

socialist
REVIEW

Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

Issue 67
July/August 1984
60p

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Inside: The miners The state

Socialist Worker the revolutionary paper today

Concerned racism

Family planning is something socialists normally support, but here Colin Sparks looks at a more sinister side to population control.

Socialists tend to think of the Family Planning Association as a vaguely worthy organisation. After all, whatever its limitations it is one of the organisations that advertises the fact that women both can and should control their own fertility.

However, it has a subsidiary organisation called Population Concern, which is not at all worthy, vaguely or otherwise. True it sounds worthy enough, being concerned to:

'Raise funds in the United Kingdom for population and development programmes around the world, in order to provide the knowledge and means of planned parenthood as a basic human right, and to establish a balance between the population of the world and its natural resources by means which also promote human welfare, personal freedom and the quality of life.'

The reality is much nastier. For example, a glance at their recent publication *Population Misconceptions* will reveal nine photographs of human beings. Just by chance, eight of them feature what we might term 'non-Caucasians.' Behind the noble rhetoric is a simpler and nastier message: there are just too many damned blacks and they are breeding too damned fast.

Control

Behind the glossy window dressing of the UK operation lie hidden a number of rather more dubious set-ups. Socialists are of course in favour of all women, wherever they happen to live, having the right to control their own fertility, but we also recognise that the reality of some of the 'population control' programmes adopted by various regimes have nothing to do with women's rights and everything to do with the profits of the drug companies and the goals of particularly nasty ruling classes.

So we find the publications of Population Concern proclaiming the noble humanitarian goals of their programmes while boasting of operating in such havens of women's rights as Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and India.

Just to take the last example: one of the best known aspects of 'population control' in India in the last decade was Sanjay Gandhi's programme of compulsory and involuntary sterilisation for the urban poor.

None of this reality is allowed to creep into the sanitised argumentation and publicity of Population Concern. You and I are invited to help keep down the number of blacks in a very civilised manner with none of the ugly bits on display.

What there is instead is a version of a very



Food shortage...what food shortage?

old argument which runs that the world's resources are finite and any increase of population is bound to lead to greater starvation and misery.

This is often called 'Malthusianism' after the British clergyman and economist Dr Thomas Malthus, who published an *Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798.

Malthus, who wrote his book as a counter to the arguments of an early anarchist called Godwin, argued that:

'1. Population is necessarily limited by the means of subsistence.

'2. Population invariably increases where the means of subsistence increase, unless prevented by some very powerful and obvious checks.

'3. These checks, repress the superior power of the population, and keep its effects on a level with the means of subsistence, are all resolvable into moral restraint, vice and misery.'

What Population Concern and similar operations are up to today, is propagandising for a new form of 'moral restraint' while popularising all of the most reactionary of Malthus' arguments.

The obvious overall objection to Malthus is that he detected the limit of food capacity as having been reached in his own day because people starved from lack of food, yet the world today supports a much greater population.

People still starve, but not because of some objective limit to food production. They starve today for the same reason as, with a far smaller population, they starved in Malthus's day: because of social relations, not the fixed limits of food production.

The reactionary effect of Malthusian arguments can be seen when we look at how Population Concern tackle the possible objection that 'Hunger arises from an unequal distribution of food.' They say:

'If the world's total available food supply could be meticulously divided by the population of the world and each ounce of food available could be handed to each man, woman and child every day for 365 days, every year, would the daily allocation be adequate?

They go on to answer their own question: 'Although the answer is probably yes, it might well be argued that food distribution on a world-wide basis is totally unrealistic.'

'Surplus cereal stocks on the continents of North America and Oceania usually have to be paid for, and many less developed countries are unable to afford the necessary level of food imports ...'

This is quite openly and simply reactionary. They are saying that although there is no food shortage, and there is not likely to be any food shortage, people starve because of the way the world is organised. This, they argue cannot and should not be changed. What should be changed is the number of people. Population Control is a substitute for social change.

Racist

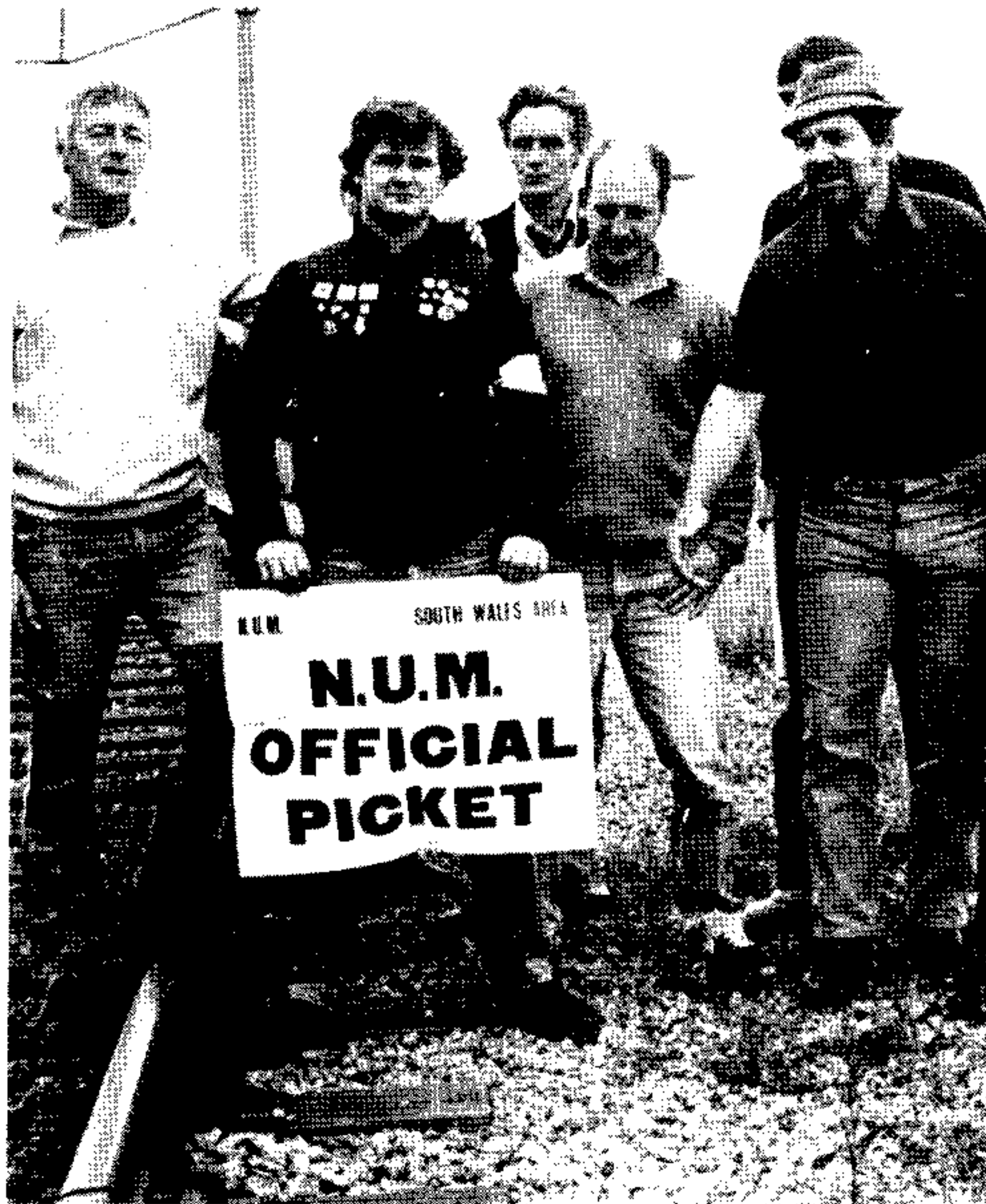
The idea of there only being limited resources available is quite a widespread one. It rests on the belief that the level of technology is fixed and that therefore no new resources can be mobilised.

Agriculture has always been one of the key areas where this has been argued. For Malthus there was an objective limit to the amount of food which could be raised from a given area of land.

What the subsequent development of agricultural technique showed was that the idea of a fixed limit was and is false. The application of scientific techniques to agriculture has resulted in sharp rises in the productivity of the soil.

There is not one single instance today in which there is an absolute shortage of the necessities of life. There are plenty of actual shortages, for particular classes of people in particular parts of the world. Those shortages have everything to do with property relations and nothing to do with some 'population problem'.

The reactionary and racist arguments of Population Concern are a particularly insidious example of the ways in which good intentions got twisted to evil ends by the realities of world capitalism.



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CENTRE PULL-OUT**

Edited by: Colin Sparks **Assisted by:**
Dave Beecham, Norah Carlin, Sue
Cockerill, Pete Goodwin, Noel Halifax,
Gareth Jenkins, Rob Ferguson, John
Deason, Pat Stack, Andy
Zebrowski.
Production, business and reviews:
Rob Ferguson, Pat Stack

Subscription rates for one year:
Britain and Ireland £8, Overseas
Surface £9, Europe Air £11,
Elsewhere Air £14.50 (institutions
add £7.50).
Cheques and postal orders payable to
Socialist Review. Socialist Review is
sent free to all prisoners on request.

ISSN 0141-2442
Printed by East End (Offset) Ltd. (TU all
depts) London E2

Politics the key

The miners' strike has developed into a war of attrition. Miners talk quite openly about lasting out to the winter or new year in order to have an impact, and government ministers put a brave face on things and claim that they will be able to survive even the winter. Hardly anyone still says that the battle will be won or lost in the next few days.

The long and bitter slog of the miners' strike is not natural or inevitable. Every week throws up chances of transforming the dispute from a long slog in which the determination of each side is tested to breaking point, into a battle that could be lost or won in one decisive morning of struggle.

The first week of the strike showed how things could be. The strength and initiative of the rank and file miners from a small number of Yorkshire pits surprised everybody by walking out, and by pulling behind them the rest of the Yorkshire coalfield. They also pulled out the other major coal producing areas with the exception of Nottinghamshire. But it is worth remembering that in the

first week they *did* manage to stop the Notts pits, even if only pending the result of the area ballot.

But it was very much a sign of the shape of things to come that by the end of the first week the officials were back in control, and that the Yorkshire miners who had fought independently even of the local leadership, and against the wishes of the area executive on a number of key issues in the first few days, were willing, if not happy, to accept that control.

The ruling class, which had been as surprised as anyone else at the explosion, was also able to regroup and organise the massive police intervention in week two

which has been a contributory factor in making the struggle so difficult.

The first grand fact of the strike was that a large number of miners were prepared to take action against closures. The second grand fact was that not *all* miners were prepared to go along with that, and that the strikers were not able to picket them out. Those two realities combined to shape the early course of the dispute, and still provide the cutting edge of many arguments in the labour movement about the question of support.

One of the reasons for the very widespread support for the miners is that they are seen to be doing what every activist in the movement has wanted to do for a long time: fight back against the Tories and fight back hard. The Notts scabs, of course, have also provided a magic excuse for every potential scab up and down the country to deny solidarity or support.

The next decisive turning point was the battle to stop the steel plants. This began in Scotland, with a brief flurry around Ravenscraig, moved to the battle around Orgreave in Yorkshire, and then concentrated on the Llanwern steelworks in South Wales.

An important and obvious lesson follows immediately from just that chronicle: at no time was the fight to stop steel conducted as an organised national campaign co-ordinated across all of the steelworks. That had two conclusions. Most obviously, it allowed the ruling class to concentrate its forces, in particular its police forces, on whichever area it happened to be fighting in at a particular time.

Although miners, too, travelled, particularly to Orgreave for the major confrontation, the ability to concentrate on one place helped the state and the bosses much more than it did the miners.

Military

But that purely tactical question is secondary. Throughout the left there has been a tendency to overplay such purely military matters. They were not and are not decisive. Much the most important consequence of the 'staggered' struggle around steel was political.

The key argument that has been used by Bill Sirs and every local union official in the country to justify their members working with coal and iron ore that has been driven through miners' picket lines has been the need to keep this or that steelworks open. There is no doubt that this argument has been enough to make workers who might listen to appeals to solidarity forget any prospect of class consciousness and to carry out the most open scabbing we have seen for a long time.

The argument in Scotland runs that if we refuse to handle scab material then the people in South Wales will and it will be us who suffer from the threatened closure. Of course, the argument in South Wales has been just the reverse.

Now, there is no doubt whatsoever that the BSC want to close down some capacity. Obviously, what is needed is a united and organised fightback. That is not likely to come from Sirs and the ISTC executive. The



BILL SIRS: leading the scabs

only way that those divisions could be overcome would be if a group of workers who were already fighting back were to generalise to a national struggle. But the NUM decision to fight each works on its own has played right into the hands of the local leaderships who have been looking for a way to avoid a fight.

There is nothing to be gained, however, from simply bewailing the fact that large scale scabbing is going on. For socialists the important thing to do is to understand why this is happening and to use that understanding to map out a strategy that can win.

That strategy must start off from recognising that, while the ruling class is determined to win, and has acted fairly shrewdly, it is not unbeatable. It is true that the ruling class wishes to inflict a major defeat on the miners, and through them on all of the working class; they retain the desire to drive down real wages. That, one of the objectives of their policy since the end of the boom, is one of the things that Thatcher has so far not delivered.

The intransigence which follows from this desire is what led to a breakdown of the attempted compromise in mid-June. Everybody, even Scargill, on the union side seemed to be convinced that a deal was on, but then MacGregor upped the stakes in an interview with *The Times* and the bureaucrats were left without the possibility of the compromise they so desperately wanted.

But even though the ruling class are determined to win, they have still been forced to

tread relatively cautiously. They have not, for instance, so far made any attempt to use the formidable battery of anti-union legislation they have at their disposal against either the NUM or other trade unionists.

That is not to say that they will not use the law, or that they may not get away with it. On their part it is a matter of calculation. Sometimes, like with the NGA at Warrington, the calculations of the most hawkish of the ruling class proved correct and they have got away with it. Sometimes, as with GCHQ, the ruling class made a minor miscalculation and, although they won their immediate objective, they did so at the price of giving their opponent, who managed to pull a surprising amount of strike action against them, a powerful filip.

Battle

With the miners' strike, it is clear that initially they made a fairly major miscalculation: they did not expect a battle in the pits, and they did not expect that to coincide with a hardening of the mood amongst public sector employees over pay. If they made a fairly serious mistake that time, they may do so again and alter the whole terms on which the strike is being fought.

But if they miscalculated over the strike itself, and found themselves faced not only with the miners but also with large numbers of other groups of public sector workers pursuing pay claims with unexpected vigour, it is also the case that they have, so far, not

paid any substantial price for that mistake.

The reason for their immunity brings us to the second major element in the socialist analysis of the strike so far. The decisive factor in preventing the generalisation of the strike has been sectionalism.

Both the divisions inside the NUM and the divisions between different groups of workers have been classic examples of the ways in which the downturn in the class struggle has led to the development of ideas of local particular issues being the province of this or that group of workers and the atrophy of the idea of class wide organisation and struggle. Yorkshire against Nottinghamshire in the NUM, Llanwern against Ravenscraig in BSC, steelworker against miner in general—those have been the decisive limitations of the strike.

Officials

It is important to repeat yet again that this is a political and organisational failing in the heart of our movement, and that it is this which is decisive. The activities of the police, which occupy the attention of many trade union officials and Labour Party members, are important but they are a secondary and contributing factor. They only work because we are weak and divided.

A minority fighting can stretch their resources but not defeat them. And if, once they manage to force scab material through a picket line, it was then blacked, then their military prowess would be wasted. The key

weaknesses lie within our movement.

Overcoming those weaknesses is the problem. It is the answer to the question of what to do that is decisive.

The strike has illustrated quite decisively that the bureaucracy, no matter how left its rhetoric, is quite unable to overcome that sectionalist weakness. The whole of the bureaucracy, from Sirs on the extreme scabby right to Scargill on the extreme militant left, have proved unable to overcome the difficulties.

No doubt there are many in the movement who will agree with us about Sirs, but will start to hesitate when we include Jimmy Knapp, and be screaming dissent once the sacred name of Arthur Scargill is taken in vain.

The temptation on the left is to try to draw a line of demarcation *inside* the bureaucracy between left and right. It is a distinction which then permits a concentration on winning positions inside the bureaucracy for the left.

It is important to recognise that there are big differences within the bureaucracy: Bill Sirs *is* very far to the right of Arthur Scargill and this has a real effect on the class struggle. Arthur Scargill *is* very much to the left of Jack Taylor and this has an important effect on the class struggle. But they *all* remain bounded by that fundamental reliance on the official apparatus which is both the expertise and the weakness of the bureaucrat.

Take Orgreave as an example. Sirs, of course, has been encouraging scabbing.

Scargill has been trying with substantial determination to stop the delivery of coke from Orgreave to Scunthorpe. That is certainly an important difference. Scargill also saw from very early on the importance of stopping steel and saw the need to concentrate his forces on that: Taylor and Co were much more reluctant and tried almost every trick in the book to avoid a confrontation. That also is an important difference.

But take the events leading up to the 'Bloody Monday' at Orgreave. For some two weeks Scargill had been trying, against the indifference or sabotage of the local executive, to mount mass pickets. But he had also, along with the rest of the bureaucracy, been closeted in secret talks with the NUM which he stated were going very well indeed. By the Friday before the big battle it looked as though the deal was on. On the Saturday there was the Yorkshire Miners' Gala. *Orgreave was not mentioned.*

At the same time the talks broke down. The Taylors were denied an opportunity to sell out by the intransigence of the ruling class. The events of the Monday were organised by the Yorkshire bureaucracy, and more generally by the bureaucracy as a whole, on the Sunday itself.

Symbolic

Now the size and the determination of the picket on that Monday was, in itself, a tribute to the organisational ability of the bureaucracy and to the spirit of the rank and file. But it was also very much the work of a bureaucracy mobilising a stage army. The very next day there was no picketing, and once the coke started to move after a brief break there was no resumption of mass picketing. Instead, the battle shifted to South Wales and took a radically different form. Instead of mass picketing, the miners were now relying on symbolic pickets to stop train drivers.

To their credit, the train drivers have mostly respected the token pickets and refused to deliver ore. They have taken the suspensions in a very principled way. But they have not used the suspensions as a reason for a more general walk-out—after all Knapp and the rest of their leadership have been arguing that a levy can provide the money needed to pay the suspended men full wages for the duration.

No doubt, financially, this is possible. Politically it is disastrous. Not only does it ensure the isolation of those workers sent home, but it fails to take the opportunity to broaden the dispute and to take advantage of management blunders. It fits with the low key post-*Orgreave* approach.

There is an important and obvious conclusion to draw from all of this. Bloody Monday at *Orgreave* represented a shift to the left by Taylor and Co—after all they had been prevented from staging a sell-out by the class enemy. But that shift to the left was a bureaucratic one. Just as Scargill was unable to bypass the Taylors and the like, so he has gone along with the new strategy in practice.

The obvious missing factor, the force that could overcome all these weaknesses and sectionalism, is the rank and file. It has certainly been visible during the strike—it



SCARGILL: closeted in talks

was they who fought the police with great courage and determination in a host of battles as well as the big confrontation. But they have not been able to act as an independent force.

Go back to Orgreave again, and you can see that very clearly. The procedure for picketing in Yorkshire is that you turn up at the welfare and get an envelope with instructions of where to picket, plus your expenses for the day. That form of organisation, in itself, makes sure that only a minority, those who take the initiative of coming to the welfare, actually get involved in the action. And it also means that the bureaucracy decide who is going where. The initiative that had rested with the rank and file in the first few days of the strike is now firmly back in the hands of the officials.

There are no meetings at which rank and file miners can thrash out what are the most important targets that day or week, where they can organise to go round and motivate some of the strikers who are just digging their allotments.

Failed

What that meant at Orgreave was that miners who could see the need to be there turned up but got instructions, and the money, to go to Nottinghamshire. They went: simple loyalty, plus the consciousness that they had been given scarce resources to do a job, ensured that they tried to get to Nottinghamshire. They were either turned back by the cops or failed to stop scab miners. Then, and only then, the most determined headed for Orgreave. It was a system designed to make sure the pickets at Orgreave were small.

In order to break with such stupidity it would require a very high level of political awareness *and* an organisation independent of the bureaucracy. Although many miners could see the need to go to Orgreave, they went under the prodding of Scargill. Even the most determined miners had no organisational independence, and for the majority, to go was not to break with the bureaucracy, only to respond to the call of one section.

The sad fact is that there are only a tiny number of miners who can see the need to organise *independently* of the bureaucracy. They are far too few to achieve any actual

organisational impact. The reason why there are so few is that it needs a fairly high degree of political awareness to see the need for such organisation in respect of the rhetoric of the bureaucrats. Particularly when Scargill is showing his left face, it is a very persuasive one. It needs a clear political understanding of the role of the bureaucracy to see the need for independent organisation. The first task for socialists is to increase that number of miners who are aware of the need for independent organisation.

That is not simply a task for those inside the mining industry. The miners are, quite rightly, active outside of the mining areas, seeking support and backing from other groups of workers. There is also very substantial sympathy for the miners among quite wide layers of workers, and a commitment to organise at least collections amongst the bulk of union activists.

It is however true that many of the people who are today active in support of the miners are themselves unclear about the role of the bureaucracy.

Indeed, it is often worse than that. If the vice that affects many miners is the belief that Scargill walks on water, then the vice that affects many who genuinely want to help the miners is the belief that *miners* walk on water.

That sort of attitude is of little use. The crying need in the strike is political clarity, and the best assistance any socialist can give to any miner is to convince him of the need for independent rank and file organisation. That means argument, often very hard arguments, with miners. It also means arguments, often very hard arguments, with many of the people who support the miners. It particularly means arguments with those committed to one or other version of the Labour Party left.

They are, since the EEC elections ended, without a canvass to call their own and are putting their energies into supporting the miners. This is a good thing, and we welcome it, but they are also grinding their own axe. From *Tribune* to the *Militant* they are all committed, very committed, to the idea that it is left bureaucrats that count. They are probably *more* committed to this even than the miners who look to Scargill. So any attempt to argue the politics of the strike will be met by the organised hostility of the sectarian left as well as by the suspicion of

less compromised miners and their supporters.

Winning those arguments will not be easy under the best of circumstances. Political clarity on our part is one of the first requirements for making headway. The other primary criterion is that we, the socialists, are seen to be the people who are the most active fighters for the miners' cause.

That means beginning with the little things like making sure that collections are taken for the miners wherever we have any influence. It also means that it is necessary to try to step up the level of solidarity.

If the current mood amongst the most conscious layer of the labour movement is one of sympathy for the miners, then we need to try to firm up that sympathy and turn it into real solidarity. So the collection needs to become the regular collection. The collection needs to become the levy. The levy needs to become the organising force for the token support of one of the regional days of action. And that token action needs to become the basis for real solidarity, for blacking the lorry firms that deliver scab coal, for instance.

Headway

It is the determination to lead the struggle forward at the same time as being very very clear about the overall politics of the strike that can begin to make some sort of headway, not only in the industry but also amongst those people who support the miners.

There is no point in muttering about general strikes in the abstract: if Scargill were locked up that *might* connect with the mood in the class. As it stands today, it does not. But the sympathy that is there can be hardened and developed into solidarity with careful work.

And the political generalisation that is implicit both in the strike and in the support for it can also be the beginning of a clearer political understanding not only of the strike but also of the need to overthrow capitalism.

Socialists face a difficult task: the temptations of mindless and uncritical activism in support of the miners are great. And the dangers of sitting on the sidelines pointing out the correct strategy are equally great. We have to combine both the activism and the analysis. ■



Token pickets will not win the strike



Understanding the state

The battles on the Orgreave picket lines and a recent spate of small attacks on socialists by the remnants of the National Front, have provoked a number of claims that Britain is sliding into a police state or some sort of fascism. Colin Sparks looks at these claims.

The level of police violence, and the licence they have been given to arrest miners, during the current strike has been very high. If it is the big set-piece confrontations that make the TV news, there is also a constant stream of less well-publicised events that go to giving the impression of Britain becoming a police state.

As the popular image of the police changes from the 'British bobby' towards the occupying army image that French workers have towards the CRS, so the argument that Britain is changing from a democracy into a police state is heard more and more often. Sometimes, it is argued that there is also a slide to-

wards fascism going on at the same time, with either Margaret Thatcher or some of the traditional fascist organisations spear-heading the drive.

There is not in truth an unbridgeable chasm between 'democracy' a 'police state' and 'fascism'. It is important to remember that all of these are abstract terms used to disguise the social realities of who actually rules.

Take the case of the idea of 'democracy'. The general abstract term can be used to cover a variety of different types of rule.

Sixth century Athens was, for example, a democracy, in some ways much more democratic than modern Britain, magistrates for example were elected. Yet only citizens could vote. Women, slaves and foreigners couldn't.

Democracy meant the rule of a particular class; in this case the small and medium slave-owners.

The same is true today. When people talk of the 'democratic nature' of the British state, they are not pointing to who rules the state, but the way in which it is ruled. In modern Britain, the country is ruled by the owners of capital; they rule by and through democratic methods.

If Britain became a police state overnight, this same class would still rule. They would continue to control the decisive instruments of power in society — they would have a monopoly of the productive property, the capital, and we the working class would still be forced to sell our ability to labour to these self-same capitalists.

The same applies if Britain were to become a fascist state: the same people would continue to own the capital and would continue to rule.

So what matters fundamentally is not the way in which a society is ruled but the class content of that rule. Thus we would argue that Britain has never been a 'democracy', pure and simple; it has been, for the last century or so, a *bourgeois* democracy. Similarly, if it became a 'police state' it would be a capitalist police state.

Having said that, there are real and important differences between bourgeois democracy and a capitalist police state that make any idea that one can grow over quite simply into the other really very dangerous.

Any ruling class has a problem: they are, by definition, few in number since they live off the labour of the vast mass of the population. How are they going to make



POLICE: acting for the bosses

sure that the vast mass continue to work to keep them in the manner to which they wish to remain accustomed?

This general problem is particularly acute for the capitalist class, since they are constantly fighting each other as well, in the name of competition and accumulation, and so need to work even to maintain their own unity in the face of their class enemy.

There are two methods they can use: force and fraud.

Fraud means getting the working class to believe that the rule of the capitalists is normal, natural, inevitable and desirable. In order to sell this set of ideas the ruling class have all sorts of weapons: schools, the BBC, the *Daily Mail*, and so on.

Fraud

The Labour Party is one of the most important agencies of fraud attempting as it does to convince us that change can come through parliament.

Force means that the ruling class have at their disposal soldiers and coppers who can baton, imprison or kill anyone who does not accept that the rule of the capitalist class is inevitable.

The capitalist always rules through a combination of both of these tactics. What shifts is the balance between the two.

Bourgeois democracy is a means of ruling which relies very heavily on the use of fraud. The ruling class allows the working class a certain number of freedoms, and explains that any attempt to change things will lead to a loss of those very freedoms.

It is important to be very clear that these freedoms are *real* freedoms. The right to organise trade unions, to have socialist newspapers openly distributed and to be able to argue publicly for socialism are all important rights.

The fraud lies in pretending that these freedoms are all that anyone could possibly wish for, and that the desire to have, say, the

freedom to live a decent life without the misery of unemployment is something which endangers the freedoms that already exist.

Because these freedoms are real ones, and make it very much easier to organise for socialism, we are always in the forefront of the struggle to defend and extend democratic rights. For us they have a class content too: they make it that much easier for us to prepare the overthrow of bourgeois democracy and to replace it with proletarian democracy.

The most important democratic right the working class have is the ability to form their own independent organisations.

The most important of these organisations are trade unions and political parties. They are important not simply because they are a means towards preparing for the overthrow of capitalism but because they allow workers to defend themselves within capitalism.

Trade unions, for example, are not weapons for overthrowing capitalism. They are organisations by means of which workers defend themselves against the capitalists while at the same time accepting that the capitalist class owns the workplaces in which they work.

The existence of these rights is double edged. On the one hand, they allow workers to form their own organisations, on the other hand some of those organisations are important in helping to prop up the status quo.

So bourgeois democracy is a method of class rule by which the ruling class allow the existence of organisations which might endanger their rule in order to allow at the same time the development of organisations which provide it with some sort of consent.

A police state is very different in organisation. There all of these rights to independent organisations are banned, or only allowed what limited form the police may decide is appropriate at any particular time. This, of course, is a much more unfavourable set of circumstances for workers even to defend their own living standards, let alone organise

for the overthrow of a system.

A police state depends on a complete denial of those rights to organise. So while at the same time the police look up those people who wish to organise independently in order to overthrow capitalism they also have to smash those people and organisations which only want to do deals with them and who are as opposed to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism as is the most backwoods employer.

The police state, then, relies much more on force than on fraud. That does not mean they abandon fraud. Even in the most ruthless police state, the TV, the press and the education system churn out the story that everything is perfect and that the only people who object to continual police rule are a bunch of deviants probably in the pay of a foreign power.

A police state rests on the coercion of the working class. In some circumstances, for example in societies where there is a very large petty bourgeoisie, or peasant class that is only too willing to see workers smashed, a police state can be fairly stable because the capitalists can rule with the support of other social classes.

In an advanced capitalist country like Britain, however, there is no numerically large and socially powerful class which can provide the social support for the bourgeoisie if it chooses to rule through the smashing of trade unions and working class political parties. So a police state in Britain, resting almost entirely on the coercion of the working class, would be a very unstable and vulnerable form of capitalist rule.

Because these forms of class rule are so different, it is obvious that there cannot be a simple shift from one to another. To shift from bourgeois democracy to a police state or to fascism requires a major social upheaval. There has been no such change in Britain in the last decade: Britain is and remains a bourgeois democracy. A couple of parliamentary Bills and the issuing of riot shields won't change that.

Deviants

The fascist state is different again. Although all organisations independent of the state machine are banned, the state itself sets up its own mass organisations which it tries to persuade the masses is capable of representing their interests. Thus fascist states ban trade unions, but set up state run mock unions to which membership is compulsory.

It is here that fascism proves itself a superior form of bourgeois rule. It is much more stable because it provides all of the organisations that the capitalist class needs to stabilise its rule, but provides them in a form designed to eliminate any opposition and make sure that they are completely loyal to the state.

Fascism can do this because, unlike a police state, it depends on the existence of a mass civilian movement — the fascist party. It is this mass movement that provides the shock troops to smash the independent organisations of the working class.

Fascism, then, is a mechanism of class rule which also depends upon consent, but this time it is the consent of those people or-

ganised into the fascist mass movement. In advanced capitalist countries this mass movement is usually led and staffed by the small capitalist and farmer and the upper white collar employee, but if it is to succeed in becoming a mass organisation it has also got to win behind it at least a proportion of the most backward workers.

This means that it is not a simple and direct tool of the capitalist class proper. The fascist mass movement has to be built out of people who have suffered at the hands of capitalism and have been driven to despair by its contradictions. It is a movement that extracts a price from the capitalists — usually in terms of jobs for the boys once the working class has been smashed.

What, then, has happened? It is obvious that something has been going on. There are new and more vicious anti-union laws. The police are being used much more openly and directly to smash strikes. There is an ugly rhetoric from the Tory Party demanding more and more naked force in the maintenance of class rule.

What is really going on is a relatively small shift in the balance between force and fraud within bourgeois democracy. Such alterations happen all the time, but they have a common driving force: they represent responses to the balance of class forces and the level of the class struggle, rather than some deep-laid plot to win total power on the part of various police officers.

Superior

In periods of capitalist boom the police force have a relatively small direct role in the class struggle. They are much more energetic in social terror against marginal groups. As the capitalist crisis develops, they are used more and more openly to try to shift the balance of class forces.

The increased use of the police, and perhaps the army, in direct attacks on workers in Britain, is the result of the fact that the movement is on the retreat while the capitalist class faces a major problem of restoring the conditions in which it can generate profits.

A victory by the miners, or a more general shift in the balance of class forces, would lead to a swift withdrawal of the police from the picket line.

The claim that Britain is becoming a police state is used by trade union leaders and Labour Party politicians for two bad reasons. For the trade union leaders the police provide an alibi. If it is the case that the miners are defeated at Orgreave or elsewhere because of the police tactics, then who could possibly blame those trade union leaders who dragged their feet about organising solidarity action? The trade union leaders, after all, are not responsible for what chief constables do.

The other argument is heard much more often from Labour Party politicians. They say that the development of the police state in Britain, can be checked if only they are allowed more control over the police by being elected to police committees and parliament.

All of the evidence of the last Labour government proves that this is false: they

were just as ready as the Tories to use police and soldiers to break strikes, and even today the Labour leadership 'condemns violence' rather than supporting the miners.

The need to check the rise of a fascist state is also used to justify all sorts of 'popular front' type alliances with Liberals and SDPers in order to 'defend democracy'.

If you think there is some sort of abstract category called 'democracy' which is independent of the class struggle, then of course you are justified in allying with employers or any old riff-raff to defend this supra-class concept.

The price you have to pay for such a deal is that at the very least, you keep quiet about the miners, and at the worst, you have to condemn their violence just as much as you condemn that of the police.

The idea that Britain is sliding into a fascist state is ridiculous. To believe that the hundred or so active fascists in Britain today are the major political problem confronting socialists is a grotesque distortion of political reality.

But it is not just a mistake. Because such a perspective does not see fascism as a mass movement but just as a bunch of thugs, it leads to a distorted concept of how to fight back. If all you are for doing is opposing a bunch of thugs, then why not organise a bigger bunch of your own thugs to go around and fight the fascists? The miners' strike, and mass working class action do not come into the picture.

We do not ignore the problems that these false solutions stem from. Police violence is obviously a major obstacle to winning the miners' strike. Defeating the police, however, is not really a technical question. In the end the strength of the police is a reflection of the weakness on our side. That in turn is in large part the result of the failures of the very trade union leaders who are loudest in denouncing the cops.

The key to defeating the police is the

mobilisation of mass action by workers. Getting the coke from Orgreave blacked by steelworkers would be a massive defeat not just for the NCB and the government but also for the whole idea that coppers can break strikes successfully.

We believe that the way to defend and extend democratic rights is to win victories in the class war.

Again, it is certainly true that fascism needs to be opposed. But we have to be quite clear that, at the moment, the National Front or whoever do not represent the major problem facing the working class.

Even the physical defence of meetings and street sales is a political question. Squads of left wing toughs fighting squads of right wing toughs provide no answer at all. What is more likely to happen is that the cops will move and seize a heaven-sent opportunity to arrest a few lefties.

Blacked

Our ability to defeat the fascists lies in the fact that our politics have a greater potential for mass mobilisation than do theirs. We can, for example, isolate them by the fact that we have something to say about the miners' strike and they have not.

Even at the strategic level this is the case. There is no doubt that if the miners are defeated the mood of despair and despondency that will follow in the coalfields and elsewhere will provide much more fertile ground for the ravings of the fascists than will the feeling of confidence and class solidarity which will follow a victory.

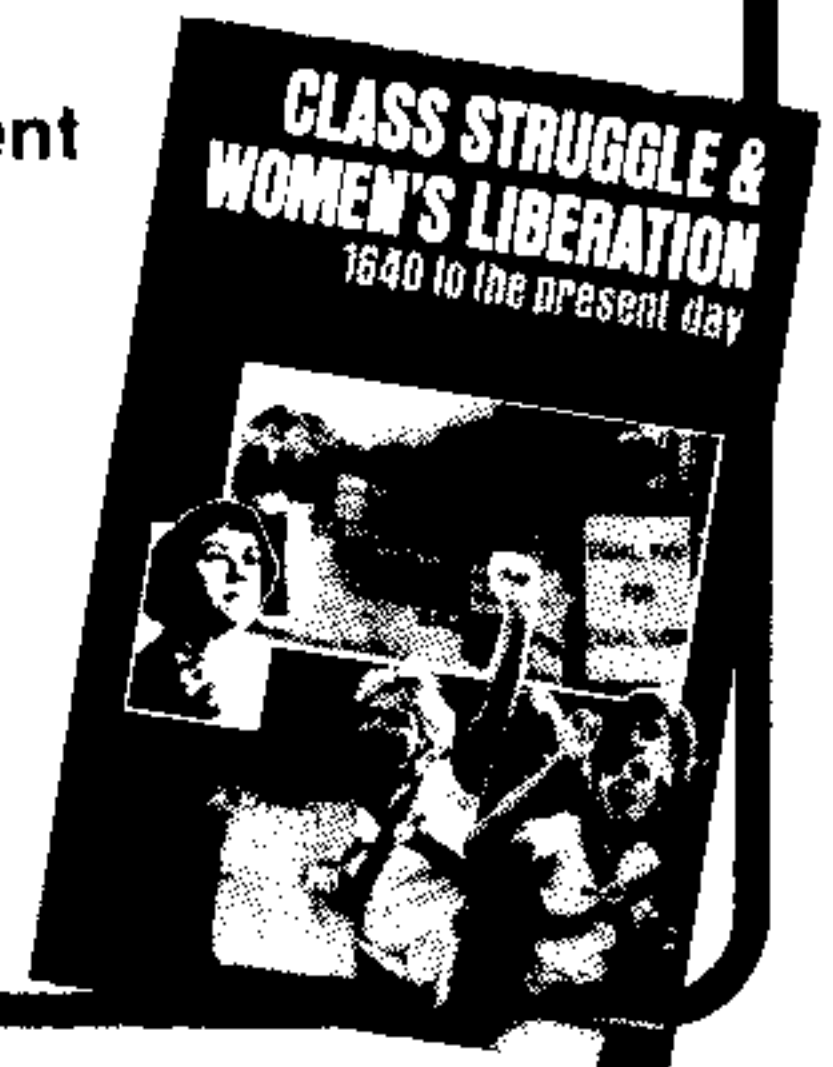
Those who seek to divert our attentions into some sort of popular front against the police state, or into military adventures against the fascists, are not only failing to solve the immediate practical problems of the movement, they are also proposing strategies that will lead to a strengthening of the very people they want to fight ■

Women's liberation —two traditions

Class struggle and women's liberation—1640 to the present day

Tony Cliff

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Voice of the party

A key part of SWP members' activity is selling *Socialist Worker*. Sue Cockerill explains why, and how this is best done.

The constant thread which runs through all our activities as members of the SWP is the weekly paper, *Socialist Worker*. Whether the activity is selling the paper on a regular street or workplace sale, or going to a picket line, or a mass lobby or demonstration, the common element is *Socialist Worker*.

Why does the party lay such stress on the paper? First, it is the main tool for conveying the ideas of the SWP outside our own ranks. When we sell the paper to someone, we are putting forward our ideas about the present situation, about how the struggle of the working class can best be advanced.

These arguments are carried as part of our total politics, so the paper will be arguing about how the miners' strike can be won, linking it with other struggles against the Tories, but it will also be taking up the questions raised in people's minds by the success of the fascists in France, the slaughter in India, and so on. No member could hope to take up all these issues without the paper.

Because the paper is taking up the arguments, it means that the members are able to deal with them when they come up at work, in the pub, or wherever. It also means that it is difficult for members to dodge issues. If you sell the paper regularly, people will argue with you about the party's position on, for example, Labour councils, or Ireland.

Organiser

The second main reason for the paper is that as well as carrying political propaganda, it also acts as an organiser. At the moment that means principally that it organises the party itself, being the main channel through which the local branches are connected together in activity, in focussing on certain issues as being the major ones to orientate around.

For example, without the paper, it would be much easier for a branch to decide that this or that activity was more important than the miners' strike, or Warrington, or GCHQ. The party as a whole had to orientate more around those issues because the paper acted as a directing, organising force.

If you look at revolutionary organisations which don't have a paper, or one that comes out irregularly, like some of the left groups in Europe, you can see that this lack of an organising mechanism results in a tendency for each local branch to do their own thing, and effectively the organisation ceases to act as a united party. It literally lacks a single voice to speak to the working class.

Conversely, if you look at reformist organisations like the Labour Party, the fact that they don't have a single paper which all the members are expected to sell is a good

measure of the difference between revolutionary and reformist politics. If you only want votes, not activity, then you don't need to organise either members or non-members (except when there's an election). And the last thing you want in a party united only by electoralism is serious discussion of theory and practice.

A revolutionary paper also acts as a forum in which militants can share the experience of workers involved in struggle in workplaces and areas.

That means carrying strike reports and analysis of developments in different unions and industries.

In periods of downturn these reports are written mainly by party members on the outside, on the basis of visiting picket lines, talking to militants and so on. In periods of upturn the paper should be in a position where more and more of these reports could be written directly by the workers involved, who would see the paper as their paper, as an organiser, for the most advanced sections of the class.

Lenin's writings on the subject of the Bolshevik paper *Pravda* in the years of working class upsurge just before the first world war give us a very good picture of such a workers' paper, a paper written by workers, not for them, and a paper supported by the workers' kopeks, the small amounts of money donated each week from thousands of workers' paypackets to keep the paper going.

The fact that *Pravda* received contributions from 504 groups of workers in the first six months of 1912 was a very telling indication of the extent to which it was seen as the workers' own newspaper.

Pravda didn't come out of nowhere, however. If we look back to Lenin's writings around the turn of the century, we find him arguing about the need for a central party paper, and about the way in which it could be used to build the party.

Although there is no argument about the need for *Socialist Worker* today, his arguments remain very useful. As people join the party, they have to be convinced of the need to go out and sell the paper — and some of the older comrades need to be reconvinced.

In an article titled *Where to Begin?* written in May 1901, and less than a year later in *What is to be Done?*, Lenin argues that a newspaper can be a collective organiser, and that in fact, only a newspaper can 'train strong political organisations'. In a famous analogy about party building, he wrote:

'The role of a newspaper is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser.

'In this last respect it may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates commu-

nication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour. With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape, that will engage, not only in local activities but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effect ... and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events.'

The whole business of standing for hours trying to sell *SW* is one that seems perhaps the oddest aspect of being in the party, both to new members and people who sympathise with our ideas, but haven't joined. And the greatest puzzle of all is why we spend ages outside workplaces selling perhaps one or two papers an hour. Even the oldest member often wonders what the point of it all is, especially at seven o'clock on a February morning.

The reason for selling at workplaces goes to the heart of our politics: it is because it is at work that the working class has the power to change society. It is there that we want to build the SWP. That doesn't mean we don't do street sales, but we recognise that selling regularly to someone going into a factory or office is potentially much more important than selling to a passer by in the street.

In other words, we don't sell papers for the sake of it, but to establish political relationships with those who buy the paper. That is a completely different idea from the notion of selling papers through news agents, where what counts is sales and advertising.

Intervention

To see how *Socialist Worker* is being used now to build the SWP, the *Review* talked to three comrades who are centrally involved in organising sales and other activity in their branches: **Phil Ramsell** from Gorton SWP, **Kath Connell** in Bradford, and **Kate Rankin** in Liverpool.

They talked about selling the paper, at workplaces and in the street, using it to develop contacts and bring people to meetings, and about the best way to organise sales and collections of money within the branches.

Some workplace sales are started cold, others result from party intervention around a particular dispute. For example, a sale at a factory in east Manchester was started cold by Gorton SWP. They sold two or three papers a week for two months — a fairly typical workplace sale — and then someone bought a paper who wanted to know where the branch met.

He began coming regularly to meetings. He had left the AUEW in disgust over the Laurence Scott sell-out, which was something comrades had to argue with him about. He joined the SWP, and began taking papers into the factory. The gate sale was kept up to provide back up.

Some time later, someone picked up a paper lying around the factory and asked where it came from.

After being pointed in the direction of the

member inside, this person joined the party about two months later. He had been very frustrated trying to organise in the factory and found it a tremendous boost to be able to come to party meetings and no longer feel so isolated. Both comrades sell inside the factory and are active in the union.

A regular sale of 15 papers was developed at an engineering factory in Brighouse by Bradford SWP after they intervened in a week-long dispute there. They found out that there was to be a mass meeting at lunchtime and went to sell the paper. The dispute was sold out, but the branch kept up the paper sale.

Bradford have recently started a sale at Grattan Warehouses, where they sold 11 papers.

Liverpool also report that whereas in the past workplace sales have taken a long time to build up, the experience seems to be that since the miners' strike it is possible to sell quite a few papers in the first week. They have sold six papers on sales at a factory in Skelmersdale and at a factory in the Wirral at the first attempt.

Gorton branch stress the importance of sales at workplaces actually meaning something. They have been selling a paper to the convenor of an engineering factory for a long time. The branch first came in contact with him through taking delegations of strikers to the factory.

Real commitment

Although he is not likely to join the party in the near future, it is important to continue selling *SW* to him every week to maintain a relationship with him, so that the party can find out what's happening in the factory, and we have someone to contact when it comes to issues like the NGA, GCHQ, the miners and so on.

At one time, this convenor was taking six papers, which seemed a lot more impressive, but then the branch realised the papers were being paid for by the stewards' committee. The WRP managed to persuade them to buy *Newsline* instead, but the convenor continued to buy *SW* for himself. As a sale his is much more valuable than the six nominal sales to the stewards were, because it represents a real commitment to our politics.

Pete from Gorton SWP also saw it as being very important to get reports on disputes into *Socialist Worker*. He mentioned a factory where the branch has been selling for two years, following intervention in a dispute there. There have been three disputes since and every time the branch has ensured a weekly report from the strike has gone into *SW*.

But this time there was no final report on the victory for a couple of weeks after the end of the strike as the branch was late getting the story in, and the workers asked where the story had got to! Liverpool also said that they found it very useful to be able to show workers in dispute that *SW* was reporting and supporting their case.

The importance of intervening in disputes using the paper can be overlooked in two ways: first of all, not intervening because the dispute seems to be a no-hoper, involving a tiny number of workers; secondly, inter-



Guide to paper sellers No 5: Bingo queues are a waste of time

vening at a supportive level, but failing to sell the paper.

The Gorton branch intervened in the *Stockport Messenger* dispute for three months before it blew up into a major national confrontation. They went down several times a week to sell the paper and argue the politics. They didn't get very far, and were tempted to give it up. The fact that they persisted didn't change the course of the dispute, but it was very important as far as the comrades were concerned, because then they knew the arguments.

Nearly every branch can probably think of disputes that they didn't follow up because it didn't seem worth it. Just think how silly

you'd feel if it turned into another Warrington. Of course, the vast majority don't, but even so, arguing on picket lines is valuable in itself. What isn't valuable is going to picket lines and not 'coming out' as an SWP member. Most people are nervous about selling the paper to total strangers, but it usually turns out to be a lot easier than expected.

The Liverpool SW organiser stressed the need to use the content of *SW* on picket lines: opening up the paper, drawing attention to the arguments in it, to the contrast between *SW* telling the truth about workers' struggles and the lies of the bourgeois press.

Regularity and consistency are seen as key

to building up sales and contacts. If people see the same sellers every week, they are more likely to buy the paper, get into conversation, and come to meetings. The conversations mean that we gain knowledge about what is happening in a particular workplace, and therefore find it easier to begin talking to other workers as well, and to go on to discuss more general political ideas.

That doesn't only apply to workplaces. Gorton branch sell every week at the university before the lunchtime SWSS meeting. The sale includes unemployed comrades as well as students. They can build up a relationship with students who buy the paper because of the regularity of the sale.

It is also easier to have conversations there than at workplaces because the students don't have to rush into work.

The street sales too are more likely to yield results if they are done consistently. A railway worker joined Gorton branch after he had bought papers at a sale the branch had done consistently.

The importance of doing workplace sales from both outside and inside came out in all

the branches.

The difficulty of selling in such a large workplace as Fords Halewood has been got over to some extent by selling on the gate as well as inside and by getting buyers of the paper to become sellers as well, so that now 80 papers go in a week.

The regularity and the enthusiasm needed for successful sales of *SW* don't come from nowhere. They require careful preparation and organisation by the branch. The sales should be discussed regularly in the context of the overall political perspective, rather than as merely a technical, organisational question.

Kate from Liverpool emphasised that better sales don't come from hectoring or moralising. Nor can they be built by just passing round a clipboard at the meeting and expecting that the sales will be regularly and successfully done. She tries to discuss the sales with each member of the branch individually, every couple of weeks. She can do this by delegating the job of collecting *SW* money to another comrade and using the time to go round and talk to people, about

their problems and their experiences doing the sales, trying to increase involvement.

Payment slips mean that the paper sales are recorded in detail so that the *SW* organiser can have a record of exactly where the sales are happening.

Kath, from Bradford, says that accountability of members also means that members are responsible for getting someone else to cover their sale if they can't. It means that she isn't called up at all hours and then has to get someone to replace a comrade who can't sell. She organises 'key' sellers for the sales, who are notified if a different member is doing the sale. Delegation means that the *SW* organiser can spend more time talking about members' problems and planning sales.

Gorton branch organises newer members to go with more experienced members to see regular buyers of the paper, after the branch meetings. However these members are also paired with more experienced ones on the public sales.

As *Socialist Worker* has been quite rightly concentrating on the miners' strike since it began three months ago, the branches have been trying to sell the paper to miners as the main way of carrying our arguments about the strike, the need for more picketing, the role of the officials, how to win solidarity action and so on.

The results have been mixed; strikes don't instantly turn workers into revolutionary socialists, even strikes as large and bitter as this one. Some miners have been hostile to what we had to say about the officials, others don't think they should have to pay for the paper. Others have been drawn towards the paper because its arguments fit with their experience of the strike and tell the truth about the police and the Tories.

Arguments

They may not accept all our politics, but *Socialist Worker* provides them with information about what is happening in other areas of the strike, and arguments about how to win the strike.

A small minority are attracted to, and join, the SWP. Kate from Liverpool described how the branch had intervened on the picket lines, mainly at Bold Colliery, and how two miners had joined the branch.

'We have tried to cover the picket lines on most days, and we have had miners down to the branch meetings nearly every week. We tell them what the subject of the meeting is, ask them to come along and discuss what is happening in the strike and make sure transport is available. We have had very good, very open discussions in the branch with the miners about how the strike can be won.'

Not every branch is going to recruit miners from the strike, but every branch can use the arguments in the paper to bring people closer to the party. The miners' strike is seen as central by many militants outside the NUM, and many people who want to see Thatcher defeated.

It has been, and still is, an opportunity to get our ideas across to a wider layer of people. The only way we can do that is by using *Socialist Worker*. ■

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Lots of noise—little action

NALGO and CPSA, two key white collar unions, had their national conferences recently. Both on paper moved left, but the reality was somewhat different. In the first of two reports **John Carney** examines the NALGO conference.

To a casual observer attending this year's conference of NALGO at Brighton it might have looked as though the union had made a welcome move leftwards. A deeper look at the conference however reveals that this was not, unfortunately, the case.

Despite the national executive, the leading body of the union, being forced onto the defensive on a number of occasions, very little of the discussion or decisions taken will be of much use to militants wanting to mount a fightback. For this sorry state of affairs the 'broad lefts', especially those of the NEC, must bear a heavy responsibility.

There was evidence of a growing confidence and a preparedness to fight present among a significant minority of the conference. Indeed, while the delegates were assembled in Brighton NALGO members in Tower Hamlets were starting to take all-out strike action and nursery nurses were taking action in Islington and Bolton. The role the Broad Lefts seemed to set themselves was restricted to providing left cover for an embattled NEC.

Ballot

During the conference itself the NEC often found itself in a beleaguered position, having to rely on leading left wing NEC members such as Ivan Bevas and Graham Burgess to save the day. Two examples most clearly illustrate this.

The first came during the debate on the defence of the Metropolitan Counties. An amendment calling for members to be instructed without prior recourse to a secret ballot not to co-operate with those authorities implementing the abolition proposals was opposed by the NEC, but had significant support among many delegates.

The NEC, fearing that they might be overturned chose Ivan Bevas to speak against the amendment. And to add insult to injury Bevas spoke, especially on the question of secret ballots, in terms not too dissimilar to those used recently by right wingers in the NUM. Victory was secured by the NEC after a close card vote.

A motion submitted by black activists in NALGO, forcing the NEC to take up seriously the question of racism among employers and in NALGO, was opposed by the NEC in favour of recommendations contained in its own rather anemic white paper. Again it was the intervention of left NEC member Graham Burgess that helped secure a victory for the NEC on a card vote.

More damaging still was the failure of the broad lefts on the NEC to condemn the NEC's disgraceful motion on YTS. This motion called for people on such schemes to be paid £32.49 — the optimum amount

before income tax and national insurance stoppages become incurred. The rationale given was that last year's position — people on YTS to be paid the rate for the job — had not been successfully implemented.

This is hardly surprising given the NEC's total failure to give any effective lead.

On pay, only SWP members pointed out that this year provided NALGO with its best opportunity to claw back lost ground by opening up a second front against the Tories.

On fighting privatisation it was again only SWP members who pointed out the damage done to the fight against privatisation by NALGO members crossing NALGO picket lines at Barking Hospital.

Further evidence of a shift leftwards among some delegates and one of the undoubted highlights of the conference was the motion of censure passed on the newly-appointed General Secretary, John Daly. This was for his betrayal of the NGA during the Stockport Messenger dispute. As one of NALGO's representatives on the TUC General Council he went against NALGO official policy when he failed to give full support to the NGA.

Not only was the motion of censure pleasing in itself, but the extremely lame attempt that Daly made to defend himself actually persuaded many delegates who might otherwise have wanted to support him to change their minds.

The only occasion that a left wing NEC member came down from the platform to address the conference was during the miners' debate. This was to speak on an amendment donating £25,000 to the miners (equivalent to approximately 3p per member). Fortunately, although the amendment was lost, it later turned out that this defeat resulted in a larger donation being made.

This was because many branches had brought along individual donations to give to the collection at conference knowing that the NEC had promised to match it. This raised something like £64,000 in total.

There was a sizeable number of delegates at the conference, especially from the power group, who were mandated not to vote for any motion that supported the miners. Threats were made of large membership resignations if any further money was donated to the miners. These were not idle threats either as an estimated 2,500 members have resigned from NALGO in protest at a previous donation of £10,000.

This undoubtedly underlay the attempt by the NEC and many in the broad left, to get the debate over as quickly as possible. It was a tragedy that the debate was shortened, because it would have provided an excellent opportunity to discuss the dispute itself, and

how the present miners' dispute can provide trade unionists with an excellent opportunity to more common cause with the miners against the Tories, by launching a fight over pay etc.

Needless to say, no mention was made of NALGO members crossing NUM picket lines or how it is vitally important to raise money at work through collections and levies etc. Instead a typically vague motion of support was passed which did not tackle in any way how NALGO members can help the miners win.

The debate over Liverpool City Council's fightback was treated in virtually identical fashion, with very little discussion on how Liverpool can win. Again the motion put forward by the Broad Left and passed expressed little more than approval for the stand taken.

The conference delegates by and large reflect the union activists who operate at remote branch executive level, often with considerable facility time rather than the more accountable shop stewards. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the conference delegates is how little they reflect the membership in terms of age, sex, colour or take-home pay, tending to be a lot older and overwhelmingly male.

Reformists

This also applies to the NEC who are elected by a ballot of the membership as a whole. Real power rests not with the conference itself but with the NEC who are empowered to carry out its decisions. This is something the Broad Lefts understand very well. It was very clear from conference that they saw the advancement of the union largely in terms of winning places on the NEC, the classic perspective of all reformists.

Although the NEC is not elected by the conference it can nevertheless be used as a place to build a reputation for yourself. Therefore, unpopular questions like how to stop NALGO members crossing NUM or Barking Hospital picket lines tend to get dropped and replaced by vague left rhetoric.

There was little understanding of the need for workplace organisation as the best defence of workers' interests displayed at the conference. Nevertheless the SWP, unhampered by electoral considerations, were able to mount the most prominent intervention of any section of the left at conference.

The SWP was the only political organisation whose members made the principled point of always identifying themselves as such during their contributions, which was not an easy thing to do as a sizeable section

of the audience booed (probably a mixture of hostile right wingers and embarrassed lefts). However, there was evidence that our intervention found an echo among the delegates not least in the sizeable turn out of 84 who attended the Tony Cliff meeting. Seven conference bulletins were produced and eagerly read by most delegates and a total of 177

papers were sold during the week.

Although conference failed to be a useful forum for discussing the all too real threats that NALGO members face over privatisation, attacks on local government, cuts etc. it can only be hoped that the coming year's struggles provide an opportunity for a more honest discussion at next year's con-

ference.

In the meantime, of course, it is up to NALGO shop stewards to make the most of this year's conference. That can be best done by doing what conference did not even discuss — organising collections for the miners, respecting all pickets lines and building workplace organisation. ■

Playing on Graham's ground

Here John McGloughlin looks at the second conference; that of the CPSA.

1984 is proving an eventful year for civil service trade unionists. The GCHQ union ban prompted the most widespread industrial action for years.

Alastair Graham's attempted 'no disruption' clause fuelled rank and file anger with his 'new realism' to such an extent that over a third of all the resolutions to CPSA conference were censures of him and the right-wing executive. The annual elections saw the Broad Left swept back into office with a heavy majority on the executive.

The Tories have now raised their pay offer to well beyond 3 percent but even so it seems likely that the current round of workplace meetings will reject the deal. Action over pay is on the cards for the first time since 1981.

Ironically it is Graham who is calling the shots over pay. It was his strategy that the predominantly left wing conference voted to follow, in pursuit of a comparability claim of only 7 percent. There is still no firm plan of action to win the claim.

Graham hopes that a rejection vote will itself be enough to win a small increase in the offer which he could then claim as a victory without having to actually lead any struggle. If the government will not budge, then token action along the same lines as the teachers seems likely, despite the fact that this sort of strategy proved a complete disaster in 1981.

Open contempt

Despite their huge majority, the Broad Left executive have done nothing to argue for the sort of action that could win on pay. This spinelessness will come as no surprise to those who saw them in action at the conference.

At the conference Graham displayed an open contempt for the Broad Left. He virtually challenged them to debate and pass a motion of no confidence in him.

With the challenge came the threat that if it was carried he would immediately resign and stand for re-election. He claims that in those circumstances he would win overwhelmingly and confirm his self-professed position as the representative of the ordinary member and expose the Broad Left lack of support among the membership.

The threat proved enough to split the Broad Left. The Communist Party and the non-aligned Labour left fell for the bluff and argued against both moving the no-

confidence motion and against voting for it if it was moved.

Jonathan Baume, leading non-aligned Labour lefty, even achieved the remarkable feat of moving to the right of Graham over pay. He argued that all talk of any action, from all-out strikes to Graham's limited industrial action in pursuit of arbitration, was dangerous dreaming.

The rest of the left, led by the supporters of *Militant* argued correctly that the aftermath of GCHQ was just the right moment to challenge Graham. Even so, Graham's taunt about their lack of base hits a nerve with them too. He feels confident in basing himself on the passivity of the mass of the membership.

Most of the time most of the members do not want to fight. The problem for the Broad Left is that their electoralism forces them to compete on the same ground as Graham and not to do anything that might upset the most backward of the membership. They have no strategy for leading the mass of the membership into more militant solutions.

That explains their timidity over the pay claim. They are nervous about calling for the sort of action that they are not absolutely confident they can pull off. It also explains why, at the executive meeting that kicked Graham off the TUC General Council, they were again split, this time over a donation to the miners. Ex-president Kevin Roddy, a prominent *Militant* supporter, proposed a £10,000 donation to add to the £25,000 already given. He was voted down by the soft wing of the Broad Left, who feared a wave of resignations from the union.

While they are quite prepared to vote sums from the union coffers to the miners, the *Militant* supporters are, however, rather more reluctant to take the argument into the offices. They have done little or nothing to organise weekly levies, for example, and the best that the whole executive could manage over the days of action in support of the miners was a weak circular offering official support to any workplace that decided to strike. There was not one word to encourage strike action.

The dilemma of the Broad Left is summed up in the problem they have with the strike by 240 DHSS computer operators at Newcastle Central Office. DHSS is one of the most militant sections and a stronghold of the left in the union.

Newcastle Central, with over 5,500 CPSA members has been dominated by *Militant* supporters for many years. The strike is over shift pattern changes and consequent pay cuts. The issue concerns every civil servant

faced with the introduction of new technology in the future.

The strike could easily be won. The Newcastle computer deals with pensions and DHSS pay, and management are willing to ride out a strike there alone. The key to winning is spreading the strike to the other computers at Reading and Livingstone. If they stop, all computer-printed Giro's stop. In the climate of the miners' strike the Tories can hardly relish the prospect.

From the start the local union leadership, the DHSS section leadership and the union national executive have all argued for keeping the strike confined to Newcastle. Reading and Livingstone have been encouraged to sign separate deals on shift pattern changes and that can only make it harder to win solidarity action.

In local offices they are asking for a £1 per week levy from staff who are also expected to operate emergency procedures by doing manually the work that is normally done by the computers.

At the conference SWP members found themselves virtually alone in arguing for spreading the strike action and for blacking the emergency procedures. Six weeks into the strike many of the strikers can see the need to escalate the action, but the local leadership are making it very difficult. They have failed to learn the basic lesson of the miners' strike: it is better to start from the minority who are prepared to fight and to generalise from there.

Escalation

Their failure is the result of their whole strategy of building the union from the top down. Lacking a base of militants tested in local struggles and capable of leading their fellow workers with them, the Broad Left executive fears calling for escalation that they are not sure they can deliver.

Whatever they want to do they find that their position forces them to relate to the passive majority of the membership rather than the minority that is prepared to fight. It was just such a logic that led them to leave the strikers in Oxford and Birmingham isolated when they were last in power.

That dilemma can only be overcome with a different sort of politics and an organisation based on building from the base.

The task of building such an organisation is difficult. It means that every meeting addressed by Newcastle strikers needs to understand that it is not just a question of supporting the levy but also of winning supportive action.

And it means that discussion of the pay offer must focus not just on rejection but also on the sort of action needed to win. It means, too, workplace collections in every office for the miners in order to drive home the need for organisation and solidarity. ■

The arbitration trap

The decision of the teachers' leaders to go to arbitration is a severe blow for teachers argues **Shaun Doherty** as he looks at the campaign.

After a lot of huffing and puffing from both sides the teachers' salary claim has been referred to arbitration and the industrial action has been called off. It is a sad reflection of the state of the teachers' unions that they are able to claim this development as a victory. It was not, however, the objective at the start of negotiations.

Since April 1975 teachers' salaries have declined by 31 percent and well documented evidence was brought forward to illustrate this decline. But there was never any intention to base a campaign of action around such a substantial figure and it was not long before the unions arrived at the figure of 12½ percent in response to the employers' derisory opening gambit of 3 percent. If 12½ percent had been divided on a flat-rate basis it would have given all teachers an increase of £20 a week, clearly a unifying figure for a campaign of industrial action.

It was, however, only when the employers, dictated to by the government, refused arbitration that the action began. The teachers' unions focussed the campaign on this intransigence on the part of the employers and on the blatant interference of the government — not on the demand for the realisation of the full claim.

Trap

Their motives for this approach reflect the dilemma of all trade union bureaucracies: they have to respond to the feelings of their members by giving the impression of putting up a fight without leading the kind of effective action necessary to win. They have been able to claim a victory because there is no doubt that the industrial action, the first concerted action of its kind for 15 years, has been responsible for the employers' partial retreat.

But arbitration is no victory. It is a trap from which the unions will find it hard to escape. From the outset the procedure is loaded against the teachers and is unlikely to produce a figure much higher than the 4½ percent offer. Even if it does come up with something more substantial its findings are not binding on the government even though they are binding on the unions.

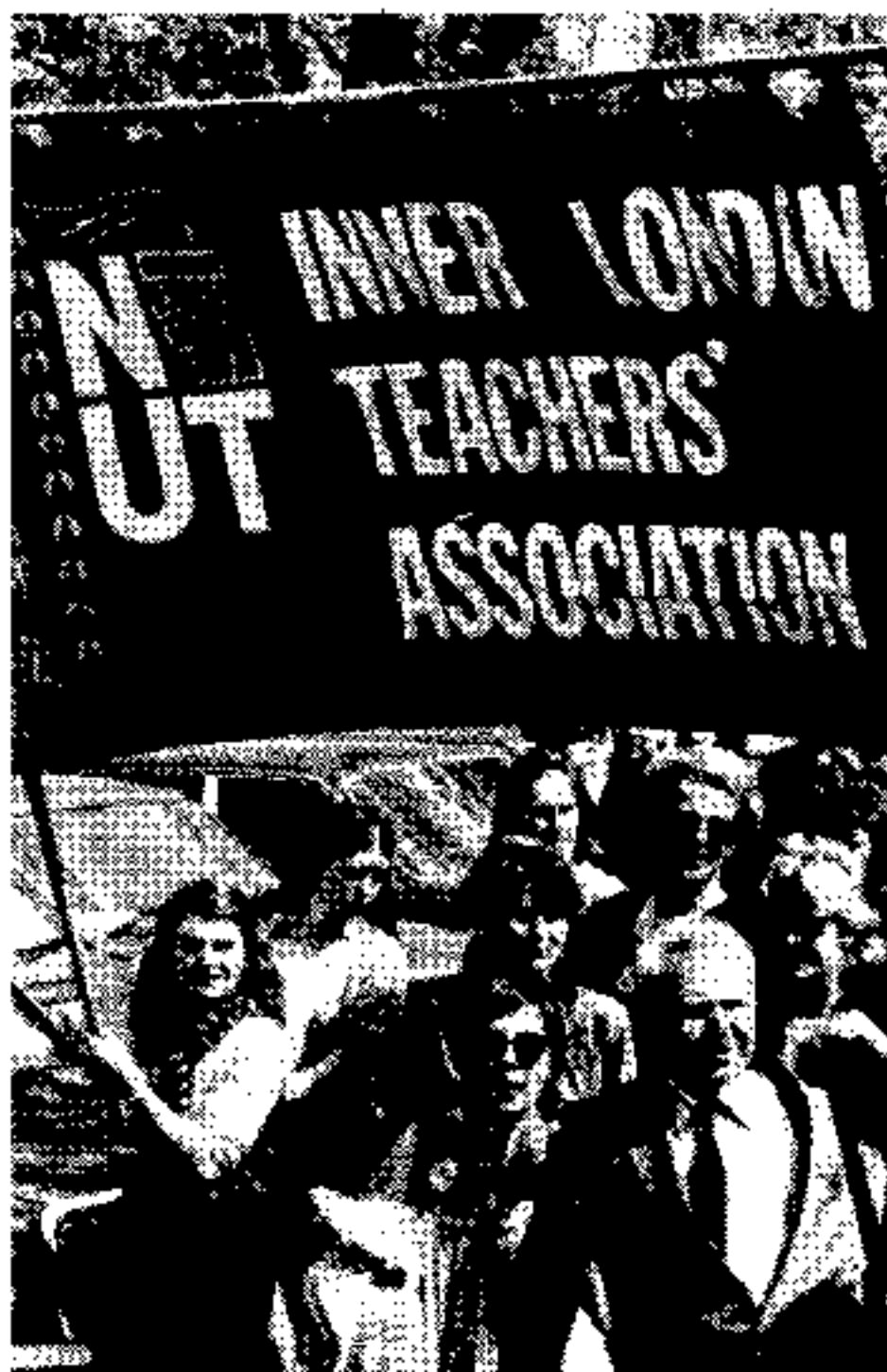
The Tories could simply refuse to pay up and Keith Joseph has already tried to preempt the outcome by insisting that no more money will be forthcoming from the government. The most likely outcome is that the local authorities will be left to find the money from elsewhere, most probably from cuts in other public expenditure, and the government will use the bludgeon of rate-capping to

prevent any employer from breaching the cash limits.

Given the failure of the teachers' unions to engage in effective action against locally implemented cuts, it is likely that the Tories will be successful in using this alternative weapon.

If this happens it will be too late for the unions to retrieve the situation. Once action has been called off it cannot be turned back on like tap water. Yet the leadership of the biggest teachers' union has been able to get away with this strategy for defeat for two reasons: the inability of the opposition inside the union to organise independently of the national executive and the relatively adroit way that the national officers, in particular the acting general secretary, Doug McAvoy have managed to take the vast majority of the membership along with them.

In the early 1970s the left inside the NUT, organised inside the Rank and File group, were able to initiate sustained unofficial action that forced the executive to beef up its



Teachers sold out

salaries campaigns. In 1984 the left is seriously divided, with the Socialist Teachers Alliance performing the function of a traditional Broad Left grouping.

Its calls for selective strikes of an extended nature cut no ice with the executive and they lacked both the political will and organisation on the ground to call them independently. In fact they have frequently argued against any unofficial action, hiding behind the union rules.

SWP members argued for the only strategy that might have won the dispute — an all-out national strike, but this call only found an echo in the most militant schools and for any of them to attempt to go it alone

would clearly have been suicidal.

It is not surprising that teachers are lacking in the confidence to act independently. They have been prevented from taking part in any real fight on salaries for years and many have sought the individual solution of promotion to improve wages. Independent rank and file action cannot be built overnight after years of the demoralising effects of the downturn in industrial struggle and in these circumstances it is much easier for the executive to keep the members in line.

The McAvoy factor should not be underestimated. He managed to draw in the rival NAS/UWT behind the arbitration strategy in order to prevent it from recruiting members from the NUT by parading its traditional phoney militancy. He also managed to sound like a trade unionist on occasions. On the *Newsnight* programme he argued that if the government could afford to send police to the miners' picket lines then it could afford to pay the teachers. Not the kind of arguments usually deployed by teachers' leaders.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude the balance sheet without itemising some important credits. Some aspects of the industrial action, particularly the refusal to cover, have been very popular in schools and have enabled union organisation to be constantly tightened. Many schools have been able to extend the official one-day no-cover sanction into an absolute refusal to cover. It is important that this policy is retained after the salary campaign has been concluded.

Goodwill

Refusal to attend meetings after school hours had led to many meetings being time-tabled as part of the normal school day, another practice that may be able to be sustained more permanently and one which draws attention to the considerable amount of their own time that teachers have traditionally been expected to donate to their employers. Even the withdrawal of lunch-time supervision, which has not been universally popular with either teachers or school students, has drawn attention to the amount of goodwill from teachers that is necessary for schools to operate.

For revolutionaries, perhaps the most important development is the opportunity our struggle has given us to raise wider political issues and in particular to build effective solidarity action with the miners. A significant number of schools are taking weekly collections for their strike and many of our meetings have been addressed by striking miners. Teachers have been made to feel a part of a struggle that extends beyond their own secluded sectional interest.

It would be a mistake to conclude this assessment without drawing attention to the fact that, for all its limitations, the dispute has involved thousands of teachers in strike action and in the operation of sanctions in their schools. If this involvement has helped to shift teachers away from the middle class notion of professionalism that has hampered trade union organisation in schools for decades and if it increases their awareness that they are workers like everyone else, it will not have been completely in vain. ■

You can't win 'em all...

The new mood amongst workers is both encouraging and uneven. British Leyland provides an excellent example of this. Here we look at the experience of two Leyland plants. In the first article **Dave Sherry** looks at Bathgate where the workforce voted to fight redundancies but quickly backed down.

Even before the coal strike blew up back in March, we were witnessing a shift in the mood of organised workers. The widespread stoppages throughout the engineering industry on the GCHQ day of action were clear evidence of this.

In the months since then the miners' strike has helped nurture and sustain this new mood — providing other groups of workers with the inspiration and confidence to take on their own bosses.

Yet to conclude from this — as some on the left have done — that the downturn has ended, or that workers in general are moving onto the offensive, would be wildly over-optimistic.

First of all this change of mood is by no means general, for although it encompasses an increased number of workers, it remains a very small minority of the whole class. Secondly, it is a very fragile development — one that would evaporate overnight if the miners were beaten. Thirdly it is a development that is constrained by the weakness of shopfloor and section organisation, and the reliance on trade union officialdom that has developed in the last ten years.

The recent example of the short-lived and unsuccessful factory occupation at British Leyland's truck plant in Bathgate serves to illustrate this point.

Bathgate once employed over 5,000 workers, but in the last five years the workforce have accepted wave upon wave of redundancies. The only attempt at resistance in that period — a week-long sit-in against sackings in 1982 — collapsed when the shop stewards led the workforce out of the factory under the threat of a court injunction from British Leyland management.

Of course that defeat was the partial responsibility of the AUEW officials and Labour MPs who counselled against breaking the law — but it also reflected a deep-rooted lack of confidence among the rank and file.

That lack of confidence persists in Bathgate's sister plant in Glasgow, where earlier this year the workforce voted to accept compulsory redundancies, and overturned a shop stewards' recommendation to oppose them.

It came as no surprise, when in May of this year, the Cabinet finally announced that with the collapse of the commercial truck market, Bathgate was no longer viable. Part of the operation would be privatised and the remainder transferred to the plants in Lancashire. As a result all 1,800 jobs would go by 1986.

What did surprise many people was the response of the Bathgate workforce. At a



The vote to resist surprised many

mass meeting at the end of May they overwhelmingly backed the shop stewards' recommendation to lock out the management, seize the plant and machinery and occupy against closure.

BL management never expected such a move, and were clearly caught off balance by the spirit of resistance and the decision to occupy. All the evidence shows that they confidently expected the workforce to take the redundancy money and go quietly. So why did a workforce that seemed to be down and out respond as it did?

There are three main reasons why the occupation began. First of all closure meant the end of the road for the whole workforce and in West Lothian where unemployment tops 30 percent the workers knew their backs were up against the wall. This feeling was fuelled by the undoubted public sympathy for the plight of the workers. Even the most rabid of the Scottish Newspapers were opposed to the closure.

But two other factors had a greater bearing on the workers' decision to occupy. Clearly in an old mining area the miners'

strike was showing that workers could fight back. And in the week before the occupation vote, it did appear as if the railwaymen, the water workers and the teachers might follow the miners' lead. The feeling of isolation was being broken down.

Thirdly the workforce had muscle of their own. The Bathgate plant held the vital engine components for BL's new range of trucks, and with this source of supply cut off, the rest of the truck division was now vulnerable to the Bathgate occupation.

Sadly the opportunity to build on this new-found confidence was missed because the shop stewards and the minority who took part in the occupation were unable to involve the passive majority in spreading the dispute.

During the occupation *Socialist Worker* argued:

'The leaders of the STUC are out to capitalise on the widespread public sympathy that the occupation enjoys throughout Scotland. Yet they are in danger of leading the fight up a blind alley. They plan to mount yet another "Ravensraig style campaign" aimed at

convincing Thatcher to keep Bathgate open in the interests of "Scottish industry". But the key to victory lies elsewhere. The future of Bathgate depends on the degree to which its workforce can convince their BL workmates in Glasgow, Lancashire and at the profitable car plants in the Midlands of the need for practical solidarity — financial support, blacking and strike action if the law is used against the Bathgate workforce.

'A passive sit-in will only play into management's hands — but an occupation that involves the rank and file in organising solidarity among other workers can win. The Bathgate workers must now take their fight against closure to the other Leyland truck plants — and more importantly — to Cowley and Longbridge.'

But instead of taking these initiatives the shop stewards sat tight inside the occupation allowing management to quickly regain the upper hand. No delegations were sent out to other BL plants and no attempt was made to involve the passive majority in the occupation or in the kind of activity needed to sustain it.

Instead the stewards and the activists supporting them chose to rely on the STUC's promise of support through its community-

based campaign of 'winning public sympathy'. It was assumed that the official union machine would deliver solidarity from the rest of the Leyland combine in due course.

In the space of a week the confidence of the workforce evaporated through lack of contact and involvement. So much so that at the ensuing mass meeting the workforce voted by a narrow majority to return to work rather than challenge the management over their threat to refuse redundancy money unless the occupation ended.

Although a significant minority voted to fight on the occupation was abandoned with many of the activists blaming the rank and file. Yet only a week previously the same workers had voted to fight.

The outcome at Bathgate shows how the rebuilding of workers' confidence to struggle can't be separated from the task of rebuilding organisation in the workplace that acts independently of the officials. Bathgate also shows that the legacy of the last ten years won't be washed away overnight, and that the reformist approach shared by many activists will act as a brake on the development of future struggles.

The extent to which we can create a network of revolutionaries in workplaces is therefore crucial.

The new mood creates additional opportunities for us to do so now. ■

supporter, had laid the basis for the period of offensive of which Robinson's sacking has become a totem. Edwardes was organising the downturn just as we gave it a name.

The background to the current wave of disputes at Longbridge is the long climb out of that defeat and the defeat over the Rest Allowance (tea-break strike). The latter was as damaging as the Robinson affair since the sell-out was not organised by Duffy and Moss Evans but by the Works Committee at the plant.

Deserted by both local and national leaderships, the workforce cut in half and the intensity of the work rocketing under Edwardes' 'slaves charter' the Longbridge workforce would not be in a mood for a major fight for a long time. They have experienced what the miners would face if they were beaten.

Under these pressures there is only one way shop stewards' organisation could have become an alternative leadership — if revolutionary politics and organisation had commanded a much larger membership than it did. The politics of not relying on either the officials or the works committee, of fighting against class collaboration either at national level with a Labour Government or locally with 'participation', of being against sectional organisation and of insisting on a high profile for revolutionary politics etc. That tradition, even if we had recognised the downturn earlier, was not strong enough and a forced retreat was unavoidable.

The demoralisation and defeats inevitably lead to a divorce between stewards and ordinary workers. A plant joke calls the stewards 'the pancake men' because they so often get turned over at mass meetings. It is not that the stewards aren't formally to the left of their members — they often are. It is that after being turned over so regularly, and without a political analysis to explain it, the effect on the stewards is that they become conservative.

And the one time that things do move they lag behind. Hence the Joint Shop Stewards Committee on the GCHQ day of action only

You can win some

The other Leyland experience comes from Longbridge. John Rees reports.

There has been a sixfold increase in the number of disputes at BL's Longbridge plant in the first quarter of this year, compared with the same period in 1983. The management's response is clear:

'We have asserted the rights of management to manage. While we are always prepared to discuss we will never again say "can we?" Those days are gone forever.'

There is no doubt that the management at Longbridge are serious and belligerent in their determination to hang on to the fruits of the long march and a series of bloody battles since the early 70s. Starting right back in the days of 'worker participation' the strategy was one of first incorporating workers' representatives, at all levels, into joint committees with management.

Secondly the strategy depended on simultaneously divorcing those individuals from the people they were supposed to represent and using them as a force to police disputes.

As incorporation gathered momentum in the mid-seventies a whole layer of the works committee (the convenor and senior stewards — the plant leadership) and the ordinary stewards became less and less the people who articulated workers' grievances to management and more and more the people who presented management's views to workers.

Michael Edwardes' particular genius was that he realised when this phase had gone far enough — when it had weakened union organisation so much that it was possible to move directly to the offensive. Edwardes looked over Derek Robinson's shoulder and in effect said: 'There is no one standing behind you anymore' and pushed him unceremoniously out of the plant.

The period of incorporation of which Robinson had been an enthusiastic

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recommended an hour's strike — yet on the day huge sections of the plant voted to take the whole afternoon off.

The cost of the Edwardes offensive was high. Everyone you talk to in Longbridge talks about the pressure, especially on the tracks. 'Those guys really earn their money' one Longbridge worker told me...

It is one thing that everyone agrees on. Alan Beddows, AUEW officer:

'Everyone is fed up with the pressure.'

A steward who left his job on the track:

'My pay is down but I am a happier man — those guys deserve every penny they earn and more. You wouldn't believe the stick they have to put up with.'

It's rumoured that half the new labour taken on to produce the new Honda-Rover had left within a week.

Jack Adams, the CP convenor of Longbridge is right when he says:

'We've been through a period when everything has been thrown at us — it's been pretty well impossible...but you can't motivate people with impositions and force forever...they will not accept that...and the company are now reaping the results of those years.'

One piece of graffiti in the plant sums up the pressure. It reads:

'Is this Longbridge or Long Kesh?'

That pressure has vented itself in all sorts of short-lived and mostly successful disputes over the past two years. Those small successes plus increased confidence because of the commercial success of the Metro and the Maestro has fuelled an increased mood of combativity — a release for the pressure.

The key dispute was a few weeks back. An attempt to increase the line speed without taking on new labour was met with a 700-strong strike — the management caved in within a few days. Not only was the strike popular and very well supported but also picketing was organised — unusual at Longbridge.



The shop floor is picking up after a run of defeats

The deal was supposed to be for 100 new workers although the final total was nearer 500. In the local press this was put down to good sales but it is also a product of the strike which hit the management plans for increased productivity.

The dispute that followed was less successful although the fact that the strike took place at all was a sign of increased confidence. A black forklift truck driver hit a foreman who called him a 'black bastard'. The worker was sacked and the transport drivers walked out in support — demanding reinstatement.

The management took a hard line. They recognised two things, 1) that the transport drivers are a strong well organised section who can bring Longbridge and eventually Cowley to a standstill, and 2) this wasn't just a victimisation dispute in the same mould as half a dozen disputes over the past 18

months. Especially following the manning dispute, this was a much more combative strike over an issue which intertwined resistance to racism with a challenge to management's right to hire and fire as they wished.

Under such circumstances the action needed the active support of other Longbridge workers and a strategy designed to spread the dispute to other BL plants. The leadership of the strike either from the works committee or the transport stewards, never sought to overcome the passivity of the strikers and thereby the isolation of the section — which no matter how strong, did not feel powerful enough to take on a determined management in isolation.

The experience of Longbridge is in many ways a microcosm of events in the class as a whole. The history of problems faced include the incorporation followed by the offensive against the shop floor, the failure of the predominantly reformist politics of the majority of the stewards to provide an alternative leadership, the painstakingly slow resurgence of confidence through a series of small victories. The difficulty which, even within the new mood, the old traditions of sectionalism and reliance on the lower levels of the bureaucracy cause militants who are trying to capitalise on the outbursts of struggle, are recurring elements in the disputes.

The new mood born out of bitterness against the years of tightening labour discipline vented through small victories gives revolutionaries a few inches more elbow room. The price of making use of those few inches is absolute clarity in our criticisms of shop floor reformism plus an ability to connect general revolutionary politics with a practical day-to-day strategy which makes sense to the best people involved in the struggle.

It is a strategy in which general politics must be argued out around the day to day tasks of levy sheets, resolutions and petitions to the stewards' committee, constant arguments and organisation on the sections and paper sales which seek to draw the best individuals to the party branch. ■

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You can't beat the bank

As US interest rates rise Latin America threatens to default on its international debt, and western banks get the jitters at the prospect of a financial collapse to rival that of the 30s, **Pete Green** explains what lies behind the crisis.

The world banking system is very unlikely to collapse over the next few months — despite some extravagant talk, and a lot of nail-biting in banking circles in recent weeks. But the international debt crisis has reached another critical stage.

Demands for payment by Western banks, or by their financial policeman, the International Monetary Fund (the IMF), are crippling the economies of debtor countries throughout the Third World. After two years or more of austerity, negative growth, wage cuts and mass unemployment, starvation and misery, those countries are still no nearer to paying off their debts. These now total over \$800 billion (half owed to the banks).

In the last six months the pressures of the crisis have lain behind a military coup in Nigeria, riots against food price increases in Morocco and Tunisia, and political turmoil in the Philippines. But it is in Latin America, with a total debt of \$350 billion (thousand million) dollars that political tension and the spectre of a general default (failure or refusal to pay up) have the bankers sweating.

Cuts in wages

The banks have long since given up expecting Brazil (total debt \$93 billion), Mexico (\$89 billion), or Argentina (\$43 billion) to pay off what they owe on time, if at all. But since the crisis exploded in their faces in August 1982, when Mexico declared itself bankrupt and had to be bailed out with new loans of \$11 billion, the banks have insisted on two conditions for any deal.

Firstly they have demanded that the interest on the debt be paid. If that happens they can continue to rake in large profits even if the loan itself (the principal) has to be extended indefinitely. Secondly, they have in some cases been willing to lend more money, but only on condition that the governments concerned submit to the dictates of the IMF and push through the cuts in wages, public spending and any other measures deemed necessary.

Now those demands are facing their most serious challenge yet from a number of Latin American countries. There are two reasons for this.

One is that interest rates have been rising again in the United States, and in world financial markets generally. Since January the main interest rate in the US has risen by

three points. Sustained across the year that increase could cost Brazil alone another \$600 million dollars in interest payments.

The increases have provoked screams of pain from the countries concerned. In an unprecedented display of unity, the Presidents of Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia issued a statement of protest on the 21 May and called for a debtor's summit to be held in June. Demands for special measures to cut back on the interest-rate burden have proliferated. There is much talk of a debtors' cartel, an OPEC-style agreement by the countries concerned to demand better terms from the banks, wielding the threat of a continent-wide default or unilateral refusal to pay.

Of more immediate concern to the bankers, however, is the growing resistance to the demands of the IMF. That resistance has come not from the local ruling class or the politicians, so much as from below in mass upheavals which time and again have

forced even the most authoritarian regimes to retreat.

In the tiny Caribbean country, the Dominican Republic, debts of around 12 billion dollars and falling exports of sugar on which the whole economy depends, forced the Government to turn to the IMF. In exchange for a new loan it agreed to more than double the price of basic foods and medicines. In April that led to three days of rioting, leaving at least 80 people dead on the streets. In May, the Government announced its rejection of the IMF's proposals and broke off negotiations.

Bolivia has had a 'left wing' civilian government under Herman Siles since the last military dictatorship collapsed in 1982 faced with bankruptcy and a massive strike wave. An economy dependent upon exports of tin, with a low price on world markets, Bolivia has been called the fastest 'de-developing' country in Latin America. Incomes per head had fallen by a quarter since 1980 before the latest series of IMF demands as a condition of new 'assistance'. Attempts by Siles to push through the IMF's proposals (including tripling the price of petrol and basic foodstuffs) led to three months of sustained protest. That included a strike at the state-owned central bank which



It is workers like this Bolivian miner who have put up the resistance to the IMF and frightened the world's bankers

paralysed the country's financial system.

On the 30 May Siles finally reached an agreement with the COB (Bolivian Confederation of Labour) whose power had been shown in a couple of three-day general strikes which had brought the whole country to a halt. The IMF plan was abandoned, and the Government announced a 'temporary' suspension of all payments (principal and interest) on its foreign debt. This plus talk of another military takeover was enough to persuade the union leaders to back down.

Bolivia's total debt of \$4.7 billion (only \$1 billion of which is owed to the banks) is tiny by the standards of Brazil, and would not in itself give any banker a sleepless night. But the symbolism of Bolivia openly declaring itself unwilling to pay up is much more worrying. Ecuador followed its example a few days later, refusing to pay until it received better terms. The actions of the Bolivian working class (which, spearheaded by the tin miners, has an astonishing history of militancy) have served as a reminder to nervous politicians throughout the continent of the possible consequences of the crisis.

Of the largest debtors, however, it is Argentina which is now causing most concern. The Radical government led by Paul Alfonsín arrived in power in December in the wake of the collapse of the discredited military regime and mass political reawakening. It inherited a debt of over \$40 billion dollars (although the accounts were so dodgy no one really knows the true amount). Most of that money had been wasted on arms for the generals, luxury imports for the middle classes or (perhaps as much as \$10 billion of it) spirited away to buy up villas in Miami or to Swiss bank accounts.

The working class of Argentina which suffered severe wage cuts and industrial collapse in the years from 1976-1982 when the debt was built up is now expected to bear

the brunt of any cuts in the privatises of wage increases. In the 1982 election campaign the radical unionists, having towed a hard line on payments in a deal with the Peronist government (perpetually controlled unions), were demanding an over \$50 million wage increase each year wages are not paid. The government has not only failed to meet these demands, but has also revealed the extent of its financial problems. The regime has sought a deal with the IMF.

Impossible demands

The problem of Argentina is not as complicated to solve as it seems. It is 'impossible' to require the government to be 'responsible' to a private bank. The government has agreed for special 'responsible' conditions for their creditors. The government has had to pay prices of the raw materials and to be responsible for the debt. The government has granted 'concessions' to the banks which has one of the most important implications: with only partial payment of the debt, payment by the banks to other countries such as Mexico and Brazil.

Argentina has agreed to pay interest on its interest on the debt. It has to be aware that all the banks are going to start writing off some of the debt as 'non-performing' or 'bad'. If that happens the banks have to pay the money which comes straight to the government. Fear of that remains the main reason why Chile, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela were persuaded to pay the \$300 million dollar debt. The banks are not interested by the Argentine government. The banks have to pay the \$100 million, which is the amount of their

colliers, since all the money was used to cover the interest due.

Mexico and the others went along because the deal broke all the rules about not lending any more money without an agreement with the IMF. The banks caved in because they were so nervous about having to declare their losses on Argentinian debt at a time of general uncertainty in the financial markets. But hardliners such as Britain's Nigel Lawson were appalled at this laxity, as it only postponed the problem.

Now the Argentine government has written its own 'letter of intent' to the IMF. They've agreed to a massive reduction in the budget deficit, cuts in subsidies on food and energy prices, and even in defence spending. But the IMF is demanding an outright cut of 8 percent in public sector wages and salaries, which Alfonsín doesn't dare risk making. The Peronist unions are threatening renewed industrial action if their demands are not met. The situation is one of 'stalemate' as the *Financial Times* put it.

The US Government has withdrawn its guarantee of the \$300 million loan made in March. The banks are insisting that, as the chairman of Chase Manhattan put it recently 'The IMF is the keystone of a solution. You cannot allow a country to go around the IMF or you erode the whole framework of a solution.' In other words if Argentina is left off the hook, it will be impossible to demand cuts elsewhere. Without those cuts the squeeze on working class living standards necessary to free the resources to pay off the bankers will not happen.

Run on bank

Alfonsín on the other hand cannot, at the moment, afford to give in to the IMF's demands. The interest payments due to the US banks by 30 June will not be paid. That will on one estimate force some of the largest American banks to take cuts in profits of as much as 36 percent for Manufacturer's Hanover, 17-20 percent for Chase Manhattan, and 7 percent for Citicorp.

All this is happening at a time when the near-collapse of America's eighth largest bank Continental Illinois, at the end of May has exposed the vulnerability of the banking system to a sudden withdrawal of deposits or a 'run on the bank'.

Continental Illinois had been in trouble even since it lost around a billion dollars on dodgy loans to energy companies and property speculators it had made via a much smaller bank, Penn Square, which went bust in 1982. Most of its declared bad debt of \$2.3 billion was on loans made to companies such as International Harvesters and Dome Petroleum not to Latin America. But it might have been able to handle those if it hadn't been carrying over \$2 billion worth of loans to the likes of Argentina and Brazil as well.

The run on Continental Illinois was sparked off by a journalist's casual rumours. But it came in a climate of nervousness in the world money markets created by fears about rising interest rates and Third World debt. Over half of the bank's deposits came from the international money markets, from other banks and large multinational corporations.

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The victims of the debt crisis

Once the rumours spread that money began to flow out at the rate of \$2 billion a day. An announcement that all was well and that other American banks had stepped in to help merely accelerated the pace of withdrawals.

Only the intervention of the American state, in the form of the Federal Reserve Bank (the equivalent of the Bank of England), with a \$7½ billion rescue package and a guarantee to all depositors, prevented what would have been the biggest banking disaster since the early 1930s — perhaps the biggest of all time. As it was, bank shares plummeted on the stock exchange and rumours spread about the health of Manufacturer's Hanover (the fourth largest bank in the USA). Calm was restored with the declaration by a spokesman for the Fed that they were willing to:

'lend, lend boldly and keep on lending, should any more big banks run into liquidation problems'.

The example of the Continental Illinois rescue shows once again that size is a guarantee of security in the banking world, and that the American state will bail out any major bank rather than risk an international banking collapse.

It is precisely because of their confidence in the backing of the American government that the large American banks were willing to make such risky but hugely profitable loans in the first place. What worries most of them now is less the prospect of a withdrawal of deposits than the disappearance of their major source of profit in recent years. Citicorp, the largest of them all, gets around two thirds of its profits from overseas lending, and a fifth from Brazil alone.

A refusal to pay by most of the major debtors could still wipe out those profits and

damage banks such as Chase Manhattan irreparably. For the moment that is unlikely to happen. The debtors' summit in Columbia on the 21-23 June was long on rhetoric and demands, but short on substance. Bolivia and Ecuador argued for limiting debt payments in any year to no more than a quarter of export earnings. But that was firmly rejected by Mexico and Brazil.

Trade surplus

The banks have so far been able to play off the debtors against each other. Mexico was rewarded with a 1% cut in interest payments on its latest loan — having fulfilled the IMF demands, avoided political upheaval and run a large trade surplus last year. The prospects for the Brazilian economy are far worse. But the Brazilian generals, still clinging on grimly to power and riding out successive waves of protest, are not likely to do anything which will upset their backers, the US government.

The consequences of default are uncertain. In the 1930s most of Latin America did default and got away with it. But the countries concerned were then much less integrated into the world economy, and the consequences for debtors and bankers alike were much less serious. Today a default could mean that a country would be cut off from all types of loan subject to trade blockades and the seizure of any overseas assets, and forced back into barter and a nationalist policy of go-it-alone economics.

The *Economist* has argued that the consequences of default would be far worse than the austerity programmes prescribed by the

IMF. But in countries facing a decade or more of suffering to pay off western bankers the mass of the population may find either prospect intolerable. The alternatives are not simply those of compliance with the IMF, or the nationalism of the bourgeois opposition throughout much of Latin America.

The conflict between western capital and the Argentinian ruling class over their respective shares of the surplus produced by Argentinian workers is not for us the decisive issue. What Argentinian workers need to do is to reject the demands of both sets of exploiters.

The pressures will persist. The trade surpluses on which Mexico and Brazil depend to obtain the precious foreign currency needed to avoid bankruptcy have increased over the the last year. That's mainly due to the recovery in the American economy.

Yet that recovery is dependent upon the massive arms spending of the Reagan government and the soaring budget deficit which has forced it to suck in borrowed money from around the world. That money can only be obtained by the American government paying higher interest rates. Those rates impose an increased burden on anyone borrowing money on world financial markets, including the Latin American countries. The situation is highly contradictory and very unstable.

The perspective remains one of protracted agony, not a dramatic collapse of the system. As world capitalism continues to stumble, from deep slump, to weak recovery and then (sometime in the next two or three years) back again into slump, that agony will be especially acute in the debtor countries of Latin America. ■

Death of a compromiser

When the Pope, a fascist and Eric Heffer all sing the praises of a dead communist something must be wrong. Ian Birchall looks at the life of Enrico Berlinguer.

Socialist Review is not in the habit of mourning the passing of Stalinist bureaucrats, and Enrico Berlinguer, the recently departed Secretary General of the Italian Communist Party, is no exception.

Berlinguer, after all, had friends enough without us. He has been described as a 'great man, a good socialist' by Eric Heffer, and as 'a good Communist' by the *Economist*. Among the million and a half people who attended his funeral was the Chinese Prime Minister, and tributes came from Mario Soares, Willy Brandt, the Vatican and Almirante, head of the fascist MSI. With admirers like that, he must have been somebody's enemy.

But despite the wreath from a group of priests and nuns dedicated to the 'new Saint Francis', Enrico Berlinguer was no feeble-minded preacher; he was a tough, unscrupulous bureaucrat who had a major influence on the recent history of the Italian Communist Party, now virtually the only CP in Western Europe not showing obvious symptoms of terminal decline.

Born in 1922, Berlinguer became a Communist at the age of 21, towards the end of the Mussolini period. As one of his rivals in the party leadership, Giancarlo Pajetta put it: 'As a very young man Berlinguer joined the party... leadership.' For Berlinguer was immediately groomed for stardom. As soon as the war ended, he became Secretary General of the Communist Youth, and in 1948 entered the party leadership.

1948 was a tough year for Italian Communists. In the general election held in March the Communist-Socialist joint list appeared to have a good hope of winning. The US State Department announced that no Italian who had voted Communist would be allowed to emigrate to America, and the Vatican cut off all escape routes by announcing that CP voters would be denied absolution. British and American warships anchored off Italian ports during the campaign.

The CP lost the election, but it faced up to its opponents by remaining resolutely Stalinist. No breath of criticism of Russia or of Stalin was permitted. In 1951 two CP deputies were expelled from the party for declaring that Communists had an overriding duty to defend the national territory against aggression from any source (a position that Berlinguer himself, who supported Italy's continuing membership of NATO, might well have put forward by the seventies).

And in 1956, despite some internal

opposition, the CP line was that the Russians had been right to invade Hungary to prevent 'the restoration of a new fascist regime'. Despite his much vaunted honesty and integrity, there is no indication that Berlinguer had any reservations about these positions.

But by the 1960s the Italian CP was entering into a deep crisis. Destalinisation, the end of the first Cold War, the split between Russia and China and the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia all cast the traditional certainties into question. The CP's former allies in the Socialist Party had done a deal with the ruling Christian Democrats, leaving the CP more isolated than ever, despite its massive electoral support.

Traditions

More and more it became clear that if the party was to improve its parliamentary situation, it would have to break, at least in part, with its Stalinist traditions. The problem was exactly how to do this, and several different currents emerged.

It was in this context that Berlinguer became deputy to the ailing leader Luigi Longo in 1969, and in 1972 assumed the position of Secretary General. In a party which was increasingly bitterly divided, Berlinguer led from the 'centre'. On the one hand was a right wing which wanted to make the party more and more openly reformist (some even wanted to liquidate the CP altogether and join up with the Socialists); on the other hand was a 'left' current which clung to the old dogmas and friendship with Mother Russia. Berlinguer won his popularity—and his power—by tacking skilfully between the two.

A year later came Berlinguer's main contribution to political strategy. He was deeply impressed by the catastrophic defeat of the Chilean working class in the *coup* of September 1973. While some people drew the lesson that the Chilean workers should have moved forward faster and more

resolutely, Berlinguer came to exactly the opposite conclusion. From the inadequacy of the parliamentary road, he deduced, not the necessity for armed insurrection, but the need to cut back on one's aims.

'It's not by obtaining 51 percent of the votes that the left wing parties can be sure of governing and achieving their work of renewal because a vertical split down the middle of our country would not be in the interests of the country and would ruin the experiment of renewing our society. That is what happened in Chile.'

This was the theory of the 'Historic Compromise'. The Communists not only could not, but should not, govern on their own, or in alliance with the Socialists only. On the contrary, they should seek to rule in coalition with the Christian Democrats, the corrupt bourgeois clique who have dominated every Italian government since the Second World War, and who bear the main responsibility for Italy's political and economic crisis.

The theory is abject. In essence it is a rerun of the Popular Frontism of the Thirties—with this difference: the Popular Front at least had the minimal plausibility of being offered as an alternative to fascism. The Historic Compromise wasn't an alternative to anything—for the only alternative was precisely those Christian Democrats that Berlinguer was so anxious to ally with.

The practice was equally abject. After the 1976 elections, the Christian Democrats accepted the CP's support, but offered them no places in government. The CP loyally delivered their part of the bargain—a restraining hand on working class militancy. Precisely because they were so loyal, the Christian Democrats used their assistance to tide themselves over a bad patch, and then calmly ditched their erstwhile allies. This was not even a 'sell-out'—the CP gave its services free of charge.

Incidentally, Berlinguer had his own little domestic 'historic compromise'—his wife is a devout Catholic, and he used to take her to church each Sunday, though he didn't stay for mass. If a self-professed Marxist can't convince the person he or she lives with, who can they convince?

But Berlinguer's defence of a reactionary Christian Democratic government was not merely tactical; he erected it into a theory. In January 1977 Berlinguer gave two speeches



The Socialist Party president mourns a bureaucrat's death

that were subsequently published as a booklet with the bizarre title *Austerity. An Opportunity to Transform Italy*.

Berlinguer begins with the spurious analysis that it is the growing strength of the Third World that has produced the world crisis. Profit, for him, is part of the system to be defended, not part of the problem:

'We affirm that the market, private enterprise, and profit can and must retain a function even in the framework of an economy that develops under the democratic public will and is oriented by this will.'

Austerity, in this context, offers the possibility of improving Italian society:

'Austerity, depending on its content and on the forces which govern its application, can be used either as an instrument of economic depression, political repression, and perpetuation of social injustice or as an opportunity for new economic and social development, rigorous pruning of the state, profound transformation of the basis of society, and defence and expansion of society.'

Such a defence of austerity, not as a necessary evil, but as a positive virtue, must be unprecedented from any self-styled Marxist. In practice it came to mean what Berlinguer calls 'a new model of consumption' (that is, a reduction of the consumption of the less well-off) and a recognition that public spending is 'excessive' and should be reduced.

One of the aspects of Berlinguer's career which has been most commended inside and outside the Communist movement has been his open criticism of Russia and the Russian model of 'socialism'. After the coup in Poland, Berlinguer declared on Italian television that 'the dynamic created by the October Revolution is now exhausted'.

Yet his criticism was often rather vague. In his report to the Central Committee on the Polish coup he talked about 'the difficulties and the sclerosis'—scarcely rigorous Marxist categories. He did criticise the regimes of the Eastern bloc for the 'identification of the party with the state'; but he also blamed the Polish regime for the 'incapacity to isolate...politically...the extremist demands'.

Pathetic

But what is most striking about such criticisms is their pathetic ineffectiveness. *Pravda* may accuse the Italian CP of 'sacrilege', but the Russian leaders are scarcely worried by the likes of Berlinguer. In 1968 Brezhnev told the Czech leaders after the Russian invasion that the Western CPs were going to 'sound off—but so what?... For 50 years now they have not mattered one way or the other.'

In 1976 the Polish oppositionist Jacek Kuron appealed to Berlinguer to intervene on behalf of arrested Polish workers. The Italian CP sent a strongly-worded message—which the Polish regime treated with contempt.

In fact, Berlinguer's criticisms of the East were nothing to do with a love of 'democracy', and everything to do with his own opportunist political strategy. The 'Historic Compromise' meant that the CP must accept



Historic compromise: Berlinguer and Christian Democrat leader shake on it

Italian membership of NATO. In 1976 Berlinguer told a reporter that he felt that NATO safeguarded 'the Italian road to socialism', as Russia could not intervene as it had done in Czechoslovakia. 'I feel safer being on this side of the fence.'

Secondly, Berlinguer's claim that the present period has shown the limitations of both reformism and Leninism, and therefore opens a 'third phase' allowed him to accommodate to a range of swampish 'movements':

'There exist, and are developing, movements, associations, organisations, groups, particularly of women, youths and intellectual workers, that are expressing in hundreds of ways outside working class parties also and beyond the traditional forms of politics, demands that are being pressed, aspirations, will-power that collides and enters into conflict with economic mechanisms, with the social set up, and with contemporary capitalism's cultural output.'

In particular, Berlinguer was anxious to set himself up as middleman between the Eastern bloc and Western social democracy:

'We today are in a position to help communications between social democratic and other movements on the one side and parties and states whose beginnings related directly and indirectly to the

October Revolution of 1917, on the other.'

Thus shortly after the Union of the Left in France broke up in 1977, Berlinguer had a formal meeting with François Mitterrand—to the great annoyance of the French Communist Party.

Certainly Berlinguer's policy has not been devoid of success in the short term. While the Spanish CP crumbles and the French party faces irreversible decline, the Italian CP has increased its representation in the European parliament, while both Socialists and Christian Democrats have lost out.

But while Communists troop off in triumph to the toothless assembly at Strasbourg, Prime Minister Craxi has got parliamentary support for his plan to cut guaranteed cost-of-living increases in wages. The CP cannot protest too vigorously without upsetting all its reformist ambitions, yet if it fails to protest the initiative stays with Craxi.

All around the world former Stalinist parties are trying to turn themselves into openly reformist parties. For most the attempt has led to disaster; the Italian party has gone far further down the road than any other. But it still has a long way to go, and the death of Berlinguer, its most skilful opportunist, will not help it. Time is still on Signor Craxi's side. ■

Roots of communalism

The recent clash between the Indian Government and the Sikhs has been portrayed by some as a national liberation struggle. **Barry Pavier** argues that it is nothing of the sort.

Since Indira Gandhi sent the Indian army into the Golden Temple at Amritsar to kill Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his supporters some people have attempted to portray this as the suppression of a national liberation movement. Occasionally it has been compared to Northern Ireland. Actually, this comparison has some relevance, but only once you understand that the politician to whom Bhindranwale corresponded was Ian Paisley.

Sikhism began in the fifteenth century AD as part of the Bhakti movement, which sought to fuse and harmonise Hinduism and Islam. The Sikhs were driven to a sharper communal identity and eventually to militarisation by persecution from the Mughal Empire. This eventually produced the 'Khalsa' (hence Khalistan), the military expression of the Sikh community. By 1800 the Khalsa had carved out a large state in Punjab. Ironically 90 per cent of that state is now within Pakistan.

Until the 1880s the Sikhs regarded themselves and were regarded by everyone else, as being no more than a branch of Hinduism. In the 1880s a movement was started by a small group of landowners, urban petit bourgeois, and theologians to reverse this process of assimilation and create a distinct and exclusive Sikh identity. This paralleled movements inside the Hindu and Moslem communities and for much the same reasons — to combat the first tentative growth of bourgeois nationalism, which threatened the leadership of those sections of the old ruling class which survived under the British and those elements of the bourgeoisie who collaborated with them.

Quite crucially, this process combined perfectly with the dominant theory of post-1857 British imperialism. This stated that India was a collection of distinct and unique ethnic groups, castes, and religious communities, each with their own specific interests and requirements. India was no more than a geographical expression, there was no Indian nation, and in fact the only real 'India' was the imperial regime. Therefore, since there could be no Indian nationalism, the nationalists in the Congress were only middle class Hindus in disguise.

The Sikhs fitted perfectly into this theory as a 'martial race', the real reasons for the tradition of military service being quite lost on the British. The theory itself was developed to quite a high level of sophistication and penetrated bourgeois academic theory to a considerable extent.

A perverse and twisted demonstration of

just how successful a theory it has been can be gauged from the fact that a great deal of multi-cultural education and race relations policy sponsored by left wing councils appears to be based on this concept of ethnicity developed by British imperial bureaucrats.

The worst thing ever done by British imperialism was to foster and promote this idea of ethnicity, which produced the political result of communalism. They used the census as a means to fix the entire Indian population into a particular community. What then happened was that petty bourgeois groups which had developed inside untouchable and low caste groups tried to get themselves upgraded.

They formed caste associations, into which they recruited all caste members, and bombarded the census commissioners with petitions. High caste groups formed caste associations and campaigned against them.

Workers and farmers

Caste associations soon developed roles beyond census campaigning, encouraged by the total lack of welfare provision. Their role as social welfare organisations continues to this day, and in many areas they play a major role in binding workers and farmers to bourgeois leaderships of the same caste, and in promoting communalism as the most important part of people's lives. Ironically, the colonial situation is now reversed. The positive discrimination introduced since independence in education, and government jobs, makes it necessary to be as backward as possible to get on to the gravy train.

So British rule did indeed transform Indian society, but largely by producing caste and religious rigidity quite unprecedented in Indian history by the combination of imperial politics and those of sections of the local ruling class.

The development of Sikhism as a distinct

community sits within this general situation. There is no 'national question' in India because there is no oppressing nationality. Since the 1880s a considerable number of linguistic, regional and communal groups with bourgeois leaderships have built themselves on this principle of ethnicity which is as much a foundation of the Indian state as it was of the empire.

The Akali Dal, the Sikh communalist party, was an integral part of the growth of Sikh separatism. From its foundation in the 1920s until 1962 it was a party of the urban petty bourgeoisie. They were in a minority compared to Punjabi Hindus, and were subjected to continual economic and social pressure. Economic because trade was dominated by Hindu caste groups, and social because they had close social connections with these Hindu castes and were under continual threat of assimilation. Religious sectarianism was the political means by which the Sikh petty bourgeois sought to protect its separate existence.

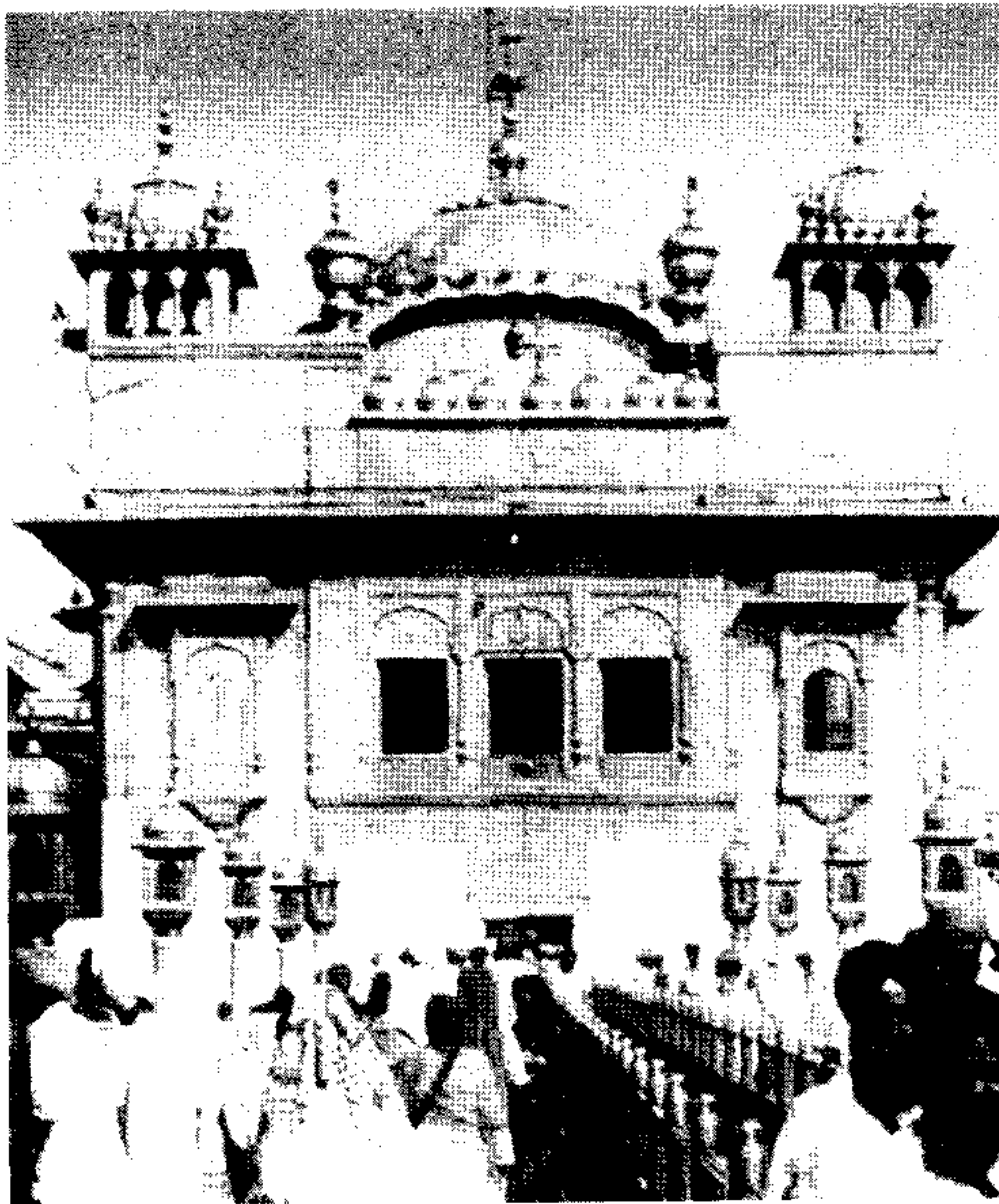
In the rural areas, Sikhs were in an overwhelming majority and the dominant social force was a caste of farmers called Jats. In a reversal of the normal stereotype, the rural areas were much more religiously and socially liberal than the towns, because there was no possible threat to Sikh identity or the supremacy of the Jats. A large number of Jats supported the Congress before and after independence. The Congress built itself after 1919 in rural India as a party of rich peasants, and so was able to get the support of large numbers of Jat farmers.

In 1962 the Akali Dal was captured by a new leadership which represented Jat capitalist farmer interests. It dropped the demand for an independent state, and after the establishment of a smaller Punjab state with a large Sikh majority in 1966 appeared to transform itself into a regional rich farmers' party. This change of line enabled it to reap considerable electoral rewards, and between 1967 and 1980 the Akali Dal led three coalition governments in Punjab, as well as having two ministers in the 1977-79 Janata government at the centre. All this was undone by the very capitalist agriculture which had propelled them to power.

The Green Revolution — the combination



Lt General of Punjab with maharajas and cohorts. The British fostered divisions



The Golden Temple: Pounded by Gandhi's troops

of capitalist agriculture with high yielding varieties of wheat and other crops, massive amounts of credit, fertilisers, machinery etc — gave massive gains to the Punjabi capitalist farmers. It also impoverished the small farmers and drove large numbers of them down into the working class. Between 1960 and 1980 the numbers of landless agricultural workers rose from 17 percent to 40 percent of the rural workforce. This does not count all those with small plots of land who have to live by working for the capitalist farmers.

Labour shortage

Many of the newly disposed Sikhs turned to religious alternatives, especially an unorthodox sect, the Nirankaris. This happened at the same time as a decisive shift of population in Punjab.

The Green Revolution created a labour shortage which pulled in large numbers of workers from the rest of India. From being 60 percent of the population in 1971 by 1981 the Sikhs were only 52 percent. This meant the collapse of the political perspectives of the Akali Dal and Sikh separatism.

This is where the comparison with Northern Ireland is relevant. Imagine an economic miracle in the North pulling in large numbers of workers from the South,

and at the same time there was a serious weakening of religious sentiment inside the Protestant working class. What would then be the response of Paisley, the Orange Order, and the UDA?

It was at this point that Bhindranwale arrived on the scene, leading a small fundamentalist group which led anti-Nirankari riots in 1978, and which later organised the murder of the Nirankari leader. In 1979, however, the Akali Dal smashed his group in the crucial temple committee elections which are the normal route to power inside the Sikh community.

When the Congress (I) returned to power nationally in 1980 they saw Bhindranwale as the perfect tool for splitting the Akali Dal. Zail Singh, former Chief Minister of Punjab, then central Home Minister and now President, pulled strings to build up Bhindranwale's support inside the temple committees.

As everyone knows this cynical manoeuvre has literally blown up in their faces. This happened for two crucial reasons. Firstly they did not realise that Bhindranwale had a mass base inside the urban petty bourgeoisie, especially the students.

They never benefited from the Green Revolution to any considerable extent and are now under exceptional pressure from

competing Hindu petty bourgeois groups. These are themselves riddled with religious communalism and in that respect urban politics have been increasingly dominated by competing neo-fascist organisations.

Secondly, and disastrously for the Congress (I), the Jat capitalist farmers have been badly hit by the recession. The picture is the rather familiar one of increased charges for crucial inputs — machinery, power, fertiliser combined with classic capitalist overproduction forcing down the prices of their crops. This is combined with the prospect of becoming a minority in the countryside, as large numbers of non-Punjabi Hindu workers settle permanently in the rural areas.

At this point it becomes possible to understand how the Akali Dal has been shifted into campaigning for greater autonomy for the Punjab state, and how Bhindranwale was able to set the pace. The demand for autonomy is the demand for the preservation of the economic and political supremacy of Jat capitalist farmers. At this moment it has coincided with the interests of the Sikh urban petit bourgeoisie, and that is why Bhindranwale was able to seize the leadership of the campaign.

Working class

What the campaign is quite obviously not is a struggle for national liberation. It is a class struggle for local supremacy by two connected regional ruling class fractions, using religious fundamentalism as the means to mobilise support. As such all socialists must utterly oppose it, along with the cynical communalism of the Congress (I).

The only way out of the shambles that the ruling class have erected is the working class which is present in large numbers. The Communist Party of India (CPI) has built an agricultural workers' union of 125,000 members and there are other unions organised by the Communist party (Marxist) (CPM) and the Maoists.

What none of these parties has done is to challenge the ties of the workers to Sikhism. They too have absorbed the imperialist explanation of Indian regionalism and have combined this with Stalinist theory to produce an Indian 'nationality question' — a country of oppressed nationalities but no oppressor!

Since, therefore, there must be legitimate national demands, parties expressing these must be supported, even if critically. So both the CPI and CPM have supported the faction of the Akali Dal led by Parkash Singh Badal, the Akali leader least sympathetic to Bhindranwale.

This cretinous attitude has meant that all their trade union activity has been unable to break significant numbers of workers from Sikhism, and so they have been utterly impotent in the crisis. In a class society riddled with communalism it is only possible to build working class unity by being rigorously anti-religious. The communist parties are hopelessly sunk in reformism and have always shirked this essential task, and so bear a heavy responsibility for the disaster which has befallen the Punjabi working class. ■

Leading workers to defeat

West Germany has ended. Dave Paenson pinpointed the strike's weaknesses in an article written before the sell-out.

At the time of writing, 60,000 West German metalworkers are on strike and a further 400,000 have been locked out. Some have been hit by so called 'hot' lockouts planned deliberately by the bosses to weaken the metalworkers' union (IGM), and others by the so called 'cold' lockouts because of lack of spare parts or because of delayed orders from other firms. Also over the past week all national and large regional newspapers have been hit by an indefinite strike.

In factory after factory workers have made clear their readiness to step up action by occupying locked out plants or at least blocking the gates completely so as to effectively stop all production including modernisation and repair work. Shop stewards committees in factories which are still working have written in to the central leadership demanding to be called out on strike too and also that ballots be held outside of the two regions of Nordhessen and Nord-Baden/Baden-Württemberg, which up to now have alone been called out. These demands have consistently fallen on deaf ears.

Instead the union leaderships of both the print workers and the metal workers agreed to arbitration procedures. Biedenkopf, a leading member of the Conservative Party, CDU, was accepted by both sides to head the arbitration committee for the print industry. His proposal was to stick to the 40 hour week and the eight hour day and instead introduce more holidays.

Wages

According to his model five days extra holiday corresponds to a shortening of the working week by one hour. These extra holidays were not to be decided upon in one fell swoop for the coming year but rather made into a subject of contention for future yearly negotiations between the union and the bosses, who would then have to arrive at a common agreement as to what part of the yearly increase in real wages would be granted in the form of cash and what part in the shape of extra holidays.

The arbitration procedure broke down on 22 June because the bosses said this model was even more expensive than a shortening of the working week.

Still heading the arbitration committee to end the metal worker's strike is Georg Leber of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), an ex-leader of the building workers' union and ex-minister for science until he was forced to resign from his post in the mid-seventies because he hadn't been able to effectively hide from the public eye the incompetent and



Pickets in Russelsheim

illegal spying practices of the German military screening service.

Gesamtmittel, the organisation of German metal bosses, has insisted that any agreement reached by this arbitration committee must be carried unanimously. This means that the bosses can simply boycott any decision that doesn't suit them without having to openly break any of the rules.

This also means that the union hasn't got any back door option open to them any more. For it has been usual practice in the past for the union leadership to vote against decisions of arbitration committees arguing that 'the neutral arbitrator wasn't being neutral enough', but to accept the decision as binding nevertheless because it had been arrived at 'democratically'. This time round the bosses obviously want to make the defeat of the unions public by forcing them to actively support a dirty deal.

Certainly the bosses have not given way one inch on the principle of the 40-hour week. They are prepared to concede 38 hours only to shift workers, who make up less than a third of a workforce totalling almost three million metal workers.

For its part the union has over the past few weeks time and time again reduced its demands and is now only asking for a 38-hour week as from 1 February 1985, 37 hours as from 1 January 1986 and 'perhaps' a further two hours reduction spread over 1987 and 1988 'which would have to be negotiated between both parties if unemployment levels have not dropped below the million mark by then'.

On the list of union demands is also a miserable 3.3 percent wage increase as from 1 July 1984 (instead of the usual 1 February) and a further 2.7 percent from 1 February 1985. This wouldn't even quite cover official inflation, let alone the automatic tax increases and extra national insurance burdens which eat away something like half of any wage increase.

According to Lambsdorff (who apart from being a Duke and a member of the Liberal Party is also hanging on to his post as minister for industry: some time in the near future he too will have to resign because of his favourite practice of accepting money for his political party in return for tax cuts and other benefits to important industrialists) the strike has already cost the German economy three quarter billion pounds in lost production.

As for the metal workers' union it is now forking out 25 million pounds a week in strike and lay-off pay, which has already created quite a hole in their funds since the beginning of the strike six weeks ago.

Protest

However, in spite of strikes and lock-outs the bosses are doing their best to take advantage of the fact that production is standing still in order to reorganise production lines and introduce new machinery.

This kind of reorganisation work is often carried out by white collar workers, but the union has refused to call white collar workers out on strike. True, union organisation among them is much lower than among blue collar workers, so it would have been much more difficult to get them out, but this shouldn't have been an insurmountable obstacle.

In the engineering firm of Wegmann in Kassel for instance, white collar workers actually staged a protest on the first day of the strike for not being called out. The answer they got from the local IGM strike committee was that the leadership knew best who to call out on strike and who not.

In several cases court injunctions have been taken out against individual strike committees threatening them with penalties of up to £125,000 a day if they don't make sure that a corridor of at least two meters width is kept open for white collar workers and other scabs to come in freely.

You then had the situation at factories like Opel-Rüsselsheim, one of the largest car plants in Germany employing over 30,000 workers, where 2,700 scabs could simply march in — a very demoralising experience for the pickets. The strike committee of Opel demanded time and again permission from their union leadership to go in and lock the gates from the inside — which from the juridical point of view would have created a new situation and got round the problem of the court injunction. But the leadership blankly refused arguing that it was their right to take any such steps when and where they see fit.

Thus a factory occupation at Knecht in Lorch was ended after only three days and any 'factory visitations' which have taken place since have all been ended within hours.

The German union bureaucracy has got a

very firm grip on its membership and is taking great care to make sure 'nothing gets out of hand'. The few scattered remains of the once very strong German revolutionary left are utterly incapable of starting any independent action, both those operating inside the factories and those operating from the outside.

Recently for instance a picket organised to stop a miserably thin six-page edition of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* coming out and quite prepared for a fight soon gave in when the strike committee personally escorted the two vans out.

A model example for the difficulties of the left operating inside the factories is VDO in Frankfurt, a firm producing instrument panels for cars and employing 1,800 workers. VDO has a long tradition of left wing shop steward work dating back to the mid-seventies. One of their greater achievements was to get foreign women workers onto the shop stewards committee, thus challenging the endemic racism and sexism of trade union structures.

VDO has been locked out for the past three weeks, but here again the white collar workers were kept on to finish off urgent orders for export and continue with planning work for new models to come out in the autumn.

So it was decided on Tuesday this week to get as many pickets along as possible to seal the plant off completely. The whole thing was planned to be just a 'symbolic action without any illusions that we could damage the firm economically but with the aim of showing the bosses our strength'. However to the great surprise of the union bureaucracy 400 pickets turned up and by six o'clock in the morning all the gates were effectively blocked.

Factory guards and senior employees had also got everything planned well in advance. They organised to have the white collar workers come early that day and made them walk round and round the whole plant in groups waiting for an opportunity to rush in as soon as the gates were opened.

Two women pickets got hurt badly when they were pushed to the ground by a couple of particularly loyal scabs. Other scabs preferred to climb in through a private housing block round the back or tried rather unsuccessfully to use ladders handed down to them through the factory windows.



Scab walks through

The main left winger on the shop stewards committee and also the driving force behind the strike committee then phoned the person in charge of the local Frankfurt strike committee, the fulltime official Günther Otto, who had up until then given his tacit blessing to the blockade.

Günther Otto immediately rushed to the scene of the action, held secret talks with the police and the boss and then told the strike committee to call the whole thing off because the boss had threatened to get a court injunction out and had also sent his personnel manager out threatening Turkish women with the sack for illegal picketing.

Police

Otto said that the action did not have the backing of the union any longer and that any member who continued obstructing the gates was acting on his or her own responsibility.

He then disappeared leaving the left winger on the shop stewards committee with the job of making a speech telling everybody to move away. This was no easy task because all the pickets wanted to stay put and at least wait until the police came to do the job themselves.

When it came to discussing the matter in the strikers' coffee bar the whole thing was

adjourned by the left winger until the early afternoon, by which time most people had left. Criticisms voiced were taken up by the union secretaries who argued that if union members were not satisfied with this or that union leader they could vote for another one at the next election. Now was not the time for bickering, they said, now was the time to discuss the next step to be taken.

When it was then suggested that the best thing would be to try and get a thousand pickets along next time, the union secretaries said it was necessary first of all to discuss things in a general way and not get down to the specifics right from the start.

The meeting was then adjourned without any decision being taken. The next day an even larger meeting of all locked-out VDO workers was brought to a very quick end 'because the room had been booked by somebody else'. The VDO workers were told not to go to the factory the following Monday but to come directly to the union offices to collect their lock-out money.

Similar events happened at other workplaces. Each time the left limited itself to trying to put pressure on the union bureaucracy but avoided putting the decision process directly into the hands of the workforce. This is not simply a reflection of the numerical and organisational weakness of the left but also a direct consequence of their strategy of trying to take over the union machine rather than build an independent, politically motivated rank and file organisation.

The strike will undoubtedly be sold out, because there is no rank and file organisation to prevent this happening and the union leadership is not prepared to go in for the kind of all-out action which would be needed to win the strike, or even win some sort of reasonable compromise.

Nevertheless the strike has shown that the German working class, in spite of its reputation for being so conservative, is prepared to fight. Revolutionaries arguing that there is such a thing as the working class and that any perspective for changing society has got to base itself on workers in struggle should have a slightly easier time because of this strike. ■



Picket almost killed by scab

Death squads and compromise

The death squads continue to operate in El Salvador, Reagan continues to back the regime. **Pete Binns and Carla Lopez** look at the weaknesses of the liberation forces.

'The angels of death have had their wings clipped,' crowed *The Economist*, as five of El Salvador's national guardsmen were convicted at the end of May for the murder of four American nuns in 1980. '...The trial has had an even better follow-up,' it went on, referring to the easing out of two senior military figures from the army. All of which added up to 'a good send off for Mr Jose Napoleon Duarte, elected to take over as El Salvador's first freely elected president on 1 June.'

Portraying El Salvador's leaders as fearless democrats who courageously take on the death squads has been very important. It has ensured a smooth run through congress of the appropriations of millions of dollars earmarked for the military. The overall plan, as envisaged in the bipartisan commission on Central America, headed by Henry Kissinger, is for \$400 million in 1984-85, which in its turn, is part of an incredible \$8 billion earmarked for the region for economic and military aid. Quite simply the whole package would have been put at risk if the part of it dealing with military aid to El Salvador had been turned down in congress.

Sacrifice

But for all the crowing and the posturing the reality underneath remains markedly different. As we pointed out in *Socialist Review* last month, constitutional rights remain suspended and the three year old state of siege remains in force. The latter puts all power into the hands of the military, and, while Duarte is officially in charge of the army, *Newsweek* recently reported that the 'officer corps warned him that he could be Commander in Chief only in name'.

For their part the officer corps were probably quite happy to sacrifice two of their number. In return they will be getting, after all, large quantities of modern military hardware plus the massive economic and military backing of the USA. Because an important part of the death squads are integrated into the military hierarchy, they are the ones who will benefit most from the influx of American arms.

Ironically then, had Roberto D'Aubuisson — the 'pathological killer' most directly associated with the death squads — won the presidential election the death squads might have benefitted much less.

Both Duarte and his American backers

would certainly like to be able to ditch the death squads and institute a liberal democratic regime, but there is just no way they can do it. The reality is one in which there are, at the moment, only two significant sources of power and influence in the country.

On the one hand there is the oligarchy, the score or so of very rich families whose money and power still come, in the main, from their ownership of huge landed estates. Their main instruments of power are, as they always have been, the army and the death squads. A massive level of corruption has kept the top 500 or so personnel in the armed forces 100 percent loyal to their landowning paymasters, and, in the past, has led to them slaughtering tens of thousands of peasants and the destruction of even the weakest land reforms when they have been attempted.

Even to suggest the possibility of reform to these people is to invite one's own physical



US cannot ditch the death squads

elimination. Most of those who have done so in the past are now either dead or have fled the country.

On the other hand there are the forces of those driven into opposition to oligarchy. Grouped around the FMLN/FDR they have been responsible for putting into practice the prolonged guerrilla war that has dominated El Salvadorean politics for more than five

years. They now control a substantial portion of the country from the Honduran border to its heartland around the Guazapa volcano.

Within it they have set up 'Local Organs of Popular Power' (PPLs), which aim for self-sufficiency both in the production of food and in maintenance of war production, and which have also taken on 'social' issues—elementary health care, the fight against illiteracy and so on.

For Duarte's strategy to succeed, a middle ground or a dialogue between these positions would have to exist. But that is just what is missing. The oligarchy has never budged an inch, and although forces within the FMLN/FDR have attempted various compromises in the past they have always failed miserably, sometimes confusing and setting back the guerrilla struggle in the process.

Furthermore the continuing flight of capital from the country has more or less arrested the development of 'liberal' industrial or commercial capital unconnected with the oligarchy; without it however there remains no real basis for Duarte's reforms.

If the election of Duarte will not change this status quo it is important to realise that in the medium term nothing else can either. The army is too weak to both cover all the principle areas of the country and at the same time concentrate in sufficient numbers to destroy the guerrillas. For their part, the FMLN, while growing in strength, is still too weak, both in numbers and in heavy weaponry, to defeat the army in the immediate future. And the United States, while carefully building up the infrastructure for a possible military invasion next year, has obviously ruled out such a move until Ronald Reagan is safely reelected next winter.

Cuba

In the meantime the El Salvadorean ruling class is also keeping its options open. So long as Duarte keeps the gravy train from Washington running and does not make things awkward, no doubt he can be tolerated. If not he will be easy enough to remove with a coup when the time comes. In the short term time might be on their side.

Reagan's strategy of neutralising assistance from Cuba and Nicaragua to the FMLN/FDR seems to be working well for them, isolating the guerrillas still further. On the other hand the FMLN/FDR are very well entrenched in a number of areas and the costs of the war continue to mount. Even the most died-in-the-wool reactionaries cannot accept that forever.

In all probability they assume they will not have to. They face an enemy whose politics are confused in the extreme and which may, as a result, lead the FMLN/FDR opposition to disaster.

One crucial problem is over the very strategy for gaining power itself. The FMLN/FDR is a coalition which has come together because its various parts feel that what they have in common — opposition to the oligarchy and the army — is more important than anything else, and that their differences should be subordinated to it. For revolutionaries however such a strategy is

only permissible — if at all — if it is plausible to suppose that the 'unity' that results is the unity of the non-revolutionary sections following the lead of the revolutionaries.

In the case of FMLN/FDR, on the other hand, it is exactly the other way about. The coalition has been increasingly dominated by the politics of reform, in which accommodation and compromise can only lead in practice to delivering up the FMLN/FDR into the hands of the army. By remaining with such people the left has been at best compromised and at worst has actually participated in such moves itself.

Compromise

Thus the FMLN/FDR is committed to a 'dialogue' with the new Duarte regime. What exactly does this mean? Guillermo Ungo, Social Democrat leader of the FDR, is very clear about this. For him it is an essentially *diplomatic* strategy in which the FMLN/FDR approach President Monge of Costa Rica to approach President Duarte with a view to starting discussions with the FMLN/FDR. The point of the discussions is to secure *minority* representation of the FMLN/FDR in a government of national reconciliation including Duarte's Christian Democrats.

From what we have said already about the impossibility of compromise at this time it should be clear by now that the strategy is nonsensical. But what does the left have to say on this matter?

They too are committed to 'dialogue'. Thus Francisco Herrera, European representative of the FMLN/FDR said last year:

'We took a more rounded view of the question. We expected that, if discussions started, certain contradictions would



Abandoning the goal of socialism

appear in the course of the bourgeois and democratic. The danger is that it has not.

For Herrera, the FMLN/FDR have a 'more rounded view' of the question. This would imply that the FMLN/FDR see their role as a separate one from that of the bourgeois.

But this is not all. He says that the bourgeois and democratic 'break' in by all the FMLN/FDR, both the American and the Salvadoran, in the case of the FMLN/FDR. So, what is the FMLN/FDR's plan to gain

space for the left, now, unfortunately, looks more and more like a strategic shift to the right — particularly on behalf of the FPL — the organisation which hitherto has had the strongest Marxist traditions within the FMLN.

This change became more fully apparent following the suicide of the founder of the FPL, Salvador Castano Carpio. In April 1983, Carpio had always opposed entering into negotiations or an alliance which did not guarantee the interests of the working class and the peasantry. By agreeing with the FMLN/FDR's proposal of a 'government of broad participation' in February of this year, the FPL made it clear that it has now abandoned the aim of a transition to socialism as something to be deferred indefinitely. It now, unfortunately, adheres more closely to the traditional Communist Party programme of alliances with 'progressive' sections of the bourgeoisie — a section missing more obviously in El Salvador even than most other places.

One of the factors contributing to this shift to the right within the FMLN is its neglect of the working class in the capital, San Salvador, following the failure of the general strike in October 1980 and the general offensive of January 1981. This has helped persuade the FMLN to base itself instead on 'self-sufficient' liberated zones in the rural areas.

Yet in recent months and weeks there has been a real upturn in strikes in the city, where tens of thousands of workers in social security offices, banking, waterworks and government offices have been involved.

It is precisely this resurgence in the workers' movement in San Salvador — brought about by a massive fall in living standards — which provides the real opportunity both for a return to class politics in El Salvador and for a successful struggle against the ruling class. But to gain from this a decisive break with the rightward-moving politics of all sections of the FMLN is needed. ■



Guerrillas now seeking 'dialogue'

Poison gift

The European elections in France proved to be very successful for the extreme right. Gareth Jenkins looks at the fascist growth and how best to fight it.

With a vote of just over 11 percent the fascist *Front National* came within spitting distance of beating the Communist Party into third place in the French European elections. This breakthrough into electoral respectability gives it ten seats in the European parliament and is the culmination of a rapid process of growth starting with the municipal elections in spring 1983.

Where the Front did particularly well was in the capital and other large industrial centres. In the Parisian area and suburbs it got votes as high as 15 percent, while in Marseille in the south it hit a record 20 percent. In all these areas, there has been an equally spectacular decline in the CP's fortunes. In Marseille, for example, its vote dropped by nearly half in comparison with 1979. A similar, if less catastrophic, withering away of the CP vote was also noticeable in the 'red belt' of the capital.

The Socialist Party fared less badly, though it too lost ground, and the right-wing parliamentary opposition emerged as the largest block.

The abstention rate was high by continental standards, with overall only 57% of the electorate voting. It is this that explains the collapse of the CP vote, rather than desertion in droves to the right and extreme right.

Marketing

Who and what is the *Front National*? The figure of Jean-Marie Le Pen, around whom the Front was created in 1972, dominated the hoardings throughout the campaign. A former parachutist, he fought in the anti-independence war France fought and lost in Indo-China and Algeria. Currently he is the director of a record company marketing such hits as *Voices and Songs of the German Revolution* (guess which one).

Until recently, he, along with the other warring grouplets of the extreme right, could be dismissed as a bad joke. His politics drew their inspiration from all the dead-end and defeated political options of the right: collaboration under Marshall Pétain with the occupying nazi forces, the shopkeeper movement led by Poujade, vainly attempting to resist the modernisation of the French economy in the mid 50s, and the diehard white settler opposition to Algerian independence.

What has transformed the unappetising Le Pen into a charismatic figure is the failure of the left in office to solve the crisis. This has given him the opportunity to exploit the fears, confusions and resentment that have

come to the surface. The demonology of fascism has begun to make sense.

Communists (and socialists) really *are* the enemy. Is not their government presiding over growing unemployment, wage freezes, cuts in benefit? Aliens *are* in our midst. Do they not compete with us for jobs, live off our resources, threaten law and order by their criminality? These issues are the raw nerve Le Pen has played on time and time again.

Demoralised by their government's treachery, many of those militants who fought to get the left into power in 1981 seek an answer. In the absence of a revolutionary alternative, Le Pen's strident demagoguery has found an echo among those least able to deal with the accumulating miseries of life in the decaying suburbs of the large cities. What could be more natural than to pick on those equally the victims of the crisis, living in the same environment, but easily identifiable by the colour of their skin?

It is this factor which explains why in rural France Le Pen made little impact, while in the strongholds of the left (such as the 'red belt' of Paris and the Marseille region) his impact was much, much greater. (In the south Le Pen also picked up the *pled noir* vote — the vote of former white residents of Algeria.)

So much, then, for the left's responsibility for its own debacle and the rise of Le Pen. What, though, of the composition of the



Le Pen telling Georges Marchais, leader of the CP, and an immigrant to pack their bags.

Cartoon taken from *Le Monde*

Front's base? Opinion polls, for what they are worth, suggest the following.

First, between 20 and 25 percent of its support comes from small businessmen. The same figures apply to the liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, etc).

Secondly, the Front has made little head into youth. Only 9 percent of the 18 to 20 age range seem to have voted for Le Pen (as against 36 percent for the traditional right and 21 percent for the Socialist Party). However, that is still 3 percent more than for the CP.

Thirdly, in terms of political preferences, a third of Le Pen's voters identify clearly with the extreme right. Another third look to the

traditional right-wing parties. However, as many as 11 percent of Le Pen's voters see themselves as on the left or as ecologically-minded!

The evidence suggests, therefore, that as yet Le Pen's base is neither hardline fascist nor youthful. That may appear to make his success (equal to Poujade's 30 years ago) less worrying. But it should not.

First, unlike Poujade, Le Pen has organisation. Secondly, the economic boom of the 50s provided no objective base for fascism. That is clearly not the case today. If normal political processes fail to resolve the crisis in the way the bourgeoisie want, the fascist option could become tempting.

It is clear that Le Pen will lose no time in exploiting his electoral success to make an impact on the streets, control of which is crucial for every fascist movement. He has already made an effective intervention in the mass demonstration called by the traditional right in protest at the government's timid plans to bring private (Catholic) education under greater state supervision.

We can expect more of the same, plus greater confidence in organised activity against the left and against immigrants.

Initiative

The real tragedy is the absence of any prospect of a French equivalent to the Anti-Nazi League. The conditions are of course different, but some kind of initiative needs to be considered before either the Front's organisation has hardened (irony has it that Le Pen is considered too moderate by some factions) or its wider support has crystallised.

Unfortunately, neither major organisation of the revolutionary left seems able or willing to take such an initiative. Although it has backed local anti-fascist mobilisations, the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* (French section of the Fourth International) appears to rest content with a general exhortation to 'the government of the workers' parties' to change its catastrophic policies.

Lutte Ouvrière, on the other hand, takes a much harder line. Le Pen, according to them, is 'a poisoned gift that the left makes to the working class', and they point out that the result of making workers pay for the crisis is deep demoralisation inside the class. The weakness of LO's denunciation of the left for following the same policies as the right is that they see Le Pen more as a sign of disaffection than as an urgent threat that needs to be fought.

Thus, in practice, though from different perspectives, both the LCR and LO neglect the specific task of looking to build a movement capable of mobilising against Le Pen.

One piece of graffiti in the Paris metro read 'Votez Le Pen'. Some wit had added 'is' at the end. Unfortunately, it will take more than wit to undo the effect of Le Pen on French politics.

For even if one's worst fears are not realised and Le Pen fails to build on his present success, the reactionary ideas that he has now made so acceptable will pull the whole of French politics sharply to the right and make a workers' fightback against the crisis that much more difficult. ■

The torch of reaction

A lot of rubbish is about to start pouring from our televisions about the Olympic Games. Here **Colin Sparks** attacks the games for their nationalism, racism, sexism, and class bias. He goes on to dream of the future 'Workers Olympics' where sport will lose these characteristics.

Even if you are hooked on sport, you will probably find this year's Olympic Games a bit too much. The corruption is too near the surface. The US is using the games to publicise capitalism. The USSR is boycotting in revenge for 1980.

On top of all that, the British are, predictably, providing Zola Budd and her apartheid backers with the passports and papers they need to sneak in by the back door.

One of the lines of criticism that has been voiced even in quite respectable liberal circles is that the modern day Olympics represent a sad decline from the good old days. The whole shebang, it is argued, has got out of hand, but if purged of its excesses it could be restored to a jolly old sporting event just like it used to be.

This comforting position is unfortunately quite untenable. The Olympic Games, even in their antique version, were always bound up with nationalism, war, personal skulduggery and every other undesirable feature of class society. Organised sport, as usual, has provided the focus for everything that is worst about humanity.

Consider the current question of commercialism. The 1984 Olympics are being run by a private company that aims to make a profit. To this end every last inch of sponsorship has been sold. Starting with things which might have some connections with the Olympics, like official watches, through more questionable things like official typewriters, the list goes on to become absurd. There is, I am told, even an official Olympic prison food.

The mind-boggling connection between the Olympics and San Quentin and Dartmoor is quickly resolved when you realise that the title 'official Olympic thingy' means *only* that the manufacturers of 'thingy' have paid the Olympic organisers a certain sum of money in order to use the title 'official Olympic'. There is no other connection necessary.

It is not at all the case that fine and innocent old Olympic traditions are being put to foul new purposes. It is true that the US organisers have made the commercial and ideological function of things very clear by flogging off every mile of the famous relay of the Olympic torch.

But this is no ceremony shrouded in the mists of obscure antiquity. It was in fact



THE GOOD: Jesse Owen, who upset Hitler's plans for an Aryan Olympics

dreamt up as a typical piece of ham propaganda by the Nazi organisers of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where the official Olympic salute, of course, was more familiar in other contexts.

The scale of marketing might be new, but the principle is not. The Rome Olympics had 46 sponsors, Montreal 168, Moscow, just to prove that state capitalism could catch up and outstrip the west, had 200 such official Olympic products.

Exotic

In fact, Los Angeles, or rather the private corporation running the games (the Los Angeles Olympic Organising Committee or LAOOC), have only let out 30 official sponsorships, costing between 4 and 15 million dollars each. The names of these will not surprise you: AT&T, General Motors, Atlantic Richfield, MacDonalds, Coca Cola, IBM, Levi Strauss. The more exotic 'official' goods are part of less prestigious operation organised by a further 43 concessionaires.

The need for this large-scale marketing operation arises from the staggering cost of the games. They are so bound up with the prestige of competing national states that the cost of staging each one has risen.

The 1976 Montreal Olympics nearly bankrupted the city, leaving its citizens the task of paying off a billion-dollar deficit. Moscow was even worse. There is a Russian joke which runs something like this: 'There are three stages to the Olympics. First, prepare for the Games. Second, hold the Games. Third, reconstruct the economy.'

In the course of their modern history the Olympic games have been a focus for almost every one of the most reactionary ideological props of modern capitalism. Take nationalism. The Germans, losers of the imperialist wars of 1914-1918 and 1939-45, were not invited to the games held by the victors in Paris in 1924 and London in 1948.

But nationalism, fostered by the rule that nations, not athletes, are invited to the games, is only one part of it. The founder, Le Coubertin, tried very hard to keep women out of the Games:

'We feel that the Olympic Games must be reserved for men... We must continue to try to achieve the following definition: the solemn and periodic exaltation of male athleticism with internationalism as a base, loyalty as a means, art for its setting and female applause as reward.'

He did not fail completely. Women are still banned from competing in some Olympic events like the pole vault and the triple jump. There will, at Los Angeles, be 144 events for men against 61 for women. All but 15 are segregated.

Racism, too, is as Olympic as putting the shot. South Africa participated in the Games from 1908 to 1960. During that period any black athlete who wanted to compete had to emigrate and represent another country. Zola Budd is the first white to try the trick, and for less honourable reasons.

In fact, class prejudice has been as constant a factor in the Olympics. The movement is still officially 'amateur' and that has always been a sign of class exclusiveness in sport — for example the original split between Rugby League and Rugby Union was over the question of the payment of players, with the northern working class clubs insisting on that right while the upper class southern clubs insisted on amateurism.

Amateurism originally meant that a person of independent means could spend more time training than a person who had a privileged job, and they in turn could spend more time training than someone forced to work long hours. In other words, amateurism made it very difficult for the worker to compete on equal terms.

Of course, amateurism has increasingly become a charade. Although the current set up still obviously makes it much more difficult for a worker to compete on equal terms, various forms of sponsorship mean that the most talented working class athletes can sell themselves to advertisers or military bureaucracies or colleges in order to get the time needed to train to a high level.

The thoroughly nasty brew of the modern Olympics rested on a number of equally nasty foundations. De Coubertin, the founder, looked in particular to the English public schools and to the ancient Greek games. Of the English public schools we will not speak, but the antique model is yet another of the myths surrounding the games.

The Greek Olympics certainly existed — from 776 BC to at least 260 AD. They were an ideological event in the narrowest sense — forming part of a religious ritual which included a sacrifice of 100 oxen to Zeus.

The origins of the athletic events were in preparation for war. They included a foot race in full armour, boxing, wrestling, chariot racing and no-holds-barred unarmed combat. Although they were not the horrid bloodbath of the Roman games, they were pretty rough: killing your opponent was not legally recognised as murder.

Slaves, the people who did the bulk of the work, could not compete of course. Nor could women, except by proxy in the chariot race, where the prize went to the owner rather than the competitor. Even then they could not collect since women were banned from the entire games.

The military origins of the games were confirmed by the fact that Sparta, the most militarised of the Greek states and the model for many modern fascist dreams, was the most successful early breeding ground of winners. Later, the games became more narrowly specialised, being dominated by athletes obliged by the rules to train for ten months of the year and who won big cash prizes.

It is one of the signs of the weaknesses of the modern workers' movement that the Olympics, despite the mutterings about Moscow and Los Angeles, are still the unchallenged centre of world athletics. This has not always been so. The period of mass working class activity after the first world war saw strong attempts to set up working class sporting events as an alternative.

The organisers banned German and Austrian athletes from both the 1920 and 1924 Olympics. The largely social democratic workers' sports association responded by organising international working class sporting events like the 1926 Workers'



THE BAD: Zola Budd, getting around the apartheid ban

Olympics held in Frankfurt under the slogan 'No more war'. The British delegate claimed: 'If wars are won on the playing fields of Eton, peace can be won on the democratic sportsfields of the Workers International Olympiads.'

The fine phrases were, however, not quite honest: all members and supporters of Communist-affiliated workers' sports organisations were banned from participating. In response a Workers' International Spartakiad was held in Moscow in 1928.

Although the programmes of these efforts contained the same sort of competitive events as the bourgeois Olympics, they also

had mass-participation sporting and cultural activities built in to try and avoid the sort of elitism that already characterised the bourgeois games.

The Spartakiad, for example, ended with a mass 'sports theatre' event on the theme of the battle between the world proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. We can sympathise with those comrades who found their revolutionary duty lay in enacting the role of the bourgeoisie.

All wings of the workers' movement in the 1920s and 1930s recognised the danger of allowing the bourgeoisie free reign in the organisation of one of the most popular of leisure activities. There will be absolutely no challenge to the orgy of competitive nationalism in Los Angeles.

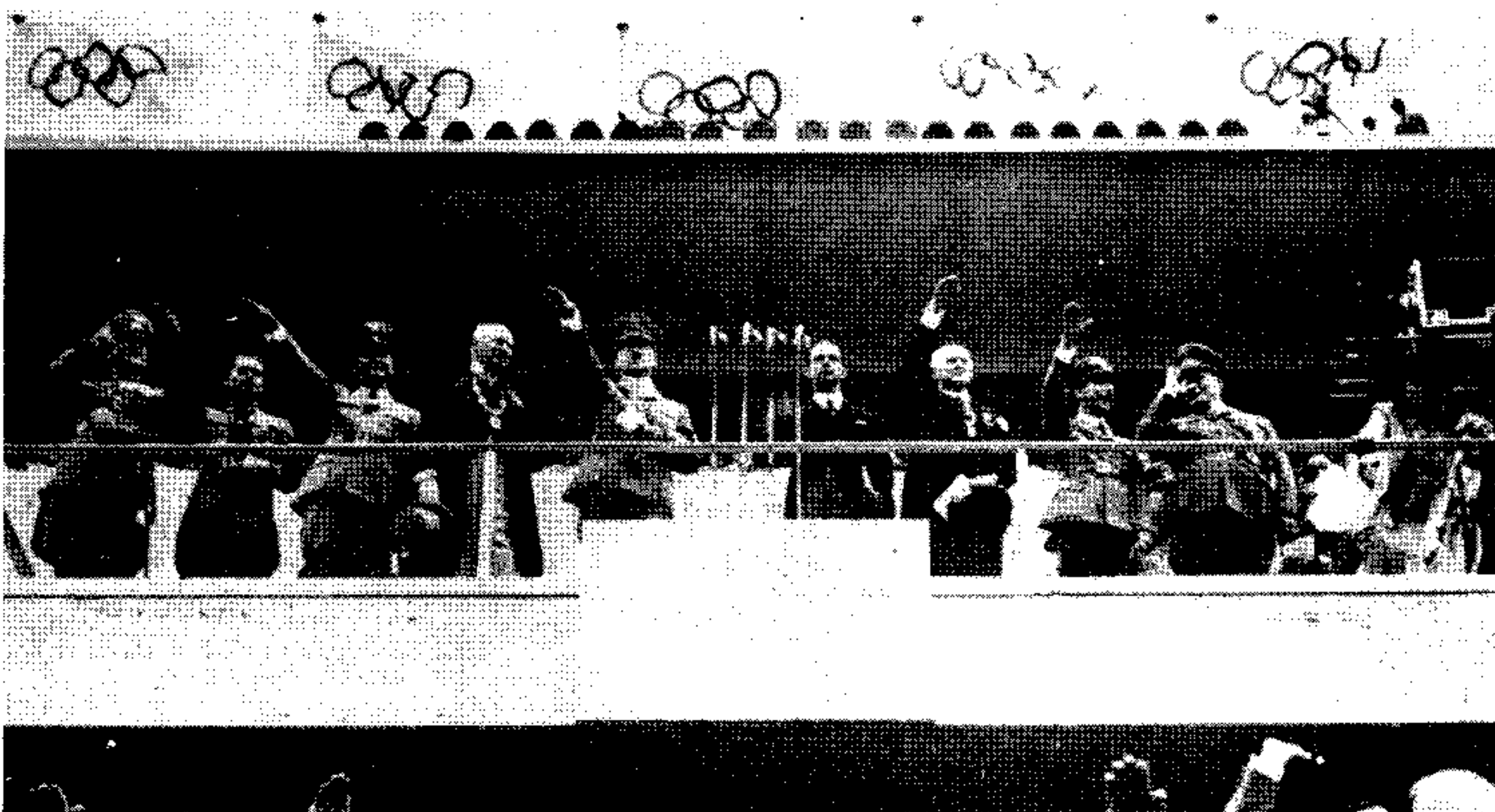
Along with Coca Cola and Levis, we are going to be sold the idea that competition is the highest human virtue. We are going to be asked to identify some upper class idiot or a horse as 'our' representative in some obscure horse trial and to cheer them against the upper class idiots of other states. We are going to be asked to believe that 'our' boys and girls are an honourable lot and that 'theirs' are full of low cunning and dangerous drugs.

And the amazing thing is that it will work. Many of the socialists who howled at the nationalism that was stirred up over the Falklands will cheer along with the super-patriots when the same Union Jack and the same National Anthem come up on the telly to celebrate some sporting triumph.

Nasty stuff, and dangerous.

Most of the facts, if not the opinions, in this article are taken from an excellent new book of essays edited by Alan Tomlinson and Garry Whannel, *Five Ring Circus*. It is published by Pluto Press for £2.95 and, despite being soft on sport, is well worth a read. It will provide something to pass the time when the only thing on the box is all that damned sport...

THE UGLY: Officials give the 'official' Olympic salute



Selling yourself

Pop goes the Culture

Craig McGregor
Pluto Press £3.95

I hate Rock and Roll,
Tony Tyler

Vermilion paper £4.95

I can think of no other subject which causes so much plain un-sullied rubbish to be written about it as popular music. In what other area of journalism could a Julie Birchill have 'risen' to having a column in the *Sunday Times* or be widely published. Incoherence, pretentious, glib and facile are the hallmarks of most writings on the subject.

When it comes to 'serious' writing and attempts at linking it to politics then the best on offer in the press is Simon Frith. If Simon Frith is the best, just think what the worst is like. Music journalism as a whole is both the worst and most pretentious form of writing around, it makes football reportage read like Jane Austin.

The reasons for this state of affairs are many and varied. They include: the effects of having to hype a new dynamic sound every six months. The claustrophobic and unreal world of rock journalism — the record companies — and the music papers. The pretentiousness of the whole process etc. Also the style of writing that has developed, a style which has degenerated from what was called in the 60's 'new journalism'.

New journalism was created in America in the 60's as part of those turbulent times. It included the then new papers such as *Rolling Stone*, *Village Voice* and writers such as Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer and Hunter S Thompson. It was an attempt to describe the excitement of the times in a modern idiom, to put across what it felt like to be a part of rebellion, of sex and drugs and rock and roll etc. And some of it was and is good writing.

Ego

At its best it was fast, funny and dynamic, making you empathise with what it felt like to be involved in the events. At its worst, it was self-obsessed, bogged down in the detailed doings of the journalist to the point of obliterating the event that the writer was involved in. It could be one long ego trip. But in both good and bad the writer became the subject of the writing. The journalist was transformed from a faceless reporter of events to a star in his or her own right.

This tradition of the journalist as star is one that has dominated music journalism for many years. As a process that breaks the liberal myth of the objective reporter there is nothing to criticise it for. Indeed some of the best writing of the left in the 20th century has been in this

style. John Reed's *Ten Days that Shook the World* or Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* are brilliant examples of the writer being a central character in the writing.

But in these socialist works it was used to politicise the 'objective' reporting. It was used to widen the writing, to put politics into the descriptions or to illustrate an idea. It was used to comment on the events witnessed and to put forward a political view.

But in new journalism the writer became the subject not to put the politics of the writer but to put forward the writer as a star. As the title of one of Mailer's books put it in *An Advertisement to Myself*.

Birth

In the hands of a good writer and in a period of great excitement the new journalism produced some good writing. But since then the style and the social movements which gave birth to it have moved on. And it is a degenerated form that now dominates the *NME*, *The Face* and all the rest. Both *Pop goes the Culture* and *I Hate Rock and Roll* can be seen as different ends of the spectrum in the degenerated new journalism style.

I Hate Rock and Roll is the style brought to its self-obsessed limits. It is pure crap. In passing Tony Tyler supports US imperialism in Vietnam, hates punk and the ANL for what they stood for (left-wing politics mixing with music) and seems to believe that all has been lost since 1954.

His musical taste resembles a younger Jimmy Young and he could slip into the Jimmy Young show on Radio 2 with ease. Dominating the book though is Tony Tyler himself presented in an unpleasant right-wing rant. So much for the one time assistant editor of the *NME*.

Craig McGregor's *Pop goes the Culture* is a far more serious work and with an introduction by Simon Frith giving it the thumbs up is a good example of one of the offshoots of new journalism. Again it is half diary, the writer is never out of sight, a collection of thoughts, ideas and observations. But it includes a longish description of Gramsci's concept of hegemony.

In fact a good explanation spoilt by a typical misuse of the idea to justify the validity of 'ideological struggle' as a form of struggle in-itself or in the words of Simon Frith 'pop practise.' The central core of the book is still the writer but now it is the writer as abstract theoriser. From knowing what the writer eats in the queue to the loo at Woodstock while listening to Joni Mitchell we now have the latest book and theory on the cultural hegemony.

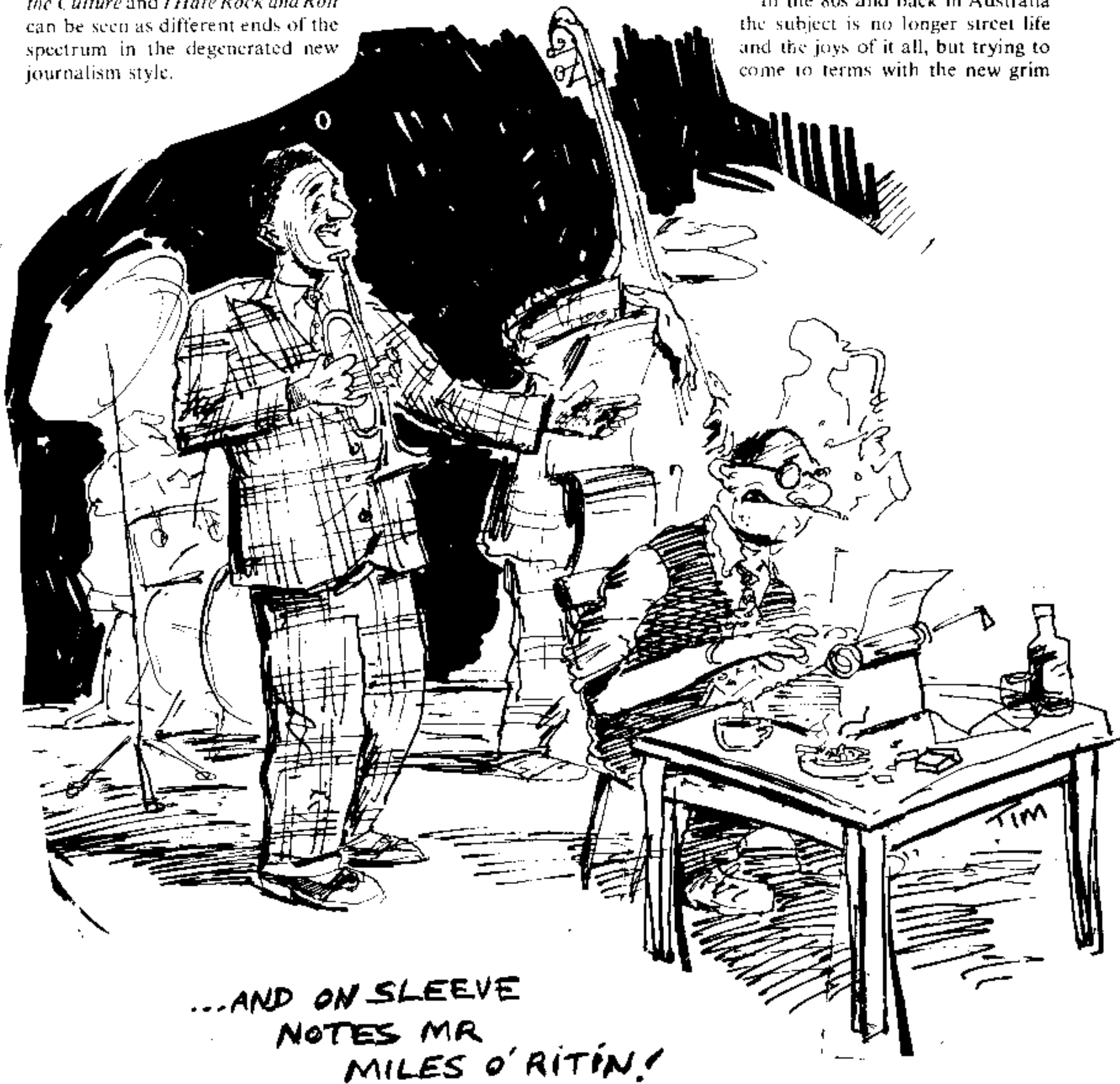
Movements

The book is really a collection of different articles written in the earlier 70s through to 1983, though not in historical order. But it is clear how the writing has changed and is an example of how one left offshoot of rock journalism has evolved.

From impressionistic descriptions of America in the 70s — the street life — full of insight and zappy prose to the 80s, ponderous and grappling with sociological terms.

McGregor's great love is jazz, his chapter on America in the 70s is the best in spite of its naivety and lack of any theory. He likes ordinary people, rare for an intellectual, and he can, when he doesn't get carried away with himself, write well.

In the 80s and back in Australia the subject is no longer street life and the joys of it all, but trying to come to terms with the new grim



times and the failure of the 68 mood to change the world. Not in itself a bad reaction you may think. But the effect is to get off the streets and into the sociological seminar, and unfortunately into the wrong theories.

The sociology of rock is now a subject to be found in the polys and universities. The ability of capitalism to absorb and sell all rebellions except workers' revolution (when they fail it can even sell that) is shown by its transformation of the underground press and music scene of the youth rebellions to lecture subjects on a poly course. Even the most clearly working class creations have been transformed into career structures for the new middle class.

The ideas of McGregor are a jumble of disconnected thoughts and theories about culture, planning and society. But through it all is the idea that the dominant power relationships found in society are the creations of ideas and ideology. The 'ruling elites' rule by manipulation of ideas, by hegemony.

Essentially McGregor is a left-liberal with some insights as to how the system manipulates the media but without an understanding of class society or the central role of profit to the whole system. Mesmorised by the surface veneer of capitalism he fails to see the logic of it; the class structure.

To him the bias against strikes is one way by which an elite rules and manipulates people to accepting the status quo. To him society is a complex web of power relationships with no overall logic to it, no central core (the productive process) which creates a driving force to society (the class struggle) and so no revolutionary solutions -- he sees the way forward by working within the movements.

Battle of ideas

His descriptions of some of the iniquities, of how much intellectual activity is based on a dislike of ordinary people are good. He demonstrates how the humour of Barry Humphries is based on the most reactionary of ideas. He shows, or at least attempts to, how town planning and the media hoodwink and crush people.

What is missing is a sense of proportion, a general framework to put the processes that he describes into. Pop or jokes are not central to maintaining the status quo. The creation of ruling class hegemony is not a series of equal processes of thought manipulation.

This is not to say that all we ever should be interested in is strikes, but that they are important to us not because of some strange obsession with getting up at 6.30 in the morning to visit picket lines but because society and its many layered levels of oppression and exploitation has a logic to it.

The logic and determining factor operating throughout society, one which reappears and 'corrupts' all

art, is profit. Behind the facade of society lies the class struggle based on the point of production.

A miners' strike is of far greater importance than the effects of 50 Benny Hill shows or getting ten number one hits by Paul Weller. Popular culture reflects all the contradictions of society, can give voice to the oppressed, point a way to the socialist potential inside capitalism, help or hinder the class struggle. But it is not a prime way by which power relationships are created.

In a certain way the transformation of the writer into a star in his or her own right has fed this notion of them as cultural warriors in the struggle for socialism ('pop practise' as Simon Frith calls it). As McGregor writes misunderstanding Gramsci:

'intellectuals ... (have) a crucial role to play, for the intellectual was first able to comprehend the intricate workings of the hegemonic state and comprehending it, combat it.' (p141).

Both the old new journalism and the present 'pop-practitioners' give pride of place to the writers or creators of culture. The class struggle becomes not the area from which all else in society is determined, but just one of the many effects of the determining ideological struggle. The vanguard of the revolution are the creators of ideology.

Socialism becomes not the active creation of the working class—self-emancipation — but winning the battle of ideas — the left intellectuals exposing ruling class hegemony and creating a counter culture.

Apart from this being elitist and downgrading workers to consumers of the correct ideas or buyers of the right-on records and ideologically sound gigs, it is reformist. It involves abandoning a revolutionary strategy on all levels:

'Over the years I've come to realise that the only safe and permanent way of combatting the dominant ideology is to employ our opposition in structures ... To be specific; this means developing and working through political parties such as the Labour Party, and through such mass movements as the trade unions, co-operatives, the women's movement, and the liberation movements (sexual, black, unemployed); breaking down the mass media chains ... making a profound overhaul of the education system ... It also means pushing through radical initiatives in the law, the constitution, the electoral system, parliament itself, financial system, tax ...'

This is a straightforward reformist package of modifying the present society by using the existing state structure and using Gramsci

to justify it! After all the insights on the working of pernicious ideas comes the most naive concept of a neutral state machine and a programme list of reforms that would look fine in a conference of the Young Liberals.

As with much of the new cultural warriors, Gramsci or Althusser are used to justify a move to the right. The McGregor of the 70s was utopian and naive but at least he was in the streets and in a vague sort of way wanted the mass of the people to change society, now it's just old fashioned reformism presented in a new fangled language and with a Eurocom gloss.

Popular culture can serve many exciting and useful functions for the revolution and ones that the left perhaps does not use as much as it could. It was for example very good that the 'New Order' did a gig for the miners, its great that the *NME* gave two pages to Marxism 83 (circulation over 500,000, readership much more), it's good that music shows the creativity of the working class that could be unleashed if capitalism was smashed.

But the system is not going to be destroyed by song like a modern day Jericho, and moreover to those who do see hegemony and ideology as the central area of struggle (Scritti Politti etc) the ideas of a gutted Gramsci have been used to argue for a reformist strategy and with a left cover. ■ Noel Halifax

Well-intentioned drivel

Here for good

Stephen Castles
Pluto Press £7.50

This is an analysis of immigration into Western Europe since the second world war and includes many useful facts and figures but is essentially well intentioned drivel. The problem with the book is that in trying to understand immigration Castles fits it into an economic model of capitalism that is confused and wrong-headed. The core of the problem is trying to explain the long boom of 1948 to '73.

It would seem from the book with its brief reference to Mandel and an attempt to explain that mythical creature 'the long wave' that the author has a very confused notion of how the system works. If the long boom was the result of a 'long wave' why did it start in 1948? If it is due to long term developments of new technology this merely begs the question as to why do inventions seem to happen in rhythms?

It is akin to the 'O' level history world view where the development of industrial capitalism is the consequence of the invention of the steam engine and the spinning jenny. People and classes disappear to be replaced by the 'restructuring of capital' and objective economic factors.

So after a rambling attempt to

explain the long boom as a result of the long wave, rebuilding after the war and the restructuring of capital (whatever that may be) Castles adds on his own theory of immigration.

The theory and reasoning are as follows. The reason for high profits and hence growth is the cheapness of labour provided by the inflow of immigrants. In other words, immigration counteracted the tendency of the profit level to fall, caused by the unions and high wages. When after 1973 immigration was stopped the crisis was brought on. In Britain where immigration was stopped much earlier the boom was less pronounced and the recession deeper and earlier, etc., etc.

Against all the writings of Marx the declining rate of profit is not the result of more machinery per worker but the result of high wage settlements. Immigration in this analysis then allowed Western Europe to grow by countering this. What was happening in Eastern Europe is not made clear.

It would be difficult to list all the objections to this analysis as it would take too much space. But in this time of high unemployment in Britain and Western Europe it seems odd to argue that a major factor in determining capitalist growth is the size of the reserve army of labour. If it was why the slump of

the 30s or why hasn't there been a boom in Ulster for the past 40 years?

It is also yet another analysis that implicitly blames all the world's woes on the workers. In this case it is the white indigenous workers of Europe who are seen as benefiting from the growth of the system by getting good wages and conditions caused by the cheap labour of the immigrant workers. The book is devoid of the slightest understanding of the Marxist concept of exploitation. It is not another word for the most oppressed.

Finally the book is reformist to the point where its reforms clash. The vision offered for the future is not of socialism and an end to all exploitation and oppression but a nice liberal reformed capitalism. It is a well intentioned work yet the contradictions of Castle's reformism are painfully obvious.

For example, the book is against sexism and the oppression of women, at the same time it is for maintaining ethnic cultures and communities. What happens when the ethnic culture includes the oppression of women, hatred of gays, the maintenance of the family with the male head as unchallenged leader etc? Confused? You would be if you tried to act on the analysis offered by this book. ■

Revolutionary spark

Revolution in Seattle
Harvey O'Connor
Left Bank \$7.50

If courage was enough then America's early socialists would have achieved socialism by 1919. By then they had led bitter struggles against the bosses and the state. Many of them went to prison for opposing the war.

But it was not true that any of the socialist organisations took a clear stand on the war. Even the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World) left it up to individual consciences whether to fight the war. With tragic irony, Wesley Everest, a war hero and IWW member, was lynched by rednecks whilst still in uniform.

Though Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party candidate for president, went to prison for his anti-war views, his party did not oppose the war either. From his prison cell he organised an election campaign that won him nearly a million votes.

The Communist Party was not yet born, and when it was, it was weak and divided.

The period that O'Connor documents, not as an armchair academic, but as an actual participant, was a period when the ideas of Lenin and the Bolsheviks had not been taken up in any serious way by the militants and socialists of America.

Over-romantic

In a lot of ways it was a golden age of class struggle, and it's all too easy to become over-romantic about the characters in Harvey's book, and hard to be critical. Yet unless we are critical we are doomed to make the same mistakes and suffer the same defeats. Without being critical it's not possible to understand why the heroic working class struggles of America peaked in 1919 and were not to go forward again until 1934.

Though the syndicalists of the early 1900s never succeeded in their aim of building a big union, for short periods they involved thousands in their organisations. For short spells they had had mass circulation newspapers and membership. But it was always temporary, rising and falling with the struggle.

For example after the Lawrence strike in 1912 the IWW had 10,000 members, by the summer of 1913 there were only 700 left.

Though the book fails to get to grips with such problems it is an honest appraisal of events.

The book is a wonderful introduction to the American class struggle, and chapter after chapter makes enthralling reading. For example:

'In October 1919 a trainload of 50 freight cars brought to the Port of Seattle a shipment labelled *sewing machines*, destination Vladivostock. A

longshore crew, wondering why a country engaged in civil war would be importing sewing machines, *accidentally* dropped a crate on the dock. The clatter that ensued came not from bobbins, shuttles or wheels, but from rifles. They were being sent to the counter-revolutionist Kolchack. The longshoremen's union refused to load the cargo, and notified other ports of their action.'

The book is full of such episodes, of lynchings, massacres, Wobblies, feminists, socialists, free speech fights and much more.

Surprisingly enough the weakest chapter is that which the whole book is based on—the Seattle general strike. The publishers of the book try to give the impression that here was a soviet. 'For the first time in America, labour ruled a city'.

Unfortunately the truth is less dramatic. There was a general strike, but hardly a situation of dual power. Indeed its failure was an opportunity to start a 'red scare—spreading like a bloodstain across the whole nation'.

The strike started in February 1919 in support of shipyard workers fighting for a living wage. It had been called by 300 delegates from all trade unions in the city. This in turn elected a committee of 15 to run the strike. 'Silence reigned over the city—Labour Guards patrolled the streets with orders to disperse any gatherings of union men.'

However there were no gatherings to disperse. The strike leadership of moderates had succeeded in persuading workers to stay at home. The strike was solid but passive, no demos, rallies or pickets.

Exemptions

The strike committee busied itself giving exemptions for emergencies, and providing food for the needy. The bosses made no move to negotiate. This confused the leadership who had believed that a general strike would magically win without any real struggle. Very rapidly they lost their nerve and began to look for ways to end the strike.

Though they could find no excuse for ending it, their refusal to lead and their attempts to end the strike so demoralised the delegates that after five days they voted to go back to work. No gains or assurances had been won, so the shipyard workers were left to fight on alone.

Trotsky, writing on the general strike in Britain, had stated:

'A general strike is the sharpest form of class struggle. It is only one step from the armed insurrection. This is precisely why the general strike more than any other form of class struggle, requires clear, distinct and therefore

revolutionary leadership.'

No doubt some of the participants were influenced by soviets, but that was only part of a confused mixture of ideas that can only be described as syndicalism.

The ideas behind the strike could best be summed up by quoting from a *Union Record* editorial (a mass circulation rank and file socialist paper):

'But the closing down of Capitalistically controlled industries of Seattle, while the workers organise to feed the people, to care for babies and the sick, to preserve order—this will move them, for this looks too much like the taking over of power by the workers—and that is why we say that we are starting on a road that leads—NO ONE KNOWS WHERE.'

That precisely sums up the tragic errors made by the syndicalists. A utopian concept of workers' control, but with no concrete plan of how to achieve it. With no centralised leadership, not taking the steps necessary for victory, the Wobblies and socialists of Seattle did not differentiate themselves from the moderate leadership. Nor were they able to deal with the state's vicious response when it came.

The ruling class was clear what the next steps were. The surrender

led to the hounding of socialists and militants and mass unemployment for the shipyard workers.

At the end of the chapter the author claims that a revolutionary spark did exist in Seattle. The trade union leaders knew that as well as the government 'and were mortally frightened'. By the third day of the strike they realised that the Seattle labour movement stood all alone.

Confusion

In conclusion it is useful to recall Georg Lukacs on the failure to understand soviets and seeing them as:

'permanent class organisation and seek to replace party and TU organisations by them, they in turn reveal their lack of understanding of the difference between revolutionary and non-revolutionary situations, and their confusion as to the actual role of the workers' soviets.'

That confusion was to be disastrous for America's revolutionaries, as Seattle amply proves. In spite of their personal courage they were unable to keep their organisations intact in the face of ruling class reaction. In Russia the years of reaction from 1907 to 1912 forged a party of steel. In America the years 1919 to 1929 saw the creation of a desert.

Andy Strouthous

Detailed rant

Three who made a Revolution
Bertram D Woolfe
Penguin £4.95

This book was first published in 1948, the year that saw the start of the cold war, and it shows it. The three of the title are Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. In fact the book concentrates on Lenin from his first political acts up to the first world war.

With some 700-odd pages it is a detailed and almost year by year, at some points day by day, account of the various splits and arguments inside the socialist movement that formed the Bolsheviks. Lenin is shown to be a warm if hard man, Trotsky brilliant, flashy and a bit of a loner; Stalin, a narrow-minded thug and a creature of the party machine.

So far so good you may think. But the work is imbued through and through with cold war paranoia and obsessions. It is both fascinating and irritating, fascinating because of the details and facts, irritating because of its analysis.

Woolfe's judgement on Lenin is that he was a person internally split between the 'western' Russian ideal of democracy and freedom and the 'asiatic' tradition of elitism and in the crucial points of struggle the asiatic part won through. So in the midst of a good exposé of Stalinist rewriting of history there is paragraph after paragraph about the



Stalin: narrow-minded thug

'Russian soul' and Asiatic totalitarianism and other such waffle.

All through the book it is clear which side Woolfe is on and it is not the Bolsheviks. In parts it is straightforward cold war rhetoric. Yet in spite of the reactionary analysis and the dislike of Bolsheviks or workers generally, the work contains a wealth of details and descriptions of the revolutionary movement. If you want to buy just one history of Lenin and the Bolsheviks buy Cliff's history of Lenin. If you've already got them and want to read about the early Trotsky as a hippy-like drop out in a commune, and in between right-wing rants, descriptions of the splits and rows of the Russian revolutionaries in some detail, then this book is worth a glance.

Simon Crane

Morning sickness



I spent one sunny Sunday afternoon last month cooped up in the Wembley Conference Centre reporting the London Annual General Meeting of the People's Press Printing Society. The PPS is the co-op which owns the *Morning Star*.

On my way out a woman handed me a small yellow leaflet with a couple of biblical quotations on it plus the explanation that she had left the Communist Party 15 years ago to serve the Lord Jesus. This service she performed by handing out such leaflets outside Communist Party meetings!

It was a bizarre ending to the afternoon. But was it really much more bizarre than what had been going on in the meeting?

The first bizarre thing was the number of people actually at the meeting. Counting in the six regional AGMs too there were well



Chater has a plan

over 3,000 people there to fight over the future of the *Morning Star*. That must be several times the number who actually *sell* the paper.

Presumably the vast majority of the 3,000 plus were members of the Communist Party. I would be very doubtful whether more than that number regularly turn up to Communist Party branch meetings.

The second bizarre thing was the nature of the row. The meeting was split down the middle. There were very few waverers. The atmosphere was vitriolic in the extreme. There wasn't a speech that wasn't booed or heckled. There were all sorts of petty tricks of manipulation and demagoguery.

The platform, controlled by supporters of *Morning Star* editor Tony Chater, were careful to ensure that floor speakers had to speak from microphones at the back.

On the other side CP general secretary Gordon McLennan rallied his supporters to a standing ovation after his own speech with a waved clenched fist as if he had just scored a goal in a football match.

And yet both sides in this vicious row claimed to be supporters of the CP's pro-

gramme, the British Road to Socialism. Neither side criticised the other's behaviour over, say, the miners' strike, the NGA dispute, CND or — going back a bit — the People's Marches.

I don't think most people were being insincere in their claims to stand for the same general politics, nor were they hiding important differences over the issues I have mentioned. For example, you couldn't tell from their behaviour in the current strike that the CP leaders of the Scottish miners were for the CP executive in the *Morning Star* fight, while the CP leaders of the Kent miners were for Chater.

The same goes in general. You may happen to know that the CPers in your own union take one side or other in the *Morning Star* dispute, but you wouldn't be able to guess it from their behaviour on union issues.

The third bizarre thing about the meeting was the attitude of both sides to the future of the paper over which they are fighting so furiously. The circulation of the *Morning Star* has been relentlessly declining for years. In the second half of last year (before another hefty price increase in January) its British circulation was down to 14,820. (In addition another 14,415 copies went abroad, almost all to Eastern Europe.)

Russians

It doesn't take much imagination to see that with a total staff of over 150 to support sooner or later the operation is going to go bust. I find it fairly amazing that it hasn't done so already. Perhaps I underestimated the willingness of the Russians to help out — they now pay for their copies a year in advance. At any rate it is now over three years since the management of the paper have been seriously sounding the financial alarm bells. Now they are talking about the paper having six months unless something is done.

Chater and most of the present management committee do at least have a plan to stop the *Morning Star* going bust. (Indeed it is this plan that sparked off the current row with the CP executive, because they didn't tell the EC about it.) The plan is to get the *Morning Star* presses to do commercial printing.

The plan looks pretty dodgy on straight commercial grounds. A new press has to be installed, costing £800,000, the supposed promises of work look suspiciously vague, and so on.

But the really staggering thing about the plan is that it starts from effectively admitting that the sales of the *Morning Star* are not going to be significantly raised in the foreseeable future. In my view of course that is absolutely correct — indeed I think circulation will continue to sink. But remember these people think they are producing a

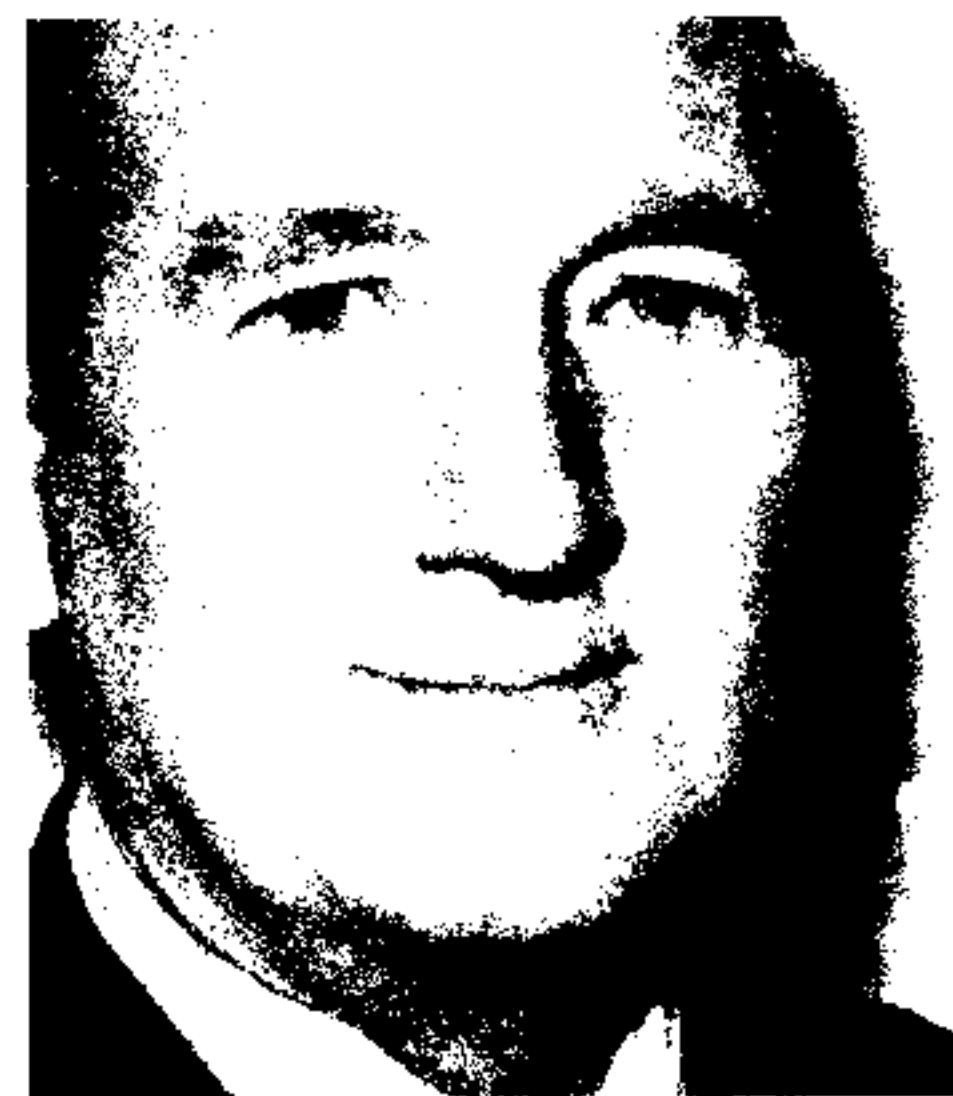
really wonderful paper at the very centre of the working class movement.

Equally staggering is the attitude of McLennan and the party executive. They have no alternative 'plan' for avoiding going bust. In pointing out the holes in Chater's plan they have probably alienated some non-CP friends in the union bureaucracy they would dearly love to keep.

But they also have only the slightest criticisms of the present style and content of the paper, and virtually no criticisms of their own totally unsuccessful efforts to raise the circulation. In other words they are relying on blind faith to avoid the bailiffs.

There is an explanation for all this bizarre behaviour. With the exception of a few rather ingenuous or downright opportunist non-CP members who have been brought in on either side, the row about the *Morning Star* is a row about the future of the Communist Party.

And the plain fact is that the Communist Party does not have a future, because it has no reason for a separate existence. That has



McLennan scores a goal

been so for a long time. The effects have however taken a long time to work themselves out.

But a sober look at the Communist Party today reveals an organisation which is no more left wing than much of the Labour left, no more theoretically minded, no more disciplined, not even any better able to intervene in the unions. Both Eurocommunists and Stalinists could find a quite comfortable home in the Labour Party, and not necessarily on the left of it.

In those circumstances differences among those who remain in the party inevitably have an increasingly unreal and desperate quality.

Viewed from the outside that can make good political gossip. But its actual consequences in the real political world are getting smaller and smaller.

Pete Goodwin