

socialist
REVIEW

Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

1962/7 - July 5th - Sept 14th - 50p



...Begin's final solution?

World Crisis In The East

The world crisis is hitting Eastern Europe hard. **Mike Haynes** shows how these economies are firmly tied into the world market.

Western banks have been trying to pick up the pieces of the huge Polish debt, but the problems extends far beyond Poland. Rumania has been forced to reschedule its debt. Hungary has been refused western credit, and now the Soviet Union itself is in difficulties.

The pressure of economic and military competition has always locked the Soviet Union into the capitalist world economy. In the last decade and a half a whole series of more direct trade, investment and financial links have been built. The result of this has been to tie the Soviet economy more closely to the dynamic of the world economy.

The figures on Soviet trade dependence are not easy to calculate. Estimates vary from 12 per cent of output to 20 per cent. Either way, all commentators agree that there is *no* evidence to support the view that the Soviet economy is isolated from the west or that it avoids trade. On the contrary, it is an integral part of the world economy.

The trade/output ratio's are what one would expect from a country with its level of development, size and resources. Even the lowest figure puts the Soviet Union on a par with countries like the USA, Argentina and Brazil.



Essentially the Soviet Union has been drawn into direct participation in the world economy through competition on an international scale. As its economy has aged it has found it necessary to draw in imports from the west and to push its exports, to pay for imports and to realise returns that are not available domestically or in Eastern Europe.

The Soviet Union is also a super power and so its economic ties have a political dimension as it tries to win friends and influence people. But what stands out is how little room for manoeuvre the Soviet union has. Time and again its own economic weaknesses have prevented it from capitalising

on the weaknesses of its competitors.

To see why this could be one has to recognise that though the Soviet economy is the world's second industrial power, it is only its vast geographical size that gives it this prominence. If you look at its level of development you see a ramshackle semi-developed economy. It is this that determines its pattern of trade.

It stands in a client relationship to the west. From Japan, West Germany and USA etc. it imports technology and capital equipment. But it cannot sell its manufactured goods back. Three quarters of its exports to the west consist of raw materials and fuel. Less than 5 per cent are finished goods. The pattern is broadly the same for Eastern Europe. Like Romania or Poland it suffers a serious balance of payments problem, and is always short of hard currencies.

It is in the third world that the Soviet Union uses its economic power over its own client states. To these it exports its often inferior manufactured goods in return for raw materials, semi-manufactured goods and all the hard currencies it can squeeze from them. These hard currencies are used to pay its debts to the west. The pattern can also be found in Eastern Europe.

Overlaid on this basic pattern is the grain trade. In spite of massively increased inputs Soviet agriculture cannot meet food needs. The Soviet Union is the world's largest grain importer. This is a tremendous drain and every attempt is made to minimise it.

It was this that dictated the Soviet Union's links with Argentina. Having bought massive amounts of Argentinian grain it found that it could not afford to subsidise the regime by further purchases once the world grain market is glutted and shipping costs from Argentina high.

This pattern of trade has been constant over the years but the pressures behind it have mounted as trade has become more important and the world economic crisis has intensified. Trade has been impossible to control and there has been no serious attempt to plan it.

In the 1971-5 five year plan it was expected to increase by some 33-35 per cent. In fact it increased by well over 100 per cent. The 1976-80 plan predicted an increase of 30-35 per cent. In fact it went up by over 60 per cent. Not surprisingly, the current plan for 1981-5 does not venture a prediction!

There is a deeper significance to this. The internal processes in the Soviet economy have been tightly locked into those of the world economy. The only attempt at reform in recent years have been to make it easier to trade abroad. The result is that the Soviet economy is now forced to react more sharply to international pressures. They are no longer felt at one remove.

The Soviet Union is not in as dire a strait as Poland or Romania. This is partly because of its size, but also because it has gold, diamonds, oil and arms to sell. Even so, they have not eliminated the problem and in recent months the Soviet Union has been forced to go cap in hand to Western banks for short term credits.

Here, too, it is a prisoner of trends in the world economy. It is the world's largest oil producer and benefited from the hike in oil prices. Now there is a glut and the Soviet Union has been forced to depress prices further by dumping oil to get foreign exchange.

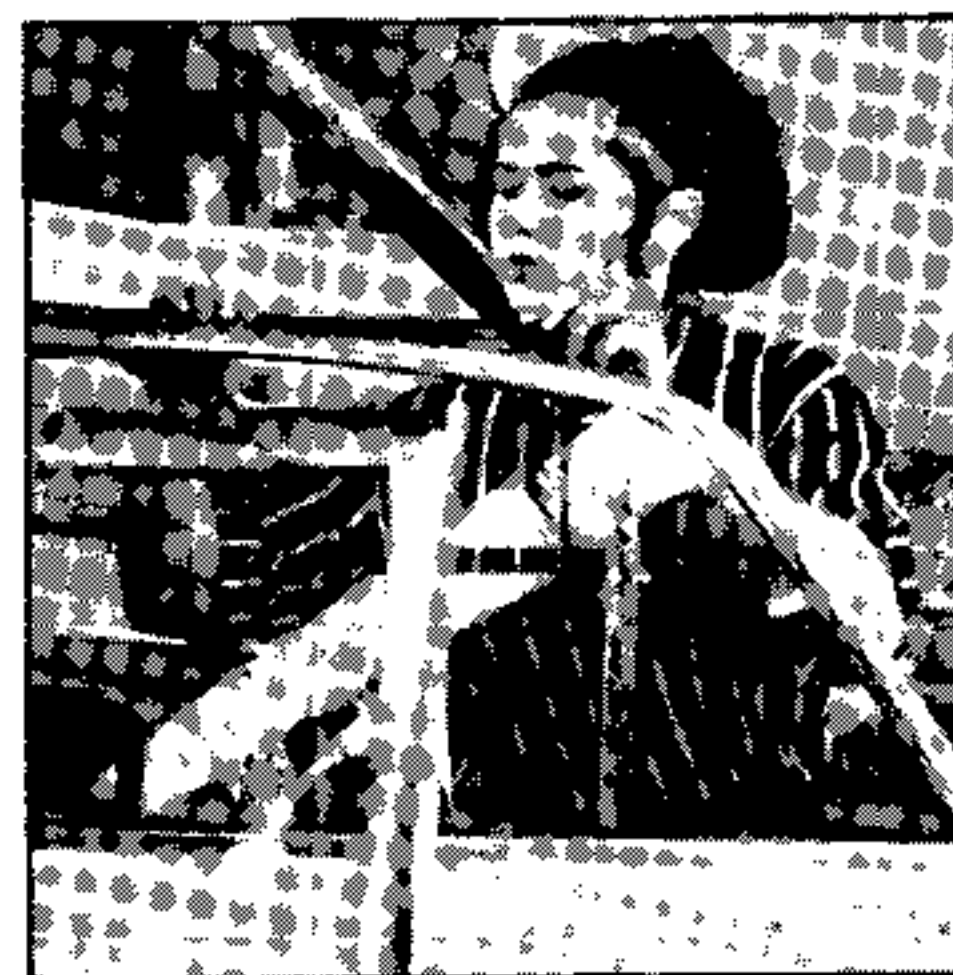
Similarly, it depends on the gold market. It produces a third of the world's gold. But it cannot sell too much for fear of lowering prices. Here, however, it is in a stronger position with South Africa its production adds up to 80 per cent of world output. The two have carved up the market to their joint benefit.

These dealings in gold and oil illustrate something else. The interaction with the economy is not a one-way process. The Soviet Union is not a passive recipient of the pressures of the world economy. It now has a hand in creating the crisis.

In the early 70's some western business men cherished the notion that the Soviet Union was a safe market that could be used to mop up the west's surplus. They are no longer so naive. As balance of payments pressures have mounted so markets in the Soviet Union have tightened. At the same time the pressure to export has intensified competition in western markets.

It does not just operate at the level of trade and competition. The financial problems have been stressed, but their significance is that the west can no longer look to the Soviet Union to bail out Eastern Europe.

The Soviet state capital has expanded its



tentacles like any other capital. It is now an embryonic multinational state capital owning and controlling production in a number of countries. Its banks too are spread out in every major financial centre. They try to play the world's money markets. If you want to ship goods and insure them then Soviet state capital will help you out. These trends are common in Eastern Europe.

In some countries they have gone much further. The fact that they exist and are growing in the heartland of 'socialist' Europe shows that we are dealing not with a separate system but a part of the capitalist world order. It is as much a part of the crisis as any other.



Keeping on the right tracks?

The NUR called off its first indefinite national strike since 1926 after just 48 hours on 28 June. The next day ASLEF called an all-out strike starting on 4 July. Nothing could illustrate the weaknesses of our movement more clearly.

The NUR decision is a setback for us all but it is an even more serious problem for ASLEF. They will now have to fight alone unless they can pull the NUR membership behind them.

Announcing the strike, an ASLEF representative said: 'BR management have to realise that they are not playing Kuwait anymore. This is a match against Brazil'. ASLEF have certainly proved that they have the strength and organisation to fight, but that sort of talk is mere bluff. Together ASLEF and the NUR would be a hundred times stronger.

The NUR setback has to be considered in that context.

The most striking thing is that while the executive voted for the strike, it was the union conference that called it off.

The NUR has never been a militant union. It was the union of the notorious Jimmy Thomas. He played a major role in selling out the General Strike in 1926. He was one of

the most reactionary ministers in the first two Labour Governments.

More recently Sidney Greene and his successor Sidney Weighell have been two of the props of the right wing in the TUC. Under their leadership the union offered virtually no resistance to twenty years of closure and redundancy. During their reign the number of NUR members fell from 475,000 to 180,000. Since the NUR has a closed shop, all of those losses were due to selling jobs.

The NUR does not have a tradition of strong rank-and-file organisation. The executive which called the present strike is to the left of their predecessors but they do not represent any massive opposition to the full-time officers.

The limit of their leftism was illustrated during the ASLEF dispute last winter. There was some rank-and-file support for the ASLEF stand on rostering, particularly amongst the NUR guards. But the NUR executive stolidly refused to budge and accepted the management offer.

socialist REVIEW

PO Box 82, London E2 01 729 2986

Contents

- 2 Crisis in East Europe
- 3 Railway workers
- 5 Begin's final solution
- 8 Malvinas and Latin America
- 10 Falklands war in the workplace
- 12 Central America
- 13 Tory plans for Ireland
- 14 Militant
- 15 Death
- 16 Lord Denning
- 18 British Economy
- 22 CND and direct action
- 23 Women and the Labour Party
- 24 Industrial discussion:
Hospitals, Dockers since
Pentonville, De Lorean
occupation
- 29 Writers reviewed: William
Blake
- 30 TUC plan for capitalism
- 32 Books: Political Graphics,
Engineers at War, Rights,
Marcuse, Nuclear power,
Shorts
- 34 Letters
- 35 Holiday reading
- 36 Revolutionary calendar: July
1789

Edited by Colin Sparks
Assisted by Stuart Ash, Dave
Beecham, Norah Carlin, Sue
Cockerill, Andy Durgan, Alan
Gibson, Pete Goodwin, Noel Halifax,
Gareth Jenkins, Christine Kenny, Jill
Poole, Jim Scott, Jane Ure Smith,
Marta Wohrle, Andy Wright.
Production Andy Durgan, Pete
Goodwin
Business Andy Wright
Books Andy Durgan

Subscription rates for one year (11
issues): Britain and Ireland £7,
Overseas Surface £8, Europe Air £10,
Elsewhere Air £13.50 (institutions
add £5)
Cheques and postal orders payable
to Socialist Review
Socialist Review is sent free to all
prisoners on request
ISSN 0141-2442
Printed by East End (Offset) Ltd,
(TU All Depts) London E2

The 'left-wing' executive was unable or unwilling to use this splendid opportunity to turn their own union away from its ingrained habit of productivity dealing.

Indeed, they share that commitment. In their current negotiations they have had no principled opposition to productivity concessions. One of their major complaints against the BR management was that it refused to discuss the NUR's own suggestions for a deal.

The left on the NUR executive is an example of the new-style Broad Left organisations which have emerged in the last few years in a number of unions. It is a close cousin of the well-known CPSA Broad Left. Like that organisation it is essentially an electoral machine. Its gains have been at the level of union officers. It has very little real organisation at the rank-and-file level and it is not designed to organise at that level. It has no record of leading struggles.

That model of left advance in the unions has now been tested. It has been found to be seriously lacking.

The executive led no serious campaign to mobilise the membership over the recent dispute. Instead they relied on trying to out-manoeuvre Weighell and the right wing. They succeeded and won a strike call. Then they found that Weighell had another card left. The union conference, with some of its delegates under mandate from their branches, voted to call the strike off.

True, the vote was for 'postponement' but, until the ASLEF decision, that could only mean complete capitulation. Whether the drivers can alter that situation remains to be seen.

In all fairness, it should be said that the NUR executive did face considerable obstacles. The media attack on the union was extraordinarily venomous. *The Sun* ran the headline 'Strike Rabble' on its front page on the first day of the strike. It was only paraphrasing a remark by Weighell himself.

The BR management, too, fought very dirty. Chief Executive Robert Reid used the house magazine *Railnews* to threaten that the result of the strike would be a twenty-five per cent reduction in services and a consequent job loss of around 10 per cent of the BR total of 250,000. All of those people got two personal letters from the management urging them to scab.

But threats and propaganda of this sort are part and parcel of any big dispute. They cannot excuse the failure of the executive of the union to work to make sure that the membership were behind their strike call.

Another problem was the attitude of other unions. Although the SOGAT national leadership called on their members not to handle newspapers diverted to road transport, the local leadership in London decided to postpone any action until they heard the result of the NUR conference decision.

Highly visible solidarity action like blacking newspapers, happening on the first day of the dispute, could conceivably have altered the mood of the conference delegates.

But again the executive should not have relied on such support happening automatically. If they had concentrated their energies on winning the hearts and minds of their own

members then they would have been in a real position to win solidarity action.

The inescapable conclusion is that the left executive lacked the base to overcome setbacks. They were defeated due to their own limitations. You cannot expect to treat the membership like a stage army and get away with it.

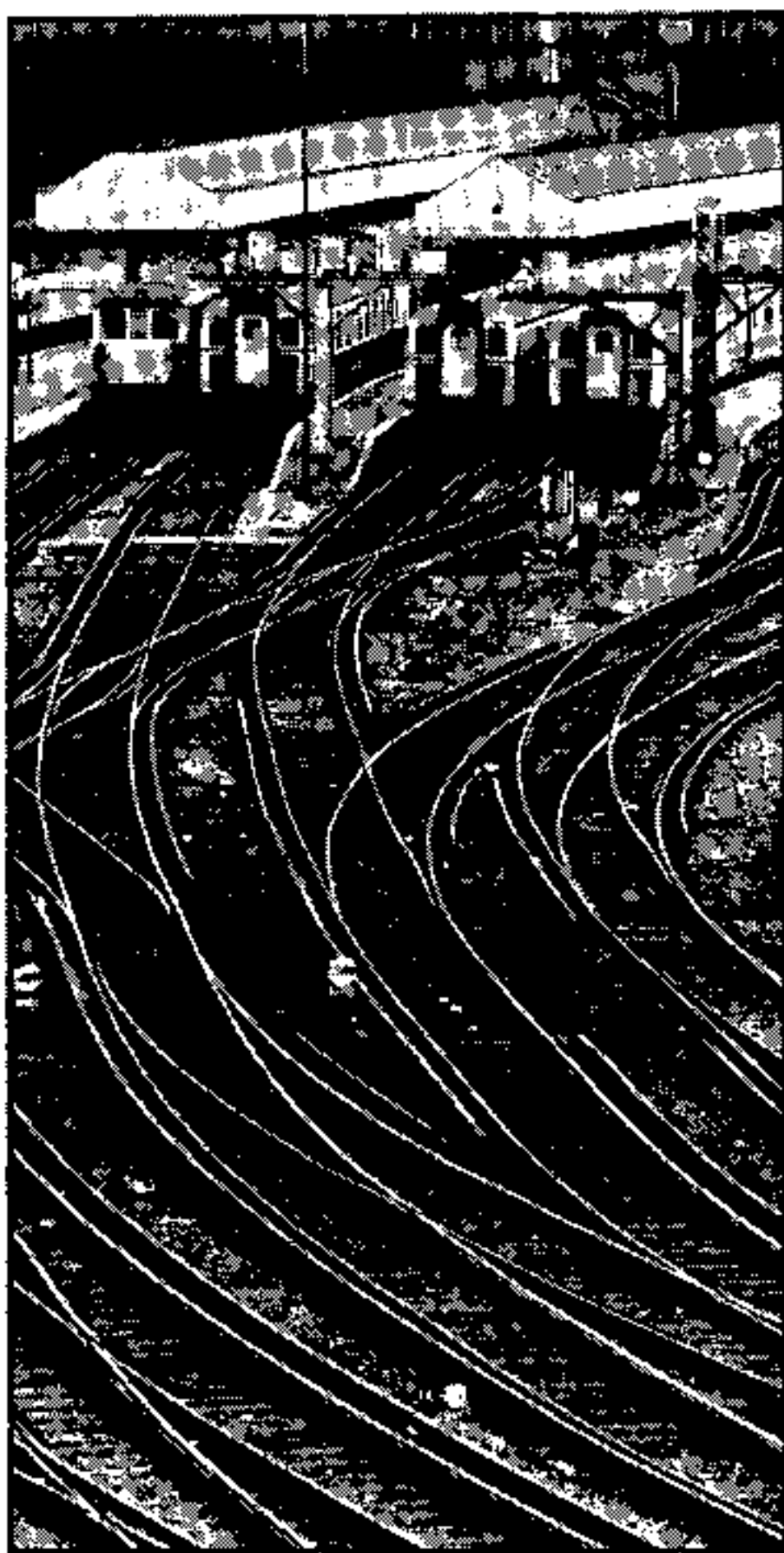
Inside the NUR the result will undoubtedly be the strengthening of Weighell and the right wing. In the longer run, things could look better. Short though it was, the strike did reveal some important developments.

The NUR, like other unions which have experienced a long period of massive job loss, has a large number of older members. Their ideas were formed in the boom period after the war. Their experience of trade unionism is the unresisted decline of the last twenty years. They provide many of the people who hold branch office and much of the support for the right wing.

These people are slowly retiring and they are being replaced by a layer of newer and younger members with very different experiences and attitudes. This layer provided many of the votes which put the left executive into office.

The strike itself proved that this layer is ready to do rather more than vote. Contrary to press accounts, the strike was well supported. In most areas the number of scabs was small. Many of those members who were opposed to the strike were sufficiently loyal to the union to obey the call and stay at home for the two days.

The number of active pickets was quite high in some areas. They tended to be the younger members of the union. Many of the older officials who used to hold the union together as a bureaucratic machine were conspicuous by their absence.



Picture: JOHN STURROCK (Network)

The strike did not last long enough for these militants to begin to form a coherent force. It did show that there are people in the NUR who are ready to fight. Properly organised, they could change the NUR from bottom to top.

That change, as the strike and its ending proved, will be a long and slow one. It will not be achieved by electoral cabals. It will need organising amongst the rank and file.

Outside of the NUR, the outcome of the abortive strike could be very serious indeed. At the very least it will make the ASLEF leadership hesitant about going through with its strike call. If the battle does take place, and if ASLEF fight alone, then the result could be a much more serious defeat.

The first people to feel the result of any defeat will be the hospital workers.

They have very much less industrial power than the railworkers. They are also bound hand and foot by the TUC. After the well-supported day of action on 23 June the TUC Health Service Committee gave the fighting call for a three day strike to start on July 19.

It would be difficult to *plan* anything better designed to demoralise the health workers and fritter away the support they undoubtedly have.

That support from other trade unionists is magnificent but it is important to recognise it for what it is.

It does not represent the end of the downturn and the start of a new and generalised working class offensive against the Tories.

It is action taken by workers who are angry with the Tory government but who lack the confidence to fight all-out on their own behalf. The miners are a good example. Despite strike action eighteen months ago, pit closures have continued with only minimal resistance. There is some doubt as to whether the closure of Snowdown colliery will be fought by more than resolutions.

Healthworkers, and particularly nurses, provide a cast-iron 'good cause' over which anger can be vented without facing up to the hard question of a serious fight on your own behalf.

Of course, the solidarity action is wonderful. But it is no substitute either for a serious fight in the hospitals or elsewhere.

The Tories and the ruling class must be thinking that things are going their way. Their victory in the Falklands gave them a new confidence. The collapse of the NUR added to it. They will be determined to break ASLEF and the healthworkers.

True, some of their pet projects are a little battered. A lot of the solidarity action with the hospitals broke the existing laws on secondary action, let alone Tebbit's new restrictions.

Overall, though, things look good for Thatcher. The Tories are doing well in the opinion polls. The Labour Party is busy purging itself. The media are openly speculating that if Thatcher can fight and beat a significant group of workers then an early General Election would be a walk-over for her.

That is speculation, but it has a ring of credibility about it. Irrespective of how things turn out the prospects for socialists remain modest. In the NUR as elsewhere we face a hard slog to rebuild. □

Begin's final solution?

The Israeli attack on the Palestinians has shocked people with its scale and ferocity. **Michael Davis** explains the background.

On Thursday 17 June the Times interviewed an Israeli soldier of the Lebanon invasion force. 'I would like to see all the Palestinians dead' he told the paper's Beirut correspondent. 'They are a sickness wherever they go.' 'I wouldn't mind seeing all the Palestinians dead and helping to do it.'

This shocking replay of Nazi ideology explains with the greatest clarity the thinking behind the Israeli invasion and destruction of south Lebanon. The invasion is an attempt to 'cleanse' Lebanon in the same way that the Zionist militias set out to 'cleanse' Palestine of its one million inhabitants in 1948. Then, after months of fighting, some 15,000 Palestinians were killed. In 1982 estimates from Lebanese and Israeli official sources suggest that a similar number were killed in less than one week.

This time the Israelis have the technology to do the job far more thoroughly. Merciless artillery bombardment and use of cluster bombs over the camps—releasing thousands of pieces of shrapnel—can only be construed as an attempt to eliminate the largest possible number of Palestinians.

Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon has been planning the invasion for at least two years—long before he was appointed 10 months ago. Frustrated by numerous false starts, like the '15 day war' of July 1981, Sharon got his chance last month when a combination of domestic and international circumstances allowed the Israeli government to launch the most ferocious offensive of Israel's short but bloody 34-year history.

With Sharon in his former post as Agriculture Minister—responsible for the occupied territories—and Begin as Prime Minister, Israel's ruling Likud government long ago decided to annex the West Bank. Sharon directed a campaign to pepper the

area with armed Jewish settlements and to bring the Palestinian population under close control. But his efforts were continually frustrated by the Palestinians' commitment to their own elected, and strongly pro-PLO local leaders.

Last year the Israelis set out to build an alternative and 'moderate' West Bank leadership. The efforts amounted to an almost complete failure. The 'Village Leagues'—an operation designed to buy in a number of rural dignitaries—failed badly. The sacking of unco-operative town councils led to a wave of strikes, demonstrations and riots. Instead of passifying the West Bank population the measures produced the most serious opposition that Israel has ever faced from its captive Palestinians.

Because the movement was intensely pro-PLO it threatened the official Israeli view that the nationalist movement was the property of a tiny group of terrorists who lacked real backing among the mass of the Arab population.

Solving 'the PLO problem'

For Begin and Sharon the need to pursue a solution to 'the PLO problem' became doubly urgent. If support for the PLO could not be reduced in the West Bank, they argued, it was all the more important to take up the project of striking directly at the organisation at its bases in Lebanon.

By eliminating the PLO there, they reasoned, the poisonous flow of Palestinian nationalism that was seeping steadily into the towns of the West Bank could be staunched, and the Israeli government could carry on with its main task—the 'Judaisation' of the West Bank and the extension of the territory of Israel towards its 'historic' borders.

The Israeli invasion was unconnected with an immediate threat to the kibbutzim of Galilee. Until the bombing of Beirut on June

5th no Palestinian rockets or shells had landed in Northern Israel since the ceasefire last summer. Operation 'Peace for Galilee' was an extension of the Israeli government plan to continue expanding the country's borders, and to systematically reduce all Palestinian opposition.

But for months before the invasion on June 7th the Israelis' scheme had been obstructed by a major international difficulty. The United States—provider of almost all Israel's mass of modern weaponry and guarantor for its enormous budget deficit—informed Begin that he was not to proceed. Fearing that an Israeli strike into Lebanon would soon involve Syria, and perhaps their backers the Soviet Union, Washington blocked the 'Sharon Plan' and gave the Israeli Cabinet 'wets' an alibi to vote against a scheme they felt might be too costly, that contained too many unknowns.

The door into Lebanon was opened by an unexpected ally. As Iran's armies scored a series of victories in the Gulf war the conservative Arab leaders and their American allies became more fearful that Khomeini would export his own destabilising brand of Islamic fundamentalism. They were especially nervous that Iran's Arab backers, like Syria, might be strengthened.

It seems that Washington's fear that Israel might draw Russia into a conflict in Lebanon was overridden by its conviction that President Assad of Syria should be put under maximum pressure before Khomeini's advances helped to consolidate his weak power base.

In May diplomats in the United States reported that the State Department had agreed on an Israeli invasion—provided that the Israelis did not stay longer than one week, and that they avoided a direct clash with Syria.

The object of the invasion was to be the destruction of PLO bases in the south and the installation of an 'independent' force in an extended buffer zone north from the Israeli border.

In mid-May Israeli Defence Minister Sharon visited Washington. He was told that the United States would give the go-ahead



BEGIN'S WAR

for sales of 75 F16 fighter-bombers to Israel. For Sharon this was the green light to prepare the invasion plan. Waverers in the Israeli Cabinet were silenced. Within three weeks F16s were bombing the Palestinian camps in Beirut, and 120,000 troops had entered Lebanon to launch one of the bloodiest local wars in modern history.

Whilst the Palestinians had been preparing for such an attack for years, they could not have foreseen the extreme degree of violence that would be used against them. With large numbers of men attached to their newly acquired tanks, heavy artillery and rocket launchers, the PLO were at first less mobile than in the previous campaigns. They were stunned by repeated and devastating air raids and almost 48 hours of continuous artillery bombardment from Israeli positions.

As the Palestinians fell back they took up the guerilla techniques to which they had been accustomed for 15 years, holding out for an incredible two weeks in the cities of Tyre, Sidon and Damour. But once the Israeli advance had begun, the encircled PLO could only fight for time. As the Israeli army moved beyond its 25 mile 'red line' it became clear that the 'Sharon Plan' was well under way. The encirclement of the PLO in Beirut was inevitable.

Although the physical liquidation of the PLO remains his priority, Begin is also taking the opportunity to make another attempt at restructuring the entire Lebanese political system.

For 30 years the Israelis have been itching to mount an operation that would secure them complete control of southern Lebanon—especially over the priceless resources of the Litani River waters—and would install a client Christian regime as an ally to the north.

In 1948 the Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion wrote that the Lebanese government should be overthrown. 'A Christian state ought to be set up there', he said, 'with its southern frontier on the Litani.'

In 1955 Foreign Minister Moshe Sharrett recorded that Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan had formulated a plan for Israeli expansion into Lebanon. 'The Israeli army will enter Lebanon, occupy the necessary territory and create a Christian regime that will ally itself with Israel', he wrote. 'The territory from the Litani southward will be totally annexed to Israel'.

The Phalange or *Kataeb* of Bashir Gemayel—a genuinely fascist organisation—is already an Israeli client force—armed and financed from Tel Aviv. Now Begin hopes to be able to extend its control over the widest area of central and southern Lebanon, hoping that it can continue 'cleansing' the country of the 'sick' Palestinians and their leftist allies.

But 60% of Lebanon's population is Muslim, the majority of the Shi'a sect, and many are desperately poor in comparison to the traditionally privileged Maronite minority. In addition at least half a million Muslim southerners have twice experienced the ravages of an Israeli invasion. Opposition to the Phalange and to Israel is intense, as indicated by the unity of the leftist and Palestinian forces during the early stages of the invasion. Even the Shi'ite militia *Amal*, which had been engaged in many clashes with the leftist National Movement and with the PLO, fought alongside them against Israel.

Dispersing the Palestinians

Israel may gamble on extending Phalangist power by installing the *Kataeb* militia in those areas from which Israel may eventually withdraw. If this is regarded as too risky, Begin may instead concentrate on supporting a strengthened Lebanese national government, relying on the largely-Christian Lebanese National Army to police the Muslim and Palestinian areas of the north, east, and south. Begin will at least hope to assist Phalange leader Bashir Gemayel in his bid to become President in elections due to take place this summer.

But whatever formulation the Israelis settle for, they will continue to face the problems of dealing with the 400,000 Palestinians remaining in Lebanon. Though large numbers have already been killed, and thousands more are said to be on their way to Israeli jails—doubtless for lengthy sessions of torture and interrogation—this can remove only a fraction of the Palestinian activists.

However much Tel Aviv likes to believe it, the PLO is not a small circle of conspirators

manipulating the mass of malleable and innocent Palestinians. Since the beginning of the resistance in 1966, the PLO has developed as a national movement that touches the life of almost every individual Palestinian.

In Lebanon the majority of Palestinian males have completed at least basic training as a guerilla fighter. Though there are many overestimates of the number of fulltime guerillas—a well-researched figure of the numbers in Lebanon before the invasion is 9,000—there are also frequent underestimates of the numbers who will fight.

The numbers who were involved in resistance against the Israeli invasion army probably amounts to several tens of thousands. The political cadre of the PLO is far smaller, but after 15 years of continuous agitation in the camps there is a very large number of activists trained in all manner of organisational techniques.

Under these circumstances talk of 'eliminating' the PLO for good is nonsense. But Israel can certainly buy time while the Palestinians regroup, and in order to ensure the most substantial obstacles to the PLO, Israel is widely believed to be considering how to place them under the control of a state authority strong enough to discipline and control them.

No amount of strengthening of the Lebanese state can guarantee a passified PLO. Israeli strategists have instead considered forcing large numbers of Palestinians across the border into Syria, where President Assad, though under pressure from his own internal opposition, has a reputation for running a ruthless police state. He is also qualified by having attacked and overwhelmed the combined forces of the PLO and the Lebanese left in 1976.

But in Israel it is felt more likely that the government will choose a variation of the 'Jordanian option'. Under this bizarre-sounding but deadly serious scheme the Palestinians of Lebanon might be directed to Jordan, where King Hussein has already proved his willingness to attack the PLO—being the first Arab leader to distinguish himself by almost obliterating the movement in the 'Black September' of 1970.

Some 53% of Jordan's population is Palestinian. By driving Palestinians from Lebanon into Jordan, and then forcing numbers of West Bank Arabs in the same direction, the 'Jordanian option' would



allow Israel to pacify Lebanon and the West Bank, Tel Aviv could then settle down to the job of fully annexing the West Bank, and build a strengthened defensive wall along the River Jordan.

According to this version, Israel could then forget the world concern over Palestinian national rights. The Palestinians would have their 'state'—in Jordan. King Hussein, with Israeli and US support, could do the policeman's job.

Perhaps Israel will use a combination of these options. What is certain is that from Tel Aviv's point of view some attempt to disperse the Palestinians is essential. Unless it is possible to prevent the PLO reorganising on the old basis, the winning of 4 or 5 years of 'calm' during which Israel can annex the West Bank—the minimum gain needed from the invasion—can never be achieved.

The possibility of a new dispersal of at least some of the Palestinians of Lebanon raises anew the question of the PLO's attitude to the Arab leaders.

Whilst most Palestinians have been case-hardened by years of sell-outs and outright assaults from the Arab leaders, there remains the illusion that the road to the liberation of Palestine leads through the palaces and presidential offices of the Arab states. The leaders of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states have contributed millions to the coffers of the PLO over the last decade. The cash has purchased the silence of PLO leaders like Yasir Arafat over the Gulf States participation in the American plans for the region, and their unwillingness to even talk of use of their powerful oil weapon to compel the western countries to move on the Palestinian issue.

A different sort of illusion has linked the PLO, and particularly its left wing, to the 'progressive' leaders of the various 'radical' regimes. Beginning with Nasser in the 1950s, and progressing through Syria's Assad, Iraq's Bakr and Saddam, and Libya's Qaddafi, the Palestinians have forged alliances with 'brother Arab's. These have either, like Assad, proved to be the most violent of enemies, or like Qaddafi, have supplied guns and rhetoric in order to keep their fingers in the Palestinian pie. Despite a host of promises Libyan forces have never engaged Israel.

A thread running through all the illusions about these 'radicals' has been the belief that such states are part of the 'socialist bloc',

that they are linked together by their alliance with the Soviet Union, which is committed to radical change in the region, and which is the only guarantee against American hegemony.

Whilst the Palestinians have become increasingly cynical about the ambitions of some individual leaders, there has still been a widespread belief that Soviet guarantees would bring 'radical' states into battle alongside the PLO. Until the very last moment there was a belief among many Palestinians that the Syrians—backed up by Moscow—would take an active part in resisting the Israeli invasion. In the event the Syrian army was drawn in only after days of fighting, when Israel compelled some of its units to engage.

The only real ally

For both the traditionally conservative and the 'radical' Arab states, the PLO has been used as a cover for their inactivity on the question of Palestine. Many Palestinian leftists will protest that they have received arms and money from the 'radicals'—though some may also admit that the price has been the purchase of some of the smaller PLO organisations, and an absence of real activity on Palestine. But for all the Arab leaders paper support for the PLO has been an important part of the effort to silence their own internal critics.

For the Palestinian struggle to be carried forward it will be necessary to swallow a large and bitter pill. There are no 'progressive' Arab states. Each 'radical' Arab ruler has at best used the PLO to colour declarations against the Zionist enemy. When it came to the crunch only Iran—a dubious ally—was willing to send troops to confront the Israelis. The Soviet Union played no role, until, as Israeli troops approached Beirut, Brezhnev warned Washington that the situation was getting a little out of hand.

Again and again the Palestinians have found themselves alone. Their tragedy is that their only sure friends are themselves being kept under close control by those rulers of Arab states who profess such a passionate defence of Palestine.

But the potential power of these Arab workers is growing. A strong workers' movement in even one of the Arab countries could, as in Iran, have an enormous destabilising effect in the region. With Palestinians dispersed into every country in the region, and concentrated in the rapidly-expanding Gulf economies, there is an opportunity for Palestinian socialists to begin to participate in the difficult but necessary task of building the Arab workers' parties that can bring down Mubarrack, Assad, Saddam and the Shaikhs.

In approaching this task the Palestinians will not always be organising outside their homeland, as has been the case with so much of the military struggle. Over the last decade the number of workers in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank and Gaza has grown rapidly. Today some 150,000 Palestinians work in Israel 'proper', commuting on a 'Pass Law' basis from the Occupied Territories. Important sections of the Israeli economy—construction, transport, 'dirty jobs'—cannot function without them. For the first time since the defeat of the Palestinian general strike in 1936 the Palestinian working class has some industrial muscle.

In many of the Middle Eastern countries the arguments about the need to build independent workers' parties will mean going back to the most basic socialist principles. But only such an effort can secure the beginnings of organisation that can take to a successful conclusion the sort of mass uprising that so nearly deposed President Sadat during Egypt's 1977 bread riots. Only socialist principles, *internationalist* principles, can secure real solidarity for the Palestinians. The collective power of workers can shake Israel, from within its occupied territories, and from without. First, it has to be worked for.

This is a difficult argument. For Palestinians faced with the daily threat of the Israeli bombs and tanks, the prisons and torture chambers, it can sound only too remote. But the repeated experience of the Palestinians bears out that there is no alternative. The precondition for those of us who want to argue the case is that here, in the western countries from which Israel gains its support, we are the most intransigent in arguing against the Zionist lies, and the most active in standing up alongside our Palestinian comrades. □



Latin American response

Dave Beecham and Mike Gonzalez look at the impact of Thatcher's victory on Argentina and on politics in Latin America.

On June 23 the *Financial Times* headlined its report of the chaos in the Argentinian military establishment: 'Argentine army assumes power as junta falls apart.' It is still far too early to say what the effect on Argentinian politics will be after the shattering defeat in the Falklands, but it has been clear for some time that the pretext used by sections of the left in Europe for supporting Britain in the war — namely that an Argentinian defeat would mean a move towards 'democracy' and even social change — is completely bogus.

We can say outright that the most likely outcome of the worst internal crisis in the Argentinian ruling class for several decades is that a new, nationalist and populist regime will emerge in place of the old one. The only difference is likely to be that a new regime, whether civilian, military or a hybrid, will have more mass support than the successive juntas of Generals Videla, Viola and Galtieri which controlled Argentina after the 1976 military coup.

The defeat of the Argentinians in the Falklands is not being taken as the end of the matter, neither by the military nor by the populist parties, principally the Peronists. Any new Argentinian regime will have to restate the national 'sovereignty' over the Malvinas with even more determination than in the past.

A permanent end to hostilities is unlikely. The Argentinian government, whatever its complexion, is going to pursue its grievances through the UN and probably maintain some 'surveillance' over the islands, though in view of the hardware the British will have there, any real raids are unlikely.

Had there been a movement of genuine opposition to the war in Argentina then indeed there might be a possibility of a civilian government having to yield to pressure for change, though this still wouldn't have justified the war! But the fact is there was no such movements. On the contrary the civilian opposition used the political space opened up by the junta to form a bloc with the military.

This was true not just of the middle class oppositionists and the Peronist movement, but of the appalling Argentine CP and of the remnants of the far left. The 'left' Peronists, the Montoneros, took the position of supporting the Malvinas war while saying that the Galtieri regime could not really represent Argentina's true national interests. The left in exile, which might have been expected to be immune to some of this, took up positions just as confusing.

The fact that there was no real anti-war movement in Argentina till after the defeat was not decisive. The anti-junta demonstrations in the wake of the surrender could

have been turned into an anti-military, working class opposition. Instead they seem to have concentrated on calling Galtieri a traitor, or raising slogans which were even more nationalistic and diversionary than before. Even the placards demanding 'Why did our boys die?' were carried by demonstrators apparently demanding justice against the traitors.

Whatever more 'moderate' regime appears in Argentina — and this is by no means guaranteed anyway — is not going to break with the populist, nationalist mood stirred up by military and Peronists alike. The chances for any real change are very weak.

More important, the Argentinian economic crisis does not permit much opening by the ruling class to opposition demands, even mild ones. True, the architect of some of the more extreme recent Thatcherite economic policies in Argentina has resigned. But economy minister Roberto Alemann was in any case extremely unpopular. His first moves when Galtieri appointed him was to freeze public employees' wages and raise the VAT on food and medicine from 15 to 20 percent. His privatisation policy — again Thatcherite — made him unpopular not just with the opposition but with the military, who believe in a measure of state capitalism.



Alemann's open laissez faire policies do not seem possible in the wake of the banks' block on credit to Argentina and the country's growing financial crisis. Well before the defeat, government policy was moving back towards traditional protectionism. The military's recently created political party, the Popular Federalist Force, was calling for this, along with the Peronists.

Not only is there nothing radical about all this — it mirrors the conflicts inside the Chilean junta — but the outcome is stark for the working class whatever happens. Either Argentina reschedules its foreign debt and squeezes the working class at the behest of the international banks, or it has to go for broke on an austerity programme which would make its attacks on living standards

earlier this year seem mild by comparison. This second option does not seem realistic. The rescheduling of Argentina's foreign debt, with strings, is virtually certain.

In these circumstances the prospects for reform in Argentina seem virtually excluded. Most likely is a further wave of nationalism, fuelled by opposition demagoguery about international banks, American imperialism or whatever. Argentinian politics look like becoming extremely rough: there is a real possibility of a popular militaristic movement appearing, with some base in the Peronist unions.

Factions in the armed forces appear to be aware of this. The ultimatum of the extreme right wing army commander, General Nicolaides, 'no military junta without army control', is not just an expression of rivalry between army, navy and airforce. The extreme military option is to go for some rescheduling of the \$35 billion foreign debt, coupled with a declaration of limited wage increases and a programme of public works. The only way they can go for this type of programme must surely be to try to promote some sort of proto-fascist movement. The embryo Popular Federalist Force looks like just that.

The outcome of the war looks grim in Argentina. Elsewhere in South America the position looks different and certainly more complex. United States policy has obviously been taking a bashing. This is not irretrievable for Reagan, as the *Wall Street Journal* has been arguing since the ceasefire. The Organisation of American States has suffered a severe blow, it looks as though the Inter-American Treaty of Mutual Assistance (the Rio treaty) has now finally been exposed as a Treaty of Assistance to the US.

Opposition

This has some obvious general benefits such as the virtual impossibility now of an OAS taskforce being sent against the guerrillas in El Salvador. It makes it difficult for any regime to be seen as too closely allied with US foreign policy. On the other hand the mood of 'anti-imperialist rhetoric' has been strengthened throughout Latin America except in Brazil. This has serious consequences for the development of socialist and independent working class organisation in several countries.

Some very strange things have been happening. Uruguay, in many ways the most brutal and successful dictatorship in the region, attacked the Reagan government over the Falklands and asked the US ambassador to leave. Cuba and Nicaragua have both been 'recognised' by Argentina, their implacable enemy. Venezuela has moved thousands of troops to its disputed border with Guyana (see map) — and all the various border squabbles in South America have had another boost.

Underlying such developments has been the growth of popular indignation about the US. A lot of this, however, is pure rhetoric, fanned by populist parties in such countries as Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Venezuela. It is a simple diversion from the class struggle at home. On the other hand the assumption of US hegemony over the military organisation of counter revolution in Latin

America can no longer be taken for granted.

The assumption that the Monroe Doctrine prevailed, that the US would defend purely 'American' interests and not permit the intervention of any 'foreign' nation, has been jolted, if not completely undermined.

The problem for us is that while anything that weakens US political hegemony in South America is clearly 'a good thing', it has generally reinforced the Third Worldist, nationalist, class collaborationist politics of nearly every opposition movement in the Spanish speaking countries.

A large part of this is the result of the rhetoric of Cuba and Nicaragua and the impact this has on the left. For the Cuban regime, and inevitably for the Nicaraguan one, the whole Malvinas episode has been coloured by the aim of strengthening the bargaining position — not the struggle — in El Salvador and neighbouring countries.

Hence outspoken support — including the offer of troops — for the Argentinian 'people'. This was a rhetorical way of getting round support for Galtieri. Hence Nicaragua's proposal of an Organisation of American States without North America. At the same time Cuba has been floating the idea of a European military 'peacekeeping' force in El Salvador, while trade unionists and oppositionists die and disappear by the hundred in Honduras and Guatemala.

The attitude of opposition forces — the whole of the organised left up to and including 'Trotskyists' — throughout Latin America has been tailored to the 'geopolitical' issues. The rhetoric about national liberation and dependency has generally been reinforced.

The one exception to this generalisation is the largest and most industrialised country in the whole continent: Brazil. The attitude of the Brazilian left, almost without exception, and indeed of the Brazilian population, to the Falklands crisis has been quite different. The Brazilian ruling class and military also took a quite distinct position. There are various reasons for this.

An underlying cause is the residual suspicion of Argentina in Brazil, which dates from a history of conflicts and also stems from the competition between the two ruling classes for regional dominance. Throughout the Falklands crisis the Brazilian government took a position of almost studied neutrality, sending three non-military aircraft to Argentina and disarming a British Vulcan bomber. At the same time it kept the Brazilian fleet on manoeuvres and extended port facilities to British hospital ships. The press and TV in Brazil have, if anything, been slightly pro-British in the conflict.

On the left the attitude to the Malvinas crisis could be summed up by the statement 'The Argentinians should not have intervened and the British should not be there.' Most of the Brazilian left took the position that the war was a diversion for the British and the Argentinian working class. Brazil should not become involved. The main struggle was at home.

A critical factor in all this must be the enormous upsurge in workers' struggle, and the emergence of a workers' party in Brazil. While populism is far from dead, the opposition to the military regime and the ruling class over the past few years has been so dominated

by the working class that the rhetoric of 'people's freedom and national liberation' does not make a lot of sense.

The Brazilian left and rank and file trade union militants have also been unique in Latin America in not expressing reservations or outright hostility about Solidarity in Poland. Ideas are much less dominated by the myths of Cuba and the Soviet Union than elsewhere. This is not to say that the Brazilian working class has emerged fully-fledged with a coherent view of the world, but that traditional Third Worldist ideas are very much in retreat.

There is no homogenous picture of Latin America after the Malvinas war. Things look bad in Argentina. The chances of an independent, class opposition emerging look very slim in the short term. Some sort of right-wing nationalist movement is possible.

The position in other countries is ambiguous. In Peru thousands demonstrated against Britain and the US, but the Peruvian left remains as confused and divided as ever. In Ecuador the left is virtually extinct and, as one *Socialist Review* reader reported recently, workers' organisation is being pushed back from even the modest gains it made in recent years. 10,000 jobs in industry have gone in two months. This is a massive assault on the small working class that exists.

In Columbia, the right has just won a comfortable Presidential victory, despite the government's support for Reagan in the Falklands and the opposition's anti-imperialist rhetoric. There is, however, a small and independent union emerging in some industries.

One real hope

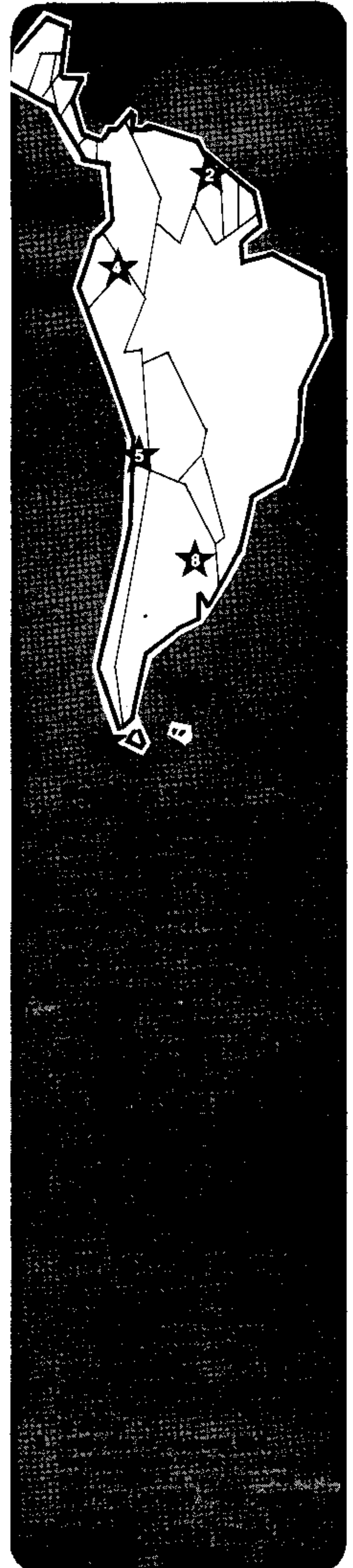
In Venezuela, government and opposition seem to have embarked on an as yet rhetorical escalation of national claims to three-quarters of the territory of Guyana. It seems a good way to prepare for next year's Presidential elections.

The military dictatorships of Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay look as secure as ever, despite mounting economic problems for Pinochet's regime.

There are two conclusions we have to guard against. One can be disposed of fairly easily: that support for Thatcher's war was somehow justified because the odious Galtieri regime could be significantly changed by defeat in the Falklands.

The other is more tempting: that the open support for Britain by Reagan has had a permanent and beneficial effect on the struggle in the Latin American countries. It is true that US hegemony in Central America has been seriously weakened. Straightforward armed intervention by US surrogates, let alone the US, is not on the cards for the time being. Beyond this little may have changed and the politics of the left remains depressingly unchanged.

The one real hope for the time being is Brazil, which after all is almost a continent in itself. The development of workers' organisation coinciding with the most important elections for 20 years this coming November could produce the most important opportunities for socialists since the struggle in Chile ten years ago. This time the potential muscle of the working class is a hundred times stronger. □



THE WAR AND

Wars always put socialists on the spot. We are forced to confront some of the most powerful reactionary arguments head on. Sue Cockerill assess how the socialist case went down on the shop floor this time round.

In recent articles in this Review parallels have been drawn with the behaviour of socialists at the time of the outbreak of war in August 1914, and Thatcher's War. One thing is very clear about the two situations: there is no comparison in terms of the scale of jingoism and war fever. In 1914 there was mass enthusiasm for the war. There were many examples of extreme anti-German feeling. White feathers were handed out. Those who stood out against the war had a very rough ride.

The Falklands War has not seen patriotic mobs in the streets, violent attacks on opponents of the war. Selling *Socialist Worker*, with its consistently large anti-war headlines, has not meant risking physical injury or even frequent verbal abuse.

Small though the anti-war demonstrations have been, they have been a great deal larger than the crowds outside 10 Downing Street. Even the 'victory' didn't bring people out in substantial numbers to celebrate. There was relief rather than euphoria.

The impact of the war on the labour movement also belies the notion that patriotism has swept aside all other considerations, despite the scandalous behaviour of the leaderships of some unions.

Moss Evans, TGWU General Secretary, made a speech giving his blessing to the Task Force being sent. Sam McCluskie of the Seamen's Union supported the war even though it put his own members in great danger. NATSOPA put out a press



statement supporting the sending of the Task Force. John Connolly, national dock secretary of the T&G, stated that the proposed strike to enforce the extension of the National Dock Labour Scheme to all ports (which never took place) would not affect any vessel involved in the war. 'We will not interfere with the war, if necessary we will give our services free.'

On the whole the national leaderships followed the disgraceful 'lead' given by Michael Foot and the parliamentary Labour Party over the war. But there is very little evidence that they attempted to carry that position within the unions. Nor is there any

evidence that, as the Labour leadership drew back from the blank cheque they had given to Thatcher, they did anything to amend their positions. They simply kept very quiet. Those that have opposed the war like Scargill, McGahey and some of the broad lefts, have not gone out of their way to mobilise against it.

Generally speaking, the positions adopted by the union leaderships have had very little effect on the shopfloor. Most members have been unaware of what their leaders have said about it one way or the other. By all accounts too, once the Labour Party leadership's support was registered for the war, their subsequent statements have been irrelevant and Benn's opposition, because of its half-heartedness, has not provided any alternative political focus for rank and file workers.

Looking at the arguments on the shop floor, a number of things seem reasonably common experiences. Any patriotic feeling in the early days actually *lessened* as the war went on and more lives were lost.

Secondly, raising the arguments against the war at work has not been especially difficult. *Socialist Worker* sales have either been as good or better than usual. The convenor at Clend Yard in Newcastle, Ted Cuskins, said that the arguments last year in support of the H-Block hunger strikers were far more difficult than putting the case against the war. That view was echoed by a number of other people.

As far as both the rank and file and management is concerned it has been a case of 'business as usual'. That is not at all surprising, given that the Falklands expedition was in no sense 'total' war.

The army is a professional force. The economy has not had to be put on a war footing. A few ships were requisitioned, and the construction of others speeded up. The shares of defence related companies went up on the Stock Exchange in anticipation of a boom in arms sales at home and abroad.

Certainly, the war has cost a very substantial sum of money — probably 1½ to two billion pounds already — and it will be the working class which foots the bill through higher taxes and more cuts. Nevertheless, compared to the world wars, this one has not demanded mass participation of any kind.

That has meant that in a very real, day to day sense, the war has been a distant one. There has been no need to either impose immediate sacrifices on many people (those who have lost relatives and friends excepted) or to ensure that production is maintained at all costs.

Shipyards building ships for the Navy might be thought to be an exception to this. In the naval dockyards which are threatened with closure, massive amounts of work were put into making the Task Force ships ready. But taking the case of Yarrow's in Clydeside, which depends on defence orders for its survival, the picture has been very much

'business as usual'.

There was a dispute going on about a safety issue. Management had given warnings to four stewards who had taken men off work on ships for safety reasons. There was an overtime ban imposed after mass meetings. A launch was coming up.

When the war started, the convenor called a mass meeting to discuss the lifting of the ban and putting the warnings 'into procedure' which would involve the full time officials. There were two huge landing craft which it was expected might be required for the war, and the convenor mentioned that the Defence or the Realm Act might be invoked by the government. The general feeling was 'Fuck the Defence of the Realm Act', and although the ban was lifted, it was a very close vote.

The shop stewards committee agreed to affiliate to the local anti-war committee and to send a delegation as well as to provide financial support. This provoked some disagreement, with the men in one section demanding a mass meeting to discuss it. Yet it was this section which took action at the beginning of June when management disciplined a steward who complained about inadequate towels in the showers (in the event of a chemical accident, immediate showers are vital). 500 men were out for three days and the dispute was won. Any support for the war did not mean surrender in the yard.

As far as management was concerned it is also clear that they didn't modify their behaviour. The twice yearly bonus was paid out during the war. The men had expected £1,000 on the basis of what was projected at Christmas. In fact they got £603 for the whole year. Before the pay out a song was going round 'A grand in the hand/you can go continental.' Afterwards it was 'We had high hopes/Pie in the sky hopes.'

The lesson was not lost on many people that while the management were asking for extra effort to finish ships early, they were



playing the same game as usual on the bonus.

One ship — a Type 22 frigate 'Beaver' — was completed six months early. But one reason for this was that the Navy were dropping their quality control substantially. A lot of overtime is worked, basically because people need the money. Not a massive amount was worked specifically because of the war.

Management also laid off sixty temporary workers in three departments in early June. A meeting subsequently decided not to allow any more temporary starts, and one department started an overtime ban.

The experience at BL Longbridge, though

WORKPLACE

different because there is no direct connection between the war and car production, confirms the view that arguing against the war has been fairly easy. As one steward put it 'Out of my section — 40 or 50 men — only one character is as bad as *The Sun*. Another said 'If you take the argument head on, the patriotic people duck back.' *Socialist Worker* sales have been at least as good as usual.

The war was seen as having politicised, some people and given opportunities for raising political arguments from outside, not merely in arguing against jingoism, but in giving answers to people on a range of political issues. The war has provoked questions in people's minds, and socialists are the only people coming up with the answers.

On the general point of the Labour Party's role, nobody I spoke to had found that what either Foot or Benn had to say was of much importance, given the overall support for the war. In BL, some Labour supporters were disgusted over Foot's role, and it was taken for granted that the effect of the war would be to preserve Thatcher in office and make a Labour victory at the next election impossible.

A steward in the Metro plant took the argument further:

'Even in its heyday, Bennery was virtually non-existent on the shopfloor. There was some talk of a Labour Party branch being set up at Longbridge, but nothing ever came of it. People are very dissatisfied with Michael Foot. Some people think Benn took the right line on the war, others say he was just trying to find a popular line rather than anything else. Basically, Bennism isn't an organised force. Benn is just a talking point.'

The experience of people in white collar workplaces with a lot of women workers hasn't been very different either. A rep in the DHSS in Edinburgh said that there was no great feeling of support for the war, although many people felt that it was necessary to 'teach the Argentinians a lesson'. At the beginning, people saw the expedition as rather a joke, and were very surprised by its rapid turn from farce to tragedy. He was very clear on the question of the Labour Party's role: 'If Foot had opposed the war, it would have been very effective.'

The question of whether or not to have collections for the South Atlantic Fund has been the only way in which the war has been raised formally in a lot of workplaces.

The evidence of the response to it cannot be seen as conclusive test of people's ideas. It is a fund for the dependents of those killed, and supporting it doesn't necessarily mean support for the war. Where it has not been agreed to, the issue may have been fudged, on the basis of opposition to all collections.

Nevertheless, it has been important in some workplaces as a focus for the arguments over whose war it is and who should pay for it.

It seems to be the common experience that the initiative in raising the Fund comes from individual stewards or members who are particularly patriotic and reactionary, acting on the basis of hearing about the Fund in the press.

In the Clend Yard in Newcastle, the proposal was defeated on the committee on the basis that dependents were the governments responsibility. In Kellogs in Manchester, the idea was dropped by the steward who raised it when it became clear that a lot of people wouldn't go along with it. One woman steward, having heard the arguments, announced that she wouldn't participate, and several members said 'You need't bother asking me.'

What happened at Gardners was that a collection was taken after an argument on the stewards committee. Gardners has an ex-



cellent record of collections for disputes, and this probably had something to do with the result. It was natural to take the matter to the committee and argue it out.

The proposal that if the collection was to take place, then there should be one for the nurses on the same day was defeated. This was probably a much clearer test than in workplaces where the issue was fudged. The bulk of the stewards collected more money for the Fund than for the nurses a week later. In sections with SWP influence, the result was the other way round.

In Yarrows, the fact that a collection didn't take place, although it was raised, certainly had to do with the fact that the

committee had debated and agreed already to send a delegation to the Glasgow anti-war committee. That the basic political arguments had already come up made it easier to resist the collection. An SWP bulletin also went in, putting the arguments against the Fund.

To say that raising the arguments against the war hasn't been difficult is not to say that we have won them with the majority of people. The situation was different from the experience of trying to argue support for the hunger strikers last year. Although some people did successfully raise that issue, the reaction was much more extreme, and in a lot of situations, it was almost impossible to even get a hearing for the arguments. Over this war, people didn't have firm ideas, especially at the beginning, and were much more open to arguments that it was a war for prestige, not principle.

The press, and the increasing seriousness of the war in terms of deaths and injuries, had rather contradictory effects. There is quite a lot of evidence that many people were disgusted by papers like *The Sun* and by the censorship which was clearly taking place, particularly over the refusal to publish casualty figures after the air attack on British forces at Bluff Cove. On the other hand, the constant media barrage, particularly the BBC (which gained unjustified credibility through Thatcher's attacks) made considerable headway in convincing people that the war was worthwhile. The deaths also in some way strengthened this, because people were increasingly unwilling to believe that all those men had died for nothing.

What everyone I talked to was agreed on was that the effects of the war are rapidly fading, and when it becomes clearer what the costs have been for Thatcher's expedition, most people will soon look back and ask 'What was it all for, anyway?' □

After the heady days of the campaign for the deputy leadership, where now for the Labour left? What moves for the embattled Militant tendency? Do followers of Tony Benn just wait in the back rooms till next conference? In THREE LETTERS TO A BENNITE, Paul Foot takes a fraternal look at the dilemmas they face...

A new SWP pamphlet, available from SW sellers, good bookshops, or by post from Socialists Unlimited, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2DE.

■ Single copy 50p (plus 20p postage), ten for £4 post free.

Dear comrade...
Three letters to a Bennite
from Paul Foot

Cartoons by Phil Evans



a Socialist Workers Party pamphlet

Guerrillas fight on...

The wars in Central America did not stop when the world's press shifted their attention to the South Atlantic. **Carla Lopez reports.**

Reagan's support for Thatcher in the South Atlantic has caused problems for US strategy in El Salvador and Guatemala. Argentine advisers have been withdrawn and there is now no chance that they will provide the backbone of a US directed ground force.

Even without this support, the wars are continuing and getting bloodier every day.

In El Salvador the new government has suspended the agrarian reform. The newly-elected Congress, strongly influenced by its extreme right wing President, Major D'Aubuisson, voted for the suspension in May. They claim the halt is only temporary.

The reform was initiated by the previous Christian Democrat government and was strongly backed by the US. Its aim was to build up a base of support for the government in their war with the guerrillas.

The first phase of the plan was initiated in 1980. It aimed to take some land from the most conservative members of the landed oligarchy, mostly cattle ranchers, and use it as a bribe to ensure the continued support of the most conservative peasants.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

It also allowed the army a perfect excuse to intensify its reign of terror in the countryside, under the guise of implementing the reform. Death tolls in the countryside grew dramatically.

The second stage of the programme would have affected the land of the more influential coffee planters. The third phase, a 'Land to the Tiller' programme modelled on US plans in South Vietnam, would give tenant farmers the right to buy their land. The hope was that they would join the class of conservative peasants.

These two phases have now been suspended. The killings, however, have continued. The peasants union, the UCS, claims that at least 8000 of its members have been turned off their land and many have been murdered or imprisoned.

D'Aubuisson's assassins have also turned their guns on the US's friends in the Christian Democrat party. So far they have murdered 4 Christian Democrat mayors, 8 party activists and 22 of their peasant sympathisers.

The land reform was one of the ways in which Reagan had managed to sell his policies to a sceptical US public. Its suspension, and the new round of murders, provoked the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee to cut the Administration's 1983 military aid request from US\$166.3 million to US\$66 million.

The current policy is one of working for an outright military victory for the Salvadorean army. It has recently been reinforced

by 1500 crack troops of the *Ramon Bellosa* brigade. They have just returned from intensive training in the US and have joined the US-trained *Atlatl* brigade in counter-insurgency operations.

The most recent operation seems to be having some success, despite the death of the Deputy Defence Minister when his helicopter was shot down. 4000 troops surrounded a number of villages in Chaletanango. Smaller groups from the US trained brigades then began 'search and destroy' operations inside the ring. These aggressive tactics have long been urged by US advisors.

They have certainly produced the 'high body count' so beloved of the US military. Reports are that 600 people have so far died. This suggests that guerrillas have been unable to follow their usual practice and evacuate villages before the army arrives.



It is too early to say whether the guerrillas will be able to fight back successfully. Certainly there is no sign that they have been dislodged from their stronghold. But the price of the new policy will certainly be even more deaths.

In Guatemala too, the army are on the

offensive. They have launched a major attack aimed at defeating the guerrillas in their strongholds in the Western Highlands. Reports of the death toll run into the thousands.

The government plans to declare a state of war in the four main areas of conflict at the end of June. What this will mean in Huehuetanango, Quiche, San Marcos and Chimaltenango was explained by the new President, Rios Montt, who argues:

'What we are doing is giving legal backing to the military-political problem. It is better that they say 20 people were executed than report 20 people found alongside the roadside.'

The Reagan administration has been working overtime to sell this butcher to the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Rios Montt is a born-again Christian and was the defrauded presidential candidate in the 1974 elections. This background did not prevent him recently strengthening his position by means of a coup which ousted the other two members of the ruling junta. He has, however, launched an 'anti-corruption' campaign.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★

It was this which was seized upon by Stephen Bosworth, US Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, to persuade the Senate that things were looking up in Guatemala. He went on to claim that indiscriminate violence had been 'brought virtually to an end'.

On closer inspection, this great campaign turns out to have been designed to make the streets safer for the Guatemalan middle class. It was the police who were responsible for so much of the arbitrary violence in Guatemala City. Those responsible for car thefts and other crimes have been purged. So have some junior civil servants.

The main result of the campaign has been that night-club owners in the city report that they have made more money in the period since the March coup than in the previous four years. The price of winning a new ally has been a small one.

The price has had no effect on the major criminals and torturers who make up the leadership of the armed forces and the government. It was never intended that it should.

The real aim of the Rios Montt government is to try to build up an alliance against the guerrillas. The US is helping them with aid for both of their plans: a military offensive and economic reconstruction.

Despite the set back caused by the South Atlantic war, Reagan is pressing ahead in Central America. There is one final little gain that he has made. The price of his support for Thatcher in her adventures is that she must support him in his bloody plans.

Just in case anyone in Britain might have got carried away by government rhetoric about fighting 'fascist juntas' and the like, Reagan used his June 8 speech to both Houses of Parliament to set the record straight. A good chunk of his speech was given over to explaining how the real freedom fighters in El Salvador were the government. □

Prior failures

The Tories' new plans for Northern Ireland are being forced through Parliament. They are meeting some opposition from their own right-wing. **Pat Stack** looks at the background.

For fifty years the Northern Ireland state was ruled by its own parliament in Stormont Castle. During that whole period one party, the Unionists, were victors of every election.

Despite the apparent stability of the regime one third of its population, the Catholic minority, despised the government and its whole state.

In 1968 this opposition led to open revolt. It started as a civil rights movement but by 1971 it was an armed struggle. After Bloody Sunday in Derry in 1972 Stormont collapsed. In March 1972 the British parliament declared direct rule.

Since then, successive governments, both Tory and Labour, have attempted to return at least some powers to Stormont. They have tried to appease Catholic opposition by offering them some form of power sharing.

Up to now all such attempts have failed. Republicans have rejected them as meaningless cosmetic exercises. Loyalists have rejected them as a surrender and the first step towards a united Ireland.

The most spectacular failure was in 1973. The Sunningdale agreement collapsed as the result of a general strike by the Loyalist Ulster Workers Council.

Since then various schemes have been tried. They all offered even less to Catholics. All failed.

The British response to its own failures has been direct rule and military repression of the Catholic population.

The British army themselves admit that a strategy based simply on a military victory over the IRA will not work. The elections of Bobby Sands and Owen Carron during the hunger strike proved that the IRA had a high level of popular support.

The hunger strike forced the British government to look again for a political initiative.

The man Thatcher put in charge of this initiative was Jim Prior. She got her main Cabinet opponent out of the way and sent him to a most unwelcome job. Prior has now come back with proposals to shift power back to the North.

The first thing you notice about the Prior proposals is how little they differ from what has gone before. Differences in detail, yes; tinkering with the structures, yes; but in essence it is the old tired, tested and failed power-sharing assembly.

Prior proposes an assembly that gains power as it proves itself 'fit to govern'. He calls this process 'rolling devolution'.

The system works like this:

* An assembly is elected by proportional

representation. This will give the Catholics one third of the seats.

* For any piece of legislation to be passed it requires the approval of 70 per cent of the Assembly.

* If the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland deems that that 70 per cent is not a fair reflection of the wishes to the minority, he can veto the decision.

* The Assembly starts life with little or no power. If all goes well it will gain power as it progresses.

* Its potential areas of power are unrestricted. If it proves itself it will take responsibility for security.

The 70 per cent rule, proportional representation and the veto are all there to try to win Catholic support. The assembly itself and its potential power, in particular its security power, are there to win Protestant support. The truth is that its chances of successes are nil.

Republicans will see it as another attempt to tinker with the sectarian state. For them, only the end of the state can provide a solution.

The hard-core Loyalists will resist any attempt to force them to share power with Catholics.

Paisley has said that he would be willing to abide by the 70 per cent rule so long as the Catholics involved do not favour a United Ireland.

Not even the moderate Catholic SDLP are in favour of these proposals. Nor are the 'moderate' Official Unionists.

It is always possible that these two groups could be persuaded to try to work the system. In the past they have been to the parties involved in power sharing. The SDLP in particular are famous for saying one thing and doing the opposite.

British link

The pressure on the 'moderates' may be mounting. Opinion polls in both communities indicate support for the scheme. However, such initiatives have had support in their early days before, and both the SDLP and the Official Unionists have had their fingers burnt as a result of the participation.

Both have lost ground recently in local elections and will be wary of sticking their necks out this time.

The events after the hunger strike may well explain the initial sympathy for the proposals amongst Catholics. At the end of the hunger strike the Republicans wound down the massive movement of support and returned to the purely military struggle.

This has led to confusion and demoralisation within the Catholic community.

But amongst both Catholics and Protestants support for Prior is lukewarm and it will quickly fade when the crunch comes.

The easiest part of the job for Prior will be getting the Bill through the Westminster Parliament.

Officially the Labour Party no longer has a 'bi-partisan' policy on Ireland. But it seems likely that they will support the Prior Bill. In



Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

a recent BBC TV *Question Time* Merlin Rees made it clear that he was supporting Prior. He told him to carry on regardless of the opposition in Ireland. The Labour left, as so often on Ireland, remain silent.

The SDP-Liberal Alliance have no policy on Ireland, but they will vote for the Bill.

The Tories opposing it are divided into two groups, the Neanderthal and the very Neanderthal – though it is very hard to tell which is which.

One group opposing it support Enoch Powell's position of complete integration into Westminster. They oppose it in the same way as they oppose Scottish and Welsh devolution. For them it represents the first step towards breaking up the UK.

The other lot stand in the Randolph Churchill tradition. They identify very closely with the unionists, oppose power sharing and want to return to the old Stormont. Essentially it is the Falklands 'War' party divided into two.

The hunger strike forced Britain to look for new initiatives. The end product has been a rehash of the old ones. Failure is inevitable.

The problem for British governments is that they attempt to reform the irreformable. The sole reason for the creation and existence of the Northern Ireland state was to maintain the link with Britain. For protestant workers this meant a state that would ensure them a privileged position.

The discrimination, gerrymandering and the barrage of repressive forces and legislation were all an integral part of ensuring the continuation of the British link and of Protestant privilege. When the civil rights movement demanded reforms, the Northern Irish government neither would nor could grant them.

There is a political solution to the North. It involves the withdrawal of British troops and breaking the British link. Until that happens there can be no peace in Ireland.

Prior's bill will fail and Britain will refuse to take the only step that can lead to peace. More people will die. This is the price for Prior's tinkering with the structures and of the continuing British presence in Ireland □

Purges: present and past

The right are attempting to drive supporters of *Militant* out of the Labour Party. It goes without saying that socialists are opposed to such witch-hunts. Pete Goodwin looks at previous purges and examines the prospects this time round.

Purges of the left are nothing new in the Labour Party. Indeed they have almost as good a claim to be part of the great Labour tradition as broken promises, empty rhetoric and rallying round the flag.

During the 1920's the Labour Party systematically eliminated Communist Party members and supporters from its ranks. In 1937 it instructed the Socialist League to wind itself up, and then proceeded to expel such prominent advocates of united action with the Communist Party as Stafford Cripps and Aneurin Bevan.

In the late 1940's it expelled half a dozen 'fellow-travelling' MPs and whipped into line others who dared to oppose the onset of the Cold War. In the 1950's it used or threatened to use disciplinary measures against the Bevanites on numerous occasions. Amongst other things they banned the 'Trotskyist' *Socialist Outlook*. Expulsions continued to be a fairly regular feature of party life well into the 1960's, even during the honeymoon of most of the left with Harold Wilson.

Much of this past is now quite rightly being recounted in great detail by the Labour left press. However a number of rather uncomfortable facts about it tend to be glossed over.

Firstly most of the horror stories that the Labour left press are recalling come from the 1950's. There seems to be a certain amnesia about the fact that purging the left extends right back into Labour's mythically heroic past. The relatively liberal internal regime of the last few years is the exception rather than the norm.

Secondly the gleeful republication of Michael Foot's statements on past purges (his impassioned defence of *Socialist Outlook* is a particular gem) certainly expose the man's pathetic hypocrisy. But they have a double edge. Why should the great tradition of the purged of yesterday becoming the reluctant purgers of today stop now?

The left, it is true, has always eventually popped up again but generally in more respectable guise. Aneurin Bevan, Stafford

Cripps, Michael Foot—all of whom were expelled in their day—were not cast into outer darkness as a result. But they returned chastened. The same goes for their followers.

And lastly, of course, the right have always got away with it. Virtually all the previous purges were carried out in the face of considerable constituency party opposition. To purge the communists in the 1920's required the disaffiliation of dozens of constituency parties. The Socialist League tamely dissolved itself despite considerable constituency support. The Bevanites in the early 1950's had sufficient of a majority among the activists to regularly sweep the elections for the constituency section of the executive. Even *Socialist Outlook* mustered 119 constituency resolutions in its defence.

The right have got away with it because they had a majority of the trade union block votes and because resistance was eventually worn down under the pressure of 'unity for the next election'.

Are things going to be any different with the proposed purge of the *Militant*?

In a number of respects the situation in the party does look different from that in which previous purges took place. The left has had at least as long and strong a run for its money as the Bevanites did. Probably longer and stronger. It can look forward to hundreds of outraged resolutions from constituency parties, and it can point to the resolutions against witch-hunts from unions as unexpected as the General and Municipal Workers and USDAW.

Foot needs blood

The right, on the other hand, lacks much of the ideological confidence which Herbert Morrison or Hugh Gaitskell had when they did their purging. They are real differences. But they are not going to be decisive.

For a start the right wing has made action against *Militant* a touchstone for putting the Labour left back in its place. So has Michael Foot. Having called *Militant* a 'pestilential nuisance' and much else, and having initiated the inquiry, he needs at least some blood. Otherwise Fleet Street would crucify him—always something of great concern to Labour leaders.

Not only does he need blood, he can get it. The recent liberal regime of the Labour Party was an indirect result of the swing to the left of some of the big unions (most notably the AUEW), produced by the industrial struggles of the end of the 1960's and the early 1970's. It was not a result of the more recent left upturn in the constituencies.

The years of Social Contract and industrial downturn have reversed that swing

(again most notably in the AUEW). The result is that half the union block votes at Labour conference are controlled by the right wing.

An appeal from Michael Foot on its own would probably be enough to make most of the union bureaucrats who are saddled with an 'anti-witchhunt' resolution ignore it. But party officials who drafted the *Militant* report have also acted with some cunning.

By proposing a register and three months for *Militant* to 'put its house in order' they have provided enough to soothe any union bureaucrat's troubled conscience—in the exceptional case that he has one. The fact that only one of the union delegates to the Labour National Executive Committee voted against the report, and that Alex Kitson of the T&GWU voted for it, shows what the voting line up is going to be when it comes to the conference.

The element of cunning in the report also provides problems for the left. True, practically all of them have greeted the report with commendable outrage and most of them will keep that up until conference. But there are going to be some who are going to grasp at the escape route of 'Why can't *Militant* use its three month's grace?' And the proposed boycott of the register could well founder on the rock of *Militant's* making some changes and trying to register itself.

Far from providing a rallying point for the left the next three months fight against the witch-hunt could well prove to be a very demoralising experience. All the tactical differences that have been developing on the Labour left over the last nine months (about whether to run for deputy leader again, about slates for the National Executive etc) will be exacerbated.

The real test will come after the purge has gone through conference. The actual number of expulsions may well not be large—just sufficient for the right to show it is putting its foot down. Much of the left is now saying that it will defy them.

No doubt at the moment many of them are quite sincere in that resolve. But they are also quite sincere in their belief in electoral politics—which requires the Labour ticket. When it comes to that ticket being removed—with say the dissolution of just one Labour Party—how many of them are going to persuade themselves that its better to get Labour back in? Even if it is a Labour Party from which Ted Grant is temporarily absent? With an election in the offing all the evidence leads one to believe most of them will reluctantly decide to 'make the best of a bad job'.

It is all a very far cry from the run-up to last year's conference. Last year the prospect was presented of getting a Labour Government significantly different from previous ones. Today it goes without saying that, should there be a Labour Government after the next election, it will be composed of the same crew behaving in the same way. □

Militant

The Tory way of death

Coping with death can be an economic nightmare as well as an emotional trauma. The £30 Death Grant is soon spent and the effects of the cuts are making it all worse.

Avril Huxtable explains.

It doesn't start with the death, it starts with having someone close to you ill and suffering in a hospital that's far away, because they've closed down all the little local hospitals. The buses are so bad that when you get there you have to cut down your time to make sure you get home. You don't get any personal attention, sympathy or understanding though you're trying to face up to the fact that someone's going to die - the hospital is understaffed, often not even finished, and can't cope with it all.

After six or eight weeks, they start taking £6.85 off an old person's pension - just at a time when their husband or wife, if it's a couple, has all the extra expense of travelling and wants to be able to bring in a few little extras. You want to bring something, the hospital food's so revolting.

Then when a person dies, they don't tell you much. There were four causes of death on our aunt's certificate - we knew how ill she'd been, but we had to ask someone who's a nurse to explain it to us.

To even get the Death Grant, you have to pay £1.25 for the hospital registrar's certificate, so it's not £30 at all. We had to queue among a crowd of people all in the same state of shock, in a horrible room with a pneumatic drill going all the time in the roof, because this hospital is still being built. It was a nightmare - I felt I just had to get out.

Bills and certificates

Then we had to get another certificate from the Registrar's office at the other side of Walthamstow - sometimes you need six or seven certificates. More to pay and more queueing. There was a bit of a row when one poor old man complained about having to wait. The interview takes half an hour and they ask you a thousand questions. Can you imagine, when you've just been bereaved!

When you go to the undertakers, the first thing they tell you is that you'll have to pay £27 to get the body released from the hospital. That's the Death Grant all gone. Then they show you the book of coffins, and tell you it starts at £345 for a coffin and two cars - extra cars cost £30 each. That may not sound too bad, but to most working class people it's a lot of money.

The crematorium costs £50 - well, a lot of people work there to keep it decent and nice. But to have even a rose bush as a memorial is out of the question. It's so expensive. They paid £13 for the vicar - I've no patience with the church myself, but the family wanted it, and I must say he was the

only person at any point who mentioned the relatives' feelings at all. I suppose he does it all the time.

Most people think they'll be all right because they're insured, but a £200 policy won't pay for a £400 funeral. And look at the money the insurance companies are making, with all their offices and things. It's bloody disgusting, they should be shot.

We sat round afterwards with all the old aunties and I know they went away worrying about their own insurance policies. I felt sad for these old folks. Some of them have lived through two world wars, and struggled to keep up appearances during the depression, and now they're having to worry about being a burden to other people when they die.

All that, and the grief that people feel as well: it can take weeks to realise what's hit you. I wasn't a close relative, but I went through it all with the old lady's daughter because I don't think she could have stood it on her own, being so close to her.

This is definitely the unacceptable face of capitalism for me - it made me want to smash something. We all sat round and said something should be done about it, but nothing will change until we do something about it ourselves! □



Picture: JOHN STURROCK (Network)

BOOKMARX CLUB SPRING 82

This is the list for the second quarter of 1982. You may join for the quarter simply by selecting books to the value of £6.50 or more at book club prices (bold type)—the normal retail price is in brackets.

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>1) Neither Washington Nor Moscow £3.00 (3.95) A new selection from the writings of the last 35 years by Tony Cliff, leading member of the Socialist Workers Party.</p> <p>2) The Joke Works £2.20 (2.95) A hilarious selection of the best work of Phil Evans, best cartoonist on the British left.</p> <p>3) Union Street £2.00 (2.95) A new novel by Pat Barker which tells of the isolation and yet dogged optimism of seven women living in one street of a northern English city set against the industrial turmoil of 1973.</p> <p>4) Solidarność—The Missing Link? £1.90 (2.50) The incisive analysis of Polish society and how to overthrow it written in 1965 by two revolutionary socialists, Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski.</p> <p>5) Your Job in the Eighties £1.90 (2.50) by Ursula Huws. Focuses attention on the effect of new technology on jobs traditionally done by women.</p> <p>6) War Lords 75p (95) CIS report on the UK Arms Industry.</p> <p>7) Sandino's Daughters £3.70 (4.95) Testimonies of Nicaraguan women in struggle—commanders, guerrillas, messengers and others collected by Margaret Randall.</p> <p>8) On the Eve of 1917 £3.70 (4.95) Exciting and readable memoirs of Russia in the period 1914-17 in the hectic and dangerous existence of an underground revolutionary by Alexander Shlyapnikov.</p> <p>9) Republic of letters £2.20 (2.95) Examines the movement of working people—particularly the</p> | <p>black and female—to establish a writing counterculture through the worker-writers movement.</p> <p>10) Nukespeak, the Media and the Bomb £1.90 (2.50) edited by Crispin Aubrey, examines how the media use language which legitimises the arms race.</p> <p>11) The Price of Coal £1.00 (1.25) by Barry Hines. Novel of the men and women who live in the shadow of the pit.</p> <p>12) A Scots Quair £2.40 (2.95) Lewis Grassie Gibbon's classic trilogy of Scottish life through three generations to the nineteen thirties—now in one Volume.</p> | <p>13) The Girl £1.90 (2.50) A powerful story set in America during the depression of the 30's seen through the eyes of a farm girl who comes to town to work in a speakeasy at a time of violence, repression and little hope.</p> <p>14) A Different Hunger £3.00 (3.95) A Sivanandan, of the Institute of Race Relations writes interestingly on the many aspects of black oppression.</p> <p>15) From the Green Antilles £1.20 (1.50) A scintillating collection of short stories from writers from all parts of the Caribbean.</p> |
|--|--|--|
-
- SPECIAL SELECTIONS FOR £6.50 EACH**
- Selection A: Titles 1, 2, 3
 Selection B: Titles 3, 12, 13
 Selection C: Titles 1, 2, 4
- Name _____
- Address _____
-
- Please send me the titles/selection ringed**
- | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| | | | | | | A | B | C | | |
- I enclose (minimum £6.50)
- **Please complete and return to: Bookmarx Club, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4**

English eccentric and raving reactionary

Lord Denning has recently been forced to retire. Noel Halifax takes a look under the wig of Britain's best known judge.

Normally judges are faceless wonders. It is rare for them to gain a wider audience than the odd *News of the World* exposé or having a Royal Commission named after them. Lord Denning is not of that mould. He is famous, as well known as the Home Secretary, an English eccentric and a raving reactionary.

His background is not the upper middle class norm for judges. His father was a member of that endangered late nineteenth century English species, the small tradesman. It is said that Lord Denning remembers taking out deliveries in a pony and trap round the countryside. It is a particularly twee and romantic English memory, but it is dear to the Denning heart.

Lord Denning's parents saved enough to pay for their offspring to go to Grammar school. Of the three that survived the First World War, one became an Admiral, one a General, and one was Lord Denning.

This lower middle-class background seems to have retained a hold on the Denning mind. He has never been fully accepted in the world of law. He was clever and got on to be a judge by the Second World War, but he was always considered a maverick.

There is a myth spread by the likes of the *Daily Mail* that Denning was a judge for the small man against the machine. In fact his judgements were only for the small man when the 'man' was a maverick fighting against trade unions. Of all the judges in England (and collectively they make a horrible crew) there has been no-one this century more dedicatedly and persistently anti-union. It is union-bashing that has made Denning's fame.

He first made a name for himself in 1974. Speaking at the annual luncheon of Magistrates he commented on the freeing of the dockers in '92 and the miners' strike of 1974.

'The Industrial Court ordered five dockers into prison for disobeying orders. What happened? The trade union movement threatened, by a few militants, to bring the whole country to a standstill unless the dockers were released.

'The rule of law is in greater danger today than it has been for 100 years.'

Over the next eight years the right-wing press started to take note and praise this defender of the small man. Take the *Spectator* in 1977:



'The last great Englishman, a long time after the last Englishman has spat over his shoulder at the evil memories of judges Goddard, Eldon and the infamous Jeffery, generations of teenagers will be singing to their guitars about this beautiful man'

Less over the top the *Daily Mail* asked:

'Why is it, Lord Denning apart, so many (of the judges) have gone so soft... They are a delight to appear in front of, universally charming and courteous. But one longs for the steel of authority, the old time confidence in their role in society.'

It is worth looking at a few examples of Denning's attitude to individuals and their rights for which he is so praised.

'To my mind it would be very wrong if this Act (Sex Discrimination Act) were thought to obliterate the difference between men and women, or to obliterate the chivalry and courteousness which we expect mankind to give to womankind.'

'The home is the most important influence on the child's life, far more important than education... the trouble today is that the home influence is not strong enough. That and the decline of Christian values.'

Such are the thoughts of Lord Denning with his comfortable country house in Hampshire, his 70 acres of land and his trout stream. In the '60s Denning ruled on a case that involved the dismissal of a woman at a teacher training college. She was sacked for having a man in her room at night. Though there were irregularities in the dismissal, Denning dismissed the case because he

declared that such a person was not fit to be a teacher.

He also ruled, in 1977 against the case of an elderly woman who charged the local authority with neglect when she fell down on the public path which, no doubt due to the spending cuts, had not been gritted. Denning ruled that local authorities had no legal duty to clear roads and paths whenever they became slippery or dangerous.

In the heyday of workers' confidence and victories, the early '70s, Denning was little to be seen. The right had started to take notice of him, though most of his decisions were later lost on appeal. With the downturn, the employers have increasingly used the courts to stop strikes. Even when Denning has later been over-turned, the effect has been to lose momentum and to divert attention into a fight between those wanting to obey the law (the officials to a man) and those who don't. The courts have exposed one of the great weaknesses of the trade union movement - the union leaders' timid and pathetic reverence for the law.

In 1977 the TUC called for action on apartheid. As part of this the Post Office workers boycotted all mail to South Africa for a day. Lord Denning ruled it illegal. He went further and ruled that any action taken by Post Office workers was against the Post Office Act of 1710!

'The very call to the workers would be a criminal offence by the trade union and its officers and every worker who obeyed the call would himself be guilty of a criminal offence. The union itself could be prosecuted in the criminal courts in its own name. Its officers could be prose-

cuted too. So could each one of the workers. The prosecution could be by the police, or by any private citizen.'

A similar dispute occurred later in the year with the Association of Broadcasting Staff who were planning to stop the broadcast of the FA Cup final to South Africa, again in line with the TUC action on Apartheid. Denning ruled it illegal and the union gave in to 'the law'. In effect, Denning had smashed the few attempts by the TUC to take any action against South Africa.

By July 1977 Denning had become involved with the Grunwick dispute. He criticised ACAS's ruling that the union at Grunwick should be recognised as the workers there were, in his view:

'very glad to get work at Grunwick and there was no evidence that they were not content with their pay and conditions'.

By now there was no question of how to break strikes. An injunction would be issued to stop spreading the dispute. Usually it would be Denning who would grant it. Having got that, the union official would bow to the law and the workers would find themselves having to take on the union officials and the state as well as their employers.

1977 was a busy year for Denning. In November he over-ruled a lower court's refusal to grant an injunction against Bill Keys of SOGAT, which was refusing to print extra copies of the *Express* while the *Mirror* was in dispute. Of course Bill Keys obeyed the law.

'People sometimes speak of a right to strike as if it were one of the fundamental rights of mankind. I would declare at once that there is no such right known to the law' said Denning the following year in a speech at Birmingham University.

In 1979 Denning ruled that the print union the NGA had no right to black any firm that advertised in the scab *Nottingham Evening Post*. This was later over-ruled, but it stopped the momentum of action. A few days later, in Canada, Denning noted 'The power of the trade unions is perhaps the greatest challenge to the rule of law in Britain.'

By 1980 Denning was in there trying to stop the steel strike spreading to the private firms. Again his ruling was over-turned after a great show of defiance by the steel workers, but it delayed the dispute for a crucial period. Again the union leaders obeyed Denning's law. Bill Sirs said:

'We are and always have been a union which obeys not only the letter but the spirit of the law. Without law there is anarchy.'

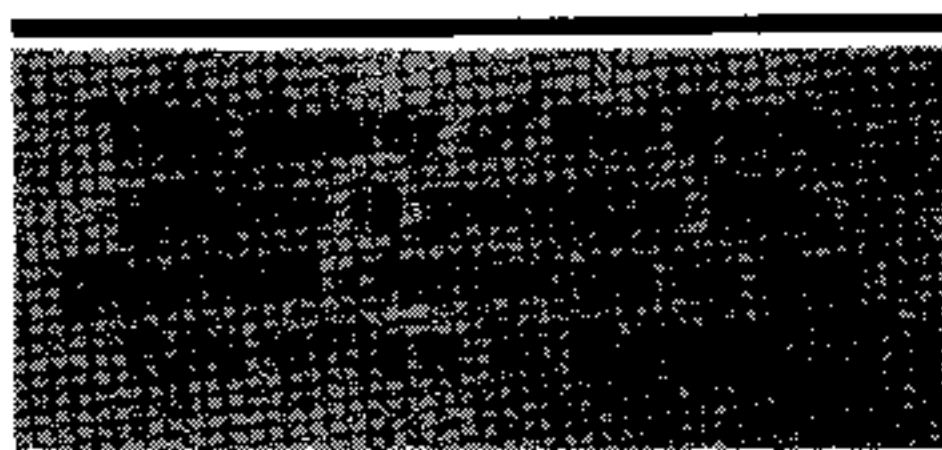
Denning has not limited himself to the unions and disputes. In March 1979 he ruled against Harringay Council for closing the schools during a caretakers' strike. According to Denning to do so was illegal. Presumably the Council should have smashed the strike and kept the schools open. He also noted that there seemed to have been consultation between the Labour Council and the unions who 'had also acted unlawfully and... appeared to have engaged in actionable conspiracy.'

1979 also saw Denning running to the defence of the not so small man against the tax authorities. Denis Healey's Tax Manage-

ment Act of 1976 had given the Inland Revenue more power to chase up tax frauds. Following the taxman's dawn raid into the City, Lord Denning's ruling (though later over-ruled) still served as a warning to the Inland Revenue not to take the law too seriously. As the *Economist* noted:

'Lord Denning's remarks will strengthen the determination of some backbench Conservative MPs to cut Mr Denis Healey's Taxes Management Act down to size.'

And it was, of course, dear old Denning who smashed Ken Livingstone's low fares scheme for London.



From union bashing, Denning was spreading out to grander things.

'If they (his critics, in this case Michael Foot) undermine the confidence of the people in the judges, they strike at the very root of law and order.' (1977)

'Our laws are being disregarded right and left. The mobs are out. The police are being subjected to violence. Intimidation and violence are contrary to the laws of the land. It should be condemned by every responsible citizen.' (1977)

As the *Sunday Telegraph* noted in 1979, Denning 'has himself... believed that judges ought to play an important part in moulding the law. Nor could he see that it was right to wait for Parliament. That, after all, might take years.'

An example of this extension of the judges power was given in 1980 when Denning reacted to the possibility that a future Labour government might abolish the House of Lords. He argued that:

'Judges were guardians of the constitution in Britain just as they were in the USA. the only difference is that our constitution is unwritten... (!)

'I think that judges here ought to have a power of judicial review of legislation... whereby the judges can set aside statutes which are contrary to our unwritten constitution.'

We now come to the most enjoyable part of the story. Lord Denning's resignation. Lord Denning published a book, *What's next in the law*.

In the book he muses on the legal system and notes that not all British folk are white any more and some even don't go to church. 'The English are no longer a homogeneous race. They are white, black, coloured and brown... some of them come from countries where bribery and graft are accepted and where stealing is a virtue.'

Because of this alien influence juries ought not to be randomly selected. Just look at the type of person you find in juries these days. All very shocking. What we need, Denning suggests, is selected juries of the most respectable citizens. Perhaps even then too many cases are dealt with by jury anyway. They are far too complex for the plebs. Why not have more dealt with by sensible trained experts like judges, such as Lord Denning, for example. You can see how the dear Lord's mind is working and looking towards 1984. But this is all par for the course and not why Denning came a cropper.

The bit where he went too far was on his comment on the Bristol riot case of last year. He suggested that the reason why some of the defendants got off was because some of the jury were black. When members of this jury threatened to sue, the book was withdrawn and Denning announced his retirement. To have the Master of the Rolls appearing in court as a defendant was too much even for the legal profession. And so this aged reactionary in drag leaves the court for his 70 acres and trout stream.

But we should not be too overjoyed to see the back of him, pleasant though that is. Denning is very much a product of the system, he may have helped devise a new way to smash strikes but that will not go away with him. Until we sweep the whole nonsense of the legal system away such extreme creatures as Denning are bound to appear and rule over us. □

Neither Washington nor Moscow

Essays on
revolutionary
socialism by
Tony Cliff



**Special Offer to Socialist
Review readers
£3.25 (plus 70p postage)
from Socialist Unlimited,
265 Seven Sisters Rd,
London N4 2DE**

ECONOMIC PROSPECTS

There is a nasty air of confidence about the Tories at the moment which is not just a product of victory in the Falklands and ratings in the opinion polls. On the battlefield at home the ruling class offensive also seems to have carried all before it. **Pete Green** takes a look at the state of the British economy.

One and a half million jobs have gone in the manufacturing industry with only isolated pockets of resistance. Days lost in strikes were down to 4.2 million in 1981 from 12 million in 1980 and the number of stoppages was the lowest since 1941. Wage settlements are running at the 4-6 percent level with some workers getting nothing at all. Real wages have now been falling for two years.

A whole series of recent economic figures have also looked good for the Tories. Profits up by 25 percent in the second half of 1981 and by an expected 20 percent in 1982. Productivity in terms of output per hour rising by 10 percent. Inflation down into single figures; a record £8 billion balance of payments surplus on the current account for 1981; public spending down to such an extent that another £2 billion or so for war games in the South Atlantic will still leave the borrowing requirement on target.

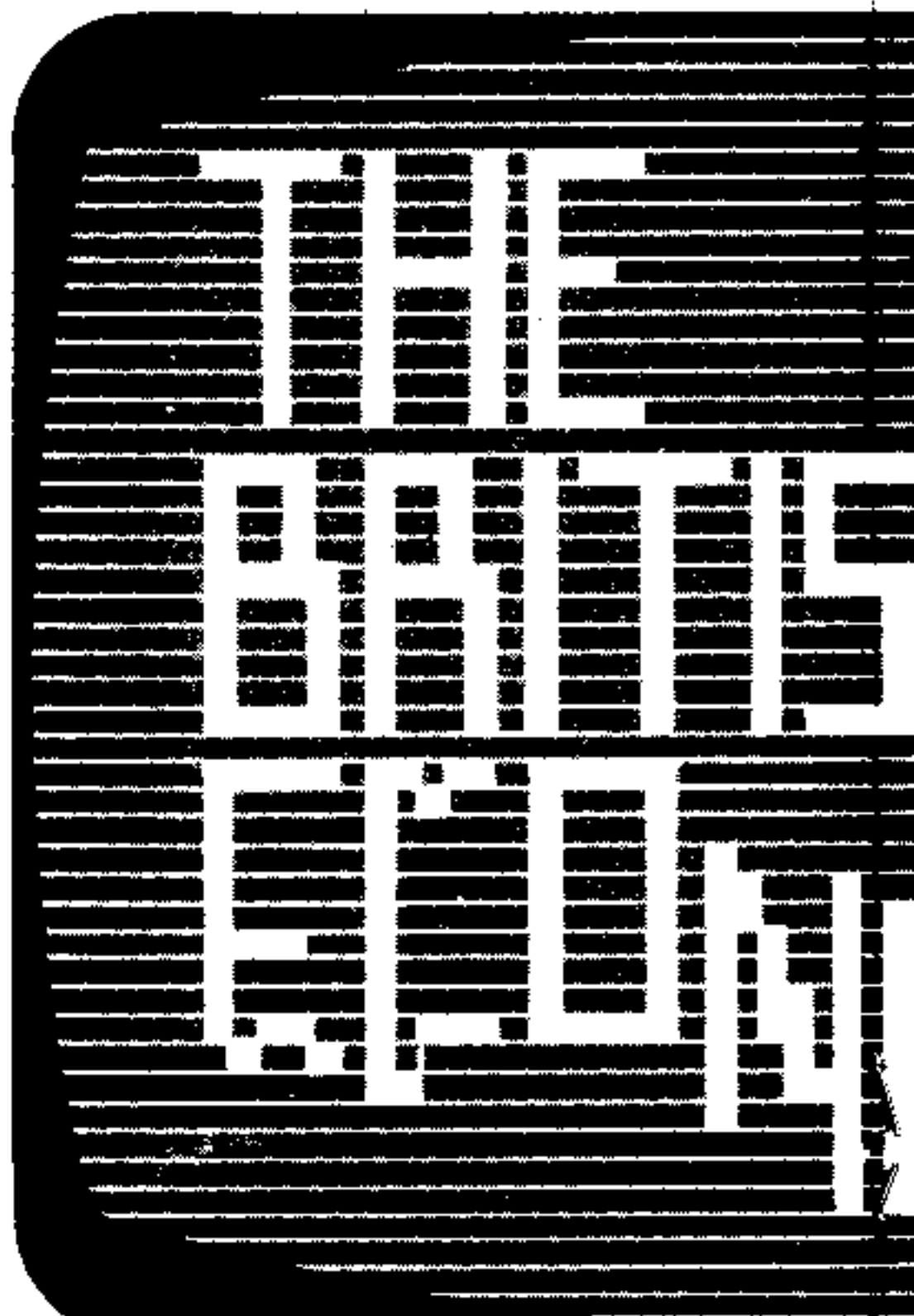
The stock market has responded with a steady recovery since the sudden collapse of last autumn. At the same time Thatcher's critics within the ruling class have become distinctly muted since this time last year. The Tory wets welcomed Howe's last budget for its 'concessions' to industry (cuts in the National Insurance surcharge and energy prices) though it was scarcely the reflationary package they'd called for earlier. The CBI has been politely sceptical about predictions of an early recovery, but its big guns are crowing about the gains they've made down on the shop floor.

The monotonous and totally ineffectual whining from Labour and TUC leaders about lunatic policies destroying the industrial fabric of the nation does seem to have missed the point. Certainly the cost of those policies in terms of human misery, wasted resources, the devastation of whole towns and inner city areas, has been appalling. But those are not the costs which show up in the profit margins of Britain's capitalists. In terms of the decisive criterion which the whole of the TUC, Foot and Benn accept, improving the competitiveness of British industry, the Tories, by the standards of post-war British governments, have been doing rather well.

To say that, however, is not to say that the Tories can succeed in turning Britain into the Japan or even the Taiwan of Western Europe. In the short term, with the world economy sinking deeper into slump, and export markets shrinking, the much heralded recovery is still some way off and is going to be weak and patchy when it comes. In the longer term the British economy as a whole is going to remain a vulnerable part of the system.

The British State is still an Imperialist power, a subordinate but important part of the Western alliance which protects the global assets of multinational capital. British based capital owns foreign assets worth around £50 billion (the second largest after the USA) and received £8 billion worth of profits and interest, or half its domestic earnings from overseas in 1981. The City is still the world's major financial centre.

Yet British capitalism, in the sense of the economic activity located within Britain itself, suffered a severe decline by international standards throughout the postwar period. Rates of investment, productivity growth and output were all significantly lower than those of any of its major rivals, with the exception of the USA which started from a much higher level. Since the early 1960s that has showed up in lower profitability, a declining share of world trade and a succession of balance of payments crises.



As the world began to slide into stagflation in the early 1970s the pressures on the British economy increased. All crises work unevenly hitting the weakest and least efficient capitals most severely. Huge chunks of British capital, in textiles, the motor industry, steel, heavy engineering, petrochemicals and shipbuilding were located in some of the most crisis-prone and fiercely competitive sectors of the system. They were particularly vulnerable after decades of under-investment. Fixed assets per worker in British manufacturing in 1976 were on average only worth £7,500 compared with £23,000 in West Germany and £30,000 in Japan.

The international character of British capitalism, the power of both British and foreign-based multinationals, the dependence on foreign trade, the interlocking of the City and the world's financial system — all of these ruled out the option of a siege economy, planning and import controls advocated on the left. In Britain as elsewhere attempts at Keynesian reflation, increasing public spending and pumping money into the economy, not only fuelled inflation and sucked in imports, but earned a thumbs down in the foreign money markets.

The Labour Government of 1974-79 (like Mitterrand's government in France today) was soon brought into line by a succession of sterling crises in its first two years in office. Foreign holders of sterling, the banks and British multinationals all moved funds out of the country, and the value of the pound fell precipitously until Labour openly adopted a programme of cuts and monetary targets.

The immediate impact of these deflationary measures was to lower demand and thus the rate of economic growth even further. Yet the logic was simple enough. Wages and public spending were not exceptionally high in Britain. Indeed real wages in Britain were already lower than those in all its major competitors including Japan. But British capitalism had fallen so far behind

They then found that as in the past incomes policies eventually break down with explosive consequences. As workers began to recoup their losses in the 1978-79 pay round and a wave of disputes broke out in the public sector, employers recognised that something a lot stronger was needed.

Labour's faint-hearted monetarism softened up the working class after the battles of the early seventies, and prepared the ground for the bodyblows of the Tories. But the weaknesses of British industry were still glaring. The State was continuing to prop up much of the economy for fear of the consequences if it did not. The new breed of hard line Tories had the nerve to go much further. With another world slump on the horizon, they were ready to hasten its arrival in Britain and force the bosses to put their own house in order.

The Tories arrived in power amidst clouds of hypocritical rhetoric about the moral and economic virtues of hard work, tax cuts and free enterprise. The monetarist theory in which some of them had so much faith was full of myths and fallacies — that high wages are the main source of a rise in the money supply and thus of inflation. But beneath the cosy housekeeping metaphors lay a coherent and ruthless strategy.

The stated primary objective was to bring down inflation, though in reality that was always subject to the qualifications that wages should fall faster than prices. Inflation for the Tories was a symptom of a deeper malaise — the accumulated inefficiencies and low profits of British capitalism, and the impotence of orthodox Keynesianism to deal with them.

The strategy was not just about using unemployment as a stick with which to force down wages and cripple shop floor organisation, with new intimidating laws on strikes and picketing in the background. It was also about creating a climate in which the weakest companies would go to the wall and the rest would have to cut wages and improve efficiency to survive. As Thatcher herself put it in the depths of the slump in May 1981.

'It is not merely a question of getting inflation down, important though that is. Much, much more fundamental than that is getting industry and services, so that they can be competitive with any other country's in the world. Now inevitably that meant industry in particular getting rid of a lot of overmanning, really getting productivity up and really getting the place into a state of efficiency and co-operation that British industry has not known for years.'

Shorn of its technicalities the strategy was simple enough. Putting it into practice was quite another matter. Amidst the storms of the world crisis, with an economy spinning downwards out of control, the Tories have presided over a slump which was far more severe than anything they expected. By the end of 1980 manufacturing output had fallen by 14.8 percent, a bigger drop than in the 1929-32 crisis. It has scarcely risen at all since then.

Far from being inflexible dogmatists the Tories have turned in all directions. That shows up clearly in their industrial policy. Despite a philosophy of non-intervention, they have matched every other major government in bailing out the biggest loss makers, subsidising exports, bribing foreign multinationals to invest in Britain and even imports controls.

When it comes to GEC flogging power stations to Hong Kong or helping Davy International win construction contracts in India or Mexico the Tories have had to play the export credit game of cheap guaranteed loans to the customer along with everyone else. They've backed British farmers against the French in the Common Market and been ruthless about keeping out cheap textiles from the Third World. They let De Lorean's shady car operation go bust in Northern Ireland but have clung on desperately to British Leyland. They sold off shares in ICL, the computer firm, in 1979 but since then have had to bail it out with a £200 million loan and a 'buy British' procurement policy throughout the State machine.

Where the Tories have tried to carry out

that it could only hope to catch up at the expense of its workforce.

The same measures, one form or another of monetarism or austerity policy, were being adopted throughout the industrialised West. These attempts to gain an edge on the competition tended to cancel each other out. Collectively they kept the whole system in a state of stagnation. Yet no national capital could opt out of the struggle to cut wages and boost profits, any more than a particular company can if its competitors are doing the same.

Callaghan and Healey accepted that logic as much as anyone and earned a lot of praise in ruling class circles for their efforts to meet it. What then was distinctive about Tory monetarism? Why did the whole of the British ruling class, and its opinion-forming journals like the *Economist* and the *Financial Times* turn so strongly towards Thatcher in 1979? As individuals they stood to gain from tax cuts and other handouts but there was more to it than that.

Labour policies were attacked on several grounds. They slashed public expenditure by 8 percent in two years, but most of the cuts hit capital spending, on new schools, roads and housing, hurting the private contractors rather than public sector jobs and services. Labour also propped up the lame ducks of British industry and poured money into special investment schemes and job subsidies. That saved many companies from bankruptcy, but to the large firms who didn't need them, the subsidies just channelled resources to the inefficient and ultimately away from themselves.

The deepest division, however, concerned not the aim but the way in which wages were to be held down. Labour's reliance on a dressed up incomes policy — the Social Contract — was a remarkable success for three years. They incorporated the union bureaucracy, demobilised the rank and file and cut living standards whilst unemployment rose to one and a half million.



their objectives they've found it far more difficult than they ever imagined.

Controlling the money-supply was supposed to curb the amount of money flowing into the economy and bring down inflation. In fact the combination of the oil price rise and the Government's own increases in VAT, energy prices and rents sent inflation from around 10 percent when they came into office to around 20 percent in early 1980. Since then it has come steadily down but only thanks to the sheer scale of the slump and the consequent fall in demand — and to the high value of the pound which has kept down import prices but squeezed the profit margins of major exporters such as ICI and British Leyland.

The monetary targets however have been continually exceeded and are only coming under 'control' because they've been loosened in successive budgets. The main reason for this has been an explosion of bank lending, not to the Government but to companies in trouble which would otherwise have gone under. Controlling bank lending is a difficult business anyway since that's how banks make their profits and they can always shift funds back and forth in the Euro-markets out of reach of the Bank of England.

What the Tories have done is to force up interest rates — providing record profits for the banks and imposing a crippling burden on those in debt. Total interest payments by industrial and commercial companies rose from £4,182 million in 1978 to a staggering £8,096 million in 1980, around 40 percent of all profits.

The Tories' public spending plans have been in even greater disarray. They've cut here and pruned there but still spending has risen each year by around £2 billion more than they planned. Defence spending, debt interest, aid to nationalised industries and above all social security payments have all contributed.

As the slump deepened the state's share of GDP actually rose from 40½ percent to 44½ percent. Every unemployed person cost the Treasury around £5,000 in benefits and lost taxes. The gap between spending and taxes, or the Public Sector Borrowing Requirements, widened adding to the government's debt and itself helping to push up interest rates. Only now with Heseltine's squeeze on the local authorities, and as cuts in wages and jobs begin to bite, is spending in real terms beginning to fall. Yet that can only serve to prolong the slump further.

In terms of monetarist orthodoxy what that all adds up to is that the Tories have been too soft. Yet if they had succeeded in meeting their targets, in cutting public spending, or in squeezing the money supply, the result would have been an even more devastating slump. If the banks had stopped

lending to companies in trouble, or British Steel and British Leyland had been allowed to go to the wall, it would have laid waste most of British industry and bankrupted many potentially profitable companies. No government could dare to contemplate the economic or political consequences of that.

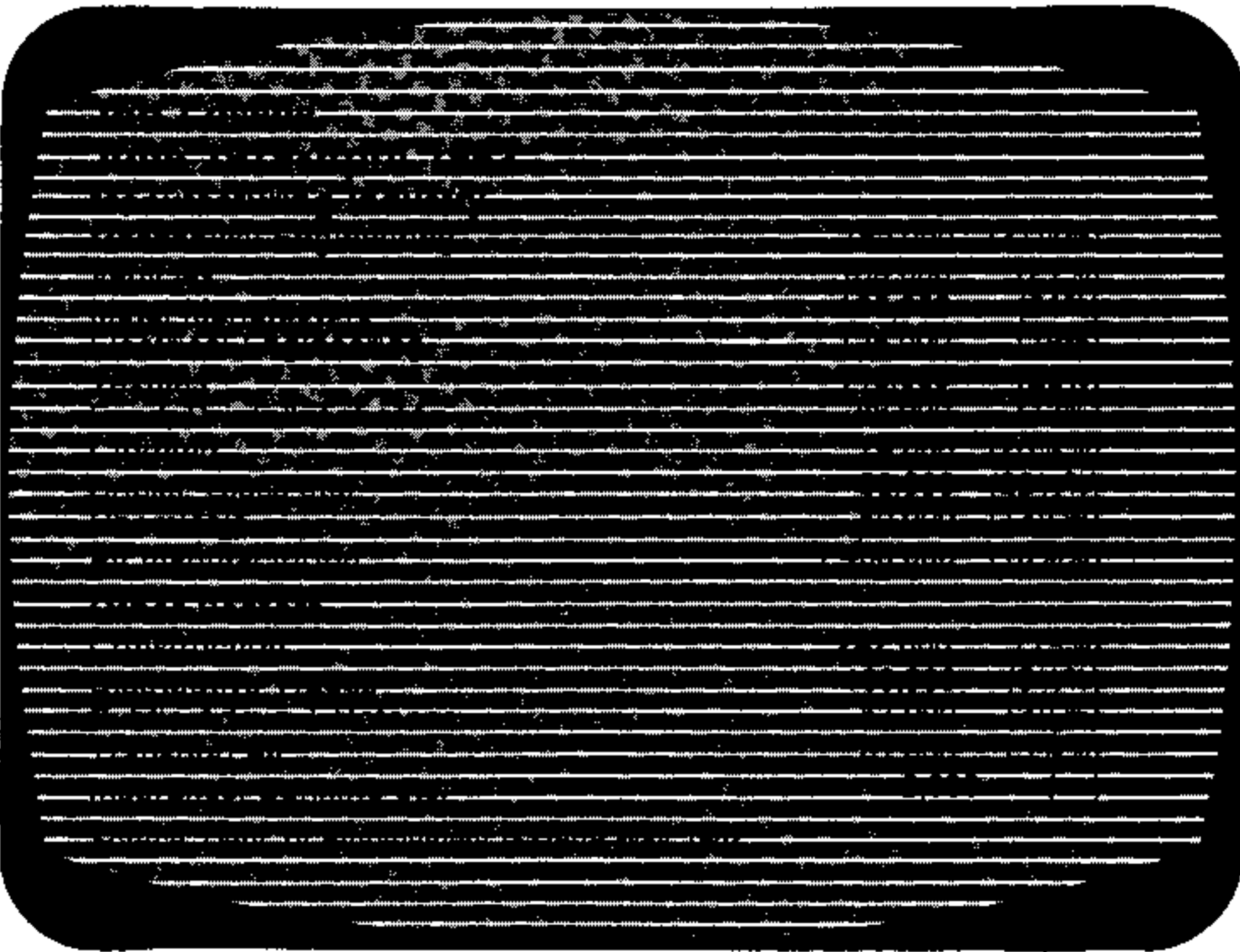
As it was, from the summer of 1979 the economy went into a precipitous decline for reasons which were only partly due to the Tories. The rate of profit on British based industrial capital had declined from around 11 percent in 1970 to an historic low of 3-4 percent (the figures are questionable but the trend is indisputable). The financial deficit of those companies (covered increasingly by borrowing from the banks given the difficulty of issuing new shares) had risen to record levels.

They now found themselves squeezed by rising energy costs, the wage increases of 1978-1979, and interest rates rising towards the 20 percent mark. Those interest rates combined with the effects of North Sea Oil also attracted large sums of hot money on the foreign exchanges into Britain, pushing up the value of the pound. Between 1977 and 1980 the competitiveness of British goods in

EMI down 10,000; Lucas down 12,000; Phillips by half since 1973; Dunlop by a third since 1977.

Small companies have been going down in dozens. Company liquidations last year hit another record, at 8,607. But the number of large or even medium-sized companies going bust has been very low by the standards of earlier crises — Alfred Herberts in machine tools; Airfix and Lesneys the toy manufacturers, Laker Airways, Stone-Platt the textile machinery makers. A number of others have looked precarious but have been rescued by the banks often discreetly guided by the Bank of England (the Wier Group, Fisons, the private steelmakers Duport, and as part of an international rescue involving banks in Canada and the USA, Massey Ferguson).

The bulk of the closures and rationalisations have occurred inside the really big multinational companies. That reflects the scale of the concentration in British industry, especially since the merger and takeover boom of the 60s and early 70s. The largest 100 companies control 42 percent of industrial production. Their sheer size means that if any of them went bankrupt



export markets declined by 50 percent.

In response to all this companies began to reduce stocks, cut capacity and sack workers in a desperate drive to lower their debt and increase profits. Employers in manufacturing had been slowly and painfully shedding jobs all through the 1970s. Now workers found that years of accepting redundancies, productivity deals and low wages had simply prepared the way for having the whole factory shut down.

The scale of the shakeout in industry and construction is illustrated by the table of job losses. The figures for particular companies are equally striking. Between 1977 and 1981 British Steel sacked 100,000 workers and British Leyland 66,000 workers. Since 1979 Courtaulds has cut its UK labour force by 40,000 or around 40 percent. GKN has cut its labour force by a third down to only 42,000 workers in Britain. ICI sacked 5,000 in 1980 and 9,600 in 1981. So it goes on — Thorn

it would have horrendous repercussions. The State would have to salvage them as it did with Rolls Royce and British Leyland in the early 1970s. But it also means that most of them have enough fat and such a broad spread of operations across the globe that they can close down huge amounts of capacity and move out of an industry or even a country entirely.

Vickers has moved out of heavy engineering, sold off its shipbuilding yards to the Government, taken over Rolls Royce motors and expanded in office equipment and overseas engineering. Birmid Qualcast is trying to get rid of its loss-making foundries and has turned to garden equipment and property. ICI has closed down its bulk fibres operation and swapped its remaining polyethylene plant for BP's PVC plant. Courtauld's has abandoned nylon production in order to expand overseas where it made a profit of £40.7 million in

1980-81 compared to a loss of £11m in Britain.

The largest British companies know that in order to survive they must be a big fish not just in Britain but in the markets of the world. Many of them have long had overseas operations which in recent years have provided most of their profits — as with Courtaulds and ICI. The high value of the pound has also made foreign assets relatively cheap to pick up. Indeed the Tories have consciously encouraged the use of the foreign exchange savings of North Sea Oil to finance a rapid expansion of British overseas investment.

In 1980 £7,100 million left the country, and in 1981 £9,470 (that can be compared with total investment in manufacturing of £7,600 million). About half of that was 'portfolio' investment by insurance companies and pension funds in overseas stocks and shares. A good chunk of the rest was by the banks, with Midland for example buying up the Crocker National Bank in the States for £820 million. Much of it however, was by industrial companies expanding their assets or buying up new companies abroad.

Events in the motor components sector give a good picture of what's been happening. Long one of the more successful areas of British industry with a large export surplus, it has still been hit by the decline of car production in the UK by more than half in the last decade to under a million. Talbot, owned by Peugeot and Vauxhall owned by General Motors have become merely assembly plants with most of the parts produced by their operations in Europe. British Leyland is still precarious and could yet go under.

The small contractors in the West Midlands have been collapsing in hundreds. GKN, however, has been making two thirds of its investment overseas and has just spent £90m on two new plants in North Carolina producing for General Motors. The sales of Dunlop's overseas operations are now twice those of its domestic ones. Lucas lost £45.3 million on components in 1980-81 and has been relying on the success of Lucas Aerospace, and expansion overseas with a new factory also in the USA.

There's no doubt that the rationalisation in British industry has begun to produce results. Unit wage costs in Britain rose by only 2½ percent last year, less than in West Germany or Japan. That reflects both the fall in real wages and the impact of the job losses on productivity.

The rise in output per hour which the Tories are so pleased about is in large part the result of closing down all the least inefficient plant and scrapping the out of date machinery. It's also a consequence of the sheer pressures on the workforce to abandon old working practices, and to accept cuts in the teabreak, job flexibility and speeded up assembly lines (see the article by Stuart Ash in last month's *Socialist Review*). In terms of investment in new technology British industry is still way behind. But those gains are still showing up in the latest profit figures. According to the Tories that should provide the basis for an investment-led recovery. It's not going to happen.

Profits for many of the largest British companies continued to rise through the

worst of the slump. Arms and electronics companies such as British Aerospace (where the Government sold half its shares in 1980), Plesseys, Hawker Siddeley and Racal have all done well. So have the big conglomerates in areas such as food, retail, hotels and tobacco (Unilever, BAT, Grand Metropolitan). Now GKN, Courtaulds etc are seeing their profits 'bounce back' to quote the *Financial Times* headline. But the prospect for the economy as a whole remain gloomy.

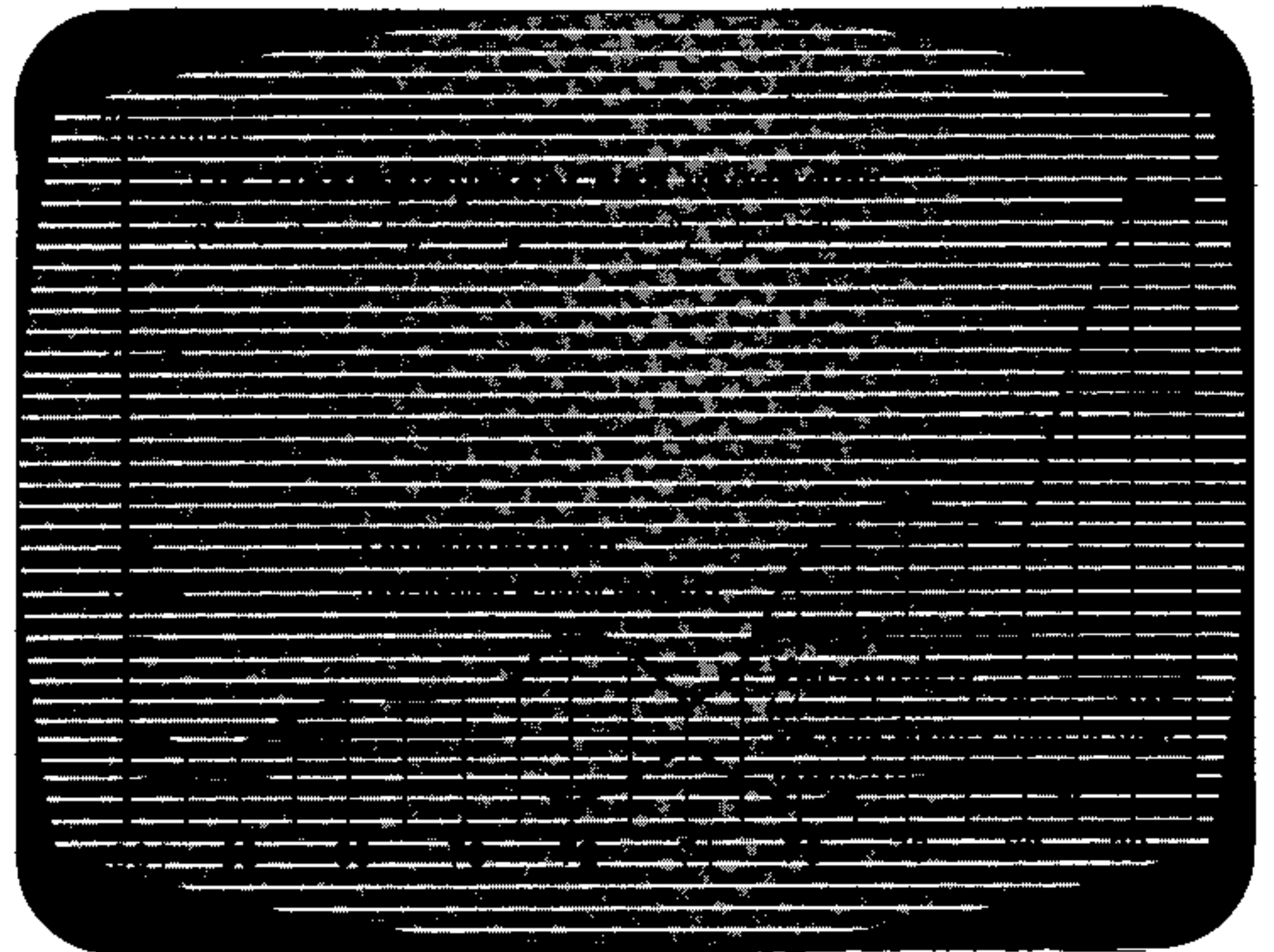
There are four main sources of demand in the economy — wages, exports, public spending and investment. The first of those is falling and exports are also being squeezed as the world recession spreads. Public spending is expanding a bit, and arms manufacturers are obviously in for a good time in the next few years. In the next budget the Tories will certainly try to stimulate the economy, but are much more likely to do that through another dose of tax cuts rather than increasing spending. That might prove a vote-winner but it won't do much for employment or growth.

That leaves investment. Rising profits, tax cuts and a fall in interest rates should all

question as well. With demand stagnant and chronic overcapacity in many industries any investment which does take place is going to replace existing plant and cut jobs even further. Ford is expanding in Britain with a £1,400m investment programme in automated plant and robots and is planning to cut its labour force by 40 percent over the next four years.

The problem of overcapacity and intense world competition is still facing the big State owned lossmakers. There is nothing which British Leyland has done which hasn't been matched by Fiat or Peugeot let alone by the American and Japanese giants. What rising productivity means when markets aren't there was recently shown when BL laid off workers at Longbridge only weeks after boasting of its productivity gains. British Steel has been helped out by the EEC cartel which has pushed up prices but still lost around £340 million last year. It's now faced with import curbs in the American market and is planning further cuts in jobs and plant.

The Tories would like to see the whole of Britain turned into a cheap labour zone. That they argue would attract more foreign



according to the theory cause it to rise substantially above its currently depressed levels. Matters are not so simple.

The main problem is the low rate of profit on new investment. That means that the flow of investment overseas is going to continue. It also means that capitalists with spare cash are going to put it into the financial markets where the rate of interest is high rather than risk immobilising it in new plant and equipment. GEC has been doing that with its £700 million cash surplus for years. Recently companies have even been borrowing money from the Bank of England at cheap rates of interest and then lending it out again. Playing the foreign exchanges has also become a popular, if risky activity. As an ICI manager recently observed:

'It's possible for companies to lose or gain more on the foreign exchanges than they can make in a whole year of trading.'

There's another side to the investment

investment. But even the much publicised Nissan investment in a car plant looks unlikely to happen now. As a cheap labour area Britain is certainly looking more attractive but is hard-pushed to compete with Spain let alone most of the Third World. There is anyway only room for a limited number of Taiwans or Hong Kongs capable of expanding exports at the expense of the rest.

In the short term the Tories might have some basis for their optimism. The combination of an upturn in the world economy and a pre-election budget stimulus might even lead to a small rise in output and a fall in unemployment.

The longer term outlook is different. The British economy will still be very vulnerable to the next slump. Even the giants of British capitalism will need to fight hard to survive. If one of them should go under, then the political impact could surprise us all. □

Heading for a blind alley

The CND demonstration on 6 June was massive. Peter Williams looks at the march and the prospects for CND.

Despite two months of war hysterics over the Falklands, a quarter of a million peace campaigners converged on Hyde Park from three starting points in London, effectively bringing the centre of the capital to a standstill.

Yet, with all its success, did the march take the movement forward? The official stress was on low key politics. We were taking to the streets to catch the eminently respectable ear of the United Nations, whose Special Session on Disarmament was starting the next day. The issue was general, the few official placards were general. It was an outing, with each leg of the march meant to wear a different colour. Why, nobody knew — any case, the instruction was ignored.

However, for very many on that march, the United Nations clearly meant nothing at all. To judge from the take up of the *Socialist Worker* placards, many thousands of which were distributed, the issue that connected was the idiocy of Thatcher's war in the South Atlantic and the health workers' pay claim. A sizeable minority of the demonstration was prepared to identify with such hardline slogans as 'Pay the Hospital Workers', 'Stop Thatcher's War', 'Blood on her Hands', 'Thatcher is the Real Enemy'.

All these were issues 'outside' CND (as the occasional CND bureaucrat or sectarian insisted). Yet many besides ourselves could see only too clearly the relevance of these slogans to the anti-nuclear cause and its success.



The CND leadership on the other hand, has always fought shy of recognising that the question of nuclear arms is quite inseparable from all the other crises that the system as a whole produces. It has wanted a broad movement on a single issue, on the grounds that breadth equals strength. What has knocked that equation sideways is the Falklands crisis.

Most of the leaders no doubt hoped it would simply go away, that it was an unfortunate accident that got in the way of the main issue. True, they protested against Thatcher's war, but did not throw the resources of CND into opposing what is, after all, no accident but the logical consequence of the same militarism that brings in Cruise and Trident.

So when it came to the first major test of actual war, CND fumbled. The reason is not hard to discover. As the letters page in *Sanity* for June/July indicates, there is a strong pro-conventional defence lobby in the ranks of the 'broad' movement.

Two letters in that month's issue use the example of the Falklands to argue that we

should scrap nuclear arms in order to build up conventional forces instead, as the best way to defend British interests. The third makes much the same point, but overall makes an attack on CND for commenting on a question that lies 'outside' the movement.

What is clear, then, is that the leadership dare not alienate those elements in CND whose major objection to nuclear arms is that it detracts from a proper conventional defence system. It dare not for fear of 'weakening' the movement. In so doing, it has its eye on even more respectable elements within the political establishment, who may be persuaded on Trident, if on absolutely nothing else.

But in reality, CND has weakened itself by doing so little to counter the increased militarism of the Tories, and, perhaps rather more importantly, the nauseating capitulation of the Labour Party to jingoism. The Labour Party's gallop to the right, putting 'national interest' before principle, augurs badly for its promises even on Trident, assuming it is returned to power.



Yet CND persists in underestimating the effects of the Falklands crisis, as if the war were simply a hiccup in an ever-rising curve of anti-nuclear feeling. It has this to say, for example, in the latest *Sanity* editorial (June/July):

The Falklands crisis has discredited the military establishment confused as it is by its imperial traditions, internal rivalries and gut reactions dressed up in technical mumbo-jumbo. The only possible useful result of the entire crisis is that it will certainly provoke a national debate about the role of Britain's armed forces in the remaining part of this battered and dangerous century. The outcome of that debate must surely be the cancellation of the new Trident nuclear missile system and the abandonment of Polaris.'

Who do they think they are kidding? Far from discrediting it the war has done quite the opposite for the military establishment. What we are much more likely to finish up with is not the cancellation of Trident and abandonment of Polaris, but Trident, Cruise and increased expenditure on conventional weaponry.

The effect of this kind of thinking will be to lead CND into a blind alley. Bigger and bigger demonstrations are clearly no answer to a government whose self-confidence has been immeasurably strengthened by 'victory' in the South Atlantic and which is resolved to instal Cruise missiles in a year's time. Indeed, demoralisation may set in unless there is a change in strategy.

That is why Arthur Scargill's speech on 6 June was such a welcome relief. Here at last was a trade union leader, with a reputation for militant action, expressing the need for something different from demonstrations:

'We have got to become more vociferous in our campaign. We have to embark on a campaign of civil disobedience to show that we are not prepared to accept total annihilation.'

A move away from passivity—which is what demonstrations have become—is the correct one, and one that caught the imagination of those present. But what does a campaign of civil disobedience amount to?

Clearly, stunts and publicity drives—like marches, occupations of nuclear bunkers and army recruiting offices—will help to build CND, particularly among youth. But such action must be in the context of building the movement in the one section of society that has the power to abolish not only nuclear weaponry but the system that creates it. That is, of course, the working class, and it is only as a class issue—one that is linked to struggles like the healthworkers'—that CND will be able to find the necessary strength.



In the present climate that is not easy. But if Arthur Scargill can bring sections of miners out in solidarity with the health workers, then it is not impossible to make headway on the nuclear issue. Obviously, it's not a matter of strike or nothing—the links will be mostly modest: setting up CND meetings in workplaces, on the one hand, getting CND activists onto picket lines, on the other.

But unless that work is done now and done urgently we will face the kind of problems faced by CND in the early 60s. Then as now, a political retreat was noticeable coinciding with the passing of the high point of the Labour Party's unilateralism as the right wing under Gaitskell regained the initiative. The Aldermaston marches, like today's demonstrations, were still big, but there was a loss of purpose and momentum.

At that point, the need for action found expression in the Committee of 100, which embarked on an ambitious programme of civil disobedience, including strike action. In that the Committee of 100 raised the

question of challenging the state through direct action, it was a definite advance on what seemed the only, and ever less credible, alternative of depending on the Labour Party to deliver the goods through Parliament.

But in that the Committee for 100 tended to substitute itself for the building of a mass movement *based on the workplace*, it unfortunately became a retreat into isolation. The passivity of the official movement was complemented by a theory of the heroic minority, in which martyrdom of the few at the hands of law would serve to spur on the many. When that failed,

martyrdom was seen almost as an end in itself, the only test of being an activist on the issue. Eventually, the Committee for 100 faded, as did CND itself.

That is a danger that must not be repeated. Any campaign of civil disobedience will have to be firmly based on drawing into activity thousands of trade unionists, not on relying on the experts or the heroes. If civil disobedience can do that, and lead to such action as industrial action against Cruise, and blacking of the nuclear industry and the bases, then CND will be able to avoid the blind alley its leaders seem intent on drawing it into. □

are to get more than men must get less.

There is a fundamental flaw in this argument. Women workers don't earn *less* because men earn *more*. There's no set amount of money that is put aside for wages so that the more men earn, the less there is to give to women.

On the contrary, if the best organised sections of the class fight for and win higher wages, it has a flow-through effect on the whole class, women workers included.

On the other hand if the best organised sections accept a pay freeze, you can bet that the lowest paid, worst organised women workers aren't going to get a pay rise either.

It is ridiculous to suggest that the key to the current pay battle in the hospitals is to demand that the miners, the steelworkers or the rail workers should forego a pay increase this year so the hospital workers' claim could be met in full. Solidarity from those workers is the way to increase the chances of forcing the government's hand.

Positive discrimination in the unions is also held up as a major way of helping women. It is undeniable that at every level of the unions women are underrepresented. Positive discrimination aims to deliberately favour women for certain positions in order to redress the balance. This was the most contentious issue at the recent National Conference of Labour Women.



Thirty-five resolutions called for the mandatory inclusion of women on selection shortlists for parliamentary and local council elections; the election of the women's section of the Labour Party's National Executive by the women's conference; five motions from the women's conference to be tabled at the annual Labour Party conference; the election of the National Labour Women's Committee by the women's con-

Feminism on the moon

Over the last couple of years a large number of feminists have joined the Labour Party, to argue for feminist politics in the hope that this will improve the position of working class women. Lindsey German shows how this strategy is mistaken.

A year ago the Labour Party launched their campaign to 'Listen to Women for a Change'. It consisted of a party political broadcast aimed at women, promising a few minor reforms from a new Labour government, an extremely feeble rally and a few meetings round the country. This year the Labour backed (and entrust run) campaign for a Womans Right to Work held a fairly successful march and festival attracting several thousand women.

These moves reflect the aspirations of the growing number of feminists who have flocked into the Labour Party in the last couple of years, and their concern to make feminism part of Labour Party politics.

The Labour Party has become increasingly the arena for any sort of organised socialist feminist ideas and activity. The autonomous groups which made up the women's movement in the early seventies have become more and more separatist and uninterested in socialist politics. For socialist feminists it has seemed much more natural to gravitate towards an organisation which at least gives the semblance of being able to change things.

Many women drifted towards socialist feminism in the early and mid seventies. Some were members or ex members of revolutionary organisations or of the Communist Party. The distinction between reform and revolution was always a blurred one, even when the class struggle was at a high level. In the years of downturn which began during the last Labour government, socialist feminism never developed a concrete analysis which could explain what was happening and how to fight against it.

Without such an analysis the movement was bound to splinter into many different directions. Also because the distinctions between reform and revolution were so blurred, there was never a strong current which argued against joining the Labour Party, and

for building an independent revolutionary organisation.

The task for feminists therefore was to join the Labour Party, usually on the Bennite or sometimes the entrust left, but to make it a Labour Party committed to feminist ideas. In this they were helped by the women's section of the Labour Party, a ready made structure in which they could work, and in the process turn from its original purpose—a place to hive off women in industrial areas—to a fighting mechanism for women's liberation.

They have undeniably had some success. The women's conference this year had over 600 delegates — double the size of last year's — and some Labour councils are offering special facilities and grants for equal opportunities. These at least feel like tangible gains — and seem much more realistic than some far off revolution. But when you look closely at exactly what the strategy for women's liberation is, things don't look quite so good.

Two planks of the strategy are the feminist incomes policy and positive discrimination. Feminist incomes policy is based on the notion that somehow there is only a limited amount of wages to go round so if women



Women's Right to Work demo in London on June 5

Picture: JOHN STURROCK (Network)

ference; and a national rules conference to decide how to implement these changes.

Pretty harmless stuff, it seems. And it was largely adopted by the conference, despite a split between the feminist recruits and the moderate trade union delegates.

Yet this sort of discrimination is not about replacing man stewards with women stewards at rank and file level. It is about two things: reserved seats and women's sub committees at the top of unions, and getting more women MPs into parliament. In other words they are reforms which may suit many of the younger women at the conference, because they directly stand to benefit from them. But they do very little to further the interests of working women in general. Voting Labour once every five years is little different if the end result is a woman MP rather than a man. Having your strike sold out is no less painful if it is done by a woman.

Real positive discrimination would mean introducing a level of democracy in the unions—genuinely accountable officials, regular meetings, regular election of stewards—which would be unacceptable to many of the women who regard more women on executives as so crucial.

But of course the real difficulty with the introduction of feminism into the Labour Party is that it might as well be conducted on the moon, for all the reality which accompanies the debate.



The left has been routed by the right. Even in the increasingly unlikely event of Labour winning the next election, the composition of the parliamentary party will be almost the same as the last one. The next Labour government will not be a left government. All the talk of positive discrimination thus becomes rather hollow. It is unrealistic to suppose that the policies which many Labour feminists want, stand much chance of being implemented. Yet the conference rows, the battles between the old Labour women and the new feminists continue. It is as if there was nothing really going on in the outside world.

The same is true in the working class movement. Today there are more women's sub committees of trade council's equality working parties and lip service to equality than ever before. Yet they remain as little more than tokens because they are not harnessed to what is going on on the ground, to the state of shopfloor organisation and to the need to rebuild it. They are the sorts of reform which give the illusion that something is being done, while covering up for the fact that women's position in society got worse under the last Labour government and is unlikely to improve much under the next.

Feminism may have done a lot for individual women inside the Labour Party, but the policies put forward won't do much for anyone else. Not because they aren't well meaning, but because they are trying to get more of a share of existing society for women—more of a society which has less and less to give. □

A rank and file cure

The health workers continue to fight on despite the hesitations of their leadership. **Lindsey Greig** looks at the overall picture. **Andy Smith** explains how the Yorkshire miners' solidarity was won.

The hospital unions pay campaign has etched over its two months duration a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of union organisation inside the hospitals today. The anger and frustration of the hospital workers themselves has provided the background to the scene.

Their fight has been fuelled by sheer poverty. Over 400,000 nurses and ancillaries earn less than enough to take them above the not very generous government poverty level. It is this simple statistic that helps to explain why NUPE members voted by 196,000 to 2,000 against the government's offer and why even the traditionally moderate Royal College of Nursing rejected the initial offer of 6.4 percent for nurses by over two to one.

The government's miscalculation of the strength of feeling is now clear. Their initial assumption was that the RCN would vote to accept and they could pursue a straight forward policy of divide and rule. Once the nurses had been got out of the way, so they reasoned, the ancillaries who do not benefit from the same public support could be easily isolated.

But the transparency of the government's intentions back fired on them. The solidarity between nurses and ancillaries is if anything greater than ever before. Just how solidly based it is will soon be sorely tested. Despite their earlier mistakes the Tories are still pursuing the same strategy.

Their latest (at the time of going to press) offer of 7.5 per cent to nurses and 6 per cent to ancillaries has certainly been sufficient to draw the RCN into further talks with the government. If they are successful in detaching the nurses from the rest of the hospital workers the TUC will have none but themselves to blame.

Hesitant moves

Throughout the ten week dispute the TUC Health Service Committee has shown a timidity which has in turn enraged and demoralised their members. The Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) started making the running in the campaign. Running is perhaps the wrong word—a slow jog is a more appropriate description.

COHSE members were invited to take a variety of forms of industrial action, including overtime bans, selective stoppages and general withdrawal of goodwill. They were soon to be joined in the campaign by the other health service unions. But despite the theoretical unity the selective nature of the action has made building a real unity more difficult.

The first hesitant moves came at the end of

March. In some areas demonstrations were held—in Manchester over a thousand hospital workers took to the streets. But it was not until the end of April that the TUC took its courage, not great at the best of times, in both hands and called for a national two hour stoppage. The support, considering the very token nature of the action, was not at all bad. Thus encouraged the TUC moved to the first of the four national one day stoppages plus a campaign to reduce hospitals to emergency cover only.

The stoppage on Wednesday 19 May was certainly a turning point in the dispute. In some areas hospital workers had sent out delegations asking other workers to take industrial action in their support.

Inspired by the response, particularly from the Yorkshire miners, hospital workers all over the country started to approach other groups of workers for solidarity. In South Wales the pits voted overwhelmingly to come out. In Yorkshire the area committee agreed to call out all its members. The TUC days of action on 8 June and the 4 June were widely backed both by hospital workers and by others.

Unused power

But although the success of the rank and file in delivering solidarity action pushed the TUC health service committee into calling for support they have so far been unable to force the TUC into the only action that could win the full claim—an all out strike backed by flying pickets to get solidarity.

Some hospital workers driven out of frustration with the TUC's failure to lead have gone out in some areas. After 19 May hospitals in Edinburgh, Leeds and Rotherham decided to stay out. But their lead was not followed across the country. The majority of hospital workers did not have the confidence to get involved in all out action without the backing of their national leaders. And it was rapidly made clear such support would not be forthcoming.

Despite a NUPE national conference decision for an all out indefinite strike from June 4, the executive easily manoeuvred their way out of it. They used a loop hole in the resolution which had called for the action to be taken with other health service unions to argue that without the support of these unions they could not move. NUPE officials were rapidly instructed to do nothing to organise for the all out strike.

Those hospitals taking action rapidly found themselves isolated by the bureaucrats and were forced back to work.

That inability of the rank and file to develop all out action is the major problem for militants. It means the TUC dictates the pace of any escalation. Their fear of calling for all out action means that the real power of the hospital workers has up until now gone unused. Building strong shop stewards organisation capable of providing an effective alternative leadership remains the central task.

COME ON MAGGIE COUGH UP!

INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION



Picture: CARLOS AUGUSTO (JFL)

Winning the miners

In Yorkshire on the first one day hospitals strike, four pits walked out in immediate support, and since then whole areas have joined in. How did this happen?

On the evening before the strike, activists at the best organised hospital in Sheffield, the psychiatric hospital, Middlewood, decided to not only picket the gates to stop fellow health workers going in to work (itself a major task) but to also send out flying pickets to other workplaces, including the pits.

It was decided to make a list of possible workplaces to visit, given that the actual resources were limited, ie a couple of cars, and a handful of pickets.

On the list were a number of reliable engineering factories that would give support. The pickets were thinking in terms of donations etc. As an afterthought, a group of pits were put on the list as a bonus. These were Maltby, Thurcroft, Silverwood, and Dinnington, all in easy access of each other.

Unofficial

Late in the evening, Kevin Barron, the Maltby NUM delegate was telephoned to make arrangements for a visit to meet the NUM officials at the pit to put the hospital workers' case. Apparently a NUPE official had rung earlier to say that the miners support wasn't needed!

Kevin Barron, however, told the Middlewood activist that if he could arrange pickets to get to the pit by 5am, then it might be possible to speak to the entire morning shift.

This they did. The pit manager called the

police. Incensed, the miners on the morning shift, after hearing the hospital workers' case, decided to walk out on strike.

During the day, other delegations went to Thurcroft and Dinnington pits. They in turn unanimously agreed to come out. At Dinnington, shocked NUM officials watched the deputies (NACODS members) also join the strike. One NUM official commented 'they didn't even support *our* strikes! ...' Back on the Middlewood picket line, the news that the miners had come out on strike boosted the pickets' confidence no end. They felt they were beginning to really move.

Their action had been unofficial. The miners' response had been unofficial. But it had worked. The NUPE officials realised that it was time to get in on the act or else it might get out of hand. For the next one day strike, the miners were on holiday. But on the following, organised picketing of pits brought out 40,000 Yorkshire miners.

The lack of organisation in the hospitals also meant that there were problems. It wasn't possible for a shop stewards' committee at a hospital such as Middlewood to do everything. Also solidarity action was cocked up before it began.

As well as calling for miners' support steelworkers were asked to join the solidarity action. NUPE full timers visited the BSC River Don plant in Sheffield, and talked to AUEW convenor Cliff Wright and other stewards. They said that obviously they supported the health workers' claim and would do what they could about strike action.

The next day, a report in the local papers and in *The Guardian* said that BSC River Don workers would be striking in support of the health workers. When the stewards went into work, not surprisingly, the shop floor gave them a hard time for saying things on behalf of them without any consultation. It was thus harder for the stewards to win action.

But what was important about the pits was that the hospital workers won the solidarity because they went directly to the pits, and the officials there took it straight to the rank and file miners.

Waiting for official confirmation from 'Barnsley' didn't happen. Thus the action took place. Later, it was said that Jack Taylor, the new Yorkshire president had said to the NUPE officials, that the NUM would strike only if the 'nurses' were working!

That's not what the militants were arguing at the NUM branches and in the canteens. At Silverwood Colliery, Pete Beevers watched the arguments.

'On the one hand you had the argument that there was still some of them working. What they meant was that there were NUPE members at other workplaces, such as the water workers that weren't out yet, so that miners couldn't yet support them'.

Showdown

That argument surfaced during the Laurence Scott dispute, when Mining Supplies in Doncaster was being picketed and needed NUM backing. Because, in Arthur Scargill's view, Mining Supplies weren't on strike the NUM couldn't black them!

'Most of the miners supported the strikes' Pete continued, 'and there were even some miners who said that striking for a day wasn't enough and that a week was far better!'

And on June 23rd, areas like Nottinghamshire, seen by other militants as the 'yellow bellies', were on *official* strike. Such was the support. Yet the way the support came, unofficially and directly at the pit heads, shows that underneath the red tape and the lack of confidence, there *is* the potential. Not only for solidarity with the health workers, but for a showdown over Snowdown? That remains to be seen. □

Taking the lead from below

Just 10 years ago the dockers shook Heath's Industrial Relations Act when they led massive strike action to free five of their stewards from Pentonville Prison. *Socialist Review* talked to Micky Fenn about developments since then.

Pentonville didn't happen overnight, the groundwork had been going on over a couple of years. The campaign against the Industrial Relations Bill was much bigger and better organised than anything we have seen over Tebbit's Bill.

In the docks, the National Ports Shop Stewards Committee (NPSSC), which is the unofficial shop stewards organisation, had been very active in the two years leading up to Pentonville. We had discussed containerisation, redundancy, threats to the National Dock Labour Scheme, retirement, severance, everything. So when the issue of containerisation came up over Pentonville, we had already been leading a campaign on the issue. The foundations were already laid.

The support we got from other Trades Unionists at the time of Pentonville was fantastic. At the beginning we didn't have any money at all, I was treasurer of the NPSSC in London and we had exactly £4. We didn't have any money from Moscow, or Libya or anywhere else. But by the end of the campaign we had got a lot of money from other militants. I think the most we ever got in any week was £1,200. Over the next couple of years we were able to support other workers in dispute.

Pentonville was a success in that it struck a blow against the Industrial Relations Bill, but it didn't solve the problems of the dock industry by any means.

For example, it did nothing to staunch the flood of redundancies. We've lost men so fast that I can only give approximate figures, but in London in 1972 there were about 21,000 dockers, now there are just 4,000. So we've lost around 18,000 men in ten years. Nationally we've gone down from 62,000 to about 21,000.

Severance money has been literally a game of leapfrog. When the employers decide that they want to get rid of another 700 or 800 men they just up the severance pay by another 500 quid. Recently its gone up from £10,000 to £16,500 and now its at £22,500.

Now they are saying that they want to get rid of men over the age of 55. A lot of dockers in London are fairly old, and the majority who take the redundancy at the moment are aged 57 to 59. The ones who have gone recently have been holding out for higher severance, because they know they can't get another job outside.

Some of the younger ones have taken severance because they thought they could get a job outside, and a few of them have, but the older men are holding out and biding their time, there are men in our dock who are 59 or 60 who have still not taken the money.

The PLA and probably Liverpool, Hull and Southampton, have reached a stage now where they are cutting very near the bone. They are getting so low in manpower that they won't be able to have a viable port if they let anymore go. A lot of the men left have special skills, they drive very heavy complicated machinery, if they went the docks would cease to function.

This increased use of sophisticated machinery is a reflection of the changes which have come in the last ten years, with containerisation and the use of bulk ships. We work with ships down in Tilbury which are as tall as a block of flats, and over 500 yards long. On these we lift 32 tons of cargo in one lift, whereas before we might have lifted two tons.

This is what is cutting down on jobs. So far on conventional cargoes they haven't attacked our manning scales, we've still got the same amount of men working on the same types of job. What they've done is switched to bulk operations and different methods of slinging stuff.



We lost the battle over containers nearly everywhere. There's only a couple of reasonable size container depots in London which have registered dockworkers. We lost that battle and that's where the docks labour force has gone. Unfortunately, some dockers took severance and went to work in unregistered container bases. In other words they sold their job and then went and nicked somebody else's. I said that we'd lost 18,000 dockers in London over the last ten years. Most of that work is now being done by unregistered dockworkers, and by a lot fewer men.

I'm pretty sure they can't cut the labour force much further. They might up the severance to £30,000, but if they lose many more men they won't be able to function. This country's still an island and we still need ports, there are still massive operations at Tilbury, Felixstowe, and Southampton and there's no way they will let these go.

'We've faced great problems with the TGWU officialdom in the docks over the last

ten years. For example they called a strike in 1975 without properly consulting the shop stewards.

The strike wasn't organised by the shop stewards committee. It wasn't lead by the shop stewards committee. In fact, in the dock I worked in at the time, the Royals, the stewards knew nothing about it before it happened. It was the docks group of the TGWU who are lay delegates who called the strike. The NPSSC wasn't involved so there were 10,000 men on strike and we were forced to support it as best we could.

We needed two or three hundred pounds from the TGWU to go picketing. We knew we had to get on the road quickly, and we kept pressing and pushing them but nothing happened. The stewards knew that unless we could very rapidly 'nationalise' the dispute we would be isolated.

We felt that the best way of spreading it would be to go up to Hull, because we felt fairly confident that they would support us. Once we'd got that foothold then Liverpool and Southampton would follow. We knew all the major ports in the NPSSC would support us if we could get to them quickly enough.

We couldn't move without finances, and we were kept waiting. It was four weeks before we got up to Hull. The stewards spoke at a mass meeting, but by then the impetus had been lost. There had been a really vicious attack in the press, saying that our strike was collapsing, that our men were going back. Actually under one per cent had gone back. But it was in the papers and on the television every single day. So the dockers in Hull and Liverpool didn't support us because they thought we were going back anyway. In fact if they had come out we would have won.

We lost that strike because it wasn't organised on the ground. It was organised by committees and individuals who very seldom come into the docks. They see themselves as delegates but they very seldom work with the men.

They were literally trying to give orders down from above, which isn't the way you win disputes. The way you win disputes is to be among the men you are talking about as a steward. You need to lead from the inside. You need to be on the picket line organising among the men. If you need anything organising you've got to do it yourself. It's no good sitting on some committee up in Aldgate telling the dockers in Tilbury to go on strike. You've got to be there.

The organisation you need to win is still there in the docks. By this I mean that there's still an active NPSSC in every major port in the country. Sometimes it functions at a high level, but most of the time its at a very low level.

When any major issue comes up it can usually deliver the goods. In Liverpool last year one of Vestey's companies, West Coast Stevedoring, were going to sack 187 men. The NPSSC threatened a stoppage and within a week all those men were found other employment.

At Grimsby, about three weeks after that, 13 men were threatened with the sack. They were told the docks were going to close and that there was no other employment for them. Although Grimsby has only been to a couple of NPSSC meetings in the last 15

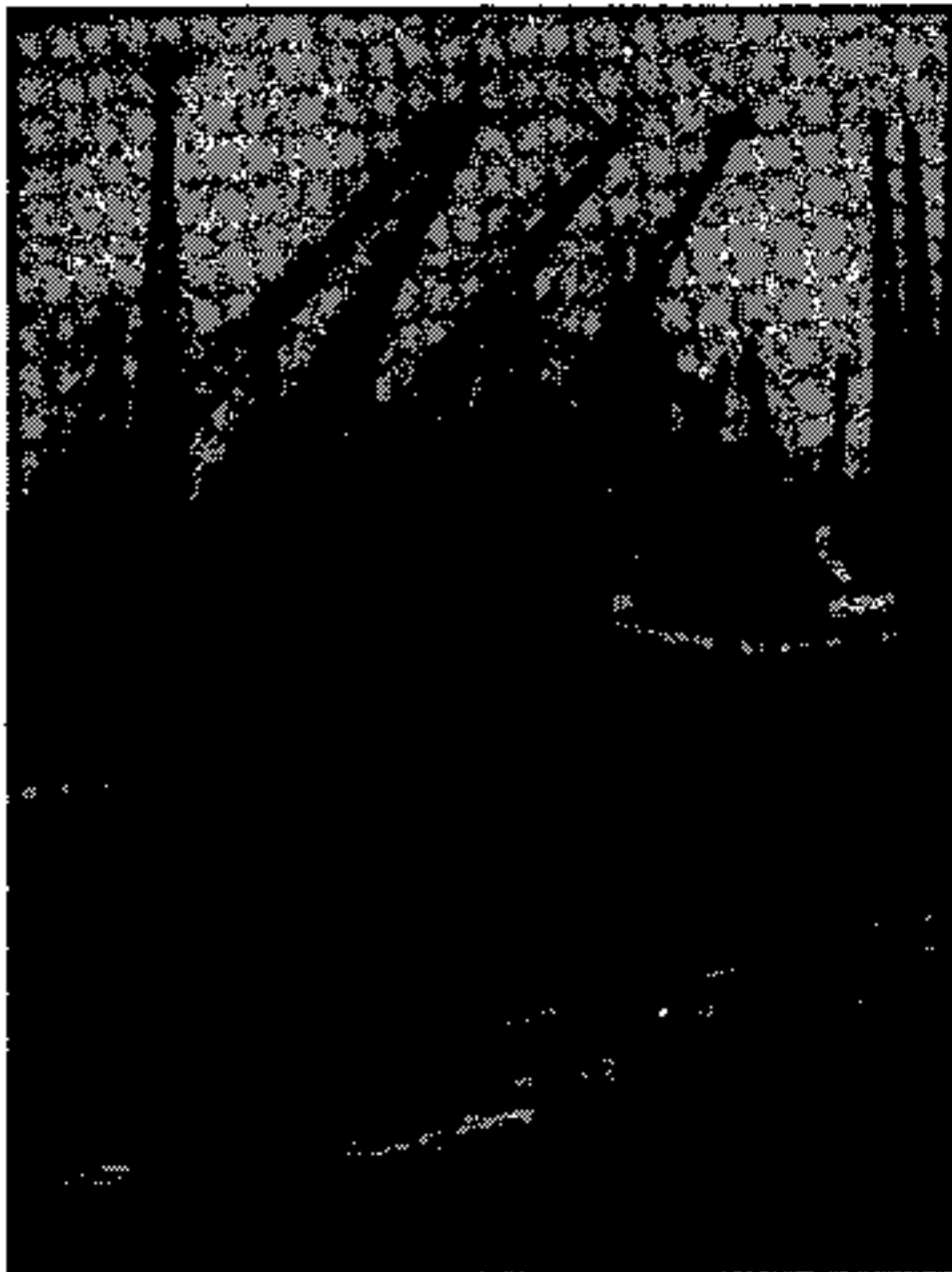
years, the Hull dockers were right behind them.

The 2,000 men at Hull voted for a strike and said they would call for an indefinite national stoppage unless those men were employed. Straight away they were found other employment. So the NPSSC can still call for action when necessary, and usually the TGWU is forced to take it up.

The NPSSC is important in making international contacts between dockers. This is still at a fairly young stage but its amazing how many men turn up at international meetings. The first one I ever went to had dockers from Le Havre, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Stockholm, Antwerp, Marseilles, and the Canary Islands.

There's not many instances where it proved all that powerful, simply because by the time you start to use it the strike's usually all over.

There was a situation in the Canary Islands, just after Franco fell, when the dockers over there were in dispute with an employer who comes into some of the British ports. They contacted the dockers in Southampton, who blacked a couple of their ships full of soft fruit, which of course rots very quickly. Within a couple of weeks the management had given those dockers



everything which they wanted, including a lot of basic trade union conditions like proper safety measures.

In some ways the situation in the docks is healthier now than in 1972. The NPSSC is still prepared to fight, but over the past few months the TGWU has shown itself prepared to fight over the issues in the docks. I think there's a couple of reasons for this.

They learnt the lessons of 1972. Shea, who was the London organiser at the time, said that the NPSSC was waiting in the wings to take up the fight if the TGWU didn't.

They're scared of having the leadership taken out of their hands and being faced with a national unofficial strike rather than an official one. As well as that, they're concerned about their loss of membership. Over the last ten years, they've lost over 400,000 members nationally—most of these since 1978.

The spirit for a fight is still there. Recently the NPSSC called a very successful strike over attacks on the scheme.

The dockers are very aware that the National Dock Labour Scheme defends them. The most important thing about it for us is the question of discipline. It means an employer can only sack a registered dock worker for stealing or striking an employer or something like that. So it's of vital importance because of the right to hire and fire.

The employers would like to get rid of it, so they could get rid of people they didn't want. We'd then have a situation very similar to that in British Leyland, with Derek Robinson, or in the building industry with Des Warren. We'd be victimised and forced out of the industry. They'd pick out all the militants, particularly the stewards in the major ports, and get rid of them.

At the moment they can't do that, and that's the reason they are concerned. The Tory papers always say that we've got a job for life. All that means is that we can't be victimised by an employer. That's the only job for life we've got.

The unregistered ports haven't got this, but as far as we can make out a lot of dockers in the unregistered ports want to come into the scheme. The employers are obviously violently opposed to this.

There might come a clash if the TGWU demands that all dockers in unregistered ports become registered. That was supposed to have happened this month, but the union have said that they will give Tebbit time to reconsider the structure of the old scheme, and come up with proposals. This is obviously useless, because they know the proposals won't be what we would consider satisfactory.

The PLA have just announced that they made a profit for the first time in god knows how long. So I think we can really start attacking on the wage front. For our last wage deal we didn't get exactly what we wanted, but we did pretty well. We were solid in the dock I work in. There was no one going to work at all. If we could have got enough pickets at the riverside wharves we would have got everything we were asking for.

If the PLA do start recruiting labour, it will be on a very limited scale. In the last ten years they've switched, like all the major ports from a labour intensive, to a capital intensive industry. It's not just container gantries. There's also new sorts of machinery on the ships — things like stacker tracks and forklifts.

The employers have done a very successful pruning operation in their terms. The real change has come down the ship's hold. Most of the cargo comes in on pallet boards and the shifting is done with forklifts. Before, everything had to be shoved or pushed or carried. This is where they've cut back on the men.

At Tilbury, nearly all the men from the Royal Group have been allocated to one department, so we've held together the tradition. One problem we have have is where the PLA has singled out men and sent them off onto three shift container operations. They've isolated them in very small groups and given them special wage deals.

There can be ten or eleven wage deals in one dock. This is an obvious method of

divide and rule. These people have been creamed off by the PLA and isolated from us.

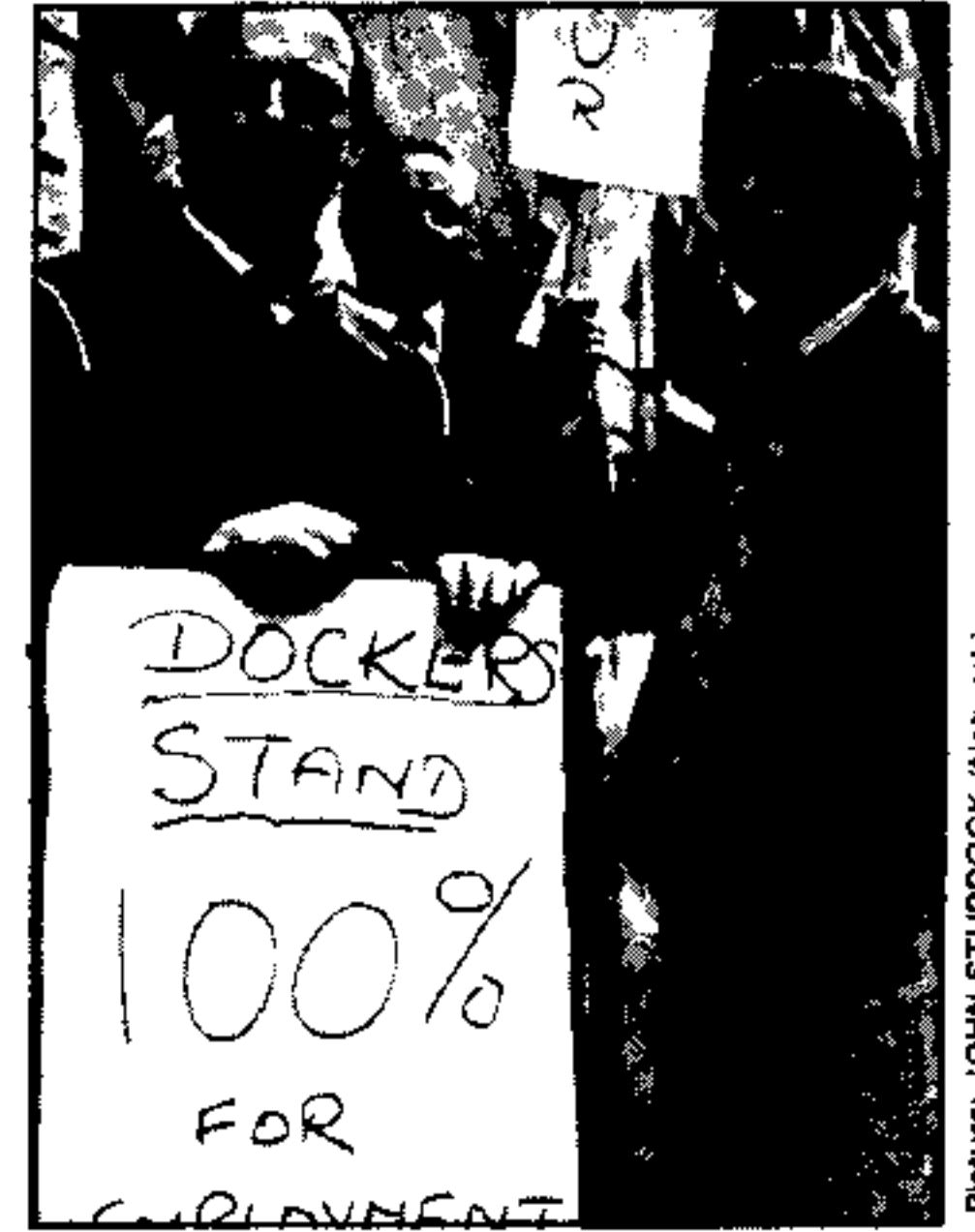
But during our last strike, which was only a couple of months ago, we stopped them as well. I think they've started to realise that their wages aren't enough for the hours they do, which includes three-shift work, night work and weekend work. They've been held to a so-called reasonable wage, and inflation has gone past it, so they've started to get angry.

If they try to alter the scheme by regionalising it even more, which is what they would like to do, or if they try to attack dockworkers through the Tebbit Bill then there will be an indefinite strike.

If we did have that sort of strike, I'm fairly convinced that we would win it. It's more likely that they will attack other trade unionists over the Tebbit laws—small factories and places like that. If they do that then our problem in the docks will be more difficult.

It's no good saying 'Oh yes we can get everybody out'. It's not as easy as all that. We would have to build a campaign inside the NPSSC to support threatened trade unionists.

What's quite encouraging is that the



Picture: JOHN STURROCK (Network)

NPSSC has already agreed that the docks will come out if anyone is put into prison over the Tebbit laws. It will be up to us as dockers to make sure that the NPSSC sticks by what it says, and that the TGWU comes in behind it.

On the day of action against the Tebbit Bill all the major ports in London stopped. We were even joined by the staff section of the TGWU, which is really unusual. Most of the major ports in the country came out, even Felixstowe, which is one of the biggest unregistered ports in the country.

We've also managed to build considerable support for the hospital workers. We had a nurse and an ancillary worker down Tilbury two days last week; they got a really good response from the men and we collected a lot of money for them.

Apart from this there's no strikes on the horizon at the moment, but then again, there's no thunderstorm on the horizon either. Something could blow up in two weeks. We've got to be sure we're ready. □

From small beginnings

The De Lorean factory in West Belfast is under occupation by its work force to protest at its closure. It is the first major fightback against redundancies in the divided working class city of Belfast. **Kieran Allen** of the Socialist Workers Movement looks at the dispute's significance.

It is important to understand the background to the occupation. The Northern Ireland economy is in a state of near collapse. Its leading economist, John Simpson stated recently that his only advice to youth was to emigrate. It is not very hard to see his rationale.

The leading industrial concerns which were the bastion for the Loyalist dominated workforces, have either shrunk dramatically or closed. The newer textile factories that were established in the fifties, such as Courtalds and ICI have not fared much better. The crisis is probably best expressed in the fate of Harland and Wolfe. In 1960 it employed 20,000 workers. Today it employs a mere 5,000 and is again looking increasingly shaky as they have been excluded from the British Shipbuilders Ltd.

The downturn in Britain and the collapse of resistance to redundancies has been more than amplified in Belfast through the dominance of Loyalist ideas amongst Protestant workers. Loyalist ideology stands as a major block on the fight to defend jobs.

Risky project

Loyalist ideas encourage the belief in 'special solutions' for individual workplaces. They cut across the belief in a united working class struggle—even leading to a reluctance to have marches on the cuts or unemployment starting out from the mainly Catholic West Belfast. They prevent the raising of even the simple argument that if the British state can spend £1,500 million on their war in the Falklands, they can also be forced to provide jobs in Northern Ireland.

The occupation in De Lorean, then, draws much of its strength from the fact that it is a mixed workforce. De Lorean was established in West Belfast in 1978. It was an extraordinary project from any point of view. John De Lorean, an ex-executive of General Motors, put up a mere £½ million to establish his pet project of a super sports car with gull-winged doors. The British state provided the other £89½ million. De Lorean had previously touted his project around the various unemployment black spots of the world, notably Puerto Rico and inner city Detroit before settling on Northern Ireland. Why did the then Labour government accept the project?

The latest issue of *The Worker* makes the following point:

'The British government and its then

Northern Ireland overlord were trying to isolate the militants in the anti-unionist community through a combination of the carrot and the stick at the time. The stick came in the form of torture in Castlereagh and the removal of political status. But alongside that there was an attempt to push the RUC to the fore as a more normal police force. They also tried to undercut the base of republican support by doing something about unemployment in West Belfast. If they had jobs, Mason foolishly thought they would be more moderate in their politics. De Lorean was the result and Mason wasn't too interested in the capital base of the firm.'

Although originally designed to mop up Catholic unemployment in West Belfast, the De Lorean workforce broke down half Catholic and half Protestant due to Loyalist pressure and the availability of large numbers of skilled Protestant unemployed in North Antrim.

The factory was therefore a risky project from the start. Even with massive state hand-outs it was severely undercapitalised. Its more well established competitors were spending double and treble its £90 million to develop new models. The result was a total lack of forward planning and a rush to flood the American market with the new model in order to recover funds for further investment. Unfortunately for De Lorean this was going on precisely at the time when the American car market was collapsing.

However capitalist viability or non-viability is not the main concern. Jobs are jobs—particularly in West Belfast where unemployment runs at over 50%. When the announcement of the De Lorean closure came through, 80% of the 1,500 workforce voted for occupation on the recommendation of the shop stewards' committee. It was a fantastic vote particularly since the workforce were being softened up for a return to the dole queue by being put on a one day week for some time previously.

The occupation, though, has many weaknesses. A proper rota system was not organised from the very beginning. As a result only a small proportion of the factory are actively involved in the sit-in. Those that have been involved have hardened their position about going for the saving of the jobs, but many of the other workers who voted for the sit-in still believe that the struggle is to get more compensation. The small number of activists involved in the occupation meant that the factory was not seen as a basis for generalising the struggle throughout the country. There has not been a major push to capitalise on the sympathy that exists for the workers by sending out teams to organise collections and support. Mass meetings during the occupations have been infrequent.

Despite these weaknesses the workers of De Lorean have shown a fantastic example of working class solidarity. When the nurses had their one day stoppage, a contingent of De Lorean workers came down from the sit-

in to join the march. But the possibilities for building on the sit-in, for inspiring a real fight throughout the 32 counties in Ireland are really immense. Unfortunately, support for the nurses apart, those possibilities are not really being grasped.

Why? For many De Lorean workers, the belief that the sit-in can win is not fully there. They know they face the toughest Tory government in years—a government that has defeated far stronger sections. In addition many of the activists involved in the sit-in come from the Catholic community. It has been almost ABC to them that unemployment is something you suffer as long as the Northern state exists. A more extreme view of the same is that the British are engaged in an 'economic withdrawal' from the North and that the De Lorean closure as part of that can be suffered because it may eventually lead to the collapse of the Northern state.

The only thing that can turn the De Lorean struggle about is support from the outside. Already the small presence of socialists in the Southern working class is being used to raise funds and to link De Lorean up with another occupation going on in the South at the Clondalkin Paper Mills. On Tuesday 29th of June a four day unemployment march started out from Waterford en route to Dublin. The march is getting wide trade union support and one of its themes on the way will be to build up support for De Lorean. Similar support from Britain would be more than welcomed.

Anti-unionists

More generally, the De Lorean occupation contains many lessons for Irish socialists. The republican and republican socialist elements have shown their weakness by their inability to build a real campaign around the struggle. For many the struggle against the Northern state is something that takes place on the streets or through the military struggle. The vital point that a successful struggle to defend jobs can only strengthen the confidence of workers to take up the wider political issues has not been seen. It was as if many believe, like Mason, that anti-unionists without jobs are more militant in their politics. The reverse in fact is the case.

Secondly, the De Lorean occupation has shown in a very small way that some examples of working class unity are possible—despite the many obstacles. It is certainly true that there are more anti-unionists involved in the occupation. But a small number of Protestant workers have also become actively involved and made some choice about putting a united defence of their jobs above considerations of regaining work simply as Protestants. That choice isn't yet a worked out political one. Given the absence of a socialist organisation in the factory, it will probably not develop into one. Nevertheless the occupation shows that working class unity—or the small beginnings of it—is not built by pious platitudes.

In the situation of Northern Ireland, the more militant the struggle the more likely the choice is put to Protestant workers of whether they stand for united working class action or the defence of marginal privileges.

Images of oppression

Judith Williams takes a look at the eighteenth century revolutionary poet William Blake

'And was Jerusalem builded here
Among those dark, Satanic mills?'

These are some of the most famous words of any English poet. Today they are associated with patriotism, with school assemblies and Tory conferences. In fact they are words from a poem full of revolutionary fervour, directed against everything that patriotism stands for—oppression and exploitation. William Blake was a revolutionary poet.

He was born in 1757, the son of an artisan—a hosier. He himself was apprenticed to an engraver at the age of 15 and received very little formal education. He worked at 'hack' printing until the 1780s in a London full of radical presses, until his own creative powers started to dominate his life.

He lived through a violent age of revolution and war—the years of the American and French Revolutions, and the Napoleonic wars. In England, these were also the years of increasingly brutal state repression directed at workers, artisans and radicals. Political frame-ups were common, censorship widespread.

It is not often realised that throughout the French wars fewer people were executed in France than were hanged by law in England.

England, though, was more than simply a country almost permanently at war during Blake's lifetime. It was also a country that saw the bloody birth of a different kind of war, the class war of the Industrial Revolution.

Blake was no detached observer. Tradition has it that he was among those at the head of the crowd which burned Newgate prison on 6th June 1780.

He was also alive to the new, radical ideas of the age, ideas about equality and freedom which challenged the old corrupt political system and suggested how men and women might live better, more satisfying lives in a more rational society.

Above all Blake lived throughout most his life in the teeming, tumultuous and unpleasant streets of Soho, the Strand and Lambeth—drawing his inspiration, anger and hope from his own life and the lives of those he lived among.

It was these three factors—the dramatic events, the explosion of radical and revolutionary ideas, and his identification with his own class—which enabled him to write poetry which captured both the profound changes going on around him and the way people felt about them.

No wonder, then, that Blake's poetry is filled with images of oppression, oppressors and their systems of thought. The King and the Priest are the enemy; prison, law and religion are the direct symbols of oppression; obedience and morality are the means by which people accept their own repression.

Take the poem *London* from *Songs of Innocence and Experience*:



I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.
How the chimney-sweep's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new born Infants tear,
And blights with plagues the Marriage
hearse.

Here we have the fear and the oppression created by the metropolis, with its central institutions of oppression, the Church and the Palace, and its all too visible victims, the child worker (the chimney sweep) and the prostitute.

But Blake is saying more than that. He is showing how the oppression is *internalised* and made into an ideology ('mind-forg'd manacles'). He is also showing how the instrument of oppression (the soldier) is himself a *victim*. Lastly, he is showing how marriage and prostitution, far from being opposites, are *dialectically* united in their common origins in sexual oppression.

So what we see is more than just Blake registering the oppression bred by war. We see him understanding how people change and are changed by their circumstances. In *London* he showed how that process ended in degradation.

In his later works, the *Prophetic Books*, he attempted to see the same dialectical process, leading away from degradation, oppression and self-oppression to revolution and self-emancipation.

It's here, however, that a real problem arises. The *Prophetic Books* are confused and difficult to understand, despite passages of brilliant clarity. The confusion is partly technical weakness; but it's partly because of objective problems beyond his control. As the radical culture of the 1790s was broken by the hammer blows of repression, Blake was forced to retreat into a private world. Unable to say directly what he wanted to say,

Are your files complete?



A full file of *Socialist Review* is an invaluable bank of information for any socialist activist. So make sure your file is complete. All back issues are available price 60p each (post included)

Special offers

- 1978/9 nos 1-16: £7 (post included)
- 1980 nos 1-11: £5 (post included)
- 1981 Nos 1-11: £5 (post included)

Place your orders quickly as we only have a few copies of some issues.

Send your orders to Socialist Review, PO Box 82, London E2. (Make cheques payable to Socialist Review)

he invented mythical characters whose meaning was necessarily obscure.

At the same time, he was a prisoner of the tradition of revolt to which he belonged. That tradition, which went back to the radical religious sects of the Puritan Revolution in the 17th century, saw liberation in essentially apocalyptic, end-of-the-world terms, the creation of a new Jerusalem.

But since the real material force that could deliver society from tyranny—the working class—was still in its infancy, the hope offered by this tradition remained a utopian dream.

It yielded Blake some brilliant dialectical insights — 'Without contraries is no progression,' he wrote — but it was never able to offer the solution to degradation that he wanted. He wrote and rewrote the *Prophetic Books*, with ever more complex structures. But they remain, even those he completed, baffling works.

Blake also saw the transition to large-scale alienated labour brought about through the war economy and the increasing application of science and technology.

These were the 'dark Satanic mills'—literally, the war machinery. And Blake's Jerusalem is not the religious hymn that most of us have sung at one time or another, but struggle and liberation:

Let the slave grinding at the mill, run out into the field;
Let him look up into the heavens and laugh in the bright air;
Let the chained soul, shut up in darkness and in sighing,
Whose face has never seen a smile in thirty weary years,
Rise and look out: his chains are loose, his dungeon doors are open;
And let his wife and children return from the oppressor's scourge.
Then all the slaves from every Earth in the wide Universe
Sing a New Song, drowning confusion in its happy notes. □

Revamping British Capitalism

The Tories are destroying the economy and the TUC and the Labour Party must intervene to protect the true interests of British employers. That is the message coming out loud and clear from the TUC's 1982 Economic Review, *Programme For Recovery*, the most miserable rag-bag of right wing reformism to emerge even from Congress House. Nigel Mason takes a look at it.

The TUC's approach is divided into two parts. There is an orthodox reflationary package of measures which, it claims, will create 677,000 new jobs over the next year. There is also a medium term strategy for growth which aims to increase output by nearly 22% over the next five years and create an extra 4 million jobs.

Over the next twelve months the TUC propose that £8.3 billion be injected into the economy, mostly through public sector capital investment, spending on education and manpower training and a cut in the rate of VAT from 15% to 12½%. Using the Treasury's own forecasting model the TUC

What the TUC wants ...

- * Economic growth up 3.7 percent
- * An extra 677,000 jobs created or saved
- * Registered unemployment down 574,000
- * Public sector investment up 16 percent, Private manufacturing investment up 6.9 percent
- * Personal consumption up 4 percent
- * Exports of goods and services up 6.1 percent
- * Imports of goods and services up 16.6 percent
- * Balance of payments surplus £2.2 million lower
- * Exchange rate 3.9 percent lower
- * Public sector borrowing requirements £28 million lower
- * Inflation 1.7 percent higher

claim wonderful results in comparison to current policies (see Box 1).

Not bad for a year's work. But the reality lying behind these figures is much more interesting. There would be an enormous boost to company profits, presumably as the carrot for private investment, and nearly all the extra resources created by the reflation would flow into public spending and private investment. Total private consumption would rise by only 1% and more than this would be absorbed by the extra 677,000 workers and their dependants. Therefore, the only way to prevent the continued fall in the real take-home pay of those already employed is through redistribution away from the upper classes but this doesn't get a look-in.

True, 'Unequal Britain' makes an appearance in the penultimate chapter but apart from arguments about the need for reduced working hours there is little of substance apart from the pious hope that more growth will mean less inequality. This is not an aberration or an oversight because when your brief is the revamping of British capitalism you cannot then attack the power and wealth of those classes who underpin it. Falling real wages for the working class and booming profits and the maintenance of the privileges of the ruling class—that is the unacceptable face of TUC Britain.

The medium term strategy is designed to address a projected job shortage of 4.9 million by 1986. How much output has to grow by in order to achieve this target depends on what happens to productivity and hours of labour and on this subject the *Review* is amazingly confused. However, what appears to be envisaged is that total output will rise by 4% per annum over the five year period, of which 3% comes from greater output per hour and only 1% from an increase in the total number of hours worked in the economy (see Box 2).

In order for this to be compatible with the employment target the hours worked by the average worker are assumed to fall by 2% per annum through a shorter working week, longer holidays and earlier retirement. Therefore, two-thirds of the 3% per annum increase in employment comes from shorter working

Subscribe to

socialist
REVIEW

FREE with every new subscription to Socialist Review on this form a copy of **SOLIDARNOSC: FROM GDANSK TO MILITARY REPRESSION** by Colin Barker and Kara Weber.

Send me the next year's Socialist Review starting with issue no
I enclose £ (Cheques/POs payable to Socialist Review)

Name

Address

Return to Socialist Review, PO Box 82, London E2
Subscription rates for one year (11 issues): Britain and Ireland £7,
Overseas Surface £8, Europe Air £10, Elsewhere Air £13.50 (institutions add £5)

hours and only one-third from an increase in the actual hours of work performed in the economy. The TUC provide no clues as to how the employers are going to be brought to agree to this and given that the strategy as a whole rests on placating private interests it is reasonable to assume that the employment target will be another sacrifice on the altar of private capital.

Even by the very weak criteria of the alternative economic strategy the TUC's programme is hardly progressive. For example, there is no longer any mention of an extension of public ownership or the use of planning agreements—presumably, as Clive Jenkins said recently, these issues of politics will have to wait until later.

It is really little more than a standard Keynesian demand management package. Now Keynesianism, which has been the ideology, if not always the practice, of Government economic policymaking during the post-War period down to 1976, fundamentally asserts that it is possible for the state to stabilise permanently capitalist economies and generate long-term prosperity and high employment by the choice of the appropriate set of economic policies. Therefore, two aspects of Keynesianism are absolutely central: first, the operation and adjustment of the economy is regarded as a *technical* issue not beset by any basic economic, political or social contradictions; and second, given that it focuses on State policymaking it is *nationally* based and oriented.

As regards the technical aspect, Len Murray tells us in his 'Foreward' that the 'people of Britain must not relapse into despair about the possibility of the economic system ever again producing a high level of employment' but nothing is subsequently said about the nature of this 'economic system'. We are told that a 'distinctive feature of our economy' is vast concentrations of power, in the city, multinational companies and the government machine, which have impeded previous attempts at planning. In the future, however, we are assured that the trade union movement will act as a counterbalancing force (despite being currently unable to prevent mass unemployment and falling living standards) and the vast concentrations of power merit no further mention. There are no capitalists and workers in the TUC's world, just flows of investment, consumption and government spending in the channels of an assumed national interest.

What there is instead is foreigners and us. The international economy pays little or no role in the TUC's thinking, there being no consideration of what forces lie behind the current world recession and how this impinges on the prospects for the British economy, and even the issue of possible retaliation against import controls receives only one sentence.

They have completely failed to grasp a crucial tendency of advanced capitalism, namely the increasing contradiction between an economy organised on an international basis and the continued political division of the World into nation states. On the one hand, this leads them to systematically underestimate the role of the world economy in the current British economic situation

and, the other side of the same coin, systematically overestimate the role of Tory policies, offering as 'proof' a pie chart which merely restates their position. On the other, it leads them to propose national economic solutions to problems which are highly internationalised. The enduring irony of this, of course, is that the TUC, amongst others, have been very vocal in dismissing Thatcherism as the economics of the nineteenth century but their quaint concept of a world economy divided into national units is essentially Victorian in structure and relevance.

In fact, the world economy exists for the TUC merely to be declared war on under the guise of the need to 'regulate disorderly or disruptive trade flows'. Japan has apparently replaced the EEC as public enemy number one in the TUC's eyes and they propose taking tough measures against them. One of the justifications they use for doing this is that it will allow discrimination in favour of imports from developing countries.

The only problem is that in the next breath they propose swingeing controls on virtually all the manufactured commodities, such as textiles and electronics, which the Third

... and how it thinks it will get it.

As regards achieving the output target of 4 per cent per annum growth the medium term strategy proposes:

- A £24 billion public investment programme in large-scale projects, such as council house building, railway electrification, telecommunications, road construction and maintenance, sewerage replacement and new power stations.
- The channelling of investment funds into industry through a National Investment Bank, with half its funds coming from the insurance companies and the pension funds and the rest from North Sea oil revenues. A 'revitalised' National Enterprise Board will acquire holdings in a wide range of companies to help ensure that investment plans and product development conform with national priorities.
- The setting up of a Foreign Investment Review Agency along with the reimposition of exchange controls to prevent the massive outflow of funds that has occurred under the Tories.
- An extensive programme of education and manpower training in order to provide for future employment needs.
- An active trade policy combining general and selective import controls to restrict the rise of total imports and protect specific industries.
- The development of a comprehensive planning system in which the trade union movement would be involved at all levels.

World has even the remotest chance of exporting to Britain. They say that it is not their intention to discriminate against the developing countries but that is the inevitable result of their strategy. Presumably they do not also intend to give encouragement and succour to the forces of nationalism and chauvinism within British society but, again, that is the inevitable result of their arguments for protection.

So Keynesianism is alive and kicking at the TUC. And it is the working class who it is preparing to kick. It was already mentioned above what implications the TUC's strategy has for wages and profits initially. Significantly, the *Review* is very quiet about prices and incomes policy but the whole logic of their strategy is to control the latter and allow profits to expand in order to stimulate private investment—to effectively control prices in these circumstances would be contradictory.

Meanwhile, the trade union movement would become much more closely incorporated within the structures of capitalist society.

The TUC leaders hope to sit on committees with the representatives of the big concentrations of power whilst rank and file workers have to accept wage cuts, speed-up, redundancies, changes in working conditions and the overall impact of the rationalisation and restructuring necessary for British capital to compete effectively on the world market. Hard decisions indeed for the TUC leaders.

Politically the TUC's strategy represents a disaster for the working class movement. What it involves is that bosses and workers should ally against the foreign enemy, especially the Japanese, thus preserving and cementing the domestic status quo with the aim of the rehabilitation of British capitalism. What it fails totally to see is that the current world recession and the specific nature of British economic decline is the result of the operation of capitalist competition internationally. The principal characteristic of capitalism is the division between those who own and control the means of production and those who have to work in order to earn a living and this plus the anarchistic nature of competition worldwide means that the system is beset periodically by crises. Capital seeks to resolve these crises by shifting the burden of adjustment onto the working class and looks for allies to help it do this—it has certainly found a willing and trusty one in the TUC.

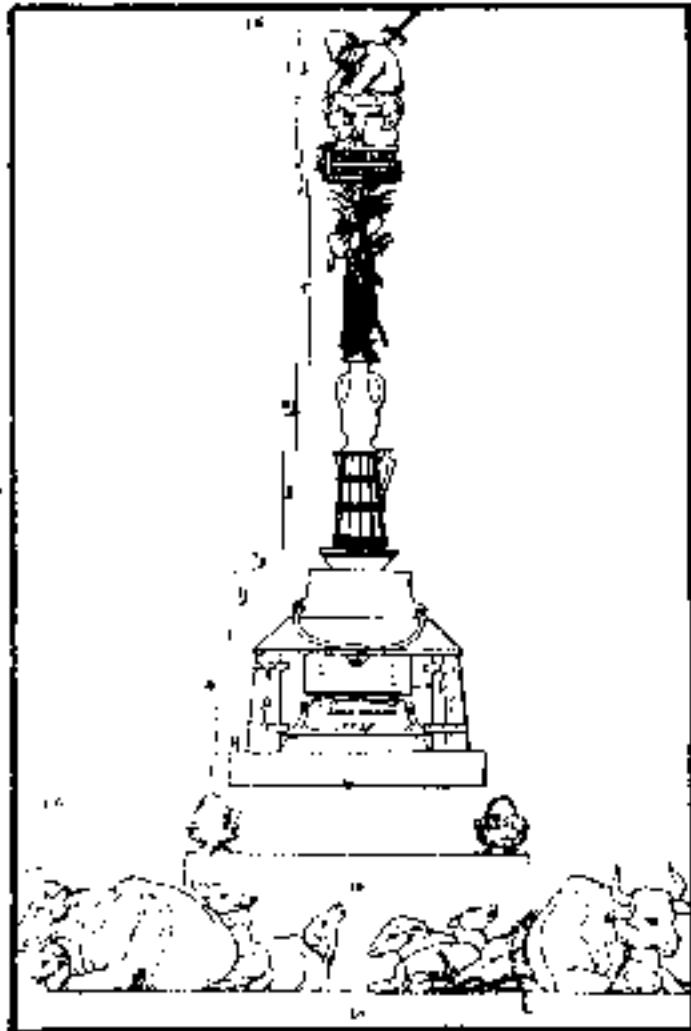
However, Len Murray is 'right' about one thing—we should not *despair* about capitalism's inability to generate high employment but *organise* a movement to fight for a socialist society which can provide a decent living for everyone. Such a movement needs to be built in every workplace in the country because it is only there that ordinary working people have the collective strength to fight the immense concentrations of power that the TUC talks of and ultimately wishes to ally with. Socialists must have nothing to do with such alliances because it is only by fighting and defeating the power of capital and its state that we can create the long-term full employment and prosperity which are the TUC's professed goals. □

Every picture tells a different story

Political Graphics: Art as a weapon
 Robert Philippe
 Phaidon £25

The war in the Falklands was distinguished for its skilful deployment of advanced instruments of high technology destruction. The same high technology did not extend to the reporting of it. For what also distinguished the conflict has been the use of some of the crudest graphics and cartoons this side of the First World War to illustrate and justify the slaughter.

The main images people have of this war are not grim newsreels that we associate with the fighting in the Lebanon, but glorious *Boys Own* type illustrations of brave Brits wading into the cowardly foe and little Union Jacks flying over large scale maps of the Falklands. From the governments point of view it's a very desirable state of affairs. They waged a war that for millions of people actually looked like a game



in which no one was hurt, because no one was seen to be hurt.

I'm sure that many excellent books are going to be written about the media and its role in the Falklands crisis. I'm also sure that many excellent books are going to be written about the history of political graphics generally. Robert Philippe has written a book about political graphics which is very large, very expensive, beautifully illustrated and deadly dull.

Robert Philippe was certainly ambitious in his undertaking. He starts from the political prints produced during the peasants war in 16th century Europe and doggedly proceeds to work his way towards the protest posters that were produced during the Vietnam war.

On his way he certainly covers a lot of ground and occasionally unearthed some really interesting facts. For example the 16th century artist Albrecht Durer prepared a design for a monument in homage to the defeated peasants of the peasants war of 1525. Not surprisingly the monument was never built, doubtless Durer never expected it to be. The book has many such stories in it but they don't go anywhere far

enough to make the text come alive.

Philippe was probably hoping that the scale of his undertaking and the mass of facts and detail he includes would be sufficiently impressive in themselves.

Unfortunately they aren't but what is particularly depressing about the text is the brief, almost dismissive, treatment he gives the graphics produced during the periods of the greatest social and political upheavals of the early twentieth century. Barely ten pages are devoted to the First World War when the propaganda offensive between nations reached a level it hasn't matched till the Falklands crisis now.

No serious attempt is made to analyse the nature and implication of the propaganda used. For example several different army recruitment posters are reproduced. All of the examples are characterized by the fact that though they're produced by different countries, all employ the same graphic device of the index finger pointing directly at the viewer. For Philippe that alone is the interesting fact, yet surely the most interesting thing about the poster is the differences between those who are doing the pointing.

The American poster uses a mythical character as its recruiting agent. Uncle Sam, American patriotism personified, the representative of an anonymous all-powerful state calling directly to the American citizen to join the US army.

The British poster is slightly more human. Lord Kitchener's rather than John Bull's face is used, though John Bull recruitment posters were printed. However the effect is the same as the Uncle Sam poster.

Kitchener like Uncle Sam embodies the idea of the all powerful state (a curious image when you think that the First World War was supposedly fought to oppose militaristic regimes). The message that accompanies the image of both is likewise powerfully simple and direct.

'Your Country needs You'. It doesn't say what for or for how long. It's enough that it should say you are needed. They are posters put out by governments that are



absolutely confident of their power and authority.

It was a confidence that wasn't going to survive the war. The war and its horrors was to bring about profound changes in attitude, both in the rulers and the ruled. This change in attitude is reflected in the German recruitment poster printed

a year after the war started.

Gone is the symbol of the all powerful state, instead the person doing the recruiting is an ordinary soldier. Direct appeals to duty and obedience no longer hold up when those you're being obedient to aren't delivering the victories they promised.

It's hard to have much faith in the responsibility of a leadership that has caused the death of hundreds of thousands of soldiers to no apparent purpose. So the appeal now being exploited is a more subtle mixture of guilt and comradeship.

The Falklands crisis was a brief affair and the Tories didn't have to print recruitment posters. If they had and *The Sun* and *Daily Express* are anything to go by I wouldn't have been too surprised to have seen one identical to the Lord Kitchener one. With Thatcher this time doing the pointing.

The Falklands crisis has shown that crude images of patriotism and self-sacrifice are as potent now as they were some 70 years ago. It's a sobering reminder of the state of the class struggle in Britain today.

Peter Court

The other war

Engineers at War 1939-1945

Richard Croucher
 Merlin Press £4.80

Richard Croucher has written the first serious Marxist analysis of the subject, a book that will remain essential reading for those interested in the question of industrial relations in the Second World War. He shows the class war was not put on ice for the duration. In 1944, a total of 3,714,000 days were lost through industrial disputes, more than at any time for the previous 12 years. This happened despite jingoistic appeals to patriotism.

Strikers were depicted by politicians and the Press as either being pro-Nazi or, at best, the unfortunate dupes of sinister subversive agents. These concocted stories stretched credibility to the limit. Perhaps the most fantastic came from Scottish miners' leader, Abe Moffat. In September 1943, when 20 collieries in Lanarkshire were idle, he blamed anarchists, Trotskyists and the Duke of Bedford for causing the stoppage.

Both Labour and Communist Parties tried to restore industrial peace, creating conditions of class harmony where productivity would rise. This book examines their role fairly, and in detail. Where, in my opinion, Richard Croucher's work becomes less satisfactory is when he comes to consider the impact of repressive legislation.

The State possessed an armoury of 868 regulations, many deliberately couched in vague, ambiguous terms, with which it tried to impose its will. Workers were fined for staying at home to care for sick children, arriving at the factory late because of a transport hold-up, and

for not working with sufficient enthusiasm.

In May 1945, Ernest Bevin, the Minister of Labour, told the House that 18,436 persons had been convicted for absencing themselves from work or being late without reasonable cause; of whom 1,323 were imprisoned. Asked how many employers had been convicted, Bevin replied: 'I would want notice of that question'.

Trade unionists became increasingly resentful of the manner wartime regulations operated, making them weapons employers could use against workers. Far from cowering them into submission, fines and imprisonment often resulted in the downing of tools; production only resumed once the punishments had been waived.

Richard Croucher could, I think, have dwelt a little more on these victories. In a sense, the 1944 Tyneside Apprentices strike fell into this category. Nationwide agitation helped to secure the release of the four imprisoned Trotskyists. The dispute, as well as the ensuing publicity, gave greater credibility to the industrial activities of the ILP, RCP, etc. Moreover, the strikers won what they came out for - no apprentice was ever conscripted into the armed forces.

Attempts to contain the mounting opposition sometimes ran into trouble. For example, when the Amalgamated Engineering Union leaders decided to suspend the Barrow District Committee for backing a strike at Vickers' shipyards, the Huddersfield District Committee en bloc resigned in protest. Wal Hannington, then AEU national organiser, journeyed

to Yorkshire to try and smooth it over.

To his dismay, he discovered the District Committee solidly ILP. Its main spokesmen were the Warwick brothers. They had been expelled from the Communist Party in 1928, charged with Trotskyism, largely through the efforts of hatchet man Hannington, and they were anxious to even old scores.

The industrial unrest needs to be seen in a wider context. In the ten

by-elections between 1939 and 1945, the ILP secured an average of 25 per cent of the total vote, fighting on a definite anti-war ticket. Many socialist ideas were beginning to gain a resonance within the class: controls were imposed more rigorously on labour than on capital; profits of the arms manufacturers – the ‘merchants of death’, as Brockway called them – rose as the soldiers fell; and firms continued to honour trading agreements reached

with their German counterparts.

British fighters in the Battle of Britain had inferior bullet-proof glass to the Messerschmitts because the Germans had the patent rights. Similarly, German tanks had greater speed and mobility because the lightest metal – beryllium – was used in their manufacture but could not be used in British tanks for the same reason.

As facts like these became more widely known, disenchantment in-

creased until a large proportion of the population, although not having clear and definite ideas, nevertheless wanted to see a fundamental change in British society. It is one of the ironies of history that it was because this feeling was so intense and widespread that a Labour Government was elected – and because a Labour Government was elected that the fundamental change did not take place.

Ray Challinor

Nuclear state power

Fuelling the Nuclear Arms Race

Sheila Durie and Rob Edwards

Pluto £2.95

There are now a mass of books on the market concerned with various aspects of the nuclear threat. This one, written by two leading members of SCRAM (Scottish Campaign to Resist the Atomic Menace – whose office was recently fire bombed) is certainly one of the best.

It sets out to cover in a comprehensive way all the complexities, back room dealing and secrecy that mark the vital links between the ‘civil’ nuclear power industry and the development of nuclear weapons. It is detailed, but quite readable and has largely escaped the trap of getting bogged down in statistics and technicalities that might aid academic interest but usually only obscures the essential heart of the argument.

Within fifty days of office Thatcher’s government had committed Britain to a massive escalation in both nuclear arms and nuclear power stations. Whilst it was announcing ever more savage cuts in all sections of public services it was prepared to spend around £7 billion on Trident and £35 billion on the Pressurised Water Reactor programme. The needs of schools, hospitals, the unemployed could not match the powerful combined lobby of the nuclear industry, Electricity Boards, multi-nationals, senior civil servants and the military.

If anyone wants an example of how parliament, as supposed guar-

dian of our ‘democracy’ is in fact merely window dressing to the powers of such interests, then note that in May 1979, after the PWR disaster at Harrisburg, Tony Benn (then Secretary of State for Energy) asked that design work on the British PWR be suspended. He was told that he did not have that power.

Too many people in the anti-nuclear movement seem to believe that it is the technology of weapons and power stations itself that is the enemy. This book recognises that the technology is only the product of a twisted society, ‘capitalist and state-capitalist relations of production are bound to lead to the introduction of machines that depend on the few controlling the many, such machines in turn strengthen existing inequalities’ (p.94).

It recognises the need to build a broad opposition in the community (as with the 170 day occupation of the CEGB site at Luxilian, Cornwall) to escape the middle-class trendy tag.

The book does not, however, make the logical next step in recognising that, as this is a political issue it has to be fought politically – not relying on gentle lobbying of MPs who have sold us out in the past, present (where is that ‘inveterate peace-monger’ Michael Foot now!) and likely future – but in direct industrial action. Despite this criticism on tactical analysis, however, this book is essential reading for anyone interested in the workings of the nuclear state.

Malcolm Atkin

A missing service

Know how to find out your rights

Grainne Morby

Pluto £3.95

There is an industry aimed at helping people to survive contemporary Britain. One of the failures of public libraries to adjust to providing a public information service has led to a plethora of Citizens Advice Bureaux, Rights Centres, community information centres and such like. With people to staff them.

And along with the centres has grown a literature and a body of knowledge. This book is a directory

of the major sources, divided into social security, immigration, sex, women, family, housing, money, consumer rights, health, retirement, police, law, children, employment, campaigning.

It follows the work of the community information project, funded by the British Library, and is intended mainly for people who work in community information. But as the author points out, most of the references will date quickly, as will this one.

What I think is missing is the recognition that most community information work actually involves

Revolutions that are defeated are soon forgotten. Yet of all the upheavals after the First World War, it was the events in Germany that prompted British prime minister Lloyd George to write: ‘The whole existing order, in its political, social and economic aspects, is questioned by the masses from one end of Europe to the other.’ Here was a great revolutionary upheaval, in an advanced industrial society, and in Western Europe. Without an understanding of its defeat, the great barbarisms that swept Europe in the 1930s cannot be understood — for the swastika first entered modern history on the uniforms of the German counter-revolutionary troops of 1918-1923, and because of defeat in Germany, Russia fell into the isolation that gave Stalin his road to power.



THE LOST REVOLUTION

Germany 1918 to 1923 by Chris Harman

Published October 1

336 pages £4.95

Special pre-publication offer

• £3 (plus £1 postage) for orders received before August 31

I enclose £4 (postage included/cheques payable to Socialists Unlimited). Return to: Socialists Unlimited, 265 Seven Sisters Rd, London N4 2DE.

Name

Address

.....

.....

knowing people and organisations rather than books. What would have been really interesting would have been a guide to the work of the important groups, then to their publications rather than the other way round. But in what it covers, it does it well.

The more general point is that the development of community information, uncontrolled, underfinanced, understaffed, really needs to be part of the library service. People need to be trained in how to help themselves, and to find out that information isn't enough. Once you know something you need to be able to organise to bring it about.

John Lindsay

BOOKSHORTS

In our next issue we hope to review three new titles which will be of interest to our readers. *On the Eve of 1917* (Allison and Busby £4.95) is the memoirs of Bolshevik organiser Alexander Shlyapnikov during the First World War. Pluto have published an interesting selection of Chinese dissident writings *Wild Lilies Poisonous Weeds* (£4.95). There is also a new edition of Maxime Rodinson's standard history *Israel and the Arabs* (Penguin £3.50)

The publishing industry seems to be gearing itself up for the anniversary of Marx's death next year. Harvester promise us a four volume *History of Marxism*. The first volume *Marxism in Marx's Day*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm is, at £30, the most expensive book on Marxism we've come across yet.

Unfortunately, it is not the best. Some of the essays—especially David McLellan on the materialist conception of history—are very good. But all are meant for other scholars, rather than for active socialists.

Prisoner without a name, cell without a number (Penguin £1.25) is the auto-biographical account of the imprisonment of the former editor or Argentina's *La Opinion* Jacobo Timerman. It is a very powerful description of torture but won't tell you much about the overall political situation in Argentina today.

Against Biological Determinism and Towards a Liberatory Biology are two interesting collections of essays on the faults and history of biological determinism. Edited by Steven Rose, they are published by Allison and Busby at £4.60 each. Unfortunately they often suffer from an obscure and academic style despite the contributors' declared intentions.

There has been a deluge of books about the nuclear terror in the last two years. Yet another is Mary Kaldor and Dan Smith (eds) *Disarming Europe* (Merlin £3.60). This is a collection of worthy essays giving many facts and figures on the arms race in Europe. However it lacks a clear perspective as to how best they can be opposed.

Seaching in the margins

Herbert Marcuse and the Art of Liberation

Barry Katz
Verso £4.50

This thorough and well-documented book provides a welcome intellectual biography of one of the major Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century.

Barry Katz exhibits an enthusiasm for his subject that is perhaps not critical enough in places. He skates over Marcuse's retreat from the radical politics of revolutionary Berlin, and his service within the US Intelligence Agencies during and after the Second World War.

Marcuse sprang into public prominence in the late 1960s as the philosopher-prophet of the revolutionary student movement. This earned him the wrath of the right; the then-governor Reagan declared him unfit to teach while others went further, threatening his life.

Paradoxically the book which made him famous *One Dimensional Man*, was notoriously pessimistic in its analysis, describing a capitalism

which had integrated and disarmed the force to which generations had looked for radical change the traditional working class.

Anxious to find a force which could bring about socialism he discovered the New Left, the radical movement of the sixties. Their emphasis on sexual liberation fitted in well with Marcuse's attempts to marry Marx and Freud.

In *Eros and Civilisation* he had linked Marx and Freud to found a notion of change based upon the explosive, revolutionary potential of the instincts of human beings.

The real value of the book lies in the detailed account it gives of Marcuse's early development. The themes which were to remain the main focus of his work were first elaborated in a period of defeat.

After the defeat of the German Revolution of 1919 Marcuse broke with all political activity and retreated into university studies. Like many erstwhile Marxists of the period he looked outside of the working class movement for a critique of society; to the aesthetic

realm of the 'artist novels' of Thomas Mann, to the philosophy of Hegel, and Heidegger, and to the critical theory of the Frankfurt School.

Such a perspective was bound to lead to a pessimistic outlook because its relationship to the reality of building forces to win socialism was so tenuous. Marcuse could do little more than cast around the margins of society, among the lumpenproletariat, in an attempt to find potentially revolutionary forces.

We can see how Marcuse came to this view, he had witnessed the defeat of the German working class and the passivity of the post-war American working class. But he over-emphasised the ability of capitalism to satisfy needs.

The re-emergence of economic crisis has proved him wrong on this score. But if we recognise this we can learn much from Marcuse's insights into the way capitalism maintains its ideological rule. Barry Katz's book is a welcome contribution to this task. Steve Perkins

LETTERS

Badly flawed argument

Lindsey German's review of *Sweet Freedom* (*Socialist Review* ;82:5) falls into the smug trap of writing off all women's struggles with the 'economic class politics' analysis which only tells half the story.

Patriarchy is not merely a by-product of capitalism—they both exist semi independently and they both oppress women. Though you are right to point out that Coote and Campbell's 'men are the only enemy' type reformism is leading women up a blind alley, the SWP myth that a socialist revolution will automatically emancipate women is as badly flawed as the authors' own arguments.

Patriarchy imposes a set of roles and values upon women; although overthrowing capitalism will bring the means of production under workers' control, sexual roles will persist unless work is done beforehand to change sexual attitudes and values. Most men (including 'socialists') accept and perform their patriarchal oppressive roles, and even those who give some measure of equality to women in relationships often use a woman's guilt feelings about sexual equality to manipulate or control a relationship.

Perhaps more importantly, most women accept unequal social/sexual relationships. There is a need to raise people's consciousness so that women can fight economic AND sexual oppression, and this can be achieved only by arguing

revolutionary socialist politics as well as revolutionary feminist sexual politics.

Sadly, the (male dominated) SWP shuns the latter. Well, after all, a cover on women's sexual equality wouldn't sell many SWP's or SR's to the lads down at Longbridge — so instead the SWP caters its politics to the predominately male shop floor. Cartoons appear in *Socialist Worker* which portray the man as 'the worker' or 'the breadwinner', and the women as the worker's wife.

The 'Where We Stand' column, which presents SWP ideas, donates a token half sentence to the struggle for women's social equality ... hardly adequate consideration for a form of oppression which systematically discriminates against half our population.

We must work to build a party which promotes sexual liberation as well as economic liberation. Only then will feminists reject bourgeois

reformism and turn to the 'revolutionary party.'

D Rommer
East Birmingham

Analysing Oi

Flynn the skinhead hero of *Oi for England* may well have been the 'rebel without the correct analysis' that S Wells called him. But what of S Wells a case perhaps of a rebel with too much analysis.

So what is Oi? At the end of his article Wells says it's a label devised by the music press for skinhead punk music. Prior to that he has also said that Oi is both 'political and 'apolitical' and that 'Oi has fought so hard to escape any political pigeonhole that it's not left with much option apart from Bushell's 'I'm a patriotic socialist'.

The same could be said for S Wells, he fights so hard to escape saying anything dogmatic he ends up saying virtually nothing at all.

Peter Leeds, Wood Green

THE WORKER
FOR WORKERS POWER AND INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM
Monthly paper of the Socialist Workers Movement. Latest issue includes articles on De Lorean The fight against the anti-abortion referendum Southern Ireland—No longer a neo-colony
Price 20p Contact PO Box 82, London E2

Getting away from it all

Whether you're basking in the sun in Benidorm or shivering in the rain in Margate, the summer holidays mean you have more time than usual. **Pete Goodwin** thinks this provides the opportunity to do some serious reading, and offers some suggestions.

Serious doesn't mean painful. Let's start with four revolutionary classics, each of very manageable length, each of which tells you an enormous amount about our tradition, but each of which is above all a very exciting read.

Teamster Rebellion by **Farrel Dobbs** (£2.75 plus 40p post) is the story of the Minneapolis teamsters strike of 1934 told by one of the Trotskyist militants who organised it. **Lenin's Moscow** by **Alfred Rosmer** (£2.95 plus 50p post) is a personal account of the early Communist International. **Revolution and Counter-revolution in Spain** by **Felix Morrow** (£2.25 plus 50p post) devastatingly untangles the lost revolutionary opportunities of the Spanish Civil War. And **Ten Days That Shook the World** by **John Reed** (£1.95 plus 40p post) more than deserves the new best seller status that *Reds* has given it.



I intentionally describe each of these books as of 'manageable length', but actually summer holidays are a time when you can have a go at a book whose length would daunt you from even starting it at any other time. Here are five real heavyweights, any one of which may surprise you by just how much you manage to get through - very enjoyably!

The History of the Russian Revolution by **Leon Trotsky** (£7.95 plus £1.20 post) is a masterpiece. It not only gives you a blow by blow picture of how a revolution is made but practically every other chapter turns out to be an essay on one or another aspect of marxist theory. **Isaac Deutscher's** biography of Trotsky also makes absorbing reading. It's in three volumes: **The Prophet Armed** (£4.50), **The Prophet Unarmed** (£5.95), **The Prophet Outcast** (£4.50) (70p post on each volume). Each volume can be read on its own.

The same goes for Tony Cliff's four volume biography of Lenin I.

'CLIFF WRITES ON THEORY AND HISTORY IN VERY PRACTICAL TERMS'



Building the Party (1870-1914) (£2.50), **2. All Power to the Soviets (1914-1917)** (£2.50), **3. Revolution Besieged (1917-1920)** (£2.50) **4. The Bolsheviks and World Revolution (1920-1923)** (£4.50) (75p post on each volume). Read separately or together they are an encyclopedia of revolutionary theory, with the added bonus of that Cliff writes on theory and history in very practical terms.

And two heavyweights on Britain. **Yvonne Kapp's Eleanor Marx** (£1.95 for two volumes plus £1.40 post - an amazing bargain!) is a lot more than a biography. It also provides fascinating snapshots of nineteenth century socialist and working class politics. **The Making of the English Working Class** by **Edward Thompson** (£3.95 plus 70p post) must be the most compelling book ever written on a slice of British history.

The opportunity summer holidays give for reading means that there is a strong temptation to use them to mug up on something you have always intended to read about but never seem to have had the chance. Don't resist it.

If you have never read a complete book by Marx or Lenin, why not have a go this summer. Try **Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto** (50p plus 25p post), **Engels Socialism Utopian and Scientific** (50p plus 25p post), **Lenin, State and Revolution** (50p plus 25p post), or **Lenin Left Wing Communism: an infantile disorder** (50p plus 25p post). All are short, all are easy to get into, so don't be intimidated. And one other short classic well worth a summer read is **Rosa Luxemburg, The Mass Strike** (90p plus 25p post).

Or, if you have always felt that you should know everything there is to know about that crucial aspect of SWP theory, state capitalism, then why not take one of these on

holiday with you? **State Capitalism in Russia** by **Tony Cliff** (£1.00 plus 50p post), **Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe**, by **Chris Harman** (£2.50 plus 50p post), **The Mandate of Heaven - Marx and Mao in Modern China** by **Nigel Harris** (£4.25 plus 50p post).

Or you might take the summer opportunity to polish up on a few other subjects. **John Molyneux's Marxism and the Party** (£2.50 plus 40p post) is excellent. **Ralph Milliband's Parliamentary Socialism** (£3.60 plus 60p post) is still a real eye opener on the Labour Party. And if you feel Marxist Economics is an embarrassing gap in your knowledge, why not try **Leo Huberman's Man's Worldly Goods** (£3.85 plus 55p post). Written in the '30s it has one appalling chapter called 'Russia has a plan!' but the rest is magic.

And while on the subject of Marx's economics if you know a bit already then stretch your mind by reading **Chris Harman's** four articles on the crisis in **International Socialism** (nos 9, 11, 13) (all £1.25 each) and 16 (£1.50) (30p post on each issue).

Of course you will feel a lot safer embarking on any of these projects if you also take a good novel or two with you. Here are five blockbusters on which I'd almost offer a money-back - if - not - absolutely - enthralled guarantee.

Germinal by **Emile Zola** (£1.95 plus 40p post) really stuns you with the bitterness of class struggle in nineteenth century France. **The Grapes of Wrath** by **John Steinbeck** (£1.95 plus 40p post) does a similar job for depression America. Another American socialist classic is **The Jungle** by **Upton Sinclair** (£1.50 plus 35p post). **Strumpet City** by **James Plunkett** (£1.95 plus 40p post) is set in the Dublin of Connolly and Larkin. And **Nostromo** by **Joseph Conrad** (£1.25 plus 35p post) may be written by a fairly reactionary author but gives a portrayal of imperialism in Latin America of which any Marxist would be proud.

Good reading. There is no evidence that socialist literature in any way diminishes your suntan.

All books on this page can be obtained from **Bookmarks**, 265 Seven Sisters Rd, London N4 2DF. Maximum postage needed, if ordering several books, is £1.40.

'MAN'S WORLDLY GOODS'



For the widest selection of socialist books—Marxist classics, labour history, feminism, novels, international and much more—visit Britain's top left wing bookshop:

Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Rd., London N4. Tel 01-802 6145. Lists available for Socialists Unlimited (SWP books, pamphlets and badges), Trade Union Bookservice and Bookmarx Club Offers.

At the beginning of July, 1789, it seemed to many educated and enlightened people that a completely peaceful and bloodless revolution had taken place in France.

The representatives of the old feudal 'order of society' – the clergy, nobility and commoners – summoned by the King in May, had peacefully transformed themselves into a National Constituent Assembly. They had declared the sovereignty of this Assembly and announced their determination to proceed with enlightened reform of the laws and institutions of France.

An English observer wrote home in June that 'the crisis now seems to be over, and the revolution complete'. He was wrong: the real revolution had not even begun. It began on 14 July with the storming of the Bastille by the people of Paris.

A peaceful revolution carried out by enlightened representatives passing resolutions in the dignified surroundings of Versailles was not possible. The financial bankruptcy of the Crown, which had led to the summoning of the three 'orders', was only a reflection of the total bankruptcy of the state and the old feudal society. The problem could not be resolved without the destruction of that state and society, and the forcible removal of the old, noble ruling class.

In town and countryside in the summer of 1789, people were starving and out of work. The state was incapable of dealing with the economic crisis, which was caused not only by the recent bad harvests and trading depression, but by long-term inflation, the impoverishment of a peasantry still burdened with paying feudal dues to their landlords, and the increasing exploitation of poor craftsmen and wage labourers by wealthy capitalists.

Already in the Spring there had been food riots, as the price of bread soared.

In the countryside, bands of wandering destitute people were already roaming around, terrorising the peasants as much as the landlords. Rumours began to spread of an aristocratic plot to destroy peasants crops and small property using hired brigands.

While the poor cried for bread and justice,

JULY 1789

the property owners howled for protection. In the long run, both could not be satisfied. But for the time being, it was absolutely clear that the monarchy could satisfy neither.

At Versailles, the King and his nobles were playing for time. The royal troops, mostly foreign mercenaries, were being brought up to surround Paris. On 11 July, the King felt strong enough to dismiss the popular minister Necker, a Swiss banker, imposed on him by the National Assembly.

The city of Paris promptly erupted. On the afternoon of 12 July, demonstrators clashed with the royal cavalry in the Tuileries Gardens. On the night of 12–13 July, crowds burned down the hated customs posts around Paris which kept the price of grain and other necessities artificially high. That same night, Parisian monasteries were ransacked for food and arms, and the raiding of gun shops and swordsmiths began.

Fearful of the excuse this might give the king to bring in his troops, the bourgeois committee of Electors of Paris formed themselves into a permanent municipal government next day, and resolved to arm the more respectable citizens as a 'bourgeois militia' to keep order in the city as well as defend it from attack. The unemployed, the homeless and most wage earners were to be excluded and disarmed. But crowds besieged the Town Hall where the Committee was meeting, demanding arms and gunpowder. On the morning of 14 July, a spectacular raid was made on the Hotel des Invalides, a barracks across the Seine. Over thirty thousand muskets were removed, along with five cannon, which later in the day were set up outside the Bastille.

The Bastille was a formidable fortress, a prison and a powerful symbol of royal

tyranny. Though there were only seven prisoners in it at the time, anyone could still be sent there by the dreaded *lettre de cachet*, a secret and unchallengeable royal warrant.

The crowds on the morning of 14 July, however, wanted the gunpowder that was stored in the Bastille. While messengers from the Committee of Electors were negotiating inside, the governor, De Launay, fired on the people who had let down the drawbridge and filled the inner courtyard.

Many of the crowd were already armed, and they were reinforced by a spontaneous mobilisation of the militia and by mutineers from the French Guards, the native section of the elite royal troops. Within hours, the Bastille had fallen and De Launay (together with the official who had refused to distribute arms from the town hall the day before) was put to death.

The fall of the Bastille was the beginning of the destruction of the royal, absolutist state, the necessary step without which the enlightened resolutions of the Assembly at Versailles were meaningless. It was the beginning of the transfer of power from one class to another.

After 14 July, things began to move very quickly indeed. Towns all over France followed the example of Paris and committees of the local bourgeoisie seized control from the royal officials.

In the countryside, the 'Great Fear' of an alliance between nobles and brigands spread like wildfire, and since the brigands did not materialise the peasants attacked the nobles, destroying the records of hated feudal dues and burning down splendid chateaux when they met resistance. Since many landlords were not nobles but bourgeois, the towns organised their own 'defence' against the peasants.

On 4 August in the Constituent Assembly, feudalism was declared abolished, though in such a way as to preserve other property rights unscathed. By the end of the year, the official power of the Church had been destroyed and church lands declared national property.

Power had passed into the hands of a new class, the bourgeoisie.

The poor and propertyless had fought – had sacrificed their lives outside the Bastille and elsewhere – for bread and justice. What they had got was the replacement of the rule of the King and nobles by the rule of the property owners: the bourgeois merchants, manufacturers and landlords.

Throughout the revolution, the poor and propertyless went on starving and sacrificing their lives to defend the new state. For the bourgeoisie often faltered, stumbling through constitutional monarchy in 1790–91 and a hesitant Republic in 1792–3 before power passed to their most radical and determined section, the Jacobins.

At every stage, it was the working people of Paris who, as in July 1789, provided the vanguard, stormed palaces and assemblies, fought reactions and saved the revolution.

The fall of the Bastille has remained a symbol of many things – of the armed revolutionary people, of the destruction of tyranny, and of the growing French nationalism that defended its results. It is also, however, a symbol of the rich riding to power on the backs of the working people. For that was the outcome of July, 1789.

Norah Carlin

