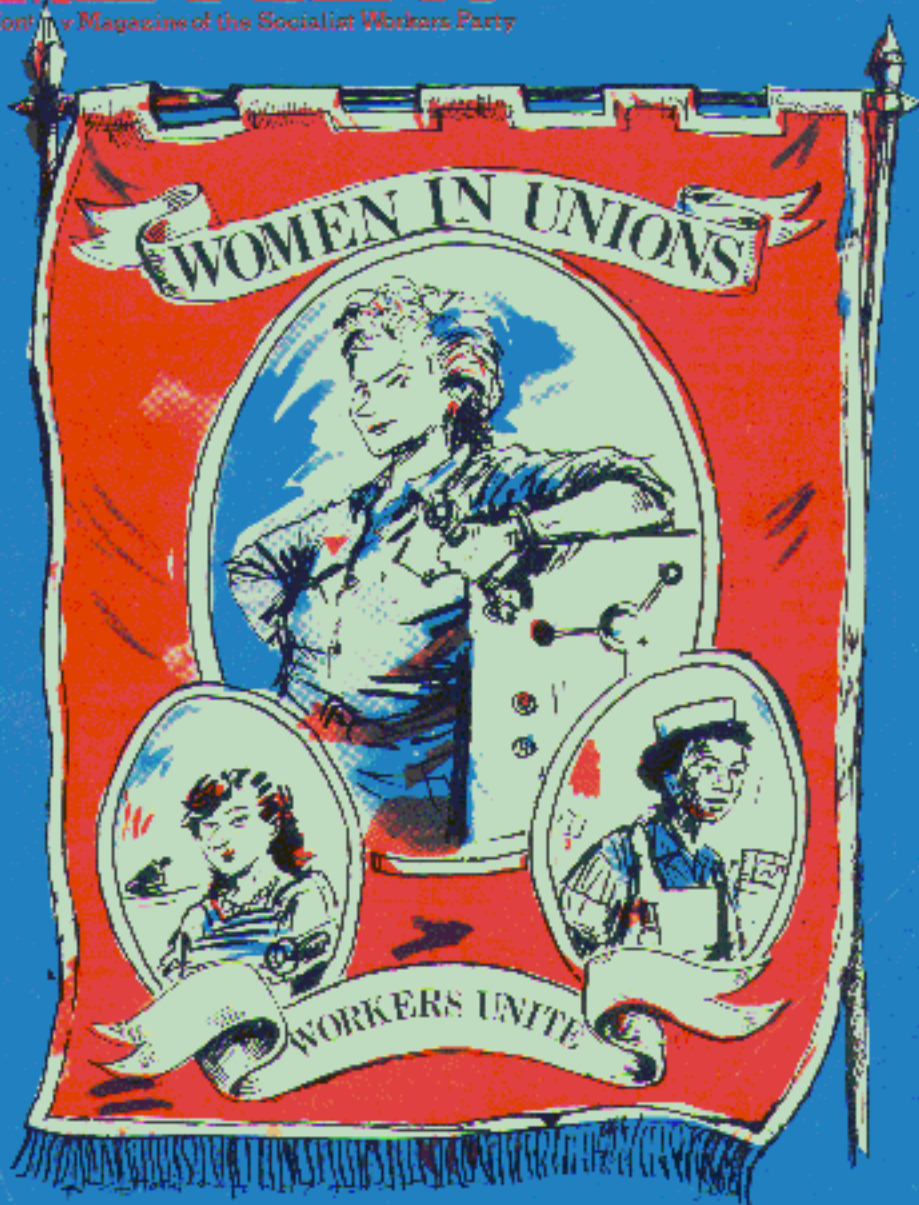


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REVIEW

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INSIDE: Hallas on Hobsbawm, Elections in Spain, Resistance in Iran

What's behind the 3.5%?

Faced with falling inflation, the Tories' pay strategy is having only limited effect. **Stuart Ash** looks at how they are likely to deal with this problem over the winter.

When the Cabinet announced the new 3.5 per cent cash limit for the next round of public sector pay increases they were trying to make their two year offer to the health workers appear more palatable. Having offered second stage increases of 4 or 5 per cent in January 1983 to the health unions they were then saying, 'look, you'll get more than other public service workers'. Norman Tebbit also added that this was the upper limit for public sector workers because workers in the private sector were accepting pay freezes and very small percentage increases. So council workers, civil servants and teachers should not look for more than 3 to 4 per cent for their next increase, says the Government, because any more would make you better off than workers in the private sector.

The truth is that the picture presented by

the government is well out of line with reality. Pay settlements and offers in private sector manufacturing companies this autumn are continuing to average around seven per cent, much as they have done over the whole of 1982. There are very few settlements below five per cent and plenty of deals at 6.7, and 8 per cent. Vauxhall's eight per cent offer has had a lot of publicity and put pressure on Ford. Tate and Lyle has offered 7.5 per cent and Shell oil has opened talks at five per cent.

The fact that the police got 10.3 per cent from September and the miners have been offered 8.2 per cent from November has added to the grievance of the NHS ancillary workers, who've only been offered six per cent, and last had a rise in December 1980.

Wages offensive

Until recently, the Tories were not too unhappy that pay settlements were averaging around seven per cent while inflation was running between ten and twelve per cent. They expected that when inflation dropped into single figures then pay expectations and settlements would drop in a corresponding way towards four and five

per cent. What is new in the current period is that for the first time in two years or so, pay deals are matching the rate of inflation - which was 7.3 per cent in September. And if the rate of inflation falls to six per cent by the end of the year we shall be seeing pay increases above the rate of inflation. Both the Coal Board and Vauxhall are offering more than the rate of inflation, which by November, could be 6.5 per cent.

There will be strong pressures in the private sector among individual employers to continue paying increases around six and seven per cent well into 1983 even with the rate of inflation reaching a temporary floor of around five per cent in the early spring, after which it will rise again. Companies with much reduced workforces can increase pay without the total pay bill rising much and can get more productivity concessions in return. But if too many headline making pay agreements go above the 7 per cent mark then it can fuel higher expectations and become the kind of problem - during limited economic recovery - that the CBI and government fear.

The government's own contribution to keeping expectations low is to announce the 3.5 per cent cash limit. But the government has still to settle the health dispute and any further movement on the percentage on offer will inevitably undermine its hard-faced stance to the other public services.

Moving towards 1983, the Tories face four key issues on pay bargaining.

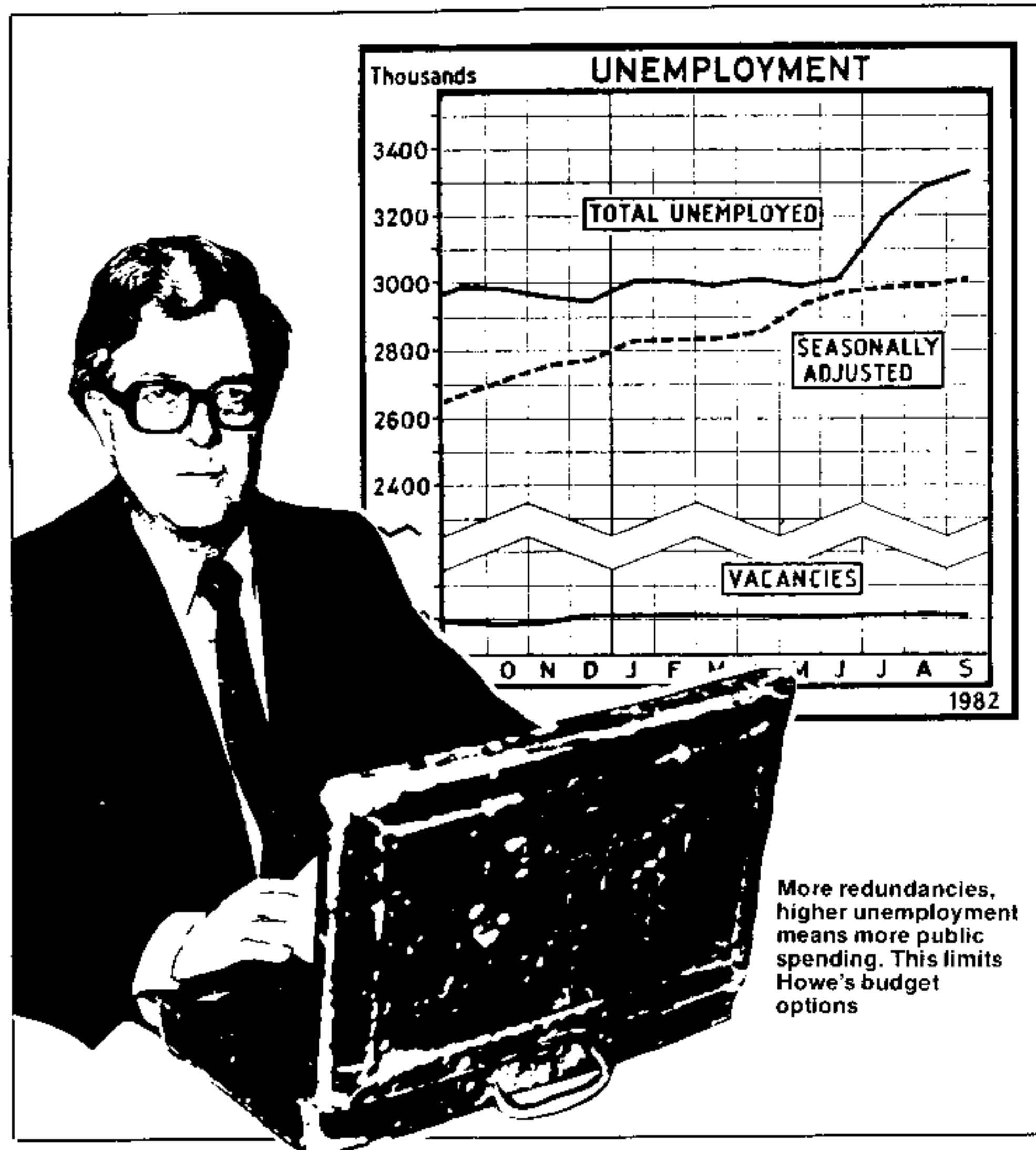
- Productivity in manufacturing companies has risen, but not yet enough for the competitiveness that the CBI wants.

- A new round of redundancies from the private sector is pushing up the unemployment total, and this means even more public spending. This means more cuts and also limits what Geoffrey Howe can do in the next Budget.

- If basic pay settlements rise faster than the rate of inflation we shall see the average earnings figures sticking at around nine or ten per cent. This will mean that labour costs are rising much faster than the CBI wants, just when the economy is supposed to be turning.

- Increases in UK wages would be rising much faster than in other parts of the EEC, where pay freezes are on the agenda, particularly in France and Germany. Thatcher wouldn't contemplate a freeze, but then she thought that pay settlements would all fall below the rate of inflation.

All these pressures tend to suggest that the government will build up a huge offensive on the public services through the winter and into next year. The Tory argument that health service pay increases must be funded substantially by the Area Health Authorities means inevitable cuts. Local authorities will go for more sackings and privatisation on a wider scale. And even if private sector pay deals match inflation, the government will go to extraordinary lengths to force the very low settlements in the civil service and the local authorities.





Armalite and ballot

The election results for the Northern Ireland Assembly are a blow to the Tories. But **Kieran Allen** of our sister organisation, the Socialist Workers' Movement, in Ireland, argues that they have much deeper implications.

'Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad' might well be written as the epitaph of Jim Prior's political career. As the election results came in showing that over 30 percent of the anti-unionist population of Northern Ireland were backing Sinn Fein, Prior's dream of an Assembly of moderates fell to pieces. But there is more at stake than the puny career of a British Tory politician.

Northern Ireland is an economic wasteland. One of its leading economists, John Simpson, has advocated mass emigration for those seeking work. Roy

Mason has described areas like West Belfast as 'a piece of the Third World in mainland Britain'. Its distinctive industrial base is collapsing. The man-made fibre industry that expanded in the sixties has shrunk. The traditional engineering industries are set for a long term decline. The world recession has been amplified in a dramatic way as the Thatcherist axe has swathed through a weak and already declining artificial economy.

It was Prior's belief that the spectre of mass unemployment could lay the basis for political moderation just as it had helped

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dampen trade union militancy in Britain itself. The message that has been hammered home by the Northern Ireland Office and their local mouthpieces in the Alliance party was that 'the troubles are putting off investors — political stability is a pre-condition for the economic upturn'. Political stability means the moderate Catholic party the SDLP taking, and being given, the opportunity to integrate itself into the running of the Northern state.

There was an urgent additional reason for seeking a 'solution'. The movement around the H Block prisoners last year was massive and militant. It drove thousands of anti-unionists into a new-found active opposition to the Northern state. It was essential for the British ruling class to defeat the H Block movement but it was also clear that they had also to move nearer a political solution.

Prior recognised correctly the weakness of the direct rule strategy that had been pursued since the fall of Stormont in 1972. By removing any forum in which bourgeois politics could breathe, it was undercutting the base of such parties as the SDLP. In the long run it meant that no effective buffer would exist between the British war machine and the IRA. At particular high points of the struggles, such as on H Block, it was already clear that the SDLP was losing its moderating influence.

But it was a measure of the British ruling class's total inability to impose any solution to the Northern crisis, that Prior's Assembly was so at variance with reality. When confronted with any problems before the election, Prior parroted the absurd message that 'once the parties get around the table there

will be movement'. The truth is that the bitterness engendered by the H Block hunger strike amongst anti-unionists and the increasing desperate economic conditions were pulling in the direction of support for the armed struggle on one hand and a renewed drive to get back Stormont on the other.

The prospect of an assembly wetted the appetite of many loyalist workers for a returned Stormont. The divisions in the ranks of the Loyalist parties to date prevented the realisation of any coherent strategy for its return. But the assembly was handing down a focus that could help unite all strands of loyalism. The scenario is easy to imagine: the refusal of Prior to implement a particularly obnoxious security measure that the majority in the assembly had agreed to could provide the necessary issue for re-mobilisation on the streets.

Loyalists move right

It is not difficult to see why Loyalist workers are moving more steadily to the right politically. True, there have been demonstrations against unemployment and militant support for the nurses. But there has also been no socialist organisation there that could capitalise on those struggles and point to different political answers that could expose the contradictions of loyalism for even a minority of Protestant workers. And the depth of a recession where there are 25 percent unemployed means that political answers are desperately required.

Instead Protestant workers have been offered the Paisleyite explanations. It runs

very simply: the economic decline of Northern Ireland is part of a conscious and planned British economic withdrawal that is the first step towards them getting out fully and handing us over to a united Ireland. A very simple and effective message for adapting loyalist ideas to the realities of mass unemployment. And Paisley has carried through the message by stomping around the North wherever Protestant workers find themselves faced with redundancies.

The answers are equally simple: get back Stormont, tie the Brits down and use discrimination as a lever against Protestant unemployment. Throughout the Assembly election Paisley was both the most vociferous in support of the Assembly and ran his campaign under the slogan of 'Back to the Stormont way'. For their part the Official Unionists poured more scorn on the idea of the Assembly as a stepping stone to Stormont but argued for integration with Britain with full powers restored to local government where the mechanisms for discrimination exist. But both of them advocate a return to discrimination as the shelter against unemployment for Protestants. In the absence of socialist ideas it will continue to have a powerful appeal.

The 'Stormont Way' is already in practice in miniature in the local governments — even though their powers have diminished since the Stormont days. Twenty three of the twenty six district councils are under loyalist control. In Armagh where 45 percent of the population is Catholic, 80 percent of the council employees are Protestants. In Cookstown Protestants were 70 percent successful in job applications while Catholics had only a 30 percent success rate. (*Irish Times*, 11/10/82). Loyalist councillors are still known to offer such gems of excuses as: 'Just because he (the Catholic) is more qualified, doesn't mean that he can fix a bicycle puncture.'

The most worrying feature for the British ruling class is the extent of open support for Sinn Fein. 30 percent of the total anti-unionist vote went to them. Yet that is only part of the picture. Sinn Fein did not contest all the constituencies — the SDLP did. Of the seven constituencies where the SDLP and the Provos faced each other the Provos were either neck and neck with the SDLP or ahead of them. Only in Derry, where the SDLP control the Council, in South Armagh and South Down did the SDLP clearly project themselves as *the* majority party of anti-unionists. The votes for Sinn Fein came predominantly from the working class and youth.

What does the vote for Sinn Fein mean? It is simply an open expression of support for the armed struggle. There was no ambiguity on the issue. The SDLP campaigned both against Prior's Assembly and the violence of the republicans. The Provos campaigned openly in support of the armed struggle. For one third of anti-unionists constitutional nationalism has reached a dead end.

That vote is a clear signal of the whittling down of the influence of the SDLP. But the cracks in the SDLP go deeper. They entered the election split between those who favoured a boycott and those for participating in the Assembly. The problem for the

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Five IRA victories in the Ulster poll put Minister's future in jeopardy

PRIOR'S BLOODY SHAMBLES



Prior: "We must persevere"



Owen Carron: "British out"



Martin McGuinness: Boycott



Gerry Adams: "First chosen"

Sinn Féin
snatch
three
Ulster
seats

IRA



Gerry Adams

POLL



Owen Carron

SHOCK

Press responses to election result show they believe their own lies.

SLDP is that they cannot offer a clear strategy for reform. The depth of loyalist reaction and the rejection of the Northern state from thousands of anti-unionists cuts the ground of compromise from under them.

However, there is a problem. The decline of the SDLP takes place after the mobilisation on the streets after the H Block hunger strike was defeated. The aftermath of the hunger strike led to tremendous passivity amongst the mass of anti-unionists. For many the impasse can now be broken by simply passive support the Provos. Now not only can you give silent support to the armed struggle but you can also openly vote for them. The Provos and particularly their 'left' current in Belfast encourage such belief. For the last year the slogan which has guided their actions has been 'the Armalite in one hand and the ballot paper in the other'.

War of attrition

Implied in the message is that the Republican movement can substitute for mass action simply by a new flexibility of tactics. It is that we will drive out the British army as long as you support us politically and militarily. Despite the new slogans of the 'Democratic Socialist Ireland' there is not the slightest notion in republican politics that what is required is the mobilisation of the working class.

Unfortunately, the road of relying on the Republican movement is long and hard. Increasingly the IRA talk of a 20 year war of attrition until some British government pulls the plug. Although as the renowned British intelligence admitted, the British army

cannot crush the Provos it is true, and admitted, the Provos cannot decisively defeat the British army. The impasse will continue as long as the results of the Assembly elections are looked on as nothing more than a 'mandate' for stepping up the armed struggle.

The Assembly results can be taken differently. They show the willingness of anti-unionists to fight to break with constitutional nationalists and go to the 'extreme' of supporting an armed campaign. These results can give confidence to those who are arguing for the rebuilding of the mass campaign on the streets and the factories. Because if the threat of Stormont is to be removed and indeed the British presence that underpins such a threat, it won't be done by five Sinn Féin Assembly reps and their armed wing, the IRA. It will be done by a movement of workers throughout the Island who show the British ruling class that they have more to lose rather than win by staying.

The Assembly results pose a problem for the ruling class on both sides of the border. The decline of the SDLP is particularly worrying for the Southern government. For the last decade they have pointed to the SDLP as the voice of Northern nationalists and used their opposition to 'violence' as an excuse for co-operation with the British army and the RUC. Quite clearly any advances for a movement that has the working class character and militancy of the anti-unionist movement is a threat to its stability.

The British ruling class, the direct custodian of the North, has therefore one of two choices. They can either view the decline

of the SDLP as ruling out compromise with anti-unionists and in such a situation turn towards military repression and backing for a returned Stormont. Such a course is fraught with difficulties given the continued willingness of anti-unionists to fight and the likely support they might get from the South in that situation.

The Southern State

Or they can recognise the Southern regime as having a more active role to play in sharing their custodianship of the North. Despite recent minor differences they share the same interests in smashing the militants. The involvement of the Southern government could also help revive the SDLP. Prior may offer the SDLP an Anglo-Irish Council for which he will be relying on the co-operation of the South. But how he will handle the Assembly, whose only participants at the moment are Protestant, will indicate which direction the British ruling class will turn.

It is most likely that Prior will turn towards the Southern regime. If the gains of the anti-imperialist movement are not to be rolled back it is therefore essential that it has an understanding of that regime's class character — which was absent during the hunger strike. For the continuation of the Northern state and its battery of repression and discrimination is tied to its supposed nationalist opponents who run the Southern state. Whether or not the ruling class on both sides of the border can restructure their institutions to cope with the new realities, depends very much on the activities of Southern workers. □

The change in Spain?

The Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) has won the election in Spain. But just as Mitterand has failed to bring socialism to France, Doug Andrews argues the PSOE will not bring socialism to Spain.

The election of Spain's first left wing government since 1936 on 28 October, following similar victories in Greece and France, will undoubtedly lead to expectations of some fundamental change in Spanish society. Unfortunately, capitalists, in Spain or elsewhere, have little to fear from the PSOE. And those who support similar parties elsewhere in Europe have nothing to get excited about.

In case anyone did have any illusions, leading PSOE member Joaquin Almunia pointed out that given 'current conditions any real change will take at least 25 years'. The party's economic expert Carlos Solchaga assured voters that the PSOE hadn't 'renounced its medium term aims' but 'given the very severe economic crisis the very future of the country was at stake', this means 'a change in strategy'. 'To be honest,' he continued 'this could make the final socialist message very similar to that of the right.'

From the elections of June 1977, the first for forty years, the PSOE has supported several social contracts and 'employment agreements'. All detrimental to working class interests. Since the first social contract, the Pact of Moncloa, was signed by all the major parties in October 1977 the cost of living has risen by 155.2 per cent while real wages by only 87.8 percent. Unemployment has doubled to 2,100,000, around 17 percent of the active population. Throughout this whole period the socialist trade union federation, the UGT, has opposed any serious resistance by workers and has counselled moderation and collaboration instead.

Despite this record there has been a mini panic in ruling class circles, an estimated

60,000 million pesetas (approximately \$600m) has left the country since September. This has only given further impetus for the PSOE to insist on its intentions not to do anything that might harm Spanish capitalism. The main aim of the socialists, according to Joaquin Almunia, will be 'to create conditions so that employers can invest, that means lowering interest rates' and engendering the belief that 'there are medium term gains to be gained from higher investment in the next few years.' To encourage this the employer's contribution to the state's Social Security scheme will be cut by 20 percent and paid by the government instead.

As party leader and new prime minister, Felipe Gonzalez, put it 'we need to win employer's confidence'. There is not even the slightest mention of nationalisations, agrarian reform or strengthening the public sector. All of which one would expect even the most timid of social democrats to at least *talk* about.

If in economic matters the PSOE have no scruples about expounding their profoundly unsocialist programme, when it comes to the thorny problem of the state machine things are worse. The continued dominance of both the army and police by Francoists—clearly illustrated by the revelation of the latest coup plot—remains the central stumbling block to any serious reforms. But what is the PSOE's response to this problem?

A bigger army

In their electoral programme there was no mention of purging the Armed Forces. Instead 'the whole national defence programme has to have as its point of reference article 8 of the constitution.' This article refers to maintaining 'national integrity' and was actually quoted by some of last year's military plotters to justify their coup attempt because of the limited moves towards regional autonomy!

Gonzalez himself after the latest and much more serious plot has insisted on blaming civilian politicians for encouraging

'golpismo' (pro-coup feeling) in the army. The army itself is basically loyal to the constitution in his view.

What is more, during the last eight years there has been the most massive rearmament ever of the Spanish army. This expenditure, around 790 million pesetas (\$7,900,000) a day, has been continually supported by the PSOE in parliament. The socialists, only proposals for change are for a more 'professional' army to guarantee 'national defence'. No doubt this is a reference to Spain's two tiny colonial possessions in Morocco, Melilla and Ceuta which the PSOE promise to defend 'with arms if necessary'. A far cry from their position in the mid-seventies when in the obscurity of illegality they described these enclaves as colonies on Moroccan soil.

The main enemy, as everyone knows, to Spain's fragile democracy is, of course, 'terrorism', in the form of the Basque separatist guerillas of ETA. Throughout the election campaign Gonzalez equated 'golpismo' with terrorism as equally repugnant. The comparison between the activities of ETA, directed solely against a repressive state, and those of fascist army officers who aim to destroy every vestige of democratic rights needs little comment. In practical terms this has meant the PSOE has supported a series of highly repressive measures designed to 'eliminate terrorism'. The irony is that such measures have only strengthened the very state that would obstruct even the most mild reforms that the PSOE might wish to implement.

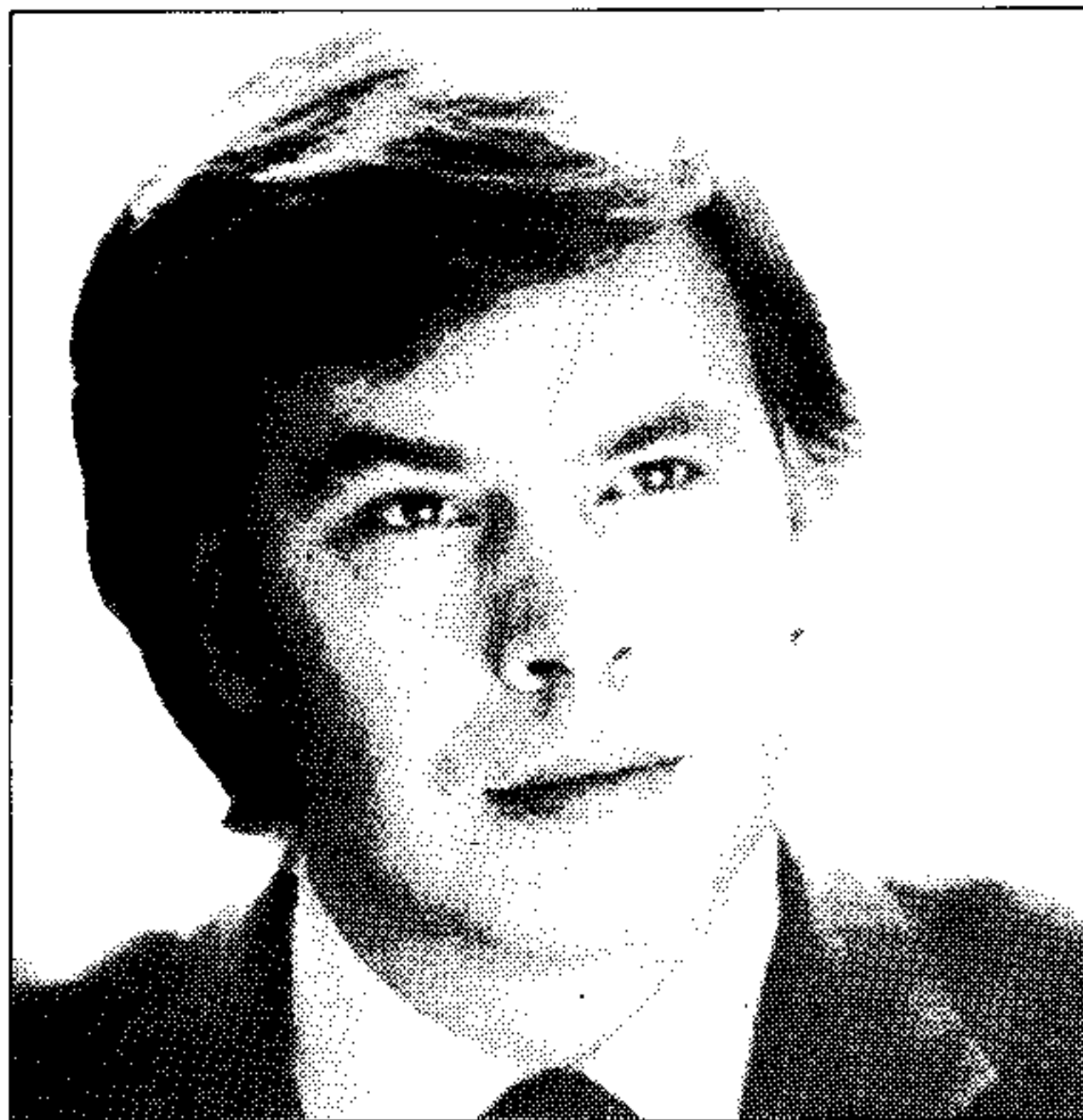
The PSOE supported for example the notorious Anti-Terrorist Law which allows for suspects to be held for ten days incomunicado without being charged. Ten days in the hands of a police force and civil guard well known (as proved by Amnesty's report in 1980) to torture and beat those unlucky enough to be under their 'care'. Not surprisingly such treatment has led to several deaths. Side by side with this has been increasing restriction on free speech and a whole series of court cases against radical journalists and publications. A recent minor example being the trial and conviction to a year's imprisonment (the prosecution wanted six years) of three leaders of the Basque section of the revolutionary organisation Movimiento Comunista (MC) for a fairly innocuous article against the monarchy.

Rather than the employers or the army it will be the revolutionary movement in the Basque Country that have most to fear from the new government.

The most controversial point (if not the only one) of the PSOE's programme is their promise to hold a referendum over Spain's entrance into NATO. Such a referendum would be expected to go against entry. Again the party's record doesn't encourage confidence. Gonzalez has repeatedly said the PSOE wouldn't take the anti-NATO



The PSOE does not like strikes.



FELIPE GONZALEZ

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Por el cambio

campaign onto the streets. He was certainly true to his word during the height of the campaign last year when the party made no serious attempt to mobilise its supporters. As Luis Yanez stated when he resigned as the party's foreign affairs spokesman a year ago, 'I'm sure that if the PSOE had opposed it in a vigorous way we wouldn't be entering NATO ... the government have no need to worry about our campaign against the alliance.'

Moreover the socialists support the continued presence on Spanish soil of US bases. Already the PSOE is talking about NATO membership as a 'secondary question' which is how the Greek socialists have avoided fulfilling their promise to pull out.

As Gonzalez put it on 3 October 'I am not anti-NATO as such but Spain will gain nothing from joining. In my opinion they have negotiated without taking into account Spain's interests, ... without any serious forethought.' More explicitly Socialist senator and international expert Fernando Moran recently said that 'parties that get into power must assume the international obligations of previous governments to avoid instability.'

Spanish society discriminates against women probably more than any other in Western Europe. This was well illustrated by a throwaway remark by former UCD Interior Minister Juan Jose Roson who speculated in a recent interview that rape must be a 'fascinating experience' (sic). However, the PSOE has little or nothing to say about women's rights. In particular they have never considered promoting a change in the stringent anti-abortion laws during the last five years. In their electoral programme, ever conscious of the power of the Catholic Church, they spoke only vaguely about 'the terminating of pregnancies in those cases where the life of the mother is in danger.' Under such conditions the eleven women tried in Bilbao last year for having abortions would be in prison.

As it happens these women received such

extensive support during their trial that they were acquitted. But no thanks to the PSOE who didn't lift a finger to help them. In fact when feminists occupied the Madrid Town Hall in solidarity they were beaten up and thrown out by municipal police on the express orders of a PSOE councillor from Barrio Nuevo. No doubt bearing this in mind he was promoted to deputy mayor.

On the question of regional and national autonomy the PSOE supported the UCD's government's legislation aimed to cut short the already limited autonomy process so as not to undermine 'national unity'. The socialists have also supported the continuation of the Catholic Church's power.

On education the likely education minister Jose Maria Maravall stated during the campaign that 'the PSOE is not thinking of attacking private education (very extensive because of the weakness of state education) and this, I repeat, is necessary to make very clear in the specific case of the Spanish Religious Education Federation'.

Collapse of right

Like their French counterparts, the PSOE and the CP are in favour of nuclear power and supported the National Energy Plan of July 1979 which laid the basis for a further expansion of nuclear power stations. However the Spanish people will be relieved to know that if the PSOE remain in government nuclear capacity will not exceed seven and a half million kilowatts in 1990!

If the PSOE are so appalling why do they enjoy such extensive support? (Though it must be added that the enthusiasm for the PSOE is not comparable with that which greeted the Greek and French socialist victories). The main reason for the socialists' victory and, to a certain extent, their support is the collapse of the right. The Centre Democratic Union (UCD) who have governed for the last five years have disintegrated into feuding factions. Its inability to cope with

increasing economic and social pressures has undermined its image as the dynamic party of the new democracy.

Electurally the only alternative on the right to the UCD was the Popular Alliance (AP). In the last few years the AP has overtaken the UCD as the main force on the right. They are led by Manuel Fraga the former Minister of Information and Tourism under Franco, responsible for, among other things, the murder of five workers by the riot police during the Vittoria general strike of 1976.

The AP is an obnoxious mixture of Thatcher-style conservatism and Francoism and enjoys the support of much of the church and the employers' federation. As yet they have been unable to consolidate their electoral position by uniting with what is left of the UCD.

Meanwhile the details of the latest coup plot are coming to light. Unlike the somewhat comic attempt of February last year this latest plot was extensively prepared down to the last details. Yet although at least 100 officers are widely believed to have been involved in the coup only four have been arrested so far.

The plotters themselves in previous months had liaised with General Milans de Bosch, 'imprisoned' for his role in last year's coup attempt. While the military hierarchy were prepared to step on this latest 'colonels coup' the extent of the plot, the completely liberal treatment of past plotters and the extent of 'golpismo' throughout the officer corps still leaves the real possibility of another attempt wide open.

One of the most bizarre asides of the whole business is the appointment of a special 'anti-coup' police unit. This is made up of the same people who before were the anti-GRAPO (ultra left wing armed group) unit and are renowned for their ultra-right connections and brutal methods. When the Minister of the Interior was questioned about this somewhat strange appointment by an incredulous MP he was told that the group's 'political connections' would make

it easier for them to infiltrate pro-coup circles! The fact that Lt Colonel Tejero, who led last year's assault on the Spanish parliament, was allowed to stand in the elections demonstrates the near impunity the military ultra-right enjoys.

During the election campaign the impartiality of the state was clear to see. Throughout the media the campaigns of both the radical nationalists and the revolutionary left were completely ignored. Members of the powerful pro-ETA coalition Herri Batasuna were harassed by the police, members of the Basque MC shot at while flyposting. The latter's electoral poster was actually confiscated. It depicted the leaders of the main parties saluting an unpleasant looking army officer—it was deemed to be 'insulting to the army'.

The demise of the Spanish Communist Party predictably reached a new stage with the elections. The drop in their vote isn't surprising given the crisis that has shaken the party recently.

A large pro-soviet split in Catalonia, the Euro-Communist majority of the Basque party fusing with left nationalists, splits to the left and right in Madrid and so on. Faced with a stampede towards 'the only real electoral alternative', the PSOE, all the CP could do was call for a 'democratic front' to 'assure the progress of democracy'. Such a front would include not only the PSOE and CP but also the discredited UCD. Only the small split around former UCD leader Adolfo Suarez favour such an idea. The irony of the CP's dilemma is that they have continually undermined their organised working class base by opposing struggles in order to gain electoral respectability and have now ended up with neither.



Tejero—last year a coup—today a candidate

The struggle for Basque freedom still remains the most pressing problem for any government. In the weeks before elections there were a series of bombs exploded and armed attacks (some fatal) against the police and civil guards. In one night alone the police shot dead three innocent people at road blocks in the Basque Country.

The turnout in the election was massive with 80 percent of the electorate voting. The PSOE vote of 10 million was 46 percent of the total. It went up from 2 million in the last election. They got 201 seats compared with 121 last time.

The other main beneficiary was the right-wing AP whose seats went up from 9 to 106.

The UCD went from 158 down to 12 seats. the CP won five seats as compared with 23

last time and their vote fell from 2 million to 800,000.

The main feature of the result was that Herri Batasuna, the radical nationalist Basque party raised its vote by 30,000 to 207,000, winning two seats. This was despite three years of intense campaigning by every other official party against them and the heavy attacks of the state machine on the Basques.

The PSOE clearly emerged as the only credible government party in Spain. But this has not caused any major upset for the Spanish ruling class. The Stock Exchange reacted calmly and the Spanish Employers Federation is already saying that the new government will help to create a climate of industrial peace.

The revolutionary left organised a much more modest level of intervention than in previous elections. In the Basque Country and Galicia they called for a vote for the radical nationalists who were a real left alternative to the PSOE. Elsewhere the main revolutionary organisations, MC and the Revolutionary Communist League (Fourth International), stood in coalition, often with other local groups and independents. In most places they actually withdrew before polling day to make it clear they had no electoral pretensions. The type and intensity of their electoral campaigns differed from area to area given the complexity of Spanish politics. Essentially they emphasised such questions as purging the armed forces, active defence of jobs and work conditions, opposition to NATO, for women's rights and solidarity with the Basques. The MC opposed calling for a vote for the PSOE as the only alternative to the right. They argued that given the undemocratic nature of the state and the experiences of the PSOE in opposition to support them in any way would only increase illusions. Moreover as the PSOE would win regardless, it was more important to stand firm against the belief that a PSOE government would be any different from a UCD one. Also to have called for a PSOE vote in the Basque Country would have been patently absurd.

The election of a PSOE government will mean very little to the lives of most workers in Spain. A reformist strategy here is more of a pipedream than in most bourgeois democracies given the fascist nature of the state.

For revolutionaries there are still opportunities, though far less than five or six years ago. There is considerable opposition to the military fascists and to joining NATO, while there is potentially a lot of support for a campaign in favour of abortion rights.

In the workers' movement the present nationally organised shop stewards' elections, although with an inevitable swing towards the socialist UGT, also show a certain regroupment of some militants. For example, the increasing re-organisation of activists expelled from the Communist Workers Commissions has led to some good results, one of the most significant being in Fords Valencia where the far left slate won 25 percent of the vote.

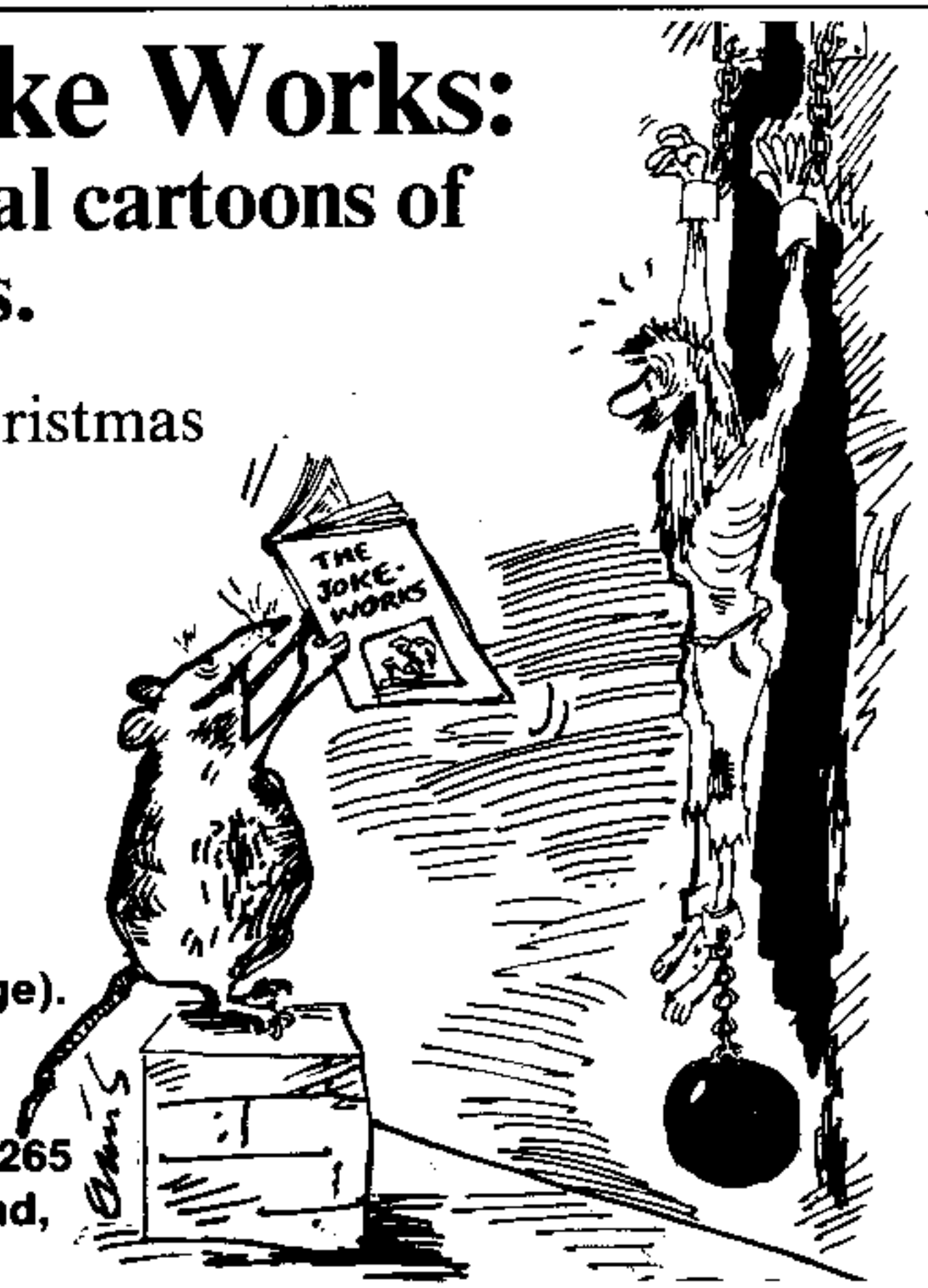
To quote the Basque MC's electoral slogan, paraphrasing the PSOE, 'Only this can change things—the struggle.' □

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Murder, Corruption, Crisis

The régime in Iran continues to fight a bitter war both against Iraq and against its opponents at home. **Maryam Poya** writes on the internal struggles.

In Khomeini's prisons today there are 50,000 political prisoners facing the most brutal torture and awaiting almost certain execution.

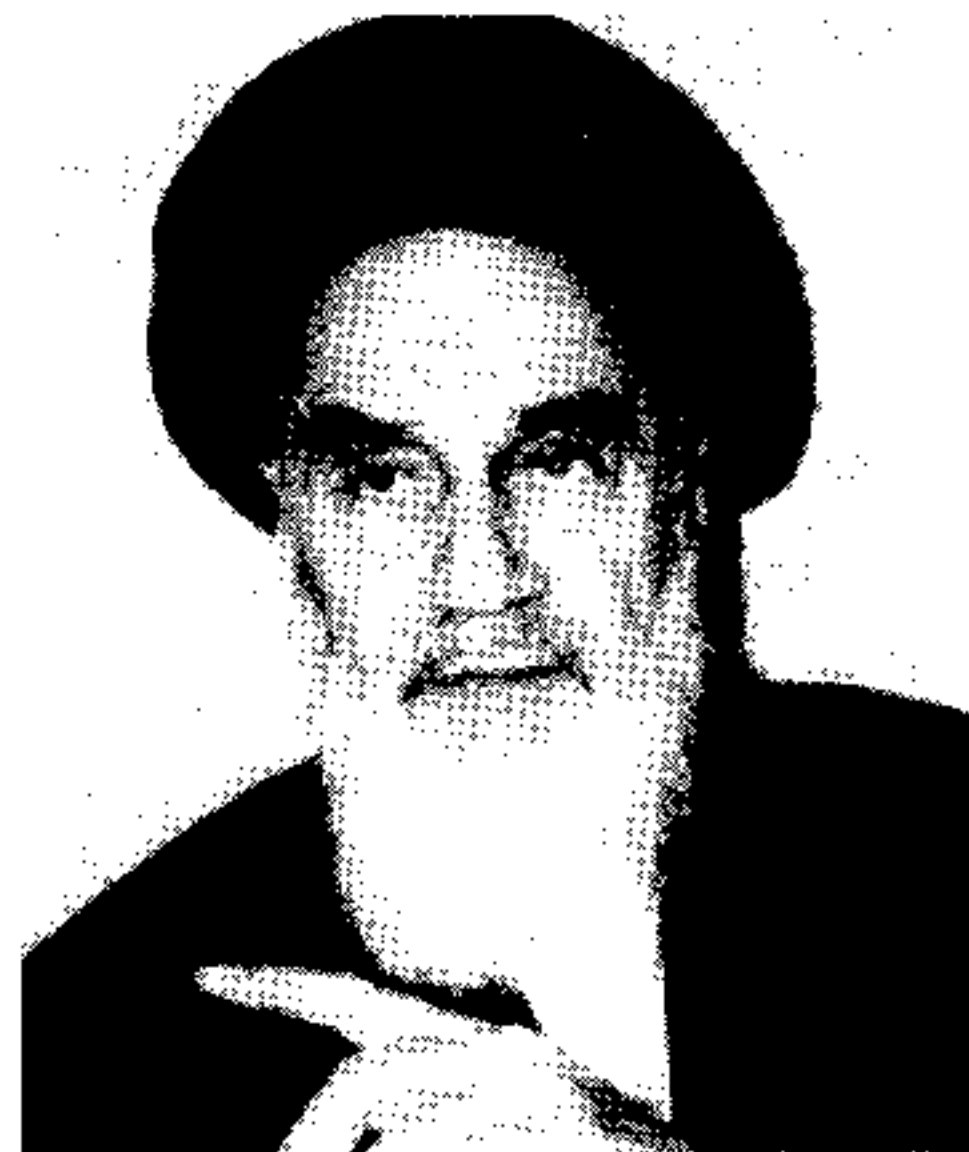
Until recently, the regime was burying the communists in a remote area outside Tehran called 'Laanat Abad' (the 'cursed land') because 'they are atheists and should not be buried with the moslems'. They buried the Mojahedeen in a special section in the main Tehran cemetery, Beheshte Zahra, because 'they believe in God, but they are Hypocrites'. Yet even the dead can be allowed no peace, for the regime found that the two burial places were becoming centres for the gathering of the families of the executed. They have now abandoned the special areas and bury everyone in Beheshte Zahra.

But since the number of executions is high, the head of the Tehran cemetery complained that 'he cannot cope with this problem, and sometimes they have to bury the dead bodies without religious ceremonies.'

The regime is now planning to build a new cemetery near Evin prison in the north of Tehran in order to solve the problems of the chief of the cemetery!

Although the regime unashamedly announces some of its executions, they also try to justify their medieval behaviour in the prisons by showing on television men and women who have been savagely tortured. They force them to say that they are a Mojaheed or a communist and that they have done this to themselves in order to become strong and able to survive in jail!

In the regime's jails, women are raped by 'Islamic law'. One family recently received



Khomeini is still the key figure

the news of their daughter's execution. The Pasdars (Revolutionary Guards) returned her belongings and gave the parents £3, explaining that 'she was a virgin, and since they do not execute virgins in Islam, one of the pasdars married her temporarily the night before her execution and the money is the price for the temporary marriage'. Many young women have been raped in jail under the name of such temporary marriages.

Life for those women not in jail is little better. The slogans on the walls are intimidating: 'Death to women without *hejab*' (Islamic clothing), 'women without *hejab* are prostitutes'.... Many women have been attacked in the streets by the barbaric agents of the regime and left with broken bones or their faces burned by acid. No women dare appear in public without Islamic clothing.

Arranged marriages are organised by the agents of the state between young women and the disabled from the war. And they have now begun to prepare the way for the introduction of clitoridectomy for girls. In a wide range of books entitled 'Answers to your ideological tests', they say that 'in Islam clitoridectomy is *mostahab* (recommended)'. This custom was unknown in Iran, but now that the Shia sect is in power, all these barbaric laws are being introduced. The main purpose of these 'answer books' is to serve the needs of those employed or applying for jobs as it is now compulsory to pass Islamic ideological tests.

'Statist'

But within the regime intense differences exist. Today there are three main factions: the 'Imam's line', the technocrats and the traditionalists led by the *Hojatiyeh*.

Distrust of the remnants of the leading sections of the bourgeoisie associated with the Shah's regime led early on to the emergence of a 'statist' faction within the regime. These are the 'progressives', tailed by the Tudeh Party and the Fedayeen majority (pro-Moscow).

This 'statist' tendency is best known by the name of the 'Imam's line' and is divided into various groups, depending on the degree of statification of the economy each supports.

The majority of *majlis* (parliament) deputies and members of the government have followed one or several of the different groups within the 'Imam's line'. They control the repressive and anti-working class institutions like the *Pasdaran* (Revolutionary Guards), *Komitehs*, Islamic societies, 'revolutionary' foundations, and militia.

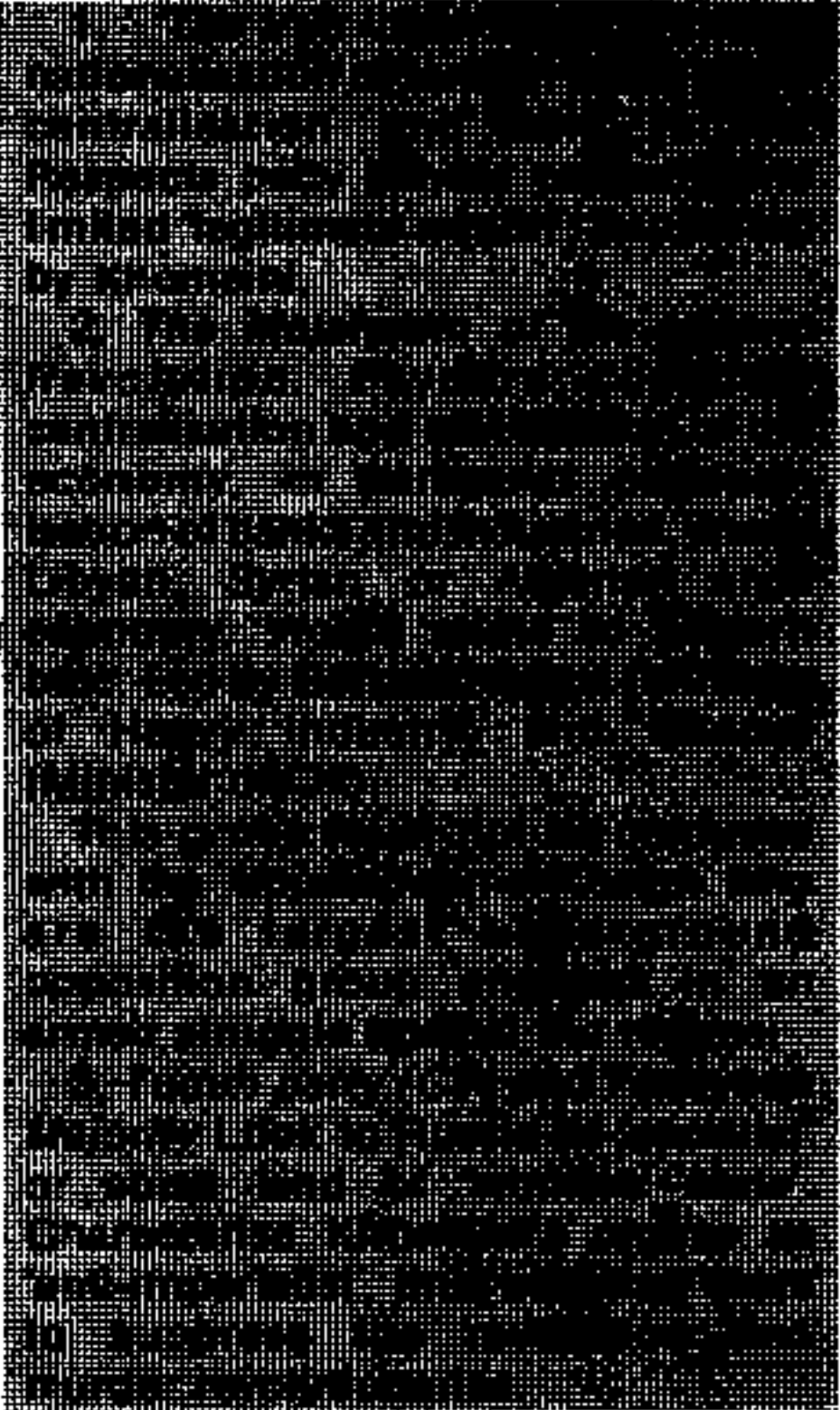
The statist faction, which became leaderless after Ayatollah Beheshti's death has faced increasingly intense opposition from sections of Iranian capital with strong links with the clergy—most of whom are rentiers, living on rent derived from family-owned land or religious institutions.

This tendency, of whom the *Hojatiyeh* are

Inside Khomeini's State.



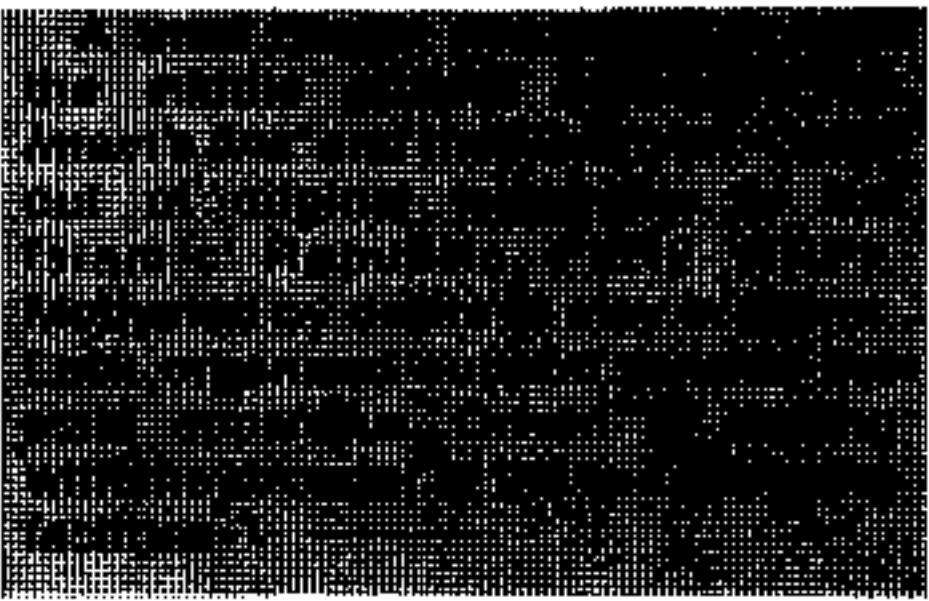
'The Imam's line'



The 'traditionalists'.



The Technocrats



the most open element, is now fighting the 'Imam's line' for power. Its first leader was Hojatolislam Falsafi, who smashed the main Baha'i centre in Tehran in 1955. Photographs of this 'noble' action were prominently displayed in the regime's press. Falsafi was allowed on the state radio to preach hatred against the Baha'is as a sop to the clergy.

Today Falsafi has become a regular visitor to Khomeini and a frequent preacher at rallies on behalf of the regime. His twenty five years of cooperation with SAVAK in anti-leftist and anti-Baha'i activities are never mentioned.

After the revolution the *Hojatiyeh* joined

the Islamic Republic Party (IRP), putting their extensive network of reactionaries at its disposal. They concentrated in particular on security and intelligence matters, with key supporters in SAVAMA, running prisons and 'revolutionary' courts.

Until recently, the statist tendency seemed to hold decisive power. But today it is quite clear that the *Hojatiyeh* tendency is gradually taking over control.

They now hold a number of important ministerial positions (Foreign, Labour and Defence), and control the whole media, most mosques and Friday prayer gatherings. They are removing the Islamic councils and societies and replacing them with a institution called *Edareh Herasat* (Guarding Department). Under the Shah's regime a very similar organisation called *Edareh Hefasat* (Protection Department) existed and was part of SAVAK.

There have been serious splits through the *Hojatiyeh's* infiltration of the pasdars, komitehs and militia, resulting in murders of the 'Imam's line' elements by the *Hojatiyeh*.

In early August of this year, three pasdars—followers of the 'Imam's line'—were brutally killed by them. The regime blamed it on Mojahedeen and communists and executed 500 prisoners in one week. This same faction has also begun to purge the Tudeh Party members from workplaces.

The most important victory of the *Hojatiyeh* over the 'Imam's line' has arisen from the fact that the bankruptcy and failure of the regime has led many members of the central bureaucracy to abandon their state capitalist views and move towards the private capitalist tendency.

The battleground between the two main factions has widened considerably over the year of struggle between them. With the exception of repression, everything is now a matter for argument, and even for fighting over.

For instance, the government recently announced that 'some of the nationalised productive units are operating at loss and government cannot sustain such loss for longer.' Behzad Nabavi (supposedly one of the very hard line statist) has announced that

'government is not a good businessman or manager. Even in communist countries, where management is undertaken by the government, we see that the affairs do not progress and they have to follow some tendencies towards capitalism. The same applies to the Islamic Republic. The government would better leave industry to the private sector so that the private sector can make them profitable. Islam respects private ownership, supporting and guiding the private sector towards correct economic activities necessary for the development of the country.'

For the *Hojatiyeh* a debate on land reform becomes immediately transformed into metaphysics, with God the ultimate owner of all land (and factories, etc. by extension) and the earthly 'owners' just acting as his stewards. So long as they come by their wealth 'honestly' and use it 'legitimately', ownership is free and unfettered.

The need for the top level of the ruling clique to compromise with this rising



Mass demonstrations and strikes overthrew the Shah...

tendency has dominated internal politics within the regime for over a year. The statist have suffered defeat after defeat and have seen the leadership, Rafsanjani (head of *Majlis*), Khomeini (President) and Moosavi (Prime Minister), ally itself over and over again with the Traditionalists.

Yet with a primitive view of the economy based on trading rather than production the traditionalists are using their increasing power to grow rich at everyone's expense. They are asset stripping both the state and the population. Rather than investing they are hoarding and spending.

All the *Hojatiyeh* are proving capable of is the institutionalisation of corruption, rather than development. The infrastructure projects so much loved by the statist are being shelved in favour of simple trade, and yet more simple trade. Iran is becoming ever more of an import—export (oil) economy, and only the removal of state subsidies is required for the whole population to be exposed to the full weight of the international economy and with it mass starvation.

Corruption

For the time being, however, the role of Khomeini remains key. He is the only one who takes the important political decisions and the different factions and tendencies are not strong enough to be able to enforce their positions on him. The central bureaucracy and *Hojatiyeh* faction, for example, are against the invasion of Iraq but have not been able to end the war.

Under such circumstances it is not surprising that many, if not most, of those involved in the state are now extensively engaged in corruption. With high unemployment, an extensive rationing system, soaring prices and a massive black market, it is easy for the agents of the state to organise this widespread corruption. Poor quality meat is available on ration, but only at 200 grams per person per fortnight and costing 350-450 rials a kilo (on average £2.50). On the black market, however, meat is freely available at 1,200 rials (£7) a kilo. Petrol, through

rationing, is 20p a litre (£0.92 a gallon) and on the black market is four times this price.

A wide layer of people now make their living dealing on the black market, buying and selling coupons. All of this requires the closest involvement of the bureaucracy and the top officials. Among the biggest centres of such corruption are the state-run co-operatives for officials where food and other goods are more readily and cheaply available than elsewhere.

Up and down the apparatus the commission agents are at work. They take their percentage, as high as 20% on each deal. Premier Moosavi, and Rafsanjani, to name but two, are involved in the corrupt selling of both oil and foodstuffs.

Corruption on such a scale is not something of simply moral concern. It represents the members and cadres of the regime voting with their feet (and wallets) against its collective future. It is a massive vote of no confidence in the system as a whole by those who run it.

All factions and political groupings involved with the regime are implicated, from the Tudeh Party to the *Hojatiyeh*. All countries, both east and west, are making the necessary payments in order to get contracts.

In such circumstances it is not surprising that the faction most strongly favouring private wealth is coming out on top. What point salting away money in a private account or in a safe at home if the state could take it all away?

Those established Iranian bourgeois figures still in the country, like Bazargan, are inactive, waiting for a 'better' situation to arise. Those who fled the country after the revolution and whose factories were 'nationalised' are living in London, Paris, Nice or New York. Some of them are making fortunes by organising contracts between Iran and other countries. Khaiami—the previous owner of Iran National—is engaged as a consultant in the dealings between Talbot and Iran National; Irvani—the previous owner of Shoe Melli—is engaged in negotiating contracts between Iran and European rubber producers.

Western capitalism is also beginning to gain confidence in the capitalist faction in Iran and is looking forward to stabilisation. Western governments who were unhappy at the overthrow of the Shah at the hands of a mass movement, and have been waiting three and a half year to see how Khomeini's regime develops, are beginning to feel that Khomeini's regime is capable of smashing the working class and its opposition. They also detect a section of the regime willing and trying hard to prove it can protect capitalist relationships.

When the Ba'athists began their military attack on Iran in order to defeat the revolution, the mullahs refused to arm the people. They left the fate of the war in the hands of the pasdars and pro-Khomeini officers.

After the battle front was stabilised, the Iranian regime considered the war a convenient excuse to hide internal crisis and further suppress the people. Today the war is a prop supporting two reactionary dictatorships. It must be turned into a civil war in both countries in order to overthrow both regimes.

In Iran, the war has left many workers' and peasants' families in mourning. Many young people can be seen in wheelchairs on street corners, and most of those who have come back from the fronts have been scared so much by the horrifying situation in the war areas that they are not prepared to return.

The regime's attempt to brainwash young people is now failing. They can no longer mobilise the youth in the cities and the villages in the North of Iran. Only by relying on people in the most backward and remote areas can they still recruit. They use people's religious beliefs to raise enthusiasm, offering money and distributing extra food and fuel coupons to their families through the 'Bonyade Shahid' (Martyrs' Foundation).

The failure of the left to be consistent in its opposition to the war has been one of its great weaknesses. This war did not stop being 'patriotic' (itself a term the left should never have used) when Khomeini attacked Iraq, nor when he began killing off the Mojahedeen and the left a year ago. It was always a reactionary war, and will be as long as the defence of the revolution is under the control of the regime.

The Iranian ruling class and its covert imperialist allies have a shared fear that the mass revolutionary movement which overthrew the Shah might arise again and overthrow Khomeini. For, despite the fact that a savagely reactionary religious power now has control over all aspects of social life, it is not the case that all hope has gone. The opposition exists and is active. The Kurds, the Mojahedeen and the left are continuing their fight. Although it has hurt the regime, the armed struggle led by the Mojahedeen has not destroyed it.

Today people hate the regime and feel joyful when its agents are assassinated by the armed groups; they support the guerillas by helping them escape, by collecting money and medicine, and by hiding them in their homes.

When a bomb goes off killing the régime's agents or the mullahs, people consider it a

good deed and presume that the bomb was placed by the Mojahedeen. If innocent people are killed, the assumption is that the bomb was placed by the regime itself.

Yet people clearly do not consider the Mojahedeen as the alternative. For socialists, the Mojahedeen and other guerilla organisations are all in varying degrees responsible for the present situation. They tailed Khomeini after the revolution, ignored the class struggle, and substituted themselves for a mass movement. Instead of fighting against the regime's attacks on every aspect of life, they have looked for compromise solutions.

Assassination

Today the Mojahedeen's strategy for overthrowing Khomeini's regime is to continue the assassination of the regime's local agents, such as the pasdars, the komitehs and the shopkeepers who play the role of the regime's secret police in each area. They believe it will eventually be impossible for the regime to hire anyone as its agents. They argue that, until then, strikes or any other political class struggle will be impossible and ineffective. They see the 'National Resistance Council' as the future government of Iran and are planning another Islamic Republic, but this time a 'democratic' one, 'where everyone, men and women, nationalities, ... will be equal'.

A 'Democratic Islamic Republic' is a fraud. The National Resistance Council, an alliance of the Mojahedeen and a section of the Iranian bourgeoisie, is doomed either to destruction or to become another dictatorship. The honest and militant members of the Mojahedeen who are heroically fighting the regime today will be the victims of such an alliance in the future.

Despite all that has happened, the Mojahedeen and the National Resistance Council still reject the separation of religion from the state and argue that Islam is progressive and that they are the true muslims.

On the question of the nationalities, the Mojahedeen argue that their unity with the

Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran will ensure the integrity of Iran. They are against the secession of the nationalities, yet, for precisely the same reason, Khomeini has been massacring the Kurds for the last three years.

The Mojahedeen and the left are consistent only in disregarding the fact that only the power of the working class and the poor peasants can overthrow the regime and replace it with a socialist state.

The victory of the revolution in February 1979 owed much to the mass strike. Although it was formed through mass street demonstrations, the movement would not have succeeded without the general strike. The workers organised strike committees in factories which were independent of the mosques and it was these committees that organised the general strike and paralysed the regime. It was this that prevented any possibility of compromise between the mullahs and the old regime.

Today we are witnessing the fact that, even under a terrorist regime, the working class is still fighting. In many workplaces workers are isolating the agents of the regime, writing their names and addresses on the walls of the toilets for the guerillas to read and act upon. In July of this year, the Esfahan steel mill, one of Iran's biggest factories which employs 40,000 workers, went on strike. More than half of these workers are employed on a temporary basis and liable to be sacked at any time by the management. They earn only the minimum wage of 20,000 rials (£120) a month. After the dismissal of a number of workers, the whole workforce went on strike and forced the Government to employ all of the temporary workers permanently as well as securing a wage increase.

This and other strikes show where the power lies and that this power could shake the regime. Workers have a great deal of experience from the last few years. Many know that in order to overthrow this regime they have to build their own organisations and work for a political general strike. Their only allies in this important task are those who have learnt from the past mistakes and are ready to start from scratch. □



...Now Khomeini uses his methods to crush all opposition.

Brazil goes to vote



November's elections in Brazil are the most important since the military coup in 1964 and the installation of a dictatorship which was the most savage in Latin America. **David Beecham** assesses the balance of forces.

Brazil's rulers hope the elections will set the seal on their policy of 'abertura'—of deliberate, controlled liberalisation in order to complete modernisation and keep order in the most advanced of the 'newly-industrialised countries'.

The elections follow four years of upheaval as the new Brazilian working class proved its strength and forced an 'opening' much wider than was intended.

Sao Paulo is the Petrograd of Brazil; both in terms of the importance of its industry, the size of its factories, the weight of the working class and because of its politics.

At the time of the 1964 coup in Brazil there were 3.6 million industrial workers; today there are around 12 million. The population of Sao Paulo more or less doubled over the same period—from around six million in the mid-1960s to over 13 million in 1982. Around two-thirds of Brazilian industry is in the Sao Paulo state—mostly in Sao Paulo itself and in the various industrial satellite towns which surround it. It is a little as though London, the West Midlands and Manchester were all thrown together into and around one vast city.

Shanty towns

This colossal growth has produced incredibly hard conditions for large numbers of workers and for the unemployed and underemployed (of whom there are about 14 million in the whole of the country). There are several hundred thousand people (no one knows how many) living in shanty-towns—the favelas. Most commentators, and certainly most Brazilian politicians, see these people as 'marginal'. They are not; some of the favelas have been in existence ten or fifteen years. The shack owners have paid large amounts for their accommodation, yet

the land still belongs to the coffee companies or the railway firms who are in a position to demand the land back at a moment's notice. Perhaps a million more people live in the 'corticós'—in conditions worse than the favelas.

State limits

In May 1978, the spark of revolt occurred. The first strike of any size for ten years—the first successful battle against a wage policy imposed by the military 14 years before. About 1,000 workers at the Saab-Scania factory in Sao Bernardo do Campo came out. They were joined by 50,000 more—Ford, Mercedes, Volkswagen, Philips, General Electric, Mannesmann. Finally 200,000 carworkers and engineers won pay increases above the state limit, the right to organise and the right to strike.

It was this movement that marked the first real break with the state-sponsored unions imposed in the 1960s. The subsequent strikes in 1979 and 1980 sealed it. The movements in the two subsequent years were far larger and far more threatening. The Government came in with police and tear gas, declaring strikes illegal, arresting the leaders, and taking over the unions established since the coup. It did not prevent the creation of the first free unions run by the workers themselves, nor the creation of rank and file opposition in the other unions (the majority run by government stooges, often in a collaboration with reformists of a social democratic and 'communist' hue).

Despite repression, large-scale redundancies, victimisation of militants and all the different forms of repression employed by the government and employers, the unions were able to consolidate. They showed their strength again in May this year when in a repeat of the tactics used in 1978 workers in the major plants—Volkswagen, Ford, Mercedes, Saab etc—clocked in and refused

to work, blockading management in the factories in the process. The big car and bus manufacturers chose to do a deal on their own—forcing the other national and international firms to improve pay offers. Once again the strongest plants paved the way for victories elsewhere.

The aftermath of the 1980 strike movement saw the birth of the Workers' Party (PT)—a party of a dramatically new type, with a genuine class approach to politics.

The PT is special in Brazil, and indeed in Latin America, because of the emphasis on the industrial working class. While this should not blind us to the fact that it remains ambiguous about its role and above all its relationship to the industrial struggle as a party, the fact that it is a class party makes it a special phenomenon.

Complex line-up

The political line-up in Brazil for the elections is as might be expected extremely complex. The 'main' opposition organisation, the PMDB, is an umbrella organisation containing numerous groupings, including the communists and the ex-MR8 guerrilla movement (known as Hora do Povo—Hour of the People) which has become extremely moderate. The PMDB inherits the mantle of the official opposition of the years of dictatorship, the Brazilian Democratic Movement. This was again a loose umbrella opposed to the military.

The main government party, the PDS, is an extremely sophisticated set up. Built on a network of local patronage, it remains the party most likely to emerge with the largest vote. Perhaps its typical representative is the present Governor of Sao Paulo, Paulo Maluf, a figure distinguished by his ambition to be the next President of Brazil (to be chosen by the national assembly in 1984), and by his enormous personal sway in Sao Paulo. The PDS is the only main government

party—others have been created to give the appearance of pluralism—but even this clearly bourgeois organisation carries a populist banner.

The Brazilian ruling class has taken out a number of insurance policies other than PDS. The PTB for example, which is expected to win in Rio de Janeiro, was once a respected part of the social democratic opposition but had its own 'coup' after the military took power. Former leader, a man called Brizola, was pushed out and a new right-wing populist group took control—described by some on the left as 'fascists.' Its figurehead in Rio—Sandra de Cavalcanti—ran a traditional TV show for many years, acting as a cross between Mary Whitehouse, Jimmy Young and Esther Rantzen. The ruling class has also conjured up another 'opposition' party (just in case) called the PP—again a right-wing populist formation.

The opposition may be dominated by the PMDB at national level—but in Sao Paulo the PT has considerable credibility. The PT is essentially like a much more rank and file based Labour Party. The main candidate, Lula, has the reputation of Arthur Scargill, only more so.

But the PT is much more than its leader. It is riddled with 'Trotskyist' groups (all the varieties of the Fourth International) none of which has any working class base. Its main leadership remains in the mould of the radical church politics which dominate much of the genuine left in Brazil. The PT has an (estimated) 20,000 militants and about 200,000 sympathisers (mainly those who signed sponsorship forms for the elections). It is obviously the main pole of attraction for the young militants, for the supporters of the Christian left and, critically, for those oppositionists from the middle class who represent social democracy.

Several PMDB deputies and local politicians have joined the PT: one key figure in Sao Paulo's state legislature decided to tour the United States with Lula in the wake of the 1980 strikes. Those visited were Ted Kennedy, AFL-CIO leaders and students at Berkeley University ...

To a degree the PT is simply a left-reformist party with a genuine workers' leader as its figurehead. But the PT's emphasis is firmly on class interests. It is not misled by populism; it is not nationalist; nor is it pro-Russian. Uniquely in Latin America the PT came out wholeheartedly for Solidarnosc and the victory of the Polish working class. What makes the PT different is the fact that it was born out of massive struggles and still has to relate to them.

Poised for change

It remains the case, however, that the PT is not a revolutionary organisation. Some very good working class militants are not in the PT at all and indeed regard it with an element of suspicion. An unemployed engineering worker, secretary of the Association of Workers of Moooca (a district of Sao Paulo) commented: 'I'm not in the PT because I want a revolutionary Marxist party based in the factories which will lead an insurrection.'

There is also a great deal of emphasis by rank and file militants in, for example, the



Brazilian metal workers seek safety of strike

other (right wing) Sao Paulo metalworkers' unions on the need for opposition movements rather than union takeovers. There are union oppositions now in several of the Sao Paulo unions. There the reality is a tremendously hard struggle to get workers interested in joining an organisation which they see as hostile.

Brazil seems poised for more changes. The ruling class is coming under international pressure to put its house in order, while at the same time having to cope with a working class conscious of its power. There is a danger that the elections will result in paralysis and that the (completely unpurged) military will try to reassert control. It is more likely that the existing government party will

win—but only a partial victory. The need will be to hit the working class even harder, and to control those new movements which are emerging.

The key question

Perhaps the key question is whether the rank and file leaders can be co-opted as has happened so often in the past. The Brazilian left remains fragile. The PT seems bound to split and there is no conscious revolutionary tendency to take the best elements forward. But there is a tremendous reservoir of revolutionary talent; a cadre in Brazil's working class. □



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Lula for governor

Earlier this year, Lula spoke to *Socialist Review* about the November elections, the state of the workers' movement and the role of the PT.

Luis Inacio da Silva, known universally as 'Lula' is probably the most important and best-known leader of rank and file workers in any Latin American country. He came to prominence in 1978 as spokesman for the carworkers and engineers of Sao Bernardo do Campo, the major industrial satellite town of Sao Paulo. As President of the Union of Metalworkers of Sao Bernardo do Campo and Diadema (another huge industrial area) he led the massive strikes of 1979 and 1980. He was one of 15 union leaders arrested under the National Security Law on 20 April 1980, a move which led to the defeat of the strike but not of the free union movement.

Lula is now the President of the Partido do Trabalhadores (PT), the Workers Party, which was born in the wake of the government's intervention against the free union movement, and has stood down as President of the union, though he is still seen as its leader.

Lula is thus free to stand as the PT's candidate for the single most important position at stake in this year's elections — governor of Sao Paulo state, the most populous part of Brazil, where two-thirds of industry is concentrated.

Lawful party

What is the PT aiming to achieve in the elections this November?

The elections are significant for a number of reasons. The most important is that it should legalise our party. The law says that a party must gain at least five per cent of the national vote—or 13 percent in nine states—in order to be legally recognised. The second reason is that the elections are part of the process of self-organisation of the working class ... so the working class discovers itself as a class.

And the third reason is so that the PT gets a good result in the elections for the national assembly, makes a good showing in the state elections and in the municipalities. There are states where we stand a good chance of getting deputies elected to the state assemblies on equal terms with the other parties.

But do you think the elections signify any great change in Brazil?

I think there is the possibility of change in a country like Brazil because there is the possibility of the opposition getting a majority in the national assembly, in the state assemblies: so there is a hope for things



Lula: leader makes his powerful point

getting better, I'd say.

I think that foreign economic and political policy, above all concerning the foreign debt, has got to change. Particularly, there ought to be discussions with foreign creditors about the refinancing of the foreign debt. From the constitutional point of view there has to be reform at least of the role of the state and national assemblies; abolition of the National Security Law; the abolition of the special laws which give exceptional powers to the government.

On the trade union front we could get

some substantial changes through Parliament allowing freedom to organise.

You personally are standing in the election for Governor of Sao Paulo, and some people are talking of an outside possibility of you winning—wouldn't this create enormous problems for the Party and for the working class—trying to run the most important city in the country?

Well first of all we're conscious enough of what Sao Paulo is like to know that if we were elected there would be some things we

could do to improve the administration of the state. Secondly, we're well aware that in a capitalist state with the big monopolies and the big international conglomerates in collaboration with the military it's impossible to have a workers' government. All the same we're also well aware of what the resources of a huge state like Sao Paulo could do to improve conditions of the vast majority of the population.

We know the difficulties but we also know that the working class wouldn't get anywhere if it didn't have the audacity to take political power: at the level of a single state, or the whole nation; or just at the level of a single municipality.

Grass roots

I think we have a real chance here. But we're not simply obsessed with winning—that won't solve our problems. We think the most important thing is to be active at the grass roots; in the sense that this is where our strength is; this is where workers can organise.

Taking the recent example of the Coferraz factory—where the workers occupied the plant when they hadn't been paid for a month and the police broke it up—do you think it would make a difference if the State Governor was different?

Well I think the minimum a governor ought to be able to do is sort out the problems of the community. The first thing would be to ensure that the police didn't intervene against the workers; secondly, the state should not allow workers to be put in the position of not getting paid; the state should overcome the firms' failings, take over responsibility and see the workers get their rights. But much more important than this: the governor of a state like Sao Paulo has got to pursue policies which mean the labour market is not at the mercy of the employers but functions for the good of the city and its inhabitants. And this could be achieved by investment—not the kind of speculative investment pursued today but investment in land, in agriculture, education; public transport: that's the way to improve employment and the standard of living of the people of Sao Paulo.

So how do you see things? Is it an electoral struggle based on the factories or is it an industrial struggle involving elections?

The class struggle doesn't begin with elections and it doesn't end with elections either: these elections are merely a stage in the workers' struggle in the factories, other workplaces, in the country, in the city. We have that perspective and the perspective that the elections are not an end in themselves, but a means we will try to use to resolve at least part of the problems facing working people.

I'd like to turn to the state of the class struggle today. Things have got much harder. What's happening?

The working class in Brazil is going through a period where government policy is directed at absorbing and institutionalising opposition. We have a completely un-



democratic union structure, inherited from military dictatorship. At the moment any sort of mobilisation is much harder than in 1978 or 1979/80. The trade union movement has to find new ways of organising, new

forms of organisation and above all new perspectives for the working class. What is now needed is a new type of workers' organisation.

Alright—what kind of party are you trying to build? A sort of front with various tendencies or a unified party with a single policy—or what?

Well I think different tendencies of opinion are healthy—they show a party is democratic. And the party is homogeneous in the sense that we have a programme, we abide by one set of rules, we have a single internal organisation and our policy is determined by our conferences.

Now we have our own party paper. We don't agree with people selling their own particular papers—but we don't forbid it. We are a party with socialist aims: but we need to discuss what type of socialism it is that we want. □



Workers celebrate May Day in Sao Paulo

CND to the sidelines

At the weekend of 26-28 November CND is holding its annual conference. Pete Binns measures the gains and losses it has made in the past twelve months, its prospects for the coming year, and how socialists should relate to it.

The successes are fairly easy to specify. They include CND's mobilisation of 200,000 people at the June demonstration (right at the height of the Falklands hysteria), the overwhelming 70 percent vote for unilateralism at the Labour Party Conference and the Church of England's cautious and provisional espousal of the unilateralist cause in the autumn. (When one thinks that only recently it was possible to think of the Church as 'The Tory Party at prayer' the latter certainly marks a major change.)

But anyone who has been involved in CND at the grass roots level can also tell a completely different story. Meetings in the localities are no longer attracting large audiences, few new activists are being drawn into the movement, the local committees are—with a few notable exceptions—reduced to a rump of functionaries from the professions who have been unable or unwilling to involve fresh layers into the campaign. This has affected working class involvement in the localities particularly badly. Without activity into which they can be drawn, most are repelled by the alternative of participating in the largely administrative affairs of the increasingly middle-class committees.

The Tories generalise

The conclusion must be that such gains as there were last year were largely the fruit of the considerably higher levels of grass roots activity in the previous period—above all 1980-81; and that unless the momentum can be restored we will lose them again. The dangers that are implicit in this situation can be understood by looking at some of these gains more closely.

The fact that 200,000 turned out for the June demonstration is a testimony to the continuing potential of the campaign. But it has to be set alongside the huge move to the right that the opinion polls have been registering since the Falklands war. Support for nuclear disarmament may be holding up quite well—or even increasing—yet this is not translating itself into any kind of a generalised opposition to Thatcherism.

Why is it that increasing support for the aims of CND has accompanied falling

support for the only party that claims to believe in it—the Labour Party—and increased support for its arch enemies in the Conservative Party?

One important reason has been the generalised nature of the Tory offensive. Mass unemployment, created and encouraged by government policies, has weakened workers' resistance to the onslaught. But this weakness has been exploited at the level of *ideas* as well as action; and in the aftermath the Tories have not been slow to win over an important part of the working class to a more generalised ruling class outlook—high wages 'cause unemployment', public spending cuts 'increase efficiency', the 'national interest' must be pursued by increasing 'our' exports, and defending 'our' sovereignty in the Falklands, and so on.

Narrow based campaign

Against this highly sophisticated and successful offensive, CND has mounted a very narrowly based campaign. Although it certainly has managed to convince many millions of the need to get rid of nuclear weapons (indeed a majority of the population if the opinion polls are to be believed) it has also isolated this question from the mainstream of political debate. During the present hospitals' dispute, for instance, CND excluded itself from consideration by refusing to support the dispute around the slogan 'Hospitals not Bombs'. In effect it was saying that cuts in hospital revenue have nothing to do with the £14 billion that the Tories are squandering on armaments.

The same is true for every other attack on workers' living standards and conditions that the Tories 'couldn't afford' to pay. Every time they should have been hit on the head with the same argument, pointing out the utter hypocrisy involved, and explaining the direct connections with nuclear weapons. But the fact is that they were not; the result has been an increasing marginalisation of CND, and fewer obstacles to the Tory attempt to construct a right-wing national 'consensus'.

It is a mistake to believe that campaigns are won when they achieve majority support. In the late 1970s, for instance, there were (according to opinion polls) up to 80 percent of the population opposed to British membership of the EEC. But this opposition was all too often rooted in a national chauvinism and an acceptance of class collaboration that ultimately rebounded to the benefit of the Tories. The same thing could happen over the question of nuclear weapons. Here too the problem is not that there is a majority that wants to keep them; rather that there are millions who want to get rid of them, but who do not as yet see what that means over the thousand-and-one other

questions that concern them or that they are invited to have opinions about.

There are similar problems with respect to the prospects of CND within the Labour Party. There too the growth in unilateralist feeling has accompanied a quite decisive move to the right on the NEC and a falling apart of last year's Bennite coalition seeking power for the left within the structures of the party. The weakness of the basis of this unilateralism was demonstrated by the subsequent vote on the question of British membership of NATO — which was overwhelmingly endorsed by the delegates. Yet this made complete nonsense of the party's unilateralism.

For a start the bulk of the nuclear targets in this country are not bases but communication, command and control centres. They would remain so long as Britain remains in NATO.

As things stand at present, the great bulk of NATO's nuclear weapons (20,000-30,000 of them) are tactical or battlefield weapons that are completely integrated into the existing land forces in Europe. Both the warheads themselves and Britain's NATO troops are under the direct command of the US military; they have been built into a single, integrated, nuclear-armed force and this will remain even if Britain gives up its own nuclear weapons machine. Furthermore while NATO says it will not be the first to use *strategic* nuclear weapons, its plans for a land war in Europe explicitly envisage NATO's first use of *tactical* nuclear weapons in such an engagement. A use which Russia has threatened would subsequently bring about all-out nuclear retaliation on their part. In other words remaining in NATO would be to consent to be part of by far the most dangerous and threatening nuclear nexus today.

Finally membership of NATO implies



that threatening the Russians with a non-nuclear death is somehow preferable to threatening a nuclear death; that Thatcher and her crew would have our support in killing Russian workers so long as they do it with napalm and fragmentation bombs rather than nuclear weapons. *The Economist*, along with quite a few NATO generals, has quite enthusiastically seized upon this point, arguing for significant increases in military expenditure to pay for the possibility of countering a Russian attack in Europe without recourse to nuclear weapons. Yet a huge part of our case against the war-mongers is based on the fact that they are prepared to squander vast sums of money on better ways of killing us while at the same time taking away our jobs, health service, homes and wages to pay for it. If a unilateralist Britain that is still a part of NATO will mean still further cuts in jobs, hospitals, homes and wages, it will make a nonsense of the whole unilateralist case.

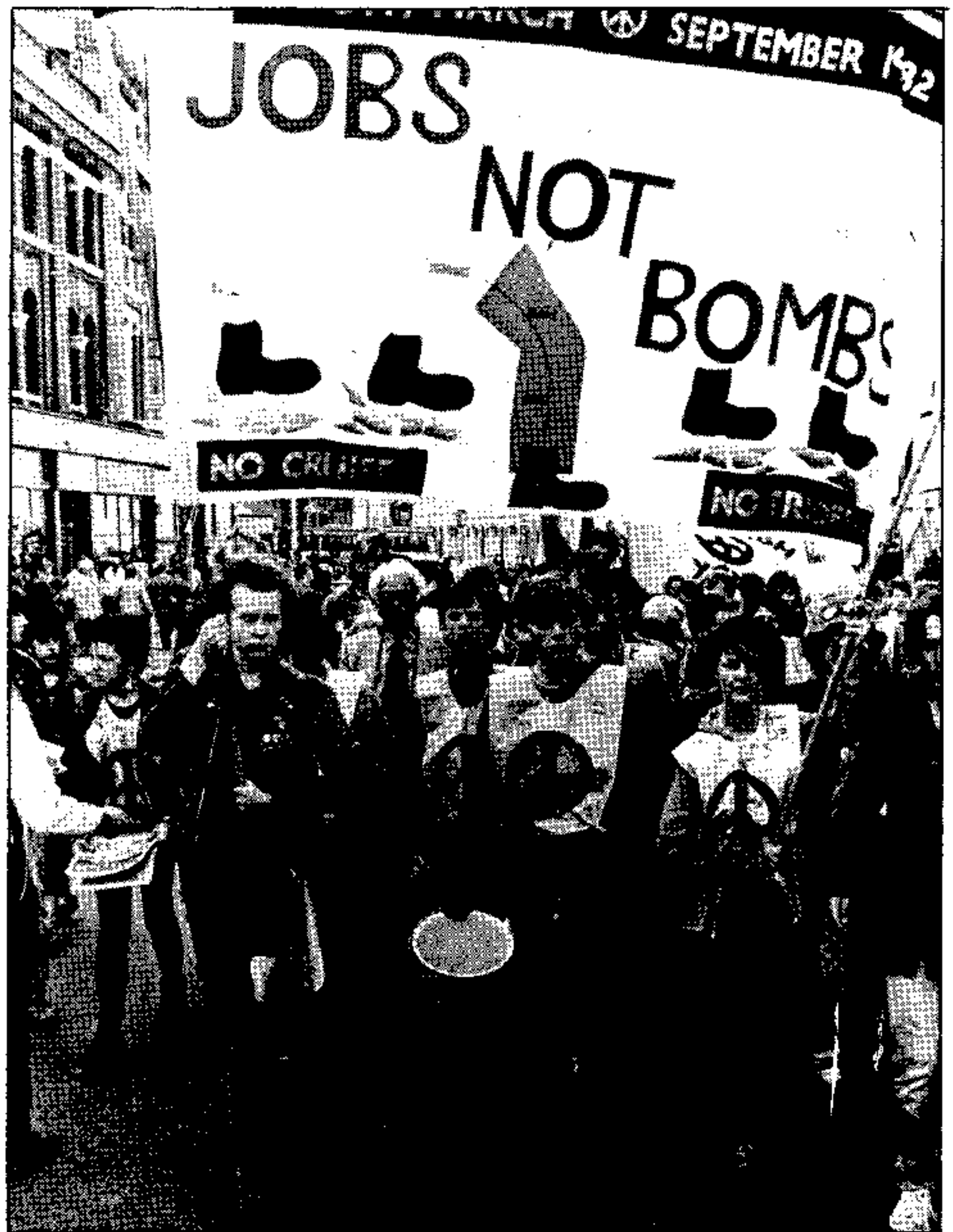
The position of the Labour Party is, therefore, riddled with contradictions; a fact that the dominant right-wing in the PLP, the NEC and the shadow cabinet will exploit to the full should a Labour Government be returned at the next election.

Wrong priorities

What should CND itself be doing in this situation? Last year its annual conference resolved, after a long battle by SWP delegates, to actually campaign against NATO. This seems to have made little impact on CND's General Council which has more or less ignored the whole issue, preferring to direct its energies elsewhere—to sending delegations to the United Nations in New York, to encouraging the setting up of SDP CND and so on. Unless these priorities are sharply changed CND's case can rapidly be eroded. An immediate campaign against NATO is now urgently needed to stop this happening.

On several fronts therefore, the ideas and arguments that CND has traded on in the last two years or so, will become increasingly inadequate. Unless the consequences of 'defence' on the daily attacks on workers' living standards are made into the centrepiece of CND propaganda and activity, then the campaign will increasingly find itself relegated to an irrelevant backwater of British politics, whatever degree of passive support it gets there. Unless it takes up the campaign against NATO, its supporters in the Labour Party will find themselves confused and demoralised. And, finally, unless CND stops pretending that multilateralism (which is what Thatcher, Reagan, Brezhnev and Co. use to strengthen their own positions) is just the same kind of thing as, and is perfectly compatible with, unilateralism (which is, after all, our weapon against these same rulers), then CND could quite easily be derailed by any one of a number of false Eastern or Western 'peace' initiatives.

What are the chances of CND, or at least a substantial portion of it, making this kind of transformation in its approach in the coming period? On the basis of the last annual con-



ference, which was distinctly more anti-working class than the previous one, and the falling away in local activities in the last year, the prospects certainly do not look good. However, the potential of the campaign is still enormous; so too is its appeal to the aspirations of millions of people. Any sudden upturn in activity could dramatically alter the situation overnight. CND is by far and away the biggest and best mobiliser of working people against Thatcher and her policies that we currently possess.

Middle class guilt

With the approach of the date for the installation of Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles, there is the promise of involving many more people in the struggle against them—and perhaps at a much higher level (involving direct action and civil disobedience) than hitherto. This certainly would qualitatively change the situation within CND.

But the trouble is that none of these missiles are likely to be installed before Spring 1984. We have no guarantee that CND will still be in a viable state to lead a

campaign against them then. And it would be a complete mistake to be lulled into inactivity in the interim. In the short run every attempt must be made to encourage both mass demonstrations and direct action, this side of the introduction of the missiles.

For socialists the headlong rush of our rulers along the road to the Third World War is, as it was in the run up to 1914 and 1939, the result of the return of crisis to the world capitalist economy. The tendency to produce such crises and the propensity of the ruling class to contemplate solving them by threatening world war is something that will persist so long as that class remains in power. Today that tendency can be seen at work at many different levels—the moves towards protectionism, the Siberian pipeline embargo and above all the growth of the military juggernauts. CND is a natural response to this crisis. But that does not mean that it is bound to go on growing as the crisis itself deepens; only through a continual involvement in activity and an appeal to the right ideas and arguments can it prevent itself getting shunted into irrelevant sidings. Just such dangers exist at the present time. Activists within it will have to argue hard to get it back on the right track again. □

Part of the union

Recent arguments among feminists are more than just a question of tactics for fighting male chauvinism. **Norah Carlin** argues that the basic principle of class struggle is at stake.

Trade unions today are riddled with male chauvinism and practices that discriminate against women. Even unions with a majority of women members are led by men and do not reflect the interests of their mostly low-paid female membership. Women are two-fifths of the workforce and over a third of all trade union members. Their average earnings are only 60 percent of men's.

The way the unions are run often makes it difficult for women to attend meetings, make their views known or take on responsibilities. The attitudes of many male trade unionists to their own wives and daughters make it even more difficult.

All this is true, important, and should be the starting point for many struggles to change the trade unions from within so that they become an effective weapon for women workers—and for male workers too.

It is a different matter altogether when these criticisms, these problems and necessary struggles are made the excuse for public union-bashing along the lines of an article Beatrix Campbell wrote for *Guardian Women* in August. It has now become notorious. Ms Campbell, a well-known feminist and a member of the Communist Party for many years, went much further than moaning about male chauvinism in the unions.

Lords of labour

She described trade unions in general as 'not only irrelevant to most women but sometimes inimical to their interests.' She attacked 'the lords of labour' for leading women hospital workers into 'a life and death sort of struggle' involving political risks they don't face themselves. And she said that the strike weapon may have been all right in the nineteenth century but is 'hardly fitting for a labour market characterised by service workers.'

The consequences of this outstandingly nasty article, which has rightly been seen as giving comfort to the anti-trade union camp of Thatcher and Tebbit, are still echoing through the *Morning Star* (which invited left Labour Party member and AUEW-TASS National Officer Barbara Switzer to reply) and the letters column of *Tribune*.

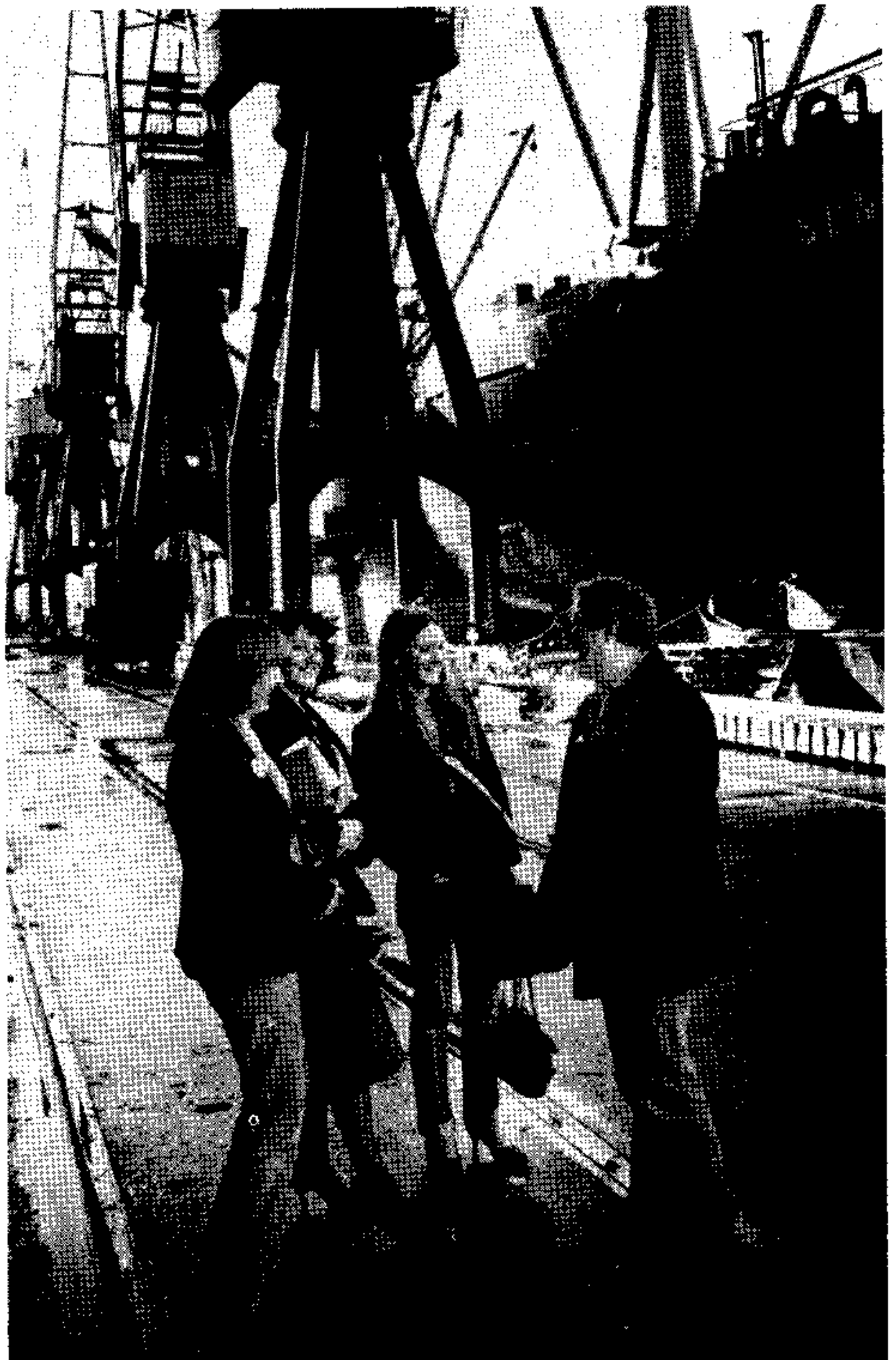
There is much more involved here than a dispute about tactics. It is not just a question of whether criticisms are raised in a fraternal manner, or within the labour movement itself rather than in the bourgeois press. The

fundamental argument of Campbell's article is not just about the position of women, but about the nature of the struggle for socialism and women's liberation. Campbell's position—which she has argued out over the last ten years—is that male domination in the trade unions is part of the patriarchal structure by which men oppress women.

This is not just a matter of terminology, or even of priorities. Behind it lie two arguments which are fundamentally destructive of working class struggle, and therefore inimical to the overthrow of the

capitalist system, the achievement of socialism, and women's liberation itself.

The first is the view that there is a 'power structure' within the working class which is of the same nature as the power structure in capitalist society at large. This is dangerous nonsense: the 'power' of trade unions is not the same as the power of the State, the Church, the Army or the judges, though they all involve male domination to a greater or lesser degree. You only have to think of the *consequences* of taking over or destroying each one in turn to realise that they are different. But the whole point of the 'power structure' analysis is that taking them over becomes an end in itself. Thatcher, Tebbit and Co pale into insignificance as each power structure becomes a separate obsession.



Lee Jeans women got essential support from dockers in their fight for jobs

The second argument is even more pernicious, for it is a denial of the validity of class struggle altogether. This fashionable view draws from the present decline of working class combativity the conclusion that the working class as such can no longer play the leading part in the struggle for socialism. The lead must be taken instead by 'broad-based' political parties composed of 'popular' movements such as feminism, ecology, etc. These arguments are, and will continue to be, dealt with elsewhere in *Socialist Review*, but it is important to realise that this is where Campbell's feminism fits. She has no qualms about union bashing in public because she has rejected class struggle as an outdated and patriarchal idea.

The other horrifying thing about Campbell-style feminism is just how incapable it is of relating to the real, present-day working class world.

Take the family wage, for instance. We are told that this is still a central preoccupation of male trade unionism, basically unchanged since the mid-nineteenth century when craft-based unionism helped to drive women out of the workforce and into the home. No doubt it was easy to find a 'group of prominent boilermakers' who all believe that women shouldn't go out to work—but both they and Ms Campbell are totally out of touch with reality.

Paid work

The fact is that half of all married women are now in paid employment, compared with only one in ten in 1931. And of the other half, a large proportion of *working class* wives are not at work either because they have very young children and no alternative to staying at home to look after them, or because they cannot get jobs in the current recession—not because their husbands are earning an adequate family wage.

In effect, the family wage has all but disappeared in the last twenty years, and the fact that some skilled male workers haven't noticed, or if they have noticed wish it hadn't, shows their capacity for self-deception, not their power to oppress women. True, we must fight any attempt to re-establish the family wage as the ideal, while at the same time recognising that many very badly-off working class families are still dependent on one income, whether a man's or a woman's. Right now, many unemployed workers' wives *need* a family wage more than many boilermakers and they aren't getting it.

The fight for equal pay and economic independence for women must take place on real ground, not on a cardboard model of fifty or a hundred years ago, and it must be sensitive to real needs.

The image of the powerful, skilled, male trade unionist carefully constructed by Beatrix Campbell and her friends is equally hollow. Blustering male chauvinists and shameless block voters their leaders may often be, but who can believe that in the real world of 1982—the world of capitalist crisis, massive unemployment and Thatcherism—the traditional 'leading sections' of the trade union movement possess real power?

Large-scale redundancies and closures



Miners and nurses, the strong and the popular

have cut much of the ground from under the feet of traditionally strong sections such as steel and car workers. If they still cling to high wages for a reduced workforce, they are snatching small victories out of massive defeats on the job front.

Politically, some of the skilled workers' unions have suffered heavy defeats, from the steel strike and the sacking of Derek Robinson to ASLEF's capitulation to flexible rostering. Only the miners have managed to preserve an image of themselves as politically undefeated despite the long-term loss of jobs in the mines—and whether this image will be preserved in the current struggle over pit closures remains to be seen. It is extraordinary how strongly Beatrix Campbell resents the self-confidence of the miners—one almost feels that political defeat would be welcomed as bringing them down a peg or two.

It is perfectly true that the trade union movement is tainted with male domination,

just as it is tainted with craftism, elitism, the twin evils of authoritarianism and passivity, and various other nasty features of capitalist society. It is above all bureaucratic—trade union leaders pursue their own goals of 'power' politics and accommodation to capitalism; officials frequently sell out strikes and wreck local negotiations from above, or dissuade members from action in the interests of 'good relations' with employers.

Bureaucracy

And under this bureaucratic leadership, women workers tend to suffer more visibly than rank and file male workers, because their low wages, lack of participation and absence from decision-making can be *measured*. But they are not the only ones who are losing out.

The trade unions are nevertheless an

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essential weapon of class struggle. Ever since Marx's own day, there have been middle class intellectual socialists who refuse to recognise this, denouncing trade union struggles as primitive, narrow, economic and selfish. Political weapons are also necessary, and ideological weapons too. But unless the working class can feel and use its own economic strength through trade union struggle, it will never even reach out for power, hegemony, revolution and the rest.

Women workers must be a vital part of the struggle to rebuild an effective, fighting trade union movement. The political weakness of the traditional skilled male sections should be an opportunity, not to borrow Tebbit's boots and kick them when they're down, but to demand a new equality, a new solidarity between men and women workers.

Lee Jeans

For the fact is that at the moment no section of workers can win on their own. Not the Lee Jeans women, who needed the solidarity of shipyard workers and dockers in their fight for jobs. Not the hospital workers (women and men), who need a big and rapid extension of the solidarity shown on the Days of Action. Not even the miners—they too depend on blacking, and on the support of 'public opinion' which is largely other workers' opinions.

We need to attack bureaucracy in the unions, and fight for a leadership that leads struggles instead of negotiating disasters. 'Feminising' the unions means nothing if it does not mean *democratising* them; demanding more women officials and executive members means precisely nothing if they continue to behave as their male counterparts do at present.

'Redistributing wealth between men and women' means nothing if it simply aims to duplicate the inequalities that exist among men. Scratch this feminist demand and that is often what you will find underneath—a belief not in equality, but in parity for women within the existing hierarchy of divisions of class, skill and pay. More top jobs for women is a strategy that will benefit the few at the expense of the many.

The slogan 'redistribute wealth between men and women' needs looking at more closely for other reasons. It should be obvious that we do fundamentally support this aim, because within particular unions or industries the levelling of grades and differentials, the demand for flat-rate increases and opposition to divide and rule productivity deals are essential to any rank and file programme. They are crucial demands for women workers.

It is rather different when this slogan is made the excuse for attacking particular sections of higher-paid workers when they are confronting employers and governments in politically significant strikes. This is a perennial problem in the trade union movement, sharpened but not created by the rightward drift of feminism. I remember a male hospital worker assuring me in 1972 that 'We would be all right if it wasn't for the bloody Ford workers.'

Worker rivalry

Nothing suits employers and governments more than disunity among the working class: the whole system, including much of the structure of the trade union movement, is designed to maximise sectionalism and rivalry.

The truth is, that we cannot eliminate these differences *without destroying*

capitalism itself; we can only seek to reduce them while capitalism survives. Equal pay for all workers would be the perfect condition for class struggle, because the nature of exploitation would then be transparent. Just for that reason, it can never be a *precondition*.

Wage freezes

If we really do want to get rid of the capitalism system—if we want real equality in the end—then *working class unity* is the priority. It is also a very practical proposition: all the wage freezes and blanket pay restrictions in recent times have been broken by better-paid workers first. The miners' victory in 1972 was the foot in the door which opened the way to a whole series of lower-paid workers' battles, including the first significant hospital workers' action.

But what if we could get an incomes policy which would really benefit low-paid women workers? This has now become an important argument among women in the labour movement, especially those who have turned in the last couple of years towards the Labour Party. Closely linked to the Feminist Incomes Policy is the Feminist Social Contract. This would mean a Labour Government committed to redistributing resources through the welfare state—for example by increased Child Benefits—or by giving higher wages to women in the public sector.

The experience of Past Incomes Policies, Social Contracts and Concordats with the Labour Party should perhaps be enough to destroy such illusions. No matter how reasonable the intentions of benefitting low-paid workers may sound, Labour governments have ended up with the same old blanket restrictions and freezes, the same



Judith Hart, a true leader of the Labour Party

degrading confrontations with low-paid workers in the public sector. (Remember the Winter of Discontent?)

No matter how firm the commitment to expanding the welfare state, large enough increases in public spending have not materialised because of the same old need to maintain profitability in the private sector. (Remember Squeezing the Rich till the Pips Squeak?)

But this time, say feminists in the Labour Party, it will be different, because this time we will change the leadership of the Labour Party—by 'feminising' it and getting the left into positions of power—so that the next Labour government really will carry out those equalising policies.

Labour Party

The immediate, practical problem about this is that it is far more easily said than done. Changing the leadership of the Labour Party is many times more difficult than getting the party conference committed to suitable policies. The defeats that really hurt feminists at this year's Blackpool conference were organisational—the rejection of proposals to have women NEC members elected by the women's sections and to get at least one woman included in every Parliamentary short list. They were crucial defeats because this strategy *depends* on changing the leadership.

It is not primarily male chauvinism and patriarchal power that prevent the Labour Party leadership from being 'feminised', but the whole nature of the party, as an electoral machine and its relations with British capitalism, past, present and prospective future. Feminist fury is wasted on Chairperson Judith Hart for obstructing the women's debate—a traitor to her sex she may be, but she is absolutely true to type as a member of the Labour Party leadership.

Real progress for women workers does not depend on changing the leadership of the Labour Party or the unions from the top, but on the progress of the class struggle and women's place within it. We must be totally committed to this—women must not get left behind in the trade union struggle this time round.

Child care

There are plenty of practical things that must be done about this. Union meetings in workplaces and branches must be genuinely open to women—that may mean changing the times of meetings, making arrangements for child care, or altering procedures so that the rank and file are heard more than the office holders. Husbands, sons and boyfriends must recognise that women trade unionists have to go to meetings and take on responsibilities that will mean they have to cook dinner or wash socks for themselves.

Women and men must be together on picket lines. No more 'Thanks for the strike vote, girls—you'll be catching up on the housework while we're out.' Though it must be said that the problem can be the other way round, too—this morning I was on a 100 percent female picket line at our local hos-



The Labour Party conference—can it be 'feminised' from within?

pital, and the women were furious that on this, their third day of action, the male porters had deserted them. Picket lines should not only include men and women from the workplace, but husbands and wives as well.

The press and television will try to divide women from men as couples and families whichever way round—from appealing to Ford strikers' wives to addressing striking clerical staff as 'our wives, mothers and sweethearts'!

We need to be able to analyse the current situation as well as past history. Modern capitalism has provided us with a new material basis for women's place in the class struggle: more women at work than ever before, the weakening of the family wage, and new technology changing the definition of skills faster each year. The women's liberation movement of the early 1970s reawakened our ideas of the need for women's liberation as part of the struggle for socialism.

If some supporters of that movement have moved sharply to the right, denying what many women felt to be the automatically revolutionary implications of feminism ten years ago, and relying instead on a perspective of change from above, we should not be shamefaced or coy about arguing with them.

Short cuts

It is not 'anti-feminist' to argue that there are no short cuts to liberation for working class women; that their advance depends on the advance of the working class as a whole, and not on winning positions in reformist parties or bureaucratised trade unions; and that without the liberation of working class women feminism is meaningless. On the contrary, it is when publicly attacking the unions and denouncing workers on strike become the test of 'feminism' that the cause of women's liberation is in danger. □



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Angels on picket lines

The traditional approach to nursing as a profession has been a major factor in alienating nurses from the rest of the hospital workforce, and limiting their union membership and militancy. **Ann Rogers** looks at some of the problems of organising nurses.

Over 80 percent of nursing and ancillary staff working in the NHS are women. They are pushed towards health care because these jobs are seen as ones in which women can use their 'natural' feminine skills, caring for others without demanding large rewards.

The training and work practices imposed on these workers try to ensure that they do not deviate from traditional women's roles, and so continue to provide a cheap and malleable source of labour for the NHS. The use of myths about women's natural role is a common means of control used by all managers of female workforces, but in nursing, which epitomises the 'ideal' of woman as care-giver, it is most strongly felt.

The experience of being on strike breaks down the traditional passivity of nurses, as many women find out for themselves that the idea of a hospital as one big happy family, all working to care for the patient, is a fiction.

There is a tremendous tension between the ideology which nurses are fed, and the reality of their working lives. Many militant nurses feel that their lack of industrial muscle makes it difficult to turn more than a few nurses into good trade unionists.

Most workers involved in industrial action soon find themselves vilified by the press and even the more backward sections of the working class. They quickly become hardened to this and the most advanced can draw political lessons. But nurses are everyone's favourites, so militants inside hospitals have a much tougher time arguing for all-out action rather than gentle persuasion. Only support from stronger sections of the class as well as regular meetings within each hospital can overcome this, creating the confidence that the dispute can be won, demonstrating that nurses are part of a wider working class movement.

The 'professionals'

Winning the argument that nurses are workers, whose interests are similar to those of porters, domestics, ancillaries is an uphill task as hospital management have always fed nurses the myth that they are 'professionals' whose only duty is to their patients.

Nursing as a 'respectable' profession developed as a result of capitalism forcing certain services out of the home and into the

public sphere. Before the mid-nineteenth century hospitals were little more than dustbins for sick paupers. The women who cleaned them, if they were cleaned at all, also came from the pauper classes. Anyone who could afford it would be cared for at home, by domestic servants.

The need for better health care, together with technical developments in medicine, led to the widespread building of public hospitals, and with it the need for people to care for the sick in these new institutions. The women who undertook the work were almost wholly young, unmarried and middle class. They did their job in the spirit with which, as dutiful daughters, they would have nursed their families a generation earlier. Hospitals were modelled on the politics of the Victorian home, with doctors playing the omniscient father, senior nurses the strict, but inferior mother, and junior nurses the completely subservient daughters. Nurses were overworked, grossly underpaid and subjected to the strictest moral standards.

This whole atmosphere, together with the class background of the majority of nurses strongly influenced their reluctance to see themselves as workers, who could fight for decent wages and conditions.

The founding of the NHS led to a rapid increase in demand for nurses. Increased recruitment led to working class women, and

married women entering nursing. Women were still pushed into nursing because it was an extension of their 'natural' role. But the women now nursing were not just doing it because they found it rewarding, but because they needed the money. A tension was bound to develop between nurses' experiences as workers selling their labour and the ideology of nurses as endlessly self-sacrificing care-givers.

Many nurses have begun to see that all their goodwill and 'responsibility' has not prevented cuts in the NHS hurting patients. The hypocrisy of the management has become clearer as they stamped on any attempts to organise against the cuts. In a situation where political decisions are leading to a rundown in the health service the most responsible thing health workers can do is fight for a decent service. Fighting the government is seen as the only way to protect patients. In the best organised hospitals the ideology of responsibility to patients has backfired on the management.

Nurses have traditionally been the people who would do any job in the wards. This has led to friction between nurses and more militant health workers, such as porters. But with sharp reductions in staffing there are now simply too many gaps appearing for nurses to keep things ticking over. When the present industrial action began the idea that the health service was crumbling because of political decisions rather than lazy porters was already widespread. Joint action by all hospital workers has further undermined the traditional divisions in the workforce.

Ten percent of nurses now belong to a proper union, rather than the right wing RCN



(Royal College of Nursing). This has been the major factor in breaking down the isolation of nurses from the rest of the workforce. Nurses usually work different shifts to other hospital workers, so they can go for weeks without speaking to anyone except other nurses, especially when they are on nights.

A major part of the nurse's training is directed at the ideological rather than the technical aspects of the job. By the time they have qualified nurses are expected to have swallowed the hierarchy's view of how a nurse should behave.

Militants weeded

The examination structure gives the nursing hierarchy great power over student nurses. Failure to conform during the training period can easily result in exam failure. Effectively nurses are on a two or three year probation. Under the guise of giving a professional qualification, the hospital management has an effective way to curb militancy. Once nurses have passed their exams they have to apply for jobs. They are not automatically given a job in the hospital in which they trained. Any militants can thus be weeded out.

Nurses are subject to levels of petty disciplinary rules which management wouldn't dream of imposing on any other group of workers.

These petty rules have led to a great bitterness among nurses. Being in contact with other hospital workers has brought home the difference between the way they are treated in comparison to other hospital workers, and that union organisation is the way to win better treatment.

At some hospitals management have tried to use these disciplinary procedures to stop nurses going on picket lines in uniform. Nurses can be dismissed for 'unprofessional' behaviour if they are found guilty of a criminal offence. So being arrested on a picket line can threaten their jobs.

The present industrial action has shown management's claims that they put patients first to be lies. In many hospitals the management have blamed the failure of supplies to arrive on picket lines, when the real reason for the shortage of supplies is the cuts, about which management does nothing. The Royal College of Nursing can be seen to have completely failed to convince the government that nurses should be paid as professionals.

Mass unionisation

These two factors have created a potential for mass unionisation of nurses. Whether this potential becomes a reality depends upon several factors. If the health workers win the present dispute, nurses would gain confidence that industrial action can win. If they receive mass support from other workers they will feel part of the class as a whole. If the overall level of the class struggle increases their ideas about their role can change even more quickly. Unless some or all of these happen it will be all too easy for nurses to slip back into passive 'femininity'. □

Soviet Power—Live

Fifty years ago Trotsky wrote his *History of the Russian Revolution*. John Lindsay introduces this classic account of the birth of workers' power.

"There are three questions on the order of the day: organisation of a government; war and peace; convocation of the Constituent Assembly." An unusual, dull, alarming rumble breaks into the noise of the meeting from outside. This is Peter and Paul Fortress ratifying the order of the day with artillery fire.

With Kamenev's opening remarks Trotsky describes the beginning of the Congress of the Soviets on 25 October 1917. The story started only eight months before but the eight months of February to October 1917 were the laboratory of the revolution.

In February 1917, Russia had been at war for three years. The Tsarist state was beginning to crumble under the impact of military defeat. Starvation affected millions of soldiers, workers and peasants, and speculation was rife.

International Women's Day was to be celebrated by meetings, speeches, leaflets. Even the Vyborg Bolshevik borough-committee opposed strikes: 'the time is unripe for militant action—the party is not strong enough and the workers have too few contacts with the soldiers.'

But the next morning, in spite of all directives, women textile workers in several factories went on strike and sent delegates to the metal workers for support. 90,000 were on strike that day. The question now was what would the soldiers do? To everyone's surprise they didn't shoot on the demonstrations. Some stood by, some stayed in their barracks, some joined the demonstrations with cudgels, but they didn't shoot.

The next day the demonstrations and the strikes grew; by the next week power was in the hands of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies.

The story of the revolution is told out of the mouths of the participants, moving from a factory worker to a soldier to a report of a Bolshevik meeting or a quotation from a bulletin. Interspaced are references to past revolutions, in England, France, Germany. The whole is woven into a fabric of theory and practice where the general point is elaborated by the direct experience and the experience develops the theory.

This is the real richness of Trotsky's history. It is not simply a story—it is a story excitingly told. It is not just a theoretical text on the mounting of a revolution, it argues every theoretical question the workers' movement must consider.

No sooner had the masses disposed of the Tsar than the bourgeoisie, petty

intellectuals, state bureaucrats and officers moved into the palaces to begin the running of things. The Soviet was a different being from that of 1905. In 1905 the Soviets had arisen out of a general strike. In 1917, because the soldiers moved so quickly, the revolution was successful before the workers had created a soviet. 'The executive committee was self-constituted, in advance of the Soviet and independently of the factories and regiments.'

The new executive's concern was the running of the war. It was also concerned to maintain profits: 'Soldiers to the barracks, workers to the shops.'

'Does that mean that everything is going to remain the same?' asked a worker.

'For the time being,' answered a Menshevik.

But the Bolshevik leadership was in no better condition.

'They behaved not like the representatives of a proletarian party preparing an independent struggle for power, but like the left wing of a democracy, which, having announced its principles, intended for an indefinite time to play the part of loyal opposition.'

In brief pen sketches Trotsky shades each of the leading Bolsheviks in this period of confusion, but also shows the base of the party in the factories, deeply unhappy, demanding a clear leadership.

The story is told of the Finland Station, of the April Conference of the Bolsheviks, of Lenin arguing the party round, away from the position he himself had held for years into the position Trotsky had argued. But Lenin did so with complete honesty. He drew the political lesson, and carried the worker militants of the party with him, leaving the leadership puzzled and running to catch up. He split the Bolsheviks fundamentally from the reformists and rearmed the party.

April, May and June were months when the reformists strengthened their control of the state in the interests of the owners of property and pursued the war in the interests of patriotism. But it was also the period when the Bolsheviks strengthened their hold on the workers and soldiers. The slogan of *Bread, Peace and Land* drew out the split in the classes supposedly together fighting a 'national revolution'.

In July the split widened into a chasm. The masses took to the streets once more, demanding an end to the war. But the power of the reformists over the army meant that an attempt to push forward the revolution would be doomed. The Bolsheviks argued against insurrection, despite the fact that it was they who were being banned, arrested, and driven underground.

It was only then that Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks:

'The balance was here struck to years of disagreement and factional struggle.

Trotsky came to Lenin as to a teacher whose power and significance he understood later than many others, but perhaps more fully than they.'

The masses on the streets raised the question of who would hold power. The argument of the Bolsheviks against seizing power in July, was not an argument against seizing power, but about who would seize power and when.

The slogan 'All power to the Soviets' raised two questions. Was the leadership of the Soviets capable of taking power? And if it did take power, would it not just hand it straight back? For the Soviets were in the hands of the compromisers:

'The calculations of the Bolsheviks on a peaceful development of the revolution rested, not on the hope that the bourgeoisie would voluntarily turn over the power to the workers and soldiers, but that the workers and soldiers would in good season prevent the compromisers from surrendering to the bourgeoisie.'

But in politics a vacuum of power is impossible. Because the masses did not push through to a seizure of power, the officer class began to exert its power, using the retreat from the streets to the factories to attack the Provisional Government.

At the same time the Germans were still advancing. The Bolsheviks' argument for proletarian revolution had to be turned against the 'protection of Russia.' argument. 'Neither the capture of Riga nor the capture of Petersburg will make us defencists,' said Lenin. 'The fall of Petersburg would be a misfortune. But the fall of the international policy of the Russian proletariat would be ruinous,' said Trotsky.

At the time Lenin was in hiding, Trotsky was in prison. The right had the ascendancy in the Provisional Government, the compromisers controlled the soviets, and the Germans were nearing Petersburg. But in the factories and the soldiers' committees the Bolsheviks argued patiently. Not now for all power to the soviets but for an insurrection.

Then the right struck. General Kornilov marched on Petersburg and the Provisional Government resigned, with Kerensky, its chairman, left alone. The stock exchange boomed, and the British offered to help the revolt. But the Tsarist officers of the right were incompetent, and the Bolsheviks had now won the trust of the masses. The railways did not move. Workers talked to the soldiers. The 'protection of the government' came to be seen as the defeat of the revolution.

In the confusion men began to arrest their officers, and a soviet of soldier deputies came into being. Kerensky, in Petersburg, failed to realise that Kornilov's troops were draining away, and tried to a deal. The bourgeoisie had measured strength with the power of the revolution and found themselves short.

The revolt of the generals opened the eyes of the masses to the dangers of the compromisers. Everywhere support turned to the Bolsheviks as the ones who had been patiently explaining what was happening and what it meant. When the Provisional Government turned to the right to protect themselves from the people, the forces of the right used the chance to try to smash the revolution.

When its fear of the right became greater



than the fear of the people, the Provisional Government turned to the left for protection. But in smashing Kornilov the workers discovered once more their own power, reestablished their organisations, and turned away from the compromisers who had led them into such dangers.

But again the leadership of the Bolsheviks was not ready.

In hiding Lenin tried time and again to force the leadership in Petersburg that the time was ripe to move. Formalism takes a grip when there is the need to move into a new situation: Wait for the assembly, wait for the congress of soviets, wait to give the Kornilovs a chance to move again.

That was Kamenev's argument.

'The data for an insurrection are lacking. We have no machine of insurrection. The enemy's machine is far stronger ... Two tactics are in conflict here: the tactic of conspiracy and the tactic of faith in the motive forces of the Russian revolution.'

Lenin replied: 'If you consider that an insurrection is right, it is not necessary to argue about conspiracy. If an insurrection is politically inevitable then we must relate ourselves to insurrection as to an art.'

Bridge

Trotsky argued: 'How on the basis of the ripened political situation are we to approach the insurrection? How find a bridge from the politics to the technique of revolution? And how lead the masses along that bridge?'

Lenin won the argument on the Central Committee by 20 votes to two with three abstentions. But behind the vote was an intense inner struggle for the determination necessary to overthrow the Provisional Government. 'The will to struggle is not stored up in advance, and is not dictated from above—it has on every occasion to be independently renewed and tempered.'

The organisation by which the proletariat could both overthrow the old power and replace it was the Soviets. However they did not themselves settle the question. The revolutionary party represented the 'brain' of the class. Conquering power could only be solved by a combination of party with soviets.

As a result of their manifest incapacity to get the country out of the mess, the ruling class lost faith in themselves. There arose a

bitter hostility to the existing order. The more decisively and confidently the proletariat acted the better it succeeded in winning over intermediate layers. The proletariat became imbued with confidence after it tested out in action the correlation of forces.

The fundamental force of the October revolution was the proletariat, its first rank, the workers of Petrograd, its vanguard, the workers of the Vyborg district. But it was impossible to summon the masses to battle in the name of the Soviet without raising the question formally in the Soviet—which would have made the problem of insurrection the subject of public debate. The Military Revolutionary Committee had been set up by the Congress of Soviets during the Kornilov scare. But even it consisted of a wide cross section of workers and soldiers.

Why, then, not organise the insurrection directly in the name of the party?

It would not have been a question of substituting for the class, and so turning the insurrection into a putsch. The Soviets represented the workers, soldiers, and to some extent, the peasants in motion. And the party was the leading force in the Soviets.

The danger was quite the opposite—letting slip a favourable moment because of frictions in the Soviets. Should they wait for the Congress of Soviets in October, or present it with the transfer of power? 'Who is to seize the power?' wrote Lenin on the evening of 24 October. 'That is now of no importance.'

Contrast February and October. On the eve of the overthrow of the monarchy, the garrison represented a great unknown. Only a general strike could create the necessary arena for mass encounters of workers with soldiers. On the eve of the overthrow of the Provisional Government the overwhelming majority of the garrison was standing openly on the side of the workers. In February the workers had not thought of seizing the banks and the palace, but of winning the soldiers. In October the banks, telephones, the commanding heights, were taken over without conflict.

The Congress of the Soviets assembled with 650 voting delegates—390 Bolsheviks. 505 voted for the transfer of all power to the Soviets. The Winter Palace falls, the guns of the Peter and Paul Fortress fall silent. 'We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order.'

Is the class contracting?

Both *The Guardian* and *Marxism Today* have recently carried an article by the well-known CP historian **Eric Hobsbawm**, arguing that to see the working class as the agency of socialism is no longer 'plausible'. **Duncan Hallas** examines his arguments.

'We may begin with the obvious fact that world capitalism is in its deepest crisis since the 1930s... Whatever the short or long term future of capitalism, the age of economic miracles of the 1950s and 1960s is past. Mass unemployment is here again on a scale unimagined for more than a generation.

'Meanwhile hard times are returning to the peoples of countries which had forgotten about them, and harder times to those which never had a chance to. Economically the international monetary and credit system is walking along the precipice of a major collapse.

'Ought we not therefore to expect a major shift towards the Left, and especially towards the Socialists, whose claim that capitalism cannot manage its contradictions, now sounds much more convincing than it has done for along time?... But there has been no major shift.'

Thus Eric Hobsbawm in *Marxism Today*. The only 'evident advances' of the left in Europe in the recent period are those of the 'peace and ecology movements' which 'do not reflect, except very indirectly indeed, any mass response to the economic failures and social problems of capitalism in its time of crisis.'

It is, at first sight, rather surprising given his general political position, that Hobsbawm does not claim the electoral victories of Mitterrand and Papanadreu as 'left advances'. Indeed his attitude towards them is cool to the point of realism! However, this is no quirk or aberration. It is necessary to his central thesis – the passing of the working class as the agency for the socialist reconstruction of society.

Hobsbawm is a skilful writer. His case cannot be better put than in his own words, and since it is important to confront the argument in its strongest form, I quote the core of it in full.

'This disappointing situation of the Left in the midst of a great opportunity must be seen against the background of difficulties which have developed over a much longer period. The core of the Left, since the decline of nineteenth century Liberalism, consisted, and still largely consists of the working class parties and labour movements which developed on a

massive scale in most of Europe before the First World War, splitting into Social Democratic and Communist parties after the October Revolution.'

'They grew up essentially as proletarian parties, a tendency intensified in the Communist Parties after 1917. That is to say, while also attracting – and seeking to attract – support from other strata and groups (for instance intellectuals), they were primarily based on manual wage earners, heavily preoccupied with the specific demands of this class, and they expected to achieve their triumph over capitalism essentially through the action of the working class.

'They saw this class as inevitably growing in numbers and socialist class consciousness, as inevitably destined by history to rise and triumph, carrying with it the rest of the people, except for a steadily diminishing number of capitalist exploiters.

'And, in fact, such parties grew and became mass forces, and attracted support from non-workers, inasmuch as they were seen as representing all that was progressive, and no other major parties existed around whom the alliance of workers and other progressive forces could rally. To this extent their historical confidence did not seem misplaced.

'This is no longer such a plausible prospect. The late Rab Butler records in his memoirs that Aneurin Bevan told him in the 1930s "You represent a declining class: I represent a rising class". It is not easy to imagine many young working class militants expressing such opinions with genuine conviction today.

Class of 1939

'The manual working class, core of traditional socialist labour parties, is today contracting and not expanding. It has been transformed, and to some extent divided by the decades when its standard of living reached levels undreamed of even by the well-paid in 1939.

'It can no longer be assumed that all workers are on the way to recognising that their class situation must align them behind a socialist workers' party, though there are still many millions who believe this. In Britain today a large sector of the "affluent" or skilled workers, once the strongest supporters of Labour, are today politically unstable, as public opinion polls and electoral analyses demonstrate.'

There are two propositions here: there is the thesis of the inevitable growth of the working class in numbers and *consequently* in socialist class consciousness ('inevitably destined by history' etc) which a conveniently vague 'they' and 'us' implication the rest of us are supposed to have depended upon, and there is the proposition that 'the manual working class is today contracting.'



Now these are quite distinct questions. The thesis of 'inevitable', 'inexorable' proletarian advance as a function of the growth of capitalism itself is, of course, a species of economic reductionism, of what Trotsky called in 1922 'the mechanical, fatalistic and non-Marxist conception of revolutionary development.'

There were indeed people who held to it in the past. They were, most importantly, the leaders of those Social-Democratic Parties which still claimed to be marxists at that time and their theoreticians: most conspicuous of whom was – Karl Kautsky!

For what Hobsbawm presents here is pure, undiluted Kautskyism. It is ironic, after all it has done to publicise Gramsci and to promote a cult of (castrated) Gramscianism, that the right wing of the British CP, in the person of its most able publicist, should now descend to naked economic reductionism.

All social theories serve a purpose. They are functional, irrespective of their scientific content. What was the function of Kautskyism, of Second International marxism? It was to conceal a reformist political practice behind a screen of marxist phrases, to promote political passivity, to postpone the struggle for power to the indefinite future, and, *in practice*, to support the status quo.

Lenin described it thus: 'By means of patent sophistry, Marxism is stripped of its living revolutionary spirit; everything is recognised in Marxism, *except* the revolutionary methods of struggle, the propaganda and preparation of those methods and the education of the masses in this direction.'

There was, and is, another tradition: Hobsbawm's 'they' are not 'us'. That other

tradition emphasises politics, the formation (or decline) of class consciousness as the product of *struggles* (or the lack of them), the heterogeneity of the working class and the *indispensability* of the revolutionary party in the formation of *socialist* class consciousness.

It is the tradition of Bolshevism, the Communist International (including the British CP) before it succumbed to Stalinism, of Trotskyism at its best. It is not a voluntaristic tradition but it rejects entirely the simple-minded economic determinism of Kautsky-Hobsbawm. It recognises that there is no mechanical connection between movements in the economy and the class struggle but rather a complex dialectical interdependence which is always changing. But for that very reason Hobsbawm's second proposition, the decline of the working class, must be carefully and objectively considered.

Smaller, weaker

To say that the industrial working class is shrinking, is, for Britain, a statement of fact. Thus, before the impact of the present slump, the percentage of the workforce employed in industry (manual and non-manual alike) fell from 47.5 in 1961 to 42.3 in 1974 to 39.7 in 1978. Since then the slump has caused a further sharp contraction in industrial employment.

Leave that aside for the moment and look at the pre-slump trend. Between 1961 and 1978 the *proportion* of the workforce in industry fell by 7.8 per cent, but the total workforce grew from 24,436,000 in 1960 to 25,487,000 in 1977. This still represents an absolute fall in the industrial workforce, but combined with a small growth in the total of workers.

At any rate, the pre-slump trend is an international one, although there are important exceptions to it. Thus, the EEC countries as a whole 'lost 2.5 million jobs in industry and gained 3 million in services' between 1974 and 1978 (N. Harris *De-industrialisation* IS Journal 2:7). The same source gives data from the United States showing a relative decline but absolute increase in industrial jobs between 1961 (22 million, 32.5%) and 1973 (26.7 million, 31.6%) followed by both absolute and

relative decline. In Japan, on the other hand, the industrial workforce increased both relatively and absolutely throughout the period to 1978.

The same is true of the Asian boom economies, which Harris regards as 'offshore extensions of Japan, and to a lesser extent, the United States.' In South Korea the industrial workforce grew from 8.7% of the total in 1963 to 22.8% in 1976, in Taiwan from 9.3% in 1952 to 38.0% in 1977. Similarly there was uneven but considerable growth of the industrial working class in some important Latin American countries and some East European ones (notably) between 1961 and 1978.

To summarise; the fifties and sixties saw a massive growth in the *industrial* workforce on the world scale and, at the same time, escalating productivity of labour in industry. In the seventies the latter trend began to prevail over the former, but the overall level of economic activity was still high enough to increase the *total* number of jobs, while the percentage of industrial workers tended to decline in the older industrialised areas.

The absolute numbers of both industrial workers proper and of all workers on the eve of the present world slump was, however, massive – far, far, bigger than in the thirties. Even in Britain, with one of the worst records of economic growth, the workforce grew from nineteen and three-quarters million in 1939 to twenty-five and a half million in 1977. If we can regard the workforce as a whole as largely proletarian, then, far from a decline the whole period from the end of the Second World War until the present slump saw an explosive growth of the working class worldwide.

But can we so regard it? There are respectable precedents for the view that the only 'real' proletarians are manual workers in industry. For example, Lenin:

'The Proletariat is the class which is engaged in the production of material values in large-scale capitalist industry.'

This is from a speech on the New Economic Policy in 1921, and it continues:

'Since large-scale capitalist industry has been destroyed, since the factories are at a standstill, the proletariat has disappeared. It has sometimes figured in statistics, but it has not been held together economically.'

The emphasis was entirely justified in the given context – the ruin of industry in an overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois (peasant) country, but it is excessively restrictive, indeed mis-leading, in a developed economy. It would, for example, exclude from the proletariat such groups as dockers and railwaymen, amongst many others.

Marx's definition of the proletariat was that class which lacks ownership of the means of production and is dependent on the sale of its labour power (to those who control the means of production) for wages in order to live. In Marx's own time the factory worker was indeed the typical proletarian (although there were important groups of non-factory proletarians, some of declining importance, some destined to grow in numbers).

Any definition is an approximation, a compressing of complicated and untidy reality into a conceptual box, and therefore to be used with caution. That said, Marx's definition remains the best guide. The great mass of 'service' workers clearly fall within it. Equally, the upper echelons of the administrative hierarchies (public and 'private', civil service and ICI) must be excluded – whether or not they have means independent of the sale of their labour power – because their social function is that of agents of capital, controllers of the workforce.

Scholasticism

But where is the line to be drawn? It cannot be drawn in terms of formal definition. That is largely a scholastic exercise. It is drawn in terms of struggle and so is continually shifting. Are the mass of hospital workers proletarians? Yes in terms of the broad definition, certainly not in terms of the narrow one. Are they capable acquiring class consciousness in struggle? Yes, in principle; sometimes yes in practice, sometimes not.

However, this is also true of 'narrow definition' proletarians. Hobsbawm tells us 'a large sector of the "affluent" or skilled workers, once the strongest supporters of Labour, are today politically unstable.' Is that because they have ceased to be proletarians?

Actually the reason is in large part connected with *politics*, with the recent ex-

HELLO! A LONG TIME AGO I JOINED THE LABOUR PARTY TO CHANGE IT FROM THE INSIDE!



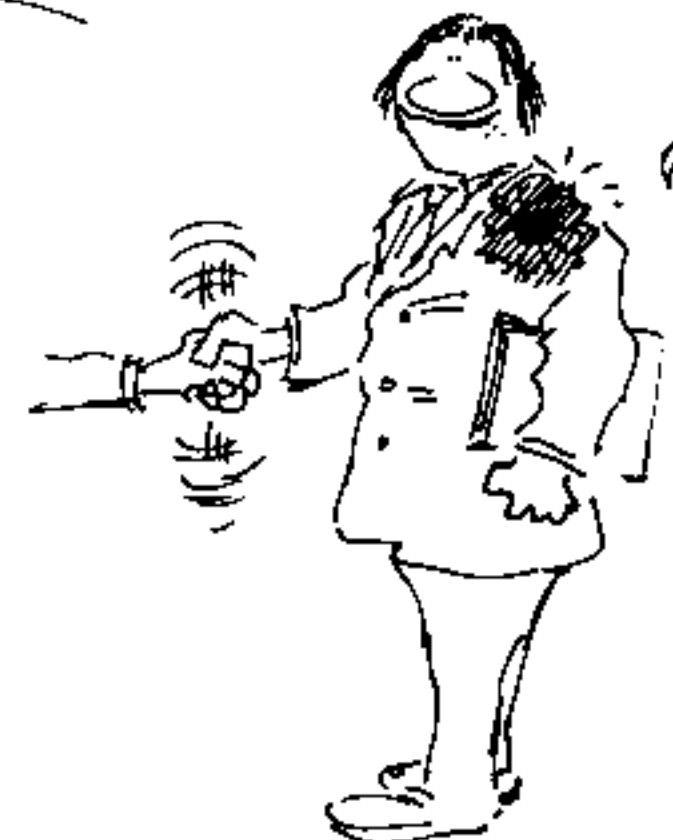
I SAT ON HARD SEATS AND WENT TO 14,000,763 INTERMINABLE DULL MEETINGS.



I BECAME WELL VERSED IN THE POLITICS OF THE DOORSTEP.



AND AT LAST I BECAME A CANDIDATE FOR PARLIAMENT!



perience of Labour government, with the repulsive face of Stalinism in Poland shown on TV screens.

To a limited extent Hobsbawm admits this:

'For, unlike the 1930s, the Left today can neither point to an alternative society immune to the crisis (as the USSR seemed to be) nor to any concrete policies which hold much promise for overcoming it in the short-term (as Keynesian or similar policies seemed to promise then).'

Thirties myth

Yet he twists the truth. The myth of the thirties is especially pernicious. It was a time of catastrophic *defeat* for the workers, especially in Europe, thanks to the *politics* of the Stalinist and Social-Democratic parties. Even in Britain, which escaped the worst of both the slump and fascism the Tories won easily both general elections held in the decade - with bigger majorities than Thatcher's - and the unions were vastly weaker even than today. There were *no* national strikes.

The myth of the 'golden past' is conjured up to 'prove' that the present situation is hopeless - unless we adopt policies which turn out, on examination, to be even more bankrupt and right-wing than those that led to disaster in the 1930s. The method, as well as the history, is false to the core.

None of what has been said here is meant to downplay the importance of the industrial working class. It remains the heart of the working class, although a minority of the whole class. Changing techniques of production and a decline in recent years of the average size of units of production (in terms of workers employed) do present problems for revolutionary socialists. They make the development of the party, as the unifying factor amongst advanced workers, *more* not less important and they impose the need to learn how best to struggle in changing circumstances.

The impact of the slump has been to shift the balance of class forces in favour of the capitalist class - for the time being. That is what we mean by the downturn. Although in Britain the downturn preceded the slump by several years, it has been greatly intensified by the slump.

This is an entirely different matter from the longer term trends we have been discussing. The onset of mass unemployment over the last three years is not explainable in terms of long term trends in technology and the changing structure of the workforce but by the slump in the world economy (and in part, very much the smaller part, by British government policy).

Previous experience indicates that, after a shorter or longer period, the downturn in the class struggle created by, or intensified by, a slump, gives way to sharp struggles. These are commonly associated with the first signs of economic upturn, even if slight, in which the accumulated bitterness bursts forth. What happens next depends on many things, but first of all on the political forces inside the working class movement. The reformists, the labour bureaucracies and their friends will try to damp down the struggles, or, if that is too difficult, to put themselves at the head of them in order to abort them.

Hard intervention

Whether they succeed or not depends on both the scale and bitterness of the struggle and on the ability of revolutionaries to intervene effectively. That, in turn, depends on how successfully the revolutionary party has been developed in the previous period i.e. *now*.

There is of course a rich literature on this subject, starting with discussions at the Third and Fourth Congresses of the Communist International, through to the experiences of the French, Polish and American mass strikes of the late thirties, the rise of the American CIO and so on.

Hobsbawm will have none of this. For him the key question is not the consciousness and confidence of the working class, however defined, but unity with 'other strata and groups'. Even verbal leftism a la Benn may repel these (undefined but in reality middle class) forces and must be avoided. Thus 'the Labour Party is so disrupted and demoralised and on the defensive that most of its members act as though they have written off the chance of defeating the government.'

As noted earlier, Hobsbawm is less than enthusiastic about the 'neo-socialist' parties in France, Greece etc - 'it is sometimes by



Eric the red? No longer

no means clear what their leaders represent other than, say, a handsome face with great public relations potential.'

Nevertheless, 'both kinds of socialist party (new and traditional) belong to the left as indeed do most British Social Democrats' (my emphasis - DH). So there we have it. 'Rebuilding the left' means unity with the SDP (and surely the Liberals too - for are they to the right of the SDP?). And that might well be possible - on the SDP's own terms.

'The left in the Socialist parties, which has sometimes captured decisive influence in them has often failed to be aware of the need for broad unity.'

Unity with middle class parties that is. Hence the whole elaborate attempt to establish the withering away of the proletariat!

Not only Benn but even the Mitterrand of 1981 is too left-wing for Hobsbawm's taste. The logic is clear enough - it is identical with the logic of Denis Healey and Peter Shore, though neither would be so openly polite to the SDP. There is, though, a glaring contradiction, a gaping hole, in this position. For Hobsbawm, if not Healey, accepts - tells us - that 'Keynesian or similar policies' do not offer 'much promise.' But what other policies will the SDP (and in particular, the Labour right) be prepared to even consider? Thus, on his own showing 'broad unity' cannot offer a way forward.

That a man of Hobsbawm's ability can serve up such a sorry mess of pottage is a striking testimony to the political degeneration of the CP. □

THE WAY WAS CLEAR FOR EDGWOOD BENN AND TROTSKY!



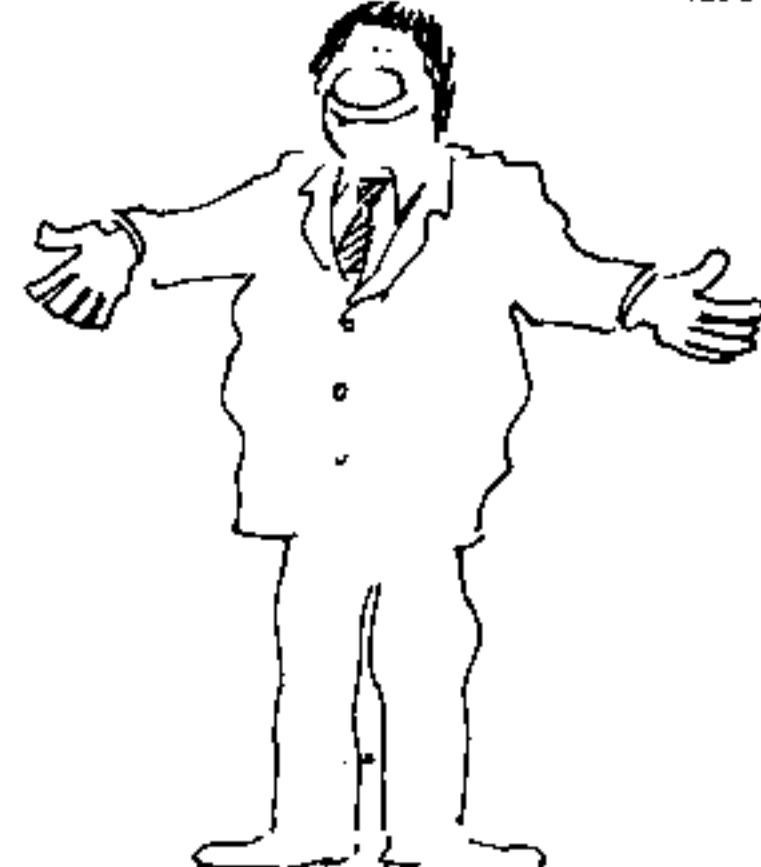
THEN SOMETHING HAPPENED.



I WAS THREATENED WITH EXPULSION! BY ALL THE LEFT-WINGERS WHO'D ENTERED THE LABOUR PARTY YEARS AGO TO CHANGE IT FROM THE INSIDE AND HAD TURNED INTO RIGHT-WINGERS!



THIS PRESENTED ME WITH A SERIOUS THEORETICAL PROBLEM OF REVOLUTIONARY STRATEGY - BUT I MANAGED TO RESOLVE IT.



-I BECAME A RIGHT-WINGER TOO!

No honourable men

John Le Carre's novels are being pushed hard in bookshops following BBC2's screening of *Smiley's People*. Colin Sparks looks at the work of this popular writer.

John Le Carre's books are set at the sharp end of the Cold War. Spies from Britain and Russia plot against each other, work out elaborate plans or deception and quite often kill.

That sounds like unpromising material. The struggles of nation states and their ruling class thugs are not exactly the sort of things that socialists like to focus on. Our war is fought out between classes and everyone from Smiley to Karla are on the other side of the barricades. Anyone who is looking for the revolutionary proletariat should steer well clear of Le Carre.

If you have slightly more catholic taste then you will find here something almost as interesting: a powerful and often moving account of how the modern capitalist state twists, distorts and kills even its most loyal servants. Le Carre's books are not socialist but they are critical.

The spy story is one of the best vehicles for that sort of writing. Of course, in the hands of the likes of John Buchan or Ian Fleming it was and is an excuse for 'snobbery with violence' but it has a much greater potential.

Such writing is convenient for authors because it allows them to tell a good story. It is popular with readers because it can have exotic locations, desperate perils, exciting action and all of the other things that we like to read about.

In the hands of writers like Le Carre it can also do something much more than that. It can tell us about the world. It stops being interesting and becomes fascinating.

Web of fragments

Capitalist Society is a writhing pit of lies, deception and violence. The world of the spy is just a concentrated version of the world we inhabit everyday. Smiley's 'Circus' and Karla's 'Moscow Centre' are simply miniatures of every great bureaucracy.

In these books they have an added fascination. Another word for spy is secret agent: they are supposed to be people who see through the dross of propaganda and know the secrets that we are ignorant of. Le Carre's spies do not have that privilege. His books are built around the baffling hunt through a web of fragments and half-truths to arrive at half-understood conclusions. His spies are just like the rest of us.

George Smiley, the hero of the books, is the decent man set up for us to identify with. Like us he hankers after the simpler days of

his youth – for him the struggle against the Nazis. Like us he is much more interested in his hobbies than his job. Like us he is surrounded by incompetents, careerists and treacherous friends. Like us, he is worried if personal vendettas are getting in the way of doing his job.

Le Carre's trap for the reader is that Smiley is not immune from the pressures of his world. Very early in the cycle, in *Ring for the Dead*, he is forced to destroy the life of a woman who like him, fought the Nazis, and whose motives are every bit as honourable as his. We follow him through a trail of such destructions. Each one is a compromise, a little betrayal of integrity.

'Lurking behind the gloomy exposure of collapse of present day society is a nostalgia for the days when Britain really did rule the waves.'

By the time of *Smiley's People* there is nothing left. Smiley reaches a summit of his career: he finally outwits and traps his major Russian opponent Karla. He forces him to defect. It is a great victory for the West. Smiley waits in the dark at the border for his final victory. His thoughts on his triumph are:

'He looked across the river into the darkness again, and an unholy vertigo seized him as the very evil he had fought against seemed to reach out and possess him and claim him despite his striving, calling him a traitor also; mocking him, yet at the same time applauding his betrayal. On Karla has descended the curse of Smiley's compassion; on Smiley the curse of Karla's fanaticism. I have destroyed him with the weapons I abhorred, and they are his. We have crossed each other's frontiers, we are the no-men of this no-man's-land.'

This betrayal of self is simply the end of a world of treachery. And for Le Carre it is a price paid for nothing. The elaborate schemes and sacrifices of his spies change nothing. *The Honourable Schoolboy* concerns one of the great triumphs of Smiley, and the Circus. But it is set against the background of the total collapse of US power in South East Asia.

The cunning of the spies does not effect that mammoth defeat of imperialism one single jot. Winning or losing will not alter by a minute the final scuttle of US power into the Chinooks on the Embassy lawn.

There are very definite limits to Le Carre's critique of modern society. Women are in no way a central part of the world he portrays. One of the things which we are offered as bait to attract us to Smiley is his failed marriage. What this actually seems to amount to is that Smiley's wife Anne finds



him a boring old fart and much prefers to go her own way.

Part of the reason for this is sheer misogyny of Le Carre's part but there is something else going on as well. Bill Hayden, the arch-villain in the books, is bisexual, and part of his unworthiness seems to be that he has a sexual life. That is a disturbing factor for Le Carre's world.

It could be argued in Le Carre's defence that he is simply representing the reality of capitalist life, particularly as experienced by the British upper classes. Even if this is true, the fact that he chose to do it by completely marginalising the personal and sexual life of his main subjects means a big limitation on the power of his criticisms of life in modern capitalism.

Dominant myths

The best of Le Carre's books is *The Honourable Schoolboy*. This is because it is the only one of his books which really has a picture of the world outside of the spies built into it. Without that, it is too easy to read the books within the conventions of spy novels in which the doings of secret agents are terribly significant. In *The Honourable Schoolboy* the petty futility of the whole secret world is spelt out clearly. That gives the book a sweep and a substance lacking in others.

It would also make it very expensive to film, which is probably why the BBC chose to miss it out. Their filming jumps from *Tinker Tailor Solider Spy* straight to *Smiley's People*.

Le Carre is ultimately a reactionary critic of British society. Lurking behind the gloomy exposure of collapse of present day-society is a nostalgia for the days when Britain really did rule the waves. But that distance from the dominant myths of today gives him a cutting edge which, combined with great literary skills, make his novels valuable reading for anyone. □

Their finest hour?

The first biography of Clement Attlee, Labour Prime Minister between 1945 and 1951, has just been published. Geoff Ellen argues that it is high in price but low in value. He looks at the record of Attlee's years in power.

No Labour government evokes more nostalgia within the Party than Attlee's. Between 1945 and 1951 major industries were nationalised and a Welfare State was established: it was what one writer called 'the climax of Labourism'. It was also, a Tory MP reflected soon after, a time when it was 'easier to make higher profits without being really efficient than probably at any period in my lifetime'.

In the country, its troops lit bonfires and dreamed aloud: in the Commons, its lieutenants, to Tory consternation, struck up the Red Flag; and in the Cabinet, its generals pinched each other. Labour had—massively, euphorically and, for some, astonishingly—won its first majority government, and in that 'blissful dawn of July 1945' its 393 MPs tingled, as one of them put it, with 'joy and hope, determination and confidence'. Ahead lay 'a new society to be built; and we had power to build it'.

What sort of society? For those to whom the result of the General Election meant 'the revolution without a single cracked skull', there now seemed 'nothing to stand in the way of laying the *socialist* foundation of the new social order'. It was not an entirely unrealistic hope.

The electoral beneficiary of an outburst of popular radicalism unknown since the days of the Chartists, Labour had been swept into office by a landslide: and awaiting it there, intact from the Second World War, lay an unprecedented range of State controls over the economy. In short, the new Cabinet had both the mandate and the means to carry through major change.

It also had leaders aware of the implications. The Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, and the President of the Board of Trade and future Chancellor, Sir Stafford Cripps, had warned a decade earlier that 'the ruling class will go to almost any length to defeat Parliamentary action if the issue is... the continuance of their financial and political control'. Therefore 'the moment to strike at capitalism' was when the government was 'freshly elected and assured of its support. The blow struck must be a fatal one...' In other words, wrote Cripps, an Emergency Powers Bill limiting the movement of capital and abolishing the House of Lords would have to be passed on the first day of the new Parliament. Nothing less than a constitutional revolution was required:

'Continuity of policy, even in fundamentals, can find no place in a socialist

programme. It is this complete severance with all traditional theories of Government, this determination to seize power from the ruling class and transfer it to the people as a whole, that differentiates the present political struggle from all those that have gone before.'

In the summer of 1945, with Labour 'freshly elected and assured of its support', with Cripps and all the other 'brilliant prophets of the inevitability of violence'—Aneurin Bevan, Ellen Wilkinson, Emanuel Shinwell and John Strachey—in office, with the Tories reeling from their biggest electoral defeat in half a century and with the armed forces radical enough to discourage any would-be British Franco, Attlee was uniquely placed to strike his 'fatal blow' at capitalism.

By then, however, he and his colleagues were talking the language not of class but of 'nation'. Attlee's socialist rhetoric had already become muted when, in May 1940, he led Labour into a Coalition Government

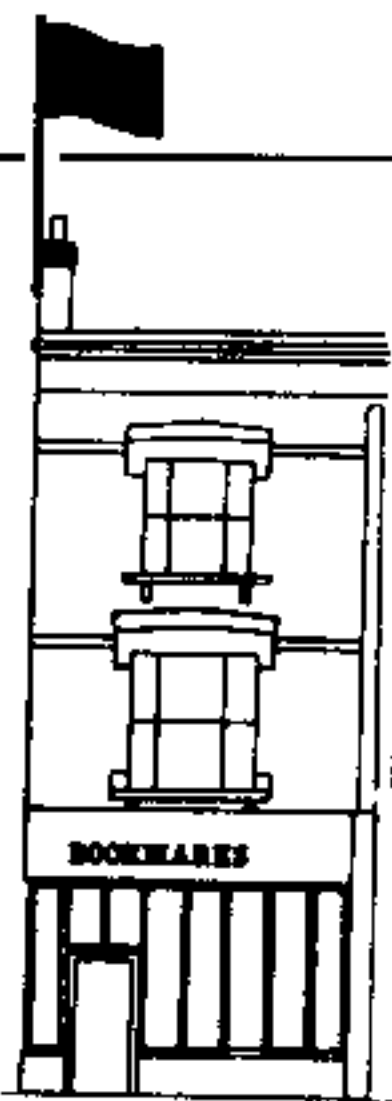
dominated by Tories and headed by a man seen by many with memories of the General Strike and Tonyandy as the Labour Movement's most bitter enemy—Winston Churchill. Having briefly shaken his fist at the ruling class, Attlee now offered it his hand: five years of governing with Tories would provide him with 'very pleasant' memories. The Labour leaders not only learned, said one of them, 'a great deal from the Conservatives in how to govern': they invariably found themselves in agreement with them. Party conflict arose only 'very seldom', Attlee recalled.

Consensus reigned. Capitalism would be preserved, but with the 'socialism' of State supervision. A Tory, Butler, re-shaped education and a Liberal, Beveridge, outlined what became the Welfare State: there were even Tories, Churchill among them, willing to countenance a degree of nationalisation. When the bluster of the General Election finally disturbed this harmony, it was still difficult, said one observer, to find in the parties' official literature 'any basic conflicts separating the left from the right'.

Behind the consensus lurked a fear. After two decades of mass unemployment, means testing and sacrifice, millions were insisting 'Never Again'; to ignore them was to risk a resurgence of the class conflict which had



Jubilant outside Transport House as Labour win the 1945 General Election



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unnerved Lloyd George's Cabinet at the end of the First World War. 'If you don't give the people social reform', Quintin Hogg, then a young Tory MP, warned in 1934, 'they will give you social revolution'. The pressure from below could not be evaded: could it, then be diverted? The answer was that it could—and Labour would show how.

It was to prove a sobering experience for those of its supporters intoxicated by the promise of a new society. A Gallup Poll discovered that for all those who wanted to see Labour govern 'along existing lines only more efficiently', there were twice as many who were demanding 'sweeping changes such as nationalisation'. Such expectations could be seen on Election Night in crowded Labour halls and celebration bonfires up and down the country, and they could be heard in the cheers of his supporters when Attlee told a victory rally that 'the principles of our policy are based on the brotherhood of man'.

Five days later, troops were sent into London's Surrey Docks to break industrial action by dockers seeking a basic 25 shillings a day.

It was a curious beginning for Ministers who had devoted much of their electioneering to exposing the scandal of working-class living standards, and a curious beginning, too, for the new era of the 'brotherhood of man' when, within a fortnight and with Attlee's support, a different sort of bonfire was lit in the streets of Hiroshima. For Labour, the 'responsibilities of office' came easy.

Conventionally bourgeois

In retrospect, of course, there had to be something faintly ludicrous in the idea of Attlee—a man so conventionally bourgeois that, it was said, he shuddered if the port was passed round the wrong way—storming the citadels of capitalist power. At best, notably with the creation of the National Health Service, his Government merely humanised inequality: at worst they promoted it. In education, largely under the guidance of 'Red Ellen' Wilkinson, Party policy on comprehensive schooling was shunned in favour of Butler's inegalitarian system of selection, with the result that—in the words of one of the Party's present educationalists—'possibly the greatest opportunity in the century to implement racial educational and social change' was lost. In foreign policy, such was Labour's 'disregard for all traditional socialist values' that one backbench MP was prompted to jibe at Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin: 'Hasn't Anthony Eden grown fat?'

This was 'continuity' with a vengeance, and nowhere more so than in industry. Twenty years earlier, George Bernard Shaw had disdainfully remarked that nationalisation need not affect the workers in the slightest: to them it 'would only be a change of masters'. And so it proved. By 1951, it has been reckoned, only nine of the 47 fulltime members and seven of the 40 part-time members of the Boards of the nationalised industries were trade unionists, and five of the Boards had no trade unionist amongst their full-time members at all. Most directors were drawn from 'the existing managerial hierarchies'. Nor was it any

different outside the board rooms: in the mines, for example, 'the same old faces' remained in charge at every level.

Workers' control for Attlee in the Thirties 'an essential part of the new order', was now dismissed by Herbert Morrison as failing to 'demonstrate good socialisation in its methods of administration and management'. The scale of this shift became apparent when, in 1946, a leading Minister let slip his belief that there was:

'not as yet a very large number of workers in Britain capable of taking over large enterprises ... Until there has been more experience by the workers of the managerial side of industry, I think it would be impossible to have worker-controlled industry in Britain, even if it were on the whole desirable.'

The speaker was Sir Stafford Cripps.

Nationalisation may have given little to the workers, but it was far from a disappointment for their former bosses. Extraordinarily generous compensation was paid to the owners of what were, for the most part, crippled industries. As a result, Attlee wrote later, 'there was not much real opposition to our nationalisation proposals, only iron and steel roused much feeling': and, he might have added that was left to last, before being carried through in such a way as to make denationalisation easy when the Tories returned to power in 1951.

From all of this, the ruling class had little to fear. 'Leading businessmen', Harold Wilson, President of the Board of Trade, boasted in 1949, 'admit that had it not been for the improved output since nationalisation there would have been no basis for private enterprise to work on.'

For those who worked in the nationalised industries, however, there was a sense of disorientation. Many miners, for example, had long treasured the hope of nationalisation and if now they felt a certain disenchantment it was less easy to express it through the traditional method of industrial action. This did not prevent such action but the argument—plausible to many and repeated *ad nauseum* from on high—that they were striking against *their* Government and *their* industry was bound to weaken it, especially when voiced by a miners' union leadership opposed to any stoppages. One of the union's area organisations, Durham, even suggested that miners' lodges should reimburse the Coal Board for losses resulting from unofficial strikes. It was hardly surprising that astute Tories such as Iain Macleod should come to see in nationalisation a means of strengthening the power of the trade union bureaucracy against the rank and file.

The claims to working class loyalty of the Labour Government were crucial in creating industrial peace in years when high employment gave workers formidable bargaining potential. Strike days between 1945 and 1951 totalled 14,260,000, compared with 192,230,000 in the seven years after the First World War.

Nevertheless, Labour often acted ferociously against the few strikes there were. One MP:

'noticed year by year in the House of Commons, with interested horror, that all the innumerable answers to questions



Attlee took great care to maintain wartime law and order (above) Troops being used to break a strike in the West India dock in 1948

in Parliament relating to strikes made by the late George Isaacs as Minister of Labour were based on the standpoint that the strikers and not the employers were to blame for the strikes.'

Not only were almost all strikes unofficial, so solid was the union leaders' support for the Government, most were also technically illegal, since Labour took care to maintain in peace time the draconian laws which Bevin had introduced during the war. Nor was this all. Troops were sent in by Labour to break strikes of dockers in September 1945, July 1946, June 1948, May to July 1949 and March 1950, of lorry drivers and meat porters in April 1946, January 1947 and June 1950, of power workers in September and December 1949, of gas workers in September 1950 and, in a touching act of concern for the Royal Family's comfort, of Buckingham Palace boiler stokers in March 1948. By 1948, it has been said, 'strike-breaking had become almost second nature to the Cabinet.'

Behind the scenes, as the recently released Cabinet Papers reveal, there were other interesting developments. Within a month of taking power, Attlee and Home Secretary James Chuter Ede discussed the possibility of reviving the Supply and Transport Organisation which a Tory Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, had used in 1926 to help defeat the General Strike. In March 1946, Ede presented the Cabinet with his proposals, which had been drafted in great secrecy lest they were leaked at a time when the Government was repealing the Trades Disputes Act, the Tories' legislative reprisal for the General Strike. The plans were put into effect during a strike of London lorry drivers in 1947.

By 1950 the Cabinet was considering secret proposals to outlaw 'subversive propaganda', to ban strikes in essential industries and to enforce secret ballots on strikes. Much of this was aimed against the Communist Party, whose 'disruptive' activities in industry became the target for mounting Cold War propaganda which Labour, conveniently overlooking the fact that until 1948 the CP had opposed strikes, was only too willing to orchestrate.

Twice in its six years in office, Labour de-

clared states of emergency to deal with dock strikes, using in the process the Emergency Powers Act which a Tory-dominated Parliament had passed in 1920 to crack down on working class discontent. It also, in the autumn of 1950, had ten striking gas workers sentenced to imprisonment (though fines were substituted on appeal) and dragged seven dockers before an Old Bailey judge in February 1951 for daring to lead another strike.

No orderly revolution

And so the indictment could go on and on. Labour took Britain into NATO, secretly funded an atomic energy programme, helped to put down revolution in Greece, exiled an African chief for presuming to marry a white woman, toyed with the idea of racist immigration controls (at a time when immigration was negligible) and pushed through a wage freeze.

Yet it lost office in 1951 with the comfort of a working class vote the size of which it has never bettered. It helped to see British capitalism through a sticky patch, but it also, uniquely for a Labour government, carried out its manifesto promises. By the end of the

Forties, workers were immeasurably better off than they had been at the end of the Thirties. Full employment and an expanding, resurgent capitalism gave moderate reformism its chance.

It was done in the name of socialism, when really it was at the expense of socialism. And it is here that the impotence of the Labour Left is most starkly revealed. In theory, this should have been their finest hour. In practice, they were irrelevant. Their figurehead, Aneurin Bevan—so much more of a fighter than today's Messiah, Tony Benn—proved, nonetheless, willing enough to maintain Cabinet secrecy on plans to break strikes or prop up reaction in Greece or even, when the Government ignored Party Conference demands or censures, to defend the leadership against the rank and file.

If 1945 showed anything, it was that 'socialism' from above—the prescription of the Labour Left, then as now—is a contradiction in terms. As one bewildered MP said at the time: 'What is the use of having an orderly revolution if it turns out not to be a revolution at all?' □

Attlee Kenneth Harris
(Weinderfeld, £14.95)



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Skilled Workers

Work, Society and Politics

Patrick Joyce
Methuen £5.95.

This is a book about an important question, or set of questions, in working class history: questions which are central to our understanding of class consciousness and politics in modern capitalism. Unfortunately I can't pretend that most readers of this journal will find it a very accessible book. It has a peculiarly contorted style and is overburdened with jargon which will make it unnecessarily obscure for most non-academic readers.

Which is a pity, because in spite of the fact that Joyce makes much too sweeping claims for his argument or his material, the book does contain some interesting arguments and is worth slogging through.

Joyce is concerned with the transformation of British working class life in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Britain, which seemed on the verge of revolution at several points in the 1830s and 40s, rapidly became the most politically and socially stable country in Europe. Chartism, with its radical critique of capitalism and alternative view of a cooperative society of artisan producers, was replaced by a narrower trade union view of the world and by an overall acceptance of capitalism as permanent.

Patrick Joyce argues that if we want to understand why workers have certain ideas and not others, create certain institutions, take certain kinds of action and not others, then we have to start with the what is most fundamental to working class experience - work.

That sounds rather obvious, but actually it's only recently that historians have started to try seriously to find out what life was

like for most workers in the factories, workshops and mines of industrialising England. Most books that pass for working class history have actually been about the development of labour politics and trade unions, with only the sketchiest of economic 'backgrounds' and little or nothing about the fundamental ground of working class organisation, the class struggle at the point of production.

Joyce argues against the orthodox left wing explanation for the decline of working class radicalism/triumph of reformism: what is usually called the Labour Aristocracy theory. This can take two forms: either the capitalist class uses some of the profits of world domination after 1850 to buy off the most advanced sections of the working class - the skilled workers.

Alternatively, the skilled workers are able to use their relative scarcity in an overstocked labour market to raise the price of their labour and so gain for themselves a relatively privileged position.

Either way: a minority of the workers, organised in trade unions, largely accepting bourgeois ideas (except about trade unions) is separated off from the poverty stricken mass, sunk in drunken stupor in the slums, usually repressed by the new police force, manipulated occasionally by bourgeois politicians' appeals to their racial prejudices.

It isn't difficult to show that this view of the working class polarised into two separate groups simply doesn't fit most of what we know about working class life. Sectional consciousness and status differences there were, but nothing like the hard and fast divisions in lifestyles and ideas that the Labour Aristocracy thesis suggests.

Joyce puts forward an alternative to the Labour Aristocracy thesis which he calls the 'mechanization thesis'. What it means is this: when British capitalism overcame its major crises, in the late 1840s, and expanded on a much broader basis in the 1850s and 60s, workers were forced to accept that the capitalist system was permanent. And the workers who were forced to face this most sharply were the factory workers, most importantly the cotton factory workers.

The expansion of the industry from the 1840s was on the basis of a more or less total mechanisation of production, a loss of worker control over the work process that hand workers, even in factories, experienced to a far lesser degree. Total loss of control over the work process, says Joyce, meant total subordination to the will and the ideas of the capitalist since the failure of Chartism and the seeming permanence of capitalism deprived the factory workers of any alternative way of looking at the world.

Joyce argues that this defeat at work - mechanisation, loss of control - results in dependence, deference, not proletarian consciousness. This acceptance of the rightness of capitalist class rule is made easier by the form control took in most Victorian factories - family ownership - and by the ideas of paternalism - the idea that the factory is like a patriarchal family - which fits in with the worker experience in his or her own family.

The worker's family works in the factory, with the male head of

family using his authority to support and underpin the owners. Outside the factory, life is very much dominated by the work relations: the owners own/control all aspects of public life in the neighbourhood of the factory. Workers who accept the owners' authority as natural in the factory also accept his authority in politics, religion etc.

Joyce's usefulness lies in his insistence that the roots of capitalist power lie in control of the work process and workers' acceptance of the naturalness of the class relations of production. His emphasis on the interdependence of all aspects of life, and the primacy of work within that, is important too. His emphasis on the interdependence of all aspects of life, and the primacy of work within that, is important too.

The problem with his approach is that he simply overestimates the ability of the capitalist class to eliminate the conflict that has its roots in the work process. Even in textile factories where workers experienced mechanisation without any previous class experience to measure it against, conflict was far more prevalent than Joyce allows.

Outside the textile factories, in other industries and even in politics, there was far greater friction between workers and capitalists than he is prepared to admit. Rather, he admits it in one sentence and then spends ten explaining why that example is exceptional. It is clear by the end of the book that it was the cotton industry that was exceptional.

Fred Lindop.

Revolt in Spain

The Comuneros of Castile: The forging of a revolution,

Stephen Haliczer,
1475-1521. University of
Wisconsin, £16.05

Forgotten revolutions are always worth recovering, and perhaps no revolution has been forgotten so thoroughly as the revolt of the Comuneros, the Spanish bourgeois revolution of 1520.

This was a revolution that failed, and the defeat was so traumatic that the memory of it was buried deep by the Spanish bourgeoisie, so deep that even in Spain, it is only recently that it has begun to be recovered. In English, there were no more than a few tantalising paragraphs until this book was published.

The history of early modern Spain has always been written in terms of the absolute monarchy, of Isabella and Ferdinand and of Philip II, and their success in reducing the bourgeoisie to complete subservience, building a state based firmly on the most reactionary nobility in Europe and postponing the rise of capitalism into the twentieth century.

But between Isabella and Ferdinand and the grim, autocratic

Philip II lay the bourgeois revolution and its defeat. In May, 1520, a Junta of Spanish towns overthrew the weak regency government and interned the royal council at Valladolid. They formed their own army and issued a constitutional programme for parliamentary government, no taxation without representation, property rights and civil liberties. Lawyers, liberal clergy and university students supported the revolutionary initiative, and the brutal sack of Medina del Campo by royal troops drove more towns into the Junta.

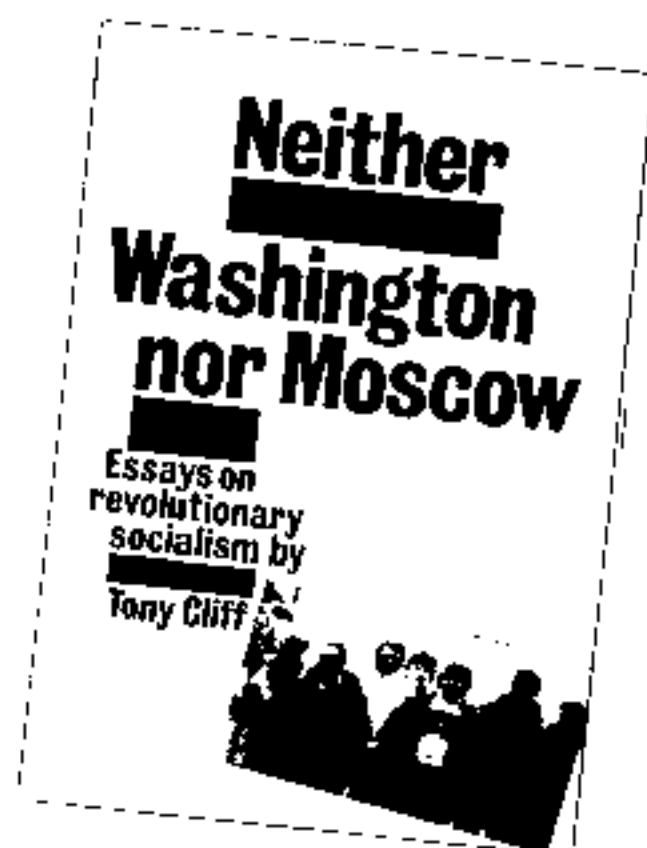
Not only that, but in this bourgeois revolution as in others the working people were out on the streets. The crisis began when the weavers of Segovia hanged the town's parliamentary deputy for voting, against his mandate, for the latest royal tax demands. A democratic popular faction took over Valladolid, and a mob stormed the jail in Medina del Campo to execute the noble lackeys imprisoned there at the start of the revolution. Peasant revolts spread rapidly while the nobility, split into factions, hesitated to fight back.

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But by the spring of 1521 the nobility had rallied round the monarch, the Emperor Charles V, and their military power proved overwhelming. They were helped by the swing of many of the urban elite back towards the monarchy because their fear of workers and peasants was greater than their desire for power. The battle of Villalar in April sealed the fate of the revolution.

Stephen Haliczzer explains very fully the relationship between the absolute monarchy and the bourgeoisie. Isabella and Ferdinand had encouraged the growth of trade and manufacture and the towns' desire for self-government up to a point, but whenever it came to the crunch they fell back on the nobility, the real social base of absolutism. He also shows that the economic regression of Spain in the sixteenth

century was by no means inevitable, but was the result of the defeat of the revolution and the deliberate efforts of Charles V and Philip II to channel bourgeois enterprise and capital into acquiring titles, land and office in the 50 years after the defeat of the Comuneros.

This book helps to restore the early modern history of Spain to the mainstream, the history of class struggle. Unfortunately, the treatment is academic, and the conclusions are not Marxist but follow Talcott Parsons' no longer even trendy sociology. The conclusions relate so little to the rest of the book that they can be ignored, however — the tale it has to tell can stand by itself. Too expensive for many individuals to buy, this book should fill out the history of revolutions on every library's shelves.

Norah Carlin

Children's books

Now Read On: Recommended Fiction for Young People: *Bob Dixon: Pluto* £3.95.

This book follows the author's *Catching Them Young* which discusses the way in which children's fiction too often reflects and, by implication, accepts, white, middle-class, sexist attitudes. It is a list of books published in or before 1980 that Bob Dixon considers to be, to quote the cover, 'good books with positive attitudes to sex, race, class and other issues'. The book is divided into three sections — up to 8, 8-12, and over 12.

The first section contains books like *Thomas Bakes a Cake* by Gunilla Wolde in which Thomas's father is the one who lights the oven for him and *My Brother Sean* by Petronella Brienburg which shows a little black boy on his first day at a nursery with a black teacher. These are books which do depart from WASP and sexist stereotypes. They are also excellent books which children love, although I find *My Brother Sean* needs an extra sentence to reassure children that mum comes back to take him home — the text leaves him at the nursery. In other books in this section, race, sex and class are irrelevant — they are totally indeterminate for instance both for the *Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Eric Carle) and *Benjamin The Hamster* who has a series of beautifully

drawn, hair-raising adventures trying to open a box. So what? Both are excellent books and favourites with children.

The choice in the other two sections concentrates on books which concern themselves with issues of race, class or sex-stereotyping with the final section very heavily weighted towards historical books. It includes no science fiction, not even Ursula le Guin.

Any list of recommended books is bound to be subjective. We will all find that this one omits books we love and includes some we find objectionable. Of the two hundred books Bob Dixon chooses, only ten were published before 1960. This reflects the enormous increase in excellent writing for children since then, especially for eight to fourteen year-olds, but it also reflects an ambivalent attitude to the classics.

Alice is included with a warning to adults that they may need to put the middle-class background into context, but *Jane Eyre* is omitted although it is one of the most telling stories in existence about upper class hypocrisy and the position of women in early Victorian England. The fact that the Brontë sisters found it necessary to assume men's names in order to get their books published is surely relevant. E. Nesbit (who was a member of the SDF) is also omitted. While her characters are middle-class, many

of the assumptions of Edwardian society are challenged, and girls initiate many of the adventures. *Little Women*, too, describes challenges to the expectations placed on girls and women in the States at the time it was written.

After twelve, young people often read books written for adults. Bob Dixon includes a few of these like Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* but the line is difficult to draw and an exhaustive list would run into many volumes. Some books could usefully be included in more than one age group, with a cross reference to the description, and it would have been very useful for teachers wanting to order books if the ISBN had been included wherever possible.

The tone of Bob Dixon's summaries is deliberately chatty. He seldom attempts to describe the quality or style of writing or illustrations, and manages to make many of the books sound rather dreary and worthy. Where I know the books, I seldom found their flavour conveyed by his descriptions, where I don't I was hardly motivated to rush out and buy

them. One description had me rolling — Anthony Browne's *A Walk in the Park* is a beautiful book of surrealist drawings with a minimal text about Mr Smythe, her son Charles and their dog Victoria in the park. The details of language and pictures brilliantly contrast their class, and I have found children as young as three and four responding to it, while the subtlety and wit of the pictures means that there is no upper age limit for enjoying this book but Bob Dixon's asserts that it 'is about the sad waste of a class divided society'. Get hold of it and judge for yourself.

A greater variety of opinions, some of them children's, would have made this book more lively. It will be useful to librarians and teachers as long as it is not regarded as exclusive, but to parents I would suggest if you have £3.95 to spare, it would be better spent on three or four paperbacks for your children, and if they're not included in *Now Read On*, but if you and your children like them, don't worry too much.

Sarah Cox

Romantic Poseur

Black List, Section H
Francis Stuart
King Penguin £2.95.

This novel is about the character 'H' and it would seem to be based on the life of Francis Stuart himself. Like Stuart, H fights for the IRA in the Irish civil war of the 20s, is a poet and a novelist, marries Maud Gonne's daughter and spends the second World War in Germany lecturing on literature and broadcasting anti-British propaganda to Ireland.

From this brief description of the novel and life of Stuart you would think that this was a political novel and H a person deeply involved in politics. In fact it is amazingly apolitical or rather anti-political. H's motives are not 'political' in the sense of wanting to change the world but mystical in wanting to support any movement that upsets normality.

Because of this H supports the IRA, the Russian revolution, Mussolini, Keats, Stalin and even Hitler. The hero's favourite is Keats and it is a mush of Catholic mysticism and existentialist anarchism that is the

subject of the novel.

To H what is important is not the politics of the outer world but the motives and their effects on the inner world of the people involved. Like other nihilist-anarchists of the time such as Celine, Stuart has a healthy cynical scorn for the Allies' claim of moral superiority, but is strangely blind to Stalin's or even Hitler's crimes.

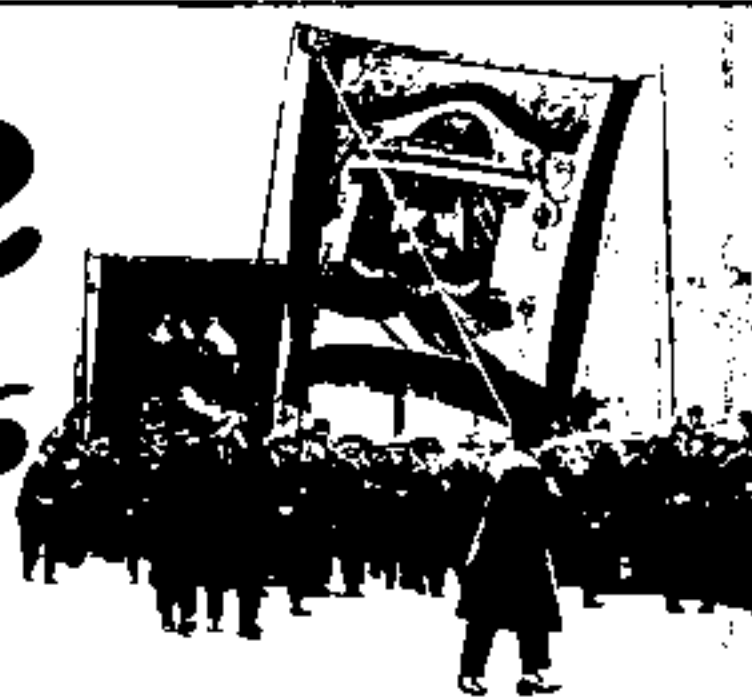
And so H drifts through Ireland and Europe seeking the inner truth, be it to taste the excitement of street fighting or the extremes of Catholic meditation. H really is a ridiculous and even ludicrous figure, not that there's much deliberate humour in the book. The hero also seems to treat women in the same way as political theories, to be used for self fulfilment and heightened experience. At times a streak of honesty comes through to pierce the Keatsian confusion and mysticism but you can't help feeling that H is a pain in the neck without much originality. Perhaps it's a deeply honest account of the times but to me it seems more like Sartre without the thinking.

Noel Halifax

Days of Hope

THE GENERAL STRIKE OF 1926

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More of the same?

Channel 4 promises to be innovative and experimental in 'the form and content of programmes' while catering for the interests of special groups, women, ethnic minorities and young people. It has been hailed as a breakthrough in television—a foretaste of a new, democratic media to which everyone has access.

What differentiates the new channel from the television we have been used to is that it commissions all its programmes. It does not make them. For many small video and film workshops making low budget programmes, Channel 4 seemed like a unique opportunity.

The 'video' revolution during the last couple of years has opened up a whole communication medium to a substantial number of people. Video is relatively cheap, easy to use and edit. The rudiments take only a few hours to grasp, anyone can learn. Women's groups, community groups and special interest groups could make programmes about their perception of the world and it would get national exposure on Channel 4. Needless to say, almost everyone, including the left, embraced Channel 4 without ever thinking about the structure of British television within capitalism.

The BBC is required by law to provide a 'service' to the whole nation. It is funded by the television licence system. At the same time it must conform to a set of guidelines laid down by parliament.

The two commercial channels are governed by the same restrictions but they are funded by advertising. Channel 4 is totally dependent on advertising revenue. In order to survive it can renege on its promises, it can deny access to special interest groups, but, it must keep the confidence of its advertisers.

Channel 4 is funded by a subscription paid by the ITV companies amounting to £104 million a year. The idea is that profit returns will eventually outstrip the money the companies are spending on Channel 4. So, Jeremy Isaacs, boss of Channel 4, must persuade the backers that he will attract ad-

vertisers, and in order to attract the advertisers he has to guarantee an audience—an audience that is going to spend.

Before Isaacs can offer a real service to the nation he has to play the ratings game. Channel 4 needs to get a 10% share of the audience—which would give a total net advertising revenue of £90 million in 1983. The advertisers are sceptical that anything like that figure can be achieved. It took BBC2 a decade to reach around 12%. ITV takes a substantial chunk of the audience—around 48% to 50% every week. That is almost 20% more than BBC. A glance at programme ratings each week give an indication of the sorts of programmes Isaac will have to put on in order to be competitive.

Coronation Street always takes a clear lead with an audience of 12.90 million almost every week. All ITV's top ten programmes maintain an audience level of 10 million upwards. BBC 1's top ten programmes get around 8 million to 9 million viewers—usually for shows like *Fame* or *Blankety Blank*. BBC2's most successful programme—*The Two Ronnies*—gets an audience of 10 million. Almost every other programme broadcast on BBC2 attracts a tiny 2 or 3 million.

To remain in the market place Channel 4 cannot afford to devote very much airtime to minority programmes. It all points to the fact that the channel will be serious and respectable, with the odd bow towards ethnic minorities and women. And middle class women at that. One of the most successful pressure groups during the days when the channel's manifesto was being formed was the WBFL (Women in Broadcasting and Film Lobby). This is made up of middle aged, middle class women, already in the industry and hell bent on securing top media jobs for themselves.

Already the channel has been described as a 'TV Guardian' or a 'TV Sunday Supplement'. But it is neither fulfilling its promises nor attracting advertisers.

'Channel Four will portray Britain as the multi-racial society



it is, encouraging different ethnic groups to speak to us, entertain us, tell us how they perceive the world we share. *Channel Four* will cater for millions who share an interest, whether it be tending a garden, buying a house, running a car, taking a holiday, learning about music... far from being a 'minority' or an 'elitist' channel.'

Isaacs is constantly stressing that the minority slots will not take up the valuable airtime needed to attract consumers with a large disposable income—the people who can afford holidays, house-buying and new cars.

The Channel 4 programme schedule states that ethnic and youth programmes will get a mere three hours airtime a week. And they will be shunted into ghetto timeslots. Youth and ethnic magazine programmes are billed for late night slots on Monday and Tuesday nights. A slot called *Women's View* is given 25 minutes at 8.15 on Wednesdays. And that is about it.

Protest from within the channel's hierarchy against this sort of scheduling has gone unheeded. Alan Fountain, the channel's commissioning editor for independent film and video, has publicly raised some telling points. He admits that the critics are in a minority and isolated by those who see profitability as the sole aim of the channel.

Minority programmes billed late at night are unlikely to attract millions of viewers. They will bring in even less advertising revenue, comedians. As Isaacs said:

'We can't afford to be a channel that puts people off. Therefore I would like to be a more populist working class channel in part of what I do than the BBC2... programmes will, however, be 'undoubtedly more upmarket than ITV normally is.'

The channel's target audience is young people between the ages of 15 and 30. That is the group with the largest disposable income. A recent advertisement in *Campaign*, the advertisers' journal, served to show who the real Channel 4 audience will be. There was a picture of a young family, clearly in the AB income bracket, standing outside a large house. Underneath we are told that Channel 4 will be reaching consumers in the Thames area. This is an area where 16.2% of the homes are AB, where the

Thames adult spends more on clothes, 41% more on eating out and 21% more on holidays, than the national average.

This is the big spender group that needs to be reached if a new commercial channel is to survive. But like it or not, Channel 4 has to meet the needs of less profitable groups. Around £5 million has been allocated to 'multi-cultural programming' in the first year from news and current affairs to comedy.

Journalists and community leaders from black and Asian newspapers and groups are critical of the 11.00pm Tuesday night slot for these programmes. They are understandably dissatisfied with the amount of time and money allocated. There will be almost no programmes broadcast in Asian languages. There may be black current affairs programmes, but will they be allowed to air feelings about harassment and discrimination, about racist laws or police brutality? The black and Asian community thinks not.

Behind the screens of *Brookside* a rift between the programme makers and the ACTT remains unresolved. Because all Channel 4's work is commissioned there are few full-time production workers as such. The ACTT feels that the company which makes *Brookside* should be given freelance status rather than full union membership as they have only one-year contracts.

Short term contracts are the norm for workers in independent companies making programmes for Channel 4. Many of them are not in the ACTT or ABS or, if they are, there are rarely more than two or three to a shop. This means that bargaining power on the new channel will be seriously undermined and national coordination almost impossible. The ACTT's position on Channel 4 is going to be much weaker than it is on the other stations.

We are getting wider choice on television, different perspectives, better films and a few previously unheard voices, but we are not watching a radical, democratic or innovative station. Channel 4 may pay lip service to ethnic minorities, women gays and youth, but it will never ask questions or challenge answers that the government and the advertisers will disapprove of. It will never challenge the structures of British television.

Marta Wohrle

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Money makes the Ring

More torrid than *Dallas*. More violent than *The Sweeney*. Funnier than *Morecombe and Wise*. More historically informative than *Upstairs Downstairs*. All this and music too! Perhaps the most compulsively watchable TV series ever hits the nation. Wagner's *Ring Cycle* has arrived. **Jennifer Batchelor** argues you must not miss it.

The BBC, of course, has been plugging it hard. And it is a major event. *The Ring* is the work for which Wagner is best known. His operas tend to be long. *Der Ring des Nibelungen* is the longest. The Cycle is in four parts. *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* – fourteen hours of non-stop music and drama usually performed over four evenings. For television it has been chopped up into manageable lengths and will be put out on successive Sundays between now and Christmas, on BBC2 and Radio 3, and again in February.

The event should not be dismissed as nothing more than an operatic bonanza, pandering to the tastes of an elitist minority while the rest of us switch over or switch off. Nor is it a pointless tale of gods and heroes set to music and a total irrelevance as we struggle with the realities of life in Thatcherite Britain. Both Wagner's *Ring* itself and this particular production of it are of considerable interest.

Richard Wagner was more a rebel than a professional revolutionary. But he was genuinely attracted to the ideas of early socialists and anarchists like Proudhon (whose battle-cry, 'Property is theft', Wagner used – at least until he acquired some himself) and Bakunin (whom he met). He protested at what he found wrong with music and theatre in his day and believed that it reflected what was wrong with society, and that society should therefore be reformed. He was less certain of how to go about it.

Wagner never joined any organised group or party for fear that his individual genius would be swamped by the mediocrity around him. He did, though, involve himself in political activities, particularly in Germany in the 1840s. He was forced into exile and left Germany for eleven years after taking part in a popular uprising in Dresden in 1849. This political background was a strong influence on the making of *The Ring*. He began work on *The Ring* shortly after the Revolution of 1848, in which he had taken part. It took him 25 years to finish it.

He wanted to present, through the legend of the Nibelungs, the setting up by the gods of an utopian society through the agency of man. The two people through whom this

was to happen were father and son, Siegmund and Siegfried. Siegfried is presented as a great hero inspired by the ideals of the 1848 Revolution. The race of the struggling Nibelungs represents the proletariat. The giants represent the propertied exploiting class. Siegfried is the prototype of the new man, who breaks through class conventions towards a new and better life. For that he is destroyed by the forces of evil who cannot allow so much goodness and greatness to exist. Brünnhilde, through her love for Siegfried, is made to understand the nature of these forces. She overcomes them by choosing to die also.

The ring itself – from which the Cycle takes its name – is forged by the Nibelung Alberich, the father of Hagen, Siegfried's murderer. It symbolises the supremacy of money, the subjection of human life to the pursuit and spending of it, and the final destruction of that life.



Wagner 'composing'

By setting the drama as myth, Wagner presents characters and situations in which later generations can recognise their own condition. They have a meaning that carries beyond the particular legendary circumstances within which they are placed towards objective and universal truths. Myth, it is said, stands for more than it is and means more than it says. The anti-capitalist spirit of 1848 is at the core of the work and its social revolutionary meaning is inescapable. It is couched in a mythological framework, but not hidden.

Over the 25 years it took Wagner to write *The Ring*, his circumstances and his ideas changed. Constantly in debt, he had to struggle to make ends meet. In exile in Paris he felt that the leaders of opera circles had conspired to block his chances of critical and financial success.

Grandiose projects like *The Ring* were unprecedented but Wagner won the support of mad King Ludwig of Bavaria, who spent vast quantities of money and energy in building elaborate palaces. He shared Wagner's enthusiasm for grand schemes and the larger-than-life. Ludwig coughed up

the money for Wagner's expensive life-style and enabled him to continue composing.

Ludwig also encouraged Wagner in the more mystical and mythical elements which came increasingly to overlay the original anti-capitalist scheme of *The Ring*.

The anti-capitalist emphasis is reflected in the production that the BBC is showing. It was the centenary production of the *Ring* at the Festspielhaus in Bayreuth and when it opened in 1976 it caused uproar and scandal. It is the work of Patrice Chéreau, one of the most important socialist directors of plays, films and operas in France.

Many of the opera-goers at Bayreuth objected violently that Chéreau had not let the drama take place in some inoffensive never-never-land in distant times. On the contrary, he points up the associations with Wagner's own time (grim factory conditions in the mid-nineteenth century, for example) and makes comparisons with present conditions. The audience hated it. They wanted opera to be escapism. It isn't. And Wagner's *Ring* cannot be divorced from its context. Fortunately, the production survived its critics and is now recognised to be a classic.

It will be a great pity if people decide to avoid watching the series just because it is opera and they think opera is elitist. It has been so, in this country at least, but as an art form it belongs to all of us. It is now much easier for those who want to see opera – and it is a visual spectacle as well as a treat for the ears – given the existence of the cinema, television and video. You don't have to take out a mortgage to buy a ticket to Covent Garden, always supposing you happen to live around London.

Nor should people be put off because it's Wagner. Much has been written about his anti-Semitism and the way his works were taken up and exploited by the Nazis. Tales of gods and heroes suited their idea of an Aryan superrace. Certainly members of Wagner's family hob-nobbed with Hitler and there is an undeniable strain of anti-Semitism in Wagner. Only recently an attempt by Zubin Mehta to include a piece by Wagner in a concert in Israel caused a near-riot. It is right to condemn Wagner for these obnoxious ideas. His music has been and can be taken up by loathsome types. But there is more to it than that.

Wagner's operas are long. And they are sung in German. The problem of length has been solved by the BBC's decision to put out the *Ring* in weekly instalments of manageable lengths. There are subtitles – recent research has anyway shown that very few words in opera are actually decipherable, so the fact that the singing is not in English makes little difference to understanding what's going on. This is particularly true of Wagner's later works such as *The Ring*. He puts more emphasis on the orchestral sound than on the singers. The meaning is carried by the music in general, rather than by the actual words a character is singing.

Wagner preferred to think of his works as musical drama, rather than as opera, which seemed so often to lapse into empty spectacle with singers showing off. Chéreau never lets the drama slacken. The combined result is great music, great drama, yet great opera. Don't miss it.

NOVEMBER 1918



'Forward, Red Soldiers! A revolutionary poster by Béla Vitz

On November 12th, 1918, the Austrian Republic was proclaimed, putting a final end to the rule of the Hapsburg dynasty. The vast empire, which had stretched over central, east and south-eastern Europe, disintegrated.

1918 opened with a wave of strikes in Austria. On January 14th, workers in the armaments factories in the industrial town of Wiener Neustadt struck. The next day the strikes spread to Vienna, and within four days the munition works in Budapest. In the three weeks after the strikes began, a million workers had struck in Austria and tens of thousands in Hungary. The strikes were followed by mutinies among Slovenian, Serbian, Czech and Hungarian troops, and in the fleet.

The workers demanded an end to martial law and censorship, the eight-hour day and the release of Friedrich Adler, the socialist who had assassinated the Prime Minister in October 1916 in protest against the war.

Out of the shop stewards' meetings in the big arms factories came the rudiments of workers' councils. The ruling class was terrified.

But the strikes petered out as the leaders of the Social Democratic Party (OSP) and the trade unions moved in to call a halt, and to incorporate the workers councils into the old party and union structures.

But this was only the beginning of the party's successful attempt to channel the movement into the creation of a parliamentary democracy rather than a state based on soviet power.

When the Republic was proclaimed by the National Assembly, which had been elected in 1911, the truth was that effective power lay in the factories and the barracks. It was the existence of that power which led to the downfall of the Empire not the actions of politicians.

In the period of the final collapse, there was widespread arming by the workers, some organised – like the crucial takeover of the Vienna Arsenal, by revolutionary shop

stewards and soldiers – much the spontaneous forming of armed workers groups.

Even the ceremony of the declaration of the Republic was marked by an attack on the members of the Government and National Assembly by soldiers of the 'Red Guard' – the 41st Battalion of the new Volkswehr (People's Army), formed of socialist soldiers. These soldiers seized the new flag of the Republic, which was red-white-red, tore the white part out and hoisted the red parts. They then charged the politicians, who withdrew through the gates of the Parliament building.

Julius Braunthal, an OSP member who was an official at the War Ministry in the crucial period November 1918 to April 1919, wrote:

'Now actual power lay with the industrial workers in the factories, and above all, with the soldiers in the garrisons. And even in the barracks the bulk of the troops was made up of industrial workers. The peasant soldiers had not waited for the demobilisation order... eager to return to their villages. Those who remained in the barracks were the instruments of power: an abundance of rifles, machine guns and other implements of war. The whole edifice of the ancien regime was repulsive to them... they would have liked to smash it to smithereens; and they actually had the power to do so.'

In the turmoil of those months, revolutionary trends were present in the People's Guard, in workers councils which sprung up, in the tiny newly-formed Communist Party. But these forces were fragments and many were unclear about what should be done. Otto Bauer, leader of the Social Democratic Party, wrote later:

'At that time, workers and soldiers could any day have proclaimed the dictatorship of the proletariat – no power was in sight to stop them.'

He also supplied the answer to why that didn't happen:

'In those days when all authority col-

lapsed, there was but one authority to emerge not diminished but strengthened: the Social Democratic Party.'

One of their first actions was to attempt to control the workers and soldiers councils to reduce them to bodies of representation rather than power. Although the first National Conference of Workers' Councils in March 1919, was supposed to represent all tendencies in the workers' movement, the electoral rules were weighted in favour of workers from small workshops, home industries and domestic help, and against the vanguard of workers from the big factories.

The rules also enabled party and trade union officials to become *ex officio* executives of the councils.

Of course, the OSP didn't succeed merely by bureaucratic manoeuvring. The bulk of the workers supported the party's ideas and arguments.

But in the conditions of starvation and economic collapse of post-war Vienna, the proclamation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic on March 21st 1919, to be followed by the Bavarian Soviet Republic on April 18th, gave a boost and a new urgency to the revolutionary forces in Austria. A Central Workers' Council was formed in Vienna in response to the call from Hungary to join the workers' fight.

The arguments of the socialists prevailed: they would do all in their power to help the Hungarian workers, but to declare a Soviet Republic in Austria would only lead to bloody civil war and intervention, including the cutting off of all food and fuel supplies from outside.

The Bavarian experiment lasted only 23 days, and the Hungarian Republic was crushed by August. The workers' movement suffered a terrible bloody counter revolution. Appalling mistakes were made in Hungary, but the lack of a revolutionary insurrection in Vienna contributed to the downfall of both republics. Austria was now surrounded by reaction, soon to be reinforced by the fascist takeover in Italy.

The new state of Austria was a tiny remnant of the old empire, with a capital city containing a third of the population of under seven million. Out of the Viennese population, half a million were dues-paying members of the OSP. After resigning from the government in 1920, the situation was of clerical, right-wing parties running the federal government, and the socialists running the towns. Vienna in particular was the site of remarkable social achievements in the twenties. This was the period of "Red Vienna", with its new housing and municipal services. These real gains reinforced the loyalty of the workers to the party.

These achievements were built on sand. The right wing and the fascists grew in strength through the twenties. The ruling class was determined to wipe out the power of the workers movement.

The ruling class had to wait until 1934 before they felt strong enough to strike back, but then they crushed the workers movement ruthlessly. The OSP, the most left-wing of all reformist parties, went down to the defeat that it had been unwittingly preparing since 1918.

Sue Cockeril