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It's my Party and I'll do what I want to...

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NOTES

of the month

RIOTS

Short fuse

WITHIN the space of a month, Handsworth, Brixton and now Tottenham have burned, with smaller explosions in Toxteth, Peckham and Southall.

Why, after four years of relative peace in the inner cities, did sections of the population once again explode?

One major reason is that the crisis of the inner cities—of public spending cuts, of unemployment, of general dereliction and no hope—has got much worse than it was in 1981.

In Brixton since the 1981 riots, unemployment has doubled, while central government spending has fallen by £15 million. Even these figures underestimate the extent of youth unemployment. It is judged at about 80 percent in reality.

Handsworth has similar figures. Even for Birmingham as a whole—once the centre of manufacturing industry—they are devastating. In the decade up to 1982 the 26 largest companies cut their labour force by 40 percent. Between 1982 and 1984 another 156,000 jobs were lost.

Spending on housing since the Tories came to power has fallen dramatically. In 1979-80 £2,544 million was spent; in 1984-5 just £1,852 million.

Alongside all this has been the continued and totally justified belief by a growing number of blacks that they are unfairly discriminated against by the institutions of British capitalism. They don't get a fair deal from the education system, the police or the legal system.

But there was one factor only which triggered off the riots in every case—the behaviour of the police and the local population's attitude to them.

The hostility and open racism of the police to blacks (and to many other residents of the inner cities) is nothing new. After all, the police clean-up operation which triggered off the Brixton riot in 1981 was officially named 'Swamp 81'. A report commissioned



Scene from recent Brixton riot

by the police last year concluded that racism inside the police force was rampant.

And there has been a long history of distrust of the police by sections of the black community.

After the 1981 riots, attempts were made to defuse the situation and to at least pacify sections of the black community. A limited amount of money was put into a number of areas (particularly Toxteth), a senior judge—Lord Scarman—was sent to investigate the conditions in Brixton which caused the first riot, and great stress was put on the ideas of 'community policing'.

Community policing was not a sharp break from the previous policies of widespread harassment. It continued the policy in a different form. The idea was to win the consent of sections of the local population for what was in reality a fairly intensive level of policing. If 'respectable' elements inside the local community could be won to cooperate with this policy, so much the better.

One of the major factors which immediately sparked the riots appears to be the police change in tactics.

Since the miners' strike the police have become increasingly confident. At the same time there seems to have been a shift in their methods. Community policing was ditched in Handsworth at the beginning of the summer. In Tottenham there was a marked increase in police harassment.

But the methods adopted have not been a simple return to the old mass harassment techniques of stop and search in the street,

like Swamp 81. These clearly exist, as the searches of cars going into Broadwater Farm in the days before the riot show.

But there have also been increases in the sorts of armed raid which ended in the shooting of Cherry Groce. In the borough of Lambeth alone, of which Brixton is a part, there have been 50 such raids since the start of the year—well over one a week.

These raids have sparked real anger. They are often made on the least pretence, and many often take place without warrants (as seems to be the case in the raid on Cynthia Jarrett's Tottenham home).

The fact that two middle aged women suffered so badly—Cherry Groce paralysed for life, Cynthia Jarrett dead from a heart attack—only brings home to the black community that everyone is under attack, even in their own homes.

It is hardly surprising, given the underlying unrest anyway, that these measures by the police elicited the response they did. Hatred and bitterness towards the police have existed since long before the 1981 riots. Once again it didn't take much for them to well over.

The resulting explosions have been branded 'an explosion of sheer wickedness' by Norman Tebbit and dismissed by Sir Kenneth Newman as led by 'Trotskyists and agitators'. The popular press has called them 'race riots'. What is the truth?

Every single riot developed from genuine anger and grievances in the area. In Handsworth it was the arrest of a motorist. In

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Brixton and Tottenham the despicable treatment of two black women. In Toxteth the arrest and remand of four men for murder triggered the protests.

Often the riots were localised. In Broadwater Farm it was confined to one estate—itsself a byword for some of the worst housing and conditions in the area. In Handsworth the rioting was confined to a few streets. In Brixton, it was able to be spread beyond the control of the police onto some major roads. But in every instance, there was widespread support for the action.

Nor is there any evidence that the riots were race riots. They were led by blacks. But on every occasion, both in 1981 and 1985, a sizeable minority and sometimes up to half have been white. The target has been the police, not the surrounding whites.

Racial oppression has given the blacks the added impetus to start and lead the riots. In the words of one young rioter, 'It's the first time in history there has been a white and black army, led by black generals.'

Young whites joined with enthusiasm on every occasion. They too know the realities of police harassment and long-term unemployment.

The riots were spontaneous explosions, built up through years of deprivation, finally sparked off by the police. They were vivid and violent protests. At the same time they were smaller and less widespread than in 1981, lasting for a shorter period of time.

Last time their outcome was at least a cosmetic attempt at change. The Scarman Report made numerous recommendations about how to overcome the problems facing the police and the ruling class. But even then, his core argument was that 'good policing will be of no avail, unless we tackle and eliminate basic flaws in our society.'

Scarman's reforms would have amounted to barely scratching the surface of the problem. But even they were more than the ruling class felt able to deliver.

What will happen this time? The signs are that the government is taking a more hawkish line. They want to criminalise the rioters and to try to isolate them. In this they may be aided by the beginning of a racist backlash.

But once again, the riots have demonstrated the complete inability of the ruling class to solve any of the problems of the inner cities. They have also shown a resentment and willingness to fight back, which is unlikely to go away. ■

RACISM

The ugly face

THE RIOTS point to another development of the last few months: the increase in issues concerning racism.

Most horrific of these has been the increase in racist attacks on individuals or Asian property in parts of London. In Waltham Forest last month there were three arson attacks on Asian houses in the space of ten days. They follow literally dozens of similar attacks in the East London area this year.

The trial of the Newham 7 earlier this year was about the right of blacks to defend themselves from individual attacks which Asians will confirm are commonplace in some parts of London. A similar trial, involving a case where a young black was knifed to death in a fight with racists, is continuing in London as we go to press.

There have also been cases of industrial action against racism. In the London Borough of Islington, several hundred housing workers struck against racists being able to deal directly with the public in housing offices.

Backlash

Again in East London, teachers at Daneford School struck in protest at the very high level of attacks by whites on Bengalis in the school. They were also protesting at the lack of facilities—the head is reluctant to introduce the teaching of Bengali, despite the high proportion of immigrants in the school—and at the failure of the Labour Inner London Education Authority to do anything about the problem.

In Bradford, Muslim parents are refusing to allow their children to be taught by racist head Ray Honeyford, who believes immigrants lower standards. And students and staff alike at Waltham Forest College prevented their principal from entering the college after a letter he wrote to *The Times* blamed West Indians for crime in the college.

Can we draw any conclusions from these disparate examples? There are a number of points which can be made.

The first and perhaps the most obvious, is that there has been something of an increase in the level of racism over the past months. The picture should not be exaggerated, and is still very patchy.

The aftermath of the riots, particularly the Tottenham one, has been to create a certain racist backlash. White workers influenced by racists organised a one day strike against Haringey council leader Bernie Grant.

The backlash has been encouraged by the attitudes of the press, the police and Tory ministers. Labour's failure to challenge the rightwing ideas being put forward has also encouraged it.

But there is another factor in the increasing number of disputes around racism. That is the determination and ability of much of the black population to fight

back against discrimination, racist attacks and police brutality.

And the riots in recent weeks have all resulted from the horrific treatment of blacks at the hands of the police.

Most young blacks in this country have always lived here. They are not prepared to accept the sort of treatment their parents and grandparents received.

It is this determination to fight back that makes the struggles so important. At the same time they point to an increased polarisation.

Some people argue that blacks fighting in this way creates a racist backlash. But racism is not created by blacks. It is something which exists anyway. But for long periods of time the small number of overt racists will keep quiet. The difference over the last few months is that the political situation—defeat of the miners, the confidence of the police and Tory policies—has allowed the confidence of the racists to grow.

This shouldn't be exaggerated. The level of racism today—and even more so the level of racist organisation—is nothing like it was in the mid and late seventies. Then the National Front were able to beat the Liberals into fourth place in certain elections, and there was a danger of fascism becoming a real force.

Today things are very different. But there are still dangers. One of these is the appalling line of the Labour Party, and the feebleness of the Labour left. Labour lefts like Ken Livingstone who denounce 'white macho politics' and pay so much lipservice to black sections have condemned the riots. When faced with the sort of white macho politics that was behind the racist demonstration in Haringey, they back down.

Genuine socialists, on the contrary, oppose racism as a matter of principle. This makes it all the more important that with this growth of racism, we do everything possible to organise against it. ■

LIVERPOOL

This compromise will cost

LAST month the fight of Liverpool council against the Tories took a major step backwards. Control of the fight passed out of the hands of the councillors and the council shop stewards and into the hands of Labour and trade union leaders.

This followed David Blunkett's impassioned plea to the Liverpool councillors to open the books to the Labour Party NEC and the general secretaries of the council unions.

Nobody should be under any illusion as to the nature of this 'peace initiative'.

It was no more than a way of making the council compromise.

As we go to press, the eight general secretaries are due to visit Liverpool. Talk is



A motley crew of Militant bashers

that they will suggest the council balance its books by taking money from next year's housing budget.

More weight is being given to this argument by a suggestion from Blunkett that other Labour councils lend Liverpool enough money to stop it going broke immediately, if Liverpool agrees to shift money out of its housing account.

These solutions would not be the small compromises many Labour and trade union leaders are making them out to be. They would result in outright capitulation.

It would mean the council turning their backs on their entire history in office. It would mean abandoning the 20,000 people on the council waiting list and going along with job losses.

This was the sort of juggling of the books we saw in other so called 'left' councils such as the GLC, Sheffield, Edinburgh and Islington when they collapsed in the face of the Tories' ratecapping legislation this year.

This is what Kinnock has argued for all along. And unless there is decisive action by the councillors and the council unions it looks as though he will get his way.

The problem is that the council and the unions are now in some disarray.

The council made the serious mistake in September of issuing redundancy notices to its entire workforce in an attempt to spin out their existing money for a further three months.

After the council unions rejected the redundancy notices, the council, to their credit, backed the council shop stewards' call for an all-out strike against the Tories.

Further mistakes were then made. The council stewards, including the best activists, agreed to ballot over the strike, despite the fact that, for over a year, the council stewards committee had held a policy of all-out strike action in the event of the crisis reaching a head.

Several of the union leaderships refused to allow their members a vote.

But then, after 47 percent of those who voted, voted in favour of striking, even after an unprecedented press campaign to vilify the council, the leadership of the council stewards called the strike off. And the council fell back on issuing redundancy

notices.

These mistakes cost the council dear.

If the strike had gone ahead Kinnock would not have dared to make his conference attack. Instead the council, by issuing redundancy notices, had handed it to him on a plate. He made the most of it. He described 'the grotesque scene of councillors scuttling around in hired taxis delivering redundancy notices to its workforce.'

Without the strike the council started to flounder in their attempt to stand by their commitment to jobs and services.

As we go to press the redundancy notices have been withdrawn. This may bring about the council's financial collapse within a couple of weeks at the most.

Workers disunited

In the meantime there has been talk of the council laying their workforce off for the month of January as an alternative to the redundancy notices.

This is an appalling suggestion. The council have fallen back on the age old method left councils resort to, when they do not have enough money to implement the reforms they want—make their own workforce pay.

In a *Militant* editorial, this intention is made plain.

'It would be preferable to have strike action before the lay offs take place, but if the workforce decide that tactically it would be better to accept the lay offs and the loss of money that will mean, then the responsibility will rest solely with Baker and the Tory government.'

In the face of last month's disasters the council workforce are disunited. Many are just waiting now for someone else to resolve the problem.

Those who always opposed fighting the Tories are now moving in for the kill. The local initiative has been taken by the city's Liberals and Tories on the one hand and those in the Labour party who are against the confrontation favoured by the council on the other.

Over the last month we have seen the most disgusting display of *Militant*-bashing in

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Liverpool.

A motley crew of city businessmen formed *Liverpool Against Militant*. They have now staged two demonstrations in the city against the council.

More serious is the challenge to the council and their *Militant* supporters, going on in the district Labour Party.

An organisation called *Liverpool Labour Left* has been formed. Their main aim is to defeat *Militant* supporters in the district Labour Party. They are putting pressure on the council leader, John Hamilton, to 'assert his authority' on the council against *Militant*.

The prospects look grim. Yet the fortunes of Liverpool could still be reversed if the council were to give a fighting lead to their workforce by campaigning for a strike against the Tories. To do so they need to stop all talk of redundancies, lay offs, balancing the books and party unity. The only real unity involves those who want to fight.

Unfortunately, few in Liverpool are drawing this conclusion. ■

THE TORIES

Not quite presentable

'BARRING accidents, the Tory party will be led into the next general election by Mrs Thatcher. And it had better make the best of it: build on her undoubted strengths of energy and commitment, try to dismantle her divisiveness.'

So said the *Economist* the week before the Tory conference last month. No doubt many Tories want to take the top businessmen's paper to heart.

Blackpool was full of Tories trying to make the best of it. Nearly every cabinet minister was given a standing ovation. The Tottenham riot gave the rank and file a chance to attack criminality and praise the police. Margaret Thatcher was adulated publicly as much as ever.

Even the antics of Jeffrey Archer and the revelations of Sara Keays were skated over or ostentatiously ignored.

But underneath the rallying of the faithful the Tory leadership and the fortunes of the

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party are in deep trouble. The biggest single trouble in terms of winning an election is the Tories' huge escalation of unemployment. Official figures show unemployment as higher than in the 1930s—the real figures are even worse. The government seems both unable and unwilling to stop the spiral.

A recent report by all-party representatives from the House of Lords also damned the government. It showed the wholesale destruction of manufacturing industry over the past years and pointed to an even gloomier future.

This is bad enough. But perhaps more worrying for the Tories is that the government doesn't really know what to do in order to solve the problems of British capitalism. This failing is dismissed sometimes as a lack of presentation. At others it is put down to the personality of Margaret Thatcher.

Neither explanation is at all adequate. The Tories have been in bad trouble for some time now. They won the miners' strike, but at a tremendous economic and social cost, which prevented them from introducing changes like tax cuts.

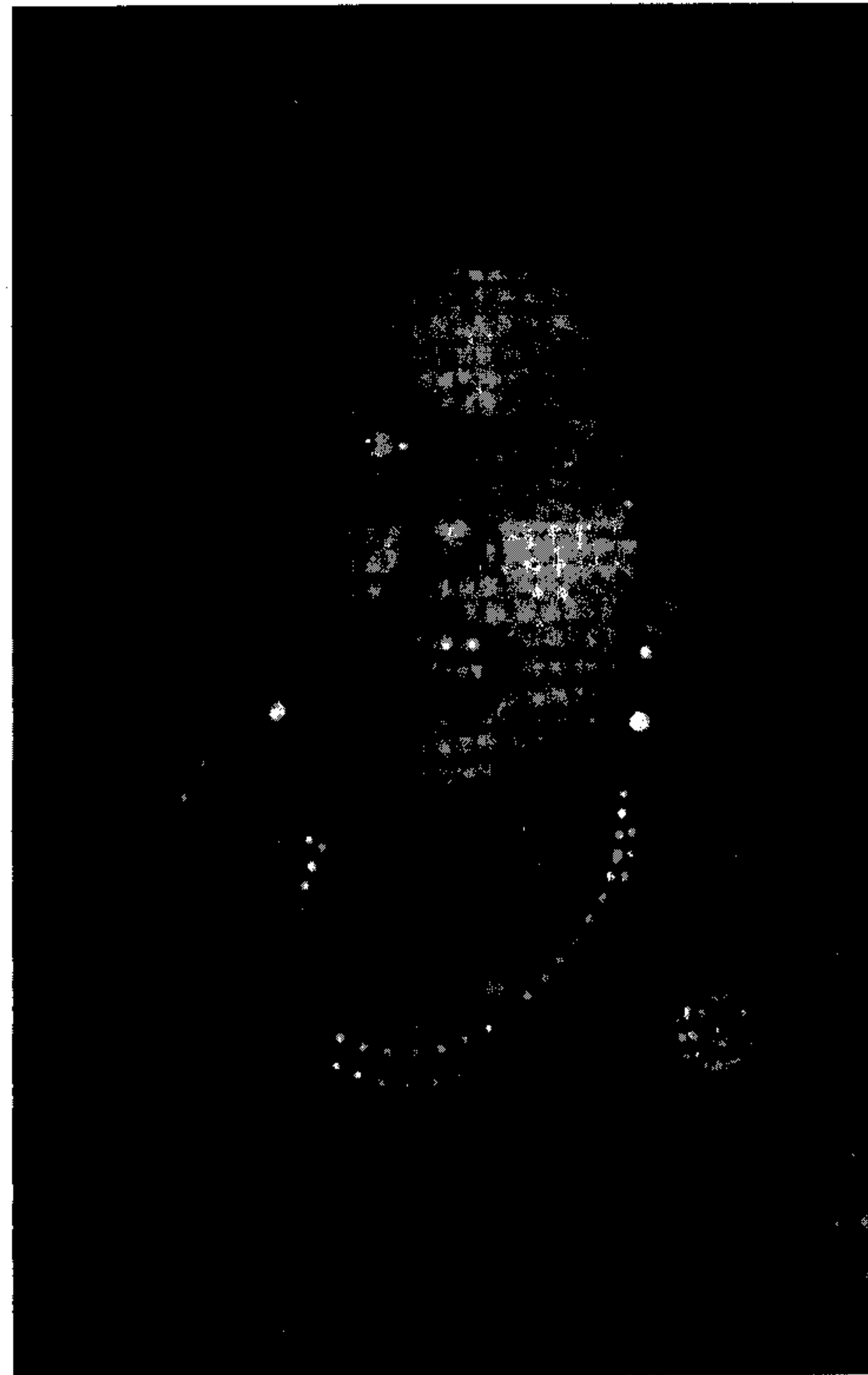
They found that even beating the miners did not solve the basic problem of profitability of British capitalism. Thatcher was not able to impose sufficiently stringent productivity or wage conditions to enable British capitalism to compete effectively on a world scale.

So all the fundamental problems which existed for British capitalism in 1979 when the Tories came to power still exist—despite the decimation of some industries, the shackling of the unions by the law, and the attempts to reduce public spending.

Thatcher's government has been increasingly forced therefore to tackle areas where she thinks she can have some success. This explains the assault on the GLC and metropolitan counties, the attempt at rates reform and her international diplomacy efforts.

But these have little or no impact on the structures or development of British capitalism. Not only that, they have also all too often provoked a political backlash which was clearly not expected. This is especially true of the GLC abolition, which appears to have done real damage to the government electorally.

All this explains the Tories' present policy, which appears to be that the less the government does over the next two years, the better.



Thatcher herself seems to subscribe to this view. 'She is known to have been in the van of those counselling caution in cabinet in recent months,' says the *Economist*.

But this presents its own problems. Firstly, those who applaud what Thatcher has done so far and want her to continue attacking workers (and this still includes most of the ruling class) feel that the government is appearing too negative. It is not proposing anything new.

Plans for major reform—like rates abolition or restructuring the welfare state—are almost certain to be shelved until after the next election. The radical programme of the Tories is grinding to a halt.

The other danger for the Tories is that even if they could win the next election by doing nothing for two years, they cannot guarantee the course of events. The policies

pursued over the past six years do little to help stability.

The riots are a case in point. And although the Tories may benefit from a racist backlash, for instance, such an outcome to the riots is by no means clear.

Instead they can appear as one further indication that the government is not in control, that the fabric of society is breaking down and that Thatcher's policies have created divisions. The same can be true about strikes, local government and a whole range of other issues.

It is these factors which made the Tory conference so unsatisfactory for loyal government supporters.

Although they chanted 'Ten more years' after Thatcher spoke, they may be wondering what on earth the government can do for the next two. ■

KERRY BABIES

A symbol of oppression

IN COUNTY Kerry in Southern Ireland a young unmarried mother gave birth to a baby that died. The police attempted to charge her with the murder of a baby that could not possibly have been hers. The mother, Joanne Hayes, confessed to this murder though she could not possibly have done it. Eventually an inquiry was held into the police behaviour.

The inquiry tribunal was to report on: 1) how members of the Hayes family came to be charged with, and made statements admitting to, the murder of the baby on the beach; 2) allegations made by the Hayes family of Gardai (police) ill-treatment; 3) any matters connected with or relevant to 'the matters aforesaid'.

The tribunal sat for five months, heard 109 witnesses, asked 60,000 questions and early last month (October) published a 270 page report which left people annoyed and confused.

During the tribunal there was outrage about the way the Hayes family, and particularly Joanne, were treated. It seemed to many as if they were on trial. They were called liars by the lawyer for the Gardai and were subjected to the kind of cross-examination normally kept for hardened criminals. The most intimate details of Joanne Hayes' sexual activity and pregnancies were forced out of her in the open court.

The judge allowed the Gardai lawyers to follow this line of questioning on the basis of item 3 of the terms of reference. Her sex life may, he said, be relevant to items 1 and 2 and therefore was admissible evidence.

The tribunal only found the Gardai guilty of 'exaggeration', 'elevating wishful thinking to the status of hard fact' and 'gilding the lily'.

All this would just be another case of whitewash no different to those where no policeman was convicted for the murder of Blair Peach or Liddle Towers. Yet there was something even nastier and more pernicious about this one.

For the tribunal didn't only whitewash the cops. It went much further. It turned viciously on the young woman, Joanne Hayes, and her family.

The family were branded liars, Joanne was accused of killing her own baby, and was subjected to the most reactionary quizzing and comments on her sex life.

She was publicly blamed for the affair she had with a married man. As the tribunal findings quaintly put it, she 'put her eye on him' and ignored 'his wife and lawful child'. The man was the father of Joanne's other child, a two year old girl.

The man's wife was seen as the main victim. The young unmarried mother who

had lost a baby, been bullied and terrified into confessing to a murder, and been forced to reveal the most intimate details of her private life, was the villain.

For those who have to confront the grip of the Catholic church and its moral authority in Ireland this must all be very depressing.

Two years ago a referendum was called by anti-abortionists who sought to enshrine the illegality of abortion in the constitution. They won an overwhelming majority of the votes. Although there were hopeful signs that in the big cities the grip of the church was weakening (particularly in Dublin), the overall picture was not a good one.

What is more, as the economic crisis in Ireland deepens and the dangers of social unrest and alienation grow, the use of religion and Catholic morality will almost certainly increase.

That is why the Pope visited Ireland. It also partly explains the wave of reported apparitions and moving statues cited in just about every corner of Ireland and it certainly explains the harsh and Victorian treatment of Joanne Hayes.

Nor can this merely be put down to the backward thinking of a handful of small farmers. The state itself uses these ideas and this morality. The Catholic hierarchy are well educated and intelligent. They have a crucial role to play in social control.

The Joanne Hayes case is not just about

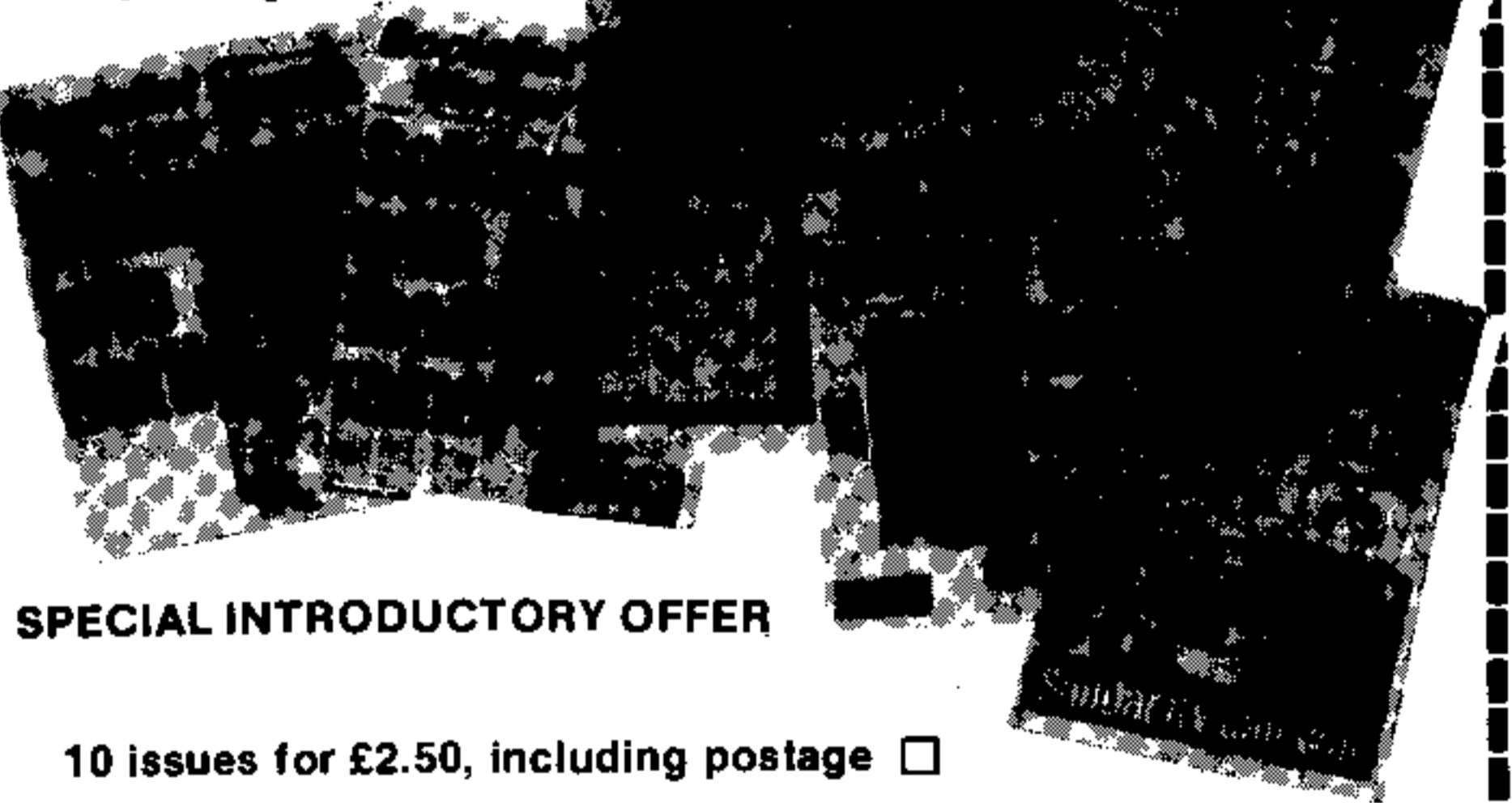
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one individual. It is part of the general attack on women that takes place in modern Irish society. You cannot fight women's oppression in Ireland, nor can you take on the Southern Irish state, without confronting the power of the Catholic church and its ideas.

Joanne Hayes' case represents more than just the sad tale of one woman, or the whitewash of the cops. It represents the morality and ideas which justify capitalist rule in Ireland. ■

Additional notes by Pete Clarke, Goretti Horgan, Pat Stack and Maureen Watson.

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NIGEL HARRIS

The eastern sun rises

AS CHINA has opened up to the world system, it has increasingly related to the Japanese economy. Japan's exports to China have increased rapidly in the eighties. They are 50 percent up in 1984/85 alone (compared to an increase in overall Chinese imports of 38 percent).

Increased imports reflect both the close attention to China paid by the Japanese government and the energetic efforts of Japanese companies—some 250 are represented in Peking (ten times the representation of British companies). The exports are mainly consumer goods, pouring in to meet the great hunger for durables of newly prosperous Chinese consumers. China is now Japan's largest export market for colour television sets and fridges. It is Japan's second largest market for vehicles, and in 1985, overtook the United States as the largest volume buyer of Japanese steel.

The Chinese government aims to increase *per capita* gross national product up to the year 2,000 from about 300 to 800 US dollars. Japanese traders thus foresee a continuous expansion in the Chinese demand for their offerings, with a possible market of ten million television sets per year for forty years (the current Japanese output is about 15 million sets per year).

Do these short term economic changes represent any long term political trends? Some people in Japan see the Sino/Japanese relationship as the basis for continued Japanese growth in the face of world slump and stagnation (in the same sort of way as the South African government appealed to the rest of Africa to close ranks with it in the mid seventies against world slump). The combination of unlimited cheap Chinese labour with Japanese capital and technology could, it is said, be the heart of a regionally self-sufficient economic bloc, especially if it came to include the oil of Indonesia.

Economic insurance

In the thirties, the creation of this regional 'Co-Prosperity Sphere' under the control of Tokyo was the declared aim of Japanese imperialism. More modestly, others think China could supply an economic insurance policy against the risk of import controls directed to keep out of North America and Europe Japanese exports.

However, this year the expansion of Sino/Japanese trade has begun to reach its limits. At one stage, Peking was talking of a possible 18 billion dollar trade deficit—a third of it due to imports from Japan. China's foreign reserves are said to be about ten billion dollars, so the limit on its importing capacity is severe. The Japanese have tried to ease matters by lending to



China and by increasing their import of Chinese goods.

Japanese grain traders have started to sign long term agreements to import Chinese corn—to the chagrin of United States companies that supplied 13.7 million tonnes in 1984, the largest US export to Japan (97 per cent of Japan's imports and 28 per cent of US corn exports). American suppliers reckon their share of Japanese imports could fall to 75 percent this year as the result of imports from China of 2.5 million tonnes. Furthermore, Chinese corn this year is slightly more expensive than American, so Washington believes these are politically motivated imports.

The same situation operates in the case of cotton. The United States share of Japanese imports, 51 percent in 1984, is expected to fall to 25 percent this year as the result of expanded Chinese exports. China is also expanding its export of vegetables, particularly hitting US exports of soya bean to Japan.

However, even if China could expand (and so pay for increased imports from Japan), is there any possibility of the Sino/Japanese economic relationship becoming a real counterweight to Japan's relationships to North America and Europe? It seems most unlikely in the foreseeable future for the two economies are wildly different in scale.

For example, some 56 percent of

Japanese exports are 'Machinery and Transport Equipment'. China's imports in this category was about 4.4 percent of Japan's supply in 1983 (the last year for which there are figures). There is no way China could sustain the mighty Japanese economy on present levels of income.

Combined imports

Even if we throw in the rest of East and South East Asia (South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam) and assume Japan's exports exactly fit what those countries require, their combined imports with those of China still only reach 46 percent of Japan's exports in this field. Japan depends very heavily on markets in North America and Europe. And this leaves out of account Japan's dependence for raw material imports in Australia and North and South America.

Could the Japanese government and banks pump funds into China to buy Japanese exports? In the late forties, Washington's Marshall Aid Plan is supposed to have achieved this purpose in Europe, injecting finance which set going the long boom. In fact, Marshall Aid seems to have been too small and too short lived to achieve this purpose; but United States military spending in Europe following the outbreak of the cold war did.

However, US funds were injected into countries with a skilled labour force and, despite destruction, a developed infrastructure. In China's case, not only is the scale much larger—China's imports are only 14 percent of Japan's exports—but China's capacity to expand is much more limited. It still has to train its workers and develop infrastructure.

In any case, Japan's companies are contesting for world domination, and for that, they need to be abreast of the latest technical changes. Even a partial dependence on a backward market is likely to stultify the technical capacity of Japanese companies—as the existence of the British empire partly stultified the technical competence of British companies trading there. However, this is a small argument in comparison to the limited capacity of China to absorb Japanese exports, let alone pay for them.

The age of the self-sufficient regional empire is past. It is now too late to recreate the old imperialism, even in the case of Japan which is the most nationally separate component of world capital. The dominant powers have gone well beyond that. The international companies are swiftly being obliged to copy the same tendency. ■

A partnership of power?

'Yes, it is credible, but is it socialism?' That was how the *Financial Times* summed up Mr Roy Hattersley's 18 months of hard work re-forging the splinters of his party's economic strategy.'

Yet Hattersley's major speech at the Labour Party Conference was greeted with applause from almost all sections of the hall. There was scarcely a word of criticism in the debate, and very little more outside.

The speech was, of course, carefully calculated. There was no more than a veiled reference to the controversial question of wages policy (that was left to post office union leader, Alan Tuffin, to raise from the floor). There were numerous taunts at the failures of Thatcherism, but no reference to what happened under the last Labour Government of 1974-79.

The message, however, was clear enough for those able to listen. At the core lay an appeal to 'the simple common sense of creating jobs by investing in Britain.'

Hattersley promises that 'Labour will be a government of industry, of output, of manufacture, of production, and the greatest financial institutions of the City of London will have to learn that under Labour it cannot be an independent power unconcerned about the success of the real economy.'

'The City of London has got to begin to work for the national interest and that of nobody else.'

Bearing the brunt

There is nothing new in Labour's commitment to the promotion of (capitalist) industry, rather than replacing capitalism. Every Labour government in history has dedicated itself to sacrificing the interests of workers to the pursuit of a 'national interest' (that is, the interests of those who own the nation).

The City of London's financiers are accustomed to being the symbolic punchbag of prospective Labour Chancellors. They are unlikely to have too many sleepless nights at the thought of Hattersley at No 11 Downing Street. They know how pliable his predecessors, Callaghan and Healey, turned out to be, once the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, and the Governor of the Bank of England, had explained the facts of life.

Whilst the City remembers what the last Labour government was really like, the bulk of the left prefers to forget the whole experience. The thrust of the Bennite campaign in the early 1980s was supposedly to ensure that the failures of 1974-79 never happened again. Today anyone who reminds people of that is regarded in Kinnock's own words, as a 'rigid dogmatist.'

For Labour's leaders are not haunted by the memories of 1974-79. Indeed, according to Hattersley, interviewed in *Marxism Today*, 'the Callaghan government, 76-79, did a good job for socialism in a cold climate'

(those were the years in which Labour succeeded in cutting the wages of most workers by more than Thatcher has managed.)

Rather they are obsessed with the spectres of Michael Foot and Francois Mitterrand. Foot, because in the 1983 election he promised that Labour would abolish unemployment, and hardly anyone (quite rightly) believed him.

Mitterrand, because in 1981 the French socialist party arrived in power with a package of far-reaching radical economic measures for solving the crisis—and within a year was in headlong retreat, before the implacable opposition of French capital and international finance.

Realism and credibility are now the watchwords of Labour spokesmen. What they mean is that, instead of abandoning any commitment to socialism after they have been elected into power, they are making their intentions perfectly clear well in advance.

The shift to the right can be seen in the way in which many of the commitments of the 1983 election manifesto, and key elements in what was the 'Alternative Economic Strategy', have been abandoned.

Firstly, instead of reducing unemployment to one million during the term of a Labour government, they now talk only of reducing the total out of work by one million. As Kinnock told the Transport Workers Union conference, back in June:

'We are seriously seeking a modern system for full employment. That is not the full employment of the 1950s, 1960s or even the early 1970s—we know its not coming back in that form.'

Translation: There's not much we can do about jobs, but we can make people take early retirement on a meagre pension, and set up more makeshift job-creation schemes, and get the numbers on the register down that way.

Secondly, any mention of nationalising powerful multinational corporations, or even any of the major banks and financial institutions has been dropped. Even the re-nationalisation of those companies sold off by the Tories has been left rather vague (with the exception of British Telecom, and it remains to be seen how much they end up paying for the shares, if they really do buy them back).

In the words of the joint Labour Party/TUC statement *A New Partnership, A New Britain*:

'New and re-established public enterprise will also be required in key sectors of the future, where a long-term strategy is essential. So we will not allow our priorities to be dictated by the present Government's privatisation drive.'

'Nor do we accept that the structure of public enterprise in Britain is perfect. Far from it. It must be made more accountable to its workers and more responsive to the community it serves.'

Translation: Nationalisation is unpopular, therefore we will not take back all that the Tories have sold off to their profiteering chums. The workers have no say in how state-owned companies are run, but we will offer union leaders some more seats on the board, and sham participation schemes to help keep the shop stewards quiet, as we push through redundancies in the name of serving the community.'

Thirdly, withdrawal from the Common Market was a long fetish of the Labour left. Indeed any nationalistic strategy involving the British economy and using import controls to insulate the country from the effects of the world crisis, has to break with the Common Market's rules. Such a strategy is scarcely socialist but it has been repeatedly endorsed by Labour conferences.

For Kinnock, however, as he told *Tribune* in September:

'The current party policy of regarding withdrawal as a last option is a much more convincing policy... That doesn't mean we abandon principles but it does mean an investigation of what the options are...'

Translation: Leaving the Common Market (which now provides almost half of Britain's trade) is unacceptable to all sectors of British capital. We will therefore try and negotiate a better deal, and when that fails we'll have to lump it.

What's left is little more than the stale Keynesian diet of past Labour governments. Money is to be pumped into the economy with extra public spending. Investment is to be encouraged. Management and unions are to be brought together in a spirit of co-operation, instead of the conflict created by the Tories.

There are one or two new elements to add spice to the dish. Co-operatives, and local enterprise boards, along the lines of the GLC are now much in favour. But even with a substantial increase in funding such bodies will still operate on the margins of the economy. They will still be subject to the pressures of the market, the compulsion to cut costs and squeeze their workers to remain competitive. They may survive, but not as islands of socialism in a capitalist ocean.

Political judgement

Hattersley's proposal for a National Investment Bank, funded with money from the Pension funds and Insurance Companies, has received much attention. Tax concessions will be used to bribe those institutions to bring back some of the \$30 billion they've stashed overseas in the last five years.

That sounds like a lot of money. But the tax concessions will have to be huge to offset the attractions of higher profits elsewhere. Moreover, the proposals for the NIB emphasise that its use of funds will be, as the pamphlet *Investing in Britain* puts it, subject to a 'requirement only to lend to, or invest in companies or projects which are commercially viable...'

At the heart of the main document spelling out Labour's policy lies the notion of a 'New Partnership'. Beneath the rhetoric of 'fairness' and 'democracy' lies an emphasis that what Labour has to offer British



capitalism is the co-operation of trade union leaders, and, more uncertainly, their rank and file.

But talk of 'partnership' without challenging the wealth and power of those who own or control the means of production, is a charade. The demand for 'fairness' simply ignores the class structure of exploitation on which capitalism rests.

Already we are getting the same spurious arguments about the need to prioritise jobs, and the low paid, used to justify the wage-cuts suffered under the Social Contract between 1975 and 1978.

As Hattersley told *Marxism Today*:

'We've treated incomes policy as if it was the burden which bad governments heaved on the backs of workers to make them pay the price of recovery. We ought to have used it as a way of building a more decent society where the lowest paid are paid more and the highest paid are paid less and the social services are preserved.'

Yet that was precisely the argument used by left leaders in the unions to sell the social contract in 1975. The militancy of the best-organised workers was successfully dampened down. Then, with the whole movement weakened, the lowest paid, es-

pecially in the public sector, were forced to bear even greater cuts in real wages.

The direction of the next Labour government should now be obvious to every socialist. Yet inside the Labour Party the challenge to all this from the left suffers from its own tenuous grasp of reality. The commitment of Tony Benn, and his dwindling band of associates, to a parliamentary road to socialism rests more on blind faith than serious analysis.

Reformist

Late on the Thursday night of the Labour conference, *Newsnight* broadcast a revealing interview. Benn quite rightly criticised Hattersley for abandoning any challenge to those who 'hold the levers of economic power, the big multinationals and banks'. Without taking them over, he said, there is no hope for socialist policies.

Back came the interviewer with 'But would a Labour government be able to control the multinationals? Wouldn't they just move their money out of the country?'

I do not accept such a pessimistic view, replied Benn. He went on to say if that was true there would be no point in being an MP. If we are determined enough they will have

to accept the verdict of Parliament.

The interviewer, of course, was right, and Kinnock and Hattersley are well aware of it. There are two rational responses to the failures of even mildly leftwing governments, like that of Mitterrand in France, to deal with the crisis.

One is to abandon the illusion that there can be a parliamentary road to socialism, and put your energies into building a revolutionary organisation. The other is to join with Kinnock in the pursuit of electoral success. There is no middle way—no half way house between capitalism and the demands of profit, and socialism and the interests of workers.

Labour has regained credibility, at least in the eyes of those who count (the *Daily Mirror*, the *Financial Times*, the CBI and the City)—at the price of jettisoning even the most threadbare pretensions to socialist policies. They will set out to manage British capitalism better than the Tories. But even judged on those grounds it is extremely doubtful if they will succeed.

Kinnock may have cast off the spectre of Michael Foot and the defeat of 1983. He should still be pursued with the memory of Ramsay Macdonald and the years 1929-31. ■
Pete Green

Not much left

THE PICTURE in the Labour Party for ten years was of gains for the left. Signs denoting the opposite, it is true, became clearer and more frequent in the years after 1982.

But many Labour lefts felt able to shrug off talk of defeats or blows to the left as pessimism or defeatism. They derided those who pointed to defeats as a sign of the futility of trying to change Labour. And they regarded each defeat as little more than a temporary setback to be overcome by gains in other areas.

This year's conference has blown those arguments sky high. The rise and rise of the Labour left has gone into reverse. The left in any case was in a weak position, and was becoming weaker. But Kinnock's two speeches—and the support they received—set the seal on the recent gains of the right.

Because Kinnock's triumph at Bournemouth was about much more than two vicious attacks on the miners and on Liverpool. It was about who controls the party. And the answer even now is ringing in the ears of the left: the right wing controls the party and is determined to tolerate no opposition.

Realignment

It has defined a future for itself which excludes the 'hard left' who once made so much of the running. Its manifesto, the way it fights the election, the boundaries of what is described as 'democratic socialism', are all in the hands of a very different group of people.

None of this should really come as a shock to the left. The writing has been on the wall for some time. Since the 1983 election—which Tony Benn hailed as 'a great victory for socialism' but which was one of Labour's worst ever electoral disasters—there has been a process of what is euphemistically called 'realignment' going on.

It consists of much of the old 'soft left' realigning towards Kinnock, leaving their erstwhile allies isolated and often demoralised. And it consists above all of placing the need to win the next election as paramount, regardless of politics or principles.

This process was halted in 1984, especially at the conference itself. Then the euphoria surrounding the miners' strike tied Kinnock's hands to some extent. Arthur Scargill received a standing ovation, amid pledges of support from even the right wing union leaders.

The spin off from the miners led to very radical policy being passed on local government, with mainstream Labour committing itself to defiance of the Tory law.

This year's conference has ditched all that. In the process it has placed a firm seal of approval on the now continued realignment, which began again in earnest as the end of the miners' strike came closer.

Perhaps the first concrete sign of the realignment was the collapse of one of the left's heroes, Ken Livingstone, over ratecapping. He has shown no sign of having had a change of heart. Livingstone was clearly unhappy about how quickly Kinnock was moving right, but spent much of his time at the *Tribune* rally attacking the 'hard left' and refusing to be bound by anyone.

The reshaping of the left has already progressed a long way. The conference itself threw the state of the left into sharp relief. It therefore gives a fairly accurate, if condensed, picture of what is happening.

The organisation perhaps best known on the left—and with a fair amount of support among the rank and file activists—is the Labour Coordinating Committee. The LCC was once known as the Bennite left. In the run up to the leadership campaign in 1981 Benn was closely identified with the organisation. Since then, their paths have diverged.

The LCC leadership realised early on after the defeat of Benn as deputy leader that they were faced with a choice. Either they could continue on their existing path or they could accept some of the arguments of the right and tailor their demands to make them more widely acceptable.

They chose the latter path. The position which the LCC holds today puts it firmly in the Kinnock camp. They have dragged many once well known left figures like Livingstone and Blunkett in their wake.

This was spelt out before this year's conference had even started at a fringe meeting noted for its vitriol and hostility to the left, and in particular to *Militant*.

One speaker stated, 'Many like to portray the left as hard or soft. The LCC refuses to be

drawn into either camp.' Instead the LCC's policies were referred to as 'radical realism'. The MP Robin Cook defined realignment as meaning the recognition that 'socialism can only be built with the consent and cooperation of the masses'.

Cook's statement was very much in tune with the conference to come. If the 'consent and cooperation of the masses' cannot be won for socialist ideas, then those socialist ideas have to be dropped. There was no notion of how socialists have to fight inside the working class to win their ideas and to turn those minority ideas into a majority.

The LCC speakers did not, of course, put it quite like that. In fact their rhetoric was remarkable for its combination of utopian and often stirring evocations of socialism, coupled with vicious attacks on those who disagreed with them from the left.

Unexpected attack

Yet any doubts about the direction of the LCC at that first meeting were dispelled before long.

Kinnock forced the left to take sides very early on in the conference. His Tuesday 'parliamentary report' launched an unexpected attack on *Militant* and their supporters in Liverpool. The LCC daily bulletin *Labour Activist* was clear where it stood:

'Our instincts say that Neil Kinnock was absolutely right to break the log jam in the party. He said in public what many had been saying in private.'

A further bulletin headlined *The Blunt Choice* went further:

'Those who decide to "fight" Kinnock are saying they don't care about winning the next election: they are opting for self-indulgence—the kind of self-indulgence which would be a real betrayal of the working class people we have the privilege and the duty to represent.'

The LCC argues that instead the left should abandon 'posturing and sectarianism'; should refrain from behaving in 'an



Ken Livingstone: no change of heart

opportunistic manner' on the NEC; and should go for a united left vote on the Tribune/Campaign Group shadow cabinet election slate, to include Michael Meacher who voted against the miners' resolution.

In other words the left has to surrender the pass to what they describe as the party establishment. Left or socialist initiatives are unacceptable because they are labelled as sectarian or divisive. In order to justify this abdication of any fight, the LCC has to pretend that they have won already. So they come out with the incredible statement:

'The left is now dominant in the party in a way that we never have been before. We don't control the party—yet—but we have to try to run it. We cannot luxuriate in opposing everything.'

In a similar vein, Kinnock's speech is referred to as 'probably the most radical, left wing speech made by any Labour leader for at least 50 years'.

Kinnock is described as not being a prisoner of the right; instead 'it is beginning to look as if they may be his'.

Respectable right

The wilful blindness and distortion of the LCC is not shared by all the left. But it is the most dominant view.

The importance of the LCC position is that it gives a degree of respectability to the move to the right which seems to be taking place among the majority of the party rank and file. It is almost as though by saying that the left is in control, those who don't want to fight Kinnock can still maintain a degree of left wing credibility. That is why the ideas of the LCC (if not the organisation which only claims a thousand members nationally) are likely to gain more support over the coming months.

Others on the left are still resisting the logic of the pro-Kinnock position. But what do they represent? And which direction are they going in?

Individuals like Benn and Skinner are clearly more isolated than before. The Campaign Group MPs were often attacked by the Kinnockites. They must now be feeling demoralised.

The fringe meeting called by *Labour Herald* had a significant audience. And its politics are a vast improvement on the LCC. But it represents very little on the ground. The *Herald* meeting which Scargill addressed was packed with several hundred people. It brought together those like Scargill and Benn with a representative of the black sections debate.

The call from *Labour Herald* was for left regroupment and unity. But there was no coming to terms with the fact that the ideas it put forward were isolated, and becoming more so.

The meeting was remarkable for a number of extremely good speeches from people like Scargill and from Dennis Skinner. But an analysis of what they said left a remarkably blank impression. The term 'whistling in the dark' could have been invented for this sort of meeting. It all sounded very good, but there was little substantial about it. The lack of substance was confirmed by the *Herald* supporters' weak showing in the conference

itself. John McDonnell, deposed deputy leader of the GLC and leading *Herald* supporter, only won the very small vote of 18,000 in the NEC elections.

If this is true of *Herald* it is even truer of the far left *Briefing* group. *Briefing* is an amalgam of supporters of single issue campaigns like gay rights or black sections, plus many fragments of the far left including the entrust grouplets. Its politics are marked by an extremely high degree of tokenism. This tokenism has the merit of protecting it from much contact with hard reality.

It means that *Briefing* combines a formally correct position on questions like opposing Kinnock, supporting the miners, and defending *Militant*, with an almost total inability to do anything about the problems. It now appears to be divided as to whether the far left should mount a challenge to the leadership next year. Whatever it decides *Briefing* has little influence and is therefore likely to alter very little.

What was striking at the conference about all the left was the complete lack of interest in what the rest of the left was doing, and complete misassessment of the political situation. So Liverpool was barely mentioned in the early fringe meetings. It was Kinnock who chose that terrain of battle. And the witch hunt against *Militant* and other socialists was not mentioned much either.

This meant that Kinnock's speech was a tremendous shock to most of the left. They couldn't believe that he would dare to do it—even worse, they couldn't believe that it had gone down so well. It was only then that some of the left began to grasp that things weren't all going in their direction, and that the future was indeed a depressing one.

This was as true of *Militant* as of anyone else. There was much bravado at their large

meeting after Kinnock's attack. The rightward drift of the party and of the conference was brushed aside by Peter Taaffe: 'All the paper resolutions don't mean that much—I wouldn't trade that for the support of the working class.'

Tony Mulhearn, a Liverpool councillor, also dismissed the attacks: 'Irrespective of what goes on this week, we will get a groundswell of support.'

Stitched up

Yet all the brave talk couldn't disguise *Militant's* isolation. They were attacked by Kinnock, stitched up by David Blunkett the following day and left with no strong policy on local government. They might not set much store by paper resolutions (quite rightly) but at least their paper resolution committed the conference to supporting illegality, to supporting industrial action against ratecapping and gave a firm commitment to a future Labour government supporting disqualified councillors.

The motion they withdrew in favour of did none of these things.

Militant must also have found the atmosphere at Bournemouth unpleasant. After Kinnock's speech there were vicious arguments in the bars and lobbies as delegates attacked *Militant* and told them to get out of the party.

Whether any of these things will have an effect in forcing the Labour left to face up to what is happening inside the party, time will tell. But Bournemouth marked clearly the leadership's determination to deal with the left. It also unfortunately marked an almost total failure by the left to meet that challenge. ■

Lindsey German



Kinnock's speech further isolated Benn

Soft left's hard man

THE ECLIPSE of the 'hard' left by the newly-strengthened 'soft' left reached its climax at Bournemouth last month.

As the born-again realists scrambled to rally behind Kinnock's banner of 'credible and justifiable policies', one man in particular emerged as the symbol, if not the architect, of the new shift.

David Blunkett's key role as 'bridge-builder' was confirmed as he endeared himself to the leadership with his firm handling of the left and parroting of Kinnock's pleas for unity and moderation.

It was Blunkett's manoeuvring which ensured the withdrawal of the hard-line *Militant* motion on Liverpool. His status was further enhanced by his usurping of Benn from top spot in the constituency section of the NEC elections.

Blunkett's rise to stardom has been impressive. In 1969 he became, at 22, Sheffield's youngest-ever councillor. In 1980 he became leader of the city council. Three years later his election to the Labour Party National Executive set the seal on his success.

Shortly afterwards he became chairman of the party's committee on local government. The probability is that he will enter parliament at the next election, when the MP for the safe seat of Brightside, Sheffield retires.

Distanced

Although generally regarded as on the left of the party, the hallmark of Blunkett's progress through the ranks has been his refusal to associate himself with any particular faction. While supporting the Bennites on party democracy he refused to endorse their more controversial policies.

At the same time he firmly distanced himself from the likes of Roy Hattersley. Ever since 1983, he has worked closely with soft lefts like Michael Meacher and Tom Sawyer of NUPE on the NEC.

The Times could declare in April 1984 that: 'By being unassociated with partisan Bennism, but firmly supportive of the Benn platforms on accountability, Mr Blunkett is well adapted to walk straight into the Kinnock camp.'

His vacillation (what *The Spectator* approvingly called his 'elasticity of convictions') has made him immensely popular.

His equivocal support for Benn has helped him avoid the fate of Livingstone and Meacher in being labelled a 'traitor of the left', while the right appreciate his ability to exert a 'calming influence on the left'. His 'honest broker' image ensures the support of the middle ground.

Blunkett's aptitude for playing the roles of left-winger and sensible realist with equal conviction, was best illustrated by his behaviour during the campaign against rate-capping.

At Labour's local government conference

in February, Kinnock argued—in direct contravention of party policy—that Labour councillors should stay in office and obey the law. Blunkett replied that while they would not default on their commitment to getting Kinnock elected they also had a commitment to party democracy and therefore to policy as decided by conference. He then tempered his defiance by concluding, to a standing ovation, that the party's main priority was to unite 'whether we believe we are right or wrong'.

Within a month that fragile unity had been shattered by the capitulation of the GLC. But, far from criticising the Labour group for ignoring party policy, Blunkett leapt to their defence. He claimed that the setting of a rate complied with the essence of party policy which was to defend jobs and services. Instead he attacked the left 'splitters' such as John McDonnell who opposed Livingstone's climb-down. By July he was arguing that the strategy of non-compliance was 'unworkable'.

But Blunkett's was no sudden change of mind. As long ago as October 1983 he had emphasised that the fight would have to be 'a co-ordinated response with an impact—not a self-gratifying, moralistic, politically correct example of martyrdom'.

With the GLC cave-in Blunkett could argue that any chance of making an 'impact' had gone and that the only remaining option was to either follow suit or indulge in futile acts of self-sacrifice. The campaign collapsed.

Blunkett's ability to wriggle off the hook was facilitated by the bureaucratic nature of the campaign and his refusal to mobilise the council's massive workforce (over 30,000—nearly three times as large as Merseyside's) against the government. He saw the council's salvation as lying elsewhere. On Democracy Day in March 1984 he admitted that new avenues of resistance would have to be explored, but only 'if the House of Lords fails us'.

And yet the central plank of Blunkett's administration in Sheffield has been an attempt to 'decentralise', to make the system of local government less alienating and to 'involve the community in the decision-making process'.

There is a contradiction here. The gulf between having a 'sense of involvement' and actually controlling your own life is massive. Besides, being able to walk 100 yards to a neighbourhood housing office rather than two miles to the town hall to be told you're still 2,000th on the housing list, doesn't necessarily enhance your 'community spirit'.

Along with the other new left councillors of the post-1980 era, Blunkett harked back to the 'golden era' of municipal socialism, the 1930's. He set himself the task of creating in Sheffield a future socialist Britain in microcosm. The theory was articulated in the Fabian Society pamphlet *Building from the Bottom*. In this he urged that regeneration

must come from within the community, through liaison between the private and public sectors, the establishment of enterprise boards and co-operatives and a general spirit of partnership within the locality.

Blunkett's efforts to build a socialist fortress insulated against the Thatcherite assault have been pursued on the economic front through the city's 50-strong employment unit which, with its annual budget of £2.5 million, finances the workshops and co-ops and is responsible for developing hi-tech research projects with the local polytechnic and university.

The city has also twinned with Donetsk in the USSR and Anshan in China. The latter agreement involved a promise that Sheffield firms would get priority on contracts for a £200 million steel modernisation programme there.

Socialist island

Sheffield is proud of its status as capital of the 'socialist republic of South Yorkshire'. Although it would be churlish to dismiss the council's achievements out of hand (particularly since, between 1980 and 1983 alone, the city lost over £125 million of government grant) it is quite clear that Blunkett's dream of a 'socialist island' has proved totally unattainable. Unemployment is still massive and growing all the time, while services have only been maintained at an ever-increasing cost to ordinary ratepayers.

Moreover the pressure of trying to build a socialist island in a hostile capitalist sea has produced some familiar results. Last year, whilst supporting the miners, Blunkett sat through a strike by 630 employees in his own housing department. He complained that the union was trying to operate a veto over the introduction of new technology and claimed that Sheffield Council stood for progress and would have no truck with 'Luddism'.

Blunkett's belief in the devolution of state control also leads him to oppose what he calls 'outdated' concepts of 'Morrisonian nationalisation'. This, he argued at this year's conference, had discredited the notion of social ownership in the eyes of the ordinary voter who was 'frightened by the idiocy' of those who called for the nationalisation of the top 250 companies. New forms of ownership had to be found, presumably along the lines of Sheffield's co-operatives.

His assertion that 'it was a grave mistake of socialists to believe in nationalisation rather than "socialisation"', is a superficially attractive one until you realise that when Blunkett talks of 'socialisation', workers' control is not quite what he has in mind.

Blunkett's obsessive rejection of 'outdated dogmas' and traditional forms of struggle (strikes, picket lines—all that nonsense) is a reflection of his deep loathing for anyone whom he considers to be 'outside the movement'.

Not being on friendly terms with David Blunkett will not cause many of us to lose much sleep. What is more surprising, however, is that given the man's record, so many of the Labour left have had illusions in him for so long. ■

Simon Terry

How the working class votes

Chris Harman discusses the implications of a new book on voting patterns

REVOLUTIONARIES are quite rightly distrustful about psephology—the study of voting behaviour. Voting figures and opinion polls provide static images of partial aspects of people's views.

They ignore the contradictory ways in which people think, the way they will express one view in certain situations (for instance, if faced with a voting paper that comes through the letter box) and quite a different view in other situations (for instance, at a workplace meeting).

Above all, they take no account of the way in which ideas can change in struggle.

And so they end up simply reflecting the ideological status quo, instead of showing how it could be changed.

But that does not mean that their findings are never of any interest. Sometimes knowing what the ideological status quo is can be of importance—especially when important political opponents rest part of their case on a misinterpretation of it.

For this reason the new study, *How Britain Votes* is of considerable interest—despite the fact that it is likely to become the swingologists' bible.

Since the disastrous result for Labour in the 1983 election, much of the running on the left has been made by Hobsbawmite notions. These hold that traditional working class socialist politics is in irreversible decline, that Thatcherism has been able to take advantage of this to establish a new 'authoritarian populist' base for conservatism, and that the only way for the left to fight back is to establish a new alliance with the parties and movements of the middle class to build an anti-Thatcher electoral majority.

How Britain Votes provides important empirical evidence against some of the key Hobsbawmite arguments. It shows that the class basis of politics in Britain has not disappeared, that the manual working class is 'somewhat more united politically than is sometimes supposed', so that in 1983, 'a particularly bad election for Labour', the party still got 51 percent of skilled workers' votes and 48 percent of semi-skilled and

unskilled votes.

It shows that things like changed patterns of consumption and house ownership have had much less effect on workers than is commonly assumed—for instance, by Hobsbawm with his claim that 'the manual working class core of traditional socialist labour parties has been transformed, and to some extent divided, by the decades in which living standards reached levels undreamed of even by the well paid in the 1930s.'

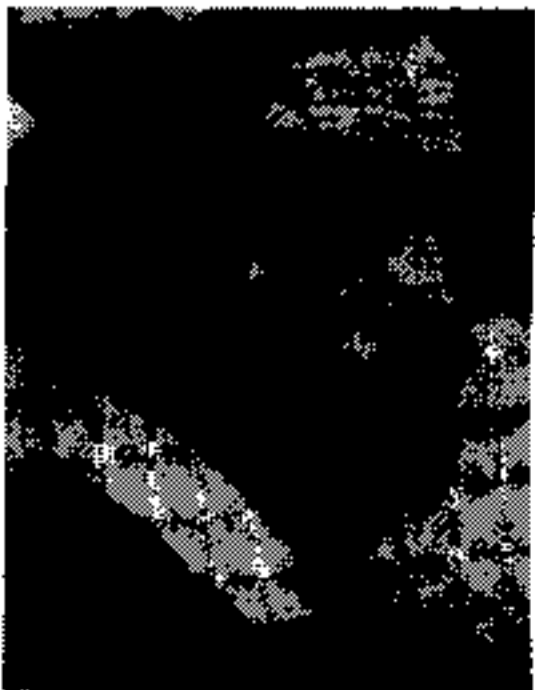
THE study found, for instance, that former Labour voting, council tenants who had bought their own houses were no more likely to vote Tory than those who hadn't. At the same time, it makes a point that must almost completely destroy the 'authoritarian populist' argument:

'The total level of support for the Conservatives (in the 1983 election) was not particularly high... In ten of the 18 elections since the emergence of the present party structure in 1922, the Conservative Party won a larger share of the vote than Mrs Thatcher's Conservatives managed in 1983.'

The authors are able to reaffirm the class basis of British politics because they break down the figures usually used to identify the manual working class. They show that the figures usually given include, along with manual wage workers, the manual self-employed and small businessmen, on the one hand, and 'foremen and technicians' on the other.

But these last two groups, it is shown, have always voted in a markedly different way to those whose lives depend on selling their manual labour power.

'It is the petty bourgeois which is the most conservative class... This plays havoc with the conventional manual/non-manual division.' And although 'foremen and technicians' differ in their voting pattern from the small businessmen and the unemployed, there is a big Conservative lead among them (with 48 percent voting Tory and only 26 percent Labour).



Hobsbawm: back to the working class

The analysis of voting also breaks down the figures usually given for 'white collar', 'middle class' voting. It separates out 'routine non-manual workers' from higher grades, which it refers to as the 'salarial'.

It distinguishes between 'workers such as clerks, salesworkers and secretaries...subordinate positions with relatively low levels of incomes' and 'managers and administrators, supervisors of non-manual workers, professionals and semi-professionals... All occupations which afford a secure basis of employment, typically affording a high income...[and often] the exercise of authority.

The 'routine non-manual workers' now make up 24 percent of the population. Their numbers have grown by 6 percent since 1964. During that period the number of manual employees has fallen, from 47 to 34 percent of the population. But the manual and routine non-manual combined still account, on this study's definition, for 58 percent of the population.

The proletariat, white and blue collar, is still easily the majority class.

ACTUALLY, in the real world, things are even better in this respect than the study suggests. For its 'salarial' is a catch-all category. It includes people like managers who clearly belong to the new petty bourgeoisie (or even the managerial section of the bourgeoisie proper) and groups of 'semi-professionals' who must be included as workers in any Marxist analysis (since they sell their labour power, exercise no control over the means of production and exercise no authority over other workers—for instance, class room teachers, lower grade nurses).

The figures given for salaries suggest how inadequate the hold-all category is: average male 'salarial' earnings are shown as only 70 percent higher (and average female 'salarial' earnings as only 19 percent higher) than average male manual wages. Hardly the stuff out of which a ruling class is made!

The point is very important, because the study claims that the 'salarial' is the fastest growing class—now accounting for 27 percent of the population (only 7 percent less than the manual working class). What is more, it sees this class as being the main base of both the Tory and the Alliance vote.

It then gives as a major reason for Labour's low vote in the last two general elections as the change in the sizes of the two biggest classes (although it argues that in a three party system, Labour's hold over the manual working class could still lay the basis for a general election win next time).

But a detailed analysis of the different groupings making up the 'salarial' would give a very different result to that of the study. It would show only about 12 percent of the population as belonging to the privileged section (the managerial section of the bourgeoisie and the 'new middle class'), with the rest belonging to the ranks of the working class (for such analyses, see Chris Harman, 'Farewell to the Working Class', *Socialist Worker*, 16 April 1983; and Alex



Callinicos, 'The New Middle Class and Socialist Politics', *IS Journal*, Summer 1983).

THE study's approach fails to grasp the most important point about the relationship between class and politics in Britain: the restructuring of industry has produced a restructuring of the working class, *not* the growth of a new class alongside and comparable in size to the working class.

We can see this if we compare three different ways of looking at the class structure (using the basic figures provided in the book):

	Conventional/ Hobsbawmite	How Britain Votes	Marxist
ruling class	?	-	2-3%
new m-c	49%	27%	12%
old m-c	8%	8%	8%
foremen etc	-	7%	7%
w-c white collar	-	24%	36%
blue collar	41%	34%	34%
total w-c	41%	58%	70%

As can be seen, the ruling class disappears entirely from *How Britain Votes*, and often does not appear in the conventional/Hobsbawmite analysis.

These different pictures of the class structure lead to different explanations as to Labour's failure.

The conventional (and Hobsbawmite) explanation is to say both that Labour gets less than a majority of working class support and that it fails to appeal to the growing middle class.

How Britain Votes argues against this that Labour does get majority manual worker support (once foremen etc are excluded from the working class). But it fails to explain why that degree of support is down on that of ten years ago. Nor can it explain the low level of support for Labour among 'routine non-manual' workers. Only 25 percent of non-manual workers voted Labour in 1983—only a little more than half the number who voted Tory.

The failure to deal with this problem means that in the end *How Britain Votes* ends up with political conclusions very similar to those who use the conventional analyses—the Labour Party, it says, needs to stress 'liberal' values that appeal to the 'educated' section of the 'salaried' (and its 'scientific' description of liberal values includes support for the EEC and for the right of racists to put across their ideas) and to stress the 'fairness' to all classes of its policies.

Yet there is a much easier explanation of Labour's weakness. *How Britain Votes* stresses that:

'Employment conditions are more fundamental determinants of values and political allegiance than is life style... Manual wage labourers have relatively little security of employment and relatively poor fringe benefits such as sick pay and pension schemes. They have little control over their own working conditions and little discretion over what they do at work. They also have relatively poor chances of gaining promotion to the better paid and more secure managerial positions. As a result manual workers cannot be sure to improve their positions through individual action. Instead they must look to collective action...'

ALL this is true. But it neglects a very important point. It was only through the experience of struggle that the 'old' manual working class adopted 'collective' values and came to identify with some sort of left

politics. From the 1850s until the early 1890s the great majority of workers voted for the individualistic Liberal Party of Gladstone. And even after the first successful battles for Labour representation, the majority of workers still voted Tory or Liberal.

The working class was won to 'collective' values and Labour voting by three waves of industrial struggle—that of the late 1880s and the 1890s, that of 1910-26, and that of the late 1930s and the wartime years. It was the experience of these struggles which led first the 'old' manual working class of heavy industry and textiles to turn to Labour, and then the newer working class of light engineering, motors and so on to do so.

But this process, by which new layers of workers were pulled behind others into support for Labour, stopped in the 1950s and 1960s—just as the massive growth of 'routine' white collar employment began.

This was not because the conditions of work in such white collar employment ruled out 'collective' attitudes. There was, after all, a massive growth of white collar trade unionism and of white collar industrial action in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

But this industrial 'collectivism' did not translate itself into political collectivism (and to judge from the ballots of Labour affiliation carried out a couple of years back in Nalگو and CPSA, showed no signs of doing so).

Why?

You can't begin to answer that question without remembering that Labour was in power for 11 of the years between 1964 and 1979—the very years in which white collar industrial militancy blossomed.

Much of the militancy was, in fact, generated in reaction to the pro-capitalist policies of Labour in power. It is hardly, therefore, surprising that most routine white collar workers and lower grade 'semi-professionals' did not see any reason to identify politically with the Labour Party.

Had there been a powerful political alternative to the left of Labour, things might have been a little different. Sections of manual workers might have struggled against Labour from a left, socialist position, creating a new political climate in which routine white collar workers were in turn politicised to the left.

But this did not happen, and so a collective approach in the workplaces did not translate itself into politics.

Once this is seen, you can also see why Kinnockism cannot do more than gain transitory support from most sections of white collar workers. Its attempts at present to make itself indistinguishable from the Alliance parties might bear fruit in getting it sufficient 'middle ground' votes to win in a couple of years' time. But as soon as it takes office, it will follow policies which will disillusion any white collar following it has built up.

How Britain Votes, by Anthony Heath, Roger Jowell and John Curtice, published by Pergamon.



White collar workers—militancy grew under Labour

Marx's road to Marxism

MARX was born in 1818 in Trier, a sleepy little market town on the Moselle noted mainly for its Roman ruins and its claim to have more churches than any other place of its size in Germany.

By 1818 the industrial revolution was well under way in Britain. Steam power, new machinery, new classes and new conflicts were creating a new world. The Combination Acts, which outlawed unions, had been in force for nearly two decades. Luddism (machinery breaking) and the savage hangings inflicted on Luddites were in the recent past.

In Marx's first year came the Peterloo massacre and the 'Six Acts' aimed at suppressing all working class political action. Robert Owen's *New View of Society*, the first utopian socialist tract in English, had been out for several years.

None of this created a ripple in Trier. In the years when Marx was growing up, the place slept in near-medieval torpor. And, with some exaggeration, the same could be said of the German speaking world as a whole. The states of the German Confederation were backward, economically and politically.

This fact is important. It determined the specific and peculiar path by which Marx arrived at his mature outlook, a path he could not possibly have followed had he been born in Lyons, Paris, Manchester or London.

For Marx came to Marxism via a profound study of philosophy, specifically the philosophy of Hegel. That philosophy was very fashionable in Germany when Marx was a youth. Indeed it was sponsored and promoted by the Prussian state (Trier, like Bonn where Marx first became a student, was in Prussian territory).

Hegel, like many of his predecessors, believed that reality is fundamentally mental or spiritual. Put vulgarly, 'it's all in the mind'. Technically, this is called *idealism* (the idea is the ultimate reality). But not, in Hegel, merely anyone's ideas.

These ideas are to be understood only in relation to an 'absolute', otherwise known as God. Not in itself a very interesting or original proposition, but, for Hegel, this reality is a *process of development*, not a state of affairs given once and for all. And this development is both necessary (ie could not be otherwise) and proceeds through contradiction and conflict—the famous thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Hegel attempted to construct an all-embracing system in which everything, past and present, could be understood

(after the event) in its inter-connections and development through contradiction and conflict.

It is easy to see how this approach lends itself to a profoundly conservative ideology. As Hegel himself said: 'Whatever is real is reasonable and whatever is reasonable is real.'

HOWEVER, there is a difficulty. For Hegel's *method* stresses *change* through conflict, whereas his implied conclusion is, in effect, all is for the best in this best of possible worlds. Thus the Prussian state of 1831 (the year of Hegel's death) represents the culmination of world history—though Hegel did not say this in so many words it is clearly his conclusion!

The contrast between Hegel's method and Hegel's system gave rise, soon after his death, to a split amongst his disciples. Those who emphasised the method, the so-called Young Hegelians, inevitably applied it to the current reality (still seen in terms of ideas, of course) and predicted its imminent passing away. Not at all what the authorities expected from philosophers!

Marx came to Berlin, capital of Prussia and Hegelianism, in 1836 after a year of dissipated idleness at Bonn and soon became first a deeply learned Hegelian and then a Young Hegelian critic.

The views of the various Young Hegelians need not be considered in any detail. It is sufficient to say that, with the important exception of Feuerbach, they remained locked into the idealist illusion—the criticism of ideas was their sole concern—and that they remained, typically, politically passive. Marx, as had been said, was one of them for some years and in this period his political views developed in the direction of an abstract 'democracy'. His first published political article, *On the Prussian Censorship* (1842), is an argument against any censorship in principle, written in the Young Hegelian fashion of 'critical criticism'. It is a most 'unmarxist' text.

However, Marx was already on the verge of going beyond these commonplaces. He was coming to a *materialist* position; that is to say to a recognition that the material world, the universe, is external to and prior to human thought or *any* thought, that ideas are shaped by circumstances, that Hegel's absolute (and so the Christian/Jewish/Islamic God) is a *product* of human society and not a prime mover. God is indeed an *idea* (spirit, geist) but that idea is made

Duncan Hallas looks at the development of Marx's thought. The article is the first of one based on a series of talks at Marxism 85.



A scene from the Peterloo massacre

by men. It does not make them (I am using men and man in the generic sense, as Marx did, without regard to sex).

It is convenient, although not strictly in chronological order, to quote here Marx's splendid statement of 1844:

'Man makes religion, religion does not make man. But man is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the world of man, the state, society. This state, this society, produces religion's inverted attitude to the world because they are an inverted world themselves. Thus the struggle against religion is indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion... Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart in a heartless world, the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people... The first task of philosophy, which is in the service of history, once the holy form of human self-alienation has been discovered is to discover self-alienation in its unholy forms. The criticism of heaven is thus transformed into the criticism of earth...the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.'

HERE we have the germ of historical materialism. But only the germ. The post-1847 Marx could never have written 'philosophy which is in the service of history'. Such grand and cloudy abstractions are residual idealism. A little over a year later he was to write: '*History does nothing*, it "possesses no immense wealth", it "wages no battles". It is *man*, real living man, that does all that, that possesses and fights; "history" is not a person apart, using man as a means for *its own* particular aims; history is *nothing but* the activity of man pursuing his aims...' (the emphases are all in the original). Even this still speaks of an undifferentiated 'man' but the *decisive* break with idealism has taken place.

Two digressions are necessary. Why all this fuss about religion? No advanced thinker of today would take it as an important starting point (although the diverse experiences of Iran and Poland demonstrate that, in the absence of a scientific materialist *force*, ie a revolutionary workers' party, 'all the old crap'—Marx's expression, can rise again with terrible effect).

The answer is that in post-1815 Germany, after the final defeat of revolutionary and then Bonapartist France, the neo-feudal reactionary regimes proscribed all 'dangerous' ideas and imposed Lutheran or Catholic orthodoxy (or both in the case of Russia) as the *only* permitted ideologies—hence even Marx could write as late as 1844: 'the criticism of religion is the foundation of all criticism'.

Second, and of lasting significance, Marx came eventually to materialism by fighting his way through Hegel's *dynamic* idealism. He came late to it, historically speaking. As he himself was subsequently to note, pioneer French, Scottish and English thinkers of the eighteenth century had already arrived at the materialist (ie scientific) position. They suffered, as pioneers hewing out an uncharted path against immense difficulties, and their materialisms typically suf-

fered, in consequence, from two defects. They tended to be mechanical, one-sidedly deterministic, on the one hand and *atomistic* (hence Robinson Crusoe and Rousseau's *Social Contract*) on the other. Marx, steeped in Hegel, was not tempted by either of these errors.

In the last resort Marxism itself was a product of uneven development and then of combined development. It was the very backwardness of Germany, as Marx came to understand quite early, that produced Hegel's philosophy which, however, contained the 'rational kernel' that Marx assimilated. The advanced countries (Britain and France) produced, respectively, political economy and socialism (or rather, a handful of advanced intellectuals produced these things but *conditions* popularised them).

What Lenin called 'the three sources and component parts of Marxism' (German philosophy, British political economy, French socialism)



The young Marx:
standing Hegel on
his head

were synthesised by Marx in a fashion which transcended their national peculiarities.

A central element in that synthesis was the *method*. Hegel's method 'stood on its head' Marx said. Perhaps he was too kind to Hegel but without doubt it could not have been developed *at that time* except by someone steeped in, and at the same time going beyond, the German philosophical tradition.

The essence of the method is contained in the second and third *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845 and unpublished in Marx's lifetime):

'The question whether human thinking can reach objective truth is not a question of theory but a *practical* question. In practice man must prove the truth... The dispute about the actuality or non-actuality of thinking—thinking isolated from practice—is a purely scholastic question.'

'The materialist doctrine concerning the

change of circumstances and education forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated' (the whole question of self-activity, the party and their inter-relationships, an immense and difficult field, but the *essence* was already outlined in 1845).

By 1845 Marx, and his new-found collaborator Frederick Engels (who had arrived at similar ideas by a somewhat different path), had achieved the synthesis. Their joint work of 1846, *The German Ideology*, marks the transition to Marxism, to a realistic socialist *practice*. It is a huge work (642 pages in the English version plus near 100 pages of notes, index etc), never published in the lifetime of Marx or Engels (it first appeared in the original German in 1932) and, because of its polemical form (against various, now largely forgotten, thinkers), difficult to read.

Yet all the essential ideas are there:

'...the first proposition of all human existence, and therefore of all history [is] that man must be in a position to live in order to "make history". But life involves before anything else eating and drinking, a place to live, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is, therefore, the production of material life itself. This is indeed a historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must be accomplished every day and every hour merely in order to sustain human life.'

SOCIETY is structured around and built on *production*. And this productive process depends on the *techniques, tools, equipment* available at any given stage of development and, beyond the more primitive stages, gives rise to social classes, to exploiters and exploited. This, in turn, gives rise to the class struggle.

To jump ahead again to late 1847 and the immortal words of the *Communist Manifesto*:

'The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.'

Now, capitalism has created the *material* basis for a classless society based on (relative) plenty. Its *human* basis is the proletariat. Progress, therefore, means the struggle for workers' power.

Of course, there is vastly more to Marxism than this. Marx and Engels both produced a vast amount of work after the *Communist Manifesto*. The whole analysis of *Capital* is the outstanding case.

Moreover, the account of Marx's own development to 1847, given here, is brutally simplified, as any short account must be. Nonetheless, it's accurate, so far as it goes. I learned something, preparing for it for Marxism 85, so perhaps some readers will gain something too.



More democracy or less

AT THE Tory Party conference, Norman Tebbit spelt out why the Tories are in favour of ballots: if there had been a national ballot at the beginning of the miners' strike, there would have been no strike. Clearly, the Tories understand that ballots have the effect of delaying, if not stopping, action altogether.

In many senses, the Tories have had a large measure of success in popularising the view that ballots in unions increase democracy and give back control to their members. Part of the reason for this success is that in the late 1970s they located a gap between union leaderships and members. Michael Edwardes exploited this phenomenon to great effect at British Leyland when he took over in 1978. He used management organised ballots to gain acceptance of the restructuring of BL whilst the shop stewards stood by helplessly, out of touch with their members.

The Tories' success in taking up the argument about democracy in the unions has had important repercussions for the left. In the past, the left dominated the argument, demanding regular election of all fulltime officials, regular meetings between shop stewards and their sections. Today the Tories have shifted the terms of the debate. They are aided by two further factors: the nature of the trade union bureaucracy and the current shift to the right inside the Labour Party.

For the right wing of the Labour Party and the trade union bureaucracy, political change is purely dependent on the ballot box and parliament. For them, balloting on the shop floor is simply an extension of this view

of change from above. Any device, therefore, which enables trade union leaders to undercut the influence of militants is acceptable. It comes as no surprise that the AUEW recently sent out a circular to all shop stewards instructing them to conduct ballots before any form of industrial action.

Both the Labour Party right wing and the likes of Gavin Laird and Eric Hammond accept the terms of capitalism and are prepared to tailor what can be achieved through parliament and the unions to the state of capitalist crisis.

The left leaders

The situation for the left trade union bureaucracy is different. Left wing trade union leaders emerge as the result of currents of opposition to class collaboration and on the basis that workers can fight for improvement. However, they too are constrained by their position in the bureaucracy: members' actions have to be controlled. Struggles must not get to the point of challenging prospects of electing a Labour government, let alone the social fabric of society.

The left bureaucracy treat their members as a stage army, even if they want it at times to fight. (That is even true of the right wing of the bureaucracy—Hammond recently organised a ballot of power workers over GCHQ. He does not want the state to have the power to disband unions at will.)

The left bureaucracy face a dilemma: they want to oppose the Tories' imposition of ballots but are unable to counter them with a strategy for regular election of officials and regular mass meetings, ie a real increase in

working class democracy. Hence they oppose the Tories' ballots in principle, but are quite happy with the idea of union controlled ballots under a Labour government.

The net result is that the trade union bureaucracy is quite defenceless on the issue of democracy in the unions as posed by the Tories. The Tories can present themselves as the true democrats who treat workers as equal thinking human beings capable of making up their own minds, as opposed to trade union leaders who distrust and have contempt for their members.

This was the major thrust of Hammond's argument at the TUC in the debate over whether to accept state funding for ballots. He, Eric Hammond, has faith in his members, whilst Ron Todd does not. Much as revolutionaries might wince at that, it strikes a chord because the left has no answers.

The capitulation to ballots by the Labour left and *Marxism Today* has to do with their conception of how to achieve socialism. For *Marxism Today*, balloting is simply a question of democracy—giving workers the right to vote. Socialism will only be achieved through the completion of the 'democratic revolution': 'It involves both a qualitative and quantitative extension of democracy with parliament as the central political institution' (*Marxism Today*, May 1985).

Put simply, socialist change in Britain is about using parliament as the means to eradicate class inequalities in the economic sphere. Gone is any understanding of parliament as expressed by Lenin so neatly in *State and Revolution*:

'To decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament—such is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarianism, not only in parliamentary constitutional democracies, but also in the most democratic republics.'

In fact both Marx and Lenin devoted their lives to the understanding that bourgeois democracy is a particular form of capitalist class rule and that workers cannot use the form of bourgeois society to achieve socialism.

For them (as well as for Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg and others) working class democracy is *in essence* different from bourgeois democracy.

The difference encompasses a completely different world view. It starts with the proposition that workers can only emancipate themselves through their own struggles.

All workers' conditions at work from pay to tea breaks depend on what workers are prepared collectively to fight for. Hence individual rights depend on collective strength. This is also true for workers' lives outside work, for matters ranging from the vote to the level of health care. Because this is the case, workers are responsible to their class for decisions they take, on whether to fight over an issue or not, as everyone is affected by how people vote.

The aim of the ruling class is always to counterpose, to the view of working class collective strength to achieve reforms, the ideas of individual rights and individual development. In a period of defeats, when

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workers feel unable to exercise their collective strength, ruling class ideas take deep root as there is no daily experience to the contrary. Hence the feeling becomes widespread that strikes are a waste of time and each worker should look after him/herself.

When the left abandons working class struggle as a means of achieving a socialist society, it inevitably results in abandoning the distinction between working class and bourgeois democracy, the logical outcome of which is to accept ballots.

During the miners' strike, the incompatibility of parliamentarianism and self emancipation was not as apparent as it is today. The Labour left, who talk about both parliament and working class struggle, were as active as ourselves in supporting the miners. Experience seemed to indicate that you could work in the Labour Party and support workers in struggle.

The events of the last few weeks prove that the attempt to combine electoralism with working class struggle leads to the subordination of the latter to the former. This comes out all too clearly over the question of ballots. It is not an exaggeration to say that ballots are a touchstone for whether an organisation is based on electoralism or working class struggle.

The difference was clearly illustrated by the pattern of the development of the miners' strike. A minority of miners struck, sent out flying pickets to other pits and appealed to fellow miners for support. Areas which had balloted against strike action, such as Scotland and South Wales, came out solidly in support. Was this democratic or not? In bourgeois terms, no. In working class terms, yes.

A section of workers took action and attempted to spread it. Workers in struggle appealing for solidarity *changed* the ideas of other workers who responded by striking.

In March 1984, the Labour left defended the miners' right to strike without a ballot, as did the miners themselves, who understood instinctively that a national ballot would

have been used to break the dynamic of the strike.

Today, the SWP is virtually the only organisation that still defends that right.

Militant abandoned the principle clearly over Liverpool. They accepted the trade union officials' demand for a ballot in the GMBATU. (On 6 September in an editorial they had said: '*Militant* is not opposed to ballots'.) Then they accepted the right of the majority to vote down those sections which had voted to strike. When confronted with the argument that the minority should have come out and spread the strike through flying pickets, their reply was that NALGO would have scabbed and flying pickets are divisive or intimidatory.

Optimism, fatalism

There is no iron law of historic development which predetermines whether workers will fight or not. Marxists never underestimate the part that conscious intervention of workers in struggle plays in changing other workers. Hence revolutionaries always argue for workers to take action and attempt to spread it, however unfavourable the circumstances. *Militant* combine a super-optimism in theory about workers' ability to fight with fatalism in practice.

The reason for *Militant's* behaviour lies in their strategy for socialism and should be a warning for the rest of the left inside the Labour Party. Saying that socialism can be achieved by electing a government with socialist policies through the ballot box, with workers playing only a back up role, leads to viewing working class struggle through the eyes of parliamentarianism. Workers can only take action if they are in the majority and after a ballot.

This forgets that in the course of struggle the determined minority can overcome uneven consciousness among workers. A revolutionary party bases itself precisely on the determined minority and its capacity at high points of struggle to transform the

passive majority into an active one.

The reason the Labour left has accepted electoralism in the workplace, and fails to distinguish between working class and bourgeois forms of democracy, is the move to the right inside the Labour Party and the unions since the end of the miners' strike. In the face of defeat, the trade union bureaucracy has abandoned all but formal opposition to Tory anti-union legislation.

Apart from fears of injunctions and loss of union funds, they see the best hope of change coming through the election of Kinnock into Downing Street. The soft lefts—Livingstone, Blunkett and Co—gave up extra-parliamentary campaigning when they gave up the fight over ratecapping. They now see their best hopes in backing but 'controlling' Kinnock.

Militant and the rest of the Labour left face the choice of leaving the Labour Party or accommodating to the move to the right. Their attitude to ballots is an indication that the latter will be their chosen course.

In such circumstances, we will have to argue the revolutionary alternative to electoralism in general and on the shop floor. There will be countless arguments about ballots in the future. We will have to use such arguments to defend workers' right to take decisions in open meetings by show of hands, for the right of the section to fight and appeal for solidarity.

Where we are forced to go along with ballots, we will have to attempt to tie them as closely as possible to open, collective voting by insisting that ballots are held after mass meetings, that there are two ballot boxes one for 'Yes' and one for 'No' votes, so workers can see how their mates are voting.

Above all, we have to remember that arguments about ballots are fundamentally about two different conceptions of democracy and two strategies for socialism. Ballots are about bourgeois democracy and electoralism. Revolutionaries fight for working class democracy and revolution. ■
Sheila McGregor



Workers in struggle change the ideas of fellow workers

Steps to solidarity

HOW DO we build solidarity with the struggles going on in South Africa today? One of the main ways has to be trying to get across to workers in this country how exactly black workers are organising.

It was to do this that a group of CPSA and Nalگو members in London recently organised a speaking tour for a South African trade union representative, Maxwell Xulu of the Metal and Allied Workers Union (Mawu).

In less than three weeks he addressed nearly 50 meetings stretched out between Scotland and Southampton, and raised about £4,000 for his union.

Almost everywhere he received a warm and enthusiastic response, but the best meetings were those where there was the time and inclination for an exchange of experiences and ideas, like that with miners in Barnsley or with civil servants in Central London.

Unfortunately the tour encountered some hostility from a number of socialists who

backed by Sactu and by those community based, UDF-affiliated unions that support the same general line.

The ANC and Sactu have admittedly tended to distance themselves from some of their more 'enthusiastic' supporters. But they should make clear that they don't oppose the independent unions establishing contact with any working class, anti-apartheid organisation they may choose.

The biggest problem which we face however is not these arguments, but that the solidarity movement in this country has not taken off to the same extent as in the United States. There the action was initiated by a number of highly respectable middle class black politicians, who were not afraid to mobilise thousands of young people and involve them in confrontation with the American state, provoking mass arrests.

In Britain the movement lacks the same kind of dynamism. Certainly it's true that there are not the same kind of black organ-



Dunnes workers striking against apartheid

regard themselves as loyal, 'hardline' supporters of the ANC. One informed us that the ANC in Britain had produced a 'directive' opposing any direct links with South African unions. No such directive exists. In Hackney £250 was collected by the Nalگو branch specifically for Mawu, but some of the branch officers who support the *Morning Star* have decided to ignore their members' wishes and want to divert the money to the AAM.

The general argument is that all contact with the South African unions should be directed via Sactu, the South African Congress of Trade Unions. This argument is no longer tenable. Sactu used to operate in South Africa as part of the Congress alliance, which was led by the ANC. Today the non-racial trade union movement is dominated by the democratic, independent unions like Mawu and NUM.

At the end of November most of these unions, together with Fosatu (the Federation of South African Trade Unions), will launch a new federation organising some 400,000 workers. The new federation is even

isations in Britain. It's also the case that the Communist Party no longer provides a backbone of activists for the AAM. But the chief responsibility for the relative lack of a substantial movement lies with the kind of politics which now dominates the left in Britain—Kinnockism.

On paper the Labour Party policy looks terrific. This year's conference voted in favour of a composite which included the following gems:

'Conference also reaffirms support for the ANC, which the oppressed masses want to build in the country, under the control of the organised working class to carry through the struggle for democracy, national liberation, non-racialism and socialism. Conference affirms that only through building international links with workers in South Africa and other countries will the genuine internationalism be developed which could lead to the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism on a global scale.'

In practice the general mood around the

Labour Party, one which has been encouraged by Kinnock's leadership, is that of opposition to trade union struggle and anti-racist action. This has had a wider impact and makes it more difficult to mobilise support for militant activities against apartheid.

The Socialist Workers Party has been actively involved in anti-apartheid campaigning over the past two months. Street meetings, which have been held in many if not most town centres around the country, have been particularly successful.

Nevertheless the SWP is too small to affect the general political climate in the present period. Whether a genuine and substantial mass solidarity movement can now develop, and burst through the neutralising fog of Labour negativism, will depend largely on the level of struggle in South Africa.

In the meantime, we have to mobilise to the best of our ability, however small. That means starting often with quite low level issues, and hoping that we can generate activity and support round them.

This month the Anti-Apartheid Movement will be leading what will hopefully be the largest demonstration of support for the struggle in South Africa yet seen in Britain.

The demonstration is demanding the isolation of the South African regime. This includes imposing economic sanctions on South Africa by the British government. Some socialists find this demand difficult to stomach.

Why is it, then, that we argue that the imposing of sanctions would be a step forward in the fight against apartheid?

Because we are not neutral in the struggle that is taking place.

The attitude of the ruling class in Britain is clear and unequivocal. They might find Botha a bit of an embarrassment, but they never allow *moral questions* to be confused with *business interests*. And with £11 billion of investment in South Africa—more than any of their rivals—British big business has a big interest in opposing sanctions. This explains the position of the Thatcher government, and why it is prepared to weather a great deal of criticism on the question.

The position of the 'revolutionary movements' is equally clear. The ANC has supported sanctions for many years. The call is also backed by the major independent black trade union federations, Cusa (Council of Unions of South Africa) and Fosatu.

Alec Erwin of Fosatu clarified his organisation's attitude towards sanctions in an interview he conducted recently with *Socialist Worker* in South Africa. He said:

'We welcome the pressure. The greater the better. It does hurt this government... We would obviously be opposed to the withdrawal of assets which we believe are now part of the social wealth of South Africa...and in the long term should be under workers' control. If we felt that some kind of immediate and direct change would follow from such withdrawal we would have to reconsider our position.'

This response provides an answer to those socialists who have argued against the position of the ANC on this issue. Sanctions,

they argued, would lead to loss of jobs in South Africa—what was termed 'deproletarianisation'—and should be opposed. There has, true, been a loss of jobs in South Africa in the last few years, but this has been caused by the recession and not by sanctions. In reality the sanctions which have been imposed have had only a limited economic effect, but they have been greeted by black South Africans as a minor, but morale boosting, victory.

Another objection has been raised by some on the left. They argue that we should not place demands for sanctions on the state because it only encourages illusions in capitalism. They ignore the fact that workers consistently make demands upon the bosses. We place demands on the government and bosses to give wage increases, build council houses, maintain the National Health Service.

Demands on state

The difference between revolutionaries and reformists is that the former recognise the need to win even quite minimal demands. This is why revolutionaries are the best fighters for reform. If workers had refused to make demands on the state small children would still be working down the mines and back-street abortions would still be a regular occurrence.

But the socialist case for sanctions should not be confused with that of the liberals. We are campaigning in support of a struggle which is *against* the interests of capitalism and involves *armed* action as a necessary means of advance. They are *for* capitalism and believe that sanctions can be used to *peacefully* eradicate apartheid.

Since the AAM is the dominant force organising solidarity activity in this country, we work with people who accept that position. In the process we aim to win support for the socialist point of view.

A major part of our argument will be that we cannot rely upon governments—whether Tory or Labour, white or black—to act against apartheid. Workers should take action themselves to break all links with South Africa. We need to build on the few examples of such action which do exist—the Dunnes workers in Dublin, the Southampton dockers, the London passport office workers and so on.

But there is no Chinese wall between the 'blacking' action taken by workers and the campaign for government imposed sanctions. A worker who comes on the anti-apartheid demonstration is more likely to fight for 'blacking' than one who stays at home! Any action against the apartheid regime is to be welcomed.

We will also have to argue that the working class is the key force in changing the system. This is not a new issue. It is one which concerned the second congress of the Comintern in 1920. Lenin provided some guidance in the fourth of his *Theses on the National and the Colonial Questions*:

'...the Communist International's entire policy...should rest primarily on a closer union of the proletarians and the working masses of all nations and countries for a joint revolutionary struggle to overthrow

the landowners and the bourgeoisie. This union alone will guarantee victory over capitalism, without which the abolition of national oppression and inequality is impossible.'

THAILAND

Echo from the past

THE ABORTIVE coup in Thailand in September lasted half a day and resulted in a handful of deaths, including two foreign journalists.

It has been described as an echo from the past when Thailand was constantly ruled by military dictatorships. Why did the important sections of the ruling class refuse to give it any backing?

Along with other countries in South East Asia, Thailand has joined the ranks of the newly industrialised nations. It is not as spectacular as South Korea which is now a major industrial state, but changes have been rapid. The image of countries in this area of the world being ruled by dictatorships is no longer correct. Although repressive regimes are useful for breaking working class resistance in times of crisis or instability, or during early stages of capitalist growth, they are a positive hindrance to stable capitalism because of their bureaucracy, inflexibility and corruption. Working class discontent cannot be channelled into harmless parliamentary manoeuvres.

All the industrialising countries in South East Asia, with the exception of Indonesia and the Philippines, have some form of distorted consensus or parliamentary rule. In the Philippines the regime of president Marcos faces widespread opposition, even from the business section. In Indonesia the working class has not yet recovered from the systematic killing that took place during the coup in the mid sixties. Ten percent of the population were estimated to have been shot.

Ironically the present conditions in Thailand meant that low ranking army officers could no longer expect to be gradually promoted into the ranks of power as before. Power now lies in the hands of the top military and business sectors who make up various ruling class parties in parliament. Each faction has to bargain and form coalitions in order to run the country.

Popular discontent

However, the so-called 'Young Turks' who staged the coup (and a previous unsuccessful one in 1981) did attempt to play on real popular discontent. The economy is going through a downturn, unemployment has increased and the value of real wages has been hit by currency devaluations. Rural incomes have been hit by falling world prices for agricultural goods.

Since the collapse of the Maoist Communist Party, due to changes in China's diplomatic policy and the conflict between

The statement is just as true today. ■
Pete Alexander

Thanks to Sarah Miller for help in compiling this article.

Vietnam and China, sections of the left have been looking for alternatives. Some had hopes in 'progressive' sections of the military. The real hope, however, lies with the growing working class. The Thai working class now makes up half the labour force and is powerfully concentrated in the Greater Bangkok area. Trade unions have operated legally since 1981 but only a very small proportion of workers are unionised, mainly in the public sector.

Fast growing union

The trade union movement is weakened by its division into four Congresses. The leader of the Labour Congress of Thailand, Ahmad Kamthetong, was recently sacked from his job with the state railways and the trade union movement as a whole was unable to take significant action. The issue was complicated by the fact that he was compromised by his close connection with a faction in the top military.

The newest and fastest growing trade union grouping is the Thai Trade Union Congress. It is the only group not associated with sections of the military or closely tied to American CIA or German Social Democratic Party money. Attempts by sections of the military to manipulate the trade union movement has resulted in a certain aversion to 'politics' in the TTUC. However, Paisal Thawatchainan, its president, in a recent union magazine article did not rule out the need for a workers' party in the future. The trouble with putting off the task of building an independent workers' party can clearly be shown by events in South Africa today, where union leaders have the same attitude.

The Thai working class faces many attacks in the future period. Textile workers are being laid off, partly as a result of import controls in the US. The government is preparing a privatisation exercise in line with other governments in the area. Attempts by the British government to attack the working class are keenly studied by both sides.

Two main facts give some hope for our class. Firstly the Thai trade union movement does not yet have problems with a large full-time bureaucracy. Trade union laws mean that trade union representatives must work on the shopfloor. Secondly the influence of Stalinism, in the form of Maoism, is no longer as strong as it was. As in many other countries working class leaders are rediscovering the ideas about workers' power. It is important that they bridge the gap between syndicalism and Marxism. ■
Giles Ungpakorn

Khomeini's road to power

The Reign of the Ayatollahs: Iran and the Islamic Revolution

Shaul Bakhash

IB Tauris £13.95

Iran under the Ayatollahs

Dilip Hiro

Routledge and Kegan Paul £20

Wrath of Allah

Ramy Nima

Pluto Press £3.95

THE IRANIAN revolution of 1978-9 still causes more confusion on the left than almost any recent political upheaval. It is not surprising—the revolution was an extraordinary series of events, penetrating every town and village in a country of 45 million, producing huge mass demonstrations, a three-month general strike and the collapse of a regime considered among the safest guardians of western interests in the Third World.

But the years following the revolution also produced a regime committed to the destruction of the movement that had brought down the Shah, the restoration of capitalism and the bloody repression of all opposition.

Western antipathy to Iran still stimulates a mechanical view among some on the left that the regime is anti-imperialist and necessarily 'progressive'.

At the other extreme are those so appalled by the repression that they now argue that the revolution was a wholly reactionary development and that Iranians were better off under the rule of the Shah. This argument is then used to sustain the idea that all revolutions are counter-productive.

Literature that helps us to understand the real nature of the Iranian events is thus of great importance. There has recently been a spate of books on Shia Islam and Iranian history, but these mainly academic studies throw little light on the revolution itself. Three books—two of which have appeared in recent months—attempt to do just this.

Dilip Hiro's *Iran Under the Ayatollahs* fails badly. This largely chronological account of the events offers no analysis of the dynamic of the revolution. It is a long, expensive and sterile book best left on the shelves. Saul Bakhash's *The Reign of the Ayatollahs* and Ramy Nima's *Wrath of Allah* (which appeared in late 1983) are far more successful efforts.

Against which interpretation of events should their efforts be judged? *Socialist Worker Review* and its predecessors have argued that a fundamental change did take place in Iran. The power of the classes supporting the Shah—the large land owners and the industrial bourgeoisie—was broken. The Shah's state—a huge bureaucracy, a well equipped army and a ubiquitous secret police, Savak—was shattered.

This change was achieved from below, by a mass movement that involved almost every section of Iranian society that had not been incorporated by the Shah.

Mass movements had developed before,

notably in the early 1960s. Then, the Shah's forces had shot the demonstrators off the streets. But in 1978 the movement was different. While, as before, the movement was initiated by intellectuals and clergy, and developed by the urban poor and the petit bourgeoisie, on this occasion it reached a new level when industrial workers started mass strike action.

By January 1979 the Iranian economy was paralysed. The Shah's American backers told him that the cost of their support was too great. Fearing that US influence in the country—a major oil supplier for the West—would be completely eroded, President Carter told the Shah to take an extended holiday, hoping to consolidate a government under liberal bourgeois figures.

The Shah never returned, and the mass movement, gaining enormous confidence from its success, moved forward to new demands.

The movement blossomed. With many managers and owners having fled, strike committees began running factories and offices. Collaborators of the former regime were purged. There were demands for new trade unions, and a host of campaigns for improved wages and conditions.

In the countryside there were widespread land seizures and Iran's national minorities—principally the Kurds, Turkoman and Baluch—produced armed movements calling for regional autonomy and sometimes secession. In the major cities a women's movement emerged to demand equal rights.

But all this soon fell victim to a different political force—that led by the mosque.

Much of the activity in the street had been led by a network of religious leaders who had long opposed the Shah. Under the partial protection of the mosque the Mullahs had helped to organise local committees—*komitehs*—which mobilised for demonstrations and distributed opposition literature.

Led by mosque

The slogans they raised—for an end to the Shah's regime, for freedom, for equality and for an assertion of Islamic values—caught the popular imagination. They expressed the aspiration for radical change, but in the vocabulary of Islam, the language most familiar to the Iranian masses.

Workers made the Iranian revolution possible, but they did not lead it. Leadership was taken by the mosque, closely aligned with its traditional supporters of the bazaar. In the months that followed the fall of the Shah this alliance began its long struggle to crush the movements of peasants, minorities, women and workers.

It constructed a new apparatus of state, based on the *komiteh*, the *pasdaran* or revolutionary guards, and Islamic bodies which were established to supervise every workplace.

Today the Khomeini regime has successfully reintegrated Iran into the world system. Its early claim to represent a system 'neither East nor West' has been abandoned as Iran is seen to trade with states from Washington to Moscow. Even its pretensions to develop a 'state capitalism' based on the Algerian or Syrian models have been abandoned.

Today Iran is a state in which private capital is being reconsolidated, in which, despite serious economic difficulties, many of the events of 1978-9 are just a bad dream for the successful businessman.

Both Bakhash and Nima help us to understand how this process developed. Bakhash is an Iranian liberal who was sympathetic to the early aims of the mass movement, hoping for the establishment of a secular government capable of controlling the clergy.

The most valuable sections of his book trace the development of the Islamic opposition from the 1930s and explain how it operated during and after the revolution.

In a fascinating section Bakhash looks at the evolution of Khomeini's attitude to the Iranian state, revealing, not surprisingly, that the Ayatollah was long a critical supporter of the monarchy and of secular governments, on the grounds that they could maintain social order.

He argues that during the height of the anti-Shah movement when Khomeini proved himself the most intransigent of all opposition leaders, he allowed his ideas to be presented by his 'liberal' supporters like Bani-Sadr in such a way that his true intention of establishing a regime based on authoritarian early Islamic principles, was disguised. This is one reason, he maintains, why Khomeini was able to rally bourgeois liberal support during the period after the Shah's fall.

Throughout the book Bakhash is able to provide a wealth of material to show, as he puts it, that Islam 'cuts both ways'. For every claim based on Koranic principles, there was a counterclaim: throughout the revolution those who used the Koran as their reference point were able to find whatever they required to defend their interests. Islam, like all religions, proved as elastic as its adherents needed it to be.

The great flaw in this book is Bakhash's elevation of individual figures in the revolution and the almost complete reduction of the role of the mass movement.

For Bakhash, Khomeini was 'the architect of the revolution'; the masses merely provided the material with which he constructed his 'Islamic Republic'. This is wrong.

Khomeini and his supporters were able to widen and deepen the opposition movement, but they relied on the Shah's own viciousness and stupidity to precipitate a genuine crisis, and, in the end, on the collective action of hundreds of thousands of workers to provide the muscle which brought the Pahlavi state to its knees.

Bakhash's analysis also leads him to place an almost absurd emphasis on the role of Bani-Sadr, who as president attempted to mediate between the Mullahs, bourgeois politicians, the military and supporters like the Mujahidin. He devotes three chapters to the fate of Bani-Sadr, whom he portrays as the pivotal figure in the battle between the

Mullahs and the forces of opposition that developed on the left.

This space could have more usefully been filled by looking at the origin and politics of the opposition on the ground.

Ramy Nima's short book avoids these problems. First published in 1983, it remains the best condensed account of the roots of revolution and the first years of the Khomeini regime. Nima does not tell us much that is new about recent Iranian history, but with a generally sound class analysis his book is a good corrective to that of Bakhash.

Nima is a revolutionary who supported the mass movement and clearly identifies the important role played by workers. But his account is frustratingly incomplete. Nima doubts the capacity of the Iranian working class to play a leading role in mass struggles, attributing its failure to the level of the Shah's repression, and to the class's fragmentation and lack of experience in political struggle. Under these circumstances, he argues, as the hold of the clergy increased, it left 'little room for self-activity or self-organisation'.

This is not true. Nima notes that by 1978 there were 3.3 million workers in Iran—33.2 percent of the total workforce. Among them, the minority in large and medium-size workplaces was large enough to play the key role in 1978 and 1979. The problem, which Nima hints at but does not develop, was a different but familiar one—that of leadership.

The speed at which events developed demanded the presence of an organisation within the working class capable of building on the power of the mass strike. No such organisation existed. Nima and Bakhash both point to the failure of the guerilla strategy of the Mujahidin and the Fedayin.

They have less to say about the Tudeh, a party which in the 1940s had played a key role in developing union organisation, and led significant struggles. But obedience to Moscow produced a neutered organisation which by the 1970s had lost most of its supporters. When the mass movement broke, it was incapable of playing any role other than that of tailing Khomeini.

The tragedy of the Iranian revolution was that Stalinism dominated the whole of the left. This was reflected not just in the failure of the Tudeh, but in the years following the fall of the Shah, in the appallingly naive analysis of the Fedayin and the Mujahidin (strictly speaking an Islamic organisation, but one that had also absorbed Stalinist categories into its analysis).

These organisations doggedly pursued the petit bourgeoisie and liberal bourgeoisie looking for 'progressive elements' with which to bloc against the Mullahs, while acclaiming the regime as 'anti-imperialist' and worthy of support because its rhetoric opposed imperialism. Subsequently Khomeini launched murderous attacks on both organisations.

It is true that the Shah's repression made organisation extremely difficult. But by 1978 the Fedayin and Mujahidin were significant poles of attraction for large numbers of youth and some workers. The problem was less conditions of work than the content of these organisations and their politics.



Had a socialist organisation with some roots in the workplaces existed, there is no guarantee that it could have won the battle of ideas with the Mullahs. What is likely however is that the workplace organisation that emerged at the height of the revolution would have had some focus, and that arguments about the future of the revolution would have been heard. Under these circumstances the Mullahs' offensive against the movement, against the minorities, the peasants and the women, might have taken a different course.

There are encouraging signs that groups on the Iranian left are reviewing the more negative parts of their tradition in the light of these lessons. At last Stalinism—the 'stages theory', the theory of 'class blocs' and the

rest—is being re-examined.

The idea of building an independent revolutionary organisation that looks to the working class as the agent of change is gaining a small but important audience.

The Iranian revolution should not be seen as a bloody and unfortunate experience. It was made by a mass movement which succeeded in bringing down a dictator and shaking the grip of imperialism in a whole region.

Providing that socialists continue to discuss the history of these events and to prepare their strategy for building a new type of Iranian workers' party, the bloody lessons of the last six years will not have been in vain. ■

Phil Marshall

What do
we mean
by..



State capitalism

ONE OF the distinctive contributions of the SWP to revolutionary theory is its analysis of state capitalism. Anyone with more than the briefest contact with the Party soon discovers that this is how we describe 'communist states'.

This theory which was first developed to explain the society in Russia has marked us out as a separate political tendency for the last forty years. What is this theory? And is it so important anyway?

Most revolutionaries now accept that Russia is not a 'model' of socialism. The suppression of any independent workers' organisation, the gross inequalities, the oppression of women, gays, national minorities, rule that out. But few agree with us about the existence of 'state capitalism'. These disagreements take us to the heart of our understanding of the centrality of the working class, the nature of the state, and the nature of contemporary capitalism.

The first issue concerns the ruling Russian bureaucracy. The pioneering study of the rise and rule of this bureaucracy was undertaken by Trotsky. We accept his view that the bureaucracy usurped power from the workers in Russia and that the rise of Stalinism marked a *defeat* for workers the world over. In Trotsky's words, Stalin was the 'grave digger of the revolution'.

Trotsky recognised that the seizure of power by workers in 1917 had been usurped by the bureaucracy. But he always thought that the state ownership of the means of production was a historic gain, which had to be defended.

Despite the appalling record of the bureaucracy since Trotsky's death, many of his followers still maintain that position. Because there is no private ownership of the basic means of production, the bureaucracy, they argue, cannot be a class. Russia, they argue is still some sort of 'workers' state'.



Max Schachtman

simply because the factories, the land, and the economy as a whole, are run by the state.

The argument that there can be a 'workers' state' where workers are totally and systematically excluded from power is strange indeed. To concede this argument would be to move away from our emphasis on the central role of the working class—and we reject it.

We also reject the argument that state ownership precludes the bureaucracy from being a class. It is true that the state rather than individuals own the means of production in Russia. But states are instruments of class rule, they exist to maintain a class as a ruling class. The question is therefore who 'owns' the state?

Class rule

The American Max Schachtman (then still a marxist) once pointed out that you don't 'own' the state like you own a pair of socks! The issue is one of control, of *power*, and in Russia that power is held by the bureaucracy. It *controls* the means of production through state ownership. The lack of *private* ownership is not crucial.

As long ago as the end of the last century Engels pointed out that the tendency in capitalism was away from private ownership:

'What does capitalist *private* production mean then? Production by a single entrepreneur, and that is of course becoming more and more an exception. Capitalist production through *limited companies* is already no longer *private* production, but production for the combined account of many people.

For example, Michael Edwardes and Ian MacGregor did not need to 'own' British Leyland, British Steel and the NCB to act as agents of capitalist *class* rule. Lenin's definition of *class* was a 'large group of people that are distinctive by the place they occupy in an historically established system of social production; by their relation towards the means of production'. The Russian bureaucracy collectively share a common 'relation to the means of production'—they are indeed a class, a ruling class.

Even if Russia is a class society why do we call it 'state capitalist'? We must accept that what happens inside Russia is not what Marx describes in *Capital*. But *Capital* was not written to *describe* capitalism but to understand how it operates, what makes it run, how it changes—its 'dynamic'. The driving force of capitalism is competition. Capitalists, besides their opposition to workers, also oppose other capitalists as competitors. Each, in order to survive as a capitalist, must seek to undercut the prices of

the opposition.

If prices are to be cut and a profit made the most efficient methods of production must be used—the latest techniques and machinery. To engage in the most efficient methods (to reduce the 'labour-time' needed to produce a commodity) demands investment. Capitalist have no choice but to reinvest their profits, to 'accumulate capital'.

At its most basic capitalism is a society in which competition *forces* the accumulation of capital. Producing consumer goods for workers must take second place to producing the means of production. As Marx put it in *Capital*:

'Accumulate, accumulate! That is Moses and the prophets! ... Therefore, save, save, ie reconvert the greatest portion of surplus value, or surplus product into capital! Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake.'

The drive to accumulate, and with it the development of new methods of production, means that capitalism has transformed the world. But it has also transformed itself—it is no longer the same as it was in Marx's day. The combination of competition and accumulation means that the most efficient units of capital eliminate their rivals. They turn into giant monopolistic corporations.

The very nature of competition changes. Giant corporations compete not just through cutting prices, but through all sorts of means—the control of raw materials, of sales outlets, advertising, access to government contracts etc. *Inside* each unit of capital there is planning (witness the development of management 'science', of work study techniques, information technology). But the anarchy of the system as a whole continues.

The growth in the size of capitals has gone hand in hand with the growth of the state. Throughout the twentieth century, state intervention, attempts to control or even 'plan' the national economy have occurred in every country.

In many countries which no one considers to be 'communist', such as Austria and Brazil, the state either owns or controls large chunks of production. Even where there is little nationalisation, as in Japan or the USA, the state through subsidies, tax concessions, or arms contracts plays a major role.

These tendencies within capitalism were identified by Bukharin (a Russian Bolshevik) as long ago as 1915:

'Concentration and centralisation of capital finally brought about the formation of trusts. Competition rose to a still higher stage... There finally comes a time when competition ceases in an entire branch of production.

'But the war for dividing up surplus

value...becomes fiercer... The centralisation process proceeds apace. Combines in industry and banking syndicates unite the entire "national" production, which assumes the form of a company of companies, thus becoming a state capitalist trust.

'Competition reaches the highest, the last conceivable state of development. Competition is reduced to a minimum within the boundaries of 'national' economies only to flare up in colossal proportions between them... The struggle between state capitalist trusts is decided in the first place by the relations between their military forces, for the military power of the country is the last resort of the struggling national groups.'

Ironically, Bukharin's words anticipated what was to happen in Russia itself. It is military competition, the spiralling arms' race, which ties Russia into the global capitalist system. Competition *within* Russia, like the 'competition' between the different branches of a giant multinational, has been 'reduced to a minimum.'

But Russia is one of a system of states, the bureaucracy has not escaped competition. As with any other national ruling class the defence of 'its' bit of the world system means it cannot run 'its' economy in any way it likes. In order to survive as a ruling class it must develop the latest techniques and heavy industry essential to modern armed forces. It *must* accumulate in order to ensure competitiveness with its (military) rivals.

All the crucial aspects of capitalism are present: competition forcing accumulation, the development of the means of production taking priority over the needs of workers, workers being exploited through a wages system to provide the surplus for accumulation. Looked at *as part of the world economy* Russia is bureaucratic state capitalist.

What is only a *tendency* towards state capitalism within private capitalism took on its fullest form with the rise of the bureaucratic class under Stalin's Russia. The power of private capitalism was broken with the 1917 revolution. But the working class was fatally weakened in the civil war that followed.

Famine forced many workers out of the factories back to their peasant families, many of the best militants were killed, and others sucked away from their base in the workplaces into the new tasks of administration. Although the civil war was won the Communist Party itself had to uphold the ideas of workers' revolution in the absence of a ruling working class.

Opportunists with no tradition of struggle joined the Party, Stalin increased his hold on the organisational machinery. With the ebbing of the revolutionary tide and the defeat of the German Revolution the Party bureaucracy accepted Stalin's theory of 'Socialism in One Country'. State power rather than workers' power became the key as tasks of 'national' construction seemed more 'realistic' than talk of international revolution.

By 1928 and the First Five Year Plan Trotsky had been defeated. The bureaucracy



was able to consolidate its power *as a class* in the space between a demoralised working class, the remnants of a private capitalist class it then eliminated, and a peasantry herded into collective farms by armed force. (This was a violent social counter-revolution.)

Soviets lost their remaining feeble role as organs of workers' power. Workers and peasants were to be exploited to provide the surplus for accumulation. The impossibility of the weak economy competing *economically* on the world market made the building up of military power to defend economic isolation even more important. *National* survival required an absolute emphasis on the building up of the means of production, and unswerving loyalty and subservience to the state.

Stalin expressed this well:

'To slacken the pace of industrialisation would mean to lag behind; those who lag behind are beaten. We are fifty years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this lag in ten years. Either we do it or we are beaten.'

The years since World War Two have seen bureaucratic state capitalisms established outside Russia. In Eastern Europe the weakness of post-war private capitalism, the material force of the Russian Army and secret police, and the *passive* acceptance by most workers enabled the 'communist' parties to take power.

In China, Cuba, Vietnam and other places power was taken by petty bourgeois leaderships using peasant struggle and peasant armed forces in the absence of a revolutionary working class, and with an already weak private capitalism. National independence (the importance of which we recognise and support) was used to nationalise the means of production in the quest for economic development. These

countries, too, despite the absence of a *workers'* revolution in *any* of them, have been called 'workers' states' by some.

The new state capitalisms, have, however, been unable to repeat Russia's successful economic development of the 1930s. The world economy, the world division of labour, has advanced too far since then. The world crisis has forced many of the state capitalist countries to recognise the impossibility of retreating into economic isolation.

Many have looked to loans from abroad, or to concessions to overseas capital as a way out of their difficulties. This has served only to integrate them still more closely into the rhythms of capitalist crisis. The debt problems, attacks on *Solidarity* in Poland, the contradictions facing post-Mao China, the compromises with the Apartheid regime forced on Mozambique, have all been documented in the pages of *Socialist Worker Review*.

State capitalism has offered no way forward. Its claim to be socialism has discredited the very idea of socialism in many eyes. Politically the belief that state ownership and national independence *are* socialism has tied many workers to the programme of the radical petty bourgeoisie.

The theory of state capitalism cuts us free from these problems. We reject state capitalism's claim to be socialist and refuse to accept national independence as a sufficient aim for the working class. Instead we are clear that socialism can be built only when workers seize and hold power.

In that seizure of power, which must be international just as capitalism is international, the bureaucratic state capitalist classes as well as the private capitalist classes of the west will be overthrown. They are equally our enemy. ■

Derek Howl

Real lies...

WHY ALL the fuss? asked *The Observer* after the showing of the BBC *Real Lives* programme *At the Edge of the Union*. Well might they ask. To anyone who watched the programme it was clear just how stupid the Tories were in attempting to get it banned. For the programme was just as you would expect a BBC programme on Northern Ireland to be.

It attempted, through the portrayal of two men—Martin McGuinness of Sinn Fein and Gregory Campbell of the Paisleyite DUP—to get a simple message across. The Irish are irrationally at each other's throats and the role of Britain's troops is to keep the peace.

Exactly why Thatcher or anybody else should object to such a programme is not clear. Perhaps it was because McGuinness was shown as a family man, and not a blood-thirsty psychopath. But again and again we were reminded by Campbell that McGuinness was a murderer of gigantic proportion.

Of course it was true that pro-British Campbell was none too good an advert for the society which Britain props up with arms. His remark about two IRA men who were shot was, 'Christmas has come early for the Protestants!' His explanation for the attacks on the civil rights marches in the late sixties, 'They were provocative as they sought to march outside the Catholic ghettos,' was in marked contrast to his joy that the (genuinely provocative) Loyalist marching season was with us again. His attack on McGuinness and the IRA for violence was contradicted when he explained that if there were a united Ireland he would take up arms and use violence.

All of this showed up Campbell for the reactionary sectarian bigot he is. Compared to him Martin McGuinness certainly seemed a reasonable man. Yet in a sense it was just this reasonableness that let McGuinness down. In reality he made little impact and, I suspect, converted few viewers to his cause.



Martin McGuinness: reasonable man

McGuinness never once made the crucial point that the state they were fighting had long been the property of those who shared Campbell's bigotry and sectarianism. That the state had enshrined that sectarianism and made it a way of life. That the Campbells of

this world don't need to use guns because they have the British army doing their shooting for them.

At one point McGuinness even went so far as to say that before the troops arrived Catholics and Protestants managed fine together. Now the troops are certainly not part of the solution in Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, to suggest everything was hunky-dory before the troops went in, is to misunderstand the roots of the present conflict in the deep institutionalised sectarianism of the partitioned state which brought that conflict about.

Which brings us to the weakest point in McGuinness' case. It is clear that the programme wanted to push the idea that if the troops went, there would be a bloodbath. Campbell supported the view, McGuinness quite rightly opposed it, but his opposition was hardly convincing.

This is because McGuinness missed the key point. That is that it is not common racial heritage that can or will unite Catholic and Protestant, but a common class interest. The vast majority of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are working class, both suffer lousy wages, bad housing, high unemployment, low standards of living.

It is true of course that Catholics suffer worse conditions than Protestants. But the key message to Protestant workers isn't: 'We're reasonable people who don't like killing,' but: 'The privileges you seek to defend are marginal—you have nothing to lose and everything to gain from the struggle to break the link with Britain. That struggle will not only be against the British, but also against the bosses in Belfast and Derry, and the various gangsters who control the state, the government and the economy in the south of Ireland.'



MARXISM & CULTURE

At the Edge of the Union attempted to portray McGuinness and Campbell as two sides of the same coin, reminding us of various similarities. Neither drink, both go to church, both are married with children. But there is an important difference between the two men. Campbell is a deep reactionary who seeks to uphold the institutionalised sectarianism of Northern Ireland. McGuinness seeks to abolish the state which is responsible for that sectarianism.

This difference occasionally peeped through in the programme. Most critics seem to agree that Campbell came across as by far the less attractive of the two men. But on the whole the BBC did quite well at distorting this essential difference, and making Britain seem the only 'reasonable' party involved. Which leads us on to the question which may haunt Leon Brittan for many a day to come. Why the hell did they try to ban it? ■

Pat Stack

...and hard facts

THE *Real Lives* saga began with comments Thatcher made to a London conference of the American Bar Association. This wealthy jamboree at the Royal Albert Hall was told of the need to 'starve the terrorists of the oxygen of publicity'.

The reference was to the exposure the Shi'ite hijackers had got during the week's impasse in negotiations about hostages being held in Beirut last June. Some American stations had gone as far as sponsoring safe news conferences for the captors. They fought a battle of their own to 'out-scoop' each other. In the course of this, Reagan's impotence and the justness of the hijackers' case began to come through to a large audience.

Thatcher was trying her best to show solidarity with Reagan. If only those pictures hadn't got into American homes he might not have lost so much face.

Like so much of Thatcher's rhetoric about the ills of modern life, its appreciation of reality is witless and its contradictions astounding.

The reason why American TV stations

were so hot to get the news first was good old capitalist competition, the rivalry of rabid free enterprise. There are two factors causing this.

Firstly, recent partial deregulation of media ownership now allows the Rupert Murdochs of this world to own as many as 12 TV stations. Previously he owned seven. This has meant that small and medium size stations and groups are looking over their shoulders to see which of the bigger cats are going to gobble them up. To survive they need to deliver the hottest shots.

Secondly, the big cats themselves have been rocked by a series of complicated take-over bids. CBS survived such a bid, but at a high cost, which will set them back for some time. For CBS news then, this means a concerted effort to win viewers. Their economic function is laid bare. They must attract the highest possible audience to deliver as a commodity to the advertisers who buy their air-time.

All this is very close to the Adam Smith Institute's Omega Report on Communication of last year. Its recommendations included

the selling off of local BBC radio and the splitting of BBC entertainment TV into competing commercial companies, with a national news service funded directly by government. In other words a commercial free-for-all with a propaganda news service.

The furthest that the Tories have got with this plan as far as the BBC is concerned is to set up an inquiry into its future funding, under the chairmanship of Professor Alan Peacock.

But it was the intervention by the *Sunday Times* which opened up another opportunity to knock the BBC. They took up Thatcher's remarks and questioned the prudence of transmitting the *Real Lives* programme.

At that point Leon Brittan made the cock-up which probably cost him his job. He leant on the BBC Board of Governors to lean on the Board of Management to stop the broadcast. They were unlikely to do the wrong thing with such close ties to the cabinet.

It may seem to some of us that the autonomy of the BBC is a favourite ruling class bedtime story, told to Oxbridge graduates before they are out of nappies and into a cushy job in Bush House. But Brittan's handling of the matter let the BBC be seen to collaborate in a blatant way.

Union action

The NUJ response was remarkable. Following the ban on 30 July a mass meeting at BBC's Lime Grove called for the 24-hour protest strike. Within three days every one of the 64 chapels in the BBC united behind the decision. Stewards in ACTT and BETA were brought into the plans. The chapel at Bush House supported the strike. The World Service, bar 15 minutes of the Koran on the Arabic service, was shut down for the first time in its 53 years.

All the action was unofficial, and involved secondary picketing, both of which were illegal.

No national news was broadcast on 7 August. Ten of the 16 ITV regions struck and the rest took some form of action. When Gus MacDonald attempted a scabbing operation, ACTT members told Channel 4 that their whole day's output would be blanked if it went ahead. It didn't.

Obviously the strike was as much about preserving autonomy, in the hands of a meritocratic bunch of professionals, as it was about thoroughgoing workers' power. Nevertheless, the fact that management did not take up the opportunities offered it by anti-union laws to sting the NUJ is a lesson for anyone in struggle. United, well-organised workers' action can turn the tide on any of Thatcher's laws.

At a time when it is being mauled in the newspaper sector, the NUJ's broadcasting section came out of this strike more confident and better organised. Confident enough even to encourage the succeeding disclosures about vetting by security services of senior BBC appointments. Again this opened up a lot more people's eyes to the niceties of the capitalist state. The decision to show the programme after all, with negligible additions now that Brittan has gone, is a victory for the strike. ■

Nick Grant

Touch of genius



Orson Welles: his face didn't fit

ORSON WELLES was a great film actor and director who never managed to get along with the Hollywood system. In the world of the big studios the work was modelled on the techniques of mass production. The methods of work-study pioneered by Taylor had been directly copied by Irving Thalberg and others when the major studios were formed.

That meant that you were given a specific job and a specific budget and your progress was monitored all the time. You were expected to produce the sort of film that the studio wanted.

Some film makers, like John Ford or Howard Hawks, were quite happy working inside this system and produced films that were both commercially successful and artistically valuable. Welles was not happy.

Born in 1915, he developed an early love of acting and of the theatre. He got his first acting job at 16, in Dublin, by conning the theatre into believing he was older and more experienced than he really was.

In the 1930s he worked in the theatre in New York, producing much-acclaimed productions like an all-black version of *Macbeth*. He was closely linked in with the radical world of artists subsidised by the cultural programmes of Roosevelt's 'New Deal'.

He then moved on to work in radio, producing plays for his 'Mercury Theatre of the Air'. One of these was his 1938 dramatisation of H G Wells' *War of the Worlds* which is a story of an imaginary Martian invasion of Earth. Orson Welles' version was to run the story as a series of news bulletins reporting the progress of the invasion in New York.

So effectively did he capture the news techniques that thousands believed they were hearing live reports of an actual invasion. There was a massive panic with people leaving the 'threatened' areas in droves. Allegedly some people committed suicide rather than fall into the hands of the aliens.

The row surrounding this production turned Welles into a national figure and he was offered work in Hollywood. He was in a strong position and was able to bargain with RKO for a very special contract.

RKO were facing bankruptcy at the time

and needed a big success to pull them through, so they gambled that the boy wonder could deliver if left to himself. Welles, still under 25, got a salary of half a million dollars a year and freedom from the normal constraints of working in the studio. His contract allowed him to pick his subject, pick his actors, pick his technicians and to do more or less what he liked. The result was *Citizen Kane*.

The film hit big problems. The story of a megalomaniac newspaper tycoon was obviously related to the real-life figure of William Randolph Hearst, and Hearst made legal difficulties. When the film was finally released his papers refused to give it publicity.

The film far from rescuing RKO's fortunes, was a financial flop. Over the years it has come to be recognised as an outstanding piece of film-making, but its commercial failure meant that Welles lost his strong negotiating position. The studio took control of his next film, *The Magnificent Ambersons*, re-edited it, cut its running time by 40 minutes, and tacked on a new 'happy' ending.

Raising money

Welles made many films after that, but never enjoyed the same confidence from his producers as he had at the start. He found it very difficult to fit into the needs of the studio system and did much of his work in Europe.

Many of his acting roles, advertising drinks for example, were undertaken to help finance film-making projects he could not raise money for elsewhere. Some of his films were years in the making while Welles rushed off acting to raise the money to finish his film. Some never made it.

Welles's own politics were basically liberal. He was never one of the key political activists in Hollywood, although he was a consistent opponent of racism. More to the point, his films are often seen as being left-wing because they are critical of aspects of US capitalism. *Citizen Kane*, for example, is very critical both of the banks, represented by a figure called Thatcher, and of the power of press barons.

A film he made much later, during one of his temporary truces with Hollywood, *Touch of Evil*, has Welles himself playing the racist, corrupt and brutal police chief Quinlan, finally defeated by Charlton Heston's Mexican detective. Whatever Welles intended, his films have been seen as left-wing, and that, perhaps, is enough.

A year before he died, Welles bought the rights to the prints of *The Magnificent Ambersons* and was working to restore his original conception. I hope that he finished it since, whatever else may be the case, Welles's work in film was never less than fascinating. ■

Colin Sparks

Howling to the Beat

THE PUBLICATION of 750 pages of Allen Ginsberg's *Collected Works* earlier this year, and his final, if still grudging acceptance by the North American literary establishment have served as a salutary reminder that one of our greatest living poets has both been writing for nearly forty years and has remained an uncompromising and a stringent critic of the capitalisms, both East and West.

He is also pretty disparaging about 'Marxist critics—their cocks covered with the blood of Mayakowski and Yesenin'. While no one in the SWP has any part in the rape of the great Russian lyric poets of the Soviet era, Ginsburg deserves better from us than simple bracketing as a well-meaning angelist who could be a good socialist if only he had read the right books.

For in contrast to the impression of apolitical spontaneity, Ginsburg and the other original Beat writers were extraordinarily erudite and had close contact with the organised American Left. In reaction to what Ginsburg accurately calls 'the capitalist vocational training' offered in Columbia University with its virtual reduction of literature to the good manners of the 19th century novel, the Beat grouping committed themselves to an intense self-education in anthropology, comparative religion, philosophy and, under the tutelage of the repulsively brilliant novelist William Burroughs, European writers like Celine, Joyce and the French surrealists.

In Ginsburg's case this dimension was combined with firsthand experience of the American Communist Party—as lovers of his homage-poem to his mother Naomi, 'Kaddish' will remember—and with other strains of socialist and Jewish proletarian organisation.

As a young man he heard Angelica Babalanoff, the Italian born critic of Lenin, Scott Nearing, the socialist author, historian and organic farmer, Mother Bloor, the travelling strike organiser, and the orator and socialist candidate for Governor of New York, Israel Amter.

The contact should not be over-emphasised as the revolutionary socialist tradition had virtually expired, with the majority of writers associated with the Trotskyist viewpoint moving quite rapidly to the right.

As Ginsburg himself put it 'Between the Scylla of Stalinism and the Charybdis of anti-Stalinism, there was not much of a left really'. But part of the Beat mission was to excavate native American radicalism from beneath the appalling conformism of the post-war USA.

Its intensive social control was now aided with advertising's boom and the new reign of the cathode tube. It was further aided by authoritarian pop psychology, backed by ECT and prison-like mental asylums, the paranoid anti-Communism pioneered by Joseph MacCarthy but now in the Yankee

mainstream, the compulsive heterosexuality and the strange robotic haircuts.

I must confess that it was through reading Ginsburg's exhilarating *America* at the age of 17 that I first heard of the Scotsboro Boys, Tom Mooney and Sacco and Vanzetti.

Romantic mission

But it is not surprising that these passionate rebels against crewcut America turned—not to the Communist Party, which was at that time, desperately trying to appear, patriotic, sexually straight and generally all-American—but to fellow artists.

For the Beat mission was, in an almost classical sense, romantic and it is probably best to see the creative outburst in North American painting, music and poetry in the Fifties as the third and possibly greatest wave of romanticism.

For only a few streets away the Abstract Impressionist painters were making the first major break in the use of pictorial space since Cubism. And down on 118th in an after hours dive run by Henry Minton and famous for its collard greens and Creole sauce, the young black virtuosos of bebop were, literally, turning jazz upside down.

From Minton's Gallery Six and the Beat



Allen Ginsberg in his hippy hat

HQ on East 7th St was emerging the romanticism of the nuclear age, recoiling from modern capitalism, classicism and 'cool' with wildly emotional art which was in each case revolutionary in its formal innovation. And in his North American romantic agony Ginsburg quite literally put himself through the extremes of drug experimentation, sexual iconoclasm, incessant travel and insanity to find and formulate his own visions of human possibility.

What remains inspiring is that his quest did not peter out after his first great, howling outbursts, organised on the page almost as Parker might phrase a solo or Pollock hurl himself at a canvas.

Ginsburg's urban romanticism has matured, retaining its lyrical exuberance but sharpening and fleshing out his explosive rejections with some very concise and intelligent analyses of the anti-revolutionary bureaucracies and philosophies of Eastern Europe, the economics of American imperialism, the fiasco which is modern Israel and the modern state's remorseless manipulation of everything from plutonium to opium to bolster its power over its subject human beings.

He was an early and brilliant critic of Ronald Raygun and his most recent poems, complicated and often as involuted and elliptical as Blake's *Prophesies* also written in a period of political reaction, are as heartening an exposure of the crackbrained rationality of Star-Wars-era Amerika as his first poems were against the insane normality of Eisenhower and Hefner's United States.

And his politics have always included the sexual dimension *Green Automobile* one of the most important and most beautiful accounts of loving passion between men since Whitman, was published in 1953 in the *Machattine Review* (the journal of the pioneering organisation of gay men in North America). And Ginsburg has continued his commitment not just to the liberation of gay men but to an enlarged view of sexuality in which men and women cease to be bottled up in the conventional attributes of their gender. And he's even discovered a sense of humour, which in the early days was somewhat crushed by the awful weight of prophesy which he had laid upon himself.

In his wonderfully scathing poem *Birdbrain*, he notes self-mockingly of his own pretensions 'Birdbrain became a great international Poet and went round the world praising the glories of Birdbrain'.

In the launderette of style, the Beat era has spun back into fashion. In the smarter London cafés a copy of *Howl*, a Blue Note hard bop LP and the sort of mohair suit one used to buy in Burtons for ten pounds but now costs ten times that is de rigueur. Socialists have every right to insist to these amnesiacs of style that the artists they defer to were highly political and deeply committed individuals.

And it is also worth reminding ourselves that movements of popular revolt against long periods of reaction, such as we have been enduring for the last decade, often come in unpredictable, impetuous, and in infuriatingly subjective idioms. ■

Dave Widgery

The cold and the new

A Documentary History of
Communism

Vol One: Communism in Russia
Vol Two: Communism in the World
Edited R V Daniels
I B Tauris £25 each

THERE are two difficulties with these books. The first is the sheer length of the period the editor has selected. Volume One deals with Russian developments from 1894 to 1982; Volume Two, even more ambitiously, deals with world developments from 1914 to 1982. That sort of range means that there is bound to be a good deal of skimming. From our point of view though, things are not so bad as might be feared.

Roughly the first three quarters of Volume One contain material of genuine interest to the student of revolutionary socialism. It includes quite a substantial amount of material about debates after 1917 which was previously either very hard to track down or existed only in Russian. Volume Two is of much less value: perhaps one quarter of that book is worth serious study.

The second reason is much more important and involves the politics of the editor. He is not a mindless down-the-line Cold War warrior as you might expect the Professor of History at the University of Vermont to be: that institution is clearly rather better staffed than, say, the London School of Economics.

Daniels is an intelligent man. He has noticed that the history of Communism falls into two distinct stages: the revolutionary period associated with Lenin and Trotsky and the counter-revolutionary period associated with Stalin.

His first volume, in particular, has that sharp disjuncture as one of its organising principles. And because of that recognition he acknowledges that 'Communism' is a label that covers all sorts of things, not just the official self-definitions of the USSR. Consequently, he prints large numbers of oppositional documents and interpretations in Volume One which are of real value.

However, for some obscure reason—naked careerism perhaps, or inability to escape from his intellectual upbringing—Daniels retains *some* of the Cold War crap. This leads him to focus too much on organisational questions and on Lenin's personality rather than on class forces in his first volume.

Thus his introduction to the excerpt from *State and Revolution* carries the immortal line: 'How seriously Lenin took the vision [of the withering away of the state] when he was writing is difficult to say...'

It is in the second volume that this shortcoming is a real handicap, though. The Cold War remnants lead him to spend too much time on state matters and exclude material about the Communist International. Even the material he does carry is accompanied by some bizarre judgements. He makes the unsubstantiated claim that, in 1920, the parties of the Comintern were bound to 'unquestioning acceptance of the decisions of the International and the interests of the Soviet Republic'.

Since he is familiar with the period, he must *know* that this statement is untrue. The International was, during its first years, full of debate. This he must be aware of, since he states in the first volume, in his introduction to the very odd selection from *Left Wing Communism*, that it was part of a major debate.

Any book of documents on the history of the Communist movement which deals with the revolutionary period must be compared with the series of volumes from Monad publishers titled *The Communist International in Lenin's Time*. By that test these books are pretty feeble. But only one volume of the Monad series has so far reached us.

While you save up your pennies for the next, promised last August and surely due soon, you could do worse than pestering your local library to buy at least the first volume of Daniels. ■

Colin Sparks

More substantially, he also shows how this strategy is the outcome of the policy of the Popular Front. Inherent in its apparent strengths are the seeds of its own weaknesses.

You can woo Tory Peers and even give the Queen a walk-on part, or you can lead a militant campaign of class struggle, but as Ken Livingstone has shown, you can't do both.

Looker goes on to show how the idea that there has been a 'forward march of labour' is a reformist mirage. As he puts it: 'The reality is that capitalism cedes no permanent territory to labour, no victories which cannot be challenged and reversed so long as the rule of capitalism persists.'

Anyone whose active political life has seen two great victories by the miners and their crushing defeat will understand that point perfectly.

Richard Hyman also contributes a fine piece around the central idea that building trade unions has always required a deliberate effort of ideological struggle. He shows how the unions have increasingly settled for recruitment that means little more than paper membership. In the last few years they have started to pay the price.

Unfortunately the book has two

big flaws. Much of the material was gathered before the miners' strike and so quite a lot of the book has a rather dated feel to it. The other problem is deeper and has to do with the authors' eclectic approach to politics.

The readers are encouraged to contact any organisation which looks attractive to them and to decide for themselves where their energies might best be concentrated.

That attitude is fine for certain things. If you go into a restaurant you expect to be handed a menu and it is up to you to decide between fish, meat and vegetables, although even here you might expect the waiter to help you with some recommendations.

The central question of whether socialism can be achieved by reform or by revolution is a bit more serious than choosing between steak and salmon.

Still, Hyman and Looker have written good chapters and David Coates has written a fair one (on the degeneration of the CP and the growth of the SWP). These three chapters at least make it worthwhile pestering your local library for a copy. ■

Kevin Corr

The impossible change

Facing Total War, German Society
1914-1918

Jurgen Kocha

Berg £15.95

The Working Class in Weimar
Germany, A Psychological and
Sociological Study

Erich Fromm

Berg £15

History of the German Labour
Movement

Helga Grebing

Berg

ONE OF the biggest problems revolutionaries in the advanced western countries face is the near all-pervasive feeling that things simply cannot change, that nothing can break the hold of established ideas over the minds of millions of people.

It is this mood which leads former revolutionaries to develop the most ludicrous illusions in the party of Neil Kinnock.

That is why the period from 1914 to 1945 remains of crucial importance. In these years bourgeois democracy was *not* the 'normal' form of capitalist rule in major advanced countries. Both the ruling class and the majority of the population in countries like Italy and Germany came to reject bourgeois democratic forms of rule, with the ruling class endorsing the claims of the fascist right, and very large numbers of workers the hopes of the revolutionary left.

Facing total war examines the first of the key experiences which led to the breakdown of bourgeois normality in Germany, the impact

of World War One.

Kocha is not a Marxist. But he is prepared to use certain Marxist categories to aid him in his presentation.

He shows how the war accentuated trends already in operation in the years before it—trends towards monopolisation in industry, the intensification of work, the development of mass production industries, the 'proletarianisation' of many areas of white collar work. And he also shows how, at the same time, these trends combined with the material deprivation caused by the war to create bitter opposition to the state among wide sections of the population.

This bitterness led to the revolutionary upheavals of 1918-20, and to the crystallisation of a very large revolutionary minority within the working class throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.

One of the most interesting parts of his book is where he looks at the impact of the war on the 'middle layer'. He shows how the old petty bourgeoisie of small businessmen and artisans were driven to the right, adopting the 'free enterprise' ideology of big business. By contrast, white collar workers (referred to by Kocha as the 'new middle layer') were, at first, attracted to the left (although not nearly as strongly as manual workers). But then, in the 1920s, the far right was able to gain ground at the expense of the left among these groups.

This is empirical backing for

Prospects for the left

A Socialist Anatomy of Britain
Ed D Coates, G Johnston and R
Bush

Polity £7.95

THIS book is the third volume in a series which the authors claim will arm left wing activists with the material they need.

The first half of this book is a worthy and comprehensive dissection of British capitalism.

The second half of the book is about the left in Britain and its pros-

pects for the future. Here the level is much more variable.

I found the two best contributions were Richard Hyman on 'Class Struggle and the Trade Union Movement' and Bob Looker on 'Class Conflict and Socialist Advance in Contemporary Britain.'

While he could have been sharper and clearer, Looker still demolishes Hobsbawm's advocacy of an electoral pact with the Alliance very effectively, and shows how idiotic it is to equate Thatcher with fascism.

Trotsky's argument that these sections of 'middle class' can be attracted by the working class movement when it acts decisively to change society—and by the reactionary right when the revolutionary challenge from the left falters.

The Working Class in Weimar Germany is an empirical survey of working class attitudes carried out 11 years after the war (and four years before the victory of fascism). At the time Erich Fromm was an orthodox Marxist.

He issued detailed questionnaires to a sample of workers to find out their range of attitudes over a number of topics, ranging from the directly political to those concerned with wider issues, like attitudes towards authority and views on sexual liberation.

The findings are of some interest. For his findings confirmed his view that class position determined people's attitudes in a general sense. He found, for instance, that manual workers tended to be less authoritarian than white collar workers, and that workers in large workplaces less so than those in small workplaces. He also discovered that within the working class there was a variation in the degree to which people rejected authoritarian, conformist stereotypes. At one extreme there was a high level of rejection among activists in the Communist Party, at the other extreme a relatively low level of rejection among right wing social democrats, with supporters of the left social democrats occupying an intermediate position.

There is a weakness with his approach, however. It is static—it does not deal with how people's attitudes are affected by the experience of different struggles and the political leadership provided to them. And so it does not deal with the most important issue of all: that of how the 'advanced' minority can draw the rest of the class behind it at certain points in history.

Nevertheless, the fact that there was such a minority in Germany is an important counter to liberal, social democratic and Euro-communist claims that revolutionary ideas cannot find a wide following inside the working class. And because it shows this, Fromm's book is worth looking at.

The same cannot be said for Helga Grebing's *History of the German Labour Movement*. It sprints through 140 years of history in 200 pages, always assuming that the main mistake of the labour movement until after the Second World War was that it was influenced by revolutionary, Marxist ideas. Wide ranging historical judgements are made without any

attempt to justify them by arguments except those of 'common sense'. In the process we are presented with 'facts' that simply are not true (like her picture of Rosa Luxemburg as opposing Lenin from the point of view of bourgeois democracy) and are left without any idea at all why the revolutionary left grew to be so strong in Germany after 1918 or why the Nazis came to power in the 1930s. ■

Chris Harman

ing insight into the politics of both Sinn Fein and Labour.

Most of the contributors are 'big names' like Ken Livingstone, Tony Benn, Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison, which Pluto hope will boost the book's sales. All of them are agreed that Labour's performance on Ireland leaves a lot to be desired. 'Our record on Ireland is absolutely appalling, it is not just bad, it is disgraceful,' says Livingstone in what is possibly an understatement.

Livingstone, however, is optimistic about a future Labour administration as 'there is a very positive and radical rethinking going on in the Labour Party'. That might or might not have been true four years ago, but this year's Party Conference has shown that the left within the Party are now on the retreat. Labour's policy of Irish unity 'by consent' was passed at the 1981 Conference when the left were in the ascendancy. This year Conference refused even to pass a motion calling for a *discussion* on withdrawing the troops.

Clive Soley, until recently a Labour Party spokesperson on Northern Ireland, proposes an all-Ireland police force and judiciary as steps towards a united Ireland. 'If you are not serious about an all-Ireland criminal justice system, you are not serious about a united Ireland.' For socialists the idea of replacing one ruling class judiciary with another of the same ilk is less than appealing. But then Clive

Soley wouldn't know anything about that.

Sinn Fein's contributions to the book are also revealing. Interestingly, both Gerry Adams and Ken Livingstone are keen to point out how much their respective parties have in common.

Adams stresses that class-based politics in the six counties are out of the question until after Ireland is united. He tells us that if partition goes 'there will be a coming together of people who have the same class interests over the whole of Ireland'. Until then Sinn Fein will, presumably, keep appealing to the 'Irish people' for support, regardless of their class.

Lest anyone should be worried, Danny Morrison assures the reader that 'we are not out to set up a communist or Marxist dictatorship in Ireland'. Certainly there is to be an element of workers' control in the new Ireland but the government are to have a say too. He doesn't tell us who will have the decisive vote in any dispute between the workers and the government but I know where I'd lay my bet.

Tony Benn's warning could be applied to either organisation. Labour, he says, 'muddle up having Labour ministers in office with having the working class in power, which is quite a different thing.'

It's a pity then that no one from the Socialist Workers Movement was invited to write a chapter on how to bring that change about. ■

Linda Moore

Penguin takes a dive

Ireland: A Positive Proposal
Kevin Boyle and Tom Hadden
Penguin Special £2.95
Ireland After Britain
Martin Collins (ed)
Pluto with Labour and Ireland £3.95

IRELAND: A Positive Proposal is hailed by Penguin as a 'bold and brilliantly argued challenge to the current despair over Northern Ireland'. Unfortunately, there's nothing bold or brilliant about it.

Most of the 110 pages are spent explaining why 'simple solutions' (like withdrawing the troops) won't work. The gerrymandered border by which Unionists were guaranteed a permanent majority in the Northern Ireland statelet is dismissed as having been an unfortunate necessity. British troops, we are told, were sent in to provide a more acceptable 'peacekeeping force'.

Hadden and Boyle's 'solution' is basically unionism with an 'Irish dimension' for window dressing. They argue that the border must be maintained, in respect of the wishes of the Unionist majority in the six counties, but that the minority com-

munity should be entitled to express their Irish identity.

Just how people are expected to express their 'Irishness' when they're on the dole, living in slum conditions, are having their door kicked in by the army, or have been locked up in prison for years, isn't dealt with here.

The so-called solution is based around Anglo-Irish committees, the setting up of an all-Ireland police force and judiciary, and the notion of a neutral cross-border zone providing a free-for-all area for security forces on both sides.

Previous Penguin Specials on Ireland have been of a high standard (for example, Eamonn McCann's *War and an Irish Town*, the *Sunday Times* Insight Team's *Ulster*, and John McGuffin's *The Guinea-Pigs*). After these, this one's a big disappointment.

Of more interest is *Ireland After Britain*, a collection of essays published by Pluto in collaboration with the Labour Committee on Ireland. The book aims to contribute to the dialogue between Irish Republicans and the left of the Labour Party and gives an interest-

Surviving the savagery

The pain of confinement
Jimmy Boyle
Pan Books £2.50

NO NAME is more guaranteed to divide opinion in Scotland than Jimmy Boyle. A hard man, famous in the Gorbals district of Glasgow, Boyle systematically terrorised local people as a collector of protection money and a contract hood. His work endeared him to no one very much, and there are still large numbers of people who remember him with fear and anger.

When Boyle was finally picked up and imprisoned for life on a charge of murder—a murder he adamantly insists he didn't commit—his reputation preceded him. The prison officers, administering a brutal system with an equal brutality, saw Boyle as a test of their power—and set out to break him. The man responded with an obstinate resistance, a refusal to be beaten down by the internal violence of prison life.

There's no doubt that at the beginning, his response was in the system's own terms—a battle for power, the hard man confronting the hard men. The prison system threw its worst and most repressive instruments at Boyle, who refused

to bend. Finally, he was left naked, covered in his own shit, in a cage within a cell where the light was never turned off. This part of his story is told in Boyle's first book, the aptly named *A Sense of Freedom*.

Peterhead prison had not broken Boyle, but instead created a sort of resistance fighter. But Peterhead remained the same, for all Boyle's anger. If Boyle had changed in the course of his battle with the system (and his first book says he had) that change could find no expression in Peterhead or any other prison.

For, as the Tory conference reminds us with deepening venom every year, prisons are places where society wreaks its vengeance. The world is divided into righteous people (ie those in power who change legalities according to their needs) and the criminals who steal, who riot, or strike, or challenge society in one way or another.

When the Special Unit was set up in Barlinnie Prison in Glasgow, it set out from different premisses. Taking the 'incurables', the prisoners who had survived every form of brutalisation, the Special Unit created a different, more humane regime.

The Pain of Confinement, Boyle's

second book, is the record of his experience of the Special Unit. The Unit represented a liberal alternative to prison as retribution. It set out with the idea that every human being can change if s/he is allowed to grow and develop, and is given resources and care. More than that, it began by saying that people change when they administer and control their own lives directly.

Boyle is the Unit's success story; others, equally creative (like Larry Winters) were irreparably destroyed before they reached the Unit and it was too late. From the point of view of politicians (Labour and Tory, as the book shows) the Unit was a gesture—but the prison system, its laws and purpose, would remain unchanged. Boyle, however, became a bit of a *cause célèbre*; more than that he changed, became compassionate, and responsible for others.

Whether or not you believe Jimmy Boyle is, in a sense, secondary. His book gives a strong sense of honesty, even if at times it is

a little long-winded and pretentious. But we cannot add our voice to the screaming law and order lobby of Tory or Labour stripe.

There *are* people with profound psychological problems who represent a danger to those around them. But they are a *tiny* number. The overflowing prisons of this country are full of capitalism's victims, as well as its rebels. We do believe that human beings can be transformed, that the repressed creativity in all of us can and will be released in the struggle for socialism.

Boyle does not claim socialist credentials—his concerns are first and foremost personal and individual. But his book says a great deal about the savagery of the prison system on the one hand, and about a will to struggle which, as we know, can develop in unforeseeable ways but which is the first step in the fight to win a more permanent liberation. ■

Mike Gonzalez

three centuries of censorship, political and ideological strangulation and economic domination, it succeeds in covering nothing in depth and left me feeling confused. It came up with too many questions and only seemed to provide one, wrong, answer.

The book tends to place too much emphasis on the individuals who own and run the media. It charts the careers of the great press barons like Lord Northcliffe and Rothermere who built vast press empires which they ruled despotically, dismissing anyone who disagreed with them (shades of Murdoch et al?).

It quite correctly points out that the social position and economic interests of newspaper proprietors then and now are identical to those whose political opinions they represent. They sit on the boards of the same companies as Tory cabinet ministers, drink in the same clubs and wear the same school ties. The same is true, of course, for those at the top echelons of the BBC.

The conclusion it draws from this, however, is that the way to change this is to break down the monopolies. It argues that if media ownership was broadened and diversified, it would be possible to produce newspapers and television stations that did not reflect and perpetuate reactionary ideas.

This conclusion seems to ignore

the book's own evidence about the economic realities behind the workings of the media—the need to attract advertising and the need to expand to remain competitive. Even if the multinationals were to be carved up, why do they assume that small capitalists would be any more right-on or accountable than large ones?

The book does have some points of interest. It has an all too brief chapter on the rise of the radical press and its links with Chartism and the growth of working class struggle. Papers like the *Northern Star* and the *Poor Man's Guardian* often provided the only links whereby workers could hear about struggles elsewhere.

It also provides an interesting account of how Churchill tried to silence the *Daily Mirror* during the war because it criticised British military tactics and 'lowered morale on the Home Front'.

If you are hoping for other examples of government interference in news reporting, however, this book will disappoint—it provides just one short paragraph on the restrictions concerning Northern Ireland.

The evidence suggests that the controls governing what gets seen and heard operate more by consent than coercion. ■

Sally Bild

Glum in Brum

Typical Girls: Young women from school to the job market

Christine Griffin
RKP £6.95

THIS book looks at the experiences of young women, including the experiences of young Asian and Afro-Caribbean women as well as white women.

It is a study of 180 young women in Birmingham, as they move from the fourth form through the fifth (and in some cases sixth) form, to the job market. It covers their expectations of work, relationships with friends and boys and their views of family life.

One prominent feature of the book is the way the racist and sexist attitudes of a lot of teachers affect the chances of the young women to get on at school, or even aspire to getting a job. For example, most of the white teachers operated with two stereotypes: 'Asian' girls were seen as passive with a tendency to overaspire, aiming for unrealistic jobs, while Afro-Caribbean girls were seen as loud and aggressive.

The way teachers channel girls into 'female' jobs also comes across clearly. A white girl who wanted to be an ambulance driver was told that this was a male job and the

teacher suggested she try for secretarial work. The views of one careers teacher were even more horrific. She said, '...the girls will be alright. If they can't find work they'll go on the streets.'

She couldn't have realised the truth in her words. Late summer 1985 young working class white and black women and men did go on the streets of Birmingham, partly in response to the things highlighted in this book—the racist attitudes of teachers and employers and the total lack of jobs for school leavers in a place like Birmingham.

As *Socialist Worker* explained, out of 100 school leavers in Handsworth 1984-5, nine whites and two blacks got jobs.

Because this book is the result of sociological research it provides no answers for the young people of Birmingham. All the conclusions in the book are aimed at academics, teachers, students, other researchers. The book is an improvement on a lot of sociological research (there aren't even many long words!). It examines racism and sexism, it allows the girls' own views to be expressed. It's useful reading, but it's got no answers—certainly not for the 'typical girls' it talks about. ■

Maggie Falshaw

The mask of reaction

When is a war not a war?

The Bombing Officer

Jerome Doolittle
Sphere

REMEMBER the tiny country called Laos that the United States 'bombed back to the Stone Age'?

At a time when *Rambo* is busy rewinning Uncle Sam's lost honour in the cinemas, Jerome Doolittle's simple, undramatised novel is a refreshing reminder of how a super-power became the super-pimp of Indochina.

The story is a nightmare, not in the tradition of *Apocalypse Now* but an even more chilling vision of nine to five office wallies engineering the ruin of a small country from the comfort of their embassy compound.

The book paints a convincing picture of the US mission in Laos on the eve of Nixon's 1972 election.

The mission's task is to wage a war that's not a war, and above all, keep it quiet. Which is where Fred Upson comes in. He's the bombing officer of the title. His job is to okay targets in Laos, that the airforce 'isn't bombing', while all the time the secret war is leaking information like a British Rail tannoy.

We've all heard the Tories' shock horror over Russia using its embassy for spying. But they stay quiet

when their US allies use their embassies to occupy countries and blitz them.

Not surprisingly, Upson finds it all too much. Already suspected of leaking a suppressed poll that 'never happened,' about the secret bombing that never was, he decided to leak even more.

The final nail is driven into his coffin when his Lao lover commits suicide after being 'interviewed' by the CIA. Upson breaks down and is shipped back home. The story ends as dreamily as it started, with the ambassador more interested in his aides' achievements in college sport than the latest bombing reports.

But the most chilling aspect of the book, is the way you begin to see how a group of not particularly paranoid men and women become cogs in a killing machine that's rolling over the Laotian peasants.

Doolittle offers a timely warning for all those who think it's possible to reform the twisted irrational system we live under:

'Years ago he put on a mask, with the intention of taking it off once he got where he was going. By now his face has almost become the mask, but not quite. Once the process is complete, he'll take off the mask. He'll relax and be himself at last, and know right from wrong with

Power behind the lies

Power Without Responsibility (The press and broadcasting in Britain)
Curran and Seaton
Methuen (Second edition) £6.95

WRITTEN before the 'shock horror' revelations about the BBC's lack of freedom, this book charts

the history of the mass media from the seventeenth and eighteenth century radical press to today's multinational conglomerates, trying in the process to locate where the mechanisms of control lie.

It is an ambitious project, too ambitious, perhaps. While covering

perfect assurance, and never suspect that his face has become the mask.'

All good stuff. But Upson, like his creator, is a principled liberal (yes, there are a few) adrift in a sea of cynics and reactionaries. His only way out is a martyrdom that doesn't affect events in the slightest. In short, the system has us all beat even before we start. Which is probably true if you're a liberal.

The answer Doolittle is groping

for is not to reform a system that feeds on horror, but to kill it outright. But, confused as the novel's attempted solutions is, Doolittle stands head and shoulders above the nasty little hacks who have made a fast buck by rewriting the war in penny dreadfuls.

His novel is trying to say something, and deserves a read if you get the chance. ■

Sean Piggot

A creative future?

On Cinema
Vincent Porter
Pluto £4.95

AFTER I'd finished this book I re-read the blurb to find out what I was supposed to have read and why. The blurb told me I'd just finished a succinct and informative account of the state of the crisis of cinema production and distribution in Britain.

The background of the crisis was outlined and possible solutions advanced. Well, to be fair, I did find the book informative. I hadn't known that it wasn't until December 1973 that the film technicians' union ACTT achieved partial recognition at the main Kodak laboratories in Harrow. It had taken 30 years.

I couldn't quite believe that figure when I first read it. Why had it taken so long? Vincent Porter doesn't go into that question too deeply.

He covers the unions' struggles in the film industry in a chapter titled Production and then moves on to the film artists' struggles in a chapter titled Creativity and then

moves on to a chapter titled Protection and then on to Censorship, Patronage, Education and so on.

Each chapter raises issues but little attempt is made to relate the chapters to each other. Thus Vincent Porter writes enthusiastically about a creative future for film being made possible by increased audience awareness, alternative filming methods and government subsidies.

All well and good but I couldn't help but think about those 30 years it had taken to unionise Kodak. If it had taken workers in the industry that long to achieve union recognition is it really possible for the film industry's customers to bring about change by increased 'awareness'?

I wouldn't want to put people off the book anymore than its slim size and price already does. It is an enjoyable and useful book and it does tackle some important and interesting questions about an industry that touches a great many people's lives. ■

Peter Court

Monitoring the met

The State of the Police
Phil Scraton
Pluto 4.95

PHIL SCRATON uses three areas of working class experience to illustrate his central argument that there is no democratic accountability for the police.

His first point is that there have been numerous examples of individual police excess. An example is the series of attacks on people in Merseyside in 1979 which left Jimmy Kelly dead, Betty Yates in hospital for four days after her whole family was beaten up, and 18 year old Jimmy Cavanagh on an operating table for five hours in an unsuccessful attempt to save his liver and spleen.

Complaints by the council, MPs and the local police committee were treated with contempt.

Then there is the question of institutionalised police racism. In

1979 the Metropolitan Police commissioned a report by the Policy Studies Institute on the relations between police and public. The results, published in 1983, are only surprising because of the origin of the report. Scraton says:

'The account of the Metropolitan Police...is one of white, male, aspiring middle class domination of blacks, women and the "non-respectable working class".'

Lastly he looks at the policing of strikes. He discusses the development of a national police force particularly since the miners' victory in 1972, and the setting up of the National Reporting Centre.

The media portray clashes between communities and the police as unprecedented and resulting from some new factor such as black immigration or the break up of the family. Scraton shows that hostility to the police is as old as the police

themselves.

In 1833, when police attacked a demonstration in London and one copper was killed, an inquest jury declared that this was justifiable homicide as police violence deserved to be met with counter-violence.

Scraton provides chapter and verse to show that every time workers have fought some aspect of the system, in the 1880s, in 1910-12 and in the 1930s, there have been pitched battles against the police.

Scraton also gives short shrift to the idea of the community policing programme which is often touted by some on the left and not so left. The 'liberal' police chief turned aspiring liberal politician, John Alderson, let the cat out of the bag when he wrote to *New Society* explaining that he saw community policing as part of a police strategy which also included more forceful operational tactics.

BOOKBRIEF

Top reprint of the month is Paul Thomas's 1980 *Karl Marx and the Anarchists*, now issued by RKP as a paperback at £8.95. While not the sort of account we would find wholly satisfactory, it does examine in detail the struggle of Marx against the various anarchists of the epoch. It is useful reading for those confronting the current rather limited anarchist revival.

The survey *British Social Attitudes: the 1985 Report* (edited by R Jowell and S Witherspoon from Gower £9.95) suffers from all of the well-known problems of such opinion polling. It tells us nothing about people's ideas in motion, but it does come up with some interesting facts about the opinions people passively hold. For example, 50 per cent of Conservative voters think that the US and Russia are equal threats to world peace. That is an amazing tribute to Reagan's ability as a propagandist. The data on men and women's attitudes is perhaps the most fascinating, showing wide gaps between what people think about household chores, which is often that they should be equally shared, and what actually happens, which is that most are done by women.

The major fiction title of the month must be Pluto's publication of Gordon De Marco's latest Riley Kovachs story *Frisco Blues* (£2.25). Dealing with racism and the ways it is tied into the structure of US life, De Marco remains by far the best of the current crop of radical detective writers. This one is a *must*. Also in the series is Ken Begg's *The Anvil Agreement* (£2.50) which is very exciting but lacks the working class environment which gives De Marco his edge. Feminist fiction is well-

represented as usual. The production manager of *SWR* picked up Margaret Mulvihill's *Natural Selection* (Pandora £3.95) thinking that the blurb claim that it was about a 'world filled with sex, adultery, plagiarism, opportunism' meant that it was about the SWP. He was disappointed to find that it was about publishing, and that the novel—despite a promising beginning—does not hold together.

Two books about film are strictly for experts. Michel Ciment's *Conversations with Losey* (Methuen, £9.95) is a detailed account of the life of the ex-Communist director of, among other things, *Accident* and *The Assassination of Trotsky*. It is less interesting than you might expect from a friend of Brecht's who was witch-hunted out of the USA, hid in an English restaurant from the red-baiter Ginger Rogers and found out too late that he knew very little about Trotsky. Perhaps it is simply that most film interviews are pretty boring. Annette Kuhn's selection of essays *The Power of the Image* (RKP, £5.95) is by a leading feminist film theorist, and contains some interesting ideas about pornography and related issues.

Lastly, very few books deserve burning, but John Laffin's *Know the Middle East* (Alan Sutton, £3.95) certainly does. Masquerading as useful and impartial information, it is a collection of racism and prejudice written entirely from the point of view of imperialism. Nasty stuff. ■

Pete Smith

Colin Sparks

Will we, won't we?

LINDSEY German, in her article *Outside the movement* (October *SWR*), rightly points out that revolutionaries have in the past broken away from larger working class parties in order to build the type of organisation that can exploit to the full circumstances as they develop.

Such organisation is necessary to co-ordinate activity in the class struggle and to propagandise. In the Labour Party today, the possibilities for this sort of organisation are extremely limiting and entail those groups inside Labour having to make numerous accommodations.

Such a conclusion is reinforced by the prevalent view that moves to democratise the party would amount to 'rocking the boat', and the difficulty of pushing reforms in a party which is prepared to move ever more rightwards means that an independent course for revolutionaries is at present absolutely correct.

Does this suggest, however, that in the British context, separation from the Labour Party is always necessarily desirable? If, for instance, the Labour Party became a left reformist party committed to the introduction of radical socialist measures and tolerant of revolutionary groupings within its ranks, would a complete break still be tactically correct?

As revolutionaries we need to concentrate on building an organisation while at the same time pushing forward working class struggle at every possible opportunity.

Accordingly, if the Labour Party were ever to become an open and left reformist organisation, surely we would need to work inside that party? We would then be able to push forward demands that British capitalism could not afford to meet, and hopefully, to reap the rewards of a situation in which the only choice would be between revolution and reaction. ■

J Moorhouse
Harrow

Hard labour

CHRIS Bambery's account of Trotsky's position on entrism in the 1930s (September *SWR*) was a useful debunking of the myths used by *Militant* (and others) to justify entrism today.

However, Chris doesn't explain the origin of *Militant's* idea that the Labour Party can be transformed into a revolutionary party.

To do this we should look at the period of the 1950s when the forerunners of *Militant* were the British section of the main Fourth International (of which, at that stage, there were two).

This was after a debate in which the FI had tried to come to terms with the establishment of Russian-type societies in eastern Europe. Rejecting the idea of state capitalism, as developed by our founders, they concluded that, like Russia itself, the new societies were 'workers' states'.

Thus, if workers' states could be established without revolutionary parties, then it could presumably happen in the rest of the world. Still paying lip service to marxism, though, they believed in the need for a party to change society. This led them to a belief that revolutionaries could enter a mass workers' party and wait for a revolutionary upsurge to force those parties to overthrow capitalism, with the entrists at their head.

Thus the *Militant's* distinctive ideas originated in the post-1953 Fourth International with the theory of 'entrism sui generis' (of a new type). Today, with the pressure of over 30 years waiting around as 'real' Labourites, the wheel has turned around and they have virtually become so. Perhaps a case of 'entrism sui generis'? ■

Geoff Collier
Hull

Where's his soul?

RICK HAY (October *SWR*) asked if there was something he had missed in my review of the book *Now here to Run*. There was indeed, and maybe I can get it across second time around.

The first point is that the remark about checking your pulse if you don't like soul music was a joke. I'm sure Rick's pulse is as healthy as my politics—maybe it's his funny-bone he needs to check.

The serious point he missed has to do with the relationship between music and the society that produces it. Now it's true that the vast majority of soul music was never overtly political—though I know of few more 'powerful statements about being black and fighting back' than James Brown's 'Say it loud, I'm black and proud'.

But it seems clear that there was a necessary connection between the confidence, drive and assertiveness

of soul music, and the rising movement for black rights of the early sixties. For a black woman to top the charts demanding *Respect*, as Aretha Franklin did in the summer of 1967, would have been simply impossible ten years previously.

This has nothing to do with individual tastes in music—I spend far more time listening to blues and jazz than I do to soul. But when Rick asserts that 'soul music removes all the power, the guts and the politics of blues', he's letting his tastes get the better of his politics (he's also clearly never listened to, say, Aretha Franklin or Wilson Pickett).

For the underlying politics of blues music is one of at best passive resignation, at worst despair. Its power and its passion come out of the struggle of men and women to stay human in the face of the all-pervading racism of America at the time—as one of the most recurring lines in blues songs puts it, 'laughing just to keep from crying'. But there is no hope that anything can be done about it.

So Billie Holiday's *Strange Fruit* (the only political song she ever recorded) is a cry of outrage against lynchings, but also against impotence in the face of such vicious racism. And even Leadbelly's famous *Bourgeois Blues* ends by simply advising 'coloured folks' to 'stay away from Washington DC'.

Popular musics do not arise out of a vacuum, but because they have something to say about their times. The blues grew out of a black society where to fight for the most elementary rights was so dangerous as to be mostly unthinkable, as a music of victims who could struggle for nothing more than their dignity as individuals. It was gospel music in that era which articulated black hopes, in talking of the life to come.

The possibility of fighting that racism and winning at least partial reforms only arose after the creation of a black working class in substantial numbers, as hundreds of thousands of blacks moved north after the Second World War to work in the steel mills and the car plants. In that new, urban, setting, the blues transmuted into firstly rhythm 'n' blues and then soul music.

And as American blacks discovered in the early sixties that their new-found importance in the economy gave them the power to fight racism, so the mood of black music changed to reflect that confidence.

The great strength of Gerri Hershey's book is that she captures the links between soul music and the politics of the time in the words of the singers themselves. It's in no sense a revolutionary intervention into the debate on culture and politics, but it's an excellent example of how to better

understand a society by understanding its music. And for that alone it's worth reading—especially by the humourless among us. ■

Charlie Hore
Leeds

Culture vulture

IT IS nice to see the beginnings of some widespread discussion on the question of 'culture' in *SWR*. It would certainly seem that a more open airing of these matters is long overdue, bearing in mind the opinions of some of your readers, notably Rick Hay (Letters October *SWR*) and, from a different viewpoint, Chris Glenn (Letters September *SWR*).

With reference to popular music in particular, it is clear that the criteria for judging the work of particular artists as politically 'good or bad' can be many and varied.

With Bruce Springsteen and The Redskins (different as they may be), the criterion is primarily in the lyrical content of their songs. With the Soul Music that Charlie Hore so admires, it must be something to do with the political and social climate in which the music was produced, and the people who were producing it.

With the Style Council it is maybe a bit of both, and also the fact that Paul Weller writes *very good songs*.

Now people may quite likely disagree with my judgements on this issue, but that is all to the good. I hope that the *Review* keeps up (and maybe even expands) coverage of these topics as they make for good reading and a lively debate in which anyone can participate (unlike arguments about Oxford history professors).

The Marxism and Culture column is also a welcome addition. When you read some of the rubbish that appears in other socialist magazines often with reprints in the *Guardian*, it is surprising that we haven't decided to take up the cudgels before. I hope that this column will continue to appear. ■

Tim Williams
North London

We welcome letters and contributions on all issues raised in *Socialist Worker Review*. Please keep your contributions as short as possible, typed, double spaced if you can, and one side of paper only. Send to: *SWR*, PO Box 82, London E2 9DS.

A very British riot

THE LLANELLI riots of 1911 are part of the history of the 'Great Unrest' among workers in Britain before the First World War. Large sections of the working class, confident in their ability to take on the bosses, dispensed with the official leadership of the movement, and relied on their own strength and organisation.

The events in Llanelli show that neither mass picketing leading to violent confrontations with the state, nor running battles involving burning and looting, are new to British working class history.

These riots happened during Britain's first national railway strike, in August, 1911. When the strike began, Llanelli was not regarded as a potential trouble spot. On the eve of the strike, police were being sent away from the town to help out in Tonypany and Cardiff. However, Llanelli was a major stop on the main line between Paddington and Fishguard, one down which a lot of freight was sent for shipping abroad.

A strike committee was formed on the first day, and picketing was immediately organised. Only 535 people were employed on the railway, but the picket on the first evening was at least 1,000 strong, such was the support for the railwaymen from the tinsplate workers, other groups of workers, and the community at large.

By the time the police superintendent arrived at the station with as many of the eighteen policemen left in the town as he could gather, three trains were already held up. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to clear the crossing, and the picket remained in place all night, with 'singing of comic ditties' and a mock election as entertainment.

Next morning, the authorities began to move. Newly arrived soldiers attempted to clear the line. They were forced back by the crowd, by now numbering about 3,000. Officials of the Great Western Railway Company met with members of the strike committee but negotiations quickly broke down.

By this time the chief constable was telegraphing Cardiff and Tonypany for the return of his men, and two of the town magistrates had telegraphed the Home Secretary for assistance. A further 250 soldiers were immediately sent to Llanelli from Cardiff. The authorities read the Riot Act, and drove back the crowds at the crossings at bayonet point. Trains now began to pass through, although the picket remained large, sometimes up to 5,000 strong, and animated.

The next morning, Saturday, a meeting of local magistrates drew up a special duty roster and decided to close the pubs early 'in the interests of public order'. Early that afternoon, a train left the station and came up against a crowd of pickets. They rushed it, chased off the driver and fireman, put out the fire, let off the steam and put the vacuum brake out of order. A company of soldiers

ran down from the station and the pickets retreated to the top of the embankment.

The crowd grew larger, and began stoning the troops. The major in charge drew out his watch and threatened to order his men to fire in one minute. A local magistrate read out the opening lines of the Riot Act. Suddenly, shots rang out, and in the garden of one of the houses overlooking the railway two men collapsed, shot.

As the news of the deaths spread, crowds gathered around the railway station, taunting and abusing the soldiers now trapped inside. Even the level crossings were abandoned as angry crowds hurled stones and missiles at the soldiers. One of the soldiers, Private Richard Spiers, had already refused to fire on the crowd, and was being held under arrest in the besieged railway station. A train arriving at the Eastern crossing carrying the kit and provisions of the soldiers was ransacked, its windows smashed and contents triumphantly scattered along the line.

The rioting and looting which now took place in the town were characterised by local newspapers as 'indiscriminate' and 'criminal'. But the chosen targets demonstrate very clearly who the crowd blamed for the two deaths.



Police arrest rioter

Apart from the soldiers' kit, the crowds seized on the property of the Great Western Railway Company. A mile of railway sidings, crowded with goods wagons, lay nearby. Truck after truck was broken into. The troops were powerless to intervene as women donned new clothes on the spot, and children were kitted out with complete new sets of garments.

Goods of all descriptions were carted off to the town's main boarding-houses and to outlying villages: sides of bacon, sacks of flour, tubs of butter, crockery, boots and bamboo tables. Ninety six trucks were looted and many set on fire.

That evening a burning truck containing detonators exploded, killing four people, and injuring eleven others. Even so, the looting continued until the early morning.

Meanwhile, crowds went in search of Thomas Jones, the senior magistrate who had telegraphed the Home Secretary for troops. Demonstrators broke the windows of his wholesale grocery warehouse and then moved on to attack his house. The windows of the ironmongery shop of the magistrate responsible for the reading of the Riot Act were also broken, before the crowd, growing larger all the time, returned to Thomas Jones's warehouse.

Police and troops arrived and made baton and bayonet charges on the crowd. Several people received wounds, but the crowds continued to stone the police, and succeeded in holding off both them and the soldiers while they broke down the doors of the magistrate's warehouse and looted the entire building.

It was only when yet more soldiers arrived at midnight that the authorities began to regain some sort of control of the streets. Several more bayonet charges were made, but it was not until 2am, when news began to spread that the railway strike had been settled by the union leaders, that the crowds began to disperse.

Bayonet charges

The damage was considerable, and for weeks afterwards the courts dealt with individuals charged with disorderly conduct or looting.

Court appearances were often attended by noisy crowds cheering the defendants. The funerals of the two shot men were huge affairs, with thousands joining the processions, and factories idle as the workers walked out. A mass meeting in the town held the town's magistrates responsible for the deaths, condemned the use of troops, and called for a public inquiry. A week afterwards the magistrate whose store was looted, Thomas Jones, had the hay-ricks of his farm set on fire by 'persons unknown'. The Swansea railwaymen and the miners of the Cambrian Combine passed resolutions of support for the soldier, Private Spiers, who had refused to fire on the crowd, and was at the time awaiting court-martial.

The newspapers, however, were appalled, blaming outsiders and 'troublemakers... spoiling for a fight' from surrounding villages. Others blamed it on immigrant workers, the navvies and 'nomadic labourers'. The *South Wales Press* called it 'sheer wanton destruction' and there were calls for strengthening the local police force.

In a town not previously or particularly noted for its lawlessness, the riot showed how the anger of large sections of ordinary working class people can spill over and lead them into direct confrontation with the forces of the state, once the violence of these forces reaches a certain pitch.

The story of Llanelli helps give the lie to Neil Kinnock's despicable pronouncement after the events of Orgreave: 'This is so untypical and so un-British.' The history of working class struggle is full of such stories. ■

Tim Evans

Thanks to Deian Hopkin's essay 'The Llanelli Riots, 1911', Welsh History Review, and to Ian Davies, Llanelli Public Library.