

# socialist worker Review

November 1986

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## Why are women kept out of skilled jobs?

Cynthia Cockburn and Ann Rogers debate



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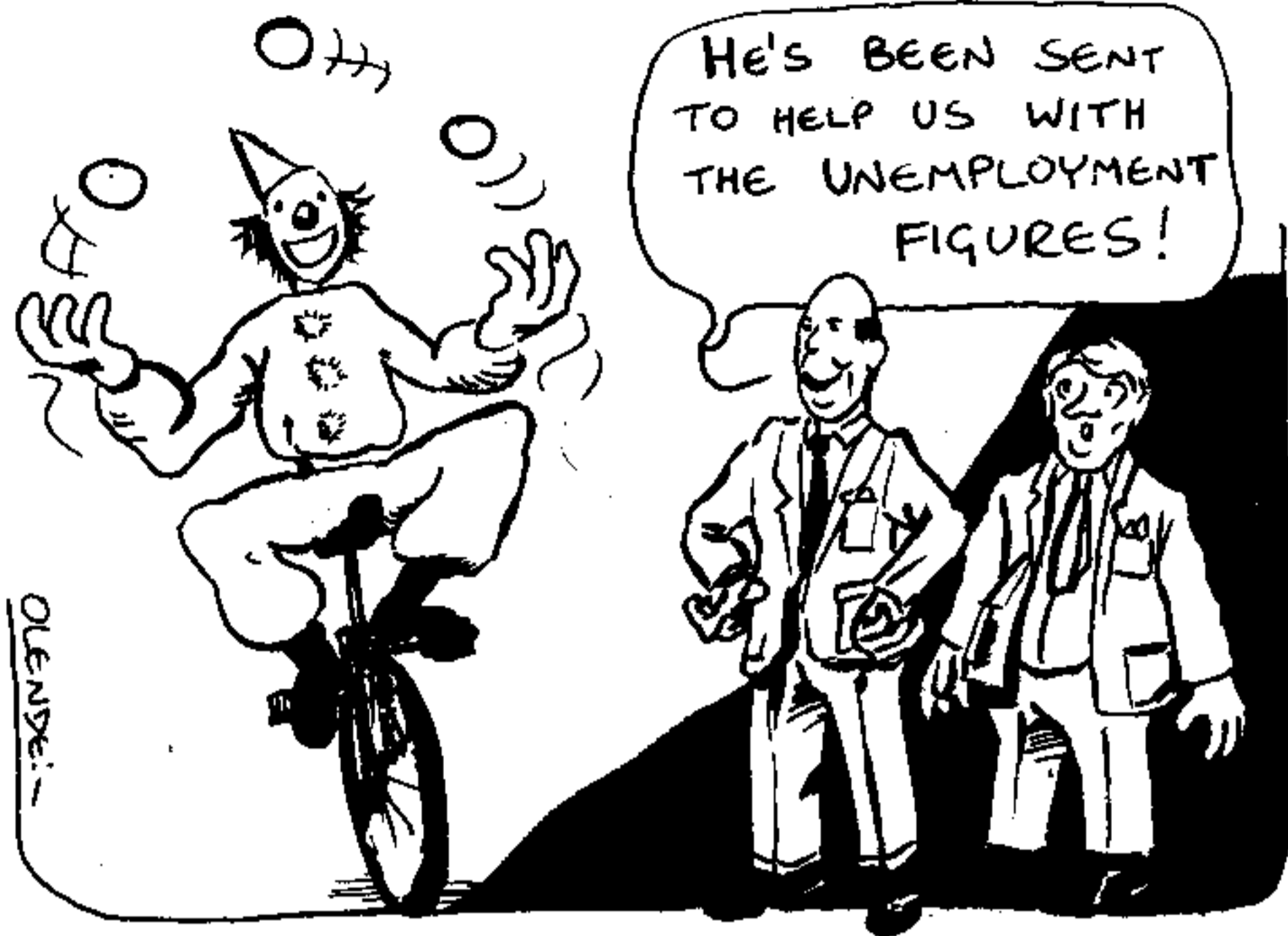
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## THE ECONOMY

# No hiding place

AS THE old saying goes, there are lies, damned lies, and statistics. That's certainly the best way to respond to the latest set of official unemployment figures released in October.

The 'seasonally adjusted' total of the number claiming unemployment benefit (as the *Financial Times*, but not the Tory tabloids carefully put it) fell in September by 22,000. The unadjusted total rose by 53,000 to 3,333,000 as this year's school leavers were finally allowed to sign on.

Even the higher figure is a joke. Since 1979 the Tories have made a grand total of 17 major or minor adjustments to the way the calculations are made. According to *Labour Research*, if the old methods of counting had been retained the official total would now be 3,900,000.

The old method did not include large numbers of women who never bothered to register because their husbands were in work. Nor did it include those placed on special schemes, such as YTS and the Community Programmes. There are now 690,000 on one scheme or another. So a reasonable estimate is that there are at least 4½ million people out of work.

Lord Young, the Employment Secretary in charge of the Manpower Services Commission, won this month's prize for hypocrisy when he commented that "That is the greatest monthly fall since April

1979, and part of the credit must be given to the Restart programme which endeavours to help the long-term unemployed find a route back to work."

To phrase it more accurately, the MSC has been shovelling people as fast as possible onto schemes and courses (on some you get no more money than the dole) to remove them from the register. The letters which call the unemployed in for interview contain warning that their benefit might be stopped if they don't attend. A significant number of cases have been reported of claimants who simply stopped signing on out of fear of prosecution for some minor infringement of the rules.

That is the ideal 'solution' to unemployment from the Tory point of view. But at the Tory Party conference Nigel Lawson also had the nerve to claim a million jobs have been 'created' since 1983.

Since 1983, the number of men in full-time waged employment has fallen by 81,000, and the number of women by 33,000. But there have been 641,000 additional *part-time* jobs, almost all for women.

The Tory total of one million includes a figure of 518,000 additional *self-employed*, which the Department of Employment admits is nothing more than a 'guesstimate'. They base the calculation partly on the number of those who are neither employed or officially signing on. In other words, if you've been frightened off the register you're simply assumed to be self-employed.

Meanwhile, back in the real world, October was another disastrous month for the Tories' economic strategy. The pound's value on the foreign exchange markets plunged steeply. Interest rates were raised once again to stop the pound falling even further. This now after the Bank of England had wasted over a billion dollars' worth of its reserves trying to stop the pound collapsing during the week of the Tory conference.

Meanwhile, inflation has been creeping

# NOTES of the month

up from 2½ to 3 percent and is due to go higher. But 'average earnings' are still increasing by around 7½ a year, and even if that too is a dodgy statistic, there's no doubt that most organised workers are still receiving wage rises well above the rate of inflation.

In addition, October saw a small rash of strikes in an area as depressed as the West Midlands, with Lucas workers bringing Austin Rover's Longbridge plant to a halt, and Jaguar workers walking out unofficially (just after the launch of the new XJ6).

Of the events within the control of the government (at least to some degree) the rise in interest rates has damaged them the most.

Those with long memories might just recall how lower interest rates were a central objective of what they used to call monetarism. Getting them down was the main justification for cuts in government borrowing which, it was claimed, would release 'savings' for the private sector, feed an investment boom, and get the economy going again.

Interest rates in Britain are currently the highest in real terms (after taking into account inflation) of all the major industrial economies. That in turn hurts many of the Tories' traditional supporters—the upwardly mobile who've just doubled their mortgage, the small business trying to get big, the big business trying to stay alive, and many of those who've been borrowing like crazy to speculate on the stock exchange.

Yet Lawson had little choice. For the last few months the Tories have been desperately trying to engineer some sort of pre-election boom, or at least prevent the economy sliding even deeper into slump.

As the *Economist* commented recently, "The government's seemingly tough fiscal stance hides a big dose of reflation." This has been covered up by the receipts from privatisation. The public sector financial deficit, which excludes those receipts, has risen from £7.7 billion last year to £12 billion for 1986-7 (and will rise even further if, despite falling oil revenues, taxes are cut in the next budget).

In other words the government is busily pumping extra money into the economy (and allowing the banks to lend even more)

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as if the word monetarism had never existed. The big flaw in such a strategy was brutally exposed by the trade figures for the month of August which were in the red to the tune of £1,486 million.

Combine government 'reflation' with rising wages and salaries, and a consumer borrowing spree, and what you get is a rapid rise in imports. Combine that with falling North Sea Oil prices, and a manufacturing industry which still can't compete on world markets, and what you get is a record trade deficit. Add in a strong suspicion in the global money markets that Lawson is taking unhealthy (for them) risks with the economy in the run-up to the election, and what you get is a good old-fashioned run on the pound.

How do you stop a run on the pound? Well, for a while you can borrow four billion dollars from the international bankers, and jack up interest rates to try and persuade the multinationals and pension funds to keep their money in pounds rather than deutschmarks.

But in the end what you have to do is

what the last British Labour government did back in 1976 and what Hawke's Labour government in Australia has just done. You stop reflating, slash public spending, squeeze the money supply and lower wage levels in order to cut back the imports and increase the exports.

Maybe the Tories can hang on until the next election. But unless oil prices rise again (very unlikely) or there's a dramatic recovery in the world economy (equally unlikely) no British government will be able to escape that fate after the election. ■

### LABOUR'S POLICY 1

## The alternative team

THREE WEEKS before the Labour Party conference, Roy Hattersley spoke to a rather more important, and distinctly less credulous, audience. He was flown to New York at the expense of Greenwell Montagu, the investment management arm of the Midland bank, to meet a select group of American bankers and financiers.

Hattersley's speech went down reasonably well. He assured his audience that Labour would not return to "the very high marginal rates of taxation" which were levied on the rich before 1979. Nor would they reintroduce controls over the movement of capital. Their new approach was, he stressed:

"a demonstration that we accept the realities of the world in which we shall become the government of Britain and that we are already preparing to overcome some of the difficulties which previous Labour governments did not always anticipate."

What that means was spelt out in an interview he gave to the *Financial Times* back in February:

"Will we ever have the courage to say that this attempt to hold an industry has failed and we must therefore abandon it? I believe we will... We have learned that being tough on questions of this sort is essential for the economic survival of the country and the political survival of the Labour government. We cannot go back to the old days when we were weak-minded on these things—we can't do it on pay, we can't do it on investment, we can't do it on public spending."

It couldn't be clearer. Labour's leadership are putting themselves forward as an alternative management team for Great Britain Ltd. If the shareholders demand that a loss-making subsidiary (British Shipbuilders, what's left of the coal industry perhaps, or even British Steel) be closed, then it will be.

If the bankers put a stop on the overdraft facility then services will have to be cut. If workers get the mistaken idea that a Labour government means they should be better off, they'll have to be put firmly in their place.

Of course, they don't quite put it like that at Labour Party conferences. The delegates need to be fed with platitudes they can regurgitate on the doorsteps for the floating voter.

Labour will not abolish poverty. But they will care about the poor. They are not going to frighten capital away from the country, but they will encourage it to return with tax incentives.

They are not going to take over the high street banks, but they will insist that the City is more patriotic. They won't consider ending unemployment, but they will take one million off the dole queues by putting them onto makeshift training schemes for a year or so and providing low-paid jobs on community programmes. They will not repeal all of the Tories' anti-trade union laws, only some of them.

There are still one or two specific commitments for Labour to abandon if it wins the election. Even the technically sophisticated proposals for buying back shares in British Telecom are liable to prove too controversial. The *Financial Times* leader-writers are not too happy with the notion of a statutory minimum wage. Increasing pensions, as the Tories keep pointing out, is just far too expensive.

In a recent letter to the *Guardian*, Michael Meacher made it crystal clear that there was no possibility of any increases in pension levels, however measly, until economic resources allowed.

But for many Labour supporters none of this matters very much. They don't expect

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miracles. They don't even expect very much in the way of reforms any more. All they ask for is that Kinnock does a bit better than Thatcher—that the welfare state isn't cut back, that unemployment falls.

Can Labour succeed even by the unambitious standards they've set themselves?

Anyone who looks at the legacy of the last Labour government of 1974-9 (when unemployment doubled from 600,000 to almost 1½ million, and massive cuts were made in the building of new hospitals, houses and schools) might well be sceptical.

The record in the last five years of Mitterrand in France, Gonzalez in Spain, Papandreou in Greece, and Hawke in Australia (all of whom promised to make reducing unemployment a priority) and all of whom presided when in office over job cuts and austerity measures) should suffice to settle the matter.

But given the fact that Labour Party supporters, even on the left, tend to suffer from chronic amnesia, parochialism, and wishful thinking, its worth giving some space to the case that Labour economists are arguing.

Firstly, they stress, unemployment is higher in Britain than in any other European country except Spain and Portugal. Thatcherite policies have been unnecessarily deflationary and are responsible for at least a third of the increase in unemployment.

The CBI, the SDP, Tory wets and, according to one poll, 80 percent of academic economists, all believe that there is room for the government to borrow more and expand the economy.

Secondly, Hattersley and his advisors claim that they have learnt the lessons of Mitterrand's disastrous attempt to expand the French economy too quickly while launching a radical programme of nationalisation, increases in wages and cuts in the working week. They will proceed much more cautiously and avoid any radical measures which might upset investors, bankers or the multinationals.

Thirdly, they argue, only Labour can forge a partnership between government, industry and the unions. Labour would call a National Economic Summit in which the unions would commit themselves to voluntary wage restraint. Hattersley's denials that he would impose a "statutory incomes policy" rest on his assumption that he can get the cooperation of Edmonds, Todd and the rest of the TUC to do the job for him. In return industrialists would agree to a programme of increased investment.

Even if this scenario worked out as planned, the benefits would go to capital rather than labour. The increase in demand would be targeted at increasing investment and exports rather than consumption. Living standards would be held down in order to increase the profitability of British industry, and free resources for export. Increases in public spending would be focussed on capital projects to benefit the construction industry.

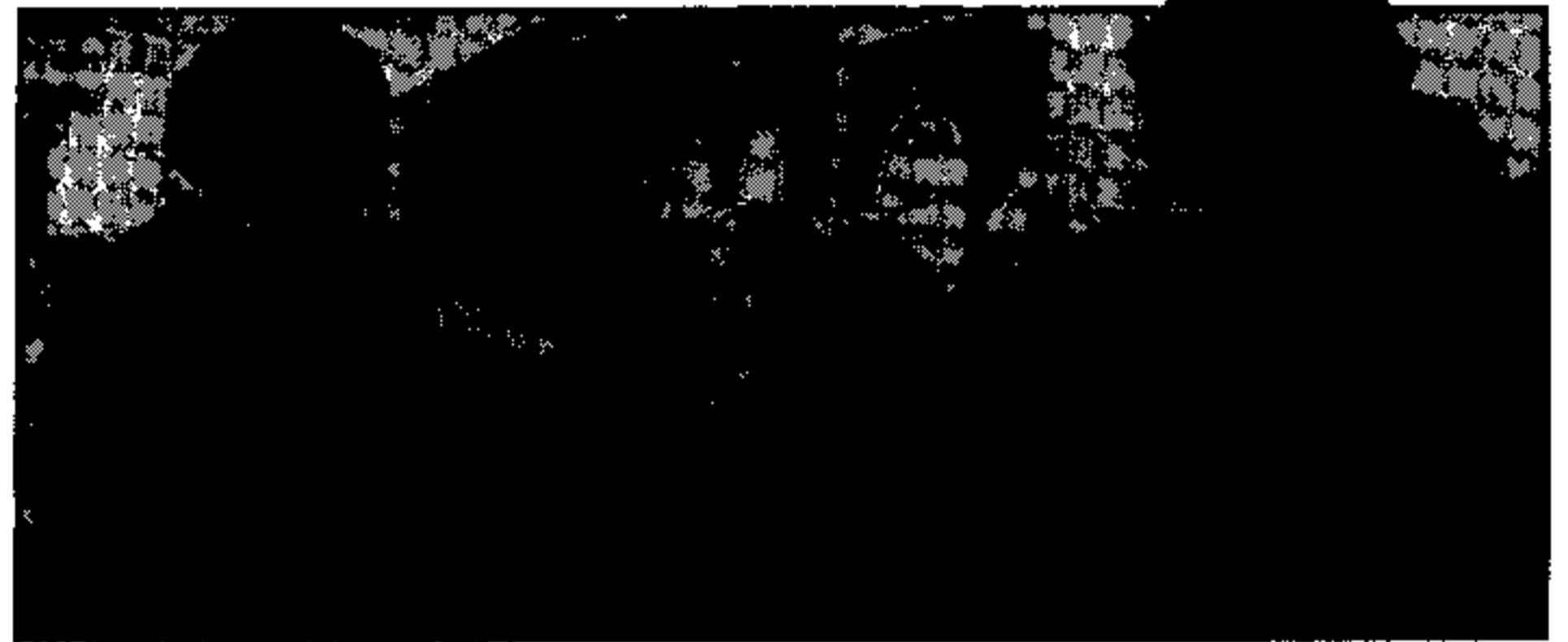
None of Hattersley's advisors seriously

expect even rapid growth in private industry to generate many more jobs. More investment will mean more labour-saving technology, more robots and automation along the lines of the new Nissan plant in the north-east.

If more jobs are created it will be along the lines already set out under the Tories. There will be more part-time jobs employing mainly women in the service sector. The Manpower Service Commission, which the last Labour government set up, will be expanded even further.

The best most of the unemployed can hope for is compulsory recruitment to a temporary scheme which employs them to clean the streets, whilst earning the statutory minimum wage of £80.

That is if the scenario worked out as



**Kinnock toasting the City**

planned. But the overwhelming probability is that it wouldn't. As the *Economist* put it last month:

"Whoever is Britain's prime minister after the next election will lead the country into a crunching economic crisis in the early 1990s, perhaps sooner."

As Cambridge economist Terry Ward, writing in the October edition of the Labour Party magazine *New Socialist*, admits:

"...Labour cannot plausibly promise to deliver high economic growth during its first term in office. Financial constraints, continuing European recession, declining North Sea oil income and the well-documented weakness of British industry, all combine to dim the prospects and to limit the extent to which borrowing can be increased to stimulate expansion.

"Constraints on growth could, in principle, be relaxed by British producers winning a larger share of European and world markets. But the chances of this happening in practice are remote. No country in Europe has succeeded in increasing market share enough to avoid recession during the past twelve years."

Ward if anything understates the difficulties. The global economy is heading into another serious downturn. The competitive pressures for shares of the market are increasing. The latest trade figures show that British based capital is losing out in that battle.

The British state is facing the prospect of declining oil revenues, growing budget

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deficits and the collapse of the pound even before the election. Not only are oil prices liable to remain depressed but North Sea production has already begun to decline from its peak levels.

The key question is not really whether Labour can provide growth, investment or jobs. It is whether as one of Hattersley's advisors put it in the *New Statesman* they can "keep the IMF at bay" and avoid the fate of the last Labour government in 1976. If they succeed in avoiding humiliation, however, it will only be because they've already done what the bankers will inevitably demand.

The likelihood is that the next Labour government, or Labour-Alliance coalition, will be even worse than the last. They will have to impose more cuts in public spending, higher interest rates, and severe cuts in the level of wages.

There are elements on the left of the Labour Party who are finally waking up to this prospect. But there are two problems with their response.

One is that their adherence to the Alternative Economic Strategy of Labour's programme in 1983 remains as unrealistic as most of the electorate believe it to be.

When Hattersley told Ian Mikardo at the Party conference that anyone with his "financial knowledge, expertise and experience would be able to find his way round the old exchange controls in 10 minutes flat" he was perfectly correct.

When Terry Ward in the article already quoted ends up saying that even if Labour cannot promote economic growth it should still give "the main priority" to "policies of redistribution, to ensure that obtainable

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income and available work are shared out far more equitably than at present, and that social objectives are not sacrificed to the pursuit of financial gain", one has to admire the sentiment. But to believe that any Labour chancellor could persuade the Treasury, the Bank of England, the City or the rest of British capital to cooperate in such an exercise is sheer fantasy.

The second problem with the response of even the Benns and Skinners is that they are still sitting on the same platform with Kinnock (Heffer, of course, paid the price for walking off) and are still giving a left face to the party which throughout its history has been employed to do the dirty work when British capitalism is in trouble. What's really needed is to prepare workers for the onslaughts that lie ahead—and that cannot be done in the ward meeting, council chamber or House of Commons. ■

### LABOUR'S POLICY 2

## Will they reach first base?

THE ONE bright spot apparently remaining amid the gloom of Labour's rightward moving conference was Kinnock's commitment to a non-nuclear defence policy and to getting rid of all the American nuclear bases in Britain.

That commitment is just about the only crumb of comfort for the Labour left. At least with this they can provide themselves with a justification that they still have some influence inside the party. Socialists outside the Labour Party, however, are entitled to a certain scepticism.

To start with, there is the pressure of pro-nuclear propaganda. Already, the Tories are milking every opportunity to turn Labour's policy to their electoral advantage. If they succeed in doing so, and

Labour suffers badly in the opinion polls as a result, Kinnock will undoubtedly back-track. That, after all, was what the 'inveterate peacemonger' and CND supporter Michael Foot did in the 1983 election.

Assuming, however, that Labour's commitment to getting rid of nuclear bases remains intact, what are its chances of implementation?

The record is not promising. Previous Labour administrations have done nothing to halt the nuclear menace—on the contrary, they have contributed to it.

The first Wilson government of 1964 to 1970 constructed the Polaris fleet. This went against its one and only specific election promise on the subject of nuclear weapons. And the 1974 to 1979 Labour government presided over the secret modernisation of Britain's submarine missiles to the tune of £100 million.

All this was in flat defiance of resolution after resolution at Labour Party conferences. The reason has less to do with the right wing nature of the prime ministers concerned than with the overall situation their governments found themselves in.

Both Wilson and Callaghan were squeezed by financial crisis and saw no alternative but to submit to the dictates of the world economic system. Therefore they were not in any position to pursue independent national policies—least of all on the central question of defence of the West—even if they had wanted to.

Now the crisis is much deeper and the pressure on the Labour leadership to pursue a 'sound' financial strategy is much greater. That is already evident even *before* Labour arrives in office. The US administration made threatening noises during the Labour Party conference. It can be relied upon to do rather more when Kinnock is presiding over the certain crises which will hit his government.

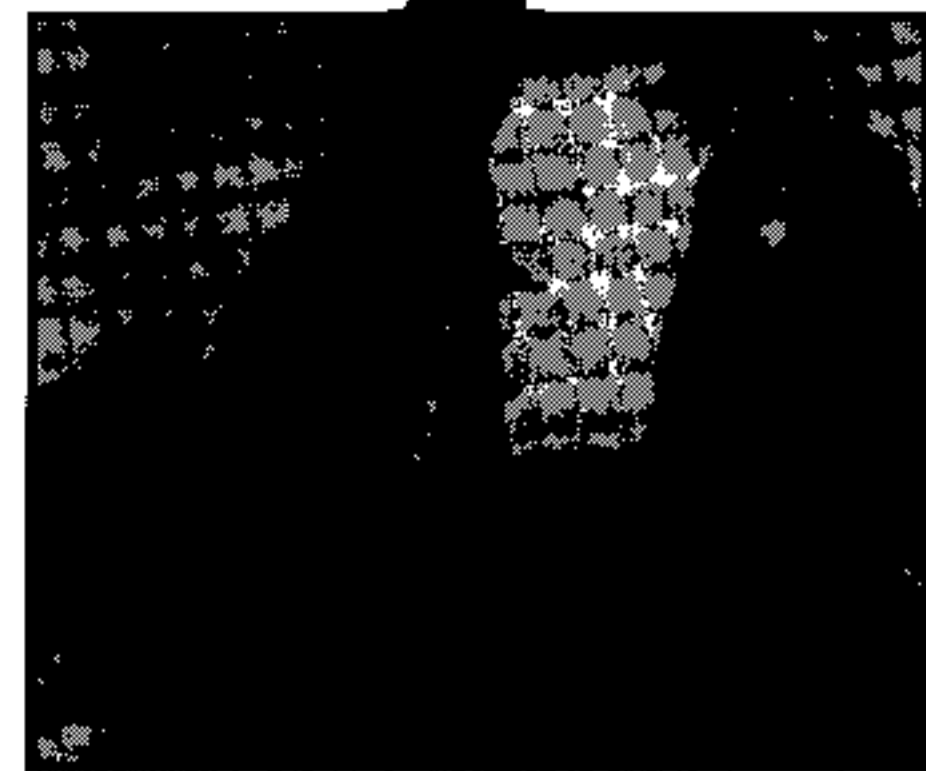
Kinnock has repudiated anything that smacks of socialism when it comes to social and economic policy. His remedies for the crisis will be equally right wing. It would be absurd to expect anything different when it is a question of facing up to American pressure.

However, all this presupposes that the only pressure will be external. Yet many examples from the past indicate that the chiefs of the *British* armed forces will refuse to let themselves be dictated to if they feel that the vital interests of their class are being sabotaged.

The fact that the government will be carrying out the mandate given it by the British people or by parliament is quite irrelevant.

Take, for instance, the Curragh incident of 1914. Independence for Ireland seemed imminent. As home rule got nearer, the Unionists in Belfast prepared to resist—by force of arms if necessary. Guns were smuggled illegally into Ulster, and the Unionist leaders made it clear that they would set up their own Ulster government, even in defiance of the decisions of the British parliament.

Faced with this threat, the Liberal



Will the missiles go?

government called on the officers at the Curragh camp to be ready for duty in Ulster should they be needed to quash resistance to the lawful authorities.

Immediately, some 57 officers tendered their resignations—and many more made it clear that they were ready to follow suit. This mutiny, which was supported by the overwhelming majority of the officers in the armed forces, was decisive. The Liberal government backed down, stating that it had no intention of coercing Ulster into home rule.

The government's surrender to the army showed that the state machine was not neutral, to be used by whatever political party happened to be in office, but the instrument of the vital interests of the ruling class.

It also showed that the British army chiefs had no scruples about respect for democratic niceties.

The second—and more relevant—example concerns the post-war Labour government. In 1947 a proposal to introduce an 18 month period of conscription (national service) was put before the House of Commons. A large backbench revolt took place. Seventy two Labour MPs voted against the proposal.

As a concession the government agreed to reduce the period of service to 12 months. The measure was to come into operation at the beginning of 1949. But with the Cold War getting worse, the army chiefs were having none of that.

In October 1948 they made their move. As Lord Montgomery, the 'hero' of El Alamein, and Chief of the Imperial General Staff, later recalled:

"I assembled the Military Members of the Army Council...and asked them if they were all prepared to resign in a body, led by me, if anything less than eighteen months National Service with the Colours was decided upon by the Government. They all agreed."

By November the government gave way. Later they even extended the period of service to two years.

Thus we see that even the mildest of measures founders on the rocks of army opposition. It is difficult to imagine it will be any different when it comes to more serious matters. Already, the top brass in the army, questioned during the Labour Party conference, have made it clear that the decision by a future Labour government to remove the American nuclear bases would meet with their resignations.

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If Attlee, with a massive parliamentary majority and popular support, backtracked on the length of nation service, Kinnock will certainly do the same about the bases. He has already and explicitly reaffirmed the Labour Party's commitment to NATO. So he will have no option but to respect the 'needs' of NATO defence as expressed by the chiefs of staff.

Once again, the reformist dream of legislating militarism out of existence is revealed for the utopian nonsense it is. ■

### SANCTIONS

## Ronnie gets it wrong

THE US Congress delivered Ronald Reagan his biggest foreign policy defeat last month when the Senate joined the House of Representatives in endorsing a package of sanctions against South Africa over Reagan's opposition.

For Congress it was a rare assertion of independence from Reagan's foreign policies—from Contra aid to the massive arms build up—which it had been more than happy to support since 1981. For Reagan the vote was a clear indication that on South Africa he is out of step with the majority of the US ruling class.

Congress approved the sanctions package in September, but Reagan 'vetoed' it, preventing it from becoming law. In explaining his action Reagan claimed that sanctions would hurt only black workers and that US companies play a positive role in weakening apartheid.

Reagan's statements were a capsule of his televised August anti-sanctions tirade in which he labelled the African National Congress "Soviet-armed" terrorists and the township struggles "tribal warfare".

Vetoed legislation becomes law if two-thirds of each congressional chamber—the Senate and the House of Representatives—votes to 'override' the president. Though overrides are rare, the subsequent congressional action underscored the isolation of Reagan and other right wing politicians like Senator Jesse Helms.

During the override debate, Helms, a segregationist from North Carolina, acted as a sort of ambassador for Pretoria, arranging phone conferences between senators and South African Foreign Minister Pik Botha.

But when the votes were counted, only 21 of 100 senators backed Reagan. A majority—including most of the senators from Reagan's Republican Party—voted for sanctions, joining the House of Representatives which had overridden Reagan, 313 to 83, days before.

"We must be on the side of history," declared Senator Richard Lugar, the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in casting his vote for sanctions. The vote opened the way "for the last non-violent option for change in South Africa," said Senator Paul Sarbanes, a Maryland Democrat.

What all this high-flown rhetoric meant was plain enough: most of the American ruling class had decided that its own rational self-interest dictated it discard a position that is as openly apologetic for Pretoria as Helms' and Reagan's. It wants to appear to pressure the South African government today so as to retain 'Western influence' tomorrow.

The Congress action followed the main approach of most Western governments' opposition to apartheid.

The sanctions themselves, though stronger in some senses than those the European Economic Community approved in August (stronger, most likely because the US is less dependent on South African exports than are some EEC countries), are riddled with loopholes.

The sanctions bar South African airline landing rights; embargo exports of coal, steel, iron, uranium, textiles and agricultural products; and ban any new investment in South Africa. However, they do not apply to the most significant US import from South Africa—gold. And they allow the president to void sanctions if they cut into 'strategic minerals' the American military might require.

The investment ban comes when new US investment in South Africa has slowed to a trickle. The *New York Times* estimated the sanctions would affect only 10 percent of US trade with South Africa.

Moreover, the sanctions package includes calls for the ANC to suspend "terrorist activities" and to commit itself to a "free" and "democratic" post-apartheid South Africa.

Nevertheless, the sanctions vote represented the repudiation of Reagan's "constructive engagement" policy which argues the progressive role of US capital and the effectiveness of "quiet diplomacy" in relations with Pretoria. But the slow pace of Botha's cosmetic reforms, the South African government's vicious repression and the rising struggle since 1984 have shot holes through Reagan's assertions.

The 'Sullivan Principles', the codes of corporate behaviour that supposedly guarantee non-racial employment practices in American-based firms in South Africa—a centrepiece of "constructive engagement"—are so discredited that their author, a conservative black minister, has threatened to renounce them if apartheid is not abolished by May 1987.

Ironically the vote came when US anti-apartheid activism has lost most of the energy it demonstrated in late 1984 and early 1985. Then several major US campuses erupted with student blockades and strikes calling for disinvestment of university holdings in apartheid. Hundreds picketed and sat in at South African consulates across the country.

Some US workers showed impressive, though highly fragmented, solidarity with South African workers. San Francisco Bay Area dockworkers blacked South African goods—until their union ordered them to unload ships. Unionised postal workers and non-unionised air freight delivery workers refused to cross student picket lines at the University of California at Berkeley during an April 1985 campus blockade. In some cases workers joined students in distributing anti-apartheid leaflets.

Today much of that activism seems to be spent. With the impressive exception of Berkeley activists—hundreds of whom waged a pitched battle last May with police in defending a mock shantytown—the movement seems almost to have disappeared.

At the same time, the Democrats have hijacked the sanctions issue as an anti-Reagan campaign plank for the upcoming November congressional elections. As a result, many of the same activists who were arrested at consulate sit-ins more than a year ago will be working to elect Democratic candidates this fall.

Much of the US left, abandoning as youthful folly the 'party building' days of the early 1970s, have encouraged the drift into the Democratic Party. Many activists, especially those attracted to the Rev Jesse Jackson's Rainbow Coalition, argue that such campaign work can gain a hearing for progressive issues (such as anti-apartheid politics) in the Democratic Party.

This is, of course, not the case. The Democrats are no less concerned about preserving Western influence in South Africa than are the Republicans.

But with sanctions now in place many US activists will be discussing the next step. For many that will be Jesse Jackson's or some other Democratic campaign. For others—albeit a much smaller number—it will mean discovering concrete ways of organising solidarity and not simply showing sympathy for the struggles of black workers in South Africa. ■

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*Additional notes by Pete Green, Gareth Jenkins and Lance Selfa.*

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NIGEL HARRIS

## Conqueror or conquered?

PRIME MINISTER Nakasone made some idiotic comments last month about how inferior the level of intelligence is in the United States because of America's black, Puerto Rican and Mexican inhabitants. It illustrates yet again, despite the fabulous material and technical advances of Japanese capitalism, the backwardness of Japan's ruling class.

Its racialism could get temporarily hysterical as Japan is drawn increasingly into the world system as the condition of the future power of its rulers; *kaikoku* (the internationalisation of Japan) is inevitable, despite all the kicking and screaming of Nakasone.

Integration is happening very quickly. The yen has increased in value remarkably—last October one US dollar purchased 214 yen, this May only 168. There has been mild panic in Tokyo as imports cheapen and exports grow increasingly expensive. Despite all the self-interested squeals of Western business, imports are growing.

And in the export trade Japan's power is being dented. One estimate has it that profits on Japanese exports are expected to decline by 30 percent this year.

Shipping and shipbuilding have been particularly hard hit—to the advantage of South Korea and other shipmakers in Newly Industrialising Countries. By August the estimated fall in the value of Japanese car exports to North America was put at £6.25 billions—or more than the combined profits of all Japanese car companies in 1985.

The problem is not simply the increase in Japanese export prices, but also the domestic effects of a rising yen. At the exchange rates of mid 1986 the wages of Japanese steel workers were approaching 20 dollars per hour (or about £13), or roughly the same as US levels (where the steel industry is crippled and contracting).

As a result Japanese companies are following their competitors overseas to find cheaper labour—and doing so when a high value yen makes it particularly cheap to buy or create assets outside Japan. In steel, Kawasaki is now importing a major part of its sales from its Brazilian affiliate and considering the closure of one of its two integrated steel works in Japan.

Matsushita's current plan aims to increase overseas production from 14 to 25 percent of its world output.

Sony aims to double its overseas production in three years.

For many other Japanese companies in electronic consumer goods the favoured locations are Korea and Malaysia, but utilising some components from the United States and France.

The front runners pull their suppliers with them. As Japanese vehicle producers expand output in the United States—US-based production of Japanese car companies is expected to reach 2 million vehicles in 1987, compared to US imports of Japan-manufactured cars of 2.3 million—Japanese component manufacturers are obliged to follow their buyers to the United States.

To compete with Japanese-made cars their US rivals are obliged to patronise the same component makers. Hitherto this has meant increased imports to the US, or it did before the yen began its steep climb. The value of imported car components in the United States increased from 480 million to 2.8 billion dollars between 1980 and 1985.

As US car companies have been busy developing joint ventures with their Japanese rivals, so the same links have been fostered with component makers—in companies like General Motors—NHK Spring, Delco Moraine etc.

The global spread of manufacturing capacity of Japanese capital and its increasing intermixture with non-Japanese capital is only a small part of the process of the internationalisation of Japanese capital.

Japan's rulers have an abundance of capital seeking profitable outlets in conditions where investment in Japan is becoming relatively unprofitable (at least in comparison with the past), and in conditions where the value of the yen makes capital exports cheap. This is the background to Japan emerging as the largest overseas investor in the world, and the largest lender to the United States.

Japanese banks are poised to overtake the value of assets of British banks in Britain, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange has become the third leg of the tripod of global finance: New York-London-Tokyo.

Yet all this hardly affects Japanese society itself. It can still be seen as Japan conquering the world and putting down the dirty foreigners—not as the world market conquering Japan.

The second process is coming in a different form—the tiny first indications of the internationalisation of the Japanese labour force. The big Japanese companies can shift production capacity abroad as the dollar value of Japanese wages rises, but the enormous mass of little companies, the sweated trades and dirty jobs cannot. You cannot clear Tokyo's garbage in Seoul or Kuala Lumpur.

Some of the first segments of the domestic labour market to be affected have been—as in the United States and Europe—restaurants, bars, construction

and farming. Barmaiding and prostitution are now said to be dominated by the *Japayuki-san* women from south east Asia. They enter Japan on short-stay visas provided by the underworld and then stay on at pittance wages. Japanese farmers—with their tiny farm plots—are legally importing Filipina girls to marry and set to the farm work Japanese women are no longer willing to undertake.

Illegal male workers, mainly from south east Asia but also from Pakistan and Sri Lanka, do the dirty jobs in restaurants (dish washing etc) and on building sites. Higher up the scale, doctors from Taiwan and South Korea are said to practise illegally. An unofficial estimate puts total illegal immigration at over 100,000 per year.

Thus, as happened in Europe in the 1960s, the pace of growth is drawing the more highly skilled Japanese worker into higher occupations, leaving sectors where conditions and wages are so poor there is an inadequate supply of native labour to man them.

The problem is made worse insofar as the Japanese birth rate is low and skill acquisition takes longer and longer.

In conditions of high growth a contracting available labour force could produce a wild labour scarcity and soaring wages—and still fail to man sectors of the economy except at prohibitive costs.

Thus internationalisation of the labour force could be the only way to prevent the Japanese working class "holding the country to ransom" and to ensure the continued world position of the Japanese ruling class.

Officially, the government is still committed to the defence of the "racial purity" of the Japanese, and forbids the admission of foreign workers.

But there are strong arguments within the ruling class calling for *kaikoku* as the condition for the survival and growth in power of the Japanese ruling class.

What is remarkable about the process is how fast it has come. What took decades in Europe and North America has arrived—like the startling economic transformation of Japan itself—with breathtaking speed. And the main direction is all to the good. Increasingly Japanese capital will lose its national specificity, becoming indistinguishable from a non-national global capital. That will assist the process of the integration of the Japanese working class into the world and weaken the appalling hold of nationalism on workers. Then Nakasone's ignorant blathering will be greeted in Japan with the derision it deserves. ■





# Which way for Labour's left?

*One of the most vocal opponents of Kinnock in the past year has been Labour MP Eric Heffer. At the recent conference he lost his seat on the NEC. Lindsey German talked to him about the Labour Party today and the future for socialists.*

**SWR:** This year's Labour Party conference was the most right wing for years. There was the massive vote for expulsions, yourself getting voted off the NEC. Why has the right wing shift occurred?

**EH:** Since 1983 there has been a feeling—particularly among the right wing and the so-called cuddly soft left—that no one can be critical of the leadership. We must all unite behind the leadership to win the next election. Anyone who puts their heads above the parapet is going to get it shot off. This is all because there is an illusion that you win elections through a softly-softly policy. There is a very real retreat from socialist ideas inside the Labour Party taking place today.

The party has to have a firm, clear commitment to the working class. It is this that is being undermined at the moment. But you don't win elections by pretending you're something you're not.

This is for two reasons. Firstly, your political enemies will say that as long as you have in your constitution Clause 4, you can't believe them. So you don't win anything by pretending or actually deciding to backtrack on your basic principles. The other thing is that you actually lose support from your own people, who want to see you coming forward with positive socialist ideas for change. And so you lose from both angles.

**SWR:** The Kinnockites would say this is what working class people want—they're not interested in revolution, they're not interested in the sort of socialism that you would argue for. How do you argue against that?

**EH:** Certainly the British working class as a whole are not looking for the immediate overthrow of the capitalist system. They will accept some changes in society, but have not yet understood the need for something more fundamental. But it is the responsibility of socialists to go out and make socialists, and convince the working class that it is their role to change—and that they'll never get the sort of changes they want unless they fight for socialism.

In any case at given moments of history, workers do respond. In 1945 there was a real revolutionary upsurge among the mass of working people. They demanded a fundamental change. And the interesting thing is, that at the end of that period, although Labour lost the election in 1951, it had the biggest vote of any party in history before or since. I take the view that if the proper leadership is given to workers in struggle they respond. If you back away from the struggle, then they become demoralised.

**SWR:** The left claim several major victories from the conference: defence, nuclear power, the minister for women. Isn't the left



*Eric Heffer signing copies of his new book at Labour Party conference*

being unrealistic? Do you think that any of those things are really going to happen?

**EH:** Firstly, the so-called gains of the left this year were not as clear or as powerful as last year. Within one year they were whittled down. Take nuclear energy. Certainly the NEC statement was better than the earlier one from the shadow cabinet. That was because Tony Benn and I put in a paper which was a very clear statement calling for the phasing out of all nuclear energy, as quickly as possible. This, together with the resolutions on a massive scale sent to conference by CLPs, forced the leadership to concede we had a case. But within the NEC statement there are areas which are grey to say the least—areas which, once a Labour government is in, all those who are opposed to phasing out will use.

The NUM resolution which was passed, unfortunately didn't get the two-thirds majority and was carried with the NEC

talking about clarifications on certain aspects. That means a Labour government will be talking about getting rid of nuclear power not even in say ten years—which is what the German social democrats clearly state. Labour are talking about decades and decades can go on and on.

On nuclear weapons: yes, they've still stood firm in saying we'll get rid of nuclear bases and nuclear weapons. In the past, we used to talk about also putting forward a policy which ultimately led to the ending of both NATO and Warsaw. We talked about working for detente which would roll back the frontiers of war in Europe, about getting all foreign troops out of Europe East and West, about a nuclear-free zone throughout Europe. This was a very positive policy.

I didn't hear that being said at this conference. I heard a lot about our great allies, the United States. The Labour Party is more tied to the Americans than ever be-



fore. Of course we were tied to them through Attlee and Wilson. But in the last few years there has been a very clear movement away from that type of close alliance.

Now we're tied in more than ever. I remember what happened in Greece and Spain. Papandreou argued they would get rid of the tie-up with America the day after the election. In Spain they talked about getting rid of the NATO bases. When it came down to it the Gonzalez government supported the continuation of the NATO bases with just a minor reduction of troops.

Who says that won't happen here? I hope not but it could.

What we've got to do is to pin the leadership down to what they've said and try and keep them to it. But whether they will keep to it, is a different matter.

**SWR:** The problem arises when you talk about pinning down the leaders. One of the interesting things in your book is where Callaghan refuses to put abolition of the House of Lords in the manifesto. You say that when it came to it, you were sitting in the committee and there was nothing you could do. You can't bust the thing wide open and have a huge fight.

**EH:** We couldn't at that stage. It was two in the morning, and we were in Downing Street. We could not have two elections, ie once for leader and the general election at the same time.

**SWR:** That's the sort of pressures that are put on people the closer they get to government.

**EH:** That's true. In any case, the executive now is being by-passed. The television launch of the new document *Investing in People*, the shadow cabinet were there, the NEC were not even involved. What's happening is that power is being moved slowly but surely—and not so slowly now—away from the NEC. Policy is being made as we go along.

**SWR:** What control is there over Kinnock? When you say we have to commit the leaders to certain policies, how can that be done?

**EH:** The position is worse now than it's ever been. We fought very hard to get the election of the leader by the involvement of all sections of the party. I say in my book it's a mixed blessing. The idea was to ensure that the party would have a socialist leader who was responsible to all sections of the party. That would be a great strength. It's worked the other way round. The fact that the leader and deputy leader are elected by the whole party and watering down policies puts them in a stronger position than ever before.

As long as they can maintain their support through the union block vote, plus the parliamentary party, the struggle for socialism is weakened and it has had the opposite effect to what was intended.

**SWR:** You have a very powerful leader and deputy leader, a shadow cabinet which is

accountable effectively only to them, or at best to the parliamentary party.

**EH:** Individual members are responsible to their constituencies. But the reselection process hasn't really had the effect it was intended to have.

**SWR:** What you're really saying is that all the changes of recent years in the party, which by and large the left fought for and welcomed, haven't resulted in a democratised party—or a party where the left can make the sort of gains they thought they could make.

**EH:** People turn to organisational changes when they find that politically things aren't going their way. They then try to control things by organisational changes. But that's an illusion. No one argued very much that the leader of the party didn't consult everybody in 1945, because the leadership were putting forward policies that everyone thought they could go out and fight for. It's only when things start going wrong, when socialist policies are ignored or watered down, that people think they need tighter control. It can have some effect, but not a lasting one. What's far more important is the political situation.

**SWR:** The Labour left has always been very weak in terms of taking account of what's happening in the class struggle. The movement around Benn was very much, we can win in parliament, we can win in the party as a whole, without asking, is there a corresponding level of struggle outside?

**EH:** It seems to me that because there was not such a struggle, that rise of the left was at a certain point bound to stop. It was bound to come up against the block vote.

**SWR:** I wouldn't entirely agree with you that it was divorced totally from the class struggle in the country. To some extent



what the parliamentary party do is a reflection of what happens outside. What happened in the miners' strike was that certainly some MPs wanted to reflect that struggle in parliament much more than they were able to do. The interesting thing is that during the Heath period the struggle was reflected in parliament—very much so.

Every battle was fought out on the floor of the House of Commons. Of course we were defeated, but the arguments were put, the struggle was reflected in parliament. With regard to the miners' strike the leadership were dampening down support for it all the time, because they didn't really believe in the strike.

**SWR:** The Heath period was when I came into politics and it strikes me that most people in my generation didn't look to the

Labour Party at all.

**EH:** In 1968 the Labour leadership was backing US policy in Vietnam. I marched in the great anti-Vietnam War demo and my Labour Party banner was probably one of the few. There I agree with you, but the other side of the coin is that a lot of those involved are now the backbone of the soft cuddly left who have made their peace with the right.

**SWR:** The point is that a revolutionary left was built outside the Labour Party. More importantly in the early seventies there were the struggles over Pentonville and the miners' strike. People could see the power of the working class in that period and Labour was much more irrelevant.

**EH:** You're only partly right. Of course the movement is important. It was the workers' movement which led to the calling of a 24-hour general strike. But I did meetings all over the country against Heath's Industrial Relations Bill. I'm not saying the class struggle is conducted in parliament, but it is reflected there. I travelled the country. There were big demonstrations called by the unions but supported by Labour, with people from our front bench.

I agree though it was mainly the movement of the workers themselves. Why you don't have that today is because of mass unemployment and working class defeats. We have to be realistic about these. You can't always resuscitate the exact same spirit and movement at a different time in history. The tide has gone out on us for a bit. It'll come back. I hope it comes back with a much clearer understanding among workers. That's up to us. We've got to make socialists in the meantime.

**SWR:** You now hear a lot of people on the left who talk as though there'll never be an upturn. It's nonsense. But what will happen if in the next few years we do see a rise in the level of class struggle—which is certainly possible, and I think likely.

**EH:** Even today look at this dispute at Sealink. I think it's marvellous—the first minor victory we've had for a long time. The workers themselves have said we've had enough. We've got some power and we're going to use what power we've got.

**SWR:** When that struggle does rise then all sorts of people now round Kinnock can move to the left. You look at the way the Labour Party's always gone.

The argument that we have with you is about the Labour Party, its electoralism and parliamentarism. When you have that move to the left workers will look to Labour and will be disillusioned because Labour can't deliver genuine socialism. Only the working class themselves can do that.

**EH:** Where I would disagree with the SWP is over the question of whether we as socialists think now is the time to build an alternative party outside of the Labour Party. That's the basic difference. I've been through that experience. I tried with Harry McShane to form the Socialist Workers Federation [in the 1950s]. We ended up as a small group outside of the mainstream. With all due respect—your paper's very good although sometimes you get it wrong—the SWP is outside of the



mainstream.

I'm not going to say that forever that socialists must use the same instrument. There may come a time when that changes. It won't come because we say we understand what is necessary better than everyone else. It will come when the circumstances are ripe and workers say, right this old instrument is no longer usable. We're not anywhere like that now. I still think we can build in the Labour Party. Okay, we've been clobbered. I know that better than anybody. But that doesn't mean the movement's dead or gone for all time.

I do think however, that the recent changes are very significant. If they continue the way they're going we've got to think very deeply because of the new disciplinary body. Now you have the charge that can be used against anybody of bringing the party into disrepute.

**SWR:** Are you saying that at a certain point you would be in favour of building another organisation outside the Labour Party, or are you saying that the party itself can be transformed into an instrument for revolutionary change?

**EH:** What I'm saying is that the Labour Party will not continue forever along the present lines. It can still be transformed into a party which can be the instrument for socialist change. That's still what I believe, but only time will tell. You argue against that, so does Ralph Miliband. It's a very serious argument but I don't actually agree with it at this time. I'll no doubt be called an old reformist by some comrades but I'll have to live with it.

**SWR:** The problem is every attempt by the left to transform the Labour Party has ended in failure.

**EH:** That's because of the character of the party. What's happening now unfortunately is that people are getting sick of the party. A number are leaving it. That happened during the Vietnam period. I still take the view that Labour at the moment represents the mass organisation of workers—because it's based on the unions. If not it would be a very different scene. The individual membership increased for a few years, but it's now going down again. Despite all the glossy image they're not recruiting.

**SWR:** When you say it's based on the unions you really mean the block vote. That's what is used as a heavy club at the moment by the right wing.

**EH:** It's our strength and our weakness.

**SWR:** But is it really ever the strength? I don't believe you can change the nature of the union bureaucracy virtually this side of the revolution. Because Labour is based on that, you can't change it. Therefore at some point if the left wants to keep its policies and is sincere, it will then have to split. You talk about us being outside the mainstream. But we have a more realistic assessment because we don't believe we're a mass party. I don't believe it is possible to control that block vote.

**EH:** The Labour left has to work harder than they've ever worked inside the unions. But I got a lot of support at the conference from individual union delegates.

**SWR:** Those people don't control the votes. It's the Ron Todds and the John Edmonds who do.

**EH:** Unfortunately it's going back to the old days where you could almost predict before conference opened what would happen.

**SWR:** A phrase you use in your book is "revolutionary reformism". What do you mean by it?

**EH:** We have to use the existing parliamentary system to get people into parliament and fight for the revolutionary concept of transforming society. The agenda is socialist revolution. But to get it we have to use all the instruments to hand, particularly in this country the parliamentary system. That doesn't mean to say it won't change. We have to use the reformist machinery to put forward the revolutionary idea. I do say that at a given stage that may not be possible. The forces of reaction will turn to anti-democratic



means to try and stop us. We mustn't shrink from using any power we've got to stop them.

The first thing in office anyway is to totally change the character of the armed forces, the powers of the state apparatus.

**SWR:** In your book you talked about the state in two ways. On the one hand you said that it was the instrument of class rule—the basic Marxist idea. You went on to quote Keir Hardie talking about the state as an "environment" that you can use.

**EH:** The state has many facets. It's not just a repressive machine. There are aspects of welfare which are positive. A socialist Labour government should firstly democratise the police and army. We have to do that very quickly indeed, giving those workers the right to join unions, to elect their officials, to have greater control over those who are put in positions of responsibility.

I have no illusions that this will be automatic. Many people will oppose it. They'll try to destabilise the economy. This is where the crunch will come. We have to transform the state totally. I would like to see the state disappear altogether, but that's not going to be simple.

**SWR:** The problem is there's the strength of the state on the one hand and the powerlessness of parliament on the other. Therefore you have to talk about real workers' power, about workers' councils instead of parliament.

**EH:** But parliament can change things. It would depend on the strength of people outside parliament to challenge

parliament.

**SWR:** Parliament can legislate for example, to get rid of the bomb. But as you've said, it is virtually meaningless unless you have a working class movement fighting. In which case why would you need parliament?

**EH:** You need parliament to say you're going to do these things and to mobilise people.

**SWR:** Why couldn't workers themselves say they want to get rid of it?

**EH:** Because they don't just like that! They vote for governments and they want governments to do things. If a government says we are going to get rid of the bomb and begins the process of doing so and then other people say we're not going to do it, you've got the authority of yourselves elected to do it. You can mobilise workers. They can mobilise themselves also of course. Both are part of the process.

I didn't know that the SWP rejected parliament to the extent that you do. You can't have a position where you've got a political machine and you say we're not going to participate in it.

**SWR:** That's not what I'm saying. When you look at what happens in every revolution parliament becomes more and more irrelevant.

**EH:** But its character will be changed.

Parliament changes because of the struggle of the people outside. When we have a socialist revolution part of that will be the change of parliament itself. It's bound to have elected representatives.

Rosa Luxemburg makes this point. She saw this more clearly than anybody else: you've got to have people elected into positions.

**SWR:** We're not against elections—it's what people get elected to. Luxemburg bears out everything we say about the need to smash the state before it smashes you.

The whole history of her life is tied up with the bankruptcy of the German Social Democratic Party which she had to break from in the end, the fact that she had to build an organisation which had no roots in parliament, which talked about building workers' councils.

**EH:** Yes, but she wasn't very happy about it. If they'd listened to her they wouldn't have done some of the things they did.

**SWR:** She was certainly in favour of operating totally outside of parliament at that point.

**EH:** Yes, but it was a totally different situation. The parliament we have today is not what we want in terms of a total socialist transformation, but it can help us considerably along that road providing we fight for and get a good socialist majority, determined to carry through its socialist programme. ■

*Eric Heffer's new book: Labour's Future—Socialist or SDP Mark 2 has been published recently by Verso £4.95.*

# Machel's sad legacy

"OUR COUNTRY will be the grave of capitalism and exploitation. There is no force capable of bringing down the People's Republic of Mozambique, from whatever quarter"—President Samora Machel, 25 June 1985, the anniversary of Mozambican independence.

An article written barely a day after Samora Machel's death can't settle whether the plane crash in which he perished was really an accident. What is certain is that the chief beneficiary will be the South African regime which had already brought the ruling Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO) to its knees.

The fact that news of Machel's death was first released in Lisbon, by the South African backed National Resistance Movement (MNR), is surely evidence of foul play.

We need not take the words of South African foreign minister Pik Botha, who mourned Machel as "a great leader of Africa" too seriously, even if they were sincerely meant.

Botha's department has been ignored in the past by the South African Defence Force (SADF), whose Department of Military Intelligence continued to arm and organise the MNR after Pretoria's support for the rebels was supposedly ended by the Nkomati pact of March 1984.

Whatever the truth about his death, Machel leaves Mozambique in desperate straits. Godwin Matatu, a journalist with close connections with the Zimbabwean regime, FRELIMO's most important ally, reported in the *Observer* the day before Machel's death that three thousand troops had been deployed to protect the capital, Maputo, from the MNR.

Matatu continued:

"While Machel tries to maintain a fort around Maputo, the writ of the government in the country's ten provinces is rapidly diminishing. According to military sources, the MNR has captured key towns in Tete and Zambezia and virtually controls the area north of the river Zambezi. Even Natola, eight miles from the centre of Maputo, is controlled by the rebels at night."

The economic situation is scarcely better. Gross national product is nearly 40 percent lower than in 1982. In a brutal escalation of their policy of destabilising neighbouring black ruled states, the apartheid regime announced on 8 October that it would repatriate the 58,000 Mozambicans working in the South African mines.

This move will cost Mozambique \$75 million a year, a third of the country's foreign earnings. For a country which has to import nearly half its food the result could be mass starvation.

It is tempting to explain the scene of devastation simply as a consequence of South African destabilisation. But the question remains: why has Pretoria been so successful?

The MNR began as a gang of black mercenaries in the Portuguese colonial army. They were used by the Rhodesian Central Intelligence Organisation in the war waged by the settler regime of Ian Smith against Zimbabwean freedom fighters based in Mozambique. After Zimbabwe became independent in 1980, the SADF took over the MNR. How is it that in six short years the rebels have reached the gates of Maputo?

In part the answer lies in the fact that FRELIMO, when it took power in 1974 after a ten year war against Portuguese colonial rule, inherited an economy that was in no sense a viable or independent entity.

In fact, Mozambique was three economies, each meeting the needs of a different set of exploiters. In the north peasant smallholders produced cash crops—for example, cotton for the Portuguese textile industry. The centre of the country was dominated by big plantations owned by foreign companies.

The south was primarily a labour reserve for South Africa's mines and farms. The ports of Maputo and Beira were built to service the more advanced South African and Rhodesian economies.

FRELIMO's problems were compounded by the transition to independence itself. The mass of Mozambique's 250,000 Portuguese settlers upped and left along with many of the more skilled blacks.

In the process they looted the economy. Boror, controlling one of the world's biggest palm plantations, simply loaded the

entire 1975 copra crop onto four ships and sailed away. FRELIMO therefore found itself presiding over an economy bereft of capital and skilled labour with three doctors and a population 97 percent of whom were illiterate.

Any regime would have faced enormous difficulties in coping with this situation, but it was the politics of FRELIMO which helped to ensure that the outcome was the present disaster.

FRELIMO is a revolutionary nationalist movement of the classic type. It had waged a guerilla war based primarily on the creation of 'liberated' zones among the northern peasantry, and took control of the more developed centre and south only after the collapse of Portuguese colonial rule following the revolution of 25 April 1974.

FRELIMO's aim was to develop an independent national economy. In any country this would have been utopian—in one as backward and dependent as Mozambique it was a recipe for catastrophe.

The strategy was justified in 'Marxist Leninist' terms, using the state capitalism of such much more developed countries as Russia and East Germany as a model. Only a Stalinist belief in the economic omnipotence of the state can explain such measures as the nationalisation of law, medicine, education and funeral services in July 1975.

This attack on petty capital could conceivably have been justified as an attempt to combat settler sabotage, but it undoubtedly helped rather to stimulate the flight of *retornados* to Portugal.

Worse was to come. The third Party Congress in 1977, inspired by 'Marxism Leninism', proclaimed heavy industry the "decisive factor" in Mozambique's development, while in agriculture big state farms were to be "dominant and determinant". FRELIMO's planners thought big. Their model was Cail, the Limpopo Agro-Industrial Complex, into which massive resources were flung.

The strategy was bound to fail.



The historic compromise? Machel and P W Botha



**FRELIMO's guerilla struggle was based primarily among the northern peasantry**

Mozambique's existing industrial base, the eighth largest in Africa at the time of independence, was heavily committed to processing raw materials for export. Exports (primarily agricultural products, prawns and coal) remained crucial to finance imported capital goods for industry and the state farms.

A world economy in which there is a glut of raw materials can largely take or leave Mozambique's exports. The new state farms proved disastrously inefficient. They also undermined the peasant agriculture which grows three quarters of the country's crops, and drove many rural people into the arms of the MNR.

As the failure of FRELIMO's neo-Stalinist economic policies became clear, Machel made various efforts to woo western capital. One came at the time of the Lancaster House conference in 1979 when Machel and his aide Fernando Honwana (killed in the same crash) forced the Zimbabwean liberation movements to accept a constitution which preserves foreign and settler control of the economy.

Machel afterwards was full of praise for the Tory government which convened the conference, calling Mrs Thatcher "the best British prime minister since Winston Churchill".

But western capital didn't bite. The influence of the MNR spread, aided by the terrible drought which gripped most of southern Africa in the first half of the 1980s.

A Zimbabwean soldier described to me how, in a battle with the MNR in 1982, three of the five FRELIMO units involved deserted to the rebel side and began firing on the Zimbabwean troops sent to aid Machel. The FRELIMO soldiers were in rags, unpaid, distinguished from peasants only by their guns.

The regime's response was greater repression and hierarchy. Having encouraged a degree of initiative from urban workers at the time of independence as a way of undermining settler power,

FRELIMO clamped down in 1979-80.

"Power is exercised by the manager," Machel declared. "It is the manager who decides." Military ranks were introduced in 1980 along with shoulder stripes and medals (of which Machel, to judge by his gold braided uniforms, got the lion's share).

As the situation deteriorated, so the measures became more brutal. In 1983 the death penalty and public floggings were introduced, and thousands of people who had fled the starving countryside were deported from the cities.

Comparisons with the old colonial *palmatorio* (corporal punishment) and with the South African pass laws were inevitable. Among the first executed and flogged for economic crimes were workers in the traditionally militant docks and railways.

Finally, in March 1984 Machel signed the Nkomati agreement with P W Botha, appropriately enough not far from where he was to die two and a half years later. Under the pact the ANC was expelled from Mozambique, and in exchange Botha promised to stop backing the MNR.

Machel hoped also to attract foreign capital to revive the shattered economy. Here he had a little success. The western banks agreed to reschedule Mozambique's debts, and there was some foreign investment—Lonrho, for example, agreed to take over part of Cail, which was effectively bankrupt.

Politically, however, Nkomati was a dead letter. The MNR carried on its war, backed both by *retornados* in Portugal and Brazil, and by at least sections of the SADF. As support for sanctions against South Africa grew, and as Pretoria became increasingly alienated even from the proponents of 'constructive engagement' in Washington and London, so Botha's reasons for observing the pact became fewer.

His decision to send back the miners, and a threatening speech two weeks ago by defence minister Magnus Malan were signs

that the apartheid regime was tightening the noose.

Whether or not FRELIMO survives his demise, Machel's legacy for Mozambican workers and peasants is a bitter one. The wider consequences of his failure could be even worse. Already in 1979-80 Mozambique's economic collapse after independence was used to justify Robert Mugabe's policy of 'reconciliation' with settler and foreign capital in Zimbabwe.

Today the ANC uses the Mozambican catastrophe to justify its refusal to link the struggle against apartheid to the struggle against capitalism. Joe Slovo, chairman of the South African Communist Party and a member of the ANC executive, recently accused advocates of a socialist revolution in South Africa of wanting to create a "Pol Pot economy". Rather than expropriate giant firms like Anglo American, Slovo would preserve a variant of the present "mixed economy".

The real lesson is a different one. FRELIMO's failure lies in its pursuit of *national* economic development. This could not succeed, especially given Mozambique's poverty and backwardness.

The result, internally, was growing class differentiation, the rise within the state apparatus of what even FRELIMO calls the "bureaucratic bourgeoisie", and increasing repression of the working class. Externally it led to the betrayal of the struggle elsewhere in the region, and Lancaster House and Nkomati.

Those fighting apartheid in South Africa should therefore not reject socialism, but recognise that their struggle can succeed only through a revolution which spreads throughout Africa, and then to the advanced capitalist countries further north.

Only one class can initiate such an international revolution—the black working class, concentrated in the factories and mines of South Africa. Only their conquest of power can end Mozambique's agony. ■

**Alex Callinicos**

# Blocking the bigots

THE FIRST time Joe tried to kill himself he was just 15. The next time he was 17. It was only after the suicide of his father and the discovery that he, too, had been gay that Joe began to accept his sexuality.

Joe is black, working class and lives in the London Borough of Haringey. It is stories like this that have inspired many socialists, lesbians and gay men in and around Haringey's Labour council to fight against the bigotry facing homosexuals.

In the 60s and early 70s the gay movement, growing alongside successful workers' struggles, began to challenge the idea that homosexuality was somehow 'unnatural' and therefore wrong. Songs, stickers and banners proudly proclaimed: "I'm glad to be gay".

Now the air is thick with poison: the witch hunt against gays because of AIDS; the witch hunt against Tatchell because of his homosexuality; the moral right's challenges to abortion, confidential contraception advice for under-16-year-olds, sex education and so on.

So when Labour made the issue prominent in the May local elections in Haringey, it was a positive and courageous move. When they set up a gay and lesbian unit and discussed introducing positive images of homosexuality into classrooms, it was the logical next step of their manifesto.

But when the scum rose to the surface and the council ignored it, all the weaknesses of reformist politics were exposed.

The reaction came in the form of a right wing local newspaper, five far right Tory councillors, and a growing group of hysterical parents.

Having failed to get much response from various racist 'outrage' campaigns, the gay and lesbian issue, beautifully combined as it was with the education of innocent little children, was too good a chance for the right to miss.

It could potentially gather support against the 'loony left' across class and race lines and, if unchallenged, strike a chord with a large section of the working class.

Immediately after the gay and lesbian unit was set up, the right wing paper launched a petitioning campaign. The Tory councillors joined in calling the unit a "bigger threat to family life than Nazi bombs", and a tiny group of parents, spearheaded by a Catholic mother, set up the Parents Rights Group (PRG).

The response from the council and the unit was deafening silence. Not one leaflet, not one meeting, not one public statement.

The only response on the streets, where the battle was necessarily to be fought, was from the local branch of the SWP, which broke up Tory petitioning sessions.

Only then did a handful of left Labour

and lesbian and gay activists set up a campaigning group called Positive Images.

When PRG threatened to burn the book *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* before a council meeting, a counter-demonstration was organised.

It shouted and outnumbered the right and was a positive demonstration of the strength of feeling. This kind of protest was, and is, important.

First, it visibly opposes the bigotry. Second, it puts pressure on the council to stick by its brave words—even if it means losing votes. And third, it galvanises and organises the section of the left and gay community that wants to fight on the issue.

The militancy of the demo brought predictable responses. It resurrected the arguments from Greenham Common which talked about peacefully winning over public opinion and ended up reaffirming the 'feminine' qualities of women. *Capital Gay*, for example, damned the "macho tactics" of the SWP.

Despite the council's frantic assurances that no changes have been made to sex education and that none will be made before next year and even then only after full consultation with parents, the right has gained support.

In early October two thirds of parents kept their children away from a school picketed by PRG, and PRG meetings are attracting 100-200. Beyond this active support there are many more sympathisers who, if the ground is left unchallenged, could well be mobilised.

They are being led by the Tories who, in their search for a popular anti-Labour issue, have seized the question of sex education and are unlikely to let it go.

In their recent conference it became the rallying call against Labour controlled councils and education authorities like the ILEA.

After joining in the general gay book bashing Education Secretary Kenneth Baker promised that control of sex education will be taken from teachers and local education authorities and given to individual schools' governing bodies, which are answerable to parents.

Combined with talk about giving parents the right to organise independent schools and the attempt to blame everything from crime to rape on deviations from 'normal' family life, it is clear that the right's offensive in Haringey is neither a one off nor is it likely to disappear.

For local Labour activists the temptation is to fight this with tokenistic campaigns.

It is a dangerous game. If the left is unwilling or unable to mobilise active support for these issues, then far from challenging the old prejudices it risks creating a backlash among those still waiting for a leaky roof to be mended. ■

Kerry Frome



This is what terrifies the Tories! A picture from *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin*



# Women, skills and work

**WOMEN** have usually been kept out of heavy skilled jobs. In the technical industries, including electronic engineering, there are 2.3 million employees—women are only a half million of these workers. Of these women over half are in low paid jobs and the rest are in unrewarding clerical jobs.

Women were not allowed to be members of the engineering union until 1943 and are still a tiny minority, 6 percent, of those studying engineering and technology in further education.

**CYNTHIA COCKBURN**, the author of two books on women and skilled work, *Brothers* and *The Machinery of Dominance*, says that: "We can't expect women to obtain power, to get even a fair deal, without men giving up some things."

**ANN ROGERS**, from the Socialist Workers Party, argues she is wrong: "Because Cynthia has a distinction between class analysis and sex gender, I think she loses sight of why women are stuck in the rotten, horrible jobs."

Here we reproduce the debate between Cynthia and Ann that took place at Marxism 86.



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## CYNTHIA COCKBURN

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I'M AN empirical researcher. I go around talking and listening to people about their work and what they think about it—in particular, their relations with the opposite sex in the context of work and training.

In Cardiff I saw an interesting project. On the first floor of a building that used to house a bra factory there is now a women's new technology training centre. It is a really nice place: brightly painted, coffee bars, reading area, and an under fives nursery which is one of the best-equipped I've ever seen.

All this is in addition to the main point of the place, which is the computers and electronic hardware on which women are being trained for skilled work. There are places for 25 children in the nursery and 56 women on the course, and the instructors are women.

On the ground floor of this same building there is a printing company. The men who work there were apparently very irritated when they heard that the bra factory was going to be converted into a training centre. They had been told it was intended specially for single mothers returning to work and bringing their children. And they said that these 'undesirables' would bring the area into bad repute. I think they did not like the idea of children associated with the workplace.

South Glamorgan Women's Workshop is one of about 20 women's training workshops that have been set up in the last two or three years. They mostly have financial support from the European Social Fund and help from local councils. But they are only short-life projects—without any security. They are continually over-subscribed by women wanting to get trained in modern technological skills in a supportive environment.

I want to explore why these workshops have come about. Why were they needed? Why are they so popular with women?

Women's earnings today, ten years after the Equal Pay Act, are on average less than three quarters those of men. If you take full time workers aged over 18, the gross hourly earnings of women are 74 per cent of those of men, and their gross weekly earnings are 66 per cent of those of men.

One of the main reasons that women and men get these unequal reward for their work is that for the great majority of cases, the work is quite different. So it hasn't been easy to compare what men do and what women do for the purposes of equal pay and there have been relatively few cases that have been able to be brought.

The work that women do can be summed up very simply. Of full-time workers, four out of every ten are clerical, two out of ten are in education, health and welfare, one and a half out of ten are in catering,

cleaning and sewing jobs. That leaves only two and a half out of ten which could be doing anything else—the huge range of other occupations that exist. In part-time work this clustering effect is worse. As many as nine out of ten are in those few kinds of work that I mentioned.

Male workers on the other hand are spread much more thinly over many kinds of occupations, and in the higher grades of most of them. This is not a new phenomenon.

One of the things that strikes you about this sexual division of labour is the place of technology in it. Technological skills are a kind of watershed. Men have a whole layer of jobs that involve technical know-how, and women are involved in jobs that don't involve technical know-how. Not all of men's jobs are technical, obviously, but

the women were working in this very technical industry had technical or management skills, whereas more than half the men did.

The same picture shows up in the figures for technical training. In engineering and technology further education courses in 1984, there were a mere 25,000 women enrolled as opposed to 414,000 men. Women were just six per cent. And they were only one per cent in the craft level of engineering.

How do we explain this absence, this quite remarkable distance of women from technology? It is very persistent over several modes of production, over several centuries, over several decades, and now, all those years after the Sex Discrimination legislation which technically opened up all kinds of work to women.



**Only 2.5 percent of women have managerial skills!**

when technological jobs exist it is almost universal that men do them.

Even where technological change has changed the pattern of jobs, when the dust settles there is one aspect of the old pattern which is continually reproduced and that is that men have the technically skilled jobs and women don't.

Looking at the figures for the most technical of industries, including electronic engineering, out of a total of 2.3 million employees, half a million were women. Quite a few. Nearly half of these, though, were in low-paid operator jobs. Almost all the remainder were in equally ill-rewarded clerical occupations. Only 2.5 percent of

The facts are several. First it has to do with employer demand. It is obvious that employers find it profitable to have their businesses staffed by a core workforce of relatively skilled and relatively favoured and steady employees, combined with a peripheral workforce of less skilled workers. These are often part-time or temporary, sometimes they are agency staff. They are in some kind of category that they can dispose of quickly when work slackens off, and then recruit again quickly when product markets pick up again.

As well as sheer money motives, of course, the employers gain by being able to divide and rule among their workforce.



They can keep the secondary workers at hand ready to undercut each other and more permanent workers, and technology comes into this because introducing new technology and scrapping old machinery and old skills often simplifies areas of work and opens it up to less skilled labour.

In Britain the core workers tend to be white and male. The peripheral workers tend to be black and/or female. And the question for us is, why women?

Here the second factor comes into play. Women come onto the labour market with certain peculiarities, life in the family has often developed in women some qualities that can be useful to an employer, for some kinds of jobs. Neatness and diligence and caring and the experience of having looked after little brothers and sisters, for instance, are examples of the types of skills women bring with them.

This often makes women a better bet for an employer than, for instance, young lads with whom they might be competing, because youngsters have a reputation for wildness.

Besides this, women come into the labour market with one hand tied behind them. We have domestic responsibilities that make us seek out part-time work, work that doesn't call for a lot of commitment for training or involve that much overtime, because we feel we couldn't sustain that because of the other commitments we have. So we have to sometimes drop in and out of work to deal with health and emotional crises in the family.

A recent survey showed that 73 per cent of women work only with women in their particular job and of their husbands, 80 percent work only with men in their particular job. There is men's work and there is women's work, and everybody knows which is which.

Some people would stop there and say that that is a complete explanation of why so few women have technical skills. But it seems to me there are more questions to be asked.

There are questions relating to this division of labour that the class analysis just does not get round to either asking or answering. And that is not surprising as the answers have not to do with class, but with gender. Specifically, they have to do with men.

Why do women spend so much of their working lives in the home? The reason why women's lives in paid employment are so patchy and inconsistent, the reason for women's absenteeism is men's absenteeism from work in the home. The question we ought to be asking is not why women can't, but how can men work a 50 hour week for 50 years at a stretch.

The answer is that even while they are hearty workers, men are looked after by women. Men seldom look after anyone else, they don't look after the elderly, they don't visit mental hospitals in nearly the numbers women do. This is a tremendous privilege for men. Whatever their class it makes them in their little way an elite. They are a little bit better off than somebody else. They are not right at the bottom of the

pile. And this is something men are unwilling to give up and one can understand why.

Secondly, why have trade unions for over 200 years—and this applies not only to craft unions but to better paid sections—not used their weight to get women out of the low-paid ghetto and end the sexual divisions and inequalities in the workforce? What lies behind this persistent commitment to maintaining pay differentials?

Quite simply, it is systematic, it is as old as the hills: male self interest. There are endless examples. Print unions at the turn of the century, for instance. Women wanted to work as compositors, employers wanted to employ them. Instead of bringing women into the union and fighting for equal pay and equal training, the men pulled up the drawbridge and fought the women off.

In engineering, women are only ad-

managers and some male trade unionists.

At the press conference which launched this report the flanneling and evasiveness of management were bad enough. But what was far worse was the response of the unions. Instead of welcoming this report as helpful to their women members, they went as cold as ice. They reacted as men in men's unions. Grey men fighting to the death to protect the old way of doing things. The men's way of keeping the railway a man's world. For a moment I was almost ashamed to be a trade unionist.

To deny what is going on is to deny the struggle of so many women within the trade unions, within the left. We have been saying this for years. We cannot put this down simply to capital and class. Men are



**A scene from the past: how much has changed?**

mitted as members of the AEU in 1942 over the dead bodies of skilled men, and after women had been working in the industry for over half a century.

And this is not water under the bridge and gone. A recently published report on the conditions of women in British Rail shows that in the railways, women are only 6½ percent of the 170,000 employees, even now. Out of 72,000 foot-plate workers, guards, signalmen and technicians, something like 100 are women.

The reason for the disadvantage of women on the railways is a kind of informal law, a sort of tacit agreement which has been struck over the years of familiar struggle between the management and the men. The aim has been to maintain the traditional pattern of recruitment and promotion.

Sons of railway men are favoured for the jobs, a strict seniority plan applies for promotion which can't help but penalise women who have career breaks to have children, while men carry on working and climb up the ladders.


This combines with a massive individual prejudice and distaste for women colleagues, a real misogyny among

transparently interested in being better earners than women, of having higher employment figures than women. They have always had these things and they will fight to maintain them.

A final question: why is it that so few women take maths and science subjects at school or apply for technical courses in further education or technical jobs?

People tend to assume that these are genuine free choices and that women really aren't interested. Listening to what women and girls say, I have concluded that the truth is different. Women and girls are not fools. They know what discomfort lies in wait for them if they try to fly in the face of gender rules and break into men's workplaces. Men defend their corner by fair means and foul. Women meet with hostility and harassment. To succeed in a man's world, women have to literally stand on their heads and do contortions.

Why should women bother on these terms? So most of them don't. Instead, a lot of women's energy is put into another very worthwhile struggle, and perhaps in some ways it is a more worthwhile one—getting women's own skills recognised and paid for.



And so finally, why women-only workshops? I think this is by now clear. They have been set up by women who have been active in the women's movement for those women who they know really are interested in technology. There are such women but many have been put off not by the difficulties inherent in the subject but by the difficulties of surviving socially in a

hostile male world. Remove the barbed wire and the barbed atmosphere, and women thrive. And in a space like that we have not just the chance to learn about technology, but to question technology.

Men's tendency to identify their masculinity with technical know-how has made them all too accepting of capital's and the state's priorities. Space shuttles and nuclear physics are much more enchanting than safe contraception and invalid carriages.

But women-only workshops can only

touch a tiny fraction of technology, and what we really have to have is change, change in the social relations at work, change in the social relations of technology and that is change in gender relations as well as in capital's relations.

We don't expect the working class to obtain power without the ruling class losing it. We can't expect women to obtain power (who wants, really wants, power anyway?) We can't expect women to even get a fair deal and some disposable fair time, without men giving up some of those things.

Men have something to gain too, of course. And arguably for us all it is more important that men learn women's jobs than women learn men's jobs. And my dream is that those printers downstairs in Cardiff might one day ask if they can bring their children to the day nursery and might even join in helping in the childcare scheme.

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## ANN ROGERS

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CYNTHIA AND I have one thing in common: we both believe that women are oppressed. One form this oppression takes is low pay, rotten jobs, sexism at work.

You've all heard the story about what happened to the woman who worked as one of the first women fire fighters in London, the way she was sexually harassed out of her job. No socialist could be anything but utterly disgusted by that sort of thing.

It is extremely important to ask why this happens, who gains from it, and how to change it. There is an area of agreement between Cynthia and I on this. We agree that the ruling class benefits from this situation.

Cynthia said at one point in one of her books that employers gain by operating in a segmented labour market where women are played off against men. This enables employers to keep everyone's wages down. Employers also gain from a working class weakened by rivalry.

We part company when she goes on to say for example that as individuals, men benefit from women devoting time and energy to maintaining the home and rearing their children.

Cynthia has spelt out that she holds two ideas. She holds the idea of the working class who are exploited at work and that ruling class exploitation actually divides people. She also holds the idea that men exist as a class. She calls this a class analysis, and sex gender analysis. She thinks you need two things to explain what actually goes on in the world.

I think that because she holds this sex gender analysis, she actually falls into all sorts of mistakes. So she will say that the institutions that organise men's power are right there in front of us: the same old newspaper firm, the same old printing chapel, the golf club in the leafy suburb.

Now can we really talk about all these



**Employers swap low paid women for high skilled men**

things as the same? I am sure if you went to a golf club in the leafy suburb, it is just as likely that you would find them discussing and plotting how to get the men in the chapel as to how they oppress women.

In Cynthia's book she contrasts the lives of men and women. She talks about women having 20 years at home raising the next generation of labour. She contrasts this with men being at work for 20 years.

That doesn't fit the reality of most women's lives in Britain or any of the other advanced capitalist countries. Sixty five per cent of women at any one time are in work. Most working class women will now work for most of their lives. The breaks they take to have children have become shorter and shorter.

Because Cynthia has a distinction between class analysis and sex gender, I think she loses sight of why women are stuck in the rotten horrible jobs.

It is not to fit in with men, it is to fit in with child care. There is a very simple fact which proves that. Married women without children are as likely to go to work as their husbands. There is no difference at all until those women begin to have children. That is what pushes them out of work, actually servicing children, not servicing men.

Then you'll find that after women have had children, they will begin to return to work. But they return to different sorts of work than before they got married. They begin to return to part-time work, to less skilled work. They begin to work the twilight shifts which we traditionally associate with women's employment.

This benefits capitalism tremendously—in two ways. One, they've got this pool of

cheap labour, this army of part-time women workers, that they can make massive profits from.

Secondly, though, they can continue to reproduce the next generation of labour in the privatised family. They don't have to provide decent nursery facilities. They don't have to provide the sort of state back-up which would be necessary if women were performing the same sort of fulltime jobs as men do.

There is another very important factor when we look at the pattern of women's employment. It's the time women are pulled into work. The great explosion of women's employment came after the Second World War. But at that time only certain sections of the economy expanded. They were what were commonly known as the service industries, and some sorts of light manufacturing. It was in these new and expanding industries that women found work.

Immigrant men were pulled into exactly the same sectors as women were after the war. It was because of the needs of capitalism, not because of any peculiarities related to sex.

One thing that characterises women's employment today is a massive de-skilling after they have children. It is not true that women never do skilled jobs. Many women have skills, which mean they have better money and a better time. Once they have had children, however, they have a hell of a job getting back into those sorts of jobs. For example, 42 per cent of nurses do not return to nursing after they have children. They return to a less skilled job because they can't get childcare.

Something like 19 per cent of teachers

find themselves in the same situation.

What this means is that those women's earning potential is fantastically hindered. If you look at women's earning, you will find they earn more before they have children than they ever earn again in their lives.

Does this give men advantages? I don't think it does. What does this loss of earning potential by women mean in the home?

First it means that working class families are poor. It also means a very large number of men work huge amounts of overtime. Men who have young children tend to work 50 hours a week. Something like 18 per cent of manual workers work over 50 hours a week. Their wives would if their wives earned the same amount of money as they did. It would improve working class men's lives if there were state nurseries. It would mean more money for the working class family, it would mean more leisure for both men and women.

At work, low pay is a threat to men because that pool of cheap labour is something that can constantly be used to make men look over their shoulder and worry about taking trade union action to defend their job.

This seems clear in the field of technical innovation, where employers sometimes make attempts to swap low-paid women for highly skilled men. They don't do that because they have any solidarity with women. They do it to further their own profits.

An example of this today is in the print industry. Behind what's happening at



**Women's work is massively deskilled**



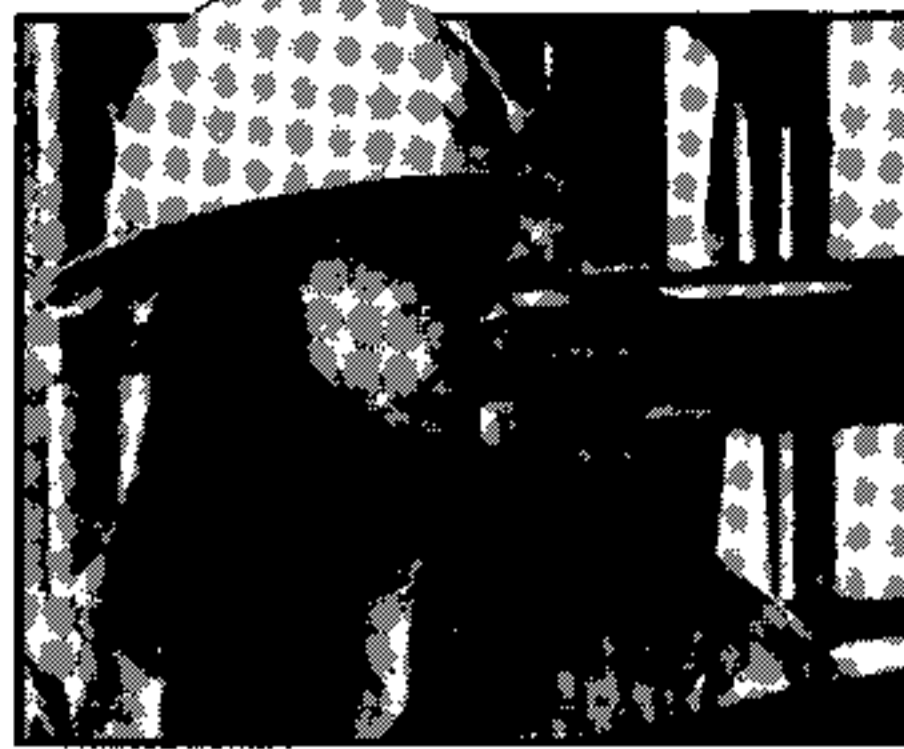
Wapping and what happened at Warrington are technological changes in the print industry.

Rupert Murdoch and Robert Maxwell would rather employ young girls to operate keyboards at £80 a week, than male compositors at £700 a week.

Have the struggles at Wapping gone wrong because of the sexism of the printers? I don't think this is true. The key thing taking the dispute in the wrong direction is a woman, Brenda Dean. When you analyse what is going on, you don't look at the sex of the printers or of Brenda Dean. You have to talk about the role of the trade union bureaucracy, or the role of Kinnock in ignoring struggle.

Because Cynthia holds a gender analysis as well as a class analysis, in the end the gender clouds the class.

She talks about software engineers, for example. She compares them to people like assembly workers. She quotes a personnel manager who works with software engineers. 'They have a lot of freedom. It is a creative, innovative job. It is not easy to control in comparison with the shop floor.



It is impossible to exercise the same sort of discipline.'

Does that really fit with most men's jobs? Does it fit with the man working on the line at Longbridge? Of course it doesn't. It probably does fit quite well with a woman journalist or with a woman doctor. Some middle class women have interesting jobs. So do some middle class men. Inside the working class there are differences between male and female employment. But all jobs are characterised by workers having very little control over what they do.

Cynthia says that women who work with men will suffer some degree, often a very high degree, of sexism at work.

Most people, for most of the time, accept the language of the ruling class. The ruling

class maintains its rule over society in two ways. They have force—smashing people up with the police and the army. And they have thought—deceiving people that this is the way things have always been and always will be. It is very important for the ruling class to convince the majority of the working class that the main division in society isn't one of class, but is something else.

Because of this, all sorts of reactionary, horrible and ultimately stupid ideas grow up and exist in the working class. Racist ideas: the ideas that the important thing is that you are British. Craftist ideas: the important thing is that you are a section one member of the AEU. Sexist ideas. They all fit in that pattern.

So all sorts of myths grow up among working class men. Some of them are just pure nonsense—women can't do technical jobs—there is something wrong with their brains. Others are forms of distorted truths. Women don't want this sort of job, women don't like doing this sort of work. The reason they don't like doing this sort of work is often that they know that come the time when they have children they will be pushed out of it, so there seems little point in taking that sort of job in the first place.

Capitalism conditions people to see things like this in gender terms, in race terms, rather than in class terms. Education, advertising, Page 3 of the Sun, a whole range of things are designed to perpetuate just that sort of ideology.

The key is: how do we change this? Given Cynthia's analysis, the answers she comes out with are extremely weak. Women-only workshops set up here and now. If you think about the Tory attacks, and what Kinnock plans or rather plans not to do, if and when he comes to power, really are we going to get those sorts of women's workshops? No.

Our solution is very different. On the surface it sounds much more difficult, but it is the only one which will work.

Sexism is in the interests of the ruling class and only the ruling class. When the ruling class is challenged on anything, those ideas begin to shift.

You could see that quite clearly in the miners' strike. Then all sorts of women's ideas about their role in society began to shift very, very quickly.

First women felt confident to go out and challenge all the ideas that they had been told. The second thing was that the miners realised very sharply that it wasn't in their interest to have their wives stuck at home being housewives, being passive. It was in their interest to have their wives out on the picket lines.

This change is not automatic. It means a political fight, and means actually explaining at every chance we get to any workers we can, that the divisions in the class only serve the ruling class, they don't serve us. You cannot do that if you believe men as a class benefit, have some sort of interest in having women discriminated against. You can do it if you believe that those divisions only serve the bosses. ■

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# Dictatorship & democracy

**M**ARX ONCE wrote to Engels: "All I know is that I am no Marxist." He was referring to the many distortions which his writing suffered at the hands of supposed admirers. If it was a problem during his lifetime, it is a hundred times worse today.

In the midst of all this distortion and confusion then it is necessary to retrieve the core of what Marx actually said and meant. A major aid to this process in recent years have been the two volumes entitled *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution* by the American Marxist, Hal Draper.

The two dealt with *State and Bureaucracy* and *The Politics of Social Classes*. Now Draper has brought out a third volume on *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.

The first thing that strikes you about these books is the sheer level of scholarship. Draper goes back wherever possible to original sources, finding out what Marx actually said, rather than what people hoped he'd say, or thought he should say.

He picks up on mistranslations and corrects them, and blows holes through the hand-me-down distortions—those which have lasted for so long or been repeated so many times that they become elevated to the level of fact.

Draper's ability to cut through this confusion is one of the outstanding features of his books.

The second thing that makes these volumes great reading is the style in which they are written.

Draper does not belong to that school of academic "Marxists" who use language which is incomprehensible to all but the enlightened few. He is not one to use five paragraphs where a sentence will do, or to use the most obscure word for a simple phrase.

Lastly Draper writes in a polemical style that hits its targets where it hurts. It's a style that is to the point and witty and is a pleasure to read.

The first two volumes have played an invaluable part in rescuing Marx's thought, and thankfully the third maintains the high standards of its fellows.

In this volume then Draper sets himself the task of rescuing the "dictatorship of the proletariat". This is important, not just to refute those who deliberately seek to mislead, but also because for the vast majority of people today the term dictatorship has nothing but unsavoury connotations.

Visions of Hitler, Stalin, military regimes or authoritarian rulers will come to mind for almost anyone if you ask them to describe dictatorship.

Draper starts by recognising this problem, and sets himself the task of tracing the origins of the term dictatorship.

**D**ICTATORSHIP is a concept that has taken on new meanings at different points in history. What was the common usage when Marx first coined "the dictatorship of the proletariat" in 1850?

To understand this it is necessary to go back to the roots of the word. Its origins lie in the Dictatura in ancient Rome.

The way in which this body operated tells us a lot. It had three main features.

Firstly it was a legal body. A special provision within Rome's constitution allowed for this one man dictatorship.

Secondly it was a temporary body, the maximum duration allowed for was six months—in practice it rarely lasted that long.

Thirdly although it could suspend existing laws it could not create new ones, and it did not control the purse strings.

The Roman Senate continually reviewed and restricted the powers of the Dictatura.

This system worked for three centuries before giving way to something more akin to modern dictatorship, in the form of first Caesar and then Augustus.

"Dictatorship" received various interpretations during the course of history. The next important stopping place for us lies in the great French Revolution of 1789.

Here the term was bandied about and used loosely. Sometimes it described the ambitions of one man (usually Robespierre by his right wing opponents). At others it was used to describe its exact opposite, so that for one opponent of the revolution, the act of insurrection where "society would soon be dissolved if the multitude, accustomed to blood and disorder, placed themselves above the magistrates and braved the authority of the law" was in itself a dictatorship. Various critics of the Commune of Paris, the most democratic form of rule to emerge during the revolution, described it as a dictatorship.

The next key point on Draper's route is the founders of the first organised socialist group,

**What does the dictatorship of the proletariat mean, how does it differ from the dictatorships we see in the world today, and does it mean the denial of democratic control? Pat Stack reviews a new book by Hal Draper which attempts to answer these questions.**



The proclamation of the Paris Commune 1871

the "conspiracy of equals". Babeuf was the movement's founder and leader. His writings, along with those of one of his ablest lieutenants, Buonarroti, were to act as a guide and inspiration to a whole generation of French Jacobin communists in the 1830s and 40s, and to the Chartists in England.

What then was the Babouvist formula?

First of all they believed that the existing government must be overthrown and a new and higher form of democracy must replace it. There remained one fundamental problem to be resolved—what form of power should be devised in the immediate aftermath of insurrection?

The Babouvists argued for a dictatorship not merely because of counter-revolution but also because of the backwardness of those on whose behalf the struggle was being fought.

Buonarroti argued:

"The experience(s) of the French Revolution...have it seems sufficiently shown that a people whose opinions have been formed under a regime of inequality and despotism is not well suited at the beginning of a regenerating revolution to designate the men charged with leading and consummating that revolution. This task can belong only to wise and courageous citizens..."

In other words: the masses aren't ready either to take power or use it wisely, so we, the enlightened minority, will have to do it for them. Draper describes this process as the Theory of Educational Dictatorship.

It is necessary to remember that these were the earliest days of the socialist movement, and that the potential role and strength of the working class was far from clear.

Nevertheless these ideas represented both an attempt to defend the revolution for a greater democracy of tomorrow, and an essentially elitist socialism from above.



The young Marx: was he a Blanquist?

The most prominent inheritor of Babeuf's formula was Auguste Blanqui. Blanqui was a committed French revolutionary who spent much of his life in jail.

He believed strongly in the need for conspiratorial secret societies. These would have to act on behalf of the masses. He believed that a dictatorial power would of necessity have to take charge immediately following the revolution.

He went on to argue:

"To be strong, to act quickly, the dictatorial power will have to be concentrated in as small a number of persons as possible."

This contrasts sharply with Marx's view of the self-emancipation of the working class.

Yet this didn't stop many from arguing that Marx's theory of dictatorship of the proletariat was a Blanquist deviation which had crept into Marx's thought.

Draper devotes a sizeable section of his book towards nailing this lie.

The accusation was first made by the arch-revisionist of the German SPD, Eduard Bernstein. It was a lie, but a lie that has been repeated by many since.

GDH Cole for example argued:

"Blanqui stated the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat much more clearly than Marx ever did."

Many others have made similar statements yet, as Draper shows, Blanqui did not state the doctrine more clearly than Marx for the very simple reason that he did not state it at all.

**B**LANQUI earned the respect of Marx as a self-sacrificing revolutionary who represented, however haphazardly, the revolutionary wing of the French movement. He did however polemicise sharply against those who sought through secret conspiracies and premature actions to provoke revolutionary struggle.

Dealing with some of his own erstwhile supporters whose political outlook had moved closer to that of Blanqui, Marx wrote:

"In place of the critical outlook the Minority substitutes a dogmatic one; in place of the Materialist, an idealist one. Instead of the actual conditions, 'pure will' becomes the drive-wheel of the revolution for them. Whereas we tell the workers: 'You have fifteen, twenty, fifty years of civil wars and people's struggles to go through, not only to change the conditions but in order to change yourselves and make yourselves fit for political rule,' you say on the contrary, 'We must come to power right away, or else we might as well go to sleep.'"

Marx condemns the notion of premature risings. He believes that the working class needs to go through a whole series of struggles and experiences in order to reach the point of revolution.

Secondly Marx is arguing that the working class must make 'itself' fit for political rule through its own struggle, a clear counterpoint to the idea that workers must be educated to rule only after the enlightened few have taken power.

There was a world of difference between Marx's concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the various forms of party or individual dictatorships put forward by others on the left at that time.

**W**HAT THEN was the kernel of Marx's theory? The term first appeared in Marx's *Class Struggle in France*. It appears at three different periods in the writing of Marx and Engels.

The first was in the period 1850-2 following the revolutionary upheavals in France and Germany in 1848. The second was between the years 1871-5 during and after the Paris Commune. Finally, after Marx's death, Engels again raised the question in the years 1890-1.

The timing of the first two is of particular importance. Marx was trying to deal with the questions, why had the revolutions failed, and how could workers both take power and hold it.

Dealing with the defeat of the French proletariat in June 1848 in *Class Struggle in France*, Marx argued that the workers went into the uprising with illusions in the bourgeois system's ability to grant reforms, but

"...only its defeat convinced it of the truth that the slightest improvement in its position remains a 'utopia within' the bourgeois republic, a utopia that becomes a crime as soon as it becomes a reality. In place of its demands, exuberant in form, but petty and even bourgeois still in content, the concession of which it wanted to wring from the February republic, there appeared the bold slogan of the revolutionary struggle, 'Overthrow the bourgeoisie! Dictatorship of the working class!'"

In fact there is no record of the slogan "dictatorship of the working class" appearing during the course of the struggle. But here Marx seems to be spelling out the only road which is open and available to the workers if the bourgeoisie are to be "overthrown".

The bourgeoisie will not hand over their power, and if they lose it they will strive to take it back.

If the revolution is to be safeguarded then coercive measures will have to be taken. The workers will have to establish their rule, their state, or to put it another way their "dictatorship". This is the precondition for the abolition of all classes and class society.

In a famous letter Marx explains this relationship. He makes the point that he did not discover classes or class struggles and goes on to say:

"What I did that was new was (1) to show that the 'existence of classes' is simply bound up with 'certain historical phases of the development of production'; (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the 'abolition of all classes' and to a 'classless society'."

So for Marx the dictatorship of the proletariat has a number of distinctive features. Firstly it is

temporary, a necessary transitional stage towards a classless society. Secondly, unlike the Babouvist/Blanquist variety of dictatorship, it is not something created from above by a minority, but is rule won by and held by the working class, a dictatorship from below.

It is certainly coercive but, unlike all previous forms of class rule and state structure, this one defends the interests of the vast majority against a small minority.

Marx outlines this point in some notes he wrote in response to attacks from the anarchist Bakunin (who incidentally had a view of dictatorship from above which was much more strident than even Blanqui's view).

"...as long as other classes especially the capitalist class still exist...the proletariat...must employ forcible means... [but] ...the proletariat, instead of struggling as individuals against the economically privileged classes, has gained enough strength and organisation to employ general means of coercion in the struggle against them."

Bakunin in his attack asks if all 40 million German workers will be members of the government. Marx's answer is succinct and to the point: "Certainly!"

But how?

In answering this we come to the last point of Marx's "dictatorship".

In common usage today the opposite of the term dictatorship is the term democracy. Yet Marx's schema has as its prerequisite a form of organisation of society that is far more democratic than anything that existed in his time, or indeed anything that exists anywhere in the world today.

Marx didn't lay out blueprints for socialism, but in the Paris Commune of 1871 he was able to glimpse, if only briefly, the form of democracy that a workers' state would take.

In *The Civil War in France* Marx outlines the characteristics of the Commune's rule: universal suffrage, the instant recall of those elected, all officials of the Commune paid workers wages, abolition of the standing army and police, all judges elected, and so on.

Quite simply, when you cut through all the distortions you find that, as Draper argues, the dictatorship of the proletariat does not mean some special reign of terror, taking on special coercive forms. It is simply another way of saying working class rule, another way of describing the "workers' state".

It is the prerequisite to classless society, and real freedom. It is finally (this side of the disappearance of classes) the most democratic organisation of society known to humanity.

Draper provides us with an invaluable restatement of these key points in a book that is a must for your bookshelves. But only put it there after you've read it. ■

**Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution; The Dictatorship of the Proletariat**

Hal Draper

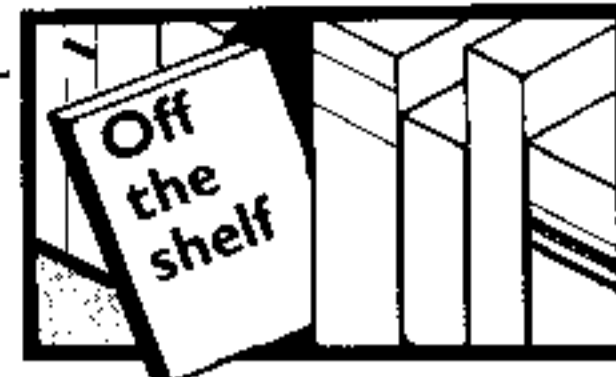
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Engels returned to the subject after Marx's death

# Our value, their money



## Wages, Price and Profit

Karl Marx

Foreign Languages Press, Peking 35p

SOME OF the ideas we face today are very old. In 1865, Marx tackled two arguments that still crop up with tedious regularity: the idea that strong groups of workers improve their pay only at the expense of weaker groups, and the idea that higher wages lead to higher prices and more unemployment. If these ideas were true, wages struggle would be both irrational and unjust.

The pamphlet *Wages, Price and Profit* is based on the notes of Marx's address to the General Council of the First International in June 1865.

After many years of reaction in Europe, during which Marx had concentrated on his economic studies, the early 1860s saw an increase in both economic and political struggle.

In this new climate the London Trades Council proposed an international gathering of workers' representatives. A congress in September 1864 formed the International Workingmen's Association (the 'First International').

This International was an amalgam of many tendencies. Marx was to spend the next period of his life fighting for political and theoretical clarity inside it. There were English trade union leaders (Marx's allies until they were frightened by a real revolution in Paris in 1870-71). There were French Proudhonists (muddled utopians), German Lassalleans (petty bourgeois 'socialists'), and Italian followers of the Republican Mazzini—who had been instructed to resist any declaration of opposition to the bourgeoisie!

There was also John Weston, a carpenter by trade, described as "an old Owenite whom everybody liked but whom most people found it difficult to listen to"! Weston had written the first draft of the IWA's Address—described by Marx as "full of the most extreme confusion".

Marx eventually overcame this problem by getting a sub-committee of the General Council to meet at his own house where he presented them with his own version. In Marx's final version of the address he stated, "The emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class themselves".

Weston, as a follower of Robert Owen, believed that workers' cooperation would win out because it was so much more rational. Weston did not support trade union organisation or wages struggles.

Weston addressed the General Council on his views in 1865. No copy of this address survives, but his arguments can be reconstructed.

He was almost certainly the author of a



**Fighting capitalism's fraud**

series of articles ("Sparks from the Workshop") published in the radical paper *The Beehive*.

In these articles he starts from his Owenite faith in reasonableness:

"When we discover an evil in a machine...we generally set our heads to work to devise a remedy or an improvement and seldom fail to accomplish our object; the task being entered on without prejudice...no one being blamed for the existence of evil, or interested in its continuance; and could we pursue the investigation of social or societarian evils...in the same calm and quiet frame of mind, our labours would, doubtless, be rewarded with similar results."

After this worthy beginning Weston embarks on his economic argument. As wage rises are followed by price increases then "the advance in wages, if confined to one particular section of the working classes, would be a clear gain to them, only it would be at the expense of other sections of workmen".

He argues "at the expense of" other workers because they must pay the increased prices without the benefit of any extra pay. He says that justice demands that the lowest paid "are first entitled to an

advance in wages".

But it is these worst paid who are least able to become organised. The benefits of wages struggle are restricted to an "aristocracy" of labour.

Anyone following the current development of the pay policy of the Labour Party will recognise these arguments as the bridge that will be used to move from 'fair wages' to pay restraint. Similar arguments were central to selling the idea of voluntary pay curbs during the Social Contract of the 1970s.

Weston continues that even if all workers *could* organise for increased wages, the general price rise of all goods would make this pointless. In fact it would be worse than pointless as the money available to employ workers would not go so far—less workers could be employed.

"Could employment at one half more wages be found for the same number of hands as are now employed...or would not the scarcity of money cause a similar scarcity of employment and throw thousands helplessly idle and unproductive...?"

Marx could not ignore these arguments. He wrote to Engels, "If these...propositions in which he alone in our society believes, were accepted, we should be



turned into a joke on account of the trade unions here and the infection of strikes which now prevails on the continent." Marx persuaded the General Council to let him give an opposing address—this became *Wages, Price and Profit*.

The pamphlet is not a very easy read. One major difficulty is that the first five sections are structured as a reply to Weston. They are therefore negative, being a thorough (sometimes painfully thorough) demolition job.

Only in the second half of *Wages, Price and Profit* does Marx put his own ideas. Even here there were problems. Marx wrote to Engels of the difficulty of getting his ideas across in the available time, "You can't compress a course of political economy into one hour." This compression means that some things get oversimplified.

It is therefore a good idea to read Pete Green's 'Education for Socialists' pamphlet, or Alex Callinicos's chapter 'Capitalism' in *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* before you try *Wages, Price and Profit*.

If Marx was worried about the problem of compressing his views, then compressing them still further would be absurd. However, I will try to highlight some of the features of Marx's argument.

Marx starts by cutting the ground from under Weston's feet. An assumption of Weston, and of many today who talk of "the national cake", is that the amount of national production is fixed. This, points out Marx, is clearly false.

Even if it were true, it does not follow that the total amount of real wages is fixed. If the proportion of national production going to real wages can vary, then one person's wage rise does not come from other workers. The workers' 'slice' can increase.

Let's look at what happens when wages rise. When workers win a wage rise they spend most of their extra money. This increases the demand for the goods they buy, and allows the capitalists producing these goods to raise their prices. Capitalists producing basics for workers have to pay more in wages, but they get more back from their increased prices.

But some capitalists, those who produce luxury goods, are not so lucky. They are paying out extra wages, but without an increase in demand they cannot raise their prices. (Marx insists that prices cannot simply be altered at the will of the capitalist.)

The profits of the luxury-producing capitalists will fall (because capitalists have less money to spend on luxuries).

The fall in demand for luxuries means that the prices of luxuries will go down—so the rate of profit of the luxury-producing capitalists falls still further.

These capitalists will tend to move into producing essentials where the rate of profit has held up. More essentials are produced, but with the increase in supply the price of essentials now falls. The rate of profit in the production of essentials falls to meet that in the production of luxuries. To

sum up, the effect of the wage rise can be a fall in the rate of profit.

This argument is at a very high level of abstraction—to see how it works out in the real world many other factors would need to be taken into account. But it demonstrates a simple point that we need to stress in opposition to wage restraint: *wage rises are won at the expense of the class enemy*.

At the root of Weston's ideas is a very old notion. This is the idea that the price of a commodity is made up of three elements—the wages that go to the worker, a profit mark-up for the capitalist and a mark-up for the landlord's rent. If this is the case then wages determine prices.

It is central to Marx's political economy



**Do low paid workers suffer if the better organised win?**

that the value of a commodity is *not* determined by wages. The commodity's value is determined by the amount of labour necessary to produce it. Now these may sound similar. Surely wages are just the reward for the labour used in producing the commodity?

The key to all of the value theory is that the *reward* for labour and *amount* of labour are quite distinct. Saying that there is the same amount of labour in 1 quarter of wheat and 1 ounce of gold (Marx's example) tells us nothing about the wages of the gold miner or of the agricultural labourer.

It appears to workers that when they go to work they sell their labour. In this view wages are the price they get for their labour. So the level of wages would be

determined by the value of labour sold. But there is no such thing as 'the value of labour'!

In fact workers sell not their *labour* but their *labour power*, their ability to work. Having sold their *ability* to work (labour power) the worker is then confronted by the capitalists' use of foremen and bonus schemes to translate that ability into actual labour.

Once the commodity, labour power, has been bought by the capitalist he gets the worker to labour, and this labour creates value. The amount of value in a commodity is determined by the amount of labour that was necessary to produce it.

This amount of labour (the 'socially necessary labour time') is represented by money when commodities are sold. The money paid as wages is exchanged for labour power. But the value represented by the wages does not need to be the same as the value created by the worker.

The incentive for a capitalist to employ workers is that they can create more value than the value returned to them as wages. The difference, which the capitalist pockets, is surplus value. Clearly the capitalist also needs to buy raw materials, machinery and so on, but this only passes on its value, it does not create value.

The idea that workers sell their labour (rather than their labour power) hides the creation of surplus value. If we imagine an employer spending £400 on raw materials, £100 on wages and selling the goods produced for £600, where does the £100 profit come from?

It appears to be a reward for the cleverness of selling at £600, or a reward for having the 'initiative' to organise the raw materials and the workers.

If we see that the value of the raw materials (£400) is combined with the value produced by the workers (£200) to produce the final value of £600, and that the workers got only half the value they produced back as wages, we can see that the capitalist is a thieving bastard!

Marx both defended wage struggles and also pointed to their limitations. He defended them because they can improve the lot of the worker. In wage struggles workers learn to fight, and this experience is essential in developing class consciousness. Marx could not be 'neutral' between the working class and its enemies. As he expressed it: "Trade unions work well as centres against the encroachment of capital."

The limitation is that trade unions operate inside capitalism. The exploitation of workers is not exposed by simple wage struggle. The fraud of the idea of 'a fair day's pay', the fraud of the expropriation of surplus value, remains unchallenged.

Trade unions "fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organised forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wages system." ■

Derek Howl

# The art of politics

A REVOLUTION is not simply about the transfer of economic power from one class in society to another. It also involves an upheaval in every area of life.

Nowhere was this more true than in the Russian Revolution of 1917. The revolution challenged all aspects of the old way of life—including artistic, literary and cultural areas.

The revolution and its inspiration threw up new artistic movements. Thousands of workers who had never thought they could write or paint or act became involved in those movements. Millions more found a new enthusiasm for a range of bourgeois 'high' culture—from ballet to fine art.

In the process of revolution too, large sections of the intelligentsia, including many artists, were pulled towards the ideas of Bolshevism.

Questions of art and culture were more than just interesting diversions, however. They also related to the question of the political direction of the revolution.

It was for this reason that Leon Trotsky, leader of the revolution, spent some time in 1923 writing the book *Literature and Revolution*, and engaged in various polemics on the subject.

There were two, sometimes apparently contradictory, strands to Trotsky's argument about art. He reinforced the general Marxist view of the relationship between a society and the art it produced. Culture, said Trotsky, was not independent. It did not depend on the expression of timeless truths, but on the given development of the society in which it was produced.

So for Trotsky the social content of art is crucial.

"The architectural scheme of the Cologne cathedral can be established by measuring the base and the height of its arches...but without knowing what a medieval city was like, what a guild was, or what was the Catholic Church of the Middle Ages, the Cologne cathedral will never be understood."

However, he also recognised that the relationship between society and art was not, and could not be, a crude or deterministic one. Art has a life of its own:

"One cannot always go by the principles of Marxism in deciding whether to reject or to accept a work of art. A work of art should, in the first place, be judged by its own law, that is, by the law of art."

Writing elsewhere, Trotsky says that art is the expression of a person's "need for those major benefits of which a society of classes has deprived him". So, he therefore argues, art is a product of class society but not necessarily its direct expression.

This gives us some understanding of why writers who certainly are not Marxists, and

who often have reactionary ideas, can appeal and be of use to socialists. Shakespeare can say something to us today not because he expresses 'universal truths' (as we are taught at school), but because he wrote in a world undergoing great change, where all the old values were in a state of flux.

The great 19th century novelist Tolstoy was reactionary in that he harked back to the values of the past. But he did so precisely because of the realistic way he was able to understand and portray the miserable oppression of the Russian peasantry.

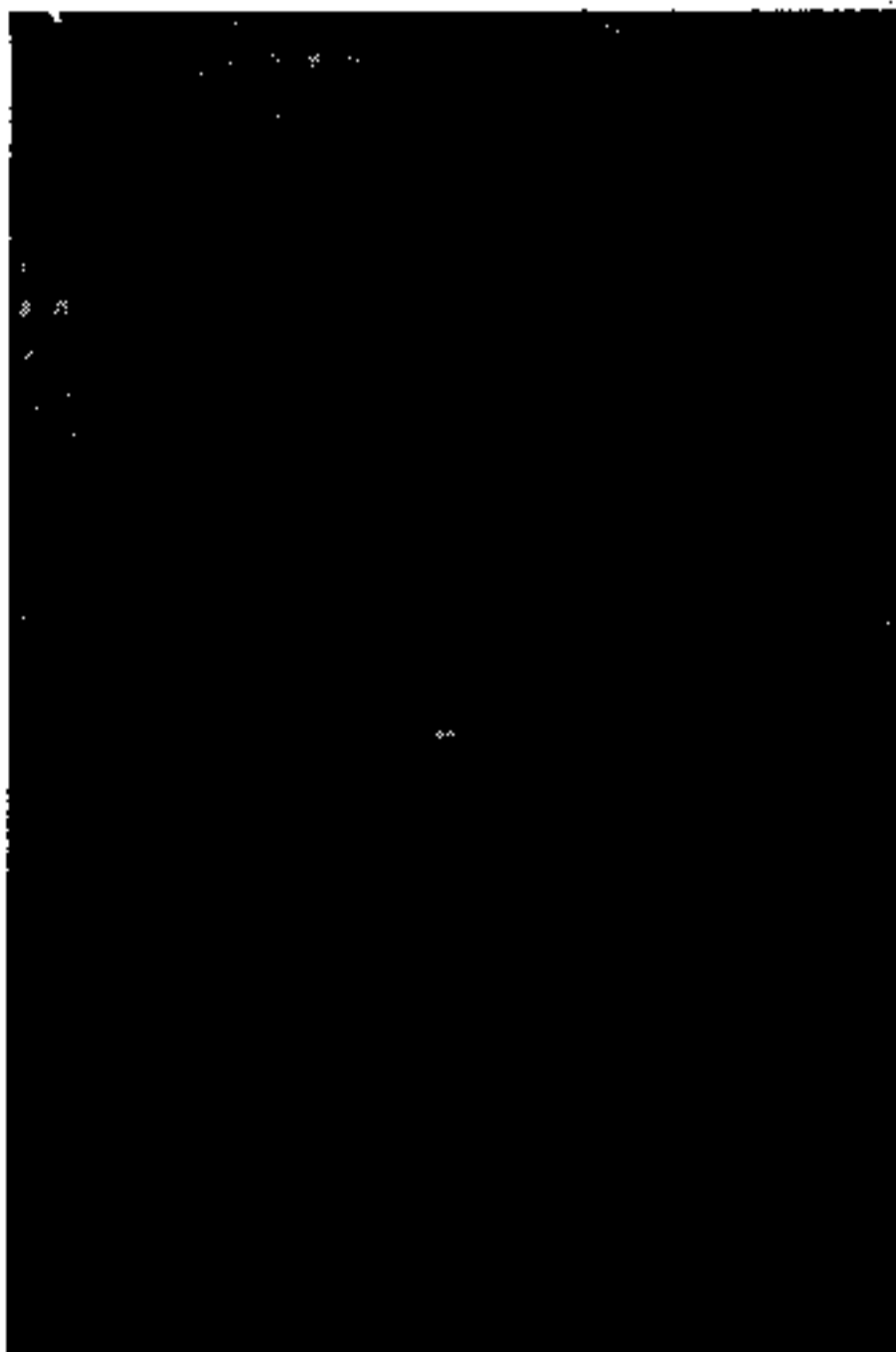
"Tolstoy did not know or show the way out of the hell of bourgeois culture. But with irresistible force he posed the question that only scientific socialism can answer."

Specifically, Trotsky criticised the concept of proletarian culture. This was the idea that just as the bourgeoisie developed its own culture, so the proletariat must.

On the face of it, this seemed an attractive argument. The proletariat had, after all, taken power. Why couldn't they create their own culture in the space of a few years as well?

Yet Trotsky argued very hard against any such idea. There is a major difference between the bourgeoisie as a ruling class and the proletariat.

Bourgeois culture was already fermenting inside feudal society, because the bourgeoisie itself was developing as a class inside feudal society. Even then, it took five centuries—from the Italian Renaissance to the great novels of the 19th century—for bourgeois culture to fully develop.



A painting of Leon Trotsky

## ART and the RUSSIAN revolution

The proletariat as a class doesn't even have the advantage that the bourgeoisie had. It cannot develop its culture inside capitalist society. It has to fight to overthrow that society first.

This is because:

"The proletariat was, and remains, a non-possessing class. This alone restricted it very much from acquiring those elements of bourgeois culture which have entered into the inventory of mankind forever."

The working class had to wait until it had destroyed capitalism in order to even begin to establish the dominance of its own ideas.

"The formless talk about proletarian culture...feeds on the extremely uncritical identification of the historic destinies of the proletariat with those of the bourgeoisie."

It is not possible for the proletariat to develop such a culture, Trotsky argues. In the years immediately following the revolution, the working class concentrates its energy on taking state power and on reinforcing that power.

But holding on to workers' power is an immense task in the early years following the revolution. This was particularly true in Russia, where the revolution took place not in conditions of advanced capitalism, but in a backward society dominated by the peasantry.

The major problems facing the revolution in its early years ranged from civil war and famine to the teaching of basic literacy skills to millions. Problems of developing proletarian culture were of necessity relegated to second place.

In any case, argues Trotsky, the job of the working class is to ensure that it secures for itself the material and spiritual heritage of the past in order to be able to lead humanity to a future without classes.

Its immediate aim is not to discard the whole of bourgeois culture. The working class has no chance to develop its own culture fully until such a time as it has virtually ceased to exist as a class.

This is because the proletariat, in taking state power and in fighting for a socialist society, heralds the end of a society based on classes, and therefore the eventual disappearance of itself as a class. This is why Trotsky stresses the difference between proletarian culture and genuine socialist art.

"The formation of a new culture which centres around a ruling class demands considerable time and reaches com-

pletion only at the period preceding the political decadence of that class."

In other words, genuinely 'socialist art' can only develop with the withering away of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the establishment of a socialist society.

It was for this reason above all that, in Trotsky's view, proletarian culture was a nonsense, let alone the idea that proletarian culture could be established after a few short years of workers' power.

He therefore regarded the supporters of proletarian culture as utopians, people who didn't look at the real difficulties and obstacles facing the attaining of socialism.

And because the proletariat could not develop their own culture, those who advocated it in fact were articulating the feelings and ideas of the *actual* working class. This led to a tendency towards philistinism, backwardness and anti-intellectualism.

Why were these arguments important? In the 1920s Trotsky saw the debate as one about how quickly socialism could be established. He believed that some artists who supported the ideas of proletarian culture made very interesting contributions, both in terms of their art and their ideas.

But he also believed that their ideas were voluntaristic. They thought that the working class could create its own conditions for self advancement, without any regard to its material and cultural conditions, or its historical level of development.

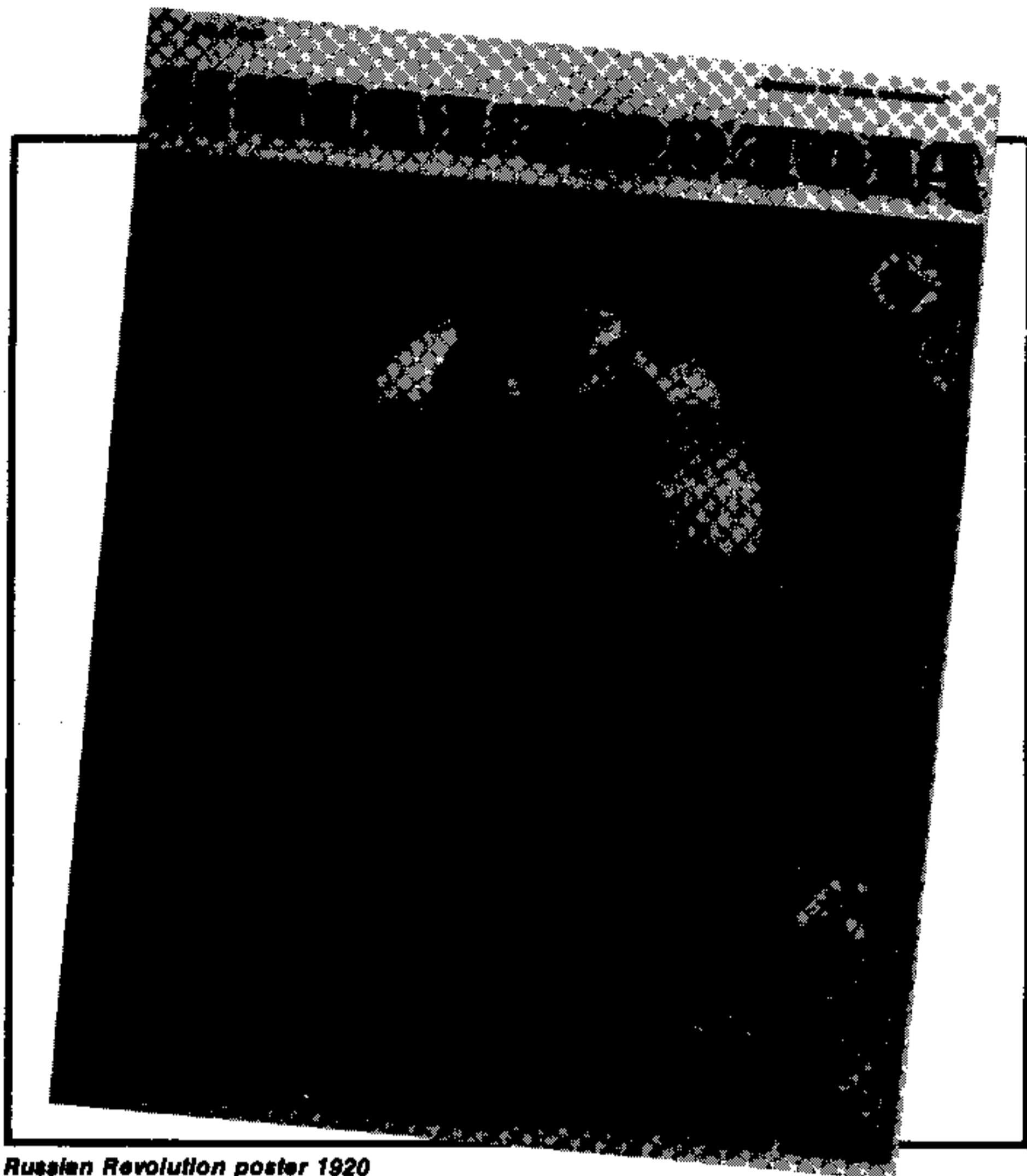
Much more pernicious, however, were the developments of the late 20s and early 30s. The idea of socialism in one country—which justified Stalin's forced industrialisation—was bitterly opposed by Trotsky.

In the field of literature the expression of this idea was the doctrine of 'socialist realism'.

The theory that art should be judged by how realistically it portrayed life was a well established one. It explained the great fondness Marx and Engels had for the writings of the French reactionary novelist Balzac. As Engels put it:

"Balzac was politically a legitimist; his great work is a constant elegy on the political decay of good society; his sympathies are with the class that is doomed to extinction. But his satire is never keener, his irony never more bitter, than when he sets in motion the very men and women with whom he sympathises most deeply—the nobles. That Balzac was thus compelled to go against his own class sympathies and political prejudices—that I consider one of the greatest triumphs of realism."

The theory of realism in art was grotesquely twisted under Stalin to produce the theory of socialist realism. The argument went that socialism had been established in Russia, so the art produced there could, by realistically depicting life, directly reflect the interests of that society. In fact this meant that art had to directly reflect the interests of the bureaucracy—a notion which stultified and destroyed any artistic talent which existed.



Russian Revolution poster 1920

Trotsky bitterly attacked this development.

"The current official ideology of 'proletarian literature' is based on a total lack of understanding of the *rhythms and periods of time* necessary for cultural maturation. The struggle for 'proletarian culture'—something on the order of the 'total collectivisation' of all humanity's gains within the span of a single five year plan—had at the beginning of the October Revolution the character of utopian idealism... In recent years it has become simply a system of bureaucratic command over art and a way of impoverishing it."

These lines were written in 1930, following the suicide of the poet Mayakovsky. Already the idea of officially sanctioned literature was widely accepted. Trotsky believed that this rigidity in the field of art could only destroy artists and the art they produced.

The voluntarism inspired by the hope of the revolution in the years after 1917 had given way to a voluntarism which insisted that art had to directly serve the Stalin regime in its task of building socialism in one country.

Everything, including art, was subjected to the drive to harness all spiritual forces to the goal of accumulation, and to the need to eliminate dissident views of Russian society.

This was a far cry from classic realism, or even the realism developed in the west in the 1930s by writers sympathetic to socialist ideas. The equivalents in Russia were writers who clashed violently with Stalinism, like Victor Serge.

Trotsky himself was the greatest victim of this process. But his writings on art and literature are some of the finest on the subject. He was able to steer a line between those who wanted a completely libertarian attitude to art and those who wanted art dominated by complete rigidity. He saw that art could serve the revolution, but artists could not produce by diktat.

Unlike many philistines, both in his lifetime and in the present day, Trotsky also saw the value of much of the culture of the ruling class. It could express the contradictions of society. It therefore could not be judged simply by its immediate message, but how it expressed a realistic view of society.

Even in a workers' state it could not be under direct political control if it was to flourish.

In the 1930s he wrote that "politics and literature constitute in essence the content of my personal life". To the end of his life he maintained a real love of and respect for revolutionary art, from the paintings of Diego Rivera to the novels of Ignácio Silone.

But he also recognised that genuine freedom for artists could only come with the freedom from constraint of capitalist society. He therefore understood the limitations on even the best or most revolutionary artists.

All his ideas are valuable in understanding the role of art and revolution today. ■  
Lindsey German

*This article is the first in a series on art and the Russian Revolution, based on a course at Marxism 86.*

# Striking against Suez



Workers protest against Suez

THE ANGLO-FRENCH invasion of Egypt in October 1956 was the last frantic but farcical attempt by Britain and France to assert themselves as major imperialist powers. In July 1956 the Egyptian government, led by nationalist Gamal Abdel Nasser, had nationalised the Suez Canal, built with the sweat and blood of Egyptians, but regarded by the European powers as their private property.

The invasion was launched in close co-operation with Israel, imperialism's main ally in the Middle East. But within a week, combined pressure from Russia and the USA brought the declining European powers to heel and a cease-fire was called.

The main inspiration behind the invasion came from French 'socialist' prime minister Guy Mollet, who saw the adventure as a second front in his bitter war to keep Algeria part of French territory. Nasser was suspected of aiding the Algerian nationalist forces.

Mollet was a prime hypocrite, who cited Marx and Engels in justification of his policy. The role of the British Labour Party, being in opposition to Anthony Eden's Tory government, was more complex.

The Labour leaders had little sympathy with Nasser. Gaitskell compared him with Hitler, while from the left Aneurin Bevan denounced him for "stirring the pot of nationalist passion". But as loyal supporters of NATO they were unhappy at Eden leading Britain into a war not backed by the USA.

When the invasion came Labour ran a campaign under the slogan 'Law Not War'. Gaitskell was apparently furious he had not been consulted. But as always the Labour leaders insisted that everything should be kept within strictly legal and par-

liamentary channels.

The National Council of Labour issued a statement urging the British people to "refrain from taking industrial action as a means of influencing national policy in the present crisis".

On 1 November the chairman of the TUC, Sir Thomas Williamson, declared: "We will not countenance unofficial industrial action, and we call on all trade unionists to oppose it."

The fact that such warnings were repeated shows that there was some pressure in the Labour movement for direct action. One group of people who voted with their feet were the reservists, recalled to fight the war. When the troopship *Asturias* sailed from Southampton on 28 October, 381 out of 1,295 reservists failed to turn up.

The *Daily Herald* reported that "the War Office was too shocked to hush it up", and claimed that it was "the longest absentee list in army history".

Military absenteeism was too hot a potato for the Labour leaders to handle. But demands for strike action were nearly as bad.

The first call for "all steps (not excluding a general strike)" came from the Socialist Medical Association. In itself this posed little threat, but the idea soon spread.

On 1 November a meeting of tally clerks in the Royal group of docks called on the TGWU executive to call a token one-day strike against the war. The bureaucracy sent Tim O'Leary, National Dock Group Secretary, to tell workers:

"Many of your colleagues are in the Middle East. Don't let them come back and say, 'We were short of tanks—we were short of food.' If you don't keep them supplied they will die quicker."

Within the next few days the strike calls spread. The executive of the Fire Brigades Union urged the TUC to call a general strike to make Eden resign. The Sheffield District Committee of the Amalgamated Engineering Union called for a total stoppage of the engineering industry.

On 3 November the *Daily Worker* reported a whole string of calls for industrial action—the Paisley districts of the AEU, workers at Firth Brown and Shardlows Sheffield, Sutton Trades Council, maintenance men at a Salford bus depot, and many more.

By 6 November the list had been joined by Selby Trades Council, Sheffield painters, Merseyside woodworkers, Lewisham electricians and others. A one-day strike of Afro-Asian students throughout Britain was called.

A delegate conference of South Wales miners rejected industrial action after a four-and-a-half hour debate. Dagenham Labour Party also took up the call for strike action.

In fact the only strike action that actually took place was at Crawley in Sussex. (If any *SWR* reader knows of other strikes I would be interested to hear from them.) At 3pm on 6 November hundreds of workers at the APV and Edwards factories on the Manor Royal estate walked out to join an anti-war demonstration. They were joined by a contingent of building workers. The demonstration was limited in size—the organisers alleged intimidation by employers—but it showed the potential that was there.

The cease-fire came almost immediately after the Crawley strike, so there was no time for the example to be taken up. Had the war gone on longer there might have been more token stoppages. Certainly it would be wrong to overstate the impact of workers' actions. It undoubtedly made little or no impact on the course of events.

As always it is difficult to know how representative were the meetings which issued calls for action. Most groups of workers confined themselves to asking the TUC to give a lead rather than taking the riskier, but more desirable, path of giving a lead and seeing who would follow.

While the right wing aimed to stamp on any direct action, the Labour left kept very quiet on the issue. The Communist Party put its weight behind calls for industrial action but was obviously seriously distracted by its own internal upheavals resulting from the events in Hungary.

But this page from our history is worth remembering. Though the actual achievements were modest, it is clear that the working class was not carried away by a wave of jingoism.

Those who wanted to oppose the war were able to organise and win support for their ideas. If even a section of the Labour left had given a clear lead, the results could have been much more impressive.

Proletarian internationalism is not a utopia or a meaningless abstraction. It can and must be fought for in the movement. ■

Ian Birchall

# Saving the system

**Bailing Out the System: Reformist Socialism in Western Europe 1944-1985**

Ian Birchall  
*Bookmarks*

"Between 1945 and 1985 social-democrats were in power—alone or in coalition—at some time in virtually every country in Western Europe... This book has been written to illustrate both the resilience and the ultimately reactionary role of social-democracy..."

This is an excellent book and it could not have appeared at a better time. It rightly concentrates on Britain, France, Italy and West Germany but brings out the highlights of developments in practically every other European country outside the Russian bloc.

My only criticism on this score is that rather more on the Scandinavian countries would have been useful.

The years 1944-5 and immediately afterwards saw a great resurgence of the social democratic parties (and of the Communist Parties as well) as a result of a massive radicalisation of the European working classes.

There was a pattern. Left wing rhetoric—often *very* left wing rhetoric—and actual policies designed to restore capitalist 'normality' as soon as possible.

The British story is probably the best known to readers of this *Review* so little need be said about it. I cannot however resist citing one of the many superbly apposite quotations from the book. It is Dennis Healey speaking at the Labour Party conference in 1945:

"The crucial principle of our foreign policy should be to protect, assist, encourage and aid in every way that socialist revolution wherever it appears."

Social democrats were in government in most of the countries at this time, typically in coalitions which also included the Communist Parties.

In France the Socialist and Communist Parties together had an absolute majority in both votes and seats in the Constituent Assembly elections in 1945. They formed a coalition with a new (and supposedly left) Catholic party, the MRP.

This government rapidly restored the bourgeois state machine (largely shattered during the liberation), presided over an austerity regime in France, mounted a massive repression in Algeria (where there was a nationalist revolt) and sent troops to recover the French colony of Vietnam.

All this was accompanied by a cloud of left phrases (and fairly extensive nationalisation measures as in Britain). Here is Guy Mollet, general secretary of the French

Socialist Party (then called SFIO) speaking at the party congress of 1946:

"We must condemn all attempts at revisionism, notably those which are inspired by a false humanism, the real meaning of which is to disguise the fundamental reality of the class struggle. It is this weakening of Marxist thought in the party which has led it to neglect the essential tasks of organisation, propaganda and penetration into the masses..."

The "neglect" referred to means the party leaders' fear of being marginalised by the bigger and better organised French CP—which was pursuing exactly the same policies. But all this was soon to change.

The Second World War was, of course, an imperialist war for the redivision of the world. And the victors soon fell out.

The United States stepped up its drive to dominate Europe, east and west, with the Marshall Plan and NATO. The USSR countered with the Cominform and the Warsaw Pact. The Cold War got underway.

The social democrats swung into the American column. Naturally, the British Labour Party (then in government) was in the vanguard of the cold warriors, developing the first British nuclear weapons and taking Britain into NATO. But most of the others soon caught up. They had an important role to play.

As Birchall says: "They could influence many who would be impervious to straightforward red-baiting." And they did, moving rapidly to the right in the process.

Talk about 'socialist revolution' or 'Marxism' was out now. The CP were thrown out of various governments in or around 1947 and moved left within limits.

The Cold War was enormously important. It polarised the European working class movements into pro-Moscow and pro-Washington camps. US-sponsored breakaways were created (with the help of the British TUC) in a number of national union federations—most importantly in France and Italy.

Those who stood for the principled internationalist position—neither Washington nor Moscow—like our forerunner, the *Socialist Review* group, became extremely isolated.

Above all, reactionary ideas became dominant—ideas more reactionary indeed than the social democratic leaders had anticipated.

"By the early fifties the social democratic parties had done their job for capitalism and could be cast aside. The next decade was a period of right wing domination: in Britain the Tories ruled for thirteen years from 1951; in



**Healey, rescuing British capitalism?**

West Germany the Christian Democrats won the highest share of the poll at five successive elections...in Italy Christian Democrats dominated the government and in France no SFIO minister served in a government between 1951 and 1956.

Leaving aside the special case of Sweden and some smaller countries...it was a bleak period for reformists."

They survived. For the arms-fuelled long boom of the fifties and sixties pretty well excluded the development of a serious organised threat from the left for a long time.

The slowly developing crisis of Stalinism weakened their CP rivals (except in the Italian case where the PCI succeeded in becoming the dominant reformist party). And the gradual but inexorable return of crises in the capitalist economy meant that there was an essential function for social democracy.

Ian Birchall puts it very clearly:

"The bankruptcy of Stalinism left social democracy with the fundamental task of mediating between labour and capital... Social democratic parties, created by the working class but wholly committed to the existing order, are the best possible organisations [for this]... This does not mean, of course, that the ruling class sees social democrats as the ideal party of government... What suits the bourgeoisie is a system that keeps the social democrats in reserve as an alternative solution."

In the last 15 or so years social democrats have been in government, at various times, in Britain, Ireland, France, West Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland.

Even Italy, where they are now very weak, currently has a 'socialist' prime minister. And here in Britain, comrade Kinnock is waiting in the wings to rescue British capitalism yet again if the Tories flounder.

This book is essential reading for today's revolutionary socialists. It is very easy reading too, and its concluding section, 'Co-opting the Left', could not be more relevant to our immediate situation. ■

**Duncan Hallas**

## The shadow that remains

Marxists in Face of Fascism

David Beetham

Manchester University Press £9.95

WHEN THE crooked cross cast its shadow across Germany in 1933 it marked the most massive defeat for the international working class. How was it that the biggest and best-organised working class movement in the world could go down to defeat with hardly a fight?

David Beetham's book draws together a series of articles and extracts from political leaders and theorists on the left during the inter-war years. They reflect the various strands of thinking on fascism current at the time. Many of the fifty or so extracts have previously been unavailable in English.

In his useful introduction Beetham brings out a number of implications from the work presented. He shows how the levels of analysis reached by Communist leaders like Clara Zetkin, Gramsci and Togliatti about the Italian experience were later lost from Comintern analyses. This was most notably through the disastrous application of the Comintern's ultra-left 'Third Period' policies by the German Communist Party, the KPD.

Clara Zetkin characterised fascism as the punishment meted out to the working class due to its failure to take the revolutionary road. For Zetkin, the bourgeoisie was on the offensive and the working class on the defensive. Fascism, a mass, semi-autonomous terror movement based on the petty-bourgeoisie, was used and encouraged by sections of the bourgeoisie to smash workers' organisations in a period of severe crisis. It follows that the working class was in a *defensive* situation.

But the Comintern and the KPD came to precisely the opposite conclusion during the Third Period (1928-34). They argued that the working class was actually in an *offensive* situation and so everything was to be subordinated to the rapid building of the party and the exposure of the social democrats as class traitors. The need was to split the presently reformist workers from their leaders and this required the 'united front from below'—social democratic leaders were castigated as 'social fascists' and regarded as the main obstacle to socialism.

There were Marxists and Social Democrats who reached the right conclusions about the necessary strategy for the left. But they were either already expelled and exiled from the Comintern parties, or they reached their conclusions after defeat. In each case they no longer commanded the influence and the forces able to shift the policies of the mass

workers' organisations or the Comintern in time.

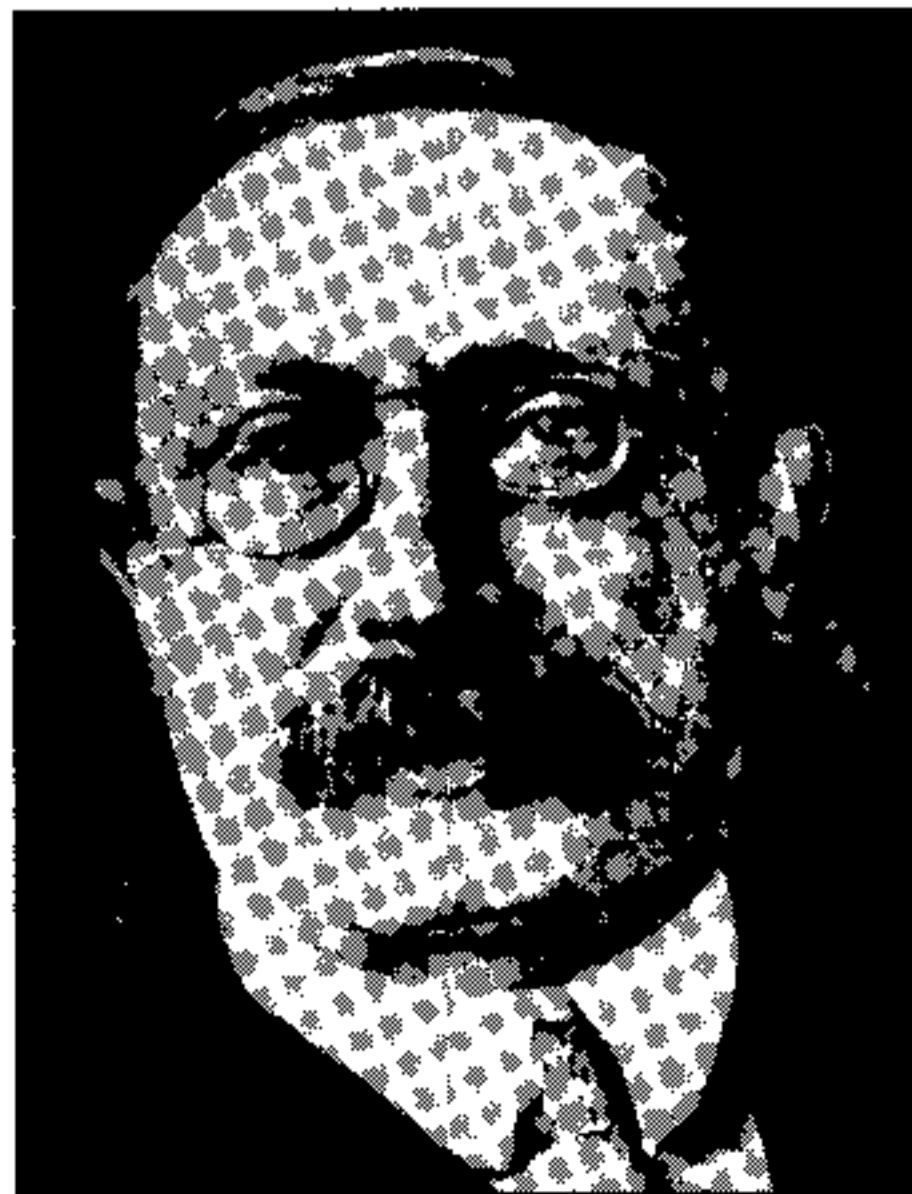
Yet at the heart of such problems was the degeneration of the Comintern itself, from an international revolutionary socialist nerve centre into an arm of Russian foreign policy. It was argued that fascism could only triumph in the more 'backward' economies: the idea that Germany, an advanced, modern state, could go fascist was unthinkable. Such complacent errors were compounded rather than corrected after the Nazi victory by the Comintern's belief about the inevitability of fascism's collapse due to its internal contradictions. It also led to Popular Frontism.

The lessons from all this are well illustrated by Beetham, but I think there are some shortcomings in his introduction.

By his own admission, for example, he uses a very broad criterion of 'Marxist'. There are extracts included from a number of people (Stalin, Léon Blum of the French Socialist Party, Karl Kautsky, Rudolf Hilferding and others) who we as revolutionary Marxists in the tradition of Lenin and Trotsky would definitely want to prefix with either 'so-called' or 'ex-'.

More seriously, perhaps, are Beetham's final points in which he thinks it 'improbable that a fascist movement could come to power in present-day circumstances'. His reasons are, firstly, that the petty-bourgeoisie, the mass base for fascism, are "not available for mobilisation behind a fascist movement to the same degree as previously". His second reason relates to the deeper implantation of parliamentary democracies since the inter-war period. In my opinion, neither of these reasons is sufficient to justify his conclusion.

There are millions of non-unionised, self-employed people and small businessmen in Britain. Such sectors provided much of the social base for the Nazi Party. Secondly, given a sufficiently severe economic and political crisis it is by no means inconceivable that desperate sections of the



Leon Blum: a Marxist?

bourgeoisie, frightened by the long-term potential power of the workers' organisations, would give support to a fascist movement. And it is not a question of 'all or nothing' with fascism: a fascist movement, even though too weak to take power, can shift the balance of forces strongly against workers and their organisations.

All of which is a recipe for vigilance, study and building the socialist alternative rather than concessions to pessimism on the one hand and complacency on the other. Fascist organisations in Britain are very weak, though we need only look to France to recognise the threat inherent in mass disillusionment with reformism in power.

In that context David Beetham's book is well worth more than a passing glance. ■  
Howard Miles

## When forces defied theory

Russia 1905-07: Revolution as a Moment of Truth

Teodor Shanin

Macmillan £9.95

EVERY GREAT revolution changes the map of the world. For it always contains much that is *new*. The 1905-7 revolution was more than a rehearsal for 1917: that metaphor suggests merely practicing a given role. 1905-7 occasioned enormous revisions in Marxist theory and practice.

Why? Because the 1905-7 experience did not conform to the evolutionist theory of stages into which Marxism had become perverted. Real social forces refused to play the parts allotted to them by theory. The workers invented the Soviet, a form of proletarian rule in a *backward* country. The bourgeoisie refused to play a progressive role. The peasantry demonstrated enormous independent revolutionary capacity. Russia turned out less capitalist than all the Marxists had supposed, and more ripe for socialism too!

This is Shanin's subject-matter. He is less interesting on the workers than on the peasantry. But never mind: his two large chapters on peasant movements, organisation and consciousness in revolutionary Russia are brilliant and thrilling. Shanin helped me understand, as never before, why Lenin, almost alone among the Bolsheviks, wanted to participate in the Duma alongside the peasant delegates, and why he fundamentally revised the Bolshevik agrarian programme.

The latter part of the book asks, who learned what from 1905-7? Some, including Mensheviks, Kadets, nobility, learning nothing, proved irrelevant. Others learned, and transformed their practice. One such

was the brutal Stolypin, the Tsar's minister, whose programme for reconstruction of Russia from above was defeated by the conservative stupidity of the very forces he tried to save.

Among the revolutionaries, two figures are especially important: Trotsky, whose experience led him to formulate the theory of permanent revolution; and of course Lenin, who reshaped the whole Bolshevik strategy and whose re-learning was more complex and deeper than Trotsky's. (Another was Luxemburg, with her brilliant account of the mass strike, but Shanin misses her.)

There are several things to quarrel with in this book—a touch of soft Maoism, insufficient consideration of Trotsky's theory of *combined* and uneven development. But overall this book is rich, bold, controversial and properly committed. I enjoyed it. ■

Colin Barker

## Good at games

George Thomas, Mr Speaker  
George Thomas  
Arrow £2.95

THERE IS something peculiarly stomach-turning about George Thomas's appalling career: from miner's son in poverty-stricken Tonypany to left wing Labour MP, from minister in the Wilson government to Speaker in the House of Commons. He finally achieved a resting place in the House of Lords with the hereditary title of Viscount Tonypany, courtesy of Margaret Thatcher.

The tragedy is so horribly predictable and has been followed by so many since that it hardly seems worth bothering to read his sorry apology of an autobiography. Not so, however, for it remains an unfortunate fact that considerably more can be learned about the nature of the Labour Party from reading the anecdotal reminiscences of George Thomas and his like than from reading *Militant* or even *Tribune*.

Thomas, we have to continually remind ourselves, was not a right wing Labourite. He entered parliament in 1945 as a man of the left, as a 'backbench rebel'. He strongly opposed government policy over Greece, voted against the introduction of conscription and generally aligned himself with Aneurin Bevan and later with that other leader of the Labour left, Harold Wilson.

His politics were a flabby Christian socialism, more concerned with conscience than with struggle. He was to faithfully follow Harold Wilson to the right after



Thomas and the fantasy world he loved best

1964. The spineless nature of even his left reformism is beautifully illustrated by his account of a Mosleyite rally held in Tonypany in the 1930s. At Thomas's urging the local Labour Party decided to boycott the meeting rather than join the Communists in disrupting it. To make sure that he avoided any of the trouble, Thomas spent the afternoon at the pictures.

The extent of his shift to the right is brought home by his reason for remembering this incident: a dinner party at the Duke of Devonshire's country house in 1981, when he sat next to Lady Mosley, "a warm compassionate woman".

Thomas became a junior minister in the first Wilson government, going to the Home Office, where Frank Soskice was Home Secretary. "We used to joke about his views on racial issues," he recalls. Amusingly enough, the Labour Home Secretary was a vicious racist. Thomas recalls how on one occasion Soskice responded to a proposal to ease immigration controls with the comment, "If we do not have strict immigration rules our people will soon all be coffee-coloured."

What dominates all Thomas's memories of political life from 1964 onwards, however, is not any of the major political events, but how wonderful our royal family is. Reading Thomas leaves you wondering whether Lenin wasn't being too optimistic when he described Labour as a "bourgeois workers' party". Thomas's attitudes are positively feudal.

When he writes of the Aberfan disaster, which occurred when he was at the Welsh Office, his account is more concerned with Lord Snowdon's visit to the area than with the causes and consequences of the tragedy. He seems to regard the investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales in 1968 as one of the great triumphs of the Wilson years (although on further consideration he's probably right about that). The Prince, we are told, has a better understanding of ordinary people than the present Labour left, among whom he still includes Neil Kinnock!

In his years as Speaker he developed an increasingly high regard for leading members of the Conservative Party, culminating in his unhealthy admiration for Thatcher. Although professing pacifist sympathies, he was a staunch supporter of

the Falklands war, which showed the world "we are still a tough little race".

What Thomas leaves out of his memoirs is just as interesting as what he includes. There is no mention of the Vietnam war—which the Wilson government wholeheartedly backed, of the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974, of the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act during the Heath years. Nor does he mention the fact that during his term as Speaker, Bobby Sands MP died on hunger strike.

On these occasions the real world intruded into the games they play at Westminster and George Thomas would rather not remember. ■

John Newsinger

## King of the wild frontier

The Artful Albanian: The Memoirs of Enver Hoxha  
Edited by Jon Halliday  
Chatto & Windus, £5.95

I FEEL about Enver Hoxha, the late Albanian leader, much as I do about Frank Sinatra: I deplore what he stood for, but it is impossible to deny that the man had style.

Hoxha was not the sort of mealy-mouthed Stalinist who dressed up his crimes as 'tragic necessities'; he was a thug and made no attempt to hide it.

His comment on the Hungarian revolution was simple: "Have some of the leaders of these counter-revolutionaries shot to teach them what the dictatorship of the proletariat is."

When Hoxha's delegation in Moscow found their rooms were bugged, they recorded a message calling their hosts 'traitors'.

So when Hoxha came to write his memoirs (from which Jon Halliday has edited a selection) he gave us lies on a grand scale. Thus the first edition of Hoxha's volume *With Stalin* contains fulsome praise of Mehmet Shehu, his prime minister from 1954 to 1981.



Enver Hoxha

But in 1981 Shehu was killed and it was claimed he had been an American agent since the 1930s. A new version of *With Stalin* was rushed through the presses.

For Hoxha the only function of the past is to justify the present. So we learn with some surprise in his account of Albania's relations with China that Mao Zedong was "never a Marxist".

For those of us who remember the years in the sixties and seventies when China and Albania swore undying friendship, this is a bit like Morecambe and Wise claiming they never did a double act.

Even in his own terms, Hoxha's account is riddled with contradictions. He complains bitterly that the Russians tried to suppress his viewpoint—but opponents within the Albanian CP got little right of free speech; in the words of Mehmet Shehu at the Fourth Party Congress:

"For those who stand in the way of party unity: a spit in the face, a sock in the jaw, and, if necessary, a bullet in the head..."

And Hoxha's professions of internationalism look pretty thin when he himself tells how, at the end of the Greek civil war, Greek Communist refugees were deported from Albania and their arms confiscated.

As a result the documentary value of these memoirs is negligible. Thus Hoxha presents the Russian leaders (after Stalin) whom he had dealings with as being not only bullies, but degenerates preoccupied with food and drink. This may well be true, but since it is what we expect Hoxha to say, his evidence is worthless.

Often, indeed, the memoirs seem to be pure *Women's Own* material; thus Hoxha tells us that:

"Stalin has taken me by the arm and walked with me in his garden, tired himself on my behalf many times, taking the greatest care of me, even over the hat I should wear to avoid getting a cold, and going so far as...to show me where the toilets were if I needed them."

What are a few million purge victims beside this avuncular solicitude for Enver's bladder?

Jon Halliday's commentary and notes are scrupulous and helpful; he never hesitates to point out Hoxha's dishonesties. Yet he clearly retains a liking for Hoxha, paying tribute to his "vigilant Balkan williness and his hard schooling in post-Leninist methodology and ritual."

Why this admiration for a man who

would be more at home in the Mafia than in a Marxist organisation? To understand that we have to look at Halliday's own political evolution.

For Halliday is a former editorial board member of *New Left Review*, and was concerned to present the intellectually respectable face of British Maoism.

The bright-eyed young Maoists of 1968 wanted a superman, a Chairman Mao of Marxist infallibility.

Now, middle-aged and cynical, they prefer those who are corruptible and corrupted, a consoling reminder that revolutionary change is impossible. ■

Ian Birchall

## A spectator of defeat

### The Polish Revolution

Timothy Garton Ash  
*Coronet* £2.95

JOURNALISTS and sociologists have always been at their weakest when confronted with the fast-moving paradox of revolution. This would be difficult enough for a journalist on *The Times* and *The Spectator* in the best of conditions. But Poland's revolution is a deeper paradox than most—a revolution against a 'workers' state'.

Garton Ash is a liberal—on the side of the workers and against the state, for democracy and against totalitarianism, critical of Stalinist apologists and Reaganite false friends of Solidarity alike. This even-handed, sympathetic liberal approach cannot explain the dynamic of the revolution, far less indicate how the tragic defeat of Jaruzelski's coup could have been avoided.

Take the attitude to Leninism. Sometimes we are treated to the old cold war equation: Leninism equals Stalinism equals the Soviet Union.

Yet, on other occasions, Lenin's ideas are used to help explain events. It is as if the logic of the proletarian revolution overcomes the ideological prejudices of the author.

Again, when in the early stages of Solidarity, the Governor of Gdansk refers to Walesa as "the tribune of the people", Garton Ash recalls and quotes the relevant passage from Lenin's *What is to be Done?*

The same contradiction is evident on the question of the Catholic Church. On one occasion we are given the obviously absurd judgement: "It is hard to conceive of Solidarity without the Polish Pope."

But then, 28 pages later, we read:

"The Poles have a remarkable ability to hear what they want to hear from their Church leaders and disregard the rest..."

The workers respect the Primate, but cheerfully ignore his warnings against the strike."

This confusion over how workers' ideas change, the state capitalist nature of the regime, and the real meaning of the revolutionary tradition becomes fatal in the section which discusses whether Solidarity went too far or not far enough.

Garton Ash quotes the SWP's analysis which argued that Solidarity could only hope to survive by taking on the struggle for state power. He concludes:

"If Solidarity had 'gone further'...it would have abandoned the whole perspective of self-limitation. The most probable outcome would have been bloody, and far more costly for the Poles and the Soviet Union... This would have been 'better' for the International Socialists, and some of President Reagan's right-wing foreign policy advisers—but for whom else?"

The first answer is that an increasing minority of Solidarity activists thought it would be better.

In addition, while Reagan was happy to see the Polish and Soviet authorities embarrassed by Solidarity, both he and Thatcher were public in their support for the moderate, Walesa wing of Solidarity. They feared revolutionary developments more than they feared the existence of a rival ruling class.

Finally, our contention that the Russian threat could be defeated is castigated as "plain rubbish" and risking "other people's lives". Yet again, Garton Ash provides his own rebuttal. Adam Michnik, a leading Solidarity activist, is quoted as supporting the view that Solidarity should have fought, even if that meant fighting the Russians—the difference is that "he, unlike the International Socialists...has the right to say that".

So analysis is judged not by its truth or falsity, but by the etiquette of who says it. Nevertheless, the fact remains that a fully mobilised, fully-armed Polish population would have at best defeated, and at worst stood a chance of beating, the Russians. There is, after all, in the years 1918-21 a precedent, when the allied armies of intervention were beaten in Russia.

But Garton Ash does not subscribe to the view that it is better to fight—with the prospect of victory—than to accept defeat without ever testing that prospect. It is a perspective which says that if the ruling class are prepared to defend their position by force of arms, then we must pack up and go home. No battle can be engaged with a guarantee of success, but the balance of forces can be assessed.

In 1981 the Polish working class was as conscious, as combative as any since 1917. What was guaranteed was that if it did not fight it would be defeated. That it did not fight is a result of a leadership which thought like *Spectator* journalists and not like Bolsheviks. ■

John Rees



## Bookbrief

STATE RACISM has been increased with the introduction of visas for immigrants coming from the Indian sub-continent, while the response of the media has been horrible. **Right to be Here: A Campaigning Guide to the Immigration Laws** (published by the Anti-Deportation Working Group) could not have been produced at a more appropriate time. It is full of facts and though we may disagree with some of it (it tries not to offend the Labour Party whose record in office is awful) it is an extremely useful and timely book.

Despite the disastrous failure of reformist economic policy in France, Greece, Chile under Allende, Britain 1974-9 et al, books wanting more of the same continue to flow off the academic production lines.

One example which our reviewer found "bad and boring" is **Planning the British Economy** by Paul Hare, published as part of the disappointing Radical Economics series by Macmillan £8.95. Hare advocates a "Gradualist Alternative Economic Strategy" which he believes should "command widespread support for its

moderation and realism". As our reviewer put it—he's a crawler.

**Beyond the Wasteland** by Bowles, Gordon and Weisskopf (*Verso* £7.95) is an interesting account of the relative economic decline of the US. They expose the appalling waste of human and physical resources under capitalism but are politically naive—they attempt to convince corporate America that workers would perform better if they were involved in 'decision-making'.

A different type of reformism runs through the collection of essays on **States versus Markets in the World System** edited by Evans, Rusachmeyer and Stephens (published by *Sage* £15.50 paperback). Our reviewer found the politics to be "third-worldist, confusing the nationalist goal of economic development in the face of world crisis, with socialism". But it does include some interesting material such as an essay on Cuba which despite itself shows the impossibility of escaping 'dependence' on the world market—in other words the impossibility of socialism in one country.

Of the new alternative thrillers **Death in**

**Leningrad** by John Lear (*Pluto Crime* £3.95) our reviewer found disappointingly too obscure and complicated. **Death by Analysis** by Gillian Slovo (*Women's Press* £3.95) was disliked—"pretentious guide to yuppie London" was the phrase used.

Zora Neale Hurston was a gifted black American writer involved in the Harlem renaissance during the 1920s. **Zora Neale Hurston, a Literary Biography** by Robert E Hemenway (*Camden Press* £7.95) as well as examining her work in great detail delves into wider issues such as the relationship between folklore and black art. It is a book our reviewer recommended and found extremely interesting.

But by far the best value is the **Education Pack No 5: Women's Liberation and the Class Struggle** at only 50p and the latest in our series of education pamphlets. This is a reprint of Chris Harman's article from *International Socialism* 2:23 (Spring 1984) which outlines the argument for a class and materialist analysis of women's oppression as well as a critique of feminist theories. ■

Noel Halifax

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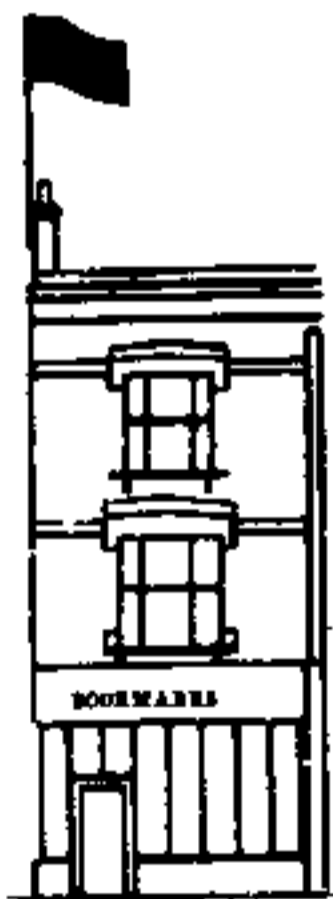
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## No to Gay Lib?

AFTER MY denunciation by comrade Jamieson as a gay-basher with a left face I must take up the cudgels and deal sharply with his muddled, incoherent and plainly mistaken letter.

I do indeed agree that AIDS is a serious public health matter. I never said anything about AIDS. Why on earth bring up this irrelevance except to dishonestly twist what I said?

Though I am abused for ignorance, let me say that it just is *not* true that sexual politics has always been an *important* part of left ideology and tradition.

If comrade Jamieson would read more widely and less selectively, or even if he deigned to speak to a few old-timers, he would know that this area was always in the past considered a very subsidiary part of the left programme, with the possible exception of the struggle over women's suffrage.

One may disagree with the priorities of socialists in the past, but the historical record is quite clear. Personally I find Luxemburg's priorities more appealing than Zetkin's.

Is comrade Jamieson really equating the problems of ethnic minorities with those of gays and lesbians? Surely there is a choice as to sexual preference? Or perhaps comrade Jamieson thinks that it is, like skin colour, an innate condition from the cradle?

Workers with different coloured skins would be happy to change economic places with the many wealthy and privileged but gay people in the City, advertising and the arts.

Sexual preference does *not* play a role in selection for the labour market that gender and race does. Thus for capitalism prejudice may play a minor but useful ideological role but not one that is intrinsic to capital as is the reserve army of labour.

One aspect of racial issues includes the disgraceful and growing sexual exploitation, the bordelisation, of the Third World so sharply dealt with by Nigel Harris in October *SWR*.

Though Nigel did not make the point, this includes the equally disgraceful exploitation of local people by foreign gays in Thailand or the Philippines, as well as by heterosexuals. Without apologies I maintain that the comparison between the oppression of gays and ethnic minorities is insolent.

The question of the role of the family would take up more space than is possible in a letter. However it should be said that for many (not all) working class people the family is the one place that they have been loved and cherished for their own sake and not for what someone could exploit from them.

If the SWP is to win workers to its ranks it must treat this area with great sensitivity. To put it bluntly, comrade Jamieson's silly attack on the institution of the family is not likely to appeal to working class couples, since he is naive enough to proclaim that people only have children because they have been conned by capitalist propaganda into producing a future supply of labour for their exploiters at their own expense!

Socialists should proclaim that it is they, not Mrs Thatcher, who will defend the working class family against the almost insupportable pressures bearing down on it in an epoch of capitalist decay.

The *bourgeois* family of which Marx and Engels sometimes speak is an institution for the inter-generational transmission of property rights and class privileges. Though the *Manifesto* speaks of the abolition of the family, this was always far more in the anarchist tradition than the Marxist one and Marx said practically nothing about it in his later work.

Engels, whose personal life style was rather bohemian and who relied on the now outdated work of the American anthropologist Morgan, spoke of, and attacked, the role of the bourgeois family in the *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Perhaps Being determined his Consciousness and not Consciousness his Being!

Finally I think the crux of the disagreement between us is the distinction between Gay Rights, a concept I support, and Gay Liberation, which I do not.

A recent article by Peter Tatchell in *City Limits* drew this clear and correct distinction, though Tatchell himself, I regret to say, is all in favour of Gay Liberation as well as Rights. Gay Liberation is the celebration of an apolitical life-stylism. Rights are a legitimate, if limited, political demand.

Clearly some comrades have a lot to learn as they have sealed themselves off from anyone who does not think like them. In other words they live in the sub-culture of a left wing ghetto. That is far more worrying than its symptoms which appear in this little dispute over sexual preferences. ■

Ted Crawford  
Ealing

## No Nigel not unique!

NIGEL HARRIS spoils an otherwise excellent article in your last issue by asserting that the Mexican PRI is unique in the Americas and "has ensured there is no cycle of military power in Mexico". Unfortunately he is wrong on both counts.

Rather than being unparalleled in the Americas as Nigel Harris asserts, the PRI has to a large degree served as a model in Latin America. The American Popular Revolutionary Alliance in Peru and the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement in Bolivia both share many characteristics with the PRI.

As Trotsky argued in 1938 these parties, along with the Chinese Kuomintang, "are very similar organisations. It is the People's Front in the form of a party."

By this Trotsky meant that these parties contained within them all the class contradictions of the People's or Popular Front as developed in Europe during the same period. And, as in Europe, the Stalinist parties were the most ardent practitioners of such class collaboration.

What is distinctive and unique about the PRI is that it was founded as a government party in 1928, nearly two decades after the prematurely stalled Mexican revolution, and has enjoyed the exercise of power ever since.

It should be noted that its organisation and ideology were to a large degree modelled on Haya de la Torres APRA, founded in 1924 while in Mexico, and to a lesser degree on the Bolshevik Party.

Today the FSLN in Nicaragua represents a very similar phenomenon to that of the organisations discussed above. Like the PRI its regime is semi-Bonapartist in character and like all such parties its base among the working masses has been won by its anti-imperialism.

It is to the credit of the FSLN that it seized the leadership of the Revolution in 1979. But it is evidence of its Popular Frontist character that it, like the FMLN in El Salvador, must constantly try to reach an agreement with American imperialism and its Contra stooges.

That the Mexican armed forces have remained relatively uninvolved in Mexican politics is due firstly to the political capital accruing to the PRI as the heir to the revolution of 1911 and

secondly to the relatively buoyant economic situation Mexican capitalism enjoyed until recently. That there has been no cycle of military power is despite rather than due to the PRI.

It is the exhaustion of this policy of verbal anti-imperialism and mild state capitalism that has led to the rise of the PAN and potentially opens the road to workers' power. The continued attraction of populist parties such as the PRI and APRA will continue to be barriers to the revolution unless we can begin to develop genuinely independent workers' parties in Latin America. ■

Michael Charles  
Cardiff

## Best of the bunch!

IT IS a pity Donny Gluckstein did not bother to read my article carefully on the decay of Labourism before he rushed to criticise it (September *SWR*).

Nowhere does it characterise the Clydeside MPs as revolutionaries. Rather it suggested that they were the most militant, the most advanced group of reformists ever to be elected to parliament.

Many of them had been imprisoned either, like Maxton, for sedition (interfering with army recruitment in wartime) or for involvement in the riot that became known as The Battle of St George's Square (an event that the Lloyd George government misread and thought was the beginning of the British revolution).

Besides having gained their personal reputations through the stand they had taken in some of the most ferocious class struggles experienced by Britain in the 20th century, they were sent to Westminster in a mass wave of left wing enthusiasm.

On arrival there they met George Lansbury, just out of his prison uniform, having led Poplar Council's successful defiance of the law, that resulted in the government's defeat: a much better performance than the Hatton-led Liverpool Council over ratecapping.

Donny Gluckstein may disagree, but it is my claim that these Clydeside rebels had a working class credibility, a working class following, a working class militancy unsurpassed in the history of the Labour Party. By comparison the Benns and Heffers of today are tame and toothless tabby cats.

Yet what did they achieve? In

his autobiography one of them, David Kirkwood, explained: "We were going to do big things. The people believed that. We believed that. At our onslaught, the grinding poverty which existed in the midst of plenty was to be wiped out. We were going to scare away the grim spectre of unemployment... Alas, that we were able to do so little!" ■

Ray Challinor  
Newcastle

## Rebecca's ruin

TIM EVANS' article about the Rebecca events in West Wales (October *SWR*) begs as many questions as it answers. Not least of these concern the significance of 'Rebecca' and the causes of its failure.

The Rebecca events were significant, but they were not exceptional. All over Britain in the period 1800-65 workers were adopting militant violence as part of sporadic, localised fightbacks.

Tim's references to "small farmers" as being the bane of Rebecca tells us very little. In the early nineteenth century the traditional class of farmers was being irrevocably divided—one group being proletarianised and the other, by amalgamating holdings, becoming prosperous.

The last point is important because the new industrial workforce had to be found somewhere. Principally it was found amongst the bankrupt farmers of Carmarthen, Connemara and Cornwall.

This organic link to the industrial workforce is vital. Tim alludes to Hugh Williams' attempts to forge links between Merthyr and Carmarthen in 1843 but only sees in them a burgeoning class consciousness.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Williams (like his East Wales counterpart, John Frost) did nothing to build real solidarity for the insurrection of textile workers at Llandloes in 1839. He must have known of the planned national rising, yet did nothing to prepare for it. Moreover, as a member of the National Convention he must have known of Frost's instructions to halt any militant acts in South Wales.

The whole purpose for middle class radical Chartists like Frost and Williams was to deflect radical (and often violent) protest into a movement that could place them in parliament. When Williams finally chose to try to build links between Chartism and

the Rebecca movements it was at Merthyr, where the working class had not yet recovered from its crushing defeat of 1831 and where moral force Chartism held the greatest sway.

What was the alternative? From 1822 onwards, after the decline of 'Rebecca', the miners and ironworkers fought through their 'Scotch Cattle'. It was not lawyers and shopkeepers who died as a result of Frost's folly in Newport, but workers. The tragedy was that the independence of the 'Scotch Cattle' and its practical plan for an uprising was submerged into a disastrous 'proto Popular Front' with middle class radicals like John Frost.

A genuinely independent working class organisation that combined open activity with the discipline of the 'Cattle', could have been built with the kind of links with their brothers and sisters in 'Rebecca' that Tim Evans talks about. That they did not is a consequence of the lack of political understanding.

The importance of all this lies in the lessons for revolutionaries today, not least in South Africa. In South Africa today, as in Britain in 1839, reformists are trying to delude workers, "...into the hope that parliamentary reform would produce an amelioration of their social condition...the people are led to expect social improvement from the increase of abstract political privileges." (*London Courier*, 6/XI/1839).

The "small farmers" who put

on their best suits to meet the correspondent from the *Times* would have been rendered irrelevant in Carmarthen in 1843 by an independently organised proletariat. As it was, the small farmers showed their class consciousness and (let us not forget in the aftermath of a general strike) sided with the ruling class and property rights.

Rebecca was broken not by the actions of small farmers, but by the defeats at Merthyr and Newport that had seen the best militants either shot down or transported. On both occasions, at Merthyr and at Newport, an independent working class leadership that had been built before the event could have changed the course of events. That is the lesson that rings down the ages from the events in Wales 150 years ago. ■

Gareth R James  
Manchester

## Genuine Jacobins

IN CHRIS HARMAN'S review of *Danton* (September *SWR*) there is one curious comment—that the French Revolution was "caught between the need to smash its enemies and the fact that the bourgeoisie is a money grabbing class whose members are individually prepared to sell themselves to anyone who will offer enough" which is why "the

revolution could only succeed through the interventions from the Parisian poor..."

To explain the behaviour of a class during a revolution in terms of the compatibility of its individuals seems a little flippant. The most revolutionary of the bourgeoisie, the Jacobins, were undoubtedly genuine.

The king would gladly have paid leaders like Marat enormous sums of money—a set of cuddly toys if necessary—to change sides. Instead, Marat spent years producing agitational papers and was stabbed to death by a right wing assassin. Many lesser known Jacobins made similar sacrifices.

The Jacobins were bourgeois in origins and aims. But they attempted the first welfare state, mass public education and the destruction of the church. The real problem was that alongside their genuine belief in equality and liberty they believed equally passionately in private property, which as we now know makes the other impossible.

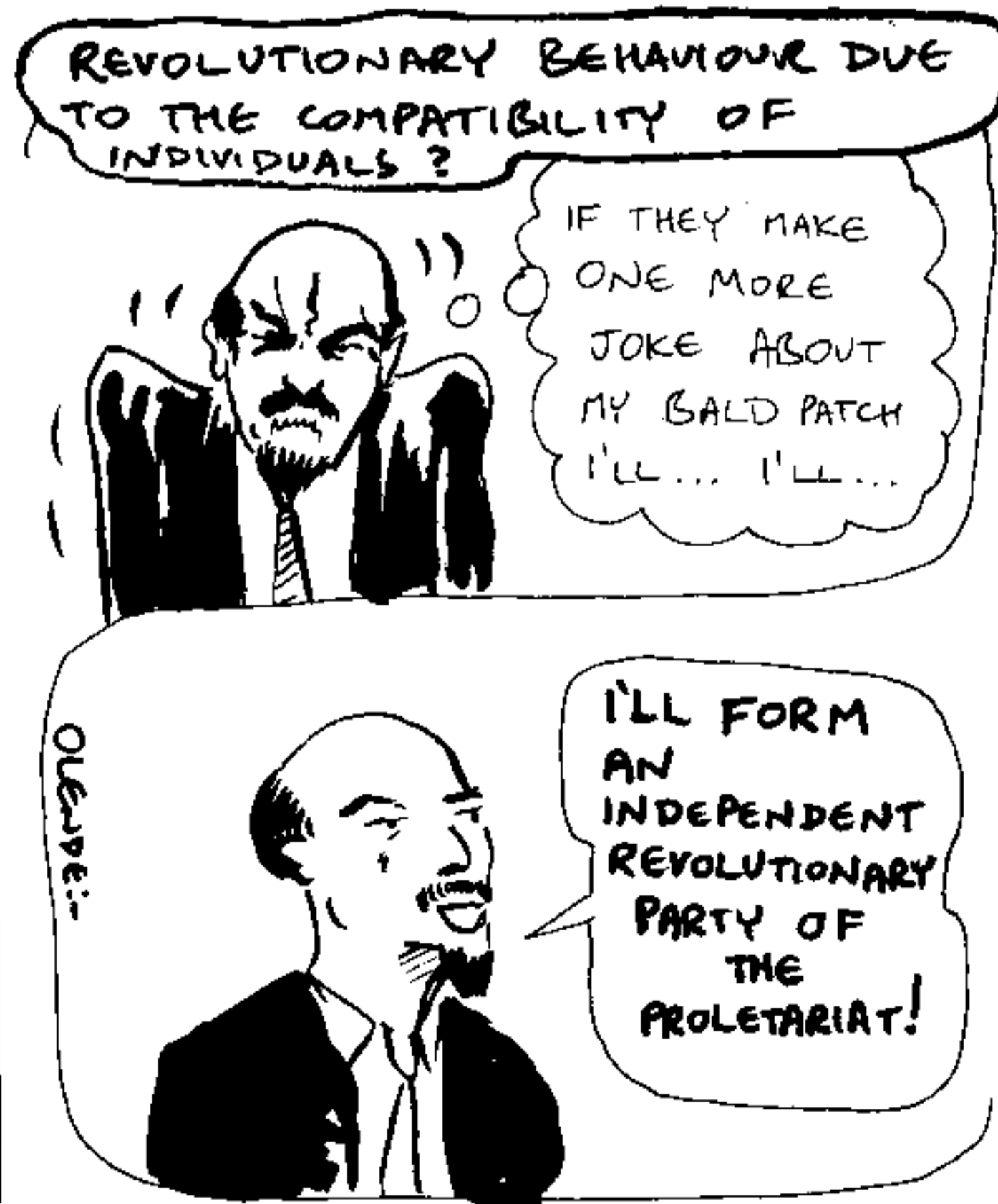
When it came to the inevitable confrontation between the poor demanding equality and liberty and bourgeois respect for private property, the Jacobins, being bourgeois, took the side of private property.

Once they had attacked the organisations of the workers and artisans and had executed their leaders, they destroyed the one power which could defend all progressive forces against the right wing. The willingness of individuals to sell themselves played a marginal role.

After all, if there was a revolution in Britain, individuals like Robert Maxwell and Roy Hattersley might well offer themselves to anyone daft enough to pay. We wouldn't claim that as a reason for not trusting the Labour Party.

In the French Revolution the bourgeoisie had the most radical, coherent ideas. They relied upon interventions of the Parisian poor to destroy the old order and give those ideas a chance to be implemented. The difference between then and now is that in a socialist revolution the class with the most revolutionary ideas is also the class that does the intervening. ■

Mark Steele  
Croydon



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# The forgotten fight

OF ALL THE mass movements that have been hidden from history, few have been as completely obscured as that of Palestine in 1936.

For six months the majority of the population supported a strike which shut down virtually all business and industry and paralysed the transport system. The movement was one of the most sustained faced by British imperialism—yet today it is largely forgotten. Its obscurity is the result of the fact that the movement was crushingly defeated—and defeat soon led to the triumph of Zionism and the re-writing of Palestinian history.

The Palestinian movement of the 1920s and 1930s was part of a response to imperialism throughout the Arab world. The Palestinians were faced however with a unique difficulty: while they struggled against the British, who saw Palestine as an important imperial base, they were also locked in conflict with the settlers of the Zionist movement.

The Jewish settlers had begun arriving in large numbers after World War One. They could call on the capital and resources of the Zionist organisations of Europe and North America in their efforts to buy Arab land and establish the basis for Jewish communities in Palestine. Their leaders were committed to the project of creating a Jewish-only state and aware of the need to tie their efforts to the needs of the British. As a result the Zionists constituted an obstacle to Palestinians, already confronted by a colonial regime which used all Britain's apparatus of repression to control the movement for Arab national rights.

Agitation against Britain and the Zionists had been going on since the end of the war. By 1935 economic crisis gave it a sharper edge—with thousands of Arabs turned off their land by Zionist settlers and urban unemployment growing, there was intense pressure on the Palestinian leadership, made up of land-owning families and the new bourgeoisie. In response, Palestinian political parties formed a front and issued three demands to Britain: an end to Jewish immigration; an end to land purchases; and an assurance that an Arab government would be formed to end the colonial Mandate.

In early 1936 Britain rejected the demands and many Arabs concluded that lobbying the colonial power—long the policy of the traditional leadership—was fruitless and direct action was needed. After successive attacks by Jew and Arab communities on each other, Palestinian activists in Jaffa and Nablus formed committees calling for a general strike until Britain acceded to the Palestinian demands.

Within three days every town in Arab

Palestine had been mobilised. In some areas committees of nationalists took the lead; elsewhere trade union branches, sports clubs, women's committees, Muslim and Christian associations and even the Boy Scouts were the focus. This expressed the strength of Palestinian national feeling—it also betrayed the fundamental weakness of the movement. From the very beginning there was no political organisation at the base which represented the interests of the mass of Palestinians.

Activists saw the strike as a re-run of the Syrian general strike which, in March 1936, after 50 days of mass action, had extracted a promise that the French Popular Front government would enter into negotiations over independence. Alas for the Palestinians, they faced not only a colonial oppressor, but a growing settler population with its 'parallel' Jewish economy, sealed off from Arab society. They were also unable to by-pass the leadership of their country's traditional rulers, who were quick to place their own interests before that of the Palestinian majority.

## 'The strike had exposed the fatal weakness of the national movement'

Within days of the call for action, the traditional leaders formed themselves into an Arab Higher Committee under the leadership of Hajj al-Amin al-Hussaini, the country's leading religious figure and the head of the largest land-owning family. The committee's intention was quite cynical—to take control of a movement which had slipped away from the traditional leaders and to use its energies to strengthen their position in dealings with the British.

But the committee could not hold the movement in check. The 'strike'—in reality a mass nationalist mobilisation—overflowed into rebellion. By June some 5,000 armed fighters had taken to the countryside and were confronting the British and the Zionists. The British High Commissioner telegraphed to the Foreign Office that the country was "in a state of incipient revolution", with "little security or control of lawless elements...outside principal towns, main roads and railways".

The British now threw their full military might behind a campaign of repression. The British garrison was increased until

there were 30,000 troops in the country—to control a population of just a million.

At first the British action was double-edged, for it removed many activists who were loyal to the Higher Committee, leaving local groups under the control of the rank and file. A mood took hold which threatened the interests of the traditional ruling class—but which stimulated a realisation in the Higher Committee that it was time to seek a settlement.

The British now stepped up repression, defeating the largest groups of rebels, while the Higher Committee let it be known that it would accept a call from the Arab kings to end the strike. In October 1936 the committee called off the strike "as a submission to the wills of their majesties and highnesses".

The strike collapsed; workers returned to industry, shops were opened, farmers went back to their fields. While the movement exploded again a year later, launching a two-year campaign of guerrilla warfare, it had been seriously weakened. The strike had exposed the fatal weakness of the Palestinian national movement; its political weight was insufficient to tackle both the colonial power and the settler population. In particular, the small and fragmented working class could not outweigh the influence of the national leadership. The small Palestine Communist Party, largely composed of Jewish members and operating within a rigid Popular Front strategy, failed to offer an alternative to the Arab national leadership.

While the Arab population had been battling against the British and against its own treacherous leaders, the Zionist communities had been taking the opportunity to plug the gap left by the withdrawal of Arab labour. They operated transport, maintained Jewish industry and supplied the British forces, strengthening their grip on the national economy and doing much to convince the British that they could best serve imperialist interests in Palestine.

When the Zionists confronted the Palestinians in 1948, they faced a movement which had been fatally weakened by its defeat in the 1930s. Imperialism and the Zionists themselves had presented an immense obstacle to the Palestinian movement but of equal importance had been the wounds inflicted by the Palestinian ruling class and its friends in the Arab Capitals. The determination of the Palestinian masses had not been enough to overcome these twin enemies.

The tragedy of the Palestinian movement is that 20 years later, when a new leadership emerged, it proved unable to learn the lessons of the 1930s. Liberation does not lie in London or Washington, in the palaces of kings or presidents, but in the efforts of workers throughout the Arab world to bring down the rulers who still place their own class interests above those of Arab workers and peasants. ■

Phil Marshall