

socialist worker Review

April
1985
Issue 75
60p



THE SHADOW OF SHARPEVILLE

**The left and the miners
Abortion and the
Powell Bill**

NOTES OF THE MONTH	3
In the aftermath of the miners' strike we look at the level of class struggle, the right in the Labour Party, the state of workers' resistance to ratecapping and the employers' offensive in Italy	
THE LEFT AND THE MINERS' STRIKE	8
Ann Rogers and Noel Halifax look at the rightward moving postmortems coming from much of the left since the miners' strike ended. And Ann Rogers talks to a Yorkshire miner about the role of the area leadership in ending the strike	
WHAT THE PAPERS SAY	11
In the third of our series, John Newsinger casts his eye over the <i>Daily Mirror</i>	
FRANCE: THE RISE OF THE NATIONAL FRONT	12
Jean Dalier from Paris reports on the growth of fascism in France today	
SEXUAL POLITICS: CONFRONTING THE POWELL BILL	14
Enoch Powell's new bill represents an attack on a woman's right to control her own body, and will, if passed, strengthen the hand of the anti-abortion lobby. Margaret Renn and Jane Ure Smith examine the bill, its implications and how to fight it	
THE PRINT INDUSTRY: HEADING FOR A SHOWDOWN	16
Alan Gibson reports on the current disputes in the print industry and their wide ranging implications	
THINKING IT OVER	17
This month Nigel Harris looks at the political situation in Mexico	
THE SHADOW OF SHARPEVILLE	18
The recent killings in South Africa once again expose the viciousness of the apartheid regime. Gareth Jenkins and John Lindsay take a look at South Africa's political situation today	
STRUGGLE AND IDEAS	22
Where do reactionary and reformist ideas come from, and how can they be changed? John Rees provides the answers	
WHAT DO WE MEAN BY Sectarianism	24
Duncan Hallas explains	
WORKPLACE NOTES	25
Organising despite the threat of victimisation	
WRITERS REVIEWED	27
Bill Thompson looks at the science fiction writer Harlan Ellison	
REVIEW ARTICLE	28
Colin Sparks reviews a major work on the early days of the Third International and Lenin's fight against the social chauvinists of the Second International	
REVIEWS	30
DEBATE AND LETTERS	35
On sexual harassment, the state and the Chartist movement	
OUR HISTORY	36
Peter Binns looks at the missed opportunity for workers' revolution in China that ended in the Shanghai massacre	

Edited by Lindsey German
Assisted by Jane Basset, Pat Stack, Gareth Jenkins, Andy Zebrowski, Noel Halifax, Dave Beecham, Norah Carlin, Laurence Wong, John Deason, Mark Cranshaw, Cathie Jasper, Lindsey Greig, Rob Ferguson, Julie Waterson, Bill Thompson Sean Piggot and Pete Binns

Production and business Pat Stack, Rob Ferguson
Reviews Colin Sparks

Subscription rate 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 Worker Review is sent free to all prisoners on request.
 ISSN 0141 2442
 Printed by Laneridge Ltd (TU all depts) London E2.

NOTES

of the month

CLASS STRUGGLE

Problems not solutions

IT TAKES a long time for the smoke to clear after a battle. After a year of the ruling class using their big guns against the miners—and of the miners responding with unexpected reserves of strength—the view is still hazy. Although it is possible to assess the state of the class struggle and generally the likely course the ruling class will take, there are obviously different options and possibilities.

The scale of the miners' defeat is becoming clearer all the time. The decision of the NUM executive to recommend ending the overtime ban is one sign that the chance of returning to work without a settlement, and continuing to fight was unlikely. And the failure of the miners' to back a national call for a weekly levy in support of those sacked is a serious blow. Out of over 900 victimisations so far, less than a third have been reinstated.

All these are signs that the ideas of solidarity engendered by the strike are crumbling fast. Many miners who were solidly for the strike in its opening months must now be accepting the arguments that they could not win, and therefore were wrong to have fought.

Certainly that is the conclusion that the bulk of the trade union leadership have drawn from the strike. They have generalised from the defeat to move to the right, to argue that nothing can be done to defy the Tory anti-union laws, that all their hopes lie in another Labour government changing the law. They will no doubt do their utmost to prevent any sort of workers' struggles which might bring them into opposition with the courts.

However there will still be struggles from different groups of workers. In some senses, the sectionalism of different groups of workers (encouraged by the union leaders) means that the miners' defeat has not generalised to the rest of the working class. A diverse range of workers from teachers to Fleet Street printers certainly have the con-

fidence at present to fight the Tories and the employers.

The likelihood of different groups of workers fighting back—on however sectional a basis—means too that the options for the ruling class are not clear. They have a clear intention—to drive down the wages and working conditions of British workers in order to make British capitalism more competitive. To do so they have to attack both union organisation and specific groups of workers. Whether they can succeed in their aims is however another matter. The battle with the miners has taken its toll for them too.

In the aftermath of the miners' strike they are hovering between two different options. They would like to go for a straightforward offensive aimed at defeating workers in particular industries. That was the strategy they attempted with the miners. It is what they are trying to do in the post office. The reason for much of the support for Thatcher among the ruling class is that she has always tended towards this confident approach, after years of governments who seemed to give way to the unions.

But after a year of pouring money into defeating the miners' strike, the Tories are not claiming they have had a roaring success. Many of their current economic problems stem from the billions of pounds put into defeating the strike. Although Lawson claimed that the money spent was a good investment for Britain (or rather British capitalism) there isn't much point in investment where the return is a long time coming in, and threatens to be low anyway.

High cost to the Tories

Lawson's budget showed both the high cost of breaking the strike, and the lack of confidence among the ruling class that—now the strike is over—they have any clearer strategy than they had before. And they have absolutely no guarantee that they will not face other strikes which can provide them with problems.

So although they would like a frontal attack on the workforce in many industries, they are often very hesitant about this approach.

The other main option that they have is to avoid direct head-on confrontation with particular workforces, but to try to achieve the same aims by working with the more conciliatory trade union leaders.

They know that many of the union leaders will be all too happy to try to keep their members in line in order to help British capitalism out of its crisis. That is after all the thinking behind the New Realism. Many employers don't see the point of sticking the boot into these union leaders when, with a little extra encouragement, they can be the best at controlling and policing their members. So for at least some sections of the ruling class, the prospect of class collaboration rather than naked confrontation is a real one.

Obviously there are many problems for a trade union leadership working with a vicious Tory government. But there is little question that sections of the TUC general council would jump at any such option. Needless to say, any agreement of this sort would be under conditions far less favourable to the unions and their members, and far more favourable to the Tories and the employers, than any sort of agreement between government and unions we have seen in recent years.

For the Tories it would have the advantage of buying them a period of social peace. The more intelligent of Thatcher's advisers understand firstly that their standing in the opinion polls is slipping and that therefore the prospect of electoral defeat looks much more likely than it did a few months ago. Their dreams of a radical re-shaping of British capitalism would crumble



NOTES

of the month

if that happened. They understand secondly that constant media coverage and disruption caused by future strikes can do them a lot of harm. It could lead many people to the conclusion that a Labour government would be preferable because it would be more likely to control the unions.

We do not know what combination of these options the Tories will most favour in the coming months. They will undoubtedly still try different tactics in different situations. But we do know that the situation is contradictory. The Tories have come out of the strike having defeated the miners, but with as many problems on their hands as they had before the strike.

Revolutionaries are always faced with difficulties in such situations. We have to assess the general drift: one of ruling class offensive. We also have to assess the different factors which can halt, delay or weaken that ruling class offensive. These can include a range of different things: the profitability of a particular industry, the strengths and traditions of its workforce, the reluctance of the ruling class to take on too many groups of workers, at any one time; even how near the election is. Add to this the always unpredictable nature of the class struggle, and it is clear that the general picture taken on its own can be misleading.

That is why we need a rounded analysis which can point to the contradictions inside the present situation. In terms of industry this means balancing on the one hand the tokenistic and inadequate response to the Tory attacks from the unions leaders, with on the other hand the strengths of many sections of workers and their bitterness against Thatcher. We also need to recognise that, although socialists are isolated and marginalised most of the time, when there is struggle their presence and activity can be crucial.

The contradictions in the present period don't just apply to industry. Although the overall situation is one of defeat and retreat for the left, there has also been a polarisation. A minority of people—quite often a large minority—are still open to socialist ideas, and open to activity which can lead them to socialist ideas. They are the people demonstrating outside the town halls to stop the retreat over ratecapping, and the people who joined the Labour Party hoping to change it over the last year. They are people who *may* be pulled to the right in the

course of the next few months, but who at present are resisting any such pull. The pool of people who were radicalised by the strike is still fairly large—certainly much larger than the SWP and its immediate periphery. They will be looking for ideas and answers and activity around specific issues in the next few months.

There are many opportunities for socialists in the months ahead. We in the SWP have recognised some of these opportunities through the increased number of people attending our public meetings, or buying our paper.

Even if times in the months ahead are difficult, and there is some demoralisation after the end of the miners' strike—there are still a sizeable number of people who are looking for political answers. Socialists have to try to respond to that need for political ideas.

This means arguing that the working class is the force which can change the world. Socialists have to couple the activity of supporting strikes and looking to workers who are moving into struggle, with a general analysis of how to change the world: revolution not reform; the central role of the working class; the impossibility of changing the world from above. So even in a situation where objective conditions are against revolutionary ideas, socialist ideas can increase their influence in a small way.

Crucial to how socialists operate is an understanding of the class struggle. If they take the deterministic view that no strikes can win because the rank and file won't fight, they can end up as abstract propagandists. If on the other hand they believe, like some on the left, that the miners' defeat marks the opening of a heightened period of class struggle, they can develop grandiose perspectives of what can be done.

If they see, however, the general picture as one of ruling class offensive, but within that all sorts of opportunities for struggle, then they can both recognise an audience to work with, and have something meaningful to say to that audience. ■

LABOUR PARTY

Right reasserts control

THE right wing inside the Labour Party has gained a renewed confidence over the past couple of months. They are firmly in control of the parliamentary Labour Party. They have ensured that Tony Benn and Eric Heffer—who supported the miners' strike—did not get elected to the shadow cabinet. They are certain to remain virtually untouched by the new round of reselections of Labour constituency candidates which are taking place.

Their confidence has been such that they are able not only to consolidate their own

positions, but also to attack those on the left whom they see as a threat. *Militant* have found themselves on the receiving end of witch-hunts in a number of local parties like Glasgow Provan. In others like Brighton Kempton they have found themselves marginalised.

In short, the right in the party have been able to go on the rampage. All this is in marked contrast to the public face which Labour adopted some months ago. The right had to join in a standing ovation for Scargill at the Labour Party conference in September. They had to go along with a great deal of left rhetoric—and some policy gains—about defying Tory laws.

Since then they have looked for every opportunity to fight back. Kinnock's attacks on the miners' strike and violence gave them some opportunity. And since the autumn, as the strike began to go down to defeat, they have increasingly reasserted control.

They have a number of things on their side. First is the fact that Labour's standing in the opinion polls has risen as the fate of the strike has been sealed. Any improvement in the party's electoral fortunes has a remarkably restraining effect on many activists. Added to this is the fact that the ending of the strike has had the effect of pulling many Labour members behind Kinnock. They are often the same people who denounced him in outrage only a few months ago. Now the pull to the right is carrying a lot of those same people in Kinnock's wake.

This is true of the whole of the mainstream left like *Tribune* and the Labour Coordinating Committee. They have taken positions which on paper condemn the right, but which equally condemn Scargill and his supporters. So the whole terrain of the left has shifted very much to the right.

The retreat on ratecapping

A major factor in accelerating this shift has undoubtedly been the ending of the strike. But another very important reason—especially in terms of internal Labour politics—is the speed with which much of the fight over ratecapping has begun to collapse. Defiance of the law was the centrepiece of the local government Labour left's strategy. At its core was the idea that the ratecapped councils would maintain a united campaign against the government and so defeat it.

The commitment of some councillors to really defying the law was always in doubt. But even the pledges to not set a rate crumbled the nearer the crunch came. Ken Livingstone affirmed his commitment to defying the Tory laws at a Democracy Day rally of tens of thousands—and days later supported a rate which complied with the law. In a number of other councils, as the date for setting a rate approached, there have been or are likely to be a number of manoeuvres, which in effect will lead to an abandonment of any struggle.

This lack of struggle has had a very demoralising effect on those who want to fight ratecapping. In many places there was never even a serious attempt to wage a fight on the part of the Labour councils. This in

turn has had a debilitating effect on those council workers who want to fight the effects of ratecapping, and who are faced with the loss of their jobs in many instances.

Why has the retreat been so swift and so widespread? Precisely because it was based on the idea of winning respectable public opinion and on popular advertising campaigns rather than basing itself on real struggle, and the real strengths that council workers have. So the campaign sounded big and impressive, but it was based on very little. As the decision date came nearer, so the individual Labour councillors on whom the campaign was based began to look for escape routes—like creative accounting and delaying the cuts for a year or two.

The argument that a Kinnock-led Labour Party can win the next election and can then reverse the Tory attacks on local government has become increasingly powerful among Labour supporters. It also dovetails with the move to the right, and becomes a justification for abandoning any defiance of the law in favour of changing it in the next parliament.

None of this means there is no fight left over ratecapping. As we go to press, a number of local authorities are still pledging not to implement cuts or to set a capped rate. But they have already been undermined by the behaviour of the GLC and ILEA. For some months there have been signals of retreat from those who should be leading the campaign. Sheffield council leader David Blunkett and NUPE official Tom Sawyer have both made clear the limitations of their

support for any real campaign against ratecapping.

In a recent interview Blunkett showed his contempt for those prepared to defy the law.

'It is not worth a sacrificial gesture of socialist martyrdom if at that point people know that it can't be achieved'.

He makes clear that his aim is getting the government to negotiate—in other words to make a small number of concessions in return for the rhetoric.

'I believe we can win sufficient concessions to ensure that that (sacrifice) will not be necessary.'

The danger of the sort of view that Blunkett puts forward is not simply that it damages and demoralises those who want to fight. It also threatens to leave any council which has taken the past few months' rhetoric seriously very isolated in the face of Tory attacks. This is exactly what all the joint meetings and conferences were meant to avoid. But now it looks as though councils like Hackney and Liverpool will be very isolated indeed.

Future of the left

Overall, the move to the right can pull many of the good Labour activists with it. But it would be a serious mistake to believe that *all* Labour activists will move that way. A large radicalised milieu can continue to exist. Its members will find themselves increasingly isolated inside the Labour Party itself. In the short term it can make some

NOTES

of the month

people even more determined to fight. This mood is reflected in the recent arguments of Tony Benn, who says there is often increased activity at and around the base of the Labour Party.

But such a mood cannot last indefinitely in the face of a general drift to the right. The people who are angry now at Kinnock's attacks on the miners or the collapse over ratecapping can draw alternative conclusions. They can either conclude that a revolutionary alternative to Labour needs to be built, or they may eventually conclude that the course taken by the Labour leadership and the 'soft left' is the only 'realistic' one. The task of revolutionaries in the months ahead is to convince a number of them that the former conclusion is correct. ■



Will he stand firm? David Blunkett facing lobby over ratecapping

NOTES

of the month

COUNCIL WORKERS

London Bridge is falling down

THE setting up of *London Bridge*, an unofficial body grouping stewards from across the capital was welcomed by those who wanted to fight ratecapping. It seemed to herald the development of genuine rank and file organisation which could lead a fight back. Last October a shop stewards' conference drew 300 people. Organisers said *London Bridge* would be independent both of the Labour councils and trade union officials.

Sadly *London Bridge* has not fulfilled that promise. For a start it tailed behind the Labour councils. At the October conference Ted Knight of Lambeth and Ken Livingstone of the GLC were the main speakers. Last month at a conference of 250 stewards Margaret Hodge of Islington made a keynote speech.

Both Livingstone and Hodge ruled out industrial action against ratecapping saying this would simply achieve the Tories' aim of closing services. These arguments were seized on by a sizeable number of stewards at last month's conference. In particular the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee in Hackney—which is threatened with a Tory receiver being sent in to run the council—said they'd work on in a UCS style work-in even if wages were stopped.

The leadership of *London Bridge* didn't point to the clear evidence that much of the Labour councils' opposition to ratecapping was in danger of folding. Its recent conference took place after Ken Livingstone had steered through the GLC's surrender. But even criticism of Livingstone was muted.

To an extent this reflected cynicism among the convenors who formed *London Bridge's* steering committee that industrial action could be won. Private soundings calculated that solidarity action in support of any fight-back in Hackney was only possible in two



Democracy Day demonstration in London

London boroughs. But this in part reflected *London Bridge's* failure to go beyond the official propaganda of the councils and prepare the case for ratecapping.

Very early on it was clear that if *London Bridge* was to succeed it would have to stand up to both the council leaders and union officialdom.

When the high court outlawed the GLC's abolition campaign Livingstone moved quickly to comply with the law. Within hours County Hall was clear of officially produced anti-abolition material. *Democracy for London*—which was closely tied to *London Bridge* in organising trade union opposition to abolition—was unceremoniously wound up. Delegates attending its AGM were told it was cancelled and Livingstone stopped GLC funding.

The block vote

At the London Labour Party Conference a motion urging co-operation with *London Bridge* was lost because of the TGWU and NUPE's block vote. Leading figures in *London Bridge* went along with this and in one instance spoke in defence of it at the conference.

Left officials like Jack Dromey of the TGWU were determined to prevent any rank and file organisation developing. NUPE has built itself by talking left, organising glossy publicity about cuts and low pay but failing

to organise any fight blaming the other council unions.

Last month's *London Bridge* Conference ended in something of a shambles. Many of those on its steering committee are on the 'hard left' of the Labour Party. Some are in entrism groupings. But they argued against building strike action, backing the 'work-in' strategy. Their arguments opened up the way for the right wing who opposed strike action under any circumstances. In that situation traditional sectional differences re-emerged.

All this also showed up *London Bridge's* failure to become more than part of the official 'campaign' against ratecapping. A number of crucial opportunities to develop organisation across different sections were lost. No effort was made to connect with the council workers' pay offer over which union officials were desperate to avoid a fight.

And last month when NUPE members in Camden's boiler section struck in defence of services threatened by the Labour Council there was no campaign to build support even after a court receiver was appointed to bring in contractors to break the strike. Not surprisingly NUPE officials made every effort to block solidarity action and ensure the strike was isolated.

By failing to stand up to the council leaders and union officials *London Bridge* has been pulled rightwards in their wake, and the prospects for rank and file organisation among council workers weakened. ■

ITALY

Sliding down the scale

THE MURDER of a right-wing trade unionist, Ezio Tarantelli, has brought the Red Brigades terrorist group back into the limelight in Italy.

Their target wasn't indiscriminatory. Tarantelli was a member of the Catholic dominated CISL union federation, and was one of the main proposers of the total abolition of the *scala mobile*, a system in which workers receive automatic pay rises which are linked to the rate of inflation.

In the last few years the Socialist-led government has slowly but surely eroded its buying power, so much so that the Communist Party (PCI) has felt obliged to launch a referendum over an arbitrary cut, about £13, which was introduced last year.

But the issue is far more important than £13 in workers' pay packets. The *scala mobile* is a symbol of what workers' militancy achieved in the early seventies. With unemployment, profits and productivity increasing, and living standards decreasing, the ruling class are attacking it still further.

The PCI called for the referendum last year to defuse a wave of strikes and demonstrations which risked going out of their control. For example, in March 1984 there was a 1½ million strong demonstration of trade unionists in Rome.

Once the Constitutional Court had announced in January that the referendum could go ahead, the PCI immediately tried to get out of it. One Communist MP, Spagnoli, said: 'At this point one could imagine that a change in the law would avoid a referendum.'

Ruling class threats

The problem isn't so much that the PCI knows which way people would vote when faced with the question, 'Do you want £13 or not?' It is that it knows that the battle would by no means be over once the votes were counted.

The ruling class have sensed that they have the PCI in a corner and that the working class is unlikely to fight independently of the PCI, so they have upped the stakes. The Italian CBI, the *Confindustria*, have threatened to rip up the entire *scala mobile* agreement if the PCI wins the referendum in June. The Socialist Party have threatened to call early general elections too (and will blame the PCI for creating political instability and wrecking their economic plans). Trade union right wingers are threatening to lead split offs as well.

If the PCI does absolutely nothing and loses the referendum then its own weakness, and that of the working class, will become

clear and will lead to further attacks. The *Confindustria* have recently suggested that they have total rights to hire and fire. If they win it by a narrow margin they will still have to deal with the problems outlined above. Only militant and widespread mobilisation can defeat the ruling class attack—referendum or no referendum.

And this is where the Red Brigades come in. Hardly anyone would deny that in the last ten years the Red Brigades' actions have reunited and rejuvenated the Christian Democrats, helped to reinforce the PCI's hold over the working class and move it further to the right, and have played a major role in criminalising many revolutionaries and revolutionary activity in general. The murder of Tarantelli will have the same effect. It's as if the miners could have won their strike by bumping off Bill Sirs and Eric Hammond, rather than building for mass pickets and solidarity action by other workers.

The prospects are bleak. The revolutionary left is small and confused. It lacks a clear political direction, because it has failed to resolve the political questions which have plagued it for years. The PCI is caught between losing face and losing votes at the local and regional elections in May, and the ruling class have scented blood—not that they could really give a damn about

Tarantelli's.

Two weeks ago a left wing leader of the PCI dominated union, the CGIL, went as far as using the miners' defeat as a reason for avoiding the referendum. Antonio Lettieri said: 'A head-on clash Scargill fashion doesn't work, the bosses aren't worried by strikes...the referendum must be avoided.'

It's true to say that any agreement between management and workers has elements of compromise attached to it but any agreement without workers' self-activity is bound to be a step backward for the working class. ■
Additional notes from Tom Behan and Chris Bambery.

NOTES of the month

Ideas that can win
Buy Socialist Worker
only 25p

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY OFFER

10 issues for £2, including postage

Normal rates £8 for six months

£15 for a year

Name

Address

Money with all orders to: Socialist Worker Circulation, PO Box 82, London E2 9DS
Cheques/POs payable to Larkham Printers and Publishers. (Write for rates for libraries, institutions and overseas subscriptions.)

The left after the miners' strike

DEFEATS FOR the working class almost always lead to a growth in right wing ideas. The end of the miners' strike is proving no exception.

But the attacks on the militant tactics pursued by the activist rank and file during the strike are not just coming from the right wing of the movement. Many who see themselves as being on the left have also begun to criticise the tactics of the strike.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee, formerly the motor behind the Bennite left in the Labour Party, has led the charge to the right. In the spring edition of its newsletter *Labour Activist* they criticise the miners on several fronts.

Its arguments are worth going into some detail as they express what is rapidly becoming the line of the official left and can be found in the writings of many others. It points to four key features for the strike's future.

It claims firstly that the failure to hold a ballot was 'bad tactics and bad politics'. It says that 'attempts to picket people out in the manner of Yorks miners in the Notts area are widely acknowledged to have embittered an already adverse situation'.

It condemns miners for fighting the police, saying that it created 'a series of images of young male violence'. And they attack miners for fighting scabs as 'cowardly and outside the rules of industrial fair play.'

Its reasons for this shift lie in their desire to rebuild bridges to Neil Kinnock. It claims that Kinnock 'could never by virtue of his role have remained silent on questions such as violence'. It will not even condemn the TUC, saying instead 'It's no good blaming the TUC and union leaderships... We have to face the facts about the limited degree of rank and file support.'

The fact that it was the union leaderships, both the Area officials of the NUM and the leaders of other unions, which made rank and file support so difficult to get has been

quietly forgotten.

As one miner told *Socialist Worker Review*, 'You can't blame the rank and file unless you've gone out and asked them for support. Some pits in Yorkshire did achieve a certain amount of solidarity action, in the Yorkshire power stations, for example. But the Trent Valley power stations were still banging away.'

'Yet there were no leaflets put into these stations. There were enough decent people in the EETPU and the power unions making it quite clear that Eric Hammond and John Lyons weren't going to help us. We had to go out and do it ourselves, and this was never done on the sort of consistent basis which would have meant that there was a chance of real solidarity action when the going got tough.'

'There was support in the power stations, you can see that by looking at the collections which were taken. If there had been an active campaign around the TUC guidelines we could have built solidarity. But it was never done. The officials stopped it in its tracks every time.'

The ballot issue

The LCC's re-writing of history is most clear over the question of the ballot and picketing. It claims that a ballot in Notts could have brought the miners there out on strike, and that the picketing put on by the Yorkshire miners actually weakened the chances bringing Notts out.

At the time of the strike all miners actively involved in the strike and the left (with the exception of the RCP) saw the ballot as an argument of the right. The left agreed at the high point of the strike that it was wrong in principle and wrong tactically.

It was wrong in principle because no one had the right to vote someone else's job away, and wrong tactically because at any point in the dispute to have had a ballot

would have stopped the strike in its stride. It would have demoralised the militants leading the strike. As anyone ever involved in a strike learns, what is vital is getting and keeping the momentum going. Holding a ballot would have stopped the crucial momentum and destroyed the struggle at the grass roots.

Similarly, to criticise the picketing by the Yorkshire miners of the Notts miners, re-writes how the strike was started in the first place and how it could have been won. It was by unofficial picketing inside the Yorks coalfield that the Yorks area came out and created the initial momentum of the strike. If there had not been picketing the strike would have been over by Easter, as the Tories had initially planned. And the picketing of Notts met with some success. Between a quarter and a third were picketed out and if the local leadership had given a lead many more could have been won over.

As a miner who was actually involved in picketing Notts said 'The tactic of picketing people out has got a long history. All the previous indications were that miners wouldn't cross picket lines. And at every pit we went to in Nottinghamshire we actually brought them out. At Cresswell, for example, we had 80 percent not crossing picket lines.'

Another miner said 'For the first couple of weeks there were results. It eventually became counter-productive because of the tactics which were used. The secret envelopes telling you where to go meant that there was no possibility of the rank and file, being able to discuss tactics.'

'When it came to the actual pickets on the gates, the only reason the police looked so organised, the only reason they were able to stop us talking to the Notts lads, was because we were so bloody disorganised.'

Perhaps the greatest insult the LCC throws at the miners is to condemn them for fighting the police. It says 'what decisively weakened support for the strike ... was violence against scabs and police on the picket line and, more particularly, against individual working miners, their homes and property. This is rightly perceived as cowardly and outside the rules of industrial fair play.'

The fact that young pickets were getting their heads beaten in by mounted police has now become, not a cause for horror and outrage but a 'dilemma'. The LCC says 'The very strength and aggressiveness of police tactics in the early period created real dilemmas about responding in kind. For some the end product of these dilemmas became a series of images of young male violence.'

This is not only an insult to the many women who stood on the picket lines throughout the strike, it is also a direct

Norah Carlin

Women

and the

Struggle

for

Socialism

Socialists want to change the world, to get rid of the rotten society we live in and build a better one based on workers' power. Feminists too want to change the world, to make women free and equal. Are the two struggles the same, or separate?

95p from SWP branch bookstalls and left bookshops, or by post (add 20p postage) from
BOOKMARKS,
 265 Seven Sisters Road,
 London N4 2DE.



Just images of male violence?

attack on the sort of tactics which could have won the strike. The police were always at their most violent on those occasions where it was absolutely crucial for the state to defeat the miners. The miners had a clear choice. They could either respond to this violence or they could give up any hope of winning the dispute.

Unfortunately the growth of right wing analysis of the strike is not confined to the LCC. The Communist Party has also been leading in this field.

In the March edition of *Marxism Today*, Pete Carter, the industrial organiser of the Communist Party, condemns mass picketing as being 'counter-productive'. As is usual with *Marxism Today* the right wing ideas come dressed up in a radical gloss. Carter claims that the strike failed because it relied on 'the actions and approach of yesteryear as models for today's struggles.' The approaches of 'yesteryear' involve old fashioned notions like mass picketing and trying to get solidarity from other workers.

In the bright new world of the Communist Party mass picketing, violence with the police, and in some cases even striking itself should be replaced. For it, as for the LCC, public opinion has been 'a crucial question' throughout the strike.

The strike lost, so its argument goes, because the case for coal wasn't presented in the correct way. The LCC says 'The NUM leadership was frequently too defensive about what kind of future industry it was fighting for.' The union's main mistake was that it has historically refused to engage in worker participation with the NCB. What on earth the LCC thinks the miners could have

gained by sitting around a table with MacGregor as he decimated the coal industry remains a mystery.

For the LCC the key struggle was not about jobs but a 'struggle of ideology' which should have sought 'by persuasion and involvement to challenge the legitimacy of Thatcher's vision of the future.'

A different approach

Such persuasion involves a totally different set of tactics from those of winning an industrial battle. In the strike the job of those who wanted to see the strike won was to argue with the active minority of miners about what was needed. If they had been strong and confident enough they would have been able to pull those miners who were sat at home along with them.

But 'public opinion' requires a different approach. It involves trying to influence people who have not been involved in the struggle on any level. It involves trying to win people whose only knowledge of the strike came from the constant barrage of lies pushed out by the media. Because of this it inevitably shifts any argument to the right.

It also ignores a major problem. If the key to winning the strike was public opinion then how do you overcome the bias of the media in reporting or ignoring strikes? There is also the obvious powerlessness of public opinion. Public opinion is against Cruise missiles and for the hospital workers getting higher wages—but it has not been successful in achieving these things. Indeed if you limit the struggle to placate 'public opinion', which is the creation of the media on a passive and

uninvolved public, then you just limit the struggle full stop. The effects which the LCC see as good in the strike, the changes in ideas amongst the miners are the results of the very actions which it would want to stop. The problem is not to prohibit struggle because it looks bad on telly but to spread the struggle so more people get involved and thereby change their ideas.

But the Communist Party and the LCC are now condemning any tactic which the miners used which wasn't popular. Violence on picket lines is especially unpopular with the majority of people, so this comes in for the hardest hammering.

It is interesting that the things which could have won the strike, the mass picketing at Orgreave for example, are just those things which are now condemned. Instead the defensive phase of the strike is lauded as the way forward for the new politics.

As the potential for victory seeped away the claims that a new sort of politics was being born in the support groups and food kitchens grew ever louder. Along with the praise went blame; for counterposed to this new 'politics of the eighties' went a firm denunciation of the traditional means of class struggle.

The food kitchens and the role of the support groups and miners wives groups were certainly crucial. Without them the strike would not have lasted. But to claim, as Pete Carter does, that this aspect of the strike took it out of being a 'narrowly class issue' is quite simply untrue.

Furthermore the importance of the food kitchens was to hold the strike together—by themselves they could not win the dispute.

For total victory to have been possible the strike would have had to have moved from the defensive back onto the offensive.

The tragedy of the strike is not that a large number of miners got involved in mass picketing and battling with the police. The

tragedy is that they didn't have the organisation to win. Today, in the aftermath of the strike, it is precisely the people who refused to provide or back such organisation who are claiming that it could have succeeded. ■
Ann Rogers and Noel Halifax



Undermining the defences

MANY OF those currently criticising the behaviour of rank and file miners during the strike were instrumental in sabotaging the strike by floating the idea of a return to work without an agreement.

Leading this move was the spokesman of the South Wales NUM, Kim Howells. Throughout the strike he has been heavily critical of mass picketing, arguing that the large confrontations at places like Orgreave actually made it more difficult to win public opinion to support the strike.

He now talks in terms of a 'victory' having been won because the strike has opened up the possibility of a new 'broad alliance' in Wales. The old trade union organisations are condemned as a 'crumbling citadel'. In their place Howells expects to see 'new and practical politics' which draws support from whole communities rather than from organised workers.

Yet the behaviour of Howells and the 'soft left' current he represented among the NUM leadership was a major factor in eroding the

strike. One miner from Yorkshire explained the effect of the argument over the return to work.

'People like Kim Howells, who began floating the idea of a return to work without an agreement, were actually sabotaging the strike.

'It was a matter of cause and effect. If the return to work argument hadn't been introduced, if we had still been maintaining the arguments about keeping things going, keeping the support up, then who knows.

'The leadership started to talk about a return to work at a time when all of the active membership were seeking to answer specific problems about keeping the strike together. In the welfare and on the picket lines people desperately wanted answers about what we were going to do with Christmas coming up.

'They were discussing holding the move back to work, maintaining picket levels, doing food collections. In short the talk

among the activists was how to keep the strike going, not how to call it off.

'From the beginning of January until the end of January the lads weren't talking about going back to work. It was under the weight of a continual barrage from the officials—talking to the lads, bringing it up in conversation, that type of thing until slowly it did gain credibility.

'All the active membership were working their arses off to maintain the strike while the leadership were closeted away and talking about giving up on the strike.

'We started to get feelers back in late November. We heard that the Area Council had actually sat down and discussed what an organised return to work would entail. They started the process. Then it became like a trickle of drops of acid which eventually began to erode the dispute itself.

'This was in Yorkshire. But we know the same thing was going on in Easington, South Wales and the rest.

'All of a sudden the idea started to become more generalised. Local branch officials began saying 'well if all else fails we could go back to work without an agreement.'

'The Area leaderships exercised a tight degree of control on the local branch leadership. They knew that this was the way that they could control the rank and file. We'd seen it throughout the strike. And they used this tight control to begin to spread the idea of returning to work.

'They decided that they wanted an end to the dispute. The argument was very well-coordinated. Each branch you went to no matter which branch officials you saw, they were all singing the same song—parrot fashion.

'The leadership maintained a continual barrage from the middle of January until the end of the strike.

'The drops of acid were going down on the membership's heads throughout the coalfields. The idea began to gain ground.

'I heard stories about Shirebrook. They were being offered a total amnesty on the quiet once the return to work was underway.

'The general picture shows that there were some dirty agreements stitched up between the lower echelons of the NUM leadership and the NCB.

'Then Kim Howells comes on the television and starts talking about it. Presumably the reason behind that was if it didn't come off only one person would be committing political suicide. He got an official reprimand but they ended up getting what they wanted. He was the front man for it. He goes on the television and stimulates the argument. Then the press latch onto it.

'Then it became a runaway. It became impossible to talk about it sensibly because of the barrage that was coming down. And in some areas it was gaining credence because the return to work was gaining pace. But it was largely their actions which had led to the situation. Because they carried on all the time about the return to work it became increasingly difficult for us to talk about holding the strike together.' ■

A new book from Socialist Worker

THE GREAT STRIKE THE MINERS' STRIKE OF 1984-5 AND ITS LESSONS

£3.95 or £3.00 to readers of Socialist Worker

Order from your Socialist Worker seller, or from your branch bookstall



DAILY Mirror

The voice of Kinnock

THE *Daily Mirror* appears to be very different from the rest of Fleet Street. Whereas the Tory press openly engages in class war, the *Mirror* preaches class collaboration. Both sides of industry have to work together for the common good of the whole nation. This requires moderate employers, moderate unions...and of course a moderate Labour government led by moderate Neil Kinnock.

The challenge to this anaemic brand of reformism comes not just from Thatcher and the Tories, but even more so from any whiff of class struggle. So despite the *Mirror* being a paper read by many miners, it never supported their strike. A victory for the miners was seen to be as much of a problem for the next Labour government as it would be for the present Tory one.

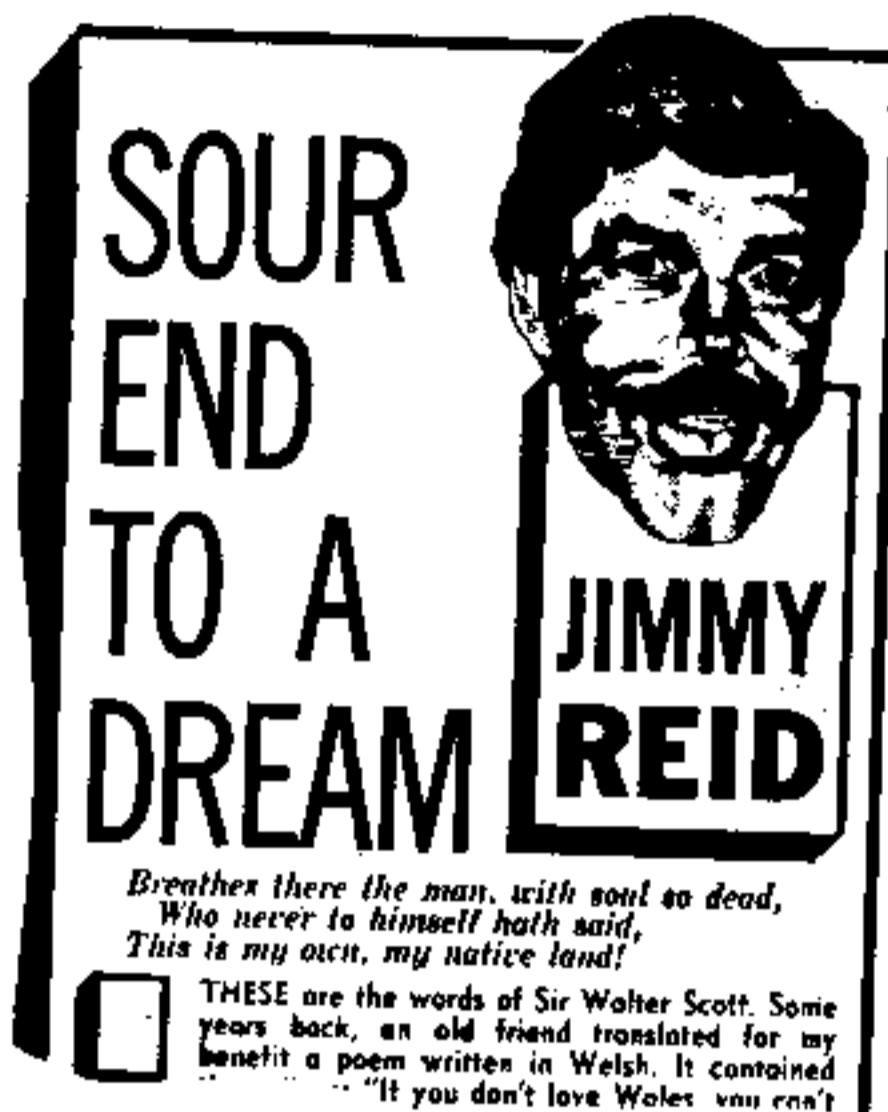
This approach to the miners was not new. The *Mirror* has played an important part in hammering the left in both the unions and the Labour Party. Attacks on Scargill have long been commonplace. Benn and the Labour left, and the Militant tendency, have all been denounced for standing in the way of Labour's hopes of affecting national reconciliation and revival. The viciousness of these attacks has often equalled anything in the Tory press.

One of the saddest developments in the *Mirror* is the transformation of Keith Waterhouse's regular column from humorous nostalgia into sour embittered reaction. Only recently, he pilloried the 'do-gooding' Child Poverty Action Group and championed the virtues of child labour (it never did him any harm). Then in the week of the miners' return to work he poured scorn on the 'Timothies', the middle class members of the miners' support groups.

The article is one long poisonous sneer at these do-gooders with their 'messianic beards and glinting spectacles and jeans'. They are obviously members of the 'caring professions—teachers, social workers, something of that kind' standing on street corners, shaking plastic buckets and 'parroting the latest Scargillism'. The Timothies were 'a kind of platonic Lady Chatterley infatuated with the proletarian virility of the striking miners'.

This crap tells us considerably more about Waterhouse than it does about the thousands of men and women who did their best to help sustain the miners in their struggle. Waterhouse cherishes a mythical past when the poor were happy and content with their lot. Now that he is a man of some wealth, he is obviously increasingly worried that this might no longer be the case and he blames the situation on teachers, social workers and other such leftie do-gooders.

More recently, the *Mirror* has acquired its own resident renegade Jimmy Reid. He



now has a regular Saturday column, 'Punchy, Powerful, Provocative', in which he can bluster at the left. His column for the week ending Saturday 16 March was a classic of its kind. What was there for him to write about? The fight for the hundreds of victimised miners, the scandal of Special Branch surveillance of union activists, the teachers' dispute. Of course not.

Trot rot

Instead we were treated to a 'Dose of the Trots', a knockabout attack on Trotskyism that clearly shows that all his years in the Communist Party were not wasted. Reid might not be 'powerful' or 'provocative', but he is certainly 'punchy'. 'Trots' has a certain ring about it. 'Sounds almost like a bacterial infection a bug picked up while holidaying abroad' Trots are 'a humourless lot, and kind of screwy', they 'cut no ice in a genuine working class environment', but are 'more at home among middle class pseudo-intellectuals'—presumably the sort of people he writes for in the *Spectator*.

Then there are the university Trots and 'sprinklings among the writers' and lastly 'the children of the foreign rich' from places like Pakistan. Fortunately, according to Reid, these phonies have had their day in the Labour Party which is at last coming to its senses 'and not before time'. Hatchet jobs like this clearly show that Reid sees himself as Neil Kinnock's mouthpiece.

While the Tory press celebrated the defeat of the miners' strike, the *Daily Mirror* proclaimed on its front page that there had been 'NO VICTORY', that no one had won the great strike and that the whole nation had lost. The strike was 'the last battle of the dinosaurs', a futile confrontation between Arthur Scargill, 'a revolutionary marxist' determined to vanquish the government, even if it meant

maximum damage to the nation's economy on the one hand, and Ian MacGregor, 'an ageing American tycoon, put in to smash the National Union of Mineworkers' on the other.

In the words of Geoffrey Goodman, the *Mirror* Group Industrial Editor, 'Thatcherism and Scargillism are the two sides of the same penny'. Instead the *Mirror* wanted a compromise, an amicable settlement that would strengthen the forces of moderation. Scargill, Thatcher, MacGregor were all equally at fault for plunging the nation into an unnecessary and outdated class war, while Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis were championed as the voices of reason and common sense.

The extremists, the *Mirror* argues, have to be replaced by people who recognise the need for us all to pull together in the national interest. The injustices and wrongs of British society which the *Mirror* recognises as a real problem, unlike the Tory press, will not be remedied by conflict and confrontation, but by reasoned moderate argument and the use of the ballot box.

Politically the *Mirror* is the voice of Neil Kinnock, the voice of the Labour leadership, by courtesy of Robert Maxwell. And its highest symbol of national unity is, increasingly, the Royal family. The Queen, Princess Di and everyone's favourite granny represent the need for a natural order of things.

Alongside the likes of Waterhouse and Reid, the *Mirror* carries stories and features that expose the injustices and inequalities of British society. Throughout the miners' strike, while the paper maintained a stance of consistent hostility to Scargillism, to mass picketing and to solidarity action, it also carried articles sympathetic to the plight of mining communities, by John Pilger for example, and of course, Paul Foot's marvellous Thursday column, the only place in Fleet Street where the miners received wholehearted consistent and effective support. How can we explain this apparent contradiction?

The *Mirror* tries to articulate the fears, grievances and hopes of its readership. This necessarily involves covering the issues that concern them: unemployment, education cuts, health service cuts, attacks on the trade unions, as well as the thousands upon thousands of petty injustices and tyrannies that plague working people's everyday lives.

The paper covers all these questions (although less regularly than it did before the Maxwell takeover) and then offers readers the prospect of the election of a moderate Labour government, righting wrongs, remedying grievances and restoring national unity. Its message is likely to find an increasing audience. ■
John Newsinger

Rise of the National Front

IN THE elections to the European parliament in June 1984 the Front National, the extreme right-wing party of Jean-Marie Le Pen, polled two million votes.

This represented 11 percent nationally, with scores of 20 percent in Marseilles, 17 percent in St Etienne and a number of other cities. In the recent local department elections (cantonales), despite standing in only three quarters of the constituencies and in an election which favours the dignitaries of the well established parties, the Front National polled 8 percent with up to 25 and 30 percent in some areas.

The sudden rise in popularity of the FN, and in particular of its leader Le Pen, has shocked many on the left. In the 1981 presidential elections Le Pen failed to gain enough signatories to even present a candidate. In the parliamentary elections that followed he had a national score of 0.5 percent. As recently as the local council elections of 1983 nationally the score was 0.11 percent. Now however, with 12 and 17 percent in certain key areas, these elections mark their spectacular arrival on the political scene.

What does Le Pen actually represent and why has he been able to achieve such success?

It is clear from his own past history that Le Pen is an extremely nasty piece of work. In 1962 it was revealed that Lieutenant Le Pen, volunteer in the French army during the Algerian war of independence, had taken a direct part in the torturing of Algerian resistance fighters. This was never denied by Le Pen until recently when detailed declarations by six of his victims were published in the French national press.

At the end of the fifties Le Pen was already a member of parliament as a representative of the right-wing populist movement of Pierre Poujade. It wasn't until 1972 that he re-emerged as leader of the newly formed FN, which united the various fascist groupings which came out of the end of the sixties.

Since then Le Pen's strategy has been one of electoral respectability, which has finally paid off. Le Pen himself has managed to steer clear of the electorally compromising, openly pro-Nazi statements of the Tyndalls and Websters in Britain.

But the reactions of activists and sympathisers at his meetings and the declarations of the various associations and fascist rags that gravitate towards Le Pen and his rallies leave no doubt what he's up to.

Anti immigration

The FN 'programme' is a recipe of three ingredients—law and order, anti immigrants, anti reds. Although there are various currents which promote anti-semitism, Catholic orthodoxy or royalism, it is the anti-immigration theme which unites the whole of the far right. It is often linked to the question of law and order. They argue that all burglaries, muggings and murders are the work of immigrants and in particular of Arabs.

Also one of the most widely seen of the FN posters has the slogan 'Two million unemployed, two million immigrants too many'. The respectability that the FN's election results have given to these ideas is already beginning to have a dramatic result. Racist remarks are more readily made at work than a year or two ago. In the past six months there have been three cold blooded murders of immigrants where the murderers, unrepentant, in each case calmly justified their actions by the remark, 'I did it because I don't like Arabs.'

Clearly, the two million who voted for the FN in the European election are not all about to take to the streets with shotguns, but it is necessary to understand what this massive shift to the right means and why it has happened. The material basis for Le Pen's ability to attract votes has been the development of the economic crisis in France. Although not as deep as in Britain, unemployment nevertheless is now at over two million with a large number of sackings recently in key industries, and with plans for

more to come.

More importantly, however, the experience of a left-wing government carrying out right-wing policies—sackings, cuts, wage freezes—has led to the demoralisation of whole sections of the left. This has been all the worse since, after 20 years of the right in government, considerable hope had been placed in the Socialist Party/Communist Party coalition.

Furthermore, the downturn in struggle which had already begun towards the end of the seventies has only deepened since the years of Mitterrand government. The subsequent lack of confidence amongst militants to fight back collectively against the austerity measures has left a vacuum which has been filled by the simple solutions of Le Pen.

The right wing parties have, in their attempt to outbid Le Pen, given a certain amount of respectability to the FN's racism. The Socialist Party and the Communist Party have also both made dangerous concessions. SP and CP local councils have continued their policy of restricting the access of immigrants to council flats ('to avoid inevitable confrontation'). The worst example of this was the famous incident a few years ago when African immigrants were physically expelled from a Communist council controlled hostel.

As was to be expected, the so-called 'tightening up' on law and order and immigration control has not led to appeasement of the right wing parties but has only led them to call for even harsher measures. It has generally made racist ideas more acceptable.

This has been a familiar scenario on a whole series of issues. Concessions to right wing pressure on private education only led to a stepping up of the right's demands, resulting in total capitulation by the left.

Disappointment with the government has led some traditional left wing voters to switch to Le Pen. But it seems that the movement is one of a general shifting to the right—CP to SP, SP to Giscard, Giscardians to Chirac, and Chirac to FN—plus a strong vote for the FN in areas where 'pieds noirs' settled after the Algerian war.

Until now the FN's ability to profit from four years of left government has been reflected essentially in electoral terms. This is in line with Le Pen's present strategy of establishing the FN as a parliamentary party of the hard right.

For the moment, the French ruling class has no need for such a party and is unlikely to lend its support to such an operation. However, as the FN establishes itself there will inevitably be tensions between those in favour of presenting a respectable image and the hard core of fascists who will be looking more and more to translating the speeches about immigrants into racist pogroms.

For the moment, however, this seems to be the work of isolated individuals. In terms of organisation on the ground the FN has not

OUT NOW!

INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISM ★ 26



Atlanta—capital of Georgia, central point of growth as the American boom moves to the south and west. The boom is analysed by Pete Green's article, 'Contradictions of the American boom'.

Colin Sparks: Labour and imperialism
★ Chris Bambery: Marx and Engels and the unions ★ Sue Cockerill: The municipal road to socialism ★ Norah Carlin: Is the family part of the superstructure? ★ Kieran Allen: James Connolly and the 1916 rebellion

£1.50 from your local *Socialist Worker* bookstall, or (plus 25p post) from IS Journal, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4

Make cheque/bank draft payable to Bookmarks



Le Pen (circled) pictured on a fascist demonstration 1983

been able to translate its electoral support into an ability to lead mass demonstrations.

The signs are, though, that over the past year they have used their election campaigns to establish an apparatus in nearly every area of France. In the south of France in particular it has been reported that whole sections of Chirac's supporters have joined the FN en bloc (a hundred at a time). A stepping up of their paper selling on demonstrations shows that, whatever the truth in reports of mass recruitment, there is no doubt that Le Pen poses an ever growing threat which the left can in no way afford to underestimate.

Unfortunately this is just what whole sections of the left seem to be doing. The Socialist Party have come out with a certain amount of (empty) anti-racist rhetoric. But at least certain sections of the leadership seem to have been quite happy to see the rise of the FN as an embarrassment to the right.

Indeed the present talk of introducing a system of proportional representation can be seen as an attempt by Mitterrand to break with the system of united candidates of the left versus the right. It could open up the possibility of a coalition of the centre of the SP and the Giscardians, against the extremes of the CP on the left and the Chirac/FN current on the right.

The Communist Party, despite having left the government last summer, has been relatively inactive over the question of the FN. This is partly due to a certain paralysis. There has been a drop in activity, a reduced and demoralised membership and a mood of crisis in the party as a result of the virtual halving of their vote over the past few years.

over the past few years.

It is also partly due to the ambiguous position the CP has on immigration. On the one hand it looks to its electorate and so can share the prejudices of the average person in the street. On the other hand it needs to satisfy the generally anti-racist membership, particularly in the unions.

The revolutionary left

As for the revolutionary left, the two major organisations, Lutte Ouvrière and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, have contrasting approaches. LO's attitude has been scandalously abstentionist. Their utterly purist and abstract interpretation of centring activity on the workplace has led them to absent themselves from every mobilisation of anti-racists over the last two years.

The LCR local branches, particularly in provincial towns, have been active in anti-fascist and Le Pen 'reception committees'. Unfortunately there has been a tendency to emphasise calls on the leaderships of local organisations for united action rather than combining this with unity round local concrete activities.

In terms of national organisation and activity in Paris, anti-racist work has been far from a priority. The most recent discovery of the LCR has been the idea of creating a broad party to the left of the left (ie to the left of the SP and CP), around a programme of measures which would 'lead the way out of the crisis'. The high point of this campaign is to put forward united candidates at the general election in March 1986.

Preparations for the elections are now well under way—over a year before they are to take place!

At the same time as Le Pen has been making the running in the news during the recent elections, the LCR has been campaigning in the railway stations, in the markets and in the workplaces around a petition calling on the government to introduce an entirely proportional representation for the 1986 elections!

Meanwhile, Le Pen posters continue to cover the walls of Paris and, if the worst is to be feared, the rest of France.

In December 1983 and 1984 second generation immigrants organised marches across France culminating in large anti-racist demonstrations. Last December's demo only had 30,000 compared to 60,000 in 1983. This was mainly due to a boycott by the SP and CP, and the media.

The overwhelmingly young demonstrators (mainly secondary school students) who took part in the demo have managed to maintain an organisation—'SOS Racisme'—which to date has sold over 300,000 badges with the slogan 'Touche pas à mon pote' ('Don't touch my mate').

It is to be hoped that either from this organisation or from the activity of various anti-racist groups there will emerge the broad anti-racist organisation desperately needed and which thousands are looking for in France today. A firm commitment by revolutionaries to the building on the ground of such a movement could certainly be a decisive factor. ■

Jean Dalier

The right to control

THE UNBORN Children (Protection) Bill won the overwhelming support of MPs when they gave it a second reading on 15 February 1985.

Promoted by Enoch Powell, and with his adept handling of the parliamentary process, this bill could easily become law before the summer.

At first glance it may not appear to be a great attack on women's rights. But it is.

In the short explanation which accompanies the bill, it says: 'The provisions of the bill do not involve any issue concerning abortion, surrogacy or legitimacy.' So why is it called the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill?—strangely similar to the title of the first Act to outlaw abortion, the Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1926. Why isn't it called the Human Embryo Research (Restriction) Bill? That's what it is supposed to be about.

During the debate Enoch Powell was very careful to confine himself to the immediate provisions of the bill and spoke only of his repugnance and revulsion when he read about human embryo research in the Warnock Report. But others were not so circumspect.

Immediately before the debate took place a series of petitions were presented to parliament, the first by Roger Freeman, MP for Kettering. He said:

'The newly fertilised human embryo is a real, living individual human being. The petitioners oppose *all* [my emphasis] practices that discriminate against the embryo or violate his/her human dignity and right to life.'

Norman St John-Stevas explained that two million signatures had been collected in just two months on this issue—the largest number since the Chartist petitions of the 1830s.

Other petitions came from Jill Knight (Birmingham Edgbaston) and Harry Greenaway (Ealing North)—both notoriously right-wing MPs. Many of the petitions had been collected by anti-abortion Life groups and vicars. 'My constituents who signed these petitions take the strong view, which I share,' said Harry Greenaway, 'that life begins at conception and that all life is made in the image of God.'

Anti-abortion

So the parameters of the debate were set in advance and the title of the bill was made clear. This was not a debate about the rights and wrongs of scientific research but about when life begins, the sanctity of human life. One MP after another got up to expound their moralistic views.

This is the danger of this bill. Not what it says, but what it doesn't say. If passed, it will strengthen the hand of the anti-abortion lobby, and with them the anti-contraception brigade, the anti-sex education moralists and every shade of anti-woman conservatism.

For anyone not convinced of the optimism

of the anti-abortion lobby over this bill, listen to Dale Campbell-Savours (Workington) in the debate:

'During the considerations of the Warnock committee there was much discussion about where life begins. That is a good question. But Warnock refused to define both when life begins and the position of the embryo at its inception... Perhaps it recognised that if it had defined when life begins it would have put the arguments about abortion on a different plane and would have brought the law on abortion into the area of absurdity. The whole life lobby interested in the further restrictions on abortion in the United Kingdom would have turned its argument on Warnock's findings.'

Enoch Powell is doing what Warnock declined to do. Even if the bill doesn't clearly define life starting at conception, that is its meaning.

On a free vote, 238 MPs voted for the bill and just 66 against, and this on a Friday afternoon when there are usually no more than a handful of MPs in the House.

What is at stake? The 1967 Abortion Act was introduced on the high tide of the post-war economic boom and the welter of progressive legislation that accompanied it through the late sixties and early seventies: abolition of capital punishment, divorce law reform, changes in the laws on drug use and homosexuality.

The mood was with the pro-abortion lobby. The horror of backstreet abortions was too much of a reality for anyone to ignore. The figures were put anywhere between 15,000 and 100,000 a year. A few, very few, abortions could be carried out legally. Those with the most money got the best treatment in the posh private clinics of Harley Street.

Many of the MPs who voted for the 1967 Act were staggered by what happened in the next few years. The numbers of legal abortions grew and grew. Women who had previously been terrified of the backstreet abortionist and reluctantly accepted an unwanted pregnancy or gave birth only to have the child adopted, now found themselves within the law and made use of it.

The gross underestimation of the actual numbers of illegal abortions backfired. No extra provision was made and the National Health Service couldn't cope. The private sector stepped in.

It was like manna from heaven for the anti-abortionists, and their propaganda machine went into full swing. London was dubbed the abortion capital of the world as women from Europe's Catholic countries travelled to Britain. Aborted foetuses were being turned into soap, screamed one book—*Babies for Burning*. It turned out to be a total fabrication by its authors, but not before it had been hawked around every TV channel, national newspaper and parliamen-

tary debate.

In 1975 James White, Labour MP for Glasgow Pollock, introduced an amending bill. The central argument was that the 1967 Act had in fact allowed abortion on demand—something that had never been the intention of its original supporters. The law must be tightened up and the abuses stamped out.

Abortion on demand never existed, and it doesn't exist now, although it is something we should support. Ultimately it is a woman's right to have control over her own body, without interference from doctors, lawyers or MPs.

Neither James White's bill, nor those that followed in 1977 from William Benyon and in 1979 from John Corrie, made it through the parliamentary process. The anti-abortion lobby was beaten off.

In a sense they had moved too soon. The progressive legislation started in the sixties had carried on into the seventies—free contraception on the NHS became available for all women in 1973, and the abortion figures began to level off. The following year the DHSS issued its now famous guidelines to doctors about prescribing contraception for girls under 16.

Last time round

The Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act both became law in 1976. The number of women going out to work was still on the increase. The post-war boom may have ended and the downturn with which we are so familiar today was well in its stride (even if we didn't yet fully realise it) but women's expectations were still on the up.

The highly successful campaign against these anti-abortion bills that was organised by the National Abortion Campaign (formed in response to the publication of James White's bill and participated in from the start by the SWP) was a measure of the confidence that many young women workers felt in those years.

Even the TUC responded to the mood—or was driven to make a commitment which it couldn't wriggle out of—and held a demonstration in support of women's abortion rights. Held in London in October 1979 it attracted thousands of women and men from branches of almost every union around the country.

It was a great achievement, and the end of an era, all in one. Thatcher was in, the economic decline of the seventies was plain for all to see. The sex-haters now found comfort in Thatcher's new moral world, with the family firmly established at the centre. The progressive sixties had become the moralistic eighties.

The anti-abortionists, anti-women's rights campaigners had also learnt. The frontal

attack didn't work. Now the onslaught is piecemeal. You can't stop sex education, so you pressure the Family Planning Association to withdraw its support for *Make it Happy* and get bookshops to ban this and other books on sex for teenagers. You can't stop freely available contraception, but you can ban it for under sixteens, as Victoria Gillick has managed to do. The Powell Bill is another side swipe.

There is more to come. Just four days before the second reading of the Powell Bill, there was a debate on abortion in the House of Commons.

Edward Leigh, MP for Gainsborough and Horncastle, had tabled a motion expressing concern about the number of late abortions, and calling upon the government 'to pay attention to the moral and ethical questions raised by abortion'.

Leigh pursued three arguments: against late abortions—those after 20 weeks; against therapeutic abortions—carried out under Section 2 of the Act, the 'social' clauses, and the private clinics—meaning those run by the charities, not the Harley Street variety.

He tied all this up into a neat little argument: the majority of late abortions are done under Section 2 and are carried out privately, not on the NHS. Here is another abuse, it must be stopped.

The facts are that in 1983, the last year for which full figures are available, there were 127,375 abortions, of which 1.38 percent were 'late' (after 20 weeks)—that's 1,757. Of these, claim the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in a recently published report, 20 percent were actually referred *before* the 20th week.

That is a measure of the extent to which the NHS can't cope. It also explains why so many late abortions take place in private clinics—there is no other chance of these women getting an abortion.

Tory values

Kenneth Clark, Minister for Health—who supports the 1967 Act—promised in this debate that the government would pay attention to a new report on foetal viability, about to be published by the Royal College, which could recommend a cut in the legal limit from 28 weeks to 24 or even 20 weeks. Such a move would be a real blow to women's abortion rights.

We hear a lot from Mrs Thatcher and Tory politicians (and some Labour ones, too) about the importance of the family—the family and nation as one, the family as the crucial teacher of moral behaviour, the family as carer for the sick and old, the young unemployed and anyone else who can be dumped into its bosom.

We hear a lot from Tory politicians about moral standards—ours, not theirs. They have little conscience about their own double standards.

All these issues present us with some difficulties. There are many socialists, many women who, for good reasons of their own, are simply against abortion. The notion of supporting abortion on demand to the moment of birth definitely raises eyebrows. Some are against surrogate motherhood because it exploits women in some way that

seems far worse than the exploitation of the production line.

The argument for us is surely a simple one. You may not like abortion or surrogacy, but ultimately every woman has the right to control her own body, without interference from experts or pressure from others because of their beliefs.

What the bill means

POWELL'S bill is a new and serious threat to women's rights. It threatens our right to choose whether or not to have children.

The bill is about in vitro fertilisation (IVF)—or, in ordinary language, test tube babies. Powell wants to put restrictions upon the way women can use this method to become pregnant and upon embryo research in general.

In introducing the bill for a second reading, Powell said:

'The bill has a single and simple purpose. It is to render it unlawful for a human embryo created by in vitro fertilisation to be used as a subject of experiment or indeed for any other purpose except to enable a woman to bear a child.'

The bill gives the embryo rights in law—something which has only ever been common under fascism. This has serious implications for abortion. It could even pave the way for outlawing forms of contraception like the coil, because they interfere with implantation of a fertilised egg.

If the bill goes through, women who want to try in vitro fertilisation will have to apply to the secretary of state for permission. They will then only be allowed four months—with the option of a two-month extension—to become pregnant. Yet on average it currently takes 14 months for a woman to conceive using this technique.

Doctors involved in IVF will be liable for a prison sentence of two years for not implanting in the womb any fertilised egg cell developed in a test tube.

They will be faced with the choice of developing only one embryo—in which case there is such a small chance of success that the treatment becomes pointless—or of implanting a relatively large number of embryos which would take the technique back years, to the days of multiple births.

Even if a test tube embryo showed signs of deformity a doctor would have no legal option but to implant it.

If IVF techniques are restricted in this way doctors will have little chance to further their understanding of infertility and the causes of miscarriage—or to pursue research into new forms of contraception.

In vitro fertilisation is a new technique which needs to be improved if it is to be of real value to women. Studies are currently under way which look at the best culture for the egg to be fertilised and begin development in, before transfer to the womb.

Other research is looking at the development of fertilised eggs in the early stages to see

It is this idea—of women's independence—which is so abhorrent to the vast majority of MPs, judges, the police, the Church, to Thatcher and her government. It flies in the face of everything they stand for—a ruling class with power and authority and a submissive working class. ■

Margaret Renn

which ones stop developing and why. If this can be identified, then only those eggs which seem more certain to develop would be implanted—leading to a better success rate.

Other studies are exploring ways of improving storage conditions between the time the egg is fertilised and when it is implanted. It has been found that if an egg is not implanted immediately the success rate for a pregnancy developing improves.

A block on research

One possible storage method is to 'freeze' the embryo in liquid nitrogen. Just this month a Manchester woman gave birth to a baby boy as a result of this technique.

The process involved five embryos. Three were implanted in the woman's womb—but none survived. Two more were grown in a culture for five days then placed in liquid nitrogen. Three months later they were thawed out and cultured again for 12 hours.

One embryo survived to become the first successful birth from this technique for Robert Edwards and Patrick Steptoe, doctors at Bourne Hall clinic in Cambridge, the key UK centre for reproductive technology.

But the technique has already produced results elsewhere. At least seven 'frozen' babies have been born in Australia.

Under Powell's bill, research like that going on at Bourne Hall would be stopped. And research that involves growing egg cells in a test tube to find a clue to inherited disorders like haemophilia would be outlawed as well.

When the bill gained a massive 172-strong majority at its second reading in February, of the Labour MPs who bothered to turn up, 44 voted in favour and 41 against.

What we need to remember is that on those three previous occasions when abortion was under threat, women—and men—mobilised swiftly against the attack. The arguments were taken up at work, on the estates and in the shopping centres, and throughout the trade union movement.

We have less than a month in which to mobilise against the Powell bill, and the arguments are more complicated because it is not so obviously a move against abortion.

The National Abortion Campaign has called a demonstration for 27 April. Every socialist should be there. ■

Jane Ure Smith

The demonstration against the Powell Bill assembles at 1pm Lincoln's Inn Fields WC2 on Saturday the 27th April

The crunch is coming

THERE ARE big battles ahead for the print unions. They have been looming ever since December 1983, when a major victory was scored over the skilled printers' union, the NGA—one of the most powerful unions in the country.

Then Eddie Shah, owner of the *Stockport Messenger*, employed non-union labour to work on new technology. Using the Tories' anti-union laws, and after a major sell-out by the TUC, he forced the union to back down over the issue.

The victory showed how easy it was for employers to by-pass the unions with new technology. And it showed the NGA in particular that unless it made compromises it could easily be carved out of important sections of the provincial press.

The immediate danger for the NGA is in the composing room of newspapers. New technology will mean copy need only be written once. Typesetting instructions, traditionally added when copy is re-set by compositors, can now be keyed in with the original copy.

New equipment now beginning to be used extensively in the United States will also allow for full page make-up on VDUs. This process will not only by-pass the compositors, but also those employed in laying a page out.

Moreover, because the new equipment calls for new skills, cowboy employers like Shah can turn round and say the unions have no automatic right to organise those who work on it.

Other employers introducing new technology have used the opportunity to widen the gulf that has always, in one way or another, existed between the NGA and the journalists' union, the NUJ.

Last December the Portsmouth and Sunderland News Group signed a deal with Tony Dubbins, general secretary of the NGA, which allowed for the retraining of three former compositors and their transfer into the editorial department—an area traditionally organised by the NUJ.

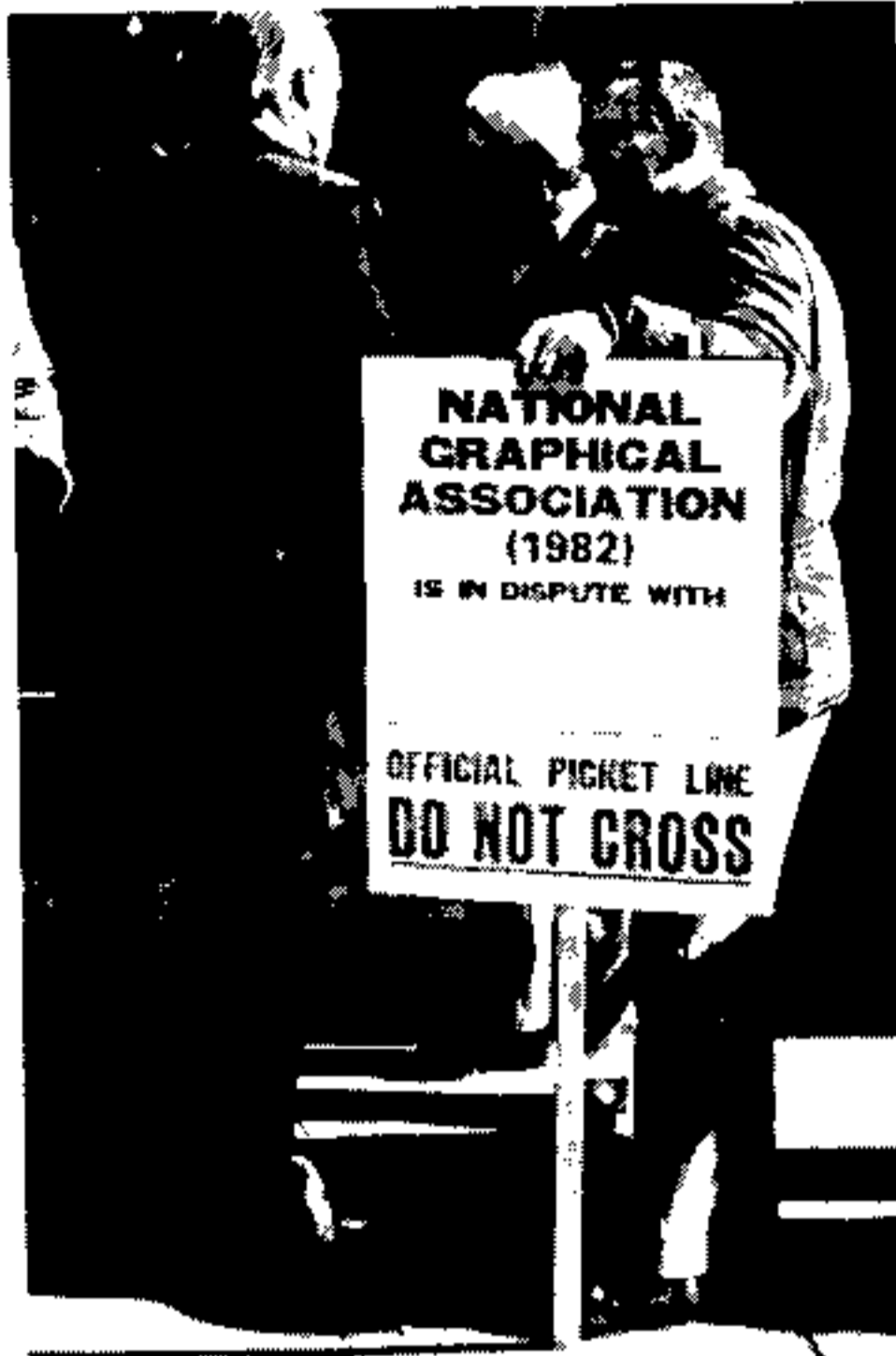
The NUJ wasn't even told the deal was being negotiated and refused to cooperate with it.

They argued that, while they were not against members of other unions being transferred, they could not accept the NGA representing them.

After six weeks of non-cooperation the company finally sacked 74 journalists at *The News* in Portsmouth. By the beginning of February the union had pulled its members out on all 26 of the companies other newspapers.

This action could not stop the newspapers being printed, however. Despite a good deal of sympathy from many compositors, particularly at *The Echo* in Sunderland, the NGA ordered its members to cross the NUJ's picket lines.

Since then the union and the company have been negotiating, under the auspices of



NGA under threat

ACAS, a compromise deal which, while not preventing the NGA retaining negotiating rights over its members in editorial, will allow the NUJ to set the limits to those rights.

More important, however, is the damage the original deal did to already sour relations between the leaderships of the two unions.

It hardened the attitude of the NUJ to the degree that, when the West Midlands News Group recently suspended 160 NGA members for refusing to cooperate with new technology at the *Wolverhampton Express and Star* journalists didn't only cross the picket lines. They also agreed, at the beginning of March, a deal with management which effectively allowed for immediate direct inputting—by-passing the composing room completely!

So shocking was this act that the NGA demanded the expulsion of the NUJ from the TUC, and picketed the NUJ headquarters in London in protest.

Inter union danger

The danger of an inter-union battle over the few jobs remaining after new technology has decimated the industry had finally come out into the open. The TUC quickly got the two leaderships together, and got them to agree to a series of talks to try and resolve their differences.

Both the Portsmouth and the Wolverhampton deals have now been suspended while these talks go ahead. But this doesn't mean the danger of a major battle has receded.

At the recent annual delegate conference of the NUJ a motion was passed which instructed the leadership to go ahead with

new technology deals, without approval from the NGA, if the talks break down.

And the talks could easily do just that. The row between the two unions has brought to the fore all the old craftist notions that members have in both unions. The horrible elitism of many journalists, and their contempt for the printers, have been given a boost.

And the printers' historical mistrust for the journalists has, once again, been confirmed.

Moreover, there is still a fundamental difference of approach to new technology between the leaders of the two unions. The NGA say new technology alters their work, and that their insistence on transfers into other departments directly flows from their claim to be 'following the job'.

The NUJ say new technology absorbs the work of the NGA, and that while they will support the NGA battle to save jobs, they will not countenance the NGA gaining a foothold in areas traditionally organised by them.

All these rows are, of course, music to management's ears. While the unions fall out the opportunity to shed labour, and to begin considering the possibility of employing non-union labour to operate new technology, gets closer.

At present various managements are observing the implications of the deals so far carried out. Many will want to sign deals with the NUJ mainly because the union does not operate a closed shop. The possibility of bringing in non-union labour is greater.

But these same managements are also afraid of the power the NGA has in the machine rooms of the industry. The NGA has the power to bring the presses to a halt. If it decides to do that, and confront the barrage of attacks from the courts that would undoubtedly follow, managements would certainly think twice about loving up to the NUJ.

Unfortunately the unions are not only facing severe problems in the provincial press. National newspaper proprietors have been itching to take on the unions in Fleet Street for years. With the Tories' anti-union legislation in one hand, and new technology in the other, the time could be close when this could happen.

The Fleet Street papers will, by next year, be facing competition from Eddie Shah's national daily. He plans to use the latest equipment to print a full colour newspaper, using a fraction of the workforce presently employed by the Fleet Street nationals.

Moreover three newspaper proprietors are building new printing plants, and installing the latest labour saving equipment. Murdoch's plant in London's docklands is ready for operation.

A recent dispute at two of his newspapers—*The Sun* and the *News of the World*—could sound the beginnings of an all-out offensive against the unions after two years of softening them up.

Such an offensive could also involve managements following the provincial press in driving wedges between the NUJ and the NGA. And they could easily touch off a battle over manning levels in the machine rooms between the NGA and the third major print union, SOGAT 82■

Alan Gibson

Thinking
it over...

Mexico diary

THE state of Chihuahua runs along the northern border with the United States. It is large—slightly bigger than Britain. It has been dominated for nearly a century by the Terrazas-Creels and an oligarchy of nineteen other families.

They always worked closely with interests over the border in Arizona and Texas. The revolution (1910 to 1920) expropriated most of the land. The great revolutionary general, Pancho Villa, distributed the land among his generals. But the families kept and expanded the rest of the economy.

In 1982, the last government of Mexico (that of President Lopez Portillo) nationalised the banks, and their private industrial holdings. He did it, in order to back the banks' overseas debts with the credits of the federal government, and he hoped, stop the flight of capital from Mexico. But private business was appalled.

The leading representative of business has been stomping the country since then 'in defence of liberty' and against 'the anarchy of the state'. The 46th Congress of the employers' federation has just ended, with a resounding call for a rollback of the public sector and the subordination of state enterprises to 'the rule of law' (meaning the market).

It is odd because successive governments have done business a lot of favours. And Mexico has become a major industrial power. Also the President has announced that state corporations will be subject to profit and loss calculations, and loss making units will be closed.

One party state

In Chihuahua—like the neighbouring northern states of Sonora and Nuevo Leon—the opposition has taken a more overt political form. In the municipal elections of 1983, 15 of Chihuahua's leading families came out publicly in support of the right wing opposition party, PAN (the National Action Party).

Mexico is a one party state. The PRI—the Party of Institutionalised Revolution—is slightly less reactionary than the Russian Communist Party, but not much. It beheaded what was left of the great peasant revolution of 1910, and fashioned by brute force a new ruling class for the country. It cannot be overthrown—short of civil war. Nonetheless, the cadres were alarmed in 1983.

Only by the most gross fraud and corruption could the books be cooked to ensure the PRI held the north.

The opposition parties were furious. There were sporadic riots and demonstrations in many towns, and particularly Coahuila. In Piedras Negras, the police opened fire—two were killed and forty-two injured before the PAN militants were driven over the border at Eagle Pass. The army was moved in to take over the city. Elsewhere, town halls were burned, cars sacked, and in one place a police chief stoned to death.

There were calls for a legal ban on PAN and the employers' federation. The Church was denounced—and all three accused of being in the pay of the US Republican Party. New president De la Madrid accused the conspiracy of treason—'There are still people outside Mexico and some inside who think Mexico does not deserve to be independent and would like to see us under the domination of a foreign power.'

In March, there was an unseemly scramble for nominations of the PRI candidates for the elections to the Assembly and for seven state governorships in July. The Assembly is a tame body that meets for four months per year only and is overwhelmingly dominated by the PRI. The PRI election campaign began in January and the walls are already covered with giant, if vacuous slogans:

'Each time we are more responsible'

'Our commitment is to Mexico alone'

'55 years of social peace'

Ministers are already touring the country, bombasting dutifully dragooned crowds. The majority stand silently and watch, as always bemused, by the fantasies of their rulers.

If the alliance of PAN and the northern ruling classes is beginning to shake the confidence of PRI, the alliance of the socialist parties and the urban working class in the south is regrettably much less developed.

The leading party, the PSUM (the Unified Mexican Socialist Party), a Euro-Communist coalition of parties dominated by the old Mexican Communist Party, has a following, but like most of the other leftist parties, it is mainly among the intelligentsia.

The PRT, the most important section of the Fourth International, is a public competitor and has just nominated its slate of candidates, headed by the redoubtable woman trade union leader, Rosario Ibarra.

The trade unions are overwhelmingly dominated by the official PRI unions, led by the famous Fidel Velasquez, now in his eighties.

Velasquez, on the point of retirement, has done more service lately for Mexico's ruling order than probably in the rest of his long life. He and his lieutenants have loyally patrolled the class perimeter, grim-jawed at the sacrifices they are obliged to ask workers to make if Mexico's revolution is to be preserved for the bourgeoisie.

The three years since 1982 have been economically the worst in Mexico's post-revolutionary history.

To keep Mexico cheap for foreign tourists and exports while inflation is high requires that the devaluation of the peso

must get faster and faster. It is now devaluing by 21 cents per day.

The press record tiny items of reality—the 40,000 children who die of diarrhoea each year; the land seizures; the strikes. And on street corners, increasingly youths jostle each other, vying for the attention of motorists stopped at the traffic lights—fire eaters, melancholy clowns and jugglers, silent Indian women with children tied to their backs mutely offering chewing gum.

And alongside that, the press is still advertising luxury holidays in the south of France, trips to Singapore and Japan. The fashionable restaurants are crowded and noisy. The highways of Mexico City are still packed with expensive cars. In Reforma, the nearest thing to the Champs Elysees in the Americas, bustles with finely-cut suits and exclusive gowns.

Even the corruption issue has gone quiet. The former head of the national oil company has gone down for lifting 30 million dollars. The ex-Chief of Police of Mexico City is being held in Los Angeles while the government seeks his extradition; his greatest crime was to deduct a chunk of the wages of every policeman in the city to provide proper burials for those killed on duty—and then he didn't bury them.

The former President himself, Lopez Portillo, who swore in 1982 to defend the peso 'like a dog', has kept his 'dog palaces', the four gracious mansions he had built at the expense of the government high above the city in the west.

Left divided

For the left, for a moment, the miners' strike in Britain offered a spark of hope. The press coverage was extensive. Even *Excelsior*, the leading conservative daily, had four long articles, summarising interviews in the coalfields. There were, they said, three forces at stake: Mrs Thatcher and McGregor, 'the Lenin of Yorkshire', and 'those in the middle, the strike-breakers'; it is quite quaint how the middle classes see strike breaking as, like themselves, being in the middle.

In the run-up to the elections in July, there is a chance for the left. The worst of the crisis has been absorbed and now the economy is looking up. Wages have become firmer, and employment started to increase.

The left is heavily divided and few of the lessons of recent years have been learned. But history unfortunately does not wait until we are ready. ■

Nigel Harris

THE SHADOW OF SHARPEVILLE

The South African regime celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre by shooting dozens of black protesters. John Lindsay and Gareth Jenkins look at how much has changed in the last 25 years and what is the state of workers' organisation today.

ON 21 March 1960, policemen opened fire on a crowd at Sharpeville, in South Africa. When the smoke had cleared, 69 lay dead. Two months later the Republic of South Africa was declared, and links with the Commonwealth were broken.

In 1963, after a show trial, the leaders of the African National Congress (ANC), were jailed for life. Many of them, including Nelson Mandela, are still in prison.

Last year 170 people died in demonstrations. This year, on the anniversary of Sharpeville, dozens have already been killed. Police have arrested the leaders of the United Democratic Front, for another show trial, to be held in Pietermaritzburg. Have 25 years of protest been a waste of time?

When the Republic was declared in 1960, the dominant Afrikaners were celebrating their victory over the English immigrants of the 19th century, and their victory over a British Empire which had defeated them militarily 60 years before. They had built up their own state capitalism with control of the railways, armaments production, massive investments in fertilisers, pharmaceuticals, insurance, explosives, all based on the value of the gold mining which led to their profitability in the world.

The British and American ruling classes looked on with slight distaste at the harsh crudeness, but with some relief as the stream of gold, diamonds and raw minerals continued to pour out of the land of plenty.

The black's place was on his own tribal lands. His place was not in the cities, where he worked and produced the wealth of capitalism. This was the basis of the system of apartheid, from which followed the whole panoply of laws on group areas, segregation, pass controls, prevention of mixed marriages, and land ownership.

TWENTY-FIVE years later the world and South Africa is a different place. The post-war boom has crumbled into the longest recession in the history of capitalism. South Africa didn't feel the effects till later, but they were all the deeper for that. The black working class is now more skilled, which means their labour is more in demand and a permanent feature of the economy. The strategy of the white ruling class has to deal with two factors. That strategy can, like a Clint Eastwood movie, be divided into three parts—the bad, the ugly, and the thoroughly unpleasant.

The bad is the politics of Harry Oppenheimer,

recently retired boss of Anglo American, and leader of the liberal wing of the white bourgeoisie. They see the major problem of the South African economy being the smallness of the home market, leading to an inability to compete in the world market. They also see the damaging effects of the pressure on other sections of capitalism from opinion outside South Africa. And they recognise that the pressure building up within South Africa could lead to an explosion.

What they want is the chance to move towards a more democratic republic. They will accept the rights of blacks to live within the cities, to own property, and to have the vote on a qualified franchise. They are prepared to see blacks forming trade unions, and they recognise the need for wages to increase—though always in someone else's factory first.

The ugly is the faction represented by Botha, the South African prime minister. He recognises the pressures building up as a result of the impossibility of ever removing black workers from the industrial economy, or from the cities.

He recognises the weakness of the South African economy and the need for its integration into the world economy. He recognises the enormous amount which is being drained out of the economy to maintain the standing army and fight a war on all fronts.

He recognises that for all white young men to spend two years in the army and to be on call-up until 65 is to reinforce the massive labour drain which precisely opens the way for black workers to increase their bargaining power, and their wages.

His strategy has several parts. He sees the need for some section of the black population to be integrated into the political system. He looks to the creation of a black petty bourgeoisie consisting of Asian and coloured lawyers, businessmen, schoolteachers, trade union bureaucrats.

Thus the President's Council, the houses of parliament for coloureds and Asians, so effectively rejected by those for whom they were designed. And also the proposed consultative council of black city dwellers, which is almost certain to be rejected. He also looks to continue the divisions among blacks along traditional 'tribal' lines, as did the original architects of apartheid. But he has allowed for the registration of some black trade unions and recognised the de facto existence and negotiating ability of others.

He hopes this will be enough to buy off pressure for change from within South Africa and mollify 'international opinion'.

Secondly, he sees the need to divide the rulers of the countries to the north and weaken their ability to provide any effective support for SWAPO or the ANC. The Nkomati accord, reached with president Machel of Mozambique, required the expulsion of the ANC from Mozambique in return for the withdrawal of support for the guerrillas fighting inside Mozambique.

Machel delivered the goods—the South Africans haven't. The power of the South African economy in the region and the inability of the leaders of black southern Africa to maintain a unity in the face of economic weakness has given him considerable success in this, even if the price proves to be a putative 'independence' for Namibia.

His third aim is a rejuvenation of the South African economy. Here he has the same sort of problem as Gandhi, Mitterrand or Thatcher—a relatively weak, uncompetitive economy. To push through the modernisation he needs, he requires western capital. Primarily he needs the cooperation of the US: his most powerful ally has to play ball on the military front, the international front, and the capital front.

The local representatives of US capital—Fords, IBM, Kodak—have to keep their workers under control, provide investment, and keep US opinion mollified.

He is therefore a little sensitive to Senator Kennedy. He is even a little sensitive to Mandela and to Machel, president of Mozambique. This would have been incomprehensible to Dr Verwoerd, prime minister at the time of Sharpeville. In 1965, when Bobby Kennedy visited South Africa, Verwoerd locked up the president of the Students Union.

The idea of allowing Kennedy into a black township would not have crossed his mind. In Verwoerd's mind black townships didn't exist. This is a measure of the change.

There is then...the thoroughly unpleasant. This is the tendency represented by the far right HNP and Andries Tuernicht's Conservative Party, representatives of some large landowners, white workers being de-skilled and seeing their wages and privileges eroded, and the children of Afrikaner middle classes fighting to protect their heritage.

Their parallels are the Christians of the Lebanon and the hard-line Zionists. They will go to any extremes to protect their world. They possibly represent as much as 30 percent of white South Africa, and they will fight. Botha has continually to be looking over his shoulder to them. Their strategy is simply to hang on—with as many guns as possible.

WHAT then can we say about the strategy of the opposition? Until recently it was easy—the opposition was the ANC. It had, and probably still has, the moral support of the vast proportion of blacks in South Africa.

Its strategy was to combine a diplomatic offensive through the UN with a military offensive, in the hopes of driving SA to the negotiating table. It relied on the support of the front-

line states for military space, on the unaligned movement for diplomatic back-up, and on the Eastern bloc states for military supplies.

The real problem lies within the nature of its strategy, which has been to separate the struggle against apartheid from the struggle for socialism. This so-called 'stages' theory of development—first the battle for democratic rights, and only then talk about anything else—would, we have always said, lead the ANC to look to white liberal opinion and the black petty bourgeoisie rather than to the black working class.

While the black working class was relatively quiescent no practical experience seemed to bear us out. What has changed is the upsurge of workplace activity during the last ten years. The formation of FOSATU and CUSA, which organise a number of black trade unions independent of the traditions of the South African Communist Party, has upset the stages theory quite considerably.

Instead of waiting for the first stage to be completed, as the theory suggests they ought, black workers have asserted their class interests.

THERE are now some 550,000 black workers organised in independent trade unions. Over the past three years, strikes have occurred at the rate of one a day. The phenomenal nature of the growth of black trade unions can be seen in the fact that in 1973 there were only 40,000 black workers organised in independent trade unions. Now there are full time organisers and offices, with a range of legal, education, and health and safety services.

The most important of the trade union bodies is FOSATU—the Federation of South African Trade Unions. It was established in 1979. By November 1983 it had 106,000 members organised in 490 factories. A number of companies recognise FOSATU stewards and negotiating rights. FOSATU emphasises the need for strong shopfloor organisation, and its nine affiliated unions are particularly strong in the car, metal, food, transport and textile industries. It also organises some white workers.

When, in 1979, the government's Commission of Inquiry into labour legislation recognised that blacks could form their own unions, FOSATU decided to comply with government legislation and apply for registration—but only on non-racial lines. FOSATU argued that registration could confer benefits because companies would recognise it, state repression would be less likely and subscriptions could be organised on a check-off basis.

Other groups of independent black unions decided against registration, most notably CUSA (Council of South African Unions). This loose federation of some 148,000 workers, mainly in the Transvaal, is much closer to the 'black consciousness' movement, which argued that the long subjection of blacks to whites must mean that although the ultimate goal is a non-racial society blacks must organise independently of whites. CUSA, therefore, doesn't have white trade union officials, unlike FOSATU.

The most important CUSA affiliate is the

National Union of Mineworkers. It was created in 1982, and has some 70,000 members, 70 percent of whom work in the gold mines, and 25 percent in the coal mines. It is recognised by 14 companies and by the Chamber of Mines for negotiating purposes.

Of the other independent trade unions that refuse to register, the most significant is the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), created in 1979 and largely based in the East London area. Estimates of its size go as high as 50,000, though its true size is probably nearer 20,000. It is a political union, in that it sees itself as involved in not only factory issues but related community issues, such as transport and rents.

It is heavily persecuted by the state, though some companies (such as Chlorides) have seen the wisdom of negotiating with SAAWU on the grounds that it really represents the workers despite non-registration. On the other hand, Rowntree-Mackintosh, the sweet manufacturers based in Britain, have resisted such negotiations despite their liberal, Quaker principles. They prefer the tame official union.

The number of strikes which have been victorious, the number of union recognition disputes which have been won, and the rise in wages and bargaining power of sections of the black working class, have awoken a sense of power and political organisation.

That in turn has given rise to all sorts of arguments about the nature of struggle in South Africa. Should the unions concentrate on immediate bread and butter issues? Should they avoid political issues which invite state repression? Should they participate in political campaigns run by bodies not solely working class in composition and leadership? The arguments have been complex and are still unresolved.

The second, new political development to complicate talking about the liberation movement is the creation of the United Democratic Front (UDF). This is a loose alliance of many opposition forces to the government (the churches, community, sporting, youth and professional bodies), and also claims support from workers' organisations.

The UDF was launched nationally in August 1983 in response to the Botha government's attempt to create a new constitution. It campaigned for a boycott of the government's proposals by Asian and coloured voters. In this it was remarkably successful. The government did not get the mandate it was seeking, and although it pressed ahead and brought in the changes in September 1984, the UDF undoubtedly put large-scale political opposition to the regime back at the centre of attention.

Despite the government's crackdown, with the arrest of 13 of its leaders (six of them charged with high treason), the UDF is more or less tolerated as a semi-legal opposition and was able to organise a conference attended by more than a thousand, in the open.

The UDF claims nearly 600 affiliates, with a membership of 1.5 million. Whether it is as strong as that is doubtful. The *Guardian* (22 February 1985) quoted a source which main-

tained that the UDF could muster only about 1,000 activists nationally, approximately 400 of those in Cape Town.

However, the politics of the UDF does not differ significantly from the ANC. The UDF thinks in terms of an alliance between classes. The reasoning is the same as that of the ANC and its stages theory. Inevitably this leads to a policy of pressure politics directed at the influential and respectable. So, for instance, the UDF has been using its connections via the church to wage a campaign for disinvestment among leading Democrat politicians in the USA (such as Senator Kennedy).

Less well-known is the National Forum Committee, claiming 200 affiliated bodies and a membership of 500,000. The NFC was largely responsible for the black protests against Kennedy's recent visit to South Africa. It is critical of the UDF (who invited Kennedy) and suspicious of the ANC-style politics that inspired the visit. The NFC's politics draw on the black consciousness movement and there are those who, in rejecting the politics of white liberalism, draw the conclusion that the fight against apartheid must be an anti-capitalist struggle.

THE disinvestment campaign of the UDF has had some success. Citibank, the world's largest financial institution, has decided not to make any further bank loans to Pretoria. Under threat from the City of New York, Citibank chose to sacrifice its South African interests to its more important business interests at home. For similarly un-altruistic motives, Ford motors chose to sell its 60 percent stake in its South African subsidiary rather than jeopardise its markets in countries hostile to apartheid.

In the US Congress, Senator Kennedy is pushing through legislation designed to prevent future investments and future bank loans (except for non-discriminatory projects in education, housing and health), as well as banning the import of Krugerrand coins and the export of US computers.

In addition some 126 US companies operating in South Africa have agreed to rid their firms of apartheid practices. Lavatories will be de-segregated, there will be comparable pay between black and white employees, and housing and other amenities will be improved.

A similar approach is being encouraged in Britain, involving major companies like Shell, Barclays and BP. So far, however, the only notable victory in the disinvestment campaign has been Oxford University's agreement to withdraw its £8 million holdings in South Africa.

In the USA the campaign has generated a lot of protest activity, with the arrests of prominent Democrats (and members of their families) at anti-apartheid demonstrations outside the South African embassy. However, the involvement of leading politicians has mostly to do with internal politics: Kennedy and others want to build a base out of embarrassing the Republicans with the charge that they are anti-black because they take no steps against apartheid.

Despite these successes, disinvestment will not

work as a strategy for undermining the South African regime. The economy is too intertwined with the world economy for the major capitalist powers to contemplate hurting themselves. While the USA (with less than 1 percent of its overseas assets—\$2.3 billion—invested directly in South Africa) might just about tolerate disinvestment, the same cannot be said of Britain with \$8.7 billion direct investment (55 percent of the foreign investment in South Africa).

All the evidence is that economic sanctions fail to produce policy changes in the countries they are directed at. Ian Smith's Rhodesia managed to survive a total boycott and sanctions campaign for nigh on a decade after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965, either because firms found a way round or because others were willing to take their place.

HOWEVER, it would be foolish to dismiss the disinvestment campaign out of hand. For while we point out that disinvestment would do nothing to help extend the power of black workers to organise, right wing opposition to disinvestment is often dressed up in spurious concern for the fate of the black workers in those companies who might decide to pull out of South Africa.

If as a result of a decision by, for example, Rowntree-Mackintosh to put Quaker principle before Quaker profit and close down its South African operation, workers then occupied the factory in a fight for jobs, our position would be quite clear. We would support them to the hilt, quite unlike the right-wing opponents of disinvestment.

And to the progressive supporters of disinvestment (who might be reluctant to support workers fighting to *retain* investment) we would say that a successful fight for jobs would do more to shake the regime than any campaign to pull firms out of South Africa. For we recognise that only in workers' independent organisation and activity is there any chance of beating apartheid.

The sensitivity of big business to disinvestment shows that sections of capital are worried about the viability of the South African state in its present form to guarantee future profits. They are also concerned about the effect of continuing operations in South Africa on their profits in such equally important third world countries as Nigeria. If that destabilises South Africa or forces the adoption of more liberal forms of exploitation, then that is all to the good, since workers have more opportunities to organise.

It is this kind of argument we must press home in the face of the pro-disinvestment arguments from Anti-Apartheid Movement supporters. Equally, we have to say that boycotts of consumer goods will not work. The key is *support* for the kinds of workers' struggles associated with black trade unionism. And making the links with trade union struggle in this country (like the miners, for example, which Anti-Apartheid largely refused to do).

However, socialists must be careful not to be abstentionist if, in support of disinvestment and boycott campaigns, there is *activity* proposed by the Anti-Apartheid Movement (particularly, say, in colleges). We will carry our arguments more successfully if we participate in protests, lobbies or demonstrations (for example, against Barclays Bank), than if we disdainfully stand on the sidelines.

An argument against South Africa, against Botha, is an argument against racism. Secondly, the profitability of British capitalism is inextricably tied to the profits of South Africa. Anything which hinders them is to our benefit.

South Africa has all the ingredients for a revolution—one that would shake the world economy to its roots. One that will show up all the weaknesses of the ideas of democratic stages and national solutions. It will be a chance for the ideas of international socialism to be tested.

The material on black trade unions is taken from Power! by Denis MacShane, Martin Plaut, David Ward (Spokesman, £4.95).



STRUGGLE & IDEAS

John Rees explains where ideas come from and how they can change.

AN established and elementary part of the revolutionary tradition is that workers' ideas change in struggle. As Marx put it: 'In revolutionary activity the changing of oneself coincides with the changing of circumstances.'

Workers who engage in such struggles have their established ideas about the police, courts, unions and Labour Party leaders challenged by their own real life experience. And although this is insufficient to automatically make them into conscious revolutionaries, it remains the indispensable starting point.

But what of reformist, or even reactionary ideas like sexism? Revolutionary ideas are the product of the real life experiences of workers, and not something into which workers have been brainwashed by the reds or misled by demagogues. We should be able to explain reformist ideas by looking at the real material experience of workers' lives as well.

Marx left the method and the outline for such an explanation. We need to develop it in order to have a systematic explanation of why reformism continues to grip the consciousness of the mass of workers. An important partial truth is contained in our everyday arguments that the media, the trade union leaders and the Labour parliamentarians mislead and betray workers' interests. But such an explanation begs a further question. Why do workers continue to believe and follow such leadership?

TO answer this question, we have to look at the real experience of most workers most of the time in capitalist society. Workers in struggle often need to organise to overcome the police and the courts. They need to fight for solidarity from other workers and therefore need to combat those who stand in their path. But even when there are large numbers of strikes, these workers are still a minority. This is true until we talk about major struggles which begin to challenge state power.

The experience of the majority is one of atomisation and lack of confidence. They are isolated and lack solidarity. They feel that they have to compete against, not cooperate with, fellow workers.

That experience is written into the definition of being working class. The working class has the potential, in struggle, to overturn the old order worldwide. When the workers are not in struggle they are the base on which the old order stands. The working class is an exploited class. It has only one capacity: to sell its wage labour to those who control the factories, offices, mines, transport facilities, finance institutions and newspapers. To be dispossessed of all these things, and yet to be the source from whose labour all those things are produced, is a

condition Marx described as alienation.

Marx transformed the term alienation from its originally religious meaning. In this context the term was used to describe the ways in which people erected from their own imagination gods and religious symbols (like totem poles and crucifixes) and then ascribed human and natural powers to these creations. In other words, human beings alienated their own powers to inanimate or imagined objects.

Of course there were national and social roots to this process as well. To those earlier societies which had no biological or scientific explanation of infant mortality, or no meteorological or agricultural explanation of a poor harvest, religious explanation was a substitute.

A bad harvest or a still-born baby were the devil's handiwork; a successful birth or a bountiful harvest were God's providence.

Marx transformed this basic concept—human capacities invested in inanimate or imagined objects—into a social analysis of wage labour under capitalism.

HE argued that in a society where the ruling class owned the means to life, the means of production, a worker's only remaining power was alienated: his own labour and its products were owned and controlled by the capitalist.

Further, Marx argued the structure of capitalist society systematically obscured this process. Far from it being obvious that the capitalists exploited the workers, stole from them their labour and its products, it appeared as though the whole system was rational and that the misfortunes of unemployment and low wages were a product of market forces which are as impersonal and unalterable as the weather.

Those market forces, the buying and selling of commodities, are worshipped as arbiters of the fate of working people just as the gods were. And, yet, like the gods, 'the market' is the creation of real human beings, of a real class society, which workers then invest with a power over their destiny.

The individual worker may be isolated, in search of work or fearful for his or her job, under the thumb of the foreman or supervisor, worried by rent payments or how to afford a new TV. The worker confronts a system into which he or she has been integrated by school and media since birth and which seems natural.

But it only seems natural so long as you accept its assumptions: if the firm doesn't make a profit it can't afford a wage rise; one man's wage rise is another man's price increase; rising wages mean unemployment. All these Thatcher bywords are only 'natural', 'common sense' as long as the role of private profit and competition through the market remain unchallenged. It is in this sense

that Gramsci wrote that 'common sense is the day-to-day ideology of the bourgeoisie'.

Furthermore the relation between worker and worker, and between worker and capitalist, are not seen as 'their own personal relations' of co-operation on the one hand and exploitation on the other. They are disguised as social relations between the products of labour.

It is precisely this veil which is torn aside by the outbreak of struggle. Blacking and solidarity action reveal the collective ability and co-operative nature of the working class's labour. The struggle itself reveals that behind the impartiality of the market stands the profit system and the ruling class.

The creation of a commodity economy and of a working class 'free' of owning any means of production was a long historical process. Capitalism struggled to enforce a division of labour—between mental and manual labour, between skilled and unskilled, between white collar and blue collar, between labour performed predominantly by men or women. This established an economic structure in which real relations of exploitation were hidden behind seemingly objective economic forces. The result is that workers see only their loss of control over society and the division amongst themselves, not their potential to control society.

The struggle is the means by which workers can overcome these divisions and assert their power. That is the meaning of Lukacs phrase: 'The workers' council spells the political and economic defeat of alienation.'

BUT while the level of struggle remains low, alienation and the rule of commodities have enormous importance in explaining working class consciousness. The very term which Marxists use to explain why workers often support the system which is antagonistic to their true interests—false consciousness—can only be fully explained in this context.

It is not that revolutionaries believe that workers have been led astray by the media and that this false consciousness can be simply dispelled by listening to 'correct' socialist ideas.

False consciousness is not something which is simply fed to workers by the ruling class (although they are only too willing to do this). It is something which is both inevitable and natural for a class which is oppressed and exploited but not yet in the act of fighting back.

So capitalism portrays its relations of class exploitation as objective market forces. This begins to explain seemingly unrelated ideas like sexism and racism. If workers accept the view that objective market forces are simply the natural and unchangeable way in which the world works, their horizons remain closed. They accept ideas which reinforce their oppression. Fundamental change becomes, literally, unthinkable.

This initial position can reflect itself in thousands of different responses to the working class's position under capitalism. It can range from the desire of left reformists for substantial change, within the structure of the system, to

support for absolute monarchy or fascism. What determines how workers' ideas are actually formed, is the level and nature of the struggle.

WE have talked in this article as if the working class only existed in two states: either passive acceptance of conditioning, or active opposition. The first leaves it defenceless in the face of market forces, the second dispels those illusions in the course of the struggle.

In fact the working class is never totally passive. If it were, the grey dull unending oppression of Orwell's *1984* would be our everyday experience. There is always some level of struggle engendered by the contradictions of the system. It is the conditions, subjective as well as objective, under which these contradictions are fought out which decide the development of working class ideas.

In Tsarist Russia the level of oppression and economic weakness meant that horrific political backwardness (pogroms against Jews, oppression of national minorities) coincided with sharp conflicts with the authorities. These conflicts were all the sharper since the very level of oppression meant that a reformist tradition had little political space in which to operate, and so revolutionaries had a relatively open field.

Reformist organisations, which fight for better terms within the system, are of course an historic achievement of working class organisation. We need only look at countries without established unions or parties for this truth to be apparent. But they contain contradictions. In the struggle for revolutionary ideas and even in a crisis-ridden contracting system, the labour leaders will be treacherous. For the mass of workers reformist consciousness is both an achievement and an obstacle to be overcome in the course of action.

Reformist ideas and worse have a real basis in workers' experience and their perceptions of the system. It is a change in that experience which is the precondition of such a change in ideas.

Although this remains the essential key to working class consciousness it would be foolish to assume that working class consciousness develops in a straight line from strike action and union militancy, through a rejection of reformism, to opposition to racism and sexism culminating in revolutionary socialism. Individual workers, groups of workers or, for that matter, whole layers of workers can become revolutionary socialists—for instance by opposing the Vietnam war or fighting against anti-abortionists.

In the course of such a struggle they will confront problems. Socialists have to argue for ideas which point towards organisation at the point of production as the key to fundamental change on these issues. We do not always start from the question of political power at the point of production but it is always where we conclude. It is where the physical power to smash the system lies. It is also the place to find the foot of the system's ideological power and the Achilles' heel of reformism.

What do we mean by?

Sectarianism

THE TERM sectarianism is used so loosely that it may be as well to start by clarifying what it does *not* mean. It is sometimes asserted that it is sectarian to try to build your own organisation in the course of intervention in various struggles.

This is nonsense. If you believe that your organisation's politics are correct, or at least more correct than those of others, you will naturally want it to grow and will try to build it. Otherwise you are not politically serious.

Of course, this may sometimes be attempted in an arrogant or insensitive fashion (not, I hope, by SWP members, or not very often), but that is not so much sectarianism as stupidity.

Sectarianism refers *exclusively* to erroneous attitudes to the class struggle.

'By directing socialism towards a fusion with the working class movement,' wrote Lenin. 'Karl Marx and Frederick Engels did their greatest service: they created a revolutionary theory that explained the necessity for this fusion and gave socialists the task of organising the class struggle of the proletariat.'

Fusion, in this context, does not mean the dissolution of a revolutionary organisation into a non-revolutionary one. Lenin was totally committed to building a revolutionary organisation and broke ruthlessly with those, including many of his former collaborators, who wavered on this central point.

The key words are 'the class struggle of the proletariat'. It is with this that socialists must 'fuse'. The notion goes back to the *Communist Manifesto*. Sectarians, for Marx and Engels, were those who created 'utopias', abstract schemes derived from supposed general principles, to which people were to be won by persuasion and example—co-operative 'islands of socialism' and suchlike—as opposed to the Marxist emphasis on 'the real movement', the actual class struggle.

It was with this in mind that Marx wrote:

'The sect sees the justification for its existence and its point of honour not in what it has in *common* with the class movement but in the *particular shibboleth* which *distinguishes* it from the movement.'

(The emphasis is Marx's own.)

Class movement is meant literally. It is not a matter, or not *primarily* a matter, of this or that working class institution but of the course of development of the real class struggle and the development of class consciousness. Marx was a revolutionary. For him revolution was not a 'particular shibboleth', but a necessary stage in the struggle for socialism which, in turn, can only be based on the class struggle, regardless, as he wrote, of 'what this or that proletarian, or even the whole of the proletariat at the moment *considers* as its aim.'

However, sectarianism is not necessarily avoided by *formal* acceptance of the centrality of the class struggle. As early as the 1880s Engels was ridiculing the German Marxist emigrés in the USA for turning Marxism into 'a kind of "only-salvation" dogma and [keeping] aloof from any movement which did not accept that dogma'. Engels had in mind the Knights of Labour, a considerable, although confused, attempt at working class organisation, which, he argued (vainly, as far as the German-American Marxists were concerned) 'ought not to be pooh-poohed from without but revolutionised from within'.

The common thread

The argument applies generally. So, in the early years of the Communist International, a good number of genuine revolutionaries, mainly in Germany but not only there, were opposed to systematic work in the existing unions. Their argument was that these unions were bureaucratised and conservative, if not downright reactionary. It was broadly true. It was also true that these unions organised millions of workers and, however bureaucratised and reactionary their leadership, they were class organisations which necessarily played a role (a bad one) in the class struggle and could not simply be bypassed.

As Lenin wrote:

'We are waging the struggle against the opportunist and social-chauvinist leaders in order to win the working class over to our side. It would be absurd to forget this most elementary and most self-evident truth. Yet this is the very absurdity that the German "Left" Communists perpetrate when *because* of the reactionary and counter-revolutionary character of the trade unions' top leadership, they jump to the conclusion that—we must withdraw from the trade unions, refuse to work in them, and create new and *artificial* forms of labour organisation! This is so unpardonable a blunder that it is tantamount to the greatest service Communists could render the bourgeoisie.'

The common thread between this mistake by the (for the most part) active and revolutionary 'lefts' and all other forms of sectarianism is failure to relate to the *concrete* struggles of workers, however difficult it may be to do so, and to set up utopian schemes as alternatives.

Thus, the propagandistic forms of sectarianism, very different at first sight, have this same root. There is a rich (if that is the appropriate word) experience of these in Britain. We may call them 'the pure selected few' sectarians after a verse by the late Tommy Jackson, referring to the British Socialist Labour Party:

'We are the pure selected few
And all the rest are damned
There's room enough in hell for you
We don't want heaven crammed.'

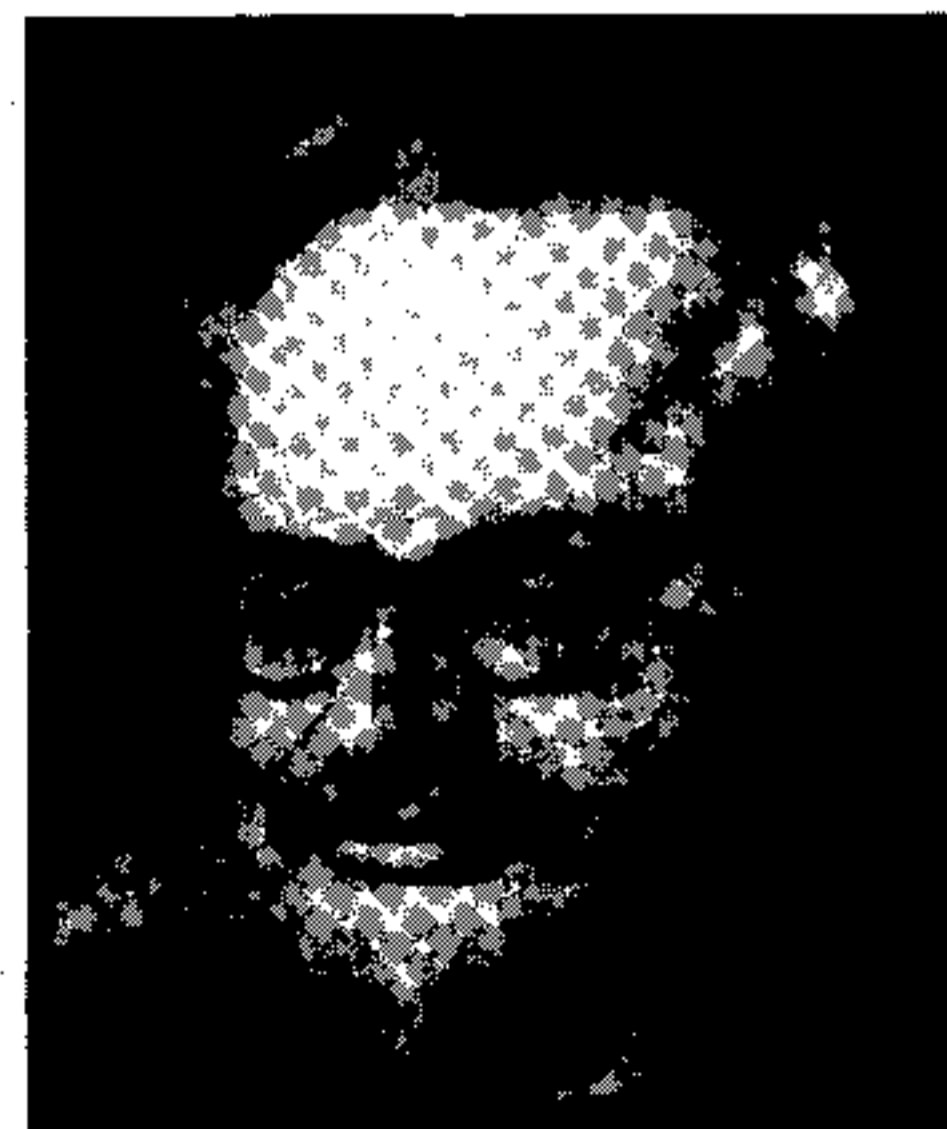
The SLP, although by no means the worst of its kind, placed excessive emphasis on propaganda and a very high level of formal (Marxist) training as a condition of membership. Not so surprisingly, it also believed in separate 'red unions' and had a rule forbidding members to hold union office, although they were allowed to be card holders where 'job necessity' (that is, the closed shop) required it.

An obsession with 'high quality' members, and fear of 'dilution' by 'raw workers' also came to characterise some of the Trotskyist groups (though not all) and their offshoots. Why is this attitude sectarian? Again we come back to the class struggle as the heart of the matter. And that cuts both ways.

As Trotsky himself wrote, 'Coming from the opportunists the accusation of sectarianism is most often a compliment.' True enough, but this in no way alters the fact that sectarian deviations can be a real danger.

Trotsky explained the emergence of sectarianism amongst some of his followers by the circumstances of their origin.

'Every working class party, every faction, during its initial stages, passes through a period of pure propaganda... The period of existence as a Marxist circle invariably grafts habits of an abstract approach onto the workers' movement. Whoever is unable to step in time over the confines of this circumscribed existence becomes transformed into a conservative sectarian. The sectarian looks upon life as a great school with himself as a teacher there... Though he may swear by Marxism in every sentence the sectarian is the direct negation of dialectical materialism, which



Leon Trotsky always fought sectarianism

takes *experience* as its point of departure and always returns to it... The sectarian lives in a sphere of ready-made formulas... Discord with reality engenders in the sectarian the need to constantly render his formula more precise. This goes under the name of discussion. To a Marxist, discussion is an important but functional instrument of the class struggle. To the sectarian discussion is a goal in itself. However, the more he discusses, the more the actual tasks escape him. He is like a man who satisfies his thirst with salt water: the more he drinks, the thirstier he becomes.'

Fortunately this variety of sectarianism is less common now than it was even a few years ago, many of the erstwhile sectarians of this stamp having been absorbed by the Labour Party.

But doesn't everything that has been said point to the conclusion that revolutionaries ought to intervene in the Labour Party and, to do so more effectively, join it? Isn't it sectarian, as *Militant* argue, to stay outside?

The main struggle

Certainly the question cannot be solved by ready-made formulas. The essence of sectarianism is abstentionism, on whatever pretext, from the actual class struggle. Does the class struggle take place, mainly or partly, in or through the Labour Party? Obviously it does *not* take place directly in the Labour Party. And so far as there is a certain feedback from inner Labour Party struggles, we must seek to influence them—by supporting the left, critically where need be, but still supporting them, against the right.

However, it is not at all the same thing as saying that the SWP ought to dissolve itself into the Labour Party (or to appear to do so whilst secretly maintaining its own organisation). There are three reasons why this would be wrong.

First, the *main* struggle is in the workplaces and, secondarily, in the unions. A revolutionary organisation must, if at all possible, be organised so as to most effectively intervene in them, with its own publication and open presence.

There is a qualitative difference between the unions, which organise on a job or industry basis, and the Labour Party which is based on a political idea—reformism, which we reject. And this remains true no matter how reformist or reactionary the union leaders are. Thus, Lenin, in the article quoted above, did not dream of arguing that his supporters should join the Social Democratic Party, although most of the union leaders were Social Democrats.

Second, the main source of recruitment comes, in fact, from our intervention in such struggles (including recruitment from those not directly involved but drawn to us by this work). The Labour Party wards are not remotely comparable in this respect.

Third, precisely from the point of view of *influencing* left wingers in the Labour Party, we are far better placed as an open organisation arguing our *political* ideas because we are not involved in conflicts over positions, selections and suchlike. ■

Duncan Hallas

WORK PLACE NOTES

This month we talked to an engineering worker who worked in an unorganised factory. He explains the tactics he used in attempting to build a union.

I GOT a job at this crummy engineering factory on night shift. The wages were lousy but they paid time and a half on nights. That was the only decent part of it. Most places pay time and a third. Everything else about the place was absolutely shocking. I was on a skilled job on £2.50 an hour. The health and safety was absolutely diabolical. The heavy engineering was done with no lifting gear at all. Everything was shifted about by diesel fork-lift truck. And of course in the winter with all the doors shut these things would be chugging away belching out black smoke.

Everyone was moaning about the conditions, the wages, the disorganisation and the waste. No one seemed to know what to do about it.

I decided to organise after I'd been there a few weeks. I went to Companies House. As they are a subsidiary of an American firm they were able to cover up very well. This firm makes hardly any profits at all. It's all going to America. But you get the clues from the turnover. It almost doubled from last year's.

Once I had decided to adopt this course, I wasn't going to expose myself to anyone, although there was such a lot of justifiable moaning that it was quite easy to moan with other workers and point a few things out.

I told them what the directors were getting paid and all that sort of stuff. I had been there four months when I put out the first leaflet.

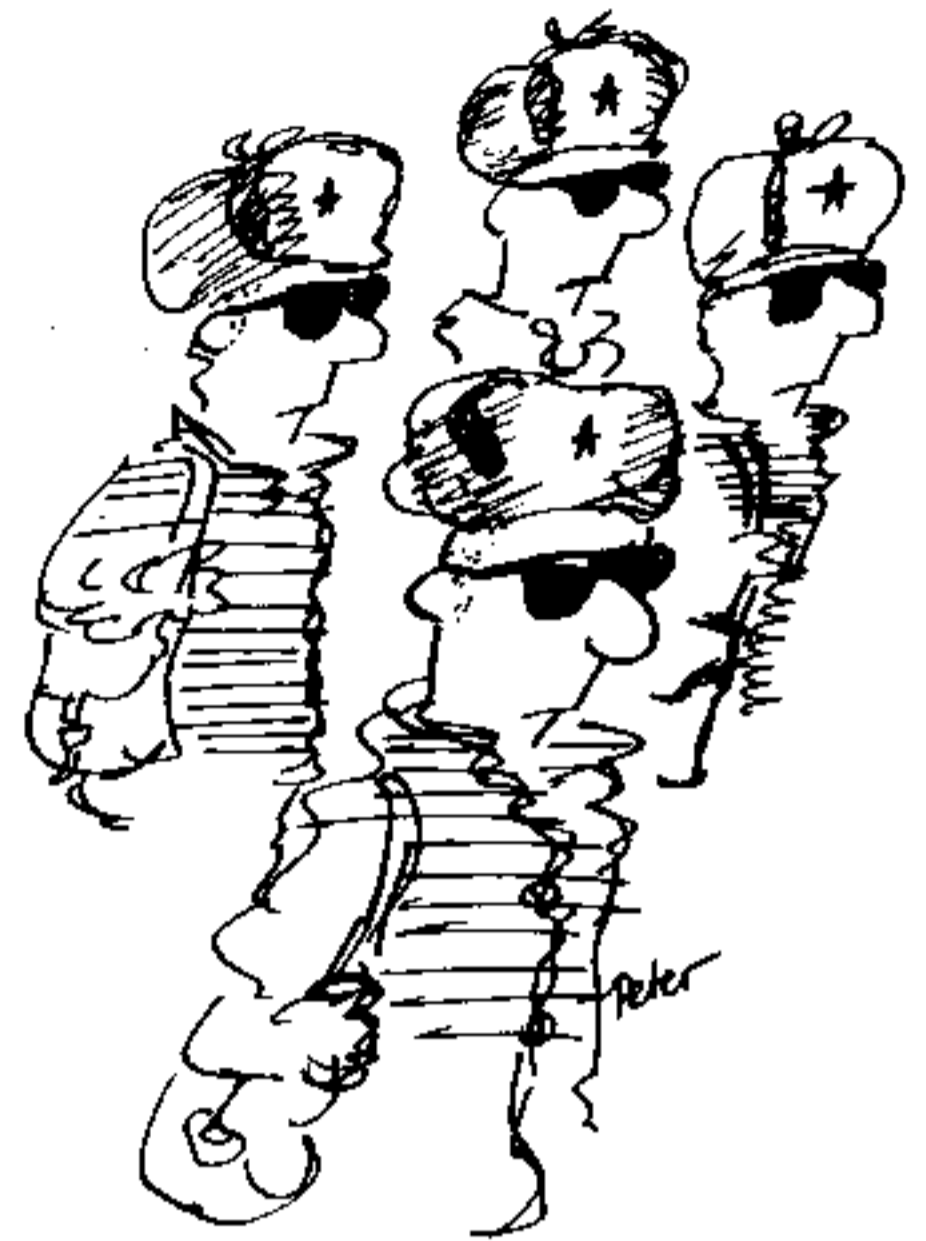
A brilliant idea

The annual wages review was coming up shortly. A comrade helped produce the leaflets on a computer. I went down with a pile of them shortly before knocking off time on days. I wore an old anorak with the hood pulled up and a pair of dark glasses over my own. I had the leaflets on a little wire hook. I sneaked in the door near the exit and hung them on a wall by the clock and hung a note on another bit of wire saying 'please take one'.

I thought it was a brilliant idea but unfortunately the manager saw the 'please take one' sign. He took one upstairs, read about half the first page, was down again like a shot, and took them all. Only a few people saw them so over that weekend I put batches of leaflets in polythene covers through the toilet windows.

I pasted some on the toilet doors. It's the ideal place because everyone goes there for a rest, but they came off easily. So the second ones I put on with Thixofix.

I knew I was probably on management's shortlist of suspects. They'd narrowed it down to nights by the way the leaflets were



'I MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR MANAGEMENT TO FIND OUT I WAS THE UNION MILITANT BY THROWING IN A FEW RED HERRINGS'

distributed. I threw in two red herrings at the first meeting. I got a bloke who had finished working at the place to come along and say that he now worked for a decent firm; the wages were much better, there was a good union there, and shop stewards.

Of course they thought it must be just him disgruntled, particularly since the leaflets had been put in through the toilet windows—it looked like an outside job.

I also allowed management to get the impression that I was looking for work elsewhere.

The leaflet we put out had to have lots of facts that you can prove, not just your opinions. You've also got to listen to all the moans and point out solutions.

The leaflet pointed out that the firm had one of the highest turnover of workers in the London area if not the whole country at a time of high unemployment, when most workers stick to the job they've got. I listed the wages and conditions, like the fact that we only had three weeks holiday a year whereas the average in engineering is five weeks.

You had to sweep the floor yourself—no one was responsible for it. And although the floors should be washed once a week they were never washed in all the time I worked there. The whole range of wages and conditions was so far below the average in the country, never mind the London area, that there was plenty of ammunition.

I wrote that we'd have to see in the annual review if any of the things were going to be rectified. One of the chaps had told a manager that his wife made more making curtains at home than he did on night shift. I finished by saying that the next leaflet would say how we could collectively go about



'GIVING OUT LEAFLETS ANONYMOUSLY POSED SOME DIFFICULTIES'

do with the peanuts they were being paid.

The meeting was chaired by a steward from London Airport who explained why people should be in the union. We took a vote at the end to have another meeting with an AUEW official present. It was unanimous.

Afterwards the chargehands were asked about what went on by the manager. He took them all to the managing director and they went through the whole rigmarole again. Other workers were also taken upstairs under some pretext and then quizzed about the meeting.

Management moved fast. The day the leaflets went out for the second meeting they formed a stooge works committee. A kind of election took place—five out of the seven elected were charge hands. A lot of people saw this as the soft option—no dues to pay, etc.

At our night shift meeting I was the first to speak. I spoke very strongly against attending the works committee. Lots of others came in once I had set the ball rolling. The vote was unanimous against attending although later on a small group decided to send someone along.

My third leaflet came out the day before the meeting was due. I was worried that the works committee being formed would hit the attendance. This is in fact what happened. There had been about 50 at the first meeting (out of just over 100 in the factory) and a dozen at the second.

That second meeting got me the sack.

I had phoned up the District Secretary who was retiring on the day of the meeting and was having a do. So they sent a District Committee man—a nice old chap but really not up to the 'cloak and dagger' stuff.

To be fair they wanted to cancel it. But once we had the unanimous vote to have the second meeting we wanted to move fast before management could react.

The meeting took place eight days after the first. I was supposed to meet the District Committee man about half an hour before to brief him. We were to go on to the meeting separately.

Unfortunately he was coming by public transport. It was Christmas week. He was late and didn't arrive at the briefing meeting. I went to the main meeting. We were sitting around having a drink. Suddenly this AUEW chap came in and said: 'Which one of you is...' and said my name.

So of course everyone in the room then knew that I was the one who had been organising the whole thing. That was just before Christmas. I worked one more night, then we had a long break. I was sacked two days after coming back.

The manager pulled me over and told me that I hadn't passed the Ministry of Defence security check and so couldn't do classified work.

Of course it was rubbish. There's nothing secret about the work.

I said I wasn't satisfied and wanted it in writing. They waited till the end of the statutory two weeks before giving it to me. The management had got me before we were properly organised. All that was left for me was to go to a tribunal.

The real danger

Of course it's very difficult to win any cases at a tribunal. But it was a tactical move. Four people have joined the union and two have become stewards. The aim of going to the tribunal is to make the company think twice about sacking anyone else—to give the four a bit of time. If they sack them it would be making my case for me because they are denying that it's got anything to do with organising a union.

The District Secretary and myself meet the four about once a month to help them with advice. I am still trying to help them organise. They joined after I handed a letter outside the factory to the people who had attended the second meeting.

The base I built up was on nights which unfortunately is only about a quarter of the workforce. We really needed someone on days. There was a lad there on days who spoke up at the meetings. He was the chief suspect for a long time. He was accosted three or four times by the manager.

He got scared off and didn't even join the union. He wrote me a letter where he says it's like being in Russia, very KGB.

Of course management try to frighten you into inactivity. The real danger is that you become so secretive that you talk to nobody.

If I did it again I would still confide. Some people you instinctively trust—you have to make those judgements. You need some one to talk to inside, and they give you good advice as well. 'Don't do that or do do that.' Especially someone who's worked there for a while.

Speed was crucial in our case, and the swiftness of management's response, and the blunder of the District Committee man was what cost me my job. But as I say there is some organisation in the place now, so it wasn't all for nothing, and I don't regret playing my part in that. ■

changing things—or alternatively we could all start making curtains!

The leaflet went down very well. The foremen were told to take them off people if they saw them reading them. The annual review was due in October but it didn't come until November. They gave an 8 percent wage rise which was double the previous year's.

Everyone believed that this was due to the leaflet. After the rise I decided to put out another leaflet—two months after the first.

The local Socialist Workers Party branch handed it out. At the bottom there was notice of a meeting for all the workers. I added that if anyone didn't want to come along they should stop grumbling and make

socialist worker Review

SUBSCRIBE

Socialist Worker Review can be ordered from the address below. Cover price is 60 pence (plus 20p postage) and yearly subscription rates are as follows:

Britain	£8.00	Europe Airmail	£11.00
Overseas Surface	£9.00	Elsewhere Airmail	£14.50
(Institutions add £7.50)			

Send a year's Socialist Worker Review starting with the issue to:

Name

Address

.....
 Make cheque/bank draft payable to SW Distributors
 Return to Socialist Worker Review, PO Box 82, London E2

The new flood

VERY OFTEN, to label something is to make it safe and less threatening, more easily packaged and sold, or dismissed as an irrelevance. 'Punk-rock' or 'New Wave' were two such labels—and 'Science Fiction' is another.

Within new-wave music there were in fact many different waves, and the same can be said of the category that is science fiction. If one person has done the most to make this the case, that person is Harlan Ellison.

Most people's ideas of science fiction (not surprising considering the amount of junk that spews forth from Hollywood every year) is of stories concerned primarily with technology, new inventions and so on, or of transposed westerns with spaceships instead of stage coaches.

Indeed for a long time this was the case almost without exception. Science fiction writers imposed their ideas about the future on societies and storylines that were remarkably present day. *Star Wars* and its imitators are prime examples.

Considering that the genre is supposedly concerned with speculation about 'what might be' far too few writers have turned their creative imagination on society itself.

Because of its emphasis on ideas, on speculation, with any literary pretensions being of secondary importance, the 'science fiction' short story (or novella or novel) is potentially the most important fictional style around today.

It is, however, important to look at the genre, in order to understand its development.

Pulp magazines

There are those who try to throw the history of 'sci-fi' back as far as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. But the roots of the present day styles lie in the pulp magazines which proliferated in the early decades of this century.

In the midst of the depression years, the market for sensational, escapist and cheap fiction was as large as the content was basic, centering as it did mainly on 'bug-eyed monsters' and their (rather unscientific) carnal intentions towards the female of the human race.

Garishly illustrated, the magazines appealed to the lowest common denominators in their readership.

Over a period of time, several editors, John Campbell of *Astounding Stories* in particular, began to take their roles a little more seriously and fostered rather more capable writers who are now regarded as the father figures of modern science fiction: Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein and so on.

As the quality of writing increased however, so did the expectations of many younger fans and writers, who wanted to see the field develop in newer, more radical ways. In the 1950s chief amongst those was Harlan Ellison.



Before he started writing science fiction, Harlan Ellison had been everything from a tuna fisherman to dynamite-truck driver. After one of his first books—*Gentleman Junkie and other stories of the hung-up generation*—became an underground classic, he moved to California to write scripts for Hollywood (much later his name was to be added to Ronald Reagan's famous 'list of subversives' in California).

All this time, though, he was waging a one man crusade against the science fiction establishment. The first real blow was struck in 1967 with the release of an anthology of never-before published stories, called *Dangerous Visions*.

Dangerous Visions was a landmark in the science fiction field. Stories were commissioned by Ellison solely on the basis that they could not be sold elsewhere—because of the language or the ideas in them.

In it there were established writers as well as new talents who had never sold a word in their lives.

On Ellison's behalf it was an amazingly risky step to take, both financially and artistically. No collection of stories which didn't contain some, if not all, previously published material had ever been released.

Hitherto (and it is still unfortunately the case) any anthology simply had to have two or three well known writers or stories to make it saleable to a publisher. Ellison's gambles however paid off.

The book's effect was immediate and shattering, spawning two further volumes and a host of imitators that trailed in its wake.

Ellison and the young writers around him were dubbed 'the new wave' but as Ellison said at the time:

'This isn't the wave, babies, it's the flood. A tidal surge of young writers showing their old masters where it's at.'

It is necessary to say why this new generation was so important. For the first time science fiction writers were beginning to take the world seriously and ask questions about the developments in society itself, rather than concentrating on purely scientific speculation.

What was just as exciting, though, was the sheer diversity of the new talents each pursuing different ideas, styles and so on.

Many of the writers who got their first breaks in *Dangerous Visions* are now established authors. One managed to break into the Bookmarx selection—one James Tiptree Jr whose excellent *Warm Worlds Otherwise* may still be gathering dust somewhere on the shelves in Finsbury Park.

Alienation

Ellison himself writes stories these days that sit very uncomfortably in any category—but certainly have nothing to do with 'science fiction.'

His stories are disturbing short fantasies and autobiographical cameos that reflect and speculate about present day American society.

His favourite theme is that of alienation. Man's alienation from the world is a major reason for the crudeness of people's lives, and Ellison's mission is to write such brutally honest pieces that people will recognise their own experiences.

To quote:

'When I write I try to say this, to say most of the fears you invent—atomic war, multinational conspiracies, assassination paranoias, fear of ethnic types, flying saucers—those are all bullshit—I inveigh against illogical beliefs.

'I try to tell you that fear is OK if you understand that what you fear is the same for everyone. Not the bogus bogey-man scares, slavering creatures in the darkness, but the fears we are all heir to simply because we are tiny creatures in a universe that is neither benign or malign ... it is simply enormous and unaware of us.

'That is why I tell you all this, and why I write to shock and anger and frighten you—to tell you that you are not alone.'

Politically Ellison represents something that can only be confined by the word 'radical'. In his writings there is little or no class politics as we in the SWP understand it, but a host of ideas about sexual politics, racism, violence and about people.

Ellison's brand of radicalism has brilliant insights into the horrors of the world, but little coherent thought on how to change it. That isn't so much a criticism of the individual, but a fact about the poverty of the left in America.

I would urge anyone to try and search out some of Harlan Ellison's books—in particular any of the *Dangerous Visions* series, or some of his more recent work *Shatterday* or *The Deathbird Stories* (which contains one of the best anti-religious stories ever written).

Harlan Ellison was one of the first people who started me thinking about the rotten bloody world we live in, and there are a lot worse places to start. ■

Bill Thompson

Lenin and the patriots

Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International. Documents: 1907-1916 The Preparatory Years

J Riddell ed,
Monad £8.50

THIS IS a book which should be studied by every serious socialist. It contains many of the most important documents of the workers' movement between 1907 and 1916, some for the first time in English. That period saw major debates in the international socialist movement, then organised in the Second International, about the nature of imperialism and the methods to be used for resisting the war that was clearly brewing. Reading these debates is both a vital and an enjoyable experience.

By the early years of this century it was obvious to everyone in the socialist movement that competition between the rival economic and political empires was causing a series of major crises. Opinions, however, were rather more divided both about the real role of imperialism and about what to do in the event of a war breaking out. At the 1907 Stuttgart Conference the parties of the international argued out their positions.

On the right of the international were the so-called 'revisionists' led by Eduard Bernstein. They were against any calls for withdrawal from the colonies or encouragement to the colonial peoples to rebel against their oppressors. Bernstein argued:

'We must get away from the utopian notion of simply abandoning the colonies. The ultimate consequence of such a view would be to give the United States back to the Indians. The colonies are there; we must come to terms with that. Socialists too should acknowledge the need of civilised peoples to act somewhat like guardians of the uncivilised.'

His ally David put it even more bluntly when he argued that if colonial rule was abolished: 'What would then occur in the colonies? They would not experience human rule but a return to barbarism.'

This sort of pro-imperialist arrogance is of course familiar to us today: it is one of the arguments that many in the Labour Party use to justify the continuing British occupation of Northern Ireland. Then, it was greeted with outrage. A Pole, Marchlewski, came back quickly:

'David has asserted the right of one nation to exercise tutelage over another. But we Poles know the real meaning of this tutelage, since both the Russian tsar and the Prussian government act as our guardians.'

The same division of opinion was present on the question of what to do if a war was to break out among the imperialist nations. On the right of the conference stood the German revisionist Vollmar, who wanted to reject the internationalism of the international's history and thus to defend 'his own' country

should a war break out:

'It is not true that "international" means the same thing as "anti-national". It is not true that we have no fatherland. And I use the word "fatherland" without adding some hair-splitting elucidation of the concept. I know why socialism must be international, but my love for humanity can never prevent me from being a good German, just as it cannot prevent others from being good citizens of France or Italy.'

On the other hand there were those like Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin who rejected such views outright and who demanded the strengthening of the conference resolutions to make it clear that the majority rejected them. On this occasion, Lenin and Luxemburg carried the day. The conference re-affirmed both its opposition to colonialism and to imperialist war.

But the organisation remained united: despite the formal majority, the likes of David and Vollmar remained prominent and influential leaders.

The First World War

On 4 August 1914, reality in the shape of the First World War smashed this dream of unity. Faced with the choice of voting for war credits or against them, the parliamentary fraction of the German Socialist Party, the SPD, voted for the war.

Lenin at first thought the newspaper in which this vote was recorded was a secret police forgery. All over Europe the socialist movement divided between those who supported their bourgeoisie in the war, usually the majority, and those who opposed the war.

The supporters of the war cheered workers on to the horrible slaughter, entered governments that broke strikes and imprisoned opponents, slandered those of their former comrades who still stood for internationalism and became the best propagandists for their own capitalist class.

The opponents of the war were fewer in number and they were divided. On the far left stood Lenin and the Bolsheviks, who recognised that the old international was dead and that it was vital to set up a new organisation as soon as possible. But even this group was divided amongst themselves: Lenin, for example, began by opposing the demand for 'peace' and insisting that to call for anything less than civil war was to capitulate to the middle-heads who did not see the class lines clearly and who wanted to join with middle-class pacifists. Reality was to knock his head against the wall, too: by 1917 'peace' was to become one of the key slogans.

What united this group was a recognition of the correctness of the slogan raised by the first SPD deputy to break party discipline and to vote against the war—Karl Liebknecht, who argued that:

'The main enemy of the German people is in Germany: German imperialism, the German war party, and German secret diplomacy. Here in our own land is the enemy that the German people must combat. We must wage this political struggle alongside the proletariat of other countries, as they struggle against their own imperialists.'

The other major group were those who opposed the war on a variety of grounds but who were not prepared to act on the consequences of their beliefs. They included, for example, some 15 SPD deputies, led by Ledebour, who while opposed to the war were not yet prepared to break party discipline and vote against the credits.

Despite these differences, the socialists who opposed the war met together at Zimmerwald in Switzerland in September 1915. Just 13 months after the start of the war, this was the first full meeting that the opponents of the 'social chauvinists' had been able to organise. The most contentious item they had to discuss was the concrete demands that the conference would put forward. While there was general agreement that the war was an imperialist one which ought to be opposed most vigorously, there was much more debate on how to be vigorous.

The right, led by Ledebour, were determined to avoid being pinned down too much. As Hoffman, one of his close supporters put it: 'Hammer at us as much as you want; just don't draw up any resolutions that will get us into hot water'. Ledebour himself argued: 'We all hope that revolutionary action will take place, but a detailed call for it should not be trumpeted to the world.'

The left at the conference, led by Lenin, carried out a vigorous polemic against this current. They argued that to talk of peace in the abstract was to avoid the fact that the war was producing a revolutionary crisis and the only way out for the working class was the overthrow of capitalism. According to Lenin:

'After this war, other, mainly colonial wars will be waged. Unless the proletariat turns off the social-imperialist way, proletarian solidarity will be completely destroyed; that is why we must determine common tactics. If we adopt only a manifesto [the right wing] will once again start deceiving the masses; they will keep saying that they too, oppose war and want peace. The old vagueness will remain.'

But despite this exemplary firmness on issues of principle, Lenin was able to avoid the trap of mindless sectarianism. When it became clear that if the left pushed their resolutions to the point of a vote the conference would not be able to come to any joint agreement and the work of the anti-war forces would be set back, the left argued:

'Because the acceptance of our amendment would to some extent jeopardise the success of the conference and since Ledebour poses his opposition in terms of an ultimatum, we withdraw our amendment under protest.'

The Zimmerwald conference thus ended without a clear division between the revolutionary current, the 'Zimmerwald left' led by

the Bolsheviks, and the 'centrists' led by Ledebour and his co-thinkers in the SPD.

Under pressure from the left, Ledebour and 14 other deputies joined the two revolutionaries in the German Reichstag, Karl Leibknecht and Otto Ruhle, in finally putting their words in to practice. Three months after Zimmerwald, nearly eighteen months into the war, they finally voted against the next set of war credits.

This did not represent a major change of mind on the part of the centrists. Ledebour and his co-thinkers were classics of their type: they stood between the open capitulation to capitalism practiced by the war-mongering majority and the revolutionary internationalism of the left led by Luxemburg.

Because of the unstable foundation of their position, they tended to swing between the poles of the movement. Their type of politics was to become a major political force, not only in Germany but elsewhere as well. It is quite possible for large political formations to grow up, and even to endure for some months or years, which oscillate between revolution and reform.

Most often, the oscillation involves revolutionary phrases and reformist activity, but sometimes such groups can move even to ultra-left activity. The reality of the developing crisis, now as then, is that the revolutionary pole of attraction starts off being a very small one, and as different social layers move into struggle under the pressure of events so their ideas move to the left at an uneven rate.

People who enter struggle with all sorts of ideas do not automatically shift directly to revolutionary socialism, particularly when there are other organisations which act as a powerful pole of attraction. These centrist organisations can often grow quite quickly and provide at least a temporary resting place for some of the people radicalised by the crisis.

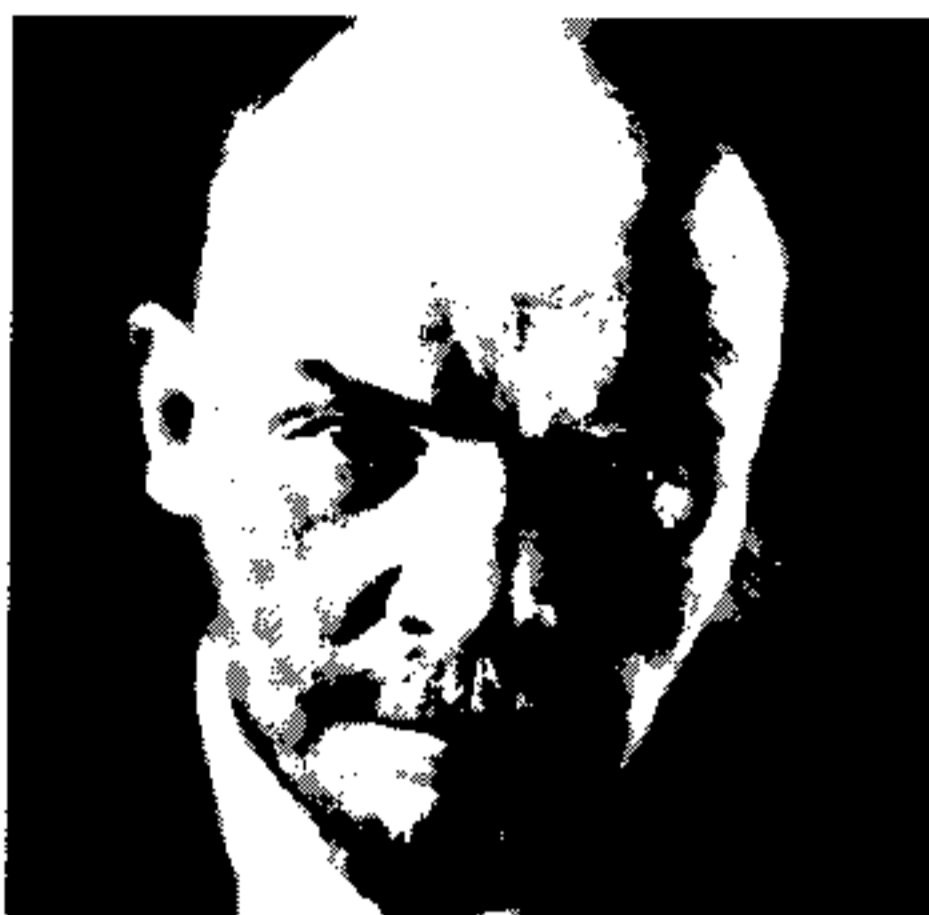
Growing opposition

Germany provided a case in point. The revolutionary left, mainly centred around Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Leibknecht and Klara Zetkin, but also involving other quite distinct groups who also opposed the war, provided a pole of attraction for some of the workers who were starting to break with the nationalism that had swept the movement in 1914. But they were a tiny and persecuted minority, and it has also to be said that, unlike the Russians, they had no long tradition of independent political organisation to enable them to carry out systematic work amongst the soldiers, sailors and workers for whom the reality of the war was becoming ever more obvious.

Into the vacuum stepped all sorts of confused currents. As the masses moved to the left under the impact of the horrors and hardships of the war they too lurched left, but, by the time matters came to the revolutionary crisis of 1918-1919 it would become clear just how unstable their politics were.

By 1916 the bulk of popular enthusiasm for the war had evaporated. In Britain the ruling class, with the agreement of the trade union bureaucracy, introduced conscrip-

tion. In Germany rank and file organisation was starting to emerge in the rapidly expanding engineering industry. In Russia there were mass strikes against the tsar.



And by 1916 the lines of battle were also clearly defined in the working class movement. The SPD leadership expelled the deputies who continued to vote against the war credits on 24 March 1916. Kautsky, one of the leading centrist opponents of the war, leading the 'Working Group' wrote of the situation:

'The question is no longer whether the opposition will triumph but what kind of opposition will win. (The Spartacus group's) radicalism corresponds to the present needs of the broad uneducated masses. Leibknecht is today the most popular man in the trenches. Everyone who has been there unanimously assures us of that. The discontented masses understand nothing of his particular political policies, but they see him as the man who is acting to end the war, and for them, that is the main question ... the Working Group is ... the bond that actually still holds the party together ... We are the centre, and our strength will determine whether the party can overcome the centrifugal forces from the right and the left.'

Kautsky, like many in the centre, believed that the war was an interruption of normal political life and things could be patched up when life got back to normal.

On the left it was clear that the old organisations were finished, destroyed from within by the rot of years. It was necessary to prepare for the great revolutionary crisis that the war heralded and to begin to construct not only national revolutionary organisations but also a new international.

This book contains the record of that process of debate and clarification. At the beginning of the period we find people quoting Marx to justify their support for colonial empires, and still co-existing in the same international, and often in the same party, with people fighting to free oppressed nations. By the end of the book the left has split twice and emerged as a much clearer force. The revolution and the struggle to build mass communist parties will be the subject of later books that we eagerly await.

Because it contains a wealth of original material that was previously only available in obscure sources this book fleshes out many arguments of which we have

previously only known the bare outline. But it is not perfect.

The book is produced by the SWP in the USA, an organisation that was once Trotskyist but is today well on the road to Stalinism. In this book that does not harm matters too much, but it does have some effects. One of them is the desire to maximise the distance between Trotsky and Lenin on a number of key issues, and to build up the role of Zinoviev as the key associate of Lenin.

Sometimes this leads to a useful clarification of Trotsky's position. For example, his account of the Easter Rising in 1916 shows one of the weaknesses of his general view. He believed that the failure of the rising was due to the acceptance by the Irish peasantry of British rule provided they retained their land rights. He therefore thought that the coming struggle for national independence would be led by the working class. In that, he was clearly wrong: he mistook a possibility for a certainty.

Behind this is an important point which touches on the essence of revolutionary politics. Trotsky developed the theory of permanent revolution to explain the dynamics of the Russian revolution. In essence it argued that the working class could lead the peasantry in the overthrow of tsarism and would then go on to carry out a socialist revolution. While that was to prove to be the case a couple of years later in Russia itself, Trotsky seems to have applied a rather crude version of this theory to Ireland in a very mechanical way. In fact, it was not until the experience of the Chinese revolution a decade later that Trotsky was really to think through the theory as a whole. It is useful to see here how even the great man himself could mis-apply his own great insight.

Towards Stalinism

The editors have published this material because they wish to bury the theory of permanent revolution, which they scandalously omit in their discussion of the positions of the Russian left on the coming revolution. Their developing Stalinism also leads them to publish substantial selections from Lenin which are easily available elsewhere in place of other more original material, and to publish some bits of Zinoviev which were best left forgotten.

While at one level it is useful to see what the Bolshevik position looked like at the hands of someone other than Lenin, at least one attack on Trotsky, *War and the Revolutionary Crisis* is little but vulgar abuse. All it teaches us is that Lenin's polemical style was, when stripped of his dialectical genius, a very blunt instrument indeed.

Of course, no history can ever be free of the intentions of the authors, and all marxist publishing is heavily influenced by the present, and this is no exception. Here, at least, it only makes parts of the book mildly irritating. Later on it could get more serious.

Meanwhile, read this book. For anyone with any serious commitment to revolutionary politics this collection of documents written three-quarters of a century ago is better reading than most contemporary detective novels. ■

Colin Sparks

Communism in Germany under the Weimar Republic
Ben Fowkes
MacMillan £4.95

HOW CAN a mass revolutionary party be built in an advanced industrial country? How does it relate to powerfully entrenched reformist organisations? How does it seize opportunities which arise for moving from low level struggles over day-to-day issues to the direct fight for power?

Germany in the years between World War One and the seizure of power by the Nazis contained the largest revolutionary movement ever seen in an advanced industrial country. Any history of that movement must be judged by socialists on the help it provides in answering

Missed opportunities

such questions.

Ben Fowkes has clearly put a lot of effort into studying the early history of German Communism—he provides a mass of information not easily obtainable elsewhere. And he is clearly sympathetic to the revolutionary goals the young Communist Party set itself. Yet the book is not all that helpful in answering the key questions and so must be a disappointment for revolutionaries.

Partly this is because of some strange historical judgements. For instance, the author devotes less attention to the mass strikes and up-

risings which greeted the attempted right wing coup of March 1920 (the 'Kapp putsch') than to the aborted attempt to get a revolutionary offensive off the ground a year later (the 'March action'). Some of the key struggles of 1919, like the formation of the two Bavarian Soviet Republics, get just a bare mention.

But the book has a more serious failing. It does not see, as Gramsci put it, that the history of a party is the history of a class seen from a certain angle. It does not start with the revolutionary possibilities, argue what could be done to fulfil

them, and then see how the German Communists responded. Instead, it tends to get trapped into looking at the arguments within the German Communist Party and the Communist International in isolation from these wider possibilities.

To some extent such an approach is almost inevitable after the Stalinisation of the international Communist movement in the mid 1920s. Then what happened in the various Communist Parties did have very little to do with real struggle and real possibilities. Their history does tend to degenerate into a history of personal intrigue.

But the history of the years 1918-23 was very different. And that difference is not conveyed in this book. It's a pity, because it means that much of the material the author puts together is wasted. ■

Chris Harman

But where are the workers?

The history of the Irish Working Class
Peter Beresford Ellis
Pluto Press £5.50p

IN RECENT years there has been an outpouring of new books about Ireland. In part this reflects the fact that Ireland has become something of a respectable issue for many on the left.

Unfortunately few of these new titles offer much that is new.

Beresford Ellis's book was first published in 1972. It set itself a major task. To provide 'a general history of the Irish working class' and to develop on the writings of Irish socialist James Connolly. This volume updates the story to 1984.

But unfortunately Beresford Ellis failed then, and fails now, in his task.

Two thirds of the book is simply a rewrite of Connolly's *Labour in Irish History*. Readers are recommended to stick to the original. The remainder of the book deals with events from the 1913 Dublin Lockout, the Easter Rising three years later up till Sinn Fein's recent electoral success.

In doing so Beresford Ellis ceases to provide a history of Irish working class struggles. Instead he falls back on a rendition of Irish republican history.

Several important events are either slipped over or ignored. The 1934 unemployment riots on Belfast are passed over in a sentence—despite the fact that the unity of Protestant and Catholic workers shook the newly-formed Unionist regime. The 1919 Belfast General Strike fares worse—it isn't mentioned at all.

No effort is made to outline the rise of a new industrial working class in the Irish Republic during the 1960s and 70s—years which saw two major strike waves.

None of this is an accident. In

1972, as the author admits, he hoped Irish unity could be achieved either through 'a strong political development of the Irish working class' or a 'change in the position of capitalism in Ireland ... which could bring the two sections together.'

Twelve years ago such views reflected the politics of the 'official' republicans—today's Workers Party. In the first edition of this book Beresford Ellis identified himself with them.

Briefly they sketched out a road to socialism in Ireland which involved passing through several complicated stages. Partition could only be overcome through the development of a strong labour movement—of the Kinnoek/Willis kind. In the North that meant uniting Protestant and Catholic workers on simple economic grounds and not challenging partition.

When the labour movement was strong enough Irish unity might be possible—unity within the confines of capitalism—and workers could begin to plan the next steps to socialism.

Not surprisingly a short cut has been found. Today the Workers Party look to the capitalist class to provide a second industrial revolution. Their saviours are the EEC, multinational capital and the British state. Part of the deal includes full support for Britain against the IRA.

Today Beresford Ellis has moved on. What is central is gaining Britain's withdrawal. Any 'natural reunion or consensus between the Catholic and Protestant working classes (remains) impossible while Britain remains'.

That this flies in the face of evidence touched on in this book is simply ignored. Socialism is once again removed from any foreseeable agenda. And the agency for change in Ireland? By implication the Provisionals.

This explains why this book offers no socialist critique of republicanism. Nowhere do we discover that revolutionaries like Trotsky explained that it was the development of capitalism internationally which produced the problems a country like Ireland faces today. Those problems can only be overcome by seeing the national question as one part—an important part—of a movement for socialist revolution.

In 1972 Beresford Ellis offered one stages theory which ruled out socialism. Today he offers another. In doing so he fails to provide a much needed history of Irish workers and their struggles. ■

Chris Bamberg



1928 KPD election poster

A chance to learn

Inside Asia
50a Oakley Road, London N1
2L5
Annual Subscription £10.00

INSIDE ASIA is a new magazine launched with the aims of promoting discussion on Asian affairs.

In the introduction the editors point to the confusion caused by events in South East Asia after the Vietnam War—the Khmer Rouge government and the war between Vietnam and China.

These events certainly caused a great deal of confusion within socialist organisations which had illusions in the 'Socialist States'. They also resulted in the decline of the left in countries like Thailand.

The arguments are not confined to events in Asia. They are relevant to all struggles in less industrialised countries. Any reappraisal on the left of the Stalinist legacy from China to Nicaragua is to be

welcomed.

This magazine's content at present is wide-ranging. The first issue contained articles which showed a depressing naivety concerning Indira Gandhi and her son.

However there were some excellent articles, one on the South Korean economy shows how, despite all the rhetoric about free enterprise, the economy has been tightly state controlled and adopts economic policies similar to those of North Korea.

Another article dealt with the response by trade unions and other groups in Hong Kong to the deal between Britain and China.

It is difficult to see how this magazine can pay its way. Hence the price (£1.50 per issue) However it could provide a forum for Marxists to discuss strategies in the 'third world' and also give British socialists a chance to learn something about Asia. ■

Giles Ungpakorn

The anarchist agitator

Emma Goldman: an intimate life
Alice Wexler
Virago £5.95

ACCORDING TO Margaret Anderson, editor of the *Little Review*, 'She was considered a monster, an exponent of free love and bombs,' and, 'Her name was enough in those days to produce a shudder.'

Emma Goldman entered the anarchist movement in 1889 at the age of 20 and made an immediate impact. She soon became known as 'Red Emma' and was described by the government as one of 'the ablest and most dangerous anarchists in the country'. She was in constant conflict with the American ruling class, spending time in and out of prison, until she was deported to Russia on 21 December 1919.

Alice Wexler's biography of Emma Goldman is an absorbing read which faithfully records the details of 'Red Emma's' life and in the process gives us an outline of American history at the turn of the century.

Unfortunately, rather than analysing Goldman's place in American labour history the author concentrates on her personality. She writes in the introduction, 'What attracted me from the start were the conflicts and contradictions that Goldman saw at the centre of her own character and that she could never wholly untangle.' The book suffers from this being her main preoccupation. She concentrates too much on the psychological motives behind Goldman's actions rather than her muddled political ideas.

Emma Goldman was quite a remarkable woman. She first attracted national attention as the collaborator of Alexander Berkman who tried to assassinate steel magnate Henry Clay Frick during the Homestead steel strike of 1892.

She became famous as a charismatic platform speaker. Thousands turned up to hear her denunciations of capitalism, militarism and government plus her defence of atheism, sexual freedom and homosexuality. In San Francisco in January 1919 she spoke for two weeks to 2,000 each night. Probably the largest turn-out was at an anti-conscription meeting in New York City which attracted about 8,000 people. As a speaker she was described as 'a spellbinder', 'the finest orator...man or woman—living'.

Tragically, Goldman's talents and energies were largely wasted, for however vehemently she attacked capitalism she had no strategy for smashing it. After 30 years of activism in America she left



no organisation or movement to show for it and capitalist America was as strong as ever. Even Wexler has to admit that Goldman's only legacy is a personal one.

This was the consequence of her anarchist politics. Anarchism, she argued, 'builds not on classes, but on men and women'. At an International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam in August 1917 she emphasised 'individual autonomy' as the 'essential principle' of anarchism. She constantly defended the absolute right of the individual.

When she spoke about emancipation it was in connection with the inner psychological liberation of the individual, not the 'emancipation of the working class', therefore for her it was quite logical to base her political practice on the individual. In reality this meant working with middle-class intellectuals. However the psychological liberation of individuals has never been known to challenge capitalism in any way, even if certain people feel they have achieved intellectual freedom.

Although Goldman defended syndicalism and raised money for the Industrial Workers of the World (Wobblies), she made no attempt to build a working class organisation or intervene systematically in the class struggle. One of the Wobbly leaders, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, although impressed by 'the force, eloquence and fire that poured forth from this woman' expressed disappointment that Goldman developed into a 'lecturer' for the entertainment of wealthy liberals. Even a fellow anarchist, Berkman, criticised her because presenting 'lectures for outside and chance audiences did not build a movement'.

Her political limitations are clear when her attitude to women's liberation is considered. The solution was for women to begin with 'inner regeneration'. True emancipation began in a woman's soul. I wouldn't like to try explaining that to a

working-class woman worn out with eight hours at a factory and a family to look after.

She dismissed notions of class struggle along with Marx who 'was after all hopelessly middle class, the typical German professor who knew a lot about books but absolutely nothing about life'. No coherent criticism was developed by her however. As an anarchist she opposed the formation of revolutionary parties because they stifled the individual. She realised that true individual freedom could not be achieved within capitalism but was unable to offer any strategy for smashing the capitalist system.

Lenin, on the other hand, was equally concerned with the idea of freedom but translated this concern into a strategy for overturning the capitalist state. He took from Marx the conclusion that only the working class can build socialism and that the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class. On this clear understanding he built a revolutionary party capable of leading the Russian working class to victory in November 1917.

Goldman welcomed the victory of the Bolsheviks initially, but she did not change any of her political ideas. Lenin's strategy for changing had proved successful and many socialists did adapt their political

practice accordingly. For Emma Goldman however, the only reason for supporting the Bolsheviks was that the American ruling class hated them. As early as 1920 she turned against the Bolsheviks, failing to see that their first concern could not be individual freedom when they were desperately fighting for survival.

Wexler does not discuss the time that Goldman spent in the Soviet Union, from 1920 to 1921, but finishes the biography at the deportation of Goldman from America. This means she also misses out Goldman's involvement with the Spanish anarchists during the civil war. This period showed clearly the danger of the anarchist obsession with individualism, in political practice.

The American ruling class considered her 'a monster' and one of the most dangerous agitators living. She was able to attract enormous audiences but this was her personal following and did not pose any threat to American capitalism. Wexler's biography is well researched and is an absorbing read. The feeling you are left with after reading it is one of frustration. Agitators of the calibre of Emma Goldman should play a large role in advancing working class struggle. She did not do so because her political analysis was inadequate. ■

Lesley Hoggart

Worthy but sterile

Government and Politics in Africa
William Tordoff

I DO NOT know William Tordoff, the university teacher. At a guess I should think he is kind and helpful. His book reads as if his university department is threatened by cuts and all the staff were told to cobble their lectures together and publish them. Crudely, his views are simplistic pro-Africa, rather than pro-America or pro-Russia.

He manages, as any good teacher would, to get all the essentials of Africa's contemporary and historical background over. Yet too much academic tightrope walking has taken all the guts and fire out of the picture. Take anti-colonialism. If I wanted an introduction to African politics I would want to know about such formative events as how the British army cut its anti-insurgency teeth fighting the Land and Freedom Army during the 1950s' so-called Mau Mau uprising in Kenya.

How, for instance, did Idi Amin become trained as a torturer by the

British in their Kenyan concentration camps? But then writing something like that would cut all too close to the current Northern Ireland bone and would get the university department cut.

So we get a lot of worthy and ultimately sterile characterisation of the administrative, political and cultural differences across the spectrum between 'Afro-Marxist' totalitarian Ethiopia and corrupt 'capitalist' Zaire. In the process views like our own are written off as idealistic.

I would suggest that Tordoff try a second youth by working again in Zambia where his favoured benign state capitalism holds sway. He might regain some of the belief in 'worker/spontaneity/internationalism' which years of being a Professor at Manchester have obviously rubbed out of him. In Zambia workers' strike actions would give him as rude a shock as they last gave the Kaunda regime only a month ago. Africa's working class is very much more alive and kicking than this book would allow us to believe. ■

John Rogers

Revolutionary liberation

Gay Liberation in the eighties
 Jamie Gough and Mike Macnair
Pluto Press £4.95

THIS BOOK has an aim I totally endorse; to argue that gay liberation is only possible with socialism and the fight for socialism will only achieve class unity and socialism if it includes gay liberation.

Unfortunately, the good intentions of the writers are beset by major difficulties. And these problems are not just sectarian quibbles but issues that strike at the heart of the book's aim. Furthermore, the problems lie at the centre of the authors' politics.

The first set of problems for the authors is how can you argue that socialism equals gay liberation when regimes you consider to be workers' states are not known for their progressive views or actions towards gays?

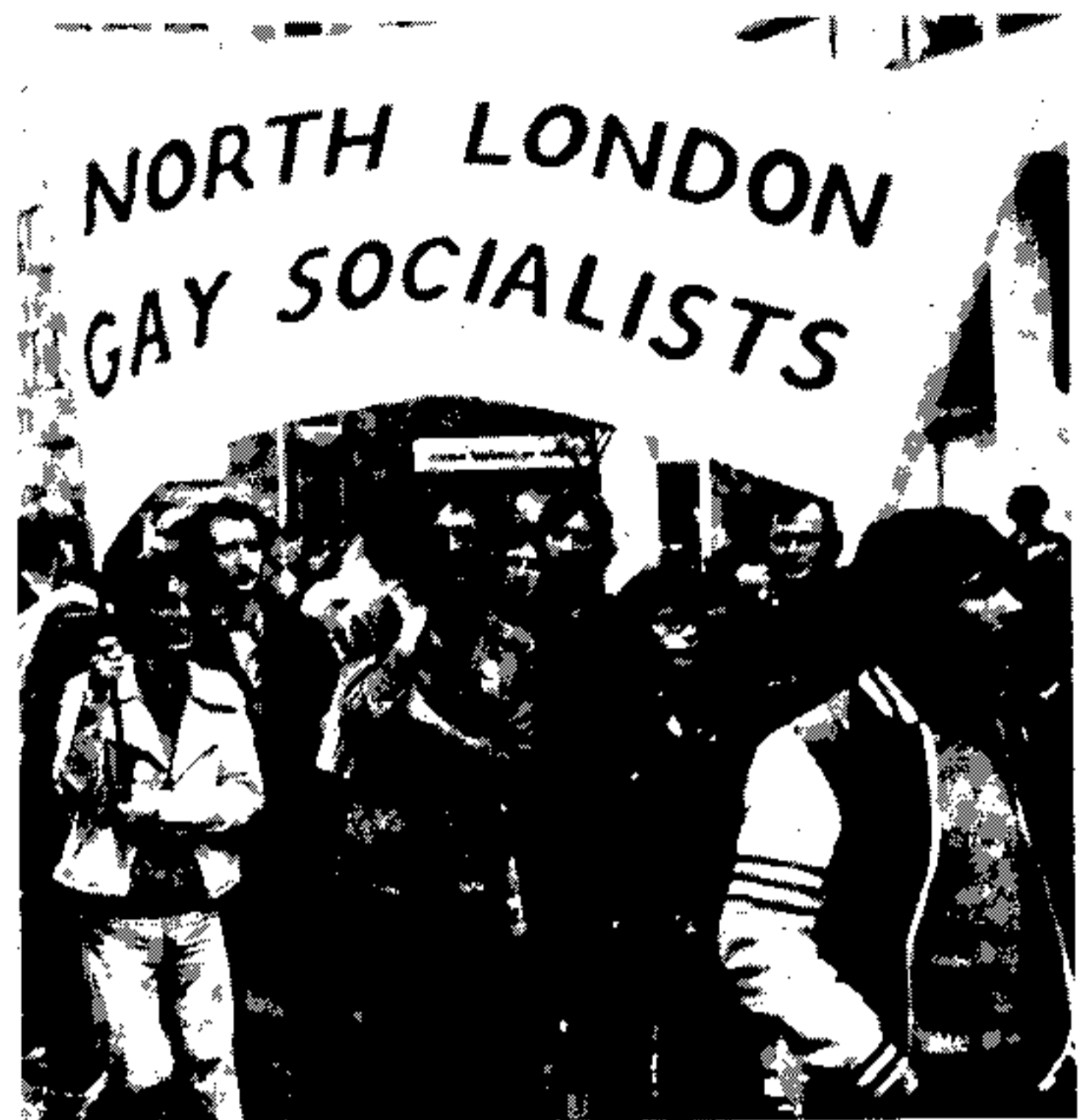
Cuba, which the authors deal with in some detail, has one of the worst records for oppression of gays. The explanation the authors give for the lack of gay rights in Cuba is that there was no gay move-

ment there. This is both unconvincing (why wasn't there a need for such a movement in Petrograd in 1917 when gay rights were won?) and downright peculiar. Peculiar because in the mid-80s the once quite large autonomous gay movement of the late 60s and 70s has, by and large, joined the Labour Party.

This includes the authors. And the argument smacks of blaming gays for their oppression.

This squirming over Cuba's record of oppression is mirrored by a fudging of the gay movement itself. You would have thought two marxists would at least be interested in the class nature of the gay movement and how it relates to the class struggle. If they are, it is an interest they keep to themselves.

The closer the book gets to concrete questions the more fudging it displays. The authors don't deal with the problems facing gay socialists. What should the relationship between a cross-class movement and workers' struggles be? Do gay workers experience the same oppression as professional or upper class gays? Should socialists un-



critically work inside cross-class movements or try to separate off workers?

Lenin certainly argued against accepting middle class-led libera-

tion movements and the Bolsheviks argued and acted against similar cross-class and middle class-led women's movements.

Instead, the authors lapse into a form of moralism. Workers ought to be non-sexist; socialists ought to fight for gay rights; gays ought to be socialists; but there is no method as to how these changes are to be brought about. The impression left is that what is needed is for the correct ideas to be fed to the masses, or imposing the right rules and laws on them.

Rosa Luxemburg once commented that arguments between socialists as to how socialism would be achieved may appear trivial but in fact mask fundamental differences not on how to get socialism, but of what socialism is.

The final set of problems with the book is that it dithers between two fundamental views of socialism. Is socialism getting the right folk on the right committee, who will then legislate it into being, or is it workers fighting from below, fighting to change the world, and in doing so changing themselves?

On the one hand, the book hints that socialism means workers' councils with society being run directly by the working class. On the other hand, parliament and local councils have a progressive role to play in achieving this.

It may seem rather sectarian to accuse fellow revolutionaries of parliamentary cretinism, but Lenin's famous phrase could hardly be more appropriately applied. The book ends with the cliched platitude of a programme of reforms—revolutionary socialism at its worst, another set of motions to be ignored by a future Labour government. ■

Noel Halifax

A radical molehill

Poor Labouring Men—Rural Radicalism in Norfolk 1870-1923
 Alan Howkins
History Workshop Series £7.95

FOR TODAY'S urban Bolshevik the thought of rural radicalism in Norfolk probably conjures up a misty view of haystack burning and rather primitive trade unionism. Alan Howkins' book can provide an eye-opener.

It is at its strongest when explaining how farm labourers organised and how the tactics differed over time, and according to the agricultural cycle. This reflects the use of at least two dozen interviews with people born before or around 1900. The book is less clear in relating what happened in Norfolk to the rest of Britain, even allowing for Norfolk's isolation.

Howkins' main theme is that while class struggle on the land was localised and fragmented in the 19th century, in parts of Norfolk the emphasis on arable farming meant that there was already a structure of sizeable farms worked by labourers who did not have access to land or charities. They might live several miles away from where they worked, and were outside the control of master, squire or parson for much of the time. Agricultural depression meant a smaller, more

permanent workforce, and in periods of labour shortage opportunities for labour organisation.

While Howkins catalogues the key influences—primitive Methodism on the first Norfolk unions in the 1860s and political Liberalism on the 'Second' (1906 onwards)—he understates the potential of the revival of trade unionism in the early 1890s. In these years, for example, the rural Norfolk Federal Union merged with the Norwich based Labour Union, and it took a number of sharp conflicts to kill the union off. Similarly the efforts of the socialists in Norwich, especially the Socialist League, to spread ideas in the surrounding villages are underplayed.

It was in one such village, St Faiths (where the SL had a branch in the 80s and the Navvies Union had a strong presence in the 90s) that farmworkers demanded that their union should behave as a trade union rather than an adjunct of the Liberal Party.

The defeat at St Faiths, and other villages, led to the election of a new leadership of the union with a less isolationist outlook, a key component in the National Agricultural Labourers Union from 1913 onwards. But it still emphasised conciliation.

After the First World War many members were prepared to take

strike action. A hundred and sixty struck for six months in the Ringers' dispute of 1921-22. This was followed by the Norfolk 'Great Strike' of 1923.

After 1923, the National Agricultural Workers Union had its own version of Spencerism, in the shape of Sam Peel, a Labour councillor and JP who opposed strikes for the sake of an alleged wider 'agricultural interest' and whose supporters made up a sizeable portion of the Norfolk Union. The links with the Labour Party, strong in the early 1920s, were further undermined as Labour 'arrived' electorally and now switched to glib phrases and promises to 'do something' about the tied cottage system.

While the Norfolk angle limits the scope of the book, it contains a record of struggles, often in the face of staggering difficulties. While Howkins is less detailed on the links between urban and rural workers in Norfolk, he rightly does not try to make a socialist mountain out of a radical molehill. He does try to do justice to farmworkers whose struggles figure prominently, and who haven't really had a look-in in labour history since Reg Groves wrote *Sharpen the Sickle* 36 years ago. The problem now is, how many agricultural workers will get a chance to see this book? ■

Steve Cherry

Sex war or class war?

Gender at Work

Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle
Pluto Press

GENDER AT WORK was written in Australia against a familiar background of unemployment, new technology, badly organised workplaces and the division of worker against worker.

The aim of the book according to its authors is 'to argue that the sexual division of labour is not "functional" to capitalism but is a defining feature of it, as central as wage labour or surplus value.'

This is a fair summary of the book and as a feminist book that treats class as a major concern it should be treated seriously.

The book develops the theme that at work, all male workers from shop floor workers to directors benefit by the creation of 'male and female' spheres of work. The domination of men and the subordination of women lie behind this distinction.

The author looks at various industries to back up this theory — manufacturing, banking, retailing, computers and hospitals.

The first major piece of evidence is the introduction of new technology which makes work more boring.

Therefore men don't mind its introduction as long as they can see

someone, ie women doing work that is even less rewarding than their own.

An added ingredient is that 'the machine symbolises masculinity and enables men to live out fantasies about power and domination which in turn produce this connection.'

Ridiculous ideas like this run throughout the book and devalue its useful information.

The authors argue that women are less likely to get promoted than men, that those that do tend to be single, and that working class women who work tend to be more confident than their counterparts at home.

They correctly state that the position of women in the workforce is part of the historical development of the labour process and give an accurate explanation of how this occurred.

But they then go on to the most absurd claims that technical and sexual domination are one and the same thing. For them this theory holds good no matter what grade or job is held.

'Men in computing, particularly those who work for the computer companies...represent a world view in which technology triumphs over everything.'

The authors' final proof that gender at work is as integral to capitalism as wage labour or surplus value is the division of authority in hospitals between male doctors and female nurses.

They claim this division is maintained because much of women's employment mirrors the tasks they do for their families at home.

Cynthia Cockburn's introduction to the book contains the key to understanding it.

Cockburn argues that 'One way of looking at the world is to see it as the integration of two distinct systems ... That way we can ask what bearing one has on the other and in what form contradictions develop between them. Another way, preferred by Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle, is to think of ourselves as living within a unitary system that is both capitalism and patriarchy, so tightly enmeshed is the power play of sex with that of class.'

In reality the world view of both is the same. The authors' main task is to show 'An adequate understanding of the social relations of work cannot be gained by analysing the basic class relations involved and then superimposing the category of sex.'

To dismiss a class analysis as

inadequate is to deny the historical circumstances which led to the sexual division of labour which the authors explain so well elsewhere in the book.

The division of worker against worker be it black and white, old and young, men and women, skilled and unskilled or Nottinghamshire miner against Yorkshire miner, is as old as capitalism itself.

It is not the case that most men benefit from the inferior position of women at work.

The problem is that these ideas are extremely plausible because of the radical terms in which they are dressed.

But at the end of the day these ideas can continue to help the bosses to divide workers.

If there are two battles then it is all too easy to fight on one and compromise on the other. Thus a victory for women will be seen as women being more represented in both the management and trade union structure at a higher level, as equal opportunity legislation, separate women's committees or caucuses and an emphasis upon positive discrimination dependent upon the overall needs of the employers.

The sex battle can always be seen to win through tokens, because the exploitation and oppression which continue to exist can be blamed on the class system.

For this reason these ideas are dangerous and should be firmly rejected—as should the book.■

Maureen Watson

Good, and funny

Dance Hall of the Dead

Tony Hillerman
Pluto £7.95, hardback, £2.50
paperback

Days like these

Nigel Fountain
Pluto £8.95 hardback, £2.50
paperback

A FEW months ago we published a review of the first four novels in the Pluto crime fiction series. They were something of a disappointment. The two latest volumes seem to be a marked improvement.

Dance Hall of the Dead is actually a standard police murder thriller. But it is set in a native American reservation in the United States and the cop is himself a Navajo Indian.

It is a story of rivalry between different tribes, of the destruction of even the last vestiges of the old culture by American capitalism and of the exploitative role of the archeologists who hang round the settlement. The story is a little bit predictable, and drags at times, but the book is interesting about the life on the reservations and, I suspect, fairly accurate.

Days like these I know is accurate in its description of the slightly seedy left in North East London. It is also an extremely good book. The story is about secret fascist plots, and about a character on the fringes of the left, Raven, who gets pulled into investigating the fascist intrigue and finds he can't let go.

What makes the book is the main character himself. He is cynical about most things, including his socialist friends. But he is also committed. So he keeps digging until he solves the mystery. Most of the book's action is set in London, where it is excellent. When it moves to Wales, the feel of the book becomes much less sure, and to be honest the action is a little bit too *Boy's Own* to be true.

But that really is my only quibble. If you like crime novels, buy this book and read it.

The story is good, the humour is very dry and very funny. There are a number of scenes where socialists denounce each other or Raven, in a somewhat earnest manner. They would make even the most earnest socialist laugh.■

Lindsey German



Misleading statistics

The Facts of Everyday Life
Tony Osman
Faber £6.95

THIS book claims that it is 'a must for people who want to know.' A large format paperback, extensively illustrated with computer drawn maps, the book is really a regional picture of Britain. Each section has titles like 'Hold your Breath' (about air pollution) 'On Your Bike' (unemployment) and so on. Superficially, it is an attractive and accessible book.

Unfortunately on closer examination it is unsatisfactory in a number of ways.

First of all, the statistics are almost all taken from government sources. Nothing wrong with that, since the government is the only body which collects enough information on which to base a regional picture of the country. But the government itself publishes rather more complete compilations like *Social Trends*, *Regional Trends* and the *Annual Abstract of Statistics*.

If you were looking for a particular piece of information it would be better to look at these in a library, especially as the map format restricts the information

you can get out of this book.

More importantly, the author—who is science editor of the *Sunday Times* magazine—has done some very misleading things with some of the statistics particularly those concerning crime. Crime statistics are notoriously easy to misinterpret anyway. To take one example from the 'Dangerous Society' section of the book on crimes of violence, I cannot see any sense in aggregating Glasgow with the Isle of Skye and coming up with an overall Scotland-wide incidence of violent crime per 100,000 population.

In part, this sort of thing occurs because the overall government regional divisions aren't very interesting, since they lump together urban and rural areas. Everybody knows that Hackney's infant mortality rate is not likely to be the same as that of Tunbridge Wells, but they are both lost in the category 'South East'. Add to that problem the need to force all the facts on to a map, and you get quite silly results in some instances.

Then there are some obvious errors. The very first section is entitled 'Stinking Rich' and purports to show 'the pattern of wealth'. In fact, the data refers to household

income, not wealth. It is of course, not possible to arrive at a map of wealth—the government does not see collecting that kind of information as exactly a priority—but that is no excuse for Mr Osman.

The book does contain some useful facts, like the one that in every year since 1966 except one, more people have left Britain than

have come to live here. And overall, it is more accessible (and cheaper) than some of the government's publications (although on some of the maps the colours are too similar to read the key accurately). It might be quite useful for a fourteen year old who was taking sociology at school. ■

Sue Cockerill

Few answers

The context of British politics
David Coates
Hutchinson £7.95.

DAVID COATES has written a textbook introduction to various aspects of British politics. Unlike most textbooks, this one doesn't concern itself with the boring minutiae of the British parliamentary procedure, or spend pages asserting the independence of the judiciary. It tries to look at the real way that British capitalism works—not at its official appearances.

So Coates spends a lot of time explaining the economic roots of British politics, as the basis for then

explaining the particular forms that different aspects of British politics take. This is all very useful.

Unfortunately the latter part of his book is only partly so. This is concerned with class and gender inside capitalist society. Here again, he provides many useful facts. In a short section headed 'the ruling class' he demonstrates the gross inequality which exists in British society from the cradle to the grave. And the facts are accessible not just for students but also for socialists wanting some ammunition for arguments at work.

Unfortunately two major problems mar the book. One is the use of diagrams and sociological jargon to describe class in capitalist society. This removes any notion of class struggle as a living example of class divisions. And it raises prejudices or assertions to a higher level than they warrant. An example of this is the meaningless diagram showing three connected triangles labelled A, B and C to demonstrate 'The hierarchy of social privilege'.

The other problem with the book is Coates' analysis. Although he writes within a Marxist framework, he accepts many of the arguments put forward by the Eurocommunist journal *Marxism Today*. In particular he sees Thatcherism as a new phenomenon, different from other Tory governments and something which requires a radical rethink on the left. This analysis, however, can neither explain why Thatcherism is also being carried out, for example, by Mitterrand in France, nor why the reformist organisations themselves have been so incapable of facing up to the crisis.

Coates therefore ends his book by saying that he has few answers to the problems facing the left—and he hasn't. Even so this book contains much that is useful written from a left wing point of view. It's not really written as a one-off read, and so is probably most useful to students. But any socialist might find it interesting—as long as they disregard much of the political framework. ■

Lindsey German

Theatre

On the stage of history

Enemies
Maxim Gorky
Sir Richard Steele Theatre, 97
Haverstock Hill, London NW3 (until
21 April)

A VILLA in a provincial Russian town. A retired general. A liberal member of the intelligentsia. A cynical, drunken brother. A public prosecutor. A precocious adolescent daughter. An actress.

The play begins like something out of Chekhov or Turgenev. It contains those seemingly endless discussions within the provincial branch of Czarist Russia's ruling class, cut off from the cultural centres of Moscow and Petersburg, increasingly feeling the pointlessness of its own existence.

But there is a difference between Gorky's play and those better known predecessors. It is not set in one of those interminable summers of the late nineteenth century, but in that year of years, 1905. What worries the central characters is not some vague existential angst, but the way in which the hidden forces that lurk in the background,

providing the feeling of vague menace in *A Month in the Country* or *The Cherry Orchard* are suddenly coming to the surface all at once.

Within shouting distance of the house is the factory which one of the characters manages and which provides the others with their incomes. Their arguments are not just those of people who have grown to hate each other, but also centre round a key political question: how to control the peasant-turned-workers whose labour keeps them all going. 'Wets' and 'hards' argue it out while the world they both accept is thrown into question by an immense social upheaval.

The intrusion of the workers into this closed, upper class world provides the play with its dynamic. One of the characters is shot. Apparently loyal workers have to be armed in order to guard the house itself against possible attack. Articulate agitators begin to cut dead the endless winging of their rulers.

It is as if the lower classes, who are mentioned but not seen in

earlier Russian plays, had suddenly broken into the action and said: you're complaining because your class is functionless, it cannot carry society forward, it can rule no longer.

The production is by a small, unsubsidised company in a very small theatre (with only about 50 seats) above a pub. There are inevitably faults with it. Some of the characters don't quite come off. The action drags a bit in the first two acts before the interval.

But if you can get to see it you should. Gorky wrote it at the height of the revolutionary upheaval, shortly before the Czarist regime arrested him. His aim was to draw a straightforward revolutionary socialist lesson from events. And it is a lesson which is still valid.

The play has only been performed once before in this country, 13 years ago, and quite likely you'll have to wait as long for another chance to see it. It's a pity that if you live far from London—indeed far from Hampstead—you'll miss even this chance. ■

Stuart Morgan

Don't sit on the fence

THE BEST thing about page 24 of *SWR* 74 is the advert for Norah Carlin's excellent pamphlet. Unfortunately, the article on the same page was very weak indeed.

Whilst Julie Waterson quite rightly exposes the weaknesses inherent in the GLC's strategy of attempting to challenge sexism 'from above', she ducks many of the arguments that socialists attempting to challenge sexism on the ground will have to face.

Garry Langford was dismissed for sexually harassing fellow firefighter, Lynne Gunning, last September. In January he was reinstated.

The article comments:

'The GLC wanted Garry Langford sacked, they see his retaining his job as condoning the sexism of firefighters ... The votes on the committee were meant to be in favour of the man losing his job, but in the course of the hearing two of the Labour

members changed their vote!' Put yourself in the position of being the FBU steward for Lynne Gunning and Garry Langford. Should you fight for his reinstatement? Does his retention amount to condoning sexism? To these questions the article provides no answer.

Many workers, in particular women, who find the levels of sexism at work abhorrent will argue that there was a very good case for Langford's dismissal. Nevertheless, as socialists and active trade unionists we must attempt to defend all our members when faced with disciplinary action by management.

To counter the demand for Langford to be sacked, two things should be highlighted. Firstly, to allow management to arbitrate over what is an internal union matter, isn't going to strengthen our ability to challenge sexist behaviour at work. On the contrary, it is likely to

impede such a battle.

To allow management to assert their discipline, however laudable their case, is to strengthen their overall right to manage. It would reinforce divisions within the workforce and weaken union organisation. Amongst female workers it would give weight to the ideas of benign management, and amongst male workers it would strengthen their existing hostility towards women.

However, the fact remains that what Garry Langford did was disgusting. Whilst we can point out the problems of attempting to combat sexism by decree, we also have to advance a viable alternative.

What should Lynne Gunning's steward have proposed to FBU members? This is clearly not an easy problem for a steward to tackle. Individual cases of sexual harassment will obviously differ in important respects, in terms of their severity, for instance. The circumstances will also differ from case to case. In order to put forward more concrete proposals we need to know more.

More about how Lynne Gunning feels about the issue, more about how the other workers feel, more about the level of union organisation in the station. None of this information is contained in the article.

Nevertheless, certain general points can be made. Firstly, many unions have policy on sexual harassment and have produced relevant publicity material. This can be used to bring the subject into the open.

Secondly, we have to actively encourage workers to bring their

grievances about sexual harassment to the union. The problem obviously exists so we should encourage members to report it.

Often the matter may be settled by way of a quiet word with the offender or merely through publicising it. However, we should not be reluctant to use the relevant grievance procedures within the union and press for appropriate disciplinary measures to be taken (up to and including expulsion from the union if necessary).

Having said this, the tactical dexterity of the union rep in presenting and arguing the case is no substitute for the support of other members. Such issues must therefore be dealt with openly, with the arguments being taken to the rank and file.

The stronger the organisation within a particular section, the easier it will be to take up and successfully defend the victims of sexual harassment, both through countering the dead weight of the bureaucrats within the grievance machine and through developing methods of 'self disciplining' amongst the workers themselves.

Complaints regarding sexual harassment are increasing. SWP members are going to have to deal with similar cases in the future. To do so properly is going to require tact, sensitivity, but above all the clear guidance we've come to expect from *SWR*.

Sexual harassment is clearly a serious barrier to women entering many trades. As such it deserves to be treated in a more serious manner in future. ■

Roger Davies and Peter Thomasson
South East London

In a state...

COLIN BARKER'S excellent article on the state (*Socialist Worker Review* Issue 74) has one important omission.

He rightly says that 'workers need to break up the state power replacing it with their own democratic and popular rule.' Read as it stands this could give the impression that the democratic and popular rule comes about without the need for workers to organise their own state.

Workers will need to arm themselves to take power. We will need to keep those arms to prevent the ruling class organising the scabs and reactionaries to retake it. The same workers' councils that organise production and distribution will need to organise the use of violence. This is what is meant by 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'—workers organising

themselves as the ruling class.

Of course, this is not the same as glorifying the idea of the state. Engels advocated the use of the word 'commune' for a workers' state because of the way socialists had identified control of the present state machine with socialism.

The workers' state is a temporary institution. Once the new society of production for human need rather than profit has taken root, the necessity to use force will diminish.

The aftermath of the miners' strike has shown that plenty of people on the left are ready to decry the use of mass pickets—which are nothing but workers using physical force against scabs and the police. We have to emphasise that workers have the right to use whatever force is necessary to win. ■

Andy Zebrowski
NW London

...about the state

IS COLIN Barker an anarchist? He talks about 'the state' in most of his article (March *SWR*) as if it was some independent and horrible being separate from the class forces on the ground. The state is simply the organisation with which one class stabilises its rule and oppresses opposing classes. After the revolution we will create our own state, a workers' state (which Colin Barker ignores) which will oppress classes opposing us: the old ruling class and sections of the middle classes who will attempt sabotage,

military coups etc.

In the long term, of course, there will be no need for the workers' state to continue since it embodies the rule of the majority, so the state machine can wither away. But in the short term we will certainly need our state. To say, as Colin does, that 'the power of the state equals and parallels the powerlessness of its subjects', talking of the state in general, is anarchistic claptrap and does us no good at all. ■

Pablo Stern
Sheffield

Chartist caricature

RAY CHALJINOR claims (February *SWR*) that the British working class was 'small and immature' in 1848 and demonstrates this by a description of the Chartist Land Scheme that reproduces the very worst of right wing analysis of the movement.

The Land Scheme wasn't an impractical attempt to turn back the clock. It was the response of trade unions to threats to their security. They saw 'surplus labour' which created competition for work and therefore wage reductions (which on piece rates led to an increase in production and so to more 'surplus labour') as their chief problem.

They tried to remove this surplus by acquiring land to be used to maintain members out of work or on strike. These would be self-supporting rather than a drain on

funds. Their removal would strengthen the striking power of the remaining workers. The scheme had nothing to do with dreams of a return to peasant proprietorship. It was a widely used tactic to help organised workers to resist the impact of industrial capitalism.

The Chartist movement represented a massive challenge to the state. Its papers, which included the writings of Marx and Engels, were read on a scale that would have the left press envious today. It organised demonstrations on a scale unparalleled since. It took systematic physical repression to subdue it. The repercussions of its defeat are still being felt. It deserves proper analysis not caricatures to prove a point. ■

Dave McNulty
Harrow

Shanghai spring

MENTION the Chinese Revolution and the chances are that most people will assume you mean 1949 and the victory of Mao's peasant army. But there was another Chinese revolution. It culminated in massive general strikes and insurrections in 1925-27, and its defeat—more than any other event—sealed the fate of the later revolution.

The Chinese society of 1925 was sick and decaying. For a hundred years before the despotic dynasties that had ruled over China for literally thousands of years entered into a terminal decline. Imperialist powers, above all Britain, had battered open the doors of the old empire. Britain fought the Opium Wars of 1842 and 1858 which enforced the importation of the drug in exchange for Chinese silver. The old regime was powerless to resist, and its enfeeblement led to the growth of corruption, warlords, gangsters and secret societies.

The First World War produced two key developments. The disruption of trade with Europe created a modern industrial proletariat a million strong and concentrated in Hangchow, Canton, and above all, Shanghai. The Versailles agreement which ended the war and which talked loftily of the right of nations to self-determination was not to be applied to China.

In the 1920s these factors produced an explosive mixture of a massive strike wave coupled with the growth of the Kuomintang, a nationalist movement led first of all by Sun Yat-sen and later by Chiang Kai-shek. The Kuomintang's politics were not very precise, but they centred around the need to clear out the foreign imperialists and the home-based warlords.

Chiang also consciously identified the movement with the Russian Revolution. 'The Chinese revolution,' he claimed, 'forms part of the front of the world revolution.' He was taken at his word by Stalin, who instructed the newly-formed Chinese Communist Party to join with the Kuomintang.

But the Kuomintang was becoming less and less an open political party and more and more a military apparatus. When the CCP joined with Kuomintang, it had to agree to three conditions: no criticism of Kuomintang politics was to be allowed; the CCP was not to engage in any activities except those sanctioned by the Kuomintang; and all power within the Kuomintang was to be firmly centralised into the hands of Chiang himself. In short, the CCP was to be bound hand and foot to Chiang's coat-tails.

Long before the final tragedy of this very one-sided alliance was played out, it was already clear how the Kuomintang would behave. They depended on the indigenous Chinese bourgeoisie for both personnel and money. In their rhetoric the Kuomintang sharply differentiated the foreign capitalists (who were 'bad') from the home grown variety (who were 'patriotic').

The supposed divisions between domestic

and foreign capital were quite imaginary. When the chips were down their interests were the same. In Shanghai for instance all the Chinese capitalists depended on electricity provided by the foreign-owned supply company. They were not going to sanction disruptions there because it would completely undermine their own profitability. They were tied to foreign capital in a hundred other ways as well—finance, supplies and so on.

At the height of the Shanghai general strike, the arch-imperialist *North China Daily News* appealed to their brothers in exploitation in the Chinese community:

'We know by long years of friendly association with you that you do not sympathise with the rioters and strikers... How long this threat to your peace, your welfare and your safety is to last depends largely on you...'

The imperialists did not have to wait long for an answer. The Chinese Chambers of Commerce in the major cities were prepared to sanction *limited* action against foreign capital to gain more seats for themselves on the municipal councils which were nearly all entirely dominated by the foreigners. They were not prepared to go further.

Massive general strikes in Shanghai in 1925 and 1926 soon brought both groups to their senses. On 18 March 1926 a deal between them was concocted at Shanghai's Majestic Hotel. Three Chinese businessmen would be admitted to the Municipal council, in return for which the Chinese bourgeoisie would use all their power to destroy the workers' movement.

Meanwhile the workers' movement was in full flood. In Shanghai the strikes led by the Communist-led General Labour Union got bigger and bigger, and took in more and more demands. There were wage demands, demands for more food, for the dismissal of offensive foremen, for better conditions, for the abolition of corporal punishment and child labour. These were fused with nationalist aspirations and were largely sparked off by the successes of the Northern Expedition army, which in 1926 seemed poised to provide a real alternative to the warlords and imperialists.

In January Hong Kong was paralysed by a general strike, in Canton pickets ruled the streets and wharves, in October there was a workers' uprising in Chekiang, in Nanking riots left the capitalists quaking in their boots, and in Shanghai itself the Communist Party-dominated General Workers Union seemed all-powerful. But they were compelled to do a deal with Chiang, and henceforth they channelled money and support towards him in large quantities.

Meanwhile the Communist Party had grown massively. In 1927 it was 100,000 strong—a better implantation in the working class than any other Communist Party at the time, and at least comparable with the

Bolsheviks in Russia in October 1917.

As the Northern Expedition army moved towards Shanghai, the CCP called a general strike in February 1927. Three hundred and fifty thousand workers responded. Within 48 hours 150,000 workers were on the streets. The factories stopped working. The trams, the postal service, shipping and all department stores stopped as well. The slogans that the CCP promoted were, however, confused: 'Support the Northern Expedition army' and 'Hail Chiang Kai-shek', they proclaimed. Even the slogans against the imperialists were dropped.

The bourgeoisie responded with a carefully conceived plan. The gangsters and secret societies, in the pay of the bourgeoisie, inflicted major attacks on workers' organisation. The municipal and foreign authorities unleashed a reign of terror. Students and strikers caught distributing leaflets were beheaded on the spot.

Yet the momentum of the struggle did not stop. Chiang held back at the gates of the city, and on 21 March an even bigger general strike began. This time, between 500,000 and 800,000 were involved, and the workers were much better prepared: they had organised a workers' militia of 5,000.

This time Chiang's troops moved in. When the terror gangs of the secret societies attacked all 120 of the union offices, the army moved in to 'arbitrate'. They called upon the workers defending the offices to disarm. If they did so, the workers were simply led out and shot. If they didn't, the whole weight of the army was directed against them.

The Communist Party was in confusion. It had accepted Chiang as the ultimate authority. It followed therefore that anyone who disobeyed his orders was a counter-revolutionary—including the workers who refused to disarm.

The secret societies set up puppet 'moderate' unions in the offices of the General Labour Union, and soon after Chiang's army publicly beheaded 5,000 of the CCP's leading militants in the squares of Shanghai. The Chinese revolution was over.

Yet the conditions for a workers' revolution in China as a whole were by no means unfavourable. Peasant revolts were sweeping areas like Hunan and Hupeh, and even Chiang's army was very open to dissent. Chiang was only able to move against the Shanghai workers after successfully removing the more revolutionary troops out of the city.

The disastrous line that the CCP followed was dictated by the Comintern, by then firmly in Stalin's grip. It was based on the assumption that there was a real identity of interest between the Chinese workers and Chinese industrialists and a real conflict of interests between the latter and foreign industrialists. The Chinese workers paid for this mistake with their own blood.

The CCP never recovered. Within three years its numbers were decimated, and the number of workers in the party sunk to one percent. The party retreated to the hinterland, and never again related to working class struggle. It was out of this experience that Maoism was born.■

Peter Binns