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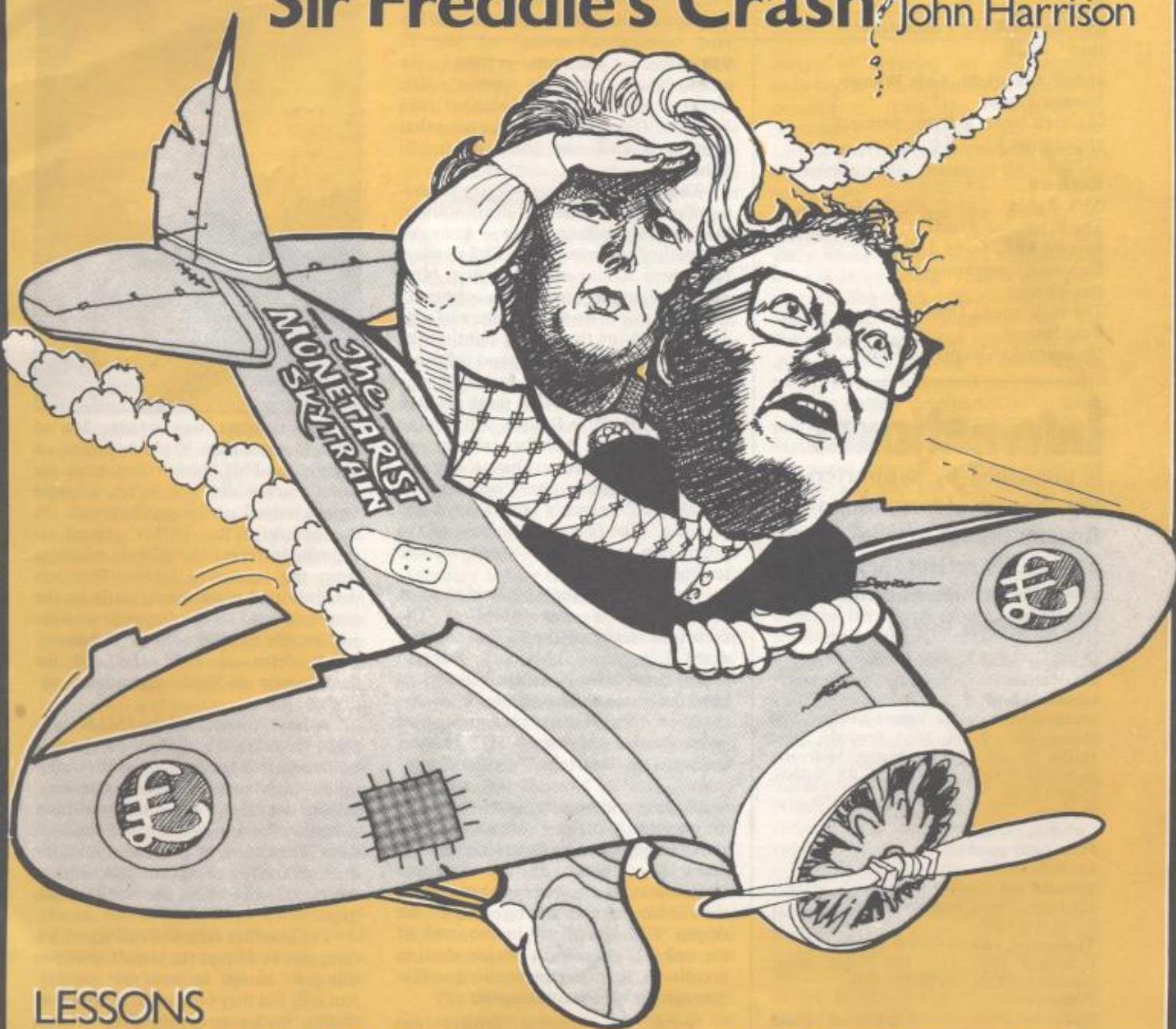
Vol 7 No 2

DOES THATCHERISM HAVE A FUTURE?

JOHN ROSS

Sir Freddie's Crash

John Harrison



LESSONS
OF SOLIDARNOSC

THE LAURENCE SCOTT STORY

DO MEN BENEFIT FROM WOMEN'S OPPRESSION?

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Editorial

SOLIDARITY WITH EL SALVADOR

US imperialism is preparing for a regional war in Central America. It is establishing itself in overall command of the region's security forces to enable the US military to take decisions which will be implemented, in the first instance, by local troops.

Thatcher's role in the region is less publicised. Yet in the last month the British Navy has participated in NATO's Safe Pass '82 exercises in the waters of the Caribbean and Central America, which included a landing at the US military base at Guantanamo in Cuba. Further, alone among its European neighbours, the British government has sent 'neutral observers' to the El Salvadorean elections. Even the establishment press is uneasy. The *Observer* coyly asked whether the Foreign Office had 'missed the news that there is a civil war going on' in El Salvador.

Thatcher's observers will try to present the election choice — death squads, fascists or the military junta — as a valid test of 'public opinion' in El Salvador. Humphrey Atkins explained that: 'Our gesture in sending observers is an entirely neutral act ... in no way a gesture of support for any of the parties fighting the election ... we want first-hand information.' Translated from forked-tongue language that means: 'We think that the "centre parties", ie Duarte, will win the elections. We can therefore take the opportunity to freshen up Duarte's image, further legitimising the "constitutionally-elected" regime's war against the guerillas.' The fact that the bulk of the population won't have voted will be studiously ignored.

Ironically even these well laid plans of the imperialists may backfire. The notorious leader of the El Salvadorean death squads, Major Roberto D'Abuisson, who is widely believed to have instigated the assassination of Archbishop Romero two years ago, may yet prove to be the victor. D'Abuisson believes that Duarte's Christian Democrats — who have 30,000 tortures, mutilations and murders under their belt in two years of office — are too soft. He characterises them as 'water melons' — green (the colour of the Christian Democrats) on the outside, but red on the inside. Campaigning under the slogan 'El Salvador will be the tomb of the reds' D'Abuisson's major election promise is to exterminate the guerillas through massive use of napalm.

When the election project was originally put forward in March 1981 the idea was for the polls to be supervised by the United Nations with Britain taking a leading part in determining the mechanics of the operation and lending

personnel with experience of the Zimbabwe poll. This was soon after the FMLN guerillas' January offensive had failed to achieve its objective of bringing the junta to the negotiating table before Reagan's inauguration. The election plan, allied to a massive increase in US military aid, was premised on the estimate that the guerillas would be eliminated, or at least marginalised, by the time of voting.



The estimate was wrong. During 1981, in more than 30 major offensives against the FMLN-controlled areas the junta's army did not inflict a single serious setback on the guerilla forces. On the contrary, the FMLN proved its capacity to retake the military initiative from the repressive forces. This was demonstrated most spectacularly by the successful raid on the Ilopango air-base just outside San Salvador on 27 January which destroyed nearly half of the Salvadorean air-forces' operational aircraft.

In July/August 1981 the FMLN launched an offensive against the junta's economy. In a ten-day period they blew up 62 high tension electricity towers, leaving the east of the country without electricity for between ten and fourteen days. The centre of the country, where the capital city and most industry is concentrated, was without electricity for two days.

The guerillas followed this up with a campaign to disrupt the junta's ability to transport troops around the country. Not only did they blow up in October the Golden Bridge across the River Lempa on the coastal highway, but on 27 December they destroyed the San Francisco Bridge, severing the country's main north-south highway. They have set up road-blocks on the Pan-American

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OR

highway, the only remaining link between the capital and the eastern third of El Salvador, and have been collecting war taxes at several points, including one only 35 miles from San Salvador.

A series of actions carried out in the capital and in Santa Ana, the second largest city, illustrate that they have also managed to re-establish networks in the cities following the heavy repression after the January 1981 offensive.

These advances have been based on a consolidation of the FMLN's implantation in the countryside. They control 25 per cent of the country, including large areas of 8 of the 14 provinces. In one of these areas in Morazan province, the guerrillas have set up schools, health clinics and hospitals as well as the radio station, Radio Venceremos. There is also a rudimentary network of schools and clinics in the Guazapa zone controlled by the guerrillas. In Palo Grande, just 25 miles from San Salvador, a 4-bed hospital has been established. Fields of tomatoes, cabbage, yucca and sorghum are being cultivated by local co-operatives. Local assemblies elect three-member courts. The FMLN have established defensive local militias in these liberated zones.

At the same time, there are reports of demoralisation in the junta's army. Two companies from the San Carlos barracks in the capital recently refused to go into combat. In some areas the army is engaged in forced recruiting, sweeping into villages and hauling off boys of 15.

The US response has been the 'Vietnamisation' of the war: massive military aid including US advisors; the establishment of the Atlacatl Brigade (the quick-response unit modelled on the Green Berets); the creation of free-fire zones (Honduras is relocating 20,000 refugees away from the border with El Salvador to allow intensive bombing of the civilian population and search and destroy missions against the guerrillas).

As part of this 'scorched earth' policy the civilian population itself becomes a military target, especially those who live in areas near the fighting. Thus in December 1981 at Mozote in Morazan Province the army systematically killed almost 1000 peasants, mostly women, children and old people. They were butchered, machine-gunned, or burned alive by the Atlacatl Brigade. When the junta says that they have scored some successes against the guerrillas this is what they mean.

The junta says it cannot win the war without American military assistance. The Americans are worried that arms and money will not be enough to turn the tide. They are not certain that the Salvadorean military can absorb more



equipment or whether it has enough of officers to fight a guerilla war. The entire 500 member student body of the Salvadorean military academy is now going through accelerated officer-training in the United States. They are part of the 1600 Salvadorean troops who arrived in the United States in January to begin training in counter-insurgency techniques at Fort Bragg, North Carolina and Fort Benning, Georgia.

There is growing doubt that a military victory is possible without ground troops from other countries. The US isn't enthusiastic about sending in American combat troops and would prefer to use troops from allies in the region. The Argentine government is more than willing.

The determination of the Reagan administration to defeat the guerrillas in El Salvador should not be underestimated. Thomas Enders spelled out Washington's position when he said on 3 February before the House Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee: 'If after Nicaragua, El Salvador is captured by a violent minority, who in Central America would not live in fear? How long would it be before major strategic United States interests — the Panama Canal, sea lanes, oil supplies — were at risk?'

The hysterical propaganda campaign against Cuba and Nicaragua, and the cynical manipulation of the military crack-down in Poland is designed to allow the US to carry through projects such as intervention in El Salvador at the smallest political and social cost. Reagan's programme of US economic development for the impoverished nations of the Caribbean and Central America is also designed to provide some cover for intervention.

The US government is not interested in any serious negotiation process. It has rejected offer after offer from the FDR/FMLN to negotiate. It has ignored Mexico's pleas to negotiate — though Mexico (and France and West Germany) sees this process of negotiation as a

means of defusing the revolutionary time-bomb. Washington has drawn its conclusions from the overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua. Any further revolutionary breakthrough in Central America directly threatens its 'vital interests'.

El Salvador has the unfortunate privilege of being, for the moment, the place where imperialism's re-armament drive is being tested. That is why Thatcher is colluding over the elections. Denis Healey has even suggested that the British government has implicated itself in the 'shabby exercise' of the elections 'perhaps to cut a few million pounds off the new nuclear deterrent. One of those privy to the new nuclear Trident deal has explained that "the attitude of the American Administration is conditioned by the way the UK acts in the wider defence interests of the alliance and the United States."' (*New Standard*, 25 February, 1982)

Thatcher's observers are by no means sure winners in El Salvador. But they do indicate the scope of the task before socialists in Britain. The mass movement in opposition to US policy in Central America is developing in Britain, Europe and the United States, but it has not yet managed to stay Reagan's hand. El Salvador is being drowned in blood and fire. The people of Guatemala and Honduras risk a similar fate and the people of Nicaragua, who have already gone through such an ordeal, face renewed strife.

Only a mighty international mobilisation is capable of raising the political price which the Reagan government must pay for such an action, of blocking the interventionist course of imperialism. Michael Foot's presence on the platform of the 28 March demonstration means nothing unless it becomes the green light for a massive labour movement mobilisation in Britain against Reagan and against Thatcher's alliance with Reagan. A warm reception for Reagan when he visits Britain in June would be in order.

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DOES THATCHERISM HAVE A FUTURE?

JOHN ROSS

What is the character of Thatcherism? Most of the debate on the left has centred on Thatcher's economic policies. John Ross argues that there are no insurmountable internal contradictions for Thatcherism on the economic level within the ruling class. Its major economic contradictions lie only in relations with the working class. Above all however the essence, and problem, of Thatcherism lies in the realm of politics. The left is drastically unprepared for the massive reorganisation of the British political system which is the consequence of the policies of this government.

The depth of the crisis of British capitalism

Those capitalist forces backing the strategy of the Thatcher government have made great play of the economic statistics for 1981. Manufacturing productivity, reflecting the pressure of unemployment and a shift in the relation of forces on the shop floor, rose by some seven or eight per cent — a higher rate of increase than Japan's. The profits of British industry rose ten per cent between the second and third quarters of the year. Days lost in strikes fell from over twelve million in 1980 to only a little over four million in 1981. Collecting these figures together in its issue of 30 January the strongly pro-Thatcher *Economist* magazine chose the headline 'Nothing to smile about?'

If they had been achieved in Japan, West Germany or France, these figures would be worth more than a smile. The problem for Thatcher is that the British economy now lags so far behind its rivals that these results would need to be achieved year after year, amid incredible working class suffering, for British capitalism even to begin to catch up with its competitors — a point dealt with in some detail below.

What is more the 1981 figures were only achieved at the cost of a 15 per cent fall in industrial production in 1979-81 and a 40 per cent fall in manufacturing sector profits during the first two years of the government's life. Crashing the economy in this way is not a strategy which can be pursued frequently by the bourgeoisie — otherwise its economic base will be reduced to a point where it is completely incapable of confronting its competitors. Such economic policies must produce *once and for all* results if they are to allow the relative gap with rivals to be narrowed. Thatcherism has proved itself quite capable of creating a gigantic recession and producing encouraging figures for industrial capital for one year after two disastrous ones. But for capitalism recession is a means to an end — not a goal in itself. Its purpose is to devalorise capital and raise the rate of exploitation in order to permit a new wave of increased profits and growth.

In order to understand this point, to see just how far British capitalism is behind its major competitors, and therefore just how long any 'recovery' would need to continue to result in serious catching up, it is crucial to grasp the central qualitative

indicators of the state of the British economy.

*In 1969, the *productivity of labour* was 3.45 times the British level in the United States, 1.46 times higher in West Germany, and 1.45 times higher in France. Since then the gap has increased rather than narrowed as Table 1 shows.

Table 1: Average annual percentage growth in productivity

	1963-73	1973-78
Japan	8.7	3.3
Italy	5.4	1.1
West Germany	4.6	3.1
France	4.6	2.7
Britain	3.0	0.6
United States	1.9	0.1

Source: Hodgson: *Labour at the Crossroads*, Martin Robertson, 1981, pp 154-5

When talking about the seven to eight per cent rise in productivity in 1981, it is also important to remember that this followed a *fall* in the productivity of labour earlier in the life of the government. In fact, in the two and a quarter years to the third quarter of 1981, it achieved a total increase in labour productivity of 3.5 per cent — an annual average increase of 1.6 per cent. During the life of the last Labour government, productivity rose by 7.6 per cent — an annual average of 1.5 per cent. It could, with some justification, be argued that Thatcher has produced a one-seventh fall in industrial output and a thirty per cent fall in profits to gain an extra productivity increase of 0.1 per cent a year!

Looked at from the viewpoint of trends, of course, the productivity figures for 1981 are more impressive than this comparison with the Labour government would indicate. But they do not begin seriously to dent the gap compared to Britain's competitors. Moreover, the rate of exploitation, which is the key to profits, does not simply depend on the productivity of labour but also on real wages. Here, Thatcher has achieved far less than the Labour government.

*As regards *investment in industry*, the record of the British economy has long been catastrophic. The average annual increase in the stock of capital per worker in the period 1870-1970 was 1.8 times higher in the United States, 1.9 times higher in West Germany, 2.5 in Italy, 2.6 in France, and 2.7 in Japan than it was in Britain (see: Glyn and Harrison: *The British Economic Disaster*, Pluto, 1980, p37). The accumulated historical result of these differences is enormous: in 1976, the average worker in Japanese manufacturing was backed by capital investment of £30,000; the equivalent figure for West Germany was £23,000 and the United States fell between the two. The figure for Britain was £7,500. To bring British capital investment per employee into line with its main competitors would cost some £100,000 million. In line with the fall in industrial production under Thatcher, manufacturing investment fell some thirty per cent between 1979 and the end of 1981 (*Economist*, 13 February 1982, p32). In short British capitalism is falling further behind all the time.

*Britain's *trade figures* reflect its inability to compete in terms of productivity and investment, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Percentage shares of world exports of manufactured goods by value

	1950	1960	1970	1979
United States	27	22	19	16
Britain	26	17	11	10
France	10	10	9	11
Japan	3	7	12	14
West Germany	7	19	20	21

Source: Gamble: *Britain in Decline*, Macmillan, 1981, p. 21

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Not for Laker

British industry is not capable of competing even in its domestic market, let alone foreign ones: in the relatively successful year of 1981, despite the high exchange rate of the pound and the depressed economy, manufactured imports were more than 6 per cent higher in volume terms than in the previous peak year of 1979 (*Economist*, 9 January 1982, p 21).

*Comparing the *absolute size of the economy*, a significant consideration in the times of cut-throat inter-imperialist competition to come, the signals of decline are just as clear. As recently as 1965, the British economy (assessed in terms of Gross National Product) was the same size as the French, fourteen per cent smaller than the German, and ten per cent larger than the Japanese. By 1979, the French economy was twenty-five per cent larger, the West German forty per cent larger, and the Japanese *twice as large* as the British. The huge decline in British industrial output under Thatcher has only served to put Britain even further behind.

*Comparing *profits*, the motor by which any capitalist economic strategy needs to be generated, Table 3 shows Britain consistently near the bottom of the league table, and the situation has grown worse since 1975 even prior to the Thatcher slump.

Table 3: Percentage rates of profit for industrial and commercial companies before tax

	1960	1965	1970	1973	1975
Japan	19.7	15.3	22.7	14.7	9.5
West Germany	23.4	16.5	15.6	12.1	9.1
United States	9.9	13.7	8.1	8.6	6.9
France	11.9	9.9	11.1	10.2	4.1
Britain	14.2	11.8	8.7	7.2	3.5
Italy	11.0	7.9	8.6	4.5	0.8

Source: Glyn and Harrison: *The British Economic Disaster*, Pluto Press, p12.

To complete the picture of the qualitative position of the British economy, it is necessary simply to summarise the further effects not discussed above of the Thatcher slump initiated in 1979.

*In 1980, *manufacturing output* fell by over 15 per cent in a single year. This is a more rapid fall than was recorded in the great slump of 1929 and, with the exception of the years 1920-21, which reflected the after-effects of the First World War, constitutes the most precipitous decline in production since the industrial revolution.

*British *international competitiveness* has deteriorated to an astonishing degree since the mid-1970s, helped considerably on its way by the high exchange rate of the pound produced by

Thatcher's policies during 1979-81. By the beginning of 1982, the competitiveness of the UK economy was around 35 to 40 per cent below its 1975 level.

*Despite the devastating increase in unemployment, Thatcher has still not succeeded in reducing *real wages* to anything like the extent her strategy requires. Real wages after tax decreased by only 3 per cent compared to an increase of 17 per cent between 1977 and 1980.

*This ability of the working class to defend its real wages despite huge unemployment up until 1981, has had important effects on *profit figures*. The 10 per cent increase in 1981 must be set against a fall of 40 per cent (excluding the North Sea Oil sector) in the preceding two years.

To sum up then, the British economy was massively behind its competitors before Thatcher started to apply her policies. *The initial effect of Thatcherism has been to put British capitalism further behind than it was when she started.* It is this context which underlines how little the 1981 figures amount to in relation to what needs to be achieved, and how decisive it is for the British ruling class, having made substantial economic sacrifices to set out on the Thatcherite road, that these results can be maintained and improved upon over a long period of time.

This is precisely the point where Thatcherism and British ruling class politics in general face massive contradictions — and explain the scope of the political changes taking place in the country. British capitalism *cannot* rapidly catch up with its competitors and certainly not during the lifetime of one government. What is more, it cannot catch up while remaining permanently in a slump of the scale imposed by Thatcher. British capitalism must produce major productivity gains and depress the real wages of the working class over a period of many years. And it must do so not merely during economic downturns but also during the relative upturns they are designed to pave the way for.

The last time such an equivalent offensive had to be made on the working class, in the early 1920s and again at the beginning of the 1930s, the ruling class policy was spearheaded by the Conservative Party. This both inflicted a crushing economic defeat on the working class before and after the General Strike and increased simultaneously its political strength and vote — going from 38 per cent of the poll in 1922 to 54 per cent in 1935. Today however the ruling class offensive must be carried through under conditions where the Conservative Party faces much stronger working class opposition, and has slumped to record unpopularity in the opinion polls. Furthermore it is confronted with a Labour Party which, despite its losses, is electorally more consolidated than in this earlier period. It is this combination of economic and political contradictions which begins to pose the necessity for a major reorganisation of the political system.

Thatcherism and the working class

The improvements in the economy for the bourgeoisie during 1981 were achieved at the expense of the second largest fall in living standards and the largest rise in unemployment experienced by the British working class since the Second World War.

For the bourgeoisie to sustain this improvement for the necessary period of years to begin decisively to change its international position requires that the working class is unable to win back what it has already lost or to resist the bigger and unremitting attacks which will follow. What is more, not only must the working class not fight back during the downturn, when it usually does badly, but it must not fight back effectively during a future upturn either.

This last point is an extremely important one, not least because of two prevailing misconceptions on the left about the relationship between trade union struggle and unemployment. First, there is the view that there is a direct correlation between the absolute level of unemployment and reduction in the level of working class struggle. It is sufficient to point out that both

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the number unemployed and the number of days lost in strikes have been increasing consistently, albeit with ups and downs, since the mid-1960s to show that this is not an adequate explanation of real developments.

The second misconception is the somewhat bizarre one — which runs counter to all classic Marxist writing on the subject — that dramatic increases in unemployment should somehow radicalise the working class on the trade union field. (This is a quite separate and more complex issue than the argument that increasing unemployment may lead to a radicalisation on the political terrain which is dealt with later). The origins of this misconception lie in an unwarranted generalisation from the period 1970-72 when there was so great a surge of working class militancy that it carried through a period of sharply rising unemployment with no fall in strikes at all.

But leaving aside this one exceptional case, the whole history of Britain since the restabilisation of the economy following the Second World War, and indeed previously indicates that there is a regular and significant correlation between the onset and development of a major rise of unemployment and a fall in the number of working days lost in strikes. With the exception of 1970-72, there have been five such post-war surges in the rate of increase of unemployment:

(i) The onset of rising unemployment in 1956 saw a sharp drop in strike days but a revival to higher than previous levels in the period 1958-59 when unemployment was higher in absolute terms.

(ii) Rapidly rising unemployment in 1962-3 led to a sharp fall in strikes (initially disguised by a protest strike in engineering in 1962) but a recovery in 1964-5.

(iii) The year 1966 saw the introduction of the austerity recession of the first Wilson government and the start of rapidly rising unemployment. There was a drop in strike days lost which gave way to struggles at record post-war levels towards the end of the government's life.

(iv) By 1975-6, unemployment was rising rapidly and strike days fell sharply but recovered to reach a new post-war record level by 1979 despite a level of unemployment which had not declined.

(v) The rapid onset of unemployment in 1980-81 sent strike figures plummeting.

The importance of this point, and the reason for discussing it at such length, is that it shows the fall in strike struggles in 1981 neither to be part of an inevitable and unstoppable downward trend (as proponents of the 'unemployment ends struggles' school would have us believe) nor a dramatic change from the normal pattern of events which can only be explained by a major downturn in the class struggle (as those who overgeneralised from 1970-72 now argue).

Put in this context, the strike figures for 1981 fit fairly classically into the year's position in the economic cycle. Indeed, given the enormously high levels of unemployment, it is, if anything, surprising that the fall was not larger than it was. The working class does not struggle for the sake of it but only if it believes there is a chance of winning, for which the downswing of the economic cycle creates unfavourable conditions.

It is also important for assessing the trade union struggle, to note the general relationship between the level of real wages and the economic cycle which has prevailed in Britain (in particular since the 1960s). After usually suffering some slowdown or setbacks in the downturn of the industrial cycle, in each new upturn the section of the working class in employment has succeeded in taking back a large part of, or more than, what has been lost. (It must be stressed that we are here talking only of the wages of employed workers and not of winning back the jobs of the unemployed; unlike the former, the latter has never been achieved at the level of the whole working class simply by trade union as opposed to political struggle).

This can be easily illustrated by considering the period since 1974. The huge industrial upsurge of 1968-74 was broken by a

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combination of the austerity policies of the Labour government and soaring inflation and unemployment which created new and far more unfavourable conditions for struggle. The working class waited until the rate of increase of unemployment started to tail off in 1977 and actually decreased slightly in 1978 and 1979. The surge in strike figures in this period scored a considerable success as Table 4 indicates.

Table 4: Level of real take-home pay 1974 to 1979
(April 1974 = 100)

July 1974	105
July 1975	101
July 1976	103
July 1977	97
July 1978	104
March 1979	105

Source: Glyn and Harrison: *The British Economic Disaster*, Pluto Press, p117.

This surge continued into the first period of the Thatcher government with real disposable personal income increasing three per cent in the 18 months to the end of 1980 (*Economist*, 16 January 1982, p21). With the onset, over the last three years, of the savage downswing of the deepest economic cycle since the war, and as one would expect from all previous experience other than the wholly exceptional one of 1968-74, attempts to defend wages have virtually collapsed and days lost in strikes have plummeted. Real wages started falling sharply in the last half of 1980 and continued downwards throughout 1981. To maintain real post-tax incomes, workers would have required a 15.6 per cent wage increase in the year to November 1981; in fact, wages rose on average only 11.3 per cent. Furthermore, the rate of wage increases was consistently falling throughout the year and was down into single figures by the start of 1982. (*Economist*, 23 January 1982, p37). Real wages will fall far more sharply in 1982 even than in 1981.

But what should also be noted is that this fall in real wages is actually less than the one occasioned by the last Labour government's austerity incomes policies: the fall in real wages between late 1974 and the end of Labour's Phase II incomes policy in 1977 was at least ten per cent — in all probability the sharpest fall since the Industrial Revolution (Glyn and Harrison, p118).

Thatcher has achieved less than this, perhaps six or seven per cent by the end of 1982 (and this is based on the government's own projections) with a level of unemployment twice as high. Furthermore, she is just reaching the crucial point of her entire operation — the onset of an upturn in the industrial cycle.

The immediate situation of the trade union struggle

It is in this overall context that, for example, the much discussed question of the 1982 miners' strike ballot must be seen. While journals like the *Economist* expected the miners to strike in support of their pay claim and the government to capitulate to them, sections of the left thought it the end of the world when they did not. Apart from those who considered it a confirmation of their view of a major downturn in the class struggle (which they only arrive at because they confuse class struggle with trade union struggle) others attributed it simply to a betrayal by Gormley. But workers always have to overcome resistance and betrayal by their leaders if they want to fight. In the context of a particular union, the character of the bureaucracy is a relatively fixed element; it cannot explain why the miners fought in one year but not in another. The processes leading the miners to reject a vote for the strike reflected real processes taking place inside the working class and not just 'bureaucratic betrayal'.

The developments in the NUM in fact should not have caused such surprise. They are explicable in terms of the above analysis of the entire post war period. During the full downswing of the economic cycle no section of the working class has really fought to defend wages. The miners did far better than most but it would have been fairly optimistic to expect a major

wages offensive during this period, and equally impressionistic to fall prey to demoralisation because one did not take place. What should have been expected was the kind of steady politicisation and move to the left without major wage struggles which we have seen in the sweeping victory of Benn in the NUM's Labour Party deputy leadership ballot and in Scargill's resounding victory in the election for the union's new president.

On the field of mass struggle however, by far the most important event was the February 1981 struggle against the 23 threatened pit closures. The speed with which strike action developed against this threat took both the NUM leadership, and more importantly the Tories, totally by surprise. The 24-hour U-turn made by Thatcher on the closures was the most humiliating defeat suffered by this government at the hands of a trade union. This strike was a crucial index of the class struggle. A mass wages struggle was not objectively speaking a likely development from the miners at that point in the economic cycle. But if they had not fought to defend their basic conditions and jobs with all the industrial strength they possess, that would have indicated a really major downturn and defeat. It did not occur.

None of this should be taken as a justification for Gormley or a lapse into economic determinism. Not only may political conditions be more unfavourable for the miners next year, if for example other groups of workers are defeated in the meantime; but if the miners had voted for a strike this year, it is, as many bourgeois commentators thought, quite possible that the government would have had to surrender before it even got under way. On the other hand, if the government had decided to stick it out, a pay strike by the miners would have provided the focus for a major offensive struggle of the working class. Victory would have very probably broken the back of the Thatcher government. For that reason the struggle would have been unprecedentedly bitter and waged with enormous ferocity on both sides.

The fact that the miners did not vote for a strike on pay was therefore a setback. But it was neither a catastrophic nor, for precisely the above reasons, an inexplicable one — any more than a strike vote would have meant a total reversal of the class relation of forces and an advance to a 'revolutionary crisis'.

The miners reflect, in a relatively very favourable relation of forces, the general processes taking place in the working class today. At this stage of the economic cycle, and in the given political situation, certain layers of workers are prepared to enter defensive struggles against employers' attempts to make use of the downturn to launch offensives on speed-up and productivity. They are, however, not yet prepared to break through the resistance of the bureaucracy to launch a major offensive against employers and the government on pay.

This is shown not merely in the overall strike figures given earlier, but is confirmed by the most important disputes which have taken place in the last period.

★ At British Leyland, huge defeats were suffered throughout the downturn: indeed, given the depressed state of the company, they started even before it. The slight economic upturn, in this case reinforced by the introduction of the Metro, led, just before Christmas, to the first real moves in years towards a real struggle on pay by a major section of the workforce. This was not sufficient to overcome the tremendous campaign of sabotage by the bureaucracy but it was the closest run thing for a long time with key plants, notably Cowley, voting strongly for a strike and significant minorities for it elsewhere. It was followed, logically in view of economic circumstances, by the most determined fight against productivity and speed-up at Longbridge since the introduction of the Edwards plan. This was followed in turn by a major strike against redundancies in the truck division. Despite the defeats suffered this is still the first time for several years that any major fight back has taken place in British Leyland.

★ At Fords, a significant struggle against speed-up and the management's productivity drive continued throughout the

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recession. The well-organised and militant Halewood plant secured some important victories. Dagenham was defeated. As one would expect no major pay struggles took place during the economic downturn. The beginning of industrial upturn in the second half of 1981, was accompanied by the most significant move towards a pay strike at Ford since the struggle that smashed the last Labour government's wage controls in 1978. The final vote at the beginning of 1982 was very close despite an enormous campaign by the bureaucracy, and a whole series of plants voted against the national union leadership recommendation to accept the company's offer.

★ The ASLEF dispute was again an example of exactly the type of industrial struggle one would expect to see waged at this point of the economic cycle. It is indeed notable for the extreme determination with which it was waged by the train drivers, and the solidarity given them by other workers. It was also notable for the fierce determination of the employers to impose their will. It would be idle to expect in present economic conditions some massive struggle by rail workers to push up their wages; but their serious struggle on productivity does show that their underlying strength is not defeated.

The bulk of the working class does not enjoy the strength of the miners. The big majority of defensive struggles are lost. But the definite upturn in struggles since the middle of 1981 shows the real qualitative nature of the situation. Its overall development appears still to be following the pattern it has shown since the war, and more particularly since 1968: setbacks and defensive struggles in periods of economic downturn; fightbacks and regaining of lost ground in periods of upturn. It is this cycle which has both prevented the bourgeoisie finding any solution to its economic crisis and prevented the working class suffering any qualitative defeat.

This situation is of course not one for facile optimism. Over the long term, successive cycles take place within a relation of forces slowly moving against the working class on the economic field. Each downturn is more pronounced and each upturn requires a harder struggle to win back less of what has been lost. But it is simply impressionism to believe either that, in the present situation the ruling class can or has imposed a stunning once-and-for-all defeat on the working class which totally breaks its ability to resist, or, on the other hand, that the periodic upturns in the trade union struggle represent any kind of pre-revolutionary upsurge to overthrow capitalism. The working class in Britain is much too strong organisationally and socially to be rapidly crushed by the ruling class. The bourgeoisie is too strong to be overthrown by any outburst of economic struggles, no matter how militant, by the working class. The resulting interplay of class forces creates increasingly severe fluctuations in the class struggle with great victories for one side being met with counter-offensives from the other.

Battles are getting more and more bitter with greater and greater stakes involved. As Table 5 shows, there has already been a dramatic trend towards fewer but bigger and longer strikes since the early 1960s; a trend which is undoubtedly the direct result of high unemployment and employers' determination to resist wage demands: workers need to struggle much longer in the economic conditions of the late 1970s and the 1980s than they did prior to the onset of mass unemployment — a fact which discourages many workers, especially in smaller companies or workplaces, from going into struggle.

Table 5: Percentage of strike days lost in strikes costing 200,000 worker-days or more

1960	1965	1970	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
8	18	33	14	—	31	41	77	74

Source: Beecham *Updating the Downturn*, International Socialism 14, Autumn 1981

As the trade union struggles get more bitter and the fluctuations of gains and losses by each class become more extreme, the whole process is becoming increasingly intertwined with the

major political crisis which the failure to resolve the situation in its own interests is creating for both classes. The end result will be an enormous explosion and a decisive confrontation on the political field which will determine the relation of class forces for a considerable period.

But we have by no means arrived at this situation yet, nor will we in a short time span. Thatcherism has *not* broken the resistance of the working class and there is no reason to expect that the present upturn will not (and given that the recession out of which it is developing is far deeper than in previous post-war experience, it is to be expected that there will be a longer than normal delay) give rise in the medium term to a real attempt by the working class to defend and win back losses in real wages. This will in turn create yet another intensification of what will undoubtedly prove a *prolonged* crisis of British capitalism.

Thatcherism and the SDP

This now brings us to the real core of the problems facing the British ruling class. The key to Thatcher's policies and their risks and possibilities for the ruling class lies not in economics but in *politics*. It is here, and not in terms of some non-existent economic irrationality, that the contradictions of Thatcherism are concentrated. In *Labour at the Crossroads* Geoff Hodgson argued that: 'There is no clear economic rationale to monetarism.' But Thatcherism is perfectly rational and coherent for the ruling class given one set of assumptions concerning the political relation of forces between the classes in Britain. It is totally irrational and even disastrous given another. If the types of cuts in living standards and conditions imposed by Thatcher could be maintained during an economic upturn and over a long period of time then the ruling class would have succeeded in something very fundamental indeed. It would have brought about a major and permanent shift in the economic relation of forces between capital and labour in Britain.

On that basis, of course, of a real *qualitative* defeat of the working class, British capitalism could begin to catch up with its rivals at last. *Such a situation would however mean, presuppose and require a complete transformation of the political situation in the country.*

A defeat of the working class on this scale, the greatest since the 1926 General Strike, would necessarily have to be carried through and take place at every level of society. It could not be 'confined' to economics. The ability of the working class to resist would have to be broken in the economy, in society, and, above all, in their concentrated expression in politics.

This is what marks Thatcher out as a radically new type of Prime Minister in recent British history. She has seized the nettle that it is *politics* which is the key to the solution of the internal economic problems facing the British ruling class. Her predecessor Heath did this in the field of international relations in embarking on a major reorientation of foreign policy away from total subordination to the United States and towards alliance with the EEC: but he pursued a traditional 'technicist' economic policy internally — embarking on a major deflationary policy in response to unemployment in 1971-72 for example.

Thatcher has carried the idea of politics being the directly determining question into internal economic issues as well. Her extreme deflationary policies have an internal *political* logic. *She believes that by these means the resistance of the working class can be decisively smashed so that even in any subsequent economic upturn it will not fight to regain what it has lost.* She believes it is possible to bring about a *permanent* shift in the relation of forces between the ruling class and the working class to the favour of the former sufficient to begin to catch up with Britain's imperialist rivals. This is the political assumption on which Thatcher's economic policies make full sense.

If, on the other hand, Thatcher *does not* succeed in bringing about such a major shift in the relation of class forces against the working class than her policies are indeed incoherent and irrational from the point of view of the key sectors of industrial

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Preparing for battle with the working class

capital. She will have radically deflated the economy, permanently reduced the manufacturing base of the country, created innumerable bankruptcies, in order simply later to see the working class take back what it has lost. Under these circumstances the ruling class would have no serious alternative but to dump Thatcher and at least temporarily find a different tactic for dealing with the situation.

It is this *political* question, which relates to the overall relation of class forces, which explains the divisions within the ruling class and the Tory Party which opened up over Thatcher's course. She has been referred to as an extremely 'doctrinaire' and 'theoretical' Prime Minister. This is false. She is in fact simply an extremely *political* one. It is the political risks which she is taking which create the divisions within capital over her policies.

Divisions inside the ruling class

The initial period of Thatcher's government posed no major problems for all the different sectors of the ruling class to unite behind her. But they supported her for different reasons. Banking capital, concentrated in the City of London, had a direct and continuing economic interest in her policies. Soaring interest rates to enforce her monetarist policies created record bank profits. Barclay's Bank at least temporarily overtook its US competitors to become the largest bank in the world. Banking capital also benefited from other aspects of Thatcher's

policies — notably the complete decontrol of foreign exchange and the high exchange rate of the pound against other currencies — which opened up major new opportunities for foreign investment and foreign operations.

These benefits became so large that in the budget of 1981 the government was forced to introduce a nominal tax on 'excess' bank profits; this, of course, only touched a small part of their gains.

To give some idea of the scale of banking capital's direct benefit from Thatcher's policies we need only note that the average real profit on British manufacturing capital by the first half of 1981 was down to 2.25 per cent. In contrast interest payment on seven-day deposits with banks was 14 per cent at the beginning of 1982. In short it is over five times as profitable to put money in a bank as to invest it in industry! No wonder that manufacturing investment fell 15 per cent in real terms from an already historically depressed starting point during 1979 (*Economist*, 19 January 1982, p21).

Under these circumstances, of course, banking capital is fully satisfied for the present policies of Thatcher to continue more or less indefinitely. It is only some political event, a sign that the government was losing control of internal political stability, that would lead the powerful British banks and financial institutions to want a major change in the government's line. Banking capital is a long term *structural* supporter of

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'Thatcherism'.

The situation for industrial capital, however, is much more conjunctural and depends on the relatively short term development of the situation. In particular its relation to the Thatcher government depends on *politics* and the overall relation of class forces. Clearly, like banking capital, industrial capital hopes that Thatcher will succeed. As the crucial test of the upturn has not yet arrived, it would be foolish indeed to withdraw its support before at least the first substantial results become evident. But with so many risks in the Thatcherite strategy it is not surprising that the more farsighted representatives of the capitalist class are forced to prepare other alternatives.

The Social Democratic Party

It is at this point that the SDP-Liberal Alliance enters ruling class strategy. Its significance for the British ruling class has to be approached not through the superficial indices of opinion polls but through the much more basic question of capital accumulation and its interrelation to the political system in Britain.

As we have already noted *all* major sections of the British ruling class supported Thatcher during the period of downswing of the economic cycle. *All* will continue to do so of course as long as she continues to have success in attacks on the working class. The Tory 'wets' have been more quiet of late not out of changes in ideas but simply because Thatcher has had some successes in 1981. Ruling class opposition is the *effect*, not the cause, of successes against Thatcher.

Banking capital, as we have already seen, has a permanent structural interest in undiluted Thatcher-type policies. Industrial capital however faces the threat that any serious working class resistance will lead to the collapse of Thatcher's strategy amid major internal economic and political contradictions. Furthermore it is far too risky at present to accept the threat of the election of a divided and unreliable Labour government. The role of the SDP-Liberals is to create the possibility for the imposition of a more organisationally and politically flexible system of bourgeois governments which can be operated in periods not only of economic downturn but also those of relative upturn.

It is radically false to believe that the bourgeoisie is primarily concerned with the formation of an 'Alliance' government after the next election. Not merely do the SDP and Liberals realistically have little chance of doing so, but an SDP-Liberal government would be institutionally weak, unstable, and liable to collapse rapidly leaving bourgeois politics in crisis. The SDP-Liberals are not going to replace either the Tories or Labour, and their 40-45 per cent standing in the opinion polls gained at the end of 1981 is an historical accident. The Alliance parties will in all probability be the *weaker* force after both the major parties.

What is more the SDP-Liberals are well aware of this. They are the first significant parties in British history to campaign explicitly on the basis that even if elected their first action would be to introduce a change in the electoral system that would ensure they never had a majority again! The introduction of proportional representation would lead not to an SDP-Liberal government but to a permanent situation of *coalition* government, with the SDP-Liberals as the 'permanent' brokers and thereby a key link in ruling class policy.

There is no doubt what the ruling class would *like* to achieve with the SDP: for it to replace the Labour Party as the alternative to the Tories. If Thatcher can hammer the working class economically and the SDP hammer Labour politically, then indeed the ruling class would have taken an enormous step forward in radically reshaping the situation in Britain. The role of the SDP-Liberals would then be simple. If Thatcher's attacks were basically working, but simply lacked a small element of electoral support, then a Conservative-Alliance government, probably with a new Prime Minister, would continue Thatcher's policies essentially unchanged.

If however Thatcher's policies should crash amid mounting

working class resistance then the Alliance also plays a crucial role — only this time not in alliance with the Tories but with *Labour*. The programme of such a government would be carrying through a major programme of wage controls, implicitly accepted for example in the recent TUC *Programme for Recovery*. The 'job creation' part of that plan, in which the bourgeoisie has no interest, would of course never be implemented and in practice would be abandoned even by the labour bureaucracy.

We can therefore clearly summarise the situation of ruling class strategy in Britain today. At present all sections of the ruling class are united behind Thatcher and will be as long as she has relative successes. It is therefore against Thatcher's government that the chief attacks of the labour movement must be directed. But the more farsighted representatives of the ruling class understand that there is little chance of her policies succeeding over the timescale required. Other more flexible alternatives must also be prepared. Hence the SDP, and its alliance with the Liberals. It plays immediately the role of the tool in weakening any possibility of Labour winning the election. More strategically it lays the basis for a more flexible system of bourgeois political domination.

The SDP-Liberals, along with reorganisation of the electoral system, therefore provide a neat potential way of tying together political and economic strategy for the bourgeoisie. In periods of downturn, a simple deflationist Tory, or Tory-dominated coalition government can be put in place and direct alliance with the trade union and labour bureaucracy ignored. In any economic upturn where the working class fights back, an SDP-Labour coalition could attempt to hold back living standards through an incomes policy to make the work of the next Tory/coalition government easier. Meanwhile, because it would have to bear the main responsibility for policing the policy, Labour would decline in popularity even more than the SDP in such a coalition, weakening the working class politically as well as economically. Meanwhile preparations for such coalitions, or simply threats of SDP gains, would powerfully reinforce the right wing inside the Labour Party and trade union bureaucracy — as indeed they already have done.

Conclusion

The next years are of crucial importance for British politics and the workers' movement. The labour movement however continues to be extremely unprepared for what is coming. Large parts of the Labour left and the Labour leadership as a whole continue to think that Thatcherism will collapse under the impact of its *internal* economic contradictions. They orient to the very policies, notably wage controls, that are the backbone of the future coalitionist politics with the SDP. They watch the latest fluctuations of opinion polls in the hope that the SDP will go away of its own accord, rather than waging a real fight against it.

The axes of such a fight flowing from the above analysis can be summed up in four points:

- 1) Thatcherism will *not* collapse because of its own internal problems or resistance from the ruling class. It is only mass action against it, with the final aim of bringing it and any future Tory government down, that will end it.
- 2) In order to prepare itself for this struggle and against the ruling class manoeuvres which will surround it, the labour movement has to completely reject any coalition with the SDP and the policies, above all wage controls on which it would be based.
- 3) As the alternative to the de facto projects of coalition with the SDP and Liberals the left inside the labour movement has to develop a real socialist policy which it both fights for now and seeks to pledge a future Labour government to.
- 4) Building a mass campaigning, democratic Labour Party and movement which fights for these goals.

It is out of these struggles combined with the immense clashes in world politics that a real revolutionary socialist alternative in Britain will be built.

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LESSONS OF SOLIDARNOŚĆ

JEAN-YVES POTEL

Resistance to martial law in Poland continues. Inevitably the Polish workers are assessing the events of the last 18 months to prepare the next wave of struggle against the bureaucratic regime.

In the introduction to a new Pluto Press book *The Summer Before The Frost* Jean-Yves Potel assesses the debates within the Solidarnosc leadership prior to the military crackdown.

Inexorably, the movement began increasingly to pose the question of power. In August, Jacek Kuron had noted: 'One senses a terrible impatience, which is becoming more and more acute, a feeling that people can no longer tolerate what is going on. For a lot of people this means that the time has come to challenge and overturn the authorities'. And in September, Jan Litynski wrote: 'At this moment, everybody is perfectly well aware that the authorities are not going to change by themselves, and that it is up to us to do it.' However, at this moment the tactics adopted by the Solidarity leadership showed their inadequacy. Bujak, president of the union's Warsaw branch, pointed this out in August: 'Our movement is growing weaker (...) Union members do not understand the tactics adopted by the leadership (...) I realised this when I went to a meeting in Ursus. It was only when I said that all this self-management activity was leading to taking power, that people understood and said OK (...) At the moment, people are waiting for a clear programme.'

In effect, the Solidarity leadership saw the building of self-management as their only means of winning economic power and enabling the country to emerge from the crisis. But the leadership was divided as to the concrete forms which, at a political level, an agreement with the government could take. Furthermore, the self-management movement was developing too slowly. Ten days before the coup d'état, *Tygodnik Solidarnosc* published a balance-sheet of the self-management experience. Jacek Merkel explained that the movement had affected only between 15 and 20 per cent of enterprises...

A confrontation became unavoidable, and Jaruzelski was thought more readily able to take it on than Solidarity. He anticipated a certain amount of support within the 'silent majority' and the mass of 'don't knows', which had undeniably grown in number during those final weeks. A sizeable section of the population was worn out and fed up with the shortages of goods, as well as being disappointed in Solidarity and confused by government propaganda. Some began to look to the army for a restoration of order. For example, an opinion poll carried out by the union in Warsaw in mid-November, showed that 26 per cent of people supported the abolition of the right to strike being proposed by the central committee of the PUP. And, compared with the previous opinion polls, this was an enormous number. Finally, Jaruzelski's reservations (if reservations there were!) were quickly dispelled under the combined pressure of the hawks within the Party apparatus, and the Soviet Union.

According to official Soviet sources, the general had outlined his plan to representatives of the Warsaw Pact on the occasion of three meetings at the beginning of December. The first in Moscow, with Warsaw Pact defence ministers; the se-



cond in Bucharest, with ministers of Foreign Affairs; and the third in Prague, with the heads of the various press agencies. 'Thus a three-tier military, diplomatic and ideological operation had been set in motion, as the first step towards martial law. Marshal Khulikov apparently had the twin tasks of overseeing the execution of the operation, and of giving orders to the two Soviet divisions stationed within Poland's borders.'

At the political level, the military operation was conceived in two stages, with a view to aggravating dissension within the union. On 4 November, Jaruzelski began negotiations with the Church and with Solidarity, towards an agreement on national unity, but he insisted on putting forward positions that were unacceptable, and he used the mass media, of which he has a monopoly, to spread slanders. He had a precise objective: to make Solidarity publicly responsible for the breakdown of negotiations. On 22 November, as if to ally suspicions, he ended the deployment of the special military brigades which since October, had been testing the tension throughout the country. On 24 November Marshal Khulikov arrived in Warsaw, and on 27-28 November, the general announced to the plenary session of the central committee that the right to strike was to be suspended, and that he would be given exceptional powers.

From that moment on, events moved very quickly, and the army went directly onto the offensive. The Solidarity leadership was caught up in the trap of negotiations on 'national unity', but they very soon realised the nature of the confrontation which was being prepared. On 3 December, in Radom, the union's presidium saw the coming clash as unavoidable, and on 11-12 December, the national commission adopted, virtually unanimously, a programme to counter it: an immediate general strike if parliament voted Jaruzelski exceptional powers; a referendum on self-management before 15 February; and free elections. But it was too late. In the night hours of Saturday-Sunday 12-13 December, the army began its wave of arrests and Jaruzelski proclaimed martial law...

So I would like to turn my attention to the question of the apparent disarray within the union's leadership. I see its main cause in that extraordinary disjunction which has been revealed

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during the 16 months of struggle — between, on the one hand, the strength, the dynamism and the determination of this social movement, and on the other hand, the weakness and lack of strategic preparedness of its leadership. The two aspects of this paradox must be analysed as they interact with each other; so as to avoid false explanations, such as those which accuse the union of bureaucratisation, Catholicism or nationalism ...

The lack of political preparedness of the union's leadership for the military clamp-down was recognised explicitly by one of Solidarity's main leaders, Zbigniew Bujak, who has managed to go underground. In an interview with the *New York Times*, he says: 'It was becoming clear that the authorities were preparing for a sizeable operation against the union (...) I would never have imagined that the whole national commission and Lech Walesa could be thrown into prison.' Obviously, these illusions must be related to the power that Solidarity had acquired within society as a whole. No doubt, success had gone to the heads of the leadership. But, more importantly, these illusions were the result of the strategic orientation adopted by Solidarity. Consensus on this orientation was maintained up till the decisions taken in October 1981 by the Solidarity leadership to participate in a 'social contract' which was to compromise three inseparable elements: 'an anti-crisis agreement' which would be 'the first proof of a cooperation between the authorities and society'; 'an agreement on economic reform', which would require a 'cooperation in the direction of radical change'; and an agreement on the establishment of a self-managed republic which would outline 'perspectives and means towards the democratisation of the institutions of public life'.

It was on this point, that the principal divergences emerged. The nub of the problem was how to define the precise content of the social contract. Given the level of people's mistrust of the PUWP, signed agreements tend to be seen in the same light as the peace treaties of yesteryear between white Americans and Indians. They are only put into force if the balance of power requires it. Furthermore, the choice of a number of priority objectives — economic reform, self-management, civil liberties, etc — increasingly led Solidarity's national leadership to seek to concentrate its forces and limit local conflicts. The latter far from being the work of undisciplined militants, were, most of the time, natural reactions to objective situations. Thus, ever since the Bydgoszcz events, the trade union leadership faced a permanent dilemma: either it took up an intransigent position in every single conflict, and in that event ran the risk of bringing about a national confrontation over quite minor issues; or it conserved its strength for dealing with those few basic points. In conditions such as these it is easy to understand the problems and difficulties which the union was experiencing in developing its policies, from the summer onwards. In a sense, the confrontational outcome initiated by Jaruzelski was unavoidable.

Discussions on the national commission and within the Inter-Enterprise Strike Committee dwelt on the question of how to get out of this dilemma, and how, practically, to define the movement's new objectives. People were more and more convinced that, without a firm position on the crucial question of power, it would not be possible to go forward and embark on an effective set of economic reforms. Two positions dominated this debate. The position of Jacek Kuron, supported by Lech Walesa, was conceived within a continuity of the union's original orientation. It was a pragmatic conception. They should move forward step by step. The union should aim at reforming the system, and should remain within the framework of the Gdansk agreements. Poland's geo-political situation could not be modified in the short term. Thus, the government would have to be forced into an agreement.

Concretely, Jacek Kuron envisaged the formation of a 'Government of National Agreement'. During a debate in Warsaw in mid-September, he explained: 'The problem is as follows: can we put forward a programme of gradual reform, and presume at the same time that power will remain in the same hands as at present? Is it not likely that such a reform would prove impossible? One has the impression that this is

what life teaches us (...) Even if the realisation of a programme of reforms from the base were to prove impossible, we would have to gather the whole of society around this programme, because only in this way would everyone come to see the authorities as being responsible for the confrontation, and if it should come to conflict, the government would very soon lose, as happened at the time of the Bydgoszcz events. One could then set up a Government of National Agreement, which would set the date for elections, and would introduce reforms. (...) The USSR would be obliged to accept such an agreement. This government would be formed "in the heat of the moment" and would have the support of the Party, the church and the union.' ...

The counter position, while not explicitly breaking with the general framework of pragmatism, felt that the only adequate response to the provocations and incompetence of the regime was to build the self-management movement, and to defend it by 'active' strike action. This tactic was included in the electoral platform of the leadership elected on the occasion of the Lodz regional congress, in July 1981. It contained a clearer vision of the government's manoeuvres. Shortly after the coup d'état, one of the Lodz leaders, Zbigniew Kowalewski, outlined the position: 'We were convinced that the regime was evolving in the direction of a military dictatorship, but we thought that it would be a long-term process. We thought that, as Solidarity went on growing and concentrating its forces, the regime would harden into the form of what we called a "military-police" dictatorship. Thus we *did* envisage the possibility of a coup d'état, but in a more distant future. We thought that the dictatorship would use every means in order to guarantee its legality, for example, by voting measures through parliament to support it; and in our view, any such voting in parliament would still be subject to the existing balance of forces. In short, we thought that we still had time left to prepare ourselves.'

After the police evacuation of the firemen's college in Warsaw on 2 December, the Lodz militants were of the opinion that: 'The country was entering a second revolutionary situation. (...) Within the rank and file there was a general feeling, not of frustration, but of the necessity of taking over the management of our own affairs. It is significant that at that stage, the idea of the "active strike" which we had put forward in August, was taken up at the base. An "active strike" means that strike committees take over power within the enterprises, as well as the control of production and distribution: in other words, a seizure of economic power by the working class within the framework created by Solidarity and the self-management movement. The inquiries which we carried out among trade unionists have shown that 65 per cent of workers were in favour of the "active strike" as a means of radical struggle, and that only 12 per cent were in favour of a general strike. In the large enterprises, the number of workers supporting the "active strike" rose to 80 per cent.' In mid-November, the idea began to spread to the whole country, and the National Commission meeting of 12 December adopted it as a principle. But it was too late. So, there was an orientation at hand which seemed more effective against the regime's threats, but it was too slowly adopted as an alternative. Furthermore, there was a lack of clarity as to its likely political outcome. Was this orientation expected to lead to a seizure of power, or to an agreement with the government dominated by the Party?

Finally, and this is probably the greatest weakness of this revolutionary process, the various political issues were governed by an overestimation of the extent of the regime's crisis, and an overestimation of the movement's strength. Following the army take-over of 13 December, any resurgence of the Polish revolution will require its leaders to undertake a clear reassessment of this question. The stakes here are high, inasmuch as this movement has raised hopes throughout the Socialist bloc; and any advance of democratic and self-managed socialism within those countries will depend, in large part, on the lessons that are drawn from the Polish experience.

Industrial Features

THE LAURENCE SCOTT STORY

For nearly a year 650 engineering workers at the Laurence Scott factory in Manchester fought for their right to work in a trail-blazing struggle that still inspires militants throughout British industry. Pete Clifford, Phil Penning and Patrick Sikorski tell the story and draw some conclusions.

'We want to be Manchester workers not Doncaster Rovers', said the placards that went up outside the Laurence Scott factory on 24 April 1981. The 650 engineers there, faced with the prospect of their factory being closed on 10 July had said 'no' to their new owner Arthur Snipe of the Doncaster-based Mining Supplies. Ten months later it took a 500-strong army of police, spearheaded by the Tactical Aid Group (the Greater Manchester SPG) to finally smash up what had been one of the most bitter and hard fought trade union struggles in recent years.

After the strike was finally broken, the *Daily Mirror* described Snipe as 'Britain's toughest boss'. But the real reasons for the defeat were succinctly put by Denis Barry, the works convenor and strike committee chairperson: 'We were defeated by the national union leadership and the police, not by Snipe.' With great determination the strikers defied the decision of the AUEW engineering union leadership to withdraw official backing from the strike in July 1981. In the heat of the struggle they combined the best traditions of rank and file solidarity with new ways of political campaigning in the industrial unions.

Only by breaking this new ground — highlighted most dramatically by appearing with Benn on his deputy leadership election platforms in front of meetings of thousands — were the Scott's workers able to fight on after July. With all illusions in the full time leadership gone and their eyes firmly on the rank and file as the only guaranteed source of solidarity, the Scott's workers campaigned up and down the land. But they never made the mistake of attempting to bypass the official structures. As a result many labour movement figures were forced to support resolutions, give donations and sign statements, however reluctantly.

A Laker-style boss

Arthur Snipe is the type of get-rich-quick 'Freddie Laker' style boss that Thatcherism has promoted. His own company Mining Supplies took over the Scott's group for £5.8m in a 'dawn raid' when it was valued at £18.7m. Like Mining Supplies, Scott's mainly produced machinery for the Coal Board. Snipe's aim was to grab the group, rationalise and remove a competitor and boost his own profits. For his plan to succeed the strong union organisation at the profitable Manchester factory had to go. Snipe claimed there was nothing unusual in closing the factory. 'Factories are closing every day', he declared.

With unemployment at 3 million Snipe had a point. Employers like Snipe have managed to get away with this due to the lack of any fight from the national union leaders. In the '60s and '70s before the current slump, factory by factory action could yield results. But from the time of the IMF intervention and Labour's Social Contract a certain reluctance to confront the Tories has arisen in the absence of fighting national policies and leadership.

In September 1980 engineers' leader Terry Duffy told his members in a special pamphlet on unemployment to rely on his good relations with the Tories. In a 21 point programme his advice to engineers was first of all: 'Do nothing which would further reduce your companies' competitiveness'. As a result

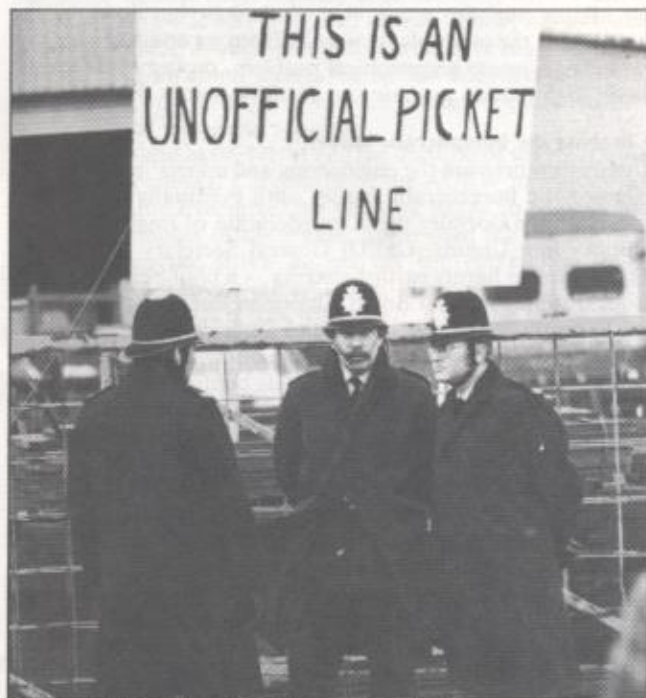


Photo: PETE GRANT

Doncaster Rovers supporters backing Snipe

during Duffy's term of office the industry as a whole had lost 600,000 jobs in the two years up to 1981.

Snipe was taking on a factory with a tradition of strong rank and file leadership. First to occupy in the engineers' sit-ins which swept the Manchester area in 1972, the stewards had forced the pace in the area on wages and conditions. When faced with closure the workforce took their union's policy of opposing closures at face value. Local union officials, including John Tocher, AUEW divisional organiser, had backed the sit-in, giving the workers confidence that the union would stick by them.

But Snipe wasted no time. He moved onto the attack hoping to turn the minority opposed to the strike into a majority. First he said he wouldn't pay their redundancy money. Then he sent threatening letters to each worker's home. And finally he paid the redundancy money with an announcement of the immediate closure of the factory. All these manoeuvres simply hardened the resolve of the workforce who were soon unanimous in backing the strike. The stewards organised all the workers on a rota basis to ensure their involvement in the sit-in and from this solid base were able to build unity against Snipe's scare tactics. They knew that with £2¼m worth of motors in the factory they had some strength. Activists were sent out across the country to gather support and the AUEW's National Committee was lobbied. National backing for a factory dispute was won in record time.

The strikers began to meet stewards from local factories who had been involved in fighting redundancies, especially those from Gardner's who had recently won a seven week long fight against management's attempts to sack several hundred workers. They had also made an important breakthrough by winning a worksharing agreement to avoid further sacking attempts. But there were big differences between Gardner's and Scott's. Hawker Siddley, the owners of Gardner's, wanted a slimmed-down workforce, not a complete closure. With a bulging export-led order book they did not want a long dispute. But Snipe was prepared to sit it out.

The strikers knew they would be in a stronger position if they could affect Snipe's whole operations. The stewards formed an Action Committee headed by Denis Barry to plan the extension of the fight to the Doncaster factory of Mining Sup-

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plies. John Tocher had arranged a meeting between the then convenor Bob Penchion and Yorkshire miners' leader Arthur Scargill. Scargill side-stepped. He agreed to black but only if the Mining Supplies group as a whole was shut down by the AUEW. As the other plants were in Blantyre and Norwich this presented a severe geographical problem, on top of which the union organisation at these two plants was very weak.

Climbing the bureaucratic ladder

Discussions between the engineering and miners' union leaders climbed the bureaucratic ladder until eventually the miners' president Joe Gormley met Confederation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Unions (CSEU) General Secretary Alex Ferry. The result was hardly earthshattering — a phone call of protest from Gormley to Coal Board Chairman Derek Ezra about using firms run by people like Snipe! Snipe realised that the officials were not prepared to rock the boat. To extend the battle would involve them in a wholesale confrontation not only with engineering employers but also with the NCB, as blacking of essential machinery would lead to miners being laid off.

The strikers were getting more and more frustrated, so the action committee planned a two week campaign to launch a flying picket on the Mining Supplies parent factory in Doncaster to cut off essential supplies and close the plant. Union officials panicked. Picketing meant confronting not only Snipe, but also the Tories' Employment Act which had been in force for over a year. It had hardly been used against the unions. But leaders like Boyd and Duffy had used the threat of the Act to discipline their own ranks.

They first advised, then pleaded with and then threatened the strikers not to picket Doncaster. The officials claimed that they had persuaded Snipe to talk, but only on condition there was no picketing. But the strikers knew the stakes for Snipe were high and went ahead. Within days, the 200 strikers mobilised in the 24 hour picketing operation sixty miles from Manchester had brought Snipe to the negotiating table. Boyd and Duffy, anxious to end the strike, concluded a national agreement on 10 July in just six hours of talks which guaranteed virtually nothing. The factory was to be kept open on a 2 day week for three months and then the position would be reviewed. This was actually worse than the position before the dispute started when they had at least been promised a 5 day week for three months.

Boyd and Duffy, armed with this agreement, moved to break the strike. Boyd wrote to Tocher instructing that a mass meeting be convened to 'terminate' the strike. Timed to coincide with a court hearing brought by Snipe to evict the strikers from the factory, the meeting was to be held 5 miles from the factory itself. The workforce was in no mood to accept this. Out of the flying picket a stronger stewards' committee had been elected with Denis Barry as the new convenor. The stewards responded to the bureaucratic back door dealing with a fine display of democracy. As though inspired by Poland's Solidarnosc, mass meetings were held daily and the stewards' committee was opened to all those with proposals on how to fight.

The workforce voted with only 16 against to endorse the stewards' rejection of the agreement. To protect their future and their union organisation they wanted nothing less than a guarantee of no enforced redundancies. The strikers returned to the factory after lobbying the court hearing and agreed to ignore the court order for their eviction and to fight on.

Despite a letter from Tocher stressing the strikers' solidarity and urging them to reconsider, Boyd and Duffy were determined to ride roughshod over the dispute. They ensured that the AUEW Executive Committee endorsed their termination of the dispute, in flagrant contravention of the union's rule book which only gives this right to the members in dispute and their district committee.

The Scott's workers turned to their Engineering Union District Committee — Manchester North — for defence against Boyd and Duffy. A strong lobby of strikers ensured that a resolution of support was passed. But the Broad Left-

dominated district leadership claimed that apart from local support and protest resolutions they were powerless in the face of Boyd and Duffy. The District Committee maintained its support for Scott's until the end. But at no time did it mobilise the kind of backing needed to ensure the sort of victory needed by Scott's and every engineering worker. The same is true of the Manchester No 29 District Confederation of Engineering Unions.

Back to Roberts Arundel?

Back in 1968 some thousands of Manchester engineers had mobilised in support of the Roberts Arundel picket line. Then the shop stewards, in a situation of mass unemployment, could mobilise the rank and file on single factory issues simply by having a militant shop organisation. Today the stewards can still mobilise a minority. But to mobilise the majority round an issue like Scott's it has to be put in the context of building a mass campaign of direct industrial action for measures to solve unemployment, like the 35 hour week, and to defeat Tebbit's Bill. Outside of this it is understandable that with 4 million unemployed, workers won't risk the sack for a few mornings' picketing.

This big change has not come about because the stewards have ceased to organise in the factories. The class as a whole is undefeated and basic factory organisation remains intact. Where there have been some of the biggest setbacks, as in British Leyland, there has also been a layer of new young stewards coming forward to lead campaigns, such as that against the recent 4 per cent wage offer and then the four week 'tea break' strike over conditions. The problems at Scott's resulted rather from national political developments as the bosses successfully fought back against stewards' power in the mid-seventies.

In 1976 the hero of the Manchester stewards, Hugh Scanlon, together with Jack Jones, became the McNee and Anderton of Labour's Social Contract. Even two years into the Labour government's term of office the Manchester stewards had again mobilised thousands to another picket — this time at Automat's. Every factory in the Confed had a set day on which to mobilise. Scott's stewards decided to mobilise every day. But as Wilson, Callaghan, Scanlon and Jones preached the gospel of the 'national interest and tightening our belts' the hesitation and doubts crept in as unemployment slowly began to mount, speed-ups arrived and voluntary redundancies were called for. Then in 1977 Scanlon turned on the Heathrow engineers and the BL toolmakers.

The Broad Left leadership which had put Scanlon into power had no intention of rocking the boat under a Labour government by breaking with Scanlon and the Social Contract. The Communist Party was always the driving force behind the Broad Lefts. Their strategy of alliances with left bureaucrats like Scanlon left them helpless when the same people turned round and attacked the membership. Once the full timers get into power they will consistently pull up the ladder behind them unless they are constantly accountable to the membership and to fighting policies.

But the Scott's workers shrugged off these handicaps. The strikers obtained a statement of support from local MP Charles Morris. Using this and the resolution from the Manchester North District they turned outwards to break their isolation. All 2,600 branches of the AUEW were mailed and Labour MPs of all shades confronted over their attitude to this fight for the right to work. Support flooded in and 114 Labour MPs were signed up to back the struggle. Both Benn and Silkin, candidates in the Labour deputy leadership battle, were persuaded to visit the factory and identify with the fight.

Using this and a rising number of AUEW branches backing the struggle they produced 15,000 copies of a strike bulletin which was distributed through a series of nationwide tours, including special delegations to the TUC and Labour Party conferences. Linking themselves up with Penn, who acted as a focus for those who wanted to fight back they spoke from his

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platforms to strengthen their own fight. At several massive meetings, on the same platform as Benn, Denis Barry pointed the finger at the problem for the Scott's struggle, and for the lefts in the Labour Party — the trade union bureaucracy. Even Broad Left leaders such as Ron Halverson (National Chairperson of the Communist Party) and Derek Robinson had to speak on the Scott's platform.

The AUEW was divided down the middle with nearly half the union's 2,600 branches sending in protest resolutions to their executive. It became a big issue in other unions not directly connected with the dispute. At the Post Office engineer's special conference delegates backed a resolution on Scott's against the advice of their leadership. This national campaign of solidarity enormously strengthened the strikers' confidence and conviction not to buckle under the pressure from Boyd and Duffy. Not even letters from Labour's Chief Whip to MPs or the withdrawal of backing by 'left' union leaders such as Ken Gill, General Secretary of AUEW/TASS and Communist Party member, had any effect on the strikers.

Snipe sees his chance

Snipe was finding it very hard. In August the eviction by bailiffs had simply mobilised more support, then an attack by Tactical Aid Group police on the picket line to escort in management scabs failed, and offers from Snipe of 150 jobs back were firmly rejected. But with co-operation from the police and the silent support of Duffy and Boyd, Snipe began to up the stakes. On 4 November the picket line was broken by an SAS style helicopter raid with enormous police protection. Snipe's flying scabs enraged the labour movement. After a strong lobby Manchester North District Secretary Doug Daniels sent out a letter calling for blacking action in support of the strikers.

Sensing an opportunity to extend the fight, the strikers with help from unemployed trade unionists and the Right to Work Campaign relaunched the Doncaster flying picket. In the first two weeks it met with more success than was expected; rank and file miners' leaders across Yorkshire and Derbyshire pledged their support. By the end of the first fortnight 35 pits had agreed to black anything removed through the picket line. Once again Snipe's empire was shaking.

But Arthur Scargill maintained his earlier position that the whole group had to be stopped before he would call for official blacking. Scargill was running for the leadership of the NUM

and did not want a bust up with engineering union leaders. Meanwhile CSEU national officials were conducting a smear campaign against Scott's aimed at influencing miners' leader Gormley, who was very willing to instruct miners not to black. Transport union drivers were also instructed to cross the picket line. Once again union leaders feared that one successful struggle for jobs won through 'secondary' picketing could lead to a whole rash of 'copy-cat' struggles.

With no lead in the NUM and the decision of the right wing-dominated National Committee of the AUEW to endorse the position of the Executive, the blacking began to collapse and with it the impact of the picket. Snipe used the Employment Act to force the strike leaders off the picket line in the knowledge that they were no longer in a position of strength. The Doncaster picket was withdrawn. Knowing the picket at Manchester was still a weapon on their side the strikers opted to hit back directly at Boyd and Duffy. Nothing could be done in the union about the dispute itself after the National Committee decision short of leading a fight for removal of the right wing leadership. The strike committee chose this option and called under the union's Rule 14 for a ballot to remove the leadership — ten per cent of the branches were needed to back this. But Boyd wrote to Manchester North District Secretary Doug Daniels forbidding him from any further involvement with the strikers.

Snipe had a chance to make a new attack. But he had to move before the Rule 14 campaign got going. With the backing of a massive police operation costing an estimated £250,000, 500 police attacked the picket line on 16 February.

Appeals to local convenors for defence of the picket line failed to mobilise any more than a handful of militants from the local factories. Even if the Broad Left-dominated factory leaderships had wanted to pull their members out, the setbacks of the last few years for their strategy of waiting to get the right leadership for the union would have made it very difficult for them to pull it off. These defeats have built a real base in the unions for the right wing ideas championed by Boyd and Duffy. Many former militant stewards have dropped out or inevitably become more conservative.

Laurence Scott like the other nationally known struggles at Gardner's and Lee Jeans clearly took place well outside the framework of protest that all sections of the bureaucracy, supported by the Communist Party, decided was appropriate under the Tories. Led by militants in the factories these struggles broke sharply with the line of 'persuading Thatcher to change course'. The very meaning of their fight was: 'Enough is enough. We're going to force Thatcher and her bosses to change course, otherwise we lose our very livelihoods.'

As with other struggles such as Royal Pride and Schreibers in Manchester and Staffa in East London, the leaderships were outside the traditional Communist Party-led Broad Left tradition. That the struggle was eventually broken is a reflection not so much of any weaknesses on the part of the Scott's workers as *Socialist Review*, journal of the Socialist Workers Party suggests, but rather of the weakness in leadership of the labour movement. A growing polarisation by workers against the employers is pushing forward new leaders out of these sharp clashes. The old Broad Left is not structuring this. Rather the kind of approach that the Scott's stewards provided points the way — building a leadership which rejects the framework of compromise with the employers, which is consistently anti-bureaucratic and thoroughly democratic.

A fight by 650 engineers has shown just what is possible and has inspired rank and file workers across the land. That struggle for a new leadership is in the hands of a small minority at this stage but one that can increasingly pose a challenge to the employers. Building that new leadership will involve a struggle alongside Benn and the existing national focus of the left in the engineering union, the Broad Left, against the right wing — but a struggle based on action rather than the Broad Left's policies of subordinating struggle to bureaucratic changes.

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REDS

REDS, the Hollywood epic from Warren Beatty, depicting the relationship between John Reed and Louise Bryant, has played to millions of people in the United States. Its opening here has aroused a storm of controversy among the left and cinema critics alike. We publish two views.

Ric Sissons

Politics and popcorn

Reds is not an anti-communist film. Any movie that can sympathetically bring to the attention of millions the life and work of the author of *Ten Days That Shook The World* must be accorded a major plus.

Running for three hours twenty minutes the stormy relationship between John Reed and Louise Bryant is played out against the background of Greenwich Village and the Russian Revolution. It is beautifully shot by Vittorio Storaro — camera operator for Bertolucci's political classic *1900*. But the film is not without problems.

There is no explanation of why a young man from a wealthy, mildly progressive Oregon family who went to private school and Harvard should become a radical. Two events stand out as crucial and politically formative

for Reed: the 1913 silk workers' strike at Paterson, where Reed was arrested and imprisoned with Wobblies' leaders Bill Haywood and Carlo Tresca; and the weeks Reed spent in Mexico in 1914 reporting on the revolution. The film fails to mention either.

We are left with a fun-loving Reed having a good time in the Village with Louise Bryant recently arrived from Oregon. The serious political views and work of Reed and his friends, like Max Eastman, are downplayed, although his opposition to American involvement in the first world war and his strong view that profit was the rationale behind war is presented forcefully.

Drawn by events in Russia both Bryant and Reed headed for Petrograd. Here, in some moving, romantic, footage the revolution and the Bryant/Reed relationship find their zenith. Through this shared experience, as comrades and writers, their relationship reaches a passionate crescendo as the workers and peasants seize state power. Internationale. Intermission.

A bag of popcorn later Bryant and Reed are back in New York. Although the film ignores it, Reed was detained en route, in Norway, where the American consul refused him a visa.

The film records the lives of Bryant and Reed in 1918 and 1919, including the writing of *Ten Days*. But it fails to show the wave of repression against radicals and socialists which was sweeping the country. Eugene Debs, whom Reed met and admired, was sentenced to 10 years in jail, while 101 Wob-

blies, including Haywood, had been given prison terms of between 5 and 20 years and fines totalling \$2m. The left lived under the threat of violence. Reed found himself on trial under the Espionage Act, along with the other editors of the magazine *The Masses*.

To its credit the film does depict, with some accuracy, the split in the Socialist Party and the formation of the Communist Party led by Fraña, and the Communist Labour Party led by Reed. In an effort to secure the support of the Bolsheviks and the Communist International Reed returned to Moscow. The film records Reed's participation in the Second Congress of the Third International and the heated debates in which the Americans and the British found themselves in a minority over the trade union question.

Now, in the period up to the Second Comintern Congress, comes the most serious distortion of fact. Reed decided to return to America. In February 1918 he set off via Petrograd for Finland carrying among other things Lenin's introduction to *Ten Days* and 102 diamonds, a 'present' to help the cause of American communism. He was caught and imprisoned. Around this term of solitary confinement the film builds a dramatic episode in the relationship between Bryant and Reed. She can get no word on his fate and sets off for Finland. No communications pass between them.

After a terrible journey she arrives at the prison gates to be told he has been freed. She continues on to Moscow. Reed has lost contact with her. His telegrams to New York get





a leader of the Russian Revolution, at Reed's funeral

no reply. The tension mounts. Reed participates in the Second Congress and is then sent to Baku for the Congress of the Peoples of the East as a representative of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

When Bryant finally arrives in Moscow Reed is thousands of kilometres away. On the return trip the armoured, agitprop train is attacked and Reed throws himself into the fray. They win through. Zinoviev, Reed, et al arrive back. The train empties, the dead are carried away, the platform clears, and Beatty and Keaton fall into each others' arms.

Unfortunately the stuff of history was not like that. During the stay in the Finnish prison they were in contact all the time, as they were upon Reed's return to Moscow and during the trip to Baku. According to Alfred Rosmer, also on the Baku train, there was no attack. Finally, according to Reed's biographer, the reunion took place in Bryant's room at the Dielovoy Dvor. Pity. Nice story.

The film's conclusion is very moving with Reed dying of typhus and Bryant's overwhelming grief. At his funeral, not in the film, Alexandra Kollontai speaking for the Bolshevik Central Committee said: 'We call ourselves communists, but are we really? Don't we rather draw life's essence from those who come to us, and when they're no longer of any use to us let them fall by the wayside, neglected and forgotten? Our communism and comradeship are dead letters if we don't give ourselves to those who most need us. Let us beware of such communism, for it slays the best in our ranks, and Jack Reed was one of the best'.

Reed is the only American to be buried in the walls of the Kremlin. Warren Beatty's production of *Reds* will, at least, mean for some time to come Reed will not be 'neglected and forgotten'.

Geoff Matthews

The selling of *Reds*

It took Warren Beatty ten years to complete *Reds*. Trevor Griffiths, who withdrew from the film after the second draft, chose to remain credited as co-author of the screenplay. Explaining this decision in *Time Out*, he provided an insight into the film's production: '... the film has been kept honest to a degree I did not anticipate. And I don't mean that I think it was made by dishonest people, simply that I got some sense of the heat of Hollywood when you're making a movie, the incredible pressure, the extraordinary amount of dealing that has to be done. To generate any kind of purity from that process is a triumph, I think. Hats off to him to the extent that he's done it. It's his movie.'

Reds cost between \$32m and \$55m to produce and required a box office success the size of *Grease* or *Raiders of the Lost Ark* to break even. What were the terms of the deal? How did Beatty sell his film? Did he sell Jack Reed with it? I think he did.

Reds is packaged as a romance. Jack Reed's history becomes the love story of Jack and Louise Bryant, and in the process his politics are diminished by his personal life. The film shows Louise Bryant as consistently insipid. We are shown her sewing, cooking, supervising furniture removal after her marriage, and serving coffee while Jack has a political meeting. When she leaves the house she is usually embarrassed, inadequate, or simply a spectator. Only when she learns to accept Jack's advice does she begin to achieve some success as a journalist.

Her progressive ideas are made to seem a



John Reed

neurotic cover for her insecurity. As soon as Jack confesses infidelity, she rushes upstairs to pack her suitcase. Eugene O'Neill, a friend of Jack's with whom she has an affair, silences her with the accusation that she talks revolutionary politics with him before sex in order to absolve herself from guilt.

Opposite her, Jack Reed is played, in what Griffiths refers to as a 'wildly modest performance', as a genial, bumbling, American boy, who bumps his head on chandeliers, burns the dinner, and can't master the Russian language.

The fleeting impression of professional competence we are given of the reactionary alcoholic playwright O'Neill is incongruous. He has a strange stillness and solidity beside Jack and Louise.

The film looks through Louise's rounded eyes at the meeting which sends Jack as a delegate on his final journey to Russia. It sides with her uninformed polemic against the rift in the American left, and agrees with her that the most sympathetic version of Jack Reed is the artist and not the politician.

The facts of Reed's short life recall a similar, lesser, English figure — George Orwell. He left a life of privilege to report on Catalonia. The artistic flaws of *Reds* recall problems raised by Orwell's work too: the relation between the observer and the observed, between politics and literature, and the nature of history.

The only attempt to resolve these problems is made through the device of the witnesses — a succession of famous contemporaries recalling Jack and Louise with varying degrees of lucidity. Their anonymity is crucial. Who are they? What were they doing in 1917? What was their relation to the two protagonists? If we don't know, how can we judge the value of their testimony? They function as ghostly chorus figures, providing authenticity for the actors.

This is a distorted, ahistorical version of the past. Where is the indecision, conflict, and learning Jack Reed must have gone through. He doesn't develop, his life is polarised between political and personal — neither informs or influences the other. Where, too, are the voices of the thousands of workers who were on strike, who do remember these events — voices like those so tellingly used in *Rosie the Riveter*?

Above all, when are we shown Reed making choices, making his own future, instead of chasing a military wagon? Beatty reneges on the responsibility of understanding and interpreting the past, in order to let himself off the hook of acting responsibly in the present.

What do you expect from the maker of *Shampoo*?

British Features

THE CRASH OF SIR FREDDIE

JOHN HARRISON

The demise of Laker Airways was transformed by the media into a national tragedy. John Harrison examines the reasons for the downfall of Margaret Thatcher's favourite capitalist, Sir Freddie Laker.

Most industries are in trouble these days, and airlines are no exception. Nine of the biggest American lines lost a total of \$750 million last year. So Laker is partly just another victim of the slump. But the company always had a weak financial structure. Sir Freddie and his first wife put only £20,000 of permanent capital into Laker Airways — a small fraction of their wealth. So it has always been over-dependent on bank loans with fairly short repayment periods.

Laker's accounts were also 'massaged' to inflate profits. In 1973 Laker spent £267,000 on training air crews to operate new planes. The accounts deemed this money to have been spent over the next four years. Paper profits were thereby jacked up from £26,000 to £300,000.

Another device was the treatment of depreciation. Since capital assets must eventually be replaced, a portion of their value is rightly considered as costs every year. This is depreciation. The normal practice is to assume an asset life (say five years) and calculate depreciation correspondingly (say one fifth of the cost of replacement). Laker did this until 1973, assuming an aircraft life of about seven years. Then he switched to an approach based on flying hours (assuming, quite unrealistically, that planes only lose value in the air, not in hangars). This effectively doubled assumed life, halved depreciation and so boosted the bottom line of the accounts.

Laker played around with punters money too. Last March the accounts of his tour company, Laker Air Travel, showed a healthy £10 million in the bank, representing deposits made for holidays. A few days after the close of the financial year this money was paid into the parent company. The device is known in the trade as 'window dressing' — which is like describing a tar and feathers job as cosmetics.

So why did the banks lend over £400 million to a company with a chronic shortage of permanent capital and blatantly massaged accounts? Were they overwhelmed by Sir Freddie's patter — taken for a flight, so to speak? Laker certainly never underestimated his sway with bankers. When trying to bail the company out in August 1981 he remarked: 'I said to myself — Laker, you are an innovator. You have innovated the airline business. Now you must innovate the banking business.' The bankers tell a different tale. Several told the *Sunday Times* that they were under intense political pressure from the Thatcher government to lend Laker much more than made banking sense.

Laker's greatest financial foolhardiness was his cavalier attitude to exchange rate risks. Most of his debts were in dollars, while income was largely in pounds. If sterling rose against the dollar, Laker stood to make a killing. But if sterling fell, he would be in real trouble. He could have covered himself against exchange rate risks as most people in his position do. But he did not. In 1980 and early 1981 the pound rose against the dollar and Laker did well. In the year to March 1981 £1.5 million of the company's £2.2 million paper profit came from exchange rate movements. This may have seemed to Sir Freddie like money for old rope. But financial turbulence is as unpredictable as its aerodynamic equivalent.

Three months later, when the 1980-81 accounts were finalis-



ed, an 18 per cent fall in sterling against the dollar had effectively busted Laker. The bottom line had been transformed from a profit to a £30 million loss, and £200 million was owed for new planes. I remember an interview with Sir Freddie at the time. He seemed incoherent, insisting on a spurious distinction between 'real money' and the effect of currency movements. It was hard to know whether this was calculated dissimulation or ignorance about the importance of exchange rates. Certainly a top banker has attributed a key role in the Laker debacle to 'mismanagement of the business'.

A particularly bizarre episode in the affair is a 1978 meeting at Laker headquarters between Bernard Lathiere, a boss of Airbus Industrie, and Sir Freddie. Lathiere had flown in to sign a 'memorandum of understanding' on the sale to Laker of ten European Airbuses. But when he arrived there was no sign of the document he had drawn up. He was told it was being photocopied. As time dragged on he grew impatient; he was due in Paris for another meeting. Finally a copy arrived. It had clearly been retyped since it was no longer on Airbus Industrie notepaper. Lathiere quickly scanned and signed it. He failed to notice that Laker had altered the figures, significantly upping the 'launching aid' discount — a price cut for early buyers of a new type of plane. This escapade could have been lifted straight from the pages of a Paul Erdman thriller.

So much for the background to the crash. The story of the final fatal nosedive can be told very briefly. By August 1981 the game was effectively up. Laker was ridiculously overstretched debt-wise and the global collapse of the industry made it impossible to reduce debts by selling off some of the aircraft on order; planes were unsaleable except at knock-down prices. The fall in the pound was the straw that broke Sir Freddie's back.

But Laker does not give up easily. That month he and his wife blithely signed a set of accounts which included the amazing statement that: '...it is not practical to estimate the financial effect of the change in the American dollar.' In reality, Laker Airways could have survived only if millions of dollars had suddenly parachuted into its lap.

The costs of flying the Atlantic are horrendous. To park an aeroplane at Gatwick costs over £55 per hour. Landing a DC10 will set you back over £810 (if you put up; towards the end Sir Freddie did not). The direct costs of flying a skytrain from Gatwick to New York and back exceed £36,000. At around £200 for a round trip Laker needed to average 180 passengers per flight to break even. To cover overheads he needed to fill almost half the seats in his DC10s. Last summer he made the break even point. But by the second half of January the Gatwick-New York flights averaged only 125 passengers. Those from Manchester managed only 107. Laker began cancelling skytrains and the average dropped even further.

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Then the banks moved in.

More interesting than the crash itself is the public response. Saving Sir Freddie became a national mania. Dozens of people spontaneously organised appeals and money poured in. Senior citizens contributed from meagre pensions and unemployed workers dug into their redundancy pay. None of them had any real idea where the money would go or any adequate safeguards. Demonstrations were held and songs sung. The explanation is partly Laker's charisma. He is a self made wheeler-dealer whose story is a movie writers' dream. (The TV series *Airline* is loosely based on Laker's early days.) His father was a merchant seaman and his mother a scrap dealer. Freddie was dull at school. When asked his ambition in life he replied 'to be a millionaire'. His class mates laughed.

In 1945 he joined BEA, as did many wartime flyers. But he soon left. With the family savings he bought government surplus trucks, which he resold at a profit. Then he bought a cherry orchard, which he resold at a profit. Then he bought radio spares. There are no prizes for guessing what he did with those.

He made his fortune in the Berlin airlift. With £38,000 borrowed from a friend in a pub, he bought BOAC's fleet of 12 converted Halifax bombers. By the end of the airlift he owned 100 aircraft and 6,000 spare engines (which he melted down and sold to a saucepan manufacturer).

Freddie is flamboyant. The *Times* has described him as an 'airline buccaneer' and written off his 'unashamedly daredevil approach to business, his talent for flying right up to the legal limit of accepted practice, not so much to break the sound barrier as to extend it...' He fosters this image by feeding the media clever off the cuff quotes. Being wined and dined at Number 10 has helped. So has the knighthood.

But the main thing that has endeared him to the public is Laker Airways' image as a champion of the people. Sir Freddie may seem an unlikely person to front such an image. His origins may be humble but he has been very rich for a very long time. He and his first wife sold their airline in 1958 for £800,000 (worth £4 million at today's prices). Only £20,000 was ever put into Laker Airways. In 1979 the company bought a £650,000 yacht for his use. In 1980 the Laker's issued themselves £4.5 million worth of free shares.

His present financial position is unclear. The shares are worthless and much play has been made of the fact that his sixteenth century Tudor house is up for sale at £350,000. But his 1,000 acre farm, near Guildford, and his stud farm, with 24 thoroughbreds, near Epsom, are not on the market. They are worth about £2½ million. The key unknown is whether Sir Freddie has personally guaranteed any company.

In any event there is no evidence he has resorted to giros as yet.

Despite such handicaps, Laker has managed to cultivate a Comrade Freddie persona by clever use of populist rhetoric. This dates from the introduction of the skytrains, when he put himself across as a people's David fighting the Goliath of state bureaucracy. (Perhaps the lone spitfighter pilot is a more appropriate image). He also debunked some of the absurd mystique of air travel. The success of this image seems to have gone to Sir Freddie's head. By the summer of 1980 he was describing his new rates as the 'first truly democratic air fare in history'. Eighteen months later, when he was bust, he confidently announced that 'The People's Airline' would soon fly again. Well, maybe. If it does, I trust its slogan will be 'Fly the Red Flag'.

There is, of course, a grain of truth in the rhetoric. Otherwise it could hardly have got off the ground. Laker did play a key role in bringing down fares on transatlantic routes. If he had broken into Europe, as he intended, he could have crashed fares there too. Internal US flights are about one third the price of their European equivalents. The standby fare — Laker's real innovation — also cut out much of the inconvenience of charters, the only other cheap way to fly. And Sir Freddie flew ordinary people. My best memory of the skytrain is the at-

mosphere, which was nothing like a typical scheduled flight. There was not an expense account in sight and I was the only person reading the *Financial Times*. Kids were everywhere. It was like an outgoing holiday charter where people feel more at home with each other than with the prospect of flying. The trip was fueled by nervous exuberation and booze.

But that is only part of the picture. Laker did not pioneer cheap transatlantic fares. British Caledonian did with charters, which already accounted for a quarter of the traffic when skytrains took off. Laker was also only able to cut fares so much by sticking to more profitable routes. Most airlines overprice these to subsidise others. Disquiet has also been voiced about the long term effect of price wars on safety (10 per cent of airline costs go on maintenance), though Laker's own safety record is excellent.

Laker was certainly no man of the people when dealing with employees. Sir Freddie has always been virulently anti-union. Annoyance at spending time negotiating with trade unions influenced his decision to quit as managing director of British United Airways in 1965. In 1977 the transport union, TGWU, sought negotiating rights with Laker Airways for cabin crews. Laker refused. The TGWU went to the arbitration service, ACAS. But the company refused to co-operate and set up a staff association, the Laker Airways Cabin Attendants Association, and gave it sole negotiating rights. Forty per cent of the cabin crew were TGWU members at the time and an ACAS survey found that nearly 70 per cent of respondents wanted the TGWU to represent them. But Laker stuck to his guns. By 1979 half of the 550 cabin crew had joined LACAA. Staff associations had also been formed for flight crew, engineers and clerical staff. All had sole negotiating rights. Laker Airways never recognised a proper union.

Laker also paid below the going rate. In 1979 ACAS observed that: '...LACAA understood that the company worked on a much lower profit margin than its main rivals and was prepared to accept that this must inevitably affect the rate of pay the company was able to offer'. In 1981 some stewardesses earned a paltry £2,800, that is £2,000 below the British Airways rate. Not much trace of 'Comrade Freddie' here.

Will Laker get airborne again? Plenty of people are keen. It is not only small shopkeepers who want to see him fly into the Florida sunset one more time. Top bankers and financial whizz-kids are also gripped by a Battle of Britain spirit where our Freddie is concerned. The first to jump in was the Orion Royal Bank. Its rescue plan was simple. Debt servicing and repayment costs would be pruned drastically by turning much of the debt into share capital, and some multi-millionaire who fancied a flutter would put £35 million of new money into the company. This would have involved the banks taking enormous losses on their outstanding loans and continuing to back Sir Freddie. Serious financial commentators say that the plan stood less chance than a refugee column straffed by Messerschmitts. Many were on TV within hours of its launch, denouncing Orion for deluding Laker employees.

It is hard to decide what Orion was up to. Did it naively believe it could persuade the banks that the package was financially sound? Did it figure on enough political pressure to make the banks bail out Laker anyway, and reckon Orion might as well take the credit for putting the deal together? Or was the whole exercise simply a publicity stunt? The latest, and possibly more serious, potential backer is Tiny Rowland, head of the multinational conglomerate Lonhro, once dubbed 'the unacceptable face of capitalism' by Edward Heath. Tiny has since devoted much energy to trying to rebuild his image. Recent efforts have centred on a boardroom battle for control of Harrods. That is still his main concern. But bailing out Sir Freddie would be smart public relations.

So a wheeler-dealer denounced by Heath may well join hands with one feted by Thatcher. This shows how far the Tories have moved to the right. It also shows how wafer thin is the divide between the acceptable and unacceptable faces of our social system.

International Features

TURKEY: NATO'S DICTATORSHIP

TURGUT TAYLAN

Ten youths hanged, hundreds killed in military operations, seventy confirmed deaths in custody, tens of thousands of political prisoners, trade union activities banned and political parties outlawed. No, not Poland — this is the ugly record of eighteen months of army dictatorship in Turkey, a member of NATO. The silence of the capitalists in Europe and the USA is deafening. In an article recently received from inside Turkey, Turgut Taylan analyses the social forces involved in the Turkish coup, as the leaders of the militant union confederation, DISK, go on trial for their lives.

Turkey before the coup had one of the largest, and best-armed, leftist movements in the world, as well as a highly organised and militant working class and an extremely politicised Kurdish national movement (Kurds make up one fifth of Turkey's population of 45 million). The coup therefore was a massive setback for the working class internationally, changing the balance of forces in favour of imperialism in the entire region. This fact has not escaped the notice of the US administration. The US Defence Secretary, Caspar Weinberger, declared his country's intent to speed up their aid with the 'modernisation' of the Turkish army after his visit in December 1981; and announced the formation of a 'Joint Defence Council' to guarantee Turkish involvement in a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) unit for south west Asia — outside the official ambit of NATO.

For revolutionaries, events in Turkey once again confirm the principal thesis of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution: that in those countries 'peripheral' to the capitalist metropolises, the bourgeoisie cannot rule through the institutions of parliamentary democracy but is forced to rely on the most brutal repression to create the conditions for 'successful' capitalist development: South Korea, Taiwan, Iran under the Shah, the Phillipines, Brazil are the most prominent examples.

The Background

Military intervention is not an unusual phenomenon in the short history of the Turkish republic.¹ The foundation of the bourgeois republic itself in 1923 owed much to the active role of the ex-generals of the Ottoman Empire, and up until 1950 the country was ruled by the party founded by Atatürk, the leader of the bourgeois revolution, within the structures of a quasi-corporatist state. The passage to multi-party parliamentarism in the wake of the Allied victory at the end of the Second World War brought along with it a dialectic of constant oscillation between more democratic forms of bourgeois rule and episodes of military intervention, arising with startling regularity at the end of each decade, respectively in 1960, 1971 and 1980. Yet despite the apparent similarity of these three episodes, each military regime had a different social basis, expressed the domination of a different power bloc, and displayed a certain logic of its own. I will here restrict myself to an exploration of the historical situation leading up to the re-

cent coup of 12 September 1980, in order to assess the prospects for the future of Turkish society.

The immediate background to the coup was, of course, the widespread political terror that had taken Turkish society in its grip during the last few years. On taking power, the junta exploited this situation to the full for the ideological legitimisation of its regime. In this it attained considerable success, one that should not come as a surprise in a society where the toll of deaths for political reasons had reached some three thousand in the twenty months preceding the coup. Despite defensive retaliation by the left and some mindless acts of individual terror committed in its name, the overwhelming responsibility lay with the fascist National Action Party (NAP), which came to determine to a remarkable extent the development of the Turkish political scene in the years after 1977. In order to understand the strategy of the NAP, however, one has to go behind the rhetoric of the junta, behind the appearance of endless political strife, and search for the real determinants that shaped the complex political conjuncture which paved the way for a swift take-over of power by the military.

On the international front, the overall context was marked by the growing importance of the Middle East for imperialism and the setback suffered by the US with the Iranian revolution in February 1979 and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. These developments made it an absolute imperative that Turkey, the only Muslim member of NATO, and militarily one of the most powerful allies of the West in the region, enjoy a period of stability. A second problem was the resurgence of Islam as a political force in the region, representing social interests that clash with those of imperialism. The Iranian revolution had given a certain impetus to the Islamic fundamentalism of the National Salvation Party (NSP). It is no coincidence that a fortnight before the coup, the foreign minister of the ruling Justice Party (JP) government was given a vote of no-confidence on a platform which was exceptionally anti-American in terms of Turkish politics. An additional element was the need to heal the wounds of the southern flank of NATO by laying the foundations of a Greco-Turkish 'rapprochement' which seemed to require certain concessions from the Turkish side, not easily obtainable under a parliamentary regime where *all* bourgeois parties have constantly fed upon a strong anti-Greek chauvinism. It is, then, no wonder that NATO officially declared its relief upon receiving news of the coup. After all, hadn't Turkey's airforce chief, now a junta-member, General Tahsin Sahinkaya, been a guest of the Pentagon only days before the coup. It should also come as no surprise to find Turkey's present government tightening up its relations with carefully selected countries in the Middle East, foremost among which stand the arch-reactionary Saudi kingdom and the oil shiekhdoms, along with other pro-imperialist countries like Egypt, Jordan and Somalia.²

However important may be the international factors that gave a certain impetus to the military takeover in Turkey, one should carefully avoid the pitfall of abstracting from the specific class struggle within the country itself and of explaining away the coup by recourse to the supposedly omnipotent hand of the US. This was in fact what the Stalinists of the Turkish Communist Party (CP) tried to do in the days following the coup: for them history, it seems is no longer a history of class struggle but the mirror image of the conflict between US imperialism and the Soviet Union, a conflict that by itself determines events all over the globe. This sort of reductionist representation is far from capturing the complexity of the picture and there are rich lessons to be learned through a study of class struggle within Turkey in the two decades before 1980.

One has, first of all, to distinguish the long-run tendencies of the class struggle from those of the period immediately preceding the coup. As regards the first, what has to be stressed

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is the inadequacy of the political regime that came into being after the 1960 coup for a sustained process of capital accumulation in Turkey. Bearing the imprint of a very specific constellation of class struggle in a peculiar historical context, the 1960 coup gave birth to the constitution of 1961 with its system of checks and balances and, more importantly, to a political system that admitted, for the first time in Turkish history, independent working class activity in the political arena. The contemporaneous growth and organisation of the proletariat and the powerful struggles waged in the late '60s revealed to the Turkish bourgeoisie that the political and economic rights of the working class imposed a harsh burden on the accumulation of industrial capital which had not yet passed beyond its phase of infancy, with a feeble degree of concentration (though not of centralisation). Although many of these popular gains were subject to an inevitable erosion in the period of military intervention between 1971-1973 and the successive right-wing Nationalist Front coalitions between 1975-1977, the bourgeoisie was not able to wrest decisive victory from the working class. This victory had to incorporate a *radical restructuring of the basic framework of politics* in Turkey and this could only be carried through under a dictatorship not accountable, even in an indirect way, to the criticism of the masses. The onset of the severe crisis of capital accumulation in the years following 1977, then, caught the Turkish bourgeoisie unprepared for the impending turmoil.

This crisis of accumulation, articulated as it was to the crisis of world capitalism and further sharpened through this very articulation, was in fact the crisis of a certain mode of accumulation experienced by most Latin American countries at the end of the sixties. This mode of accumulation had as its axis of valorisation those sectors of social production which had as outlets the internal market. This meant for Turkey a position within the world market of dependency on capital equipment and intermediate goods creating insuperable barriers for the uninterrupted flow of accumulation. These barriers expressed themselves as a huge deficit on external payments and galloping inflation (Turkey's foreign debt at the time of the coup amounted to \$16 billion owed to 250 different imperialist banks).

But the underlying problem concerned the productive structure of capital and the consequent low level of the productivity of labour. To overcome this formidable obstacle of capital accumulation, a profound restructuring of capital was indispensable. This was the logic behind the adoption by the JP government at the beginning of 1980 of the neo-liberalist economic policies of international monetarism, policies which were only to be deepened by the military after 12 September 1980. However, this sort of restructuring of capital, not unfamiliar to the British worker, has two corollaries with significant political implications. First, it requires a drastic deflation of the economy and an accompanying centralisation of capital, tending therefore to divide the ruling bloc by alienating at least a certain section of small and medium capital and the petty bourgeoisie.³ Secondly, it necessitates a policy of austerity and

hence a frontal assault on the gains of the working class and other labouring strata of the population. All in all, this sort of programme, inserted within a backward capitalist country, can only be carried out by a government with a very narrow social basis deriving its power mainly from the repressive apparatus of the state. The only other alternative, with no guarantee of success, would have been a 'grand coalition' of big bourgeois parties. Such a coalition of 'reponsible' bourgeois parties — JP and Republican Peoples Party (RPP) — which was constantly on the agenda of the ruling classes in the last few years before the coup, was all the more necessary since the NAP (the strongest fascist party in the whole of Europe) posed after 1977 a radically different solution with its forceful strategy of tension. Working its way towards a civil war through acts of individual terror and large-scale massacres in various provincial cities, the NAP was able, after 1978, through its 'success' in the Maras massacres (where, according to official figures, at least 120 people were killed by a reactionary mob led by NAP activists) to impose its terms on the political development of the country.⁴ This alternative of a grand coalition envisaged by the most 'civilised' representatives of the bourgeoisie, proved to be an impossibility in the conditions of class polarisation the society had been undergoing.

Turkish monopoly capital finally cast its dice in favour of military rule. Thus the junta can be described as the *united front* of the big bourgeoisie, implemented through military means where the traditional political parties of the class have failed.

Organised Working Class Movement

Given the undeniable mobilisation and the heroic activity of the Turkish left in the period preceding the coup, it is somewhat surprising that within the country there has been as yet so little opposition to the junta. Not that the movement has been completely shattered and atomised: the recent successive waves of hunger strikes in the prisons of Ankara and Istanbul show that the cohesion and morale of militants are to a certain extent intact. However, the activity of the left has almost exclusively been confined to propaganda in Western Europe, especially concentrating on international organisations such as the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. The efficacy of this strategy is very doubtful: although European bourgeois governments have already had to concede certain ground to international solidarity expressed by the working class movement in Europe — for instance, in cutting off EEC 'aid' to Turkey from the 1982 Budget and in taking a 'hard line' in the Council of Europe. But, until now, the left has built its strategy on the assumption that, whatever the form of government, Turkey needs European financial support desperately and could not but heed its demands. This is true, but only to a certain degree.

Recent developments have made it possible for the Turkish state to borrow quite massively on the international market for money (which, as is proved by the case of Chile after 1976, is notorious for its indifference to 'human rights', or for that matter, anything human) and Arab banks, guided by reac-

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tionary Arab politics. Indeed, under these conditions, Turkey's expulsion from Europe could, ironically, set free the more reactionary forces in Turkish society instead of weakening the role of the junta. What is being criticised here is *not* the effort put in to provoke international pressure on Turkey, but the *exclusive* emphasis that has been placed on this mode of opposition.

This strategy of the Turkish left cannot, however, be understood or criticised solely with reference to the period after the coup, for its adoption is but the expression of the incapacity of the movement to put up any other sort of resistance. But in order to understand the roots of this impotence, one has to analyse the historical development that has shaped the Turkish left. This cannot even be attempted here.⁵ Suffice it to say that under the dead weight of third-worldist, nationalist and Stalinist traditions, the Turkish left was not able, despite the enormous potential displayed by the masses on different occasions in the course of the seventies, to present the labouring masses of the country with a specific, independent position of its own, a position that would distinguish itself from the platforms of the bourgeois parties. Sections of it opted unscrupulously for tail-ending the 'left-wing' bourgeois RPP, while others waded through the troubled waters of the so-called 'vanguard war', providing a perfect example of the mentality of substitutionism. The Turkish left therefore, never took deep roots in the working class and was unable to lead the masses into action at the necessary moment. There was certainly coming into existence a heterogeneous group of revolutionaries who assessed the situation critically and looked for a way out of this double impasse, but it was too late for this new tendency to achieve a breakthrough before the onset of the long awaited debacle.

The future of Turkish 'Democracy'

Most observers of the Turkish scene are inclined to believe that the army will return to its barracks within one or two years, after the promulgation of the new constitution and the passing of political legislation. This is a somewhat rash extrapolation from the earlier military episodes where the army's direct intervention in political life did not exceed two and a half years. General Evren, of course, keeps reiterating his promise of a 'return to democracy', but he has been very careful not to specify a calendar for this. In an interview with the *Financial Times* correspondent some months ago, he would not even commit himself to a five-year period of transition. More important than Evren's personal intentions is, of course, the objective logic of class struggle. The most important factor in this respect is the duration of the crisis of capital accumulation. The draconian austerity measures which are being implemented at the moment are likely to bear fruit only over an extended period of repression of the working class, and even in that case 'success' for the bourgeoisie is contingent upon overall developments in the capitalist world economy, where prospects are not very bright for the near future.

A premature liberalisation of the political regime could, by opening up a space for action for the masses, jeopardise the outcome of the whole experiment. There is no doubt that the Turkish bourgeoisie desperately needs to stifle any independent working class activity for the next five years or so. There is, therefore, a contradiction between the needs of capital in the sphere of class struggle and a rapid normalisation of the political scene. This contradiction may, depending on concrete conditions, prolong the life of the dictatorship over and against the wishes of some of the ruling elements. It should not be forgotten that the Brazilian military dictatorship kept promising a rapid liberalisation in the first five years of its existence, only to continue its sway over society in the *seventeen years* since the coup of 1964.

There are two main obstacles against this sort of an extension of the dictatorship beyond the expected one or two years. One is the pressure of European international organisations. I have already noted that the European bourgeoisie was not unhappy to see the Turkish state clamp down on the workers

and carry out the long overdue austerity programme with forceful means. But, putting aside the opposition of the European left, even European capital is not content with a permanent dictatorship on its south eastern flank, if only because of internal pressure and the rather blatant pro-Americanism of the military in Turkey.⁶ Added to this is the danger that the present situation could encourage the military and/or fascist movements to try their hand at a 'Turkish solution' in the various countries of Southern Europe, for example Spain, where there was an attempted coup in February 1981, or Greece, with Papandreu in power. However, in the longer run, the example of Greece, which, under the colonels withdrew from the Council of Europe, but was admitted to the European Community only five years after the return to parliamentarianism, should remind everyone of the possibility of an extended isolation from the institutions of Europe.

The second obstacle, an internal one, concerns the precarious nature of the support given to the dictatorship by the two main bourgeois parties. This support has from the beginning been made conditional upon a return to democracy within a short period. Should there not appear a concrete movement in that direction after the convening of the 'Advisory Assembly', scheduled for the end of this month, these bourgeois elements will certainly put up a rising opposition to the junta. The impact of this sort of a rift within the bourgeoisie should not be underestimated. Moreover, the opposition would gain momentum owing to the fact that European social democracy keeps supporting Ecevit, leader of the RPP, and that the conservative and liberal currents in European politics sympathise with JP leader Demirel. However, as Trotsky pointed out during the rise of fascism in Germany, at certain conjunctures the parliamentary form loses much of its legitimacy for the masses and its viability for the ruling classes. The rampant crisis in every domain of social relations has created an analogous situation in Turkey. This sets formidable limits on both the capacity and the efficacy of potential bourgeois opposition to the dictatorship.

The birth of a bourgeois opposition movement, if it ever takes off, is likely to open more space for the working class movement itself. A quick recovery of the socialist movement (as opposed to spontaneous mobilisations) is, however, improbable given both the casualties it has suffered in terms of its leadership and organisation and the centrifugal forces still active in its bosom, creating an atmosphere highly inimical to the formation of a united front of working class parties and groups. But opportunities for activity should not be overlooked. And here the most important point is the fact that the largest trade union organisation, TURK-IS, is still in existence. Despite the complicity of its top leadership with the junta (its secretary general is also a minister in the government), there is a lot that socialists can do by working among the rank and file.

The more important question, however, is not the length or brevity of the period of transition to democracy but the precise nature of that 'democracy'. And here it can be said with confidence that the new political regime to which the junta will give birth will bear its imprint in a profound way. Naive souls still believe that it is possible to cajole the junta into drawing up a somewhat liberal constitution. That is because they have not been able to grasp the present dictatorship as a *product of the class struggle* in the country extending over the last two decades. Because the coup was the only solution in the face of formidable barriers to capital accumulation in Turkey, because it was the answer to the need to radically shift the balance of class forces in favour of the bourgeoisie by recasting the political and social framework, the historical mission of the dictatorship is nothing but the creation of an authoritarian regime disguised as parliamentary democracy. *To the restructuring of capital must correspond the restructuring of politics.*

The details of this setup may take different forms within a well-defined range. However, contrary to what many commentators have indicated, it is highly unlikely that the new constitu-

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tion will be drawn up in the image of the French presidential system, unless all systems which give the president priority in political initiative over parliament are considered to be identical. To enumerate only the most important features that are likely to mark the new regime: a highly restrictive law on trade union rights; the practical impossibility of legal organisation of communist or socialist parties; a president — probably Evren himself during the first term after transition — vested with huge powers, including the right to veto everything passed by parliament; a government attached personally to the president and not accountable to the legislature; a judiciary controlled, directly or indirectly, by the executive; and the impossibility of abrogating the laws passed in the present period by the junta. One may even expect the upper house (the so-called Senate) to consist of a body of senior officers, with rights to veto the decisions of the lower house, which would imply a *de facto* prolongation of military rule in Turkey.

The necessary counterpart to this bleak picture is the new historical situation opened up for revolutionary socialism in Turkey. For the first time in the history of the bourgeois republic, the bourgeoisie is attempting to wrest from the masses the social and political rights for which they have struggled over an extended period of time. For the first time in its history, the socialist movement finds itself in a situation where it alone will consistently fight for the preservation and extension of the rights and gains of the workers and the other labouring strata against the onslaught of the unified bourgeoisie. For the first time in its history, therefore, the socialist movement faces the objective conditions of building an *independent class organisation on a mass scale*. There will certainly be formidable obstacles of a legal and political nature. In place of the violence of the dictatorship, the bourgeoisie will substitute the ruse of its mockery of 'democracy'.

But the working class is sure to rise from its ashes and challenge the grotesque project of authoritarian rule in the guise of democracy. When the new constitution is put to a referendum, socialists will have to mobilise the whole class and its allies, other labouring strata and the Kurdish nation, to put up the most important resistance of all to the junta by an overwhelming 'No'. And that will only be the beginning of the end.

Postscript

Since the completion of this article, the junta has decided to close down forever all existing political parties. According to Evren, the future 'democratic' regime will see the birth of totally new parties. This is an ominous development, seeming to confirm the conjecture put forward in this article. The im-

mediate implication is that, having been tipped off by its 'friends' on the impending danger of expulsion, the junta is now ready to withdraw from the various European institutions in the near future, possibly by the end of this year. In the longer run, this decision may even imply that the new 'democracy' will be patterned somewhat in the image of the present regime in Brazil, with a government party and an official opposition party, tolerated only to a certain extent. This is the worst one can expect. But the least one can say is that the military regime is here to stay for substantially longer than two years. Or so it intends.

Footnotes

1 For a detailed account of Turkey's recent history, see C Keyder, 'The Political Economy of Turkish Democracy', *New Left Review*, No 115, May-June, 1979.

2 An orientation which has led to Turkey being asked by the Arab League to mediate in the Gulf War (Eds).

3 The petty bourgeoisie, which is a most important section of Turkish society, has already seen its position being eroded under the new structures. Except under the conquest of political power by a mass fascist party, which is certainly not the case in Turkey, the petty bourgeoisie loses under a dictatorship much of the political ground which it has secured through intricate bargaining and alliances within the framework of a parliamentary regime. In the Turkish case, the consequences of this weakening of the position of the petty bourgeoisie have been graphically manifested in two developments. On the one hand, the low support prices the government has set for agricultural products have effectively caused a deterioration of agriculture's terms of trade, thereby bringing about a remarkable impoverishment of the rural petty bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the reform of the tax system has shifted a considerable amount of burden from the shoulders of industrial capital to those of the petty bourgeoisie, rural and urban.

4 Paradoxically for many, the NAP, well-known in the West for its so-called 'Grey Wolves', a para-military organisation overwhelmingly responsible for the political terror preceding the coup, was singled out, among all bourgeois parties, as the main target. This, though, is only a seeming paradox, for it implies nothing less than the fact that the junta's most powerful rival under conditions of dictatorship is the fascist movement, with strong backing from certain sectors of the armed forces. (It should be added that, to this day, the even more dangerous possibility of a pro-fascist coup has not definitively been averted.)

5 For a useful survey of the Turkish left, from a different point of view, see A Samim, 'The Tragedy of the Turkish Left', *New Left Review*, No 126, March-April 1981.

6 Since this article was written, the increasing estrangement between the US (open support) and the EEC (critical support) on the question of the junta in Turkey has been compounded by the military clampdown in Poland. Apart from the obvious hypocrisy of the US in particular, the various possible alignments in and between Europe and the US as a result of Poland will have a real impact in Turkey (Eds).



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WOMEN'S OPPRESSION BENEFITS MEN?

The divisions between men and women in capitalist society grow more and more acute as the crisis deepens. Policies like positive action and equal opportunities are seen as divisive and against men's interests. And some feminists argue that men's oppression of women, while having something to do with the structure of class society nonetheless requires a separate struggle by women against men and male attitudes.

Judith Arkwright disputes such accepted wisdom within the women's movement. She argues that it is dangerous to argue that men in some way benefit from women's oppression, and certainly incompatible with Marxist analysis.

There may be many differing theories of patriarchy but they all share one basic assumption: that the oppression of women is a system of domination which is independent of any given social structure. It exists as a set of ideas and practices such as sexism and male violence which reproduce themselves. Patriarchy theories see the oppression of women as preceding capitalism and, without a separate revolution to get rid of male domination, succeeding capitalism. In my view none of these

— Yvonne Taylor and Judy Watson challenge the view that there is no contradiction between the immediate and class interests of working class men. They argue that an analysis of patriarchy can be situated within a class framework.

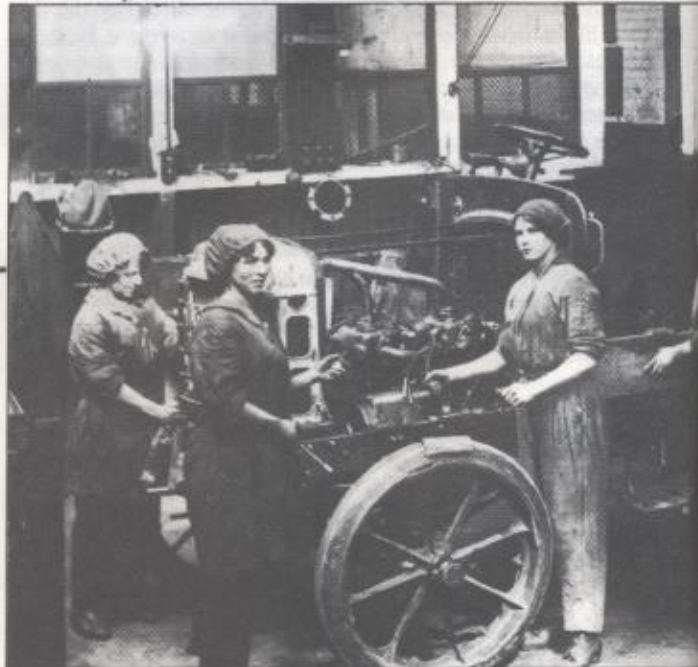
The potential for the women's movement to gain mass support is greater today than ever before. We have seen the trade union leadership forced to make a public stand on abortion and more recently on rape. Positive action for women at work, in the unions and the Labour Party is a major issue, and women are forcing the unions to take seriously the problem of sexual harassment from bosses and fellow workers. The Labour Party, with the support of the unions, is organising a national event on a woman's right to work in June.

But along with these new opportunities have come new problems which socialist feminists have found are inadequately explained by existing Marxist theory. For instance, the increased interest and action on women's oppression in the labour movement, while valued by socialist feminists, has brought them into conflict with the patronising, overbearing attitudes of many male (including rank and file) trade unionists and their inability to understand the need for an autonomous women's movement. And the fact that rape is now an issue of public debate has exposed the narrowness of interpretation to which Marxists are prone on the question of women's oppression. While it is seen as important to make political demands on the state round this issue, the role of men in sexual violence against women is inadequately explained. Many Marxists argue that it is impossible to challenge male domination in a systematic way, except in personal

theories can be integrated into a Marxist framework.

It is one of Engels' enduring achievements that he recognised that the monogamous family was the first to be based on economic relations rather than stemming from natural conditions. Morgan (the anthropologist) had argued that in pre-commodity societies, social organisation was dominated by blood ties rather than the mode of production itself: 'At this stage the type of production is less decisive than the degree in which the old blood ties and the old mutual community of the sexes within the tribe has been dissolved.' In other words the social relations of these societies were determined by natural conditions and therefore tended to vary according to the circumstances of different tribes and peoples.

It is true that Engels tended to idealise these pre-class societies. It is obvious that in subsistence societies, life was extremely hard and also possible and probable that certain inequalities existed between men and women because of the exigencies of child-care, and the low level of technology. The situation was however uneven according to prevailing natural conditions, and in societies of more abundance there is evidence that such inequalities did not exist. But Engels' proposition is not refuted by this, for he argued that before class society social relations were not determined in the same



relationships, until socialism is achieved. Socialist feminists have rejected revolutionary or radical feminist theories which see the oppression of women by men — what they define as patriarchy — as *the* fundamental social antagonism. However most would argue that men have played, and do play, an important role in helping to maintain women's subordination. A different definition of the term patriarchy has been adopted by some socialist feminists to *describe* the ideology and practice of male domination that has been a feature of all class and transitional societies.

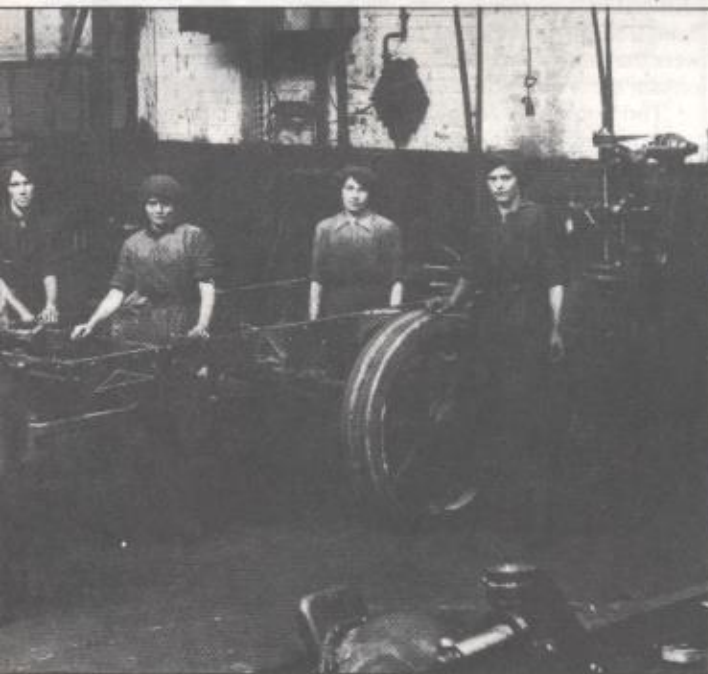
Such a definition of patriarchy can be a useful analytical development in a thoroughly Marxist approach to the issue of women's oppression. We would argue that patriarchy as we would define it — the ideology and practice of male domination — is materially based in capitalist society. The capitalist mode of production today rests as much on the super-exploitation of women at work and the free services they perform for capital in the home as it does on the exploitation of male labourers. Capitalism's interest in a patriarchal capitalist society has been relatively easy to establish. More contentious is the view that

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way by a mode of production and certainly not by a 'system of male domination'. It was only with the emergence of class society that the monogamous family emerged and was reproduced from generation to generation. It was only then that the 'historic defeat of the female sex' was finalised in a certain direction. For the first time the oppression of women was systematised and organised by class society and through the state. For Engels the appearance of the monogamous family marked not reconciliation between the sexes but the subjugation of one sex by the other, parallel to class society.

Engels also established that the root of woman's oppression was her 'exclusion from social production'. He pointed out something which has been proved correct subsequently — that capitalism is the only form of class society to produce internal contradictions acute enough to destroy class society as a whole.

By analogy, the capitalist form of family also contains within it a massive contradiction. It offers the opportunity for women to become involved in social production and yet also needs women's domestic service in the home. As a system it produces abundance and a level of technology sufficient to overcome all kinds of inequality in society. Yet because it is based on profit it cannot fulfill this role as a system. It is this kind of contradiction which itself gave birth to the modern women's liberation movement. In putting forward this thesis Engels' whole purpose was to challenge women's isolated role in the home and to demand the socialisation of domestic work, and



men themselves derive material privileges or benefits from the oppression of women which means they have some interest in the continued existence of patriarchy.

Back to the beginning

There is a broad school of thought in the women's movement which believes that male domination preceded class society and that sexual divisions were always oppressive to women. Many would share the view that women's oppression is not simply reducible to the mode of production in any given society. But we would argue that male domination can be understood within a materialist perspective.

Engels' work was a revelation in its assertion that women's oppression is a problem of history rather than biology. In the *Origins of the Family* he claims that matrilineal societies predominated and their overthrow by patrilineal society coincided with the subordination of the female sex to the male. Women's oppression arose *alongside* and not *from* class society. He presents no evidence that class society caused women's oppression but shows very clearly that the sexual division of

the abolition of the family.

Contrary to what many feminists assume, Engels' method was the opposite of economist. Engels said that the form of the family was determined by a mode of production which gave rise to class society. This does not mean that he argued that the family is merely the sum of its economic functions. It is a system of relationships. According to Engels the family gives rise to a series of juridical relations which safeguard paternity, lifelong monogamy for the woman and more than this — social/sexual mores. Before Freud, Marxists were the first to understand the possibility that sexual behaviour itself was determined by social conditions. Thus while Engels may have theories about sexual relations under socialism which we would not agree with now — the method he adopted is hardly invalidated by this.

One revolution or two?

These are the main theoretical gains of Engels which we should uphold and which are totally contradictory to any theories of patriarchy or a *system* of male domination. The debate on the origins of women's oppression is so crucial because the theories of patriarchy conclude that as patriarchy existed and exists before and separate from class society, two revolutions and political struggles are necessary. It is, indeed, a challenge to the whole basis of Marxism to argue that a system of ideas and ideology (patriarchy), can in and of itself be the determining force in social relations. The mode of production and reproduction are related and the latter is determined by the former. In *Origins of the Family*, Engels' whole argument is based on the thesis that the two modes tend to exist less and less separately and towards 'a society in which family relations are entirely subordinated to property relations'.

However, this does not tell us everything about the nature of the relationship between the two which, of course, has changed under different class societies. In capitalist societies women's role within the family, which is important for

labour in pre-class society played an important role in the development of class society. It is an expansion of this point that has arisen in recent literature.

The question Engels fails to answer is why it is women who became subordinate to men and not the other way around. He puts forward the theory that patrilineal society overthrew the traditional matrilineal order as men's position in the sexual division of labour allowed them to accumulate wealth, and this acted as a stimulus for them to ensure their own children inherited their wealth. 'As to how and when this revolution was affected,' says Engels '...we know nothing.' It must be assumed that women 'allowed' men to keep and control their wealth due to their lack of physical strength, the primitive division of labour and the demands of childcare. Whatever social processes allowed men to obtain their powerful position, they need to be investigated.

Whatever the outcome of such a study, Engels' most important contribution to the development of a class analysis of women's oppression will not become redundant. His method which sought to demonstrate that the unequal position of women was socially determined and was coincidental with the rise of private property, the monogamous family and the state, was and is a major theoretical gain for women. It remains the only approach which points to the real possibility of women's liberation with the abolition of private property.

A dialectical history of women's oppression

Whatever social processes created women's oppression, the patriarchal ideology of class society has played an active role in maintaining that oppression and is not solely a product of class society.

In order to avoid the economism of some Marxist explanations of women's oppression, some socialist feminists have attempted to explain it as a result of the existence of two sets of social relations in society: the class relations of the mode of pro-

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capitalism, is further used to keep women as a reserve force to be pulled in and out of work according to the needs of capital. This is made possible by her role in the home. Through this and other mechanisms the family under capitalism takes on a specific form even though it may have borrowed characteristics from previous societies. Under each form of class society the relation of the mode of production to the family and to ideology has been different.

Do men have an interest in oppressing women?

Thus Engels asserts that the family was an instrument of class rule. The historic mission of the working class is to abolish the family and class rule. The working class does not consciously understand this task and is not united behind it — it is divided by sexism, racism, economic differences and so on. Working class men in many instances actively oppose women's liberation. This does not prove they have interests or benefits to defend (this is indeed an economic determinist argument). Insofar as working class men oppose women's liberation, this is an expression of false consciousness.

Many working class women in the first instance are often moved into struggle to defend their families: women struggling against deportation, women struggling for the right to work because they are the only breadwinner, and so on. Do we deduce from this that women have an interest in maintaining the family? No, this would be absurd. Do we even deduce that in these cases women's immediate needs clash with their long-term needs as members of the working class. No, of course we don't. Why, then, apply this method of approach to working class men?

When we look closely at these supposed benefits or material gains which men have in oppressing women, several flaws in the argument arise. Hartmann¹ and others have used the example of the debate around protective legislation in the 19th century as proof that men have an interest in maintaining women's oppression. She says that men wanted to exclude women from the

production and patriarchal relations which are based on the sexual division of labour. We would argue that patriarchy and class are interrelated and to separate them out in such a framework can be misleading. A class analysis of women's oppression must look at the dialectical history of that oppression and therefore the dynamic interrelationship of the sexual division of labour and the mode of production which determines class divisions in society. Gramsci argued for a similar approach against those who used Marxist theory as a mechanical formula for understanding social processes. He drew attention, in particular, to the way ideology has become increasingly important to the capitalist state in the development of social control by 'consent' as well as by 'coercion'. Such an approach would lead us to explain the persistence of patriarchy in the transition to capitalism for example in the following way.

The development of capitalist industrialisation which, during its first phases, transferred women from the home to the factory, together with the absence of private property in the proletarian home, appeared to Engels to contain the basis for the emergence of a new family form in which male domination would disappear. It has been well documented elsewhere how the indiscriminate and reckless use of labour power in the early days of industrial production soon became impractical. Among other measures that were taken to safeguard the long term health of the workforce was the state restriction that was imposed on the use of women's labour. Women were moved out of production and into the home. A new sexual division of labour came into being in which women contributed to the most effective method of exploiting wage workers by reproducing, nurturing and servicing them at home at no extra charge. The large scale re-introduction of women into the workforce came with the post war boom. But woman's role at work did not supplant her role in the home. Waged work became rather an additional job, giving rise to an unequal sexual division of labour at work.

labour force for two reasons. First, that they wanted to preserve their own jobs and felt that women would take them away, and secondly, they wanted women to be in the family to look after them.

But there were many and complex reasons why working class organisations at the time might have supported protective legislation. Clara Zetkin, a leader of the German social democracy, changed her opinion during the debate. At first she was opposed to protective legislation because it excluded women from certain jobs. Then she was in favour of it because of the appalling conditions in which women and children had to work and because it could lead to a fight for better conditions for men as well. So the reasons being put forward for protective legislation were by no means all based on an anti-women perspective.

But it is evident from the debates in the 1st and 2nd Internationals that many sections of the workers' movement at the time were simply opposed to women going out to work for the two reasons outlined above. This does not prove they had a material interest in so doing. In fact we can see clearly that this was against the interests of the working class as a whole. Sending women back into the home and out of the workforce did nothing to alleviate unemployment. Women's role in bolstering the family actually helped to increase the rate of exploitation of male workers because there was more chance of imposing the strict regimentation of capitalist life on the workers; there was also less money coming into the home, two people were now being fed for the price of one. It was sections of capital who were the motor force behind the move to exclude women from certain areas of production and who benefited from it.

Today many trade unionists argue that the family wage is an important bargaining counter in negotiations even if it does deny women's rights to work. Does this mean there is a conflict of interests here between working class men and women? No, the family wage is a con by the capitalist class. It means they can shove onto the individual worker the costs of the welfare state.

The role women play in the bourgeois family is so entrenched that it is seen as natural and timeless. In reality, it locks both men and women very firmly into capitalist social relations as many have analysed. Nonetheless, the relationship between women and men in the family and the oppression which they suffer is not equal. The specific way in which women's large scale entry into production has been structured so as to maintain the sexual division of labour in the family has meant that Engels' prediction that this would play a huge part in ending male domination over women in the working class has been superseded. In fact, women seem to have traded male domination at home for male domination at work and at home.

Do men benefit?

Women's experience of the sexual division of labour in capitalist society has been a narrowing of job opportunities outside the home combined with continuing domestic responsibilities. In law and in reality, she is financially dependent on her husband. These same disadvantages have been experienced as positive benefits by working class men in the form of better pay, conditions and opportunities at work and the provision of personal services and comforts in the home. It is arguable to what extent they have colluded, through the organised labour movement, in bringing about this situation.

For example, women were moved out of early capitalist production under pressure not only from the state, but also from the male trade unions. The concern of male trade unionists for the indiscriminate exploitation of women and children also provided them with an argument for getting rid of a cheap labour source which threatened permanently to undercut their wages. Moreover, the concern expressed by the state over the disintegration of family life due to working mothers was to provide men with the basis for a new argument in wage negotiation — the notion of the family wage. Of course, by choosing to uphold the sexual division of labour in this way, it

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The costs of maintaining the welfare state come out of the surplus value of the capitalists. The concept of the family wage means that this can instead be deduced from the individual wage packet. Thus it is against the interests of male and female workers to defend such a concept in bargaining. Insofar as male workers do defend this then they are displaying false consciousness.

Because the family does not oppress men in the same way it does women and children, it does not mean to say that men benefit from or have an interest in maintaining it. If this was the case then surely men's and women's interests would be irreconcilable in the way the radical feminists suggest. Even if they did have some common causes in other spheres — if men have an interest in maintaining the family and women don't — then they are irreconcilable. Of course men get their washing and ironing done in the family. Of course women act as emotional props to men in the family. And of course many men would rather live in a family than fend for themselves. But this doesn't

tell you anything about whose interests are at stake in all this. You could even argue that children have an interest in the family if you use this method. Nor should we exaggerate the idea of the family as a haven from capitalism. Under a decaying capitalism the family is an institution which means violence, repression and sexual misery. Why then does the family continue to exist? Why would most men, women and children in this country fight to defend it? Is it because men have an interest in it? No, it's because there is no alternative to the family under capitalism.

Insofar as working class men oppress women they are acting against their own interests and in the interests of the capitalist class. Alternatively a step forward for women is a step forward for the class as a whole. Men are the agents of women's oppression, acting on behalf of the ruling class to keep the family going, but they have no interest whatsoever in maintaining this system.

The need for unity

The demands of the women's movement should not and indeed do not centre on the ideological aspects of women's oppression — trying to pinpoint the way men oppress women. Our demands should be directed against the state to expose the class nature of women's oppression. The ideological battle whilst being a part of this does not have the same weight or importance as campaigns at a national level like women's rights at work or a woman's right to choose.

The demand for a woman's right to choose is primarily a legal demand for democratic rights and it is this concept which has determined the direction of the campaign and the basis of the united front around abortion. The ideological aspects are drawn out in relation to this, not to challenge male attitudes as the prime focus. It is only when these ideological issues find some reflection at the level of the state that this becomes possible anyway. For example in the William Patten case a challenge was mounted by an individual man against his wife's right to an

answer, 'the ruling class!' This may provide neat pigeon holes into which social groups can be slotted by virtue of 'class interest' but it simply ignores the historical processes by which the ruling class and the working class have been shaped. The differing histories and experiences of these two classes have not produced two homogeneous blocs. Both the ruling class and the working class have a stratified composition. This is one important reason for the uneven development of class consciousness as Lenin recognised. He argued, for example, that the privileges which the working class in Britain derived from imperialism would have to be challenged in the fight against imperialism.

In a similar way, one can point to sectors of the working class, such as white workers in South Africa, or Protestants in Northern Ireland, who are prepared to act as agents of oppression on behalf of the ruling class and the state to protest their material privileges.

The answer to the question of whether men have any material interest in patriarchy is of course that there is a contradiction between men's immediate and long term interests, just as there is a contradiction between the immediate and long term interests of other privileged groups of workers. This analysis leads to a rather more precise and scientific use of the term 'false consciousness' which some Marxists are rather too fond of dragging in as a substitute for real analysis.

However patriarchal relations differ significantly from other relations of oppression in three major ways. First, women's oppression co-exists with other forms of oppression — racial, imperialist and so on — and affects that group of people who make up one half of the world's population. Furthermore, it has been a feature of all class societies and transitional societies. And finally, the relationship between women and men in the family, which structures the sexual division of labour in capitalism, involves women in personally servicing men by providing for their material, emotional and sexual

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INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT



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is clear that the male dominated labour movement was helping to forge the very divisions in the working class which allow workers to be played off against each other. How are such actions to be explained? Are men simply working against their own self-interest?

To maintain and uphold the oppression of women is in no way in men's long term material — that is, their class — interest. In the workplace, sexual divisions do divide and weaken the workforce. To maintain these divisions means, in the long run, condemning working class men, as well as women, to exploitation and oppression. But some Marxists seem to see only men's class interest as crucial in understanding their relationship to women. They refuse to accept that equally important in determining this relationship are those immediate benefits which men themselves may gain from women's subjugation. They change the question from 'Do men benefit?' to 'Who really benefits?' and, of course, come out with the

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abortion. It was only because of the possibility of the courts making a ruling on this case that it became a focus for activity.

Of course it is true that the practice of women's oppression operates across classes — that is all women are oppressed in some way as a sex and all men act as agents of women's oppression. But as socialists and revolutionaries we are talking about how to change this situation and how to mount the counter-attack at the crucial points for the ruling class. Take the issue of violence and sexual harassment of women. The main focus of the campaign has been to place demands on local councils, on the government and so on, not on individual men. In fact to focus on individual men, on punishment, on general propaganda about women's sexuality is to approach the whole issue from a thoroughly reformist perspective.

There is furthermore an assumption here that men constitute an identifiable social group without any differentiation between them. This encompasses men in the union bureaucracy, male employers and working class men. We put demands on the bureaucracy of the labour movement which is male-dominated and we fight to commit them to action, recognising that they have no interest in fighting consistently for women's liberation. This is not to deny that they don't reflect the backward attitudes within the working class as a whole, but we should concentrate our fire on the bureaucracy because they help to crystallise and reproduce these attitudes by failing to lead the class. While it is true that male workers do harass women workers on the job, the implications of harassment by the foreman or the boss are far more serious, for they have the real material power over a woman and her job.

Any credence given to theories of patriarchy is therefore misleading for practical orientation. To argue that all men have an interest in women's oppression is to pit men's interests against women's and to ignore the crucial role of the family. It questions the idea that a women's movement in alliance with the labour movement is the way forward. The position of socialists should be that working class men and women should

needs.

Two important things flow from our analysis: first, the need for an autonomous women's movement and second, the need to incorporate in our fight for political consciousness in the working class a challenge to patriarchal ideology. The real importance of the self-organisation of women arises not from women's 'backwardness' or lack of self-confidence but out of the backward consciousness of men based on the benefits they receive from patriarchy. The role of the autonomous women's movement cannot be taken over by the organisations of the labour movement, political movements, revolutionary organisations or even the construction of a mass revolutionary party. These will always be dominated by patriarchal ideology.

This does not mean that the labour movement, or the revolutionary organisations that exist today, have no role to play in the fight for women's liberation. On the contrary, the political and ideological battle against patriarchy has to be allied to the general struggle of the working class against oppression and ultimately for political power.

But if that possibility is to be turned into a reality then it is important to begin now to tackle the role that is also played by men in maintaining patriarchy. This means men's backward consciousness will have to be challenged directly. For instance, male violence, pornography, sexual harassment, rape, male domination in the labour movement and the revolutionary party, male chauvinism and so on, are all problems that women have to confront each day from working class men. But they are not problems that can be resolved solely at the level of the state.

We are not arguing that demands should be placed on individual men around these issues. But we can begin to challenge male domination by taking up specific demands to which we could win men. For example, the demand for positive action for women in the trade unions and the Labour Party,

fight together to smash capitalism and to develop alternatives to the family. We realise that women are doubly oppressed and will be the most consistent fighters against their own oppression whereas working class men will not; but this is the reason why we fight for a mass independent, proletarian women's movement.

We must pose the issue of an independent women's movement not by emphasising the divisions within the working class, but positively, by stressing the need and potential for unity within the working class to fight for women's liberation.

1. Heidi Hartmann and others, *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, Pluto Press, 1981.

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campaigns against pornography at work, the provision of procedures for dealing with sexual harassment, for a woman's right to choose, and for the provision of creches and the planning of meetings at times when women can attend.

The political campaigns that women organise around winning women's rights from the state inevitably cut across the benefits that men derive from women's oppression. It can be dangerous to ignore this when arguing the above demands. Instead of denying that any of these measures would challenge men's privileges, we would argue that socialists have to explain how their privileges are obstacles to the construction of a better society for both men and women.

THE NICARAGUAN DOMINO

Des Tierney

Henri Weber, *Nicaragua: the Sandinist Revolution*, Verso, £2.95. George Black, *Triumph of the People*, Zed Press, £5.95. Jenny Pearce, *Under the Eagle*, Latin America Bureau, £2.50.

Nowhere in the world is the power of US imperialism being so thoroughly contested as in Central America and the Caribbean. 1981 saw the revolutions in Grenada and Nicaragua consolidated, the build up of revolutionary wars in El Salvador and Guatemala and the continued defiance of the Cuban Revolution in the face of increasing US threats. In Costa Rica, Puerto Rico and Haiti, 1981 was a year of increased poverty, indebtedness and repression, and one of growing resistance to the US-backed regimes there.

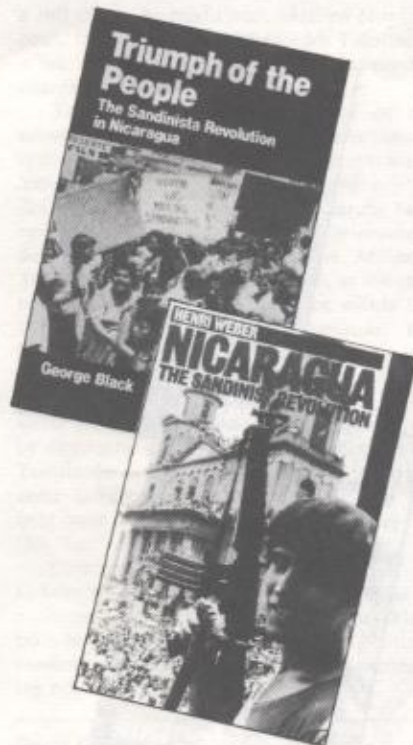
Central America and the Caribbean have become a critical arena of world politics — the increasingly fragile political systems besieged by mass movements of workers and peasants, led by revolutionary forces intent on taking the 'Cuban road'.

An important aspect of this process is the growing hostility to the US plans from its own working class and that of Western Europe. In trying to convince working people throughout the world that they have an interest in lending their support to the US's alliances with extreme right-wing, anti-working class regimes, the US has encountered the 'Vietnam syndrome'. One of the difficulties socialists face in trying to increase this sentiment in the labour and trade union movement has been the lack of good written material on the area. These books will play an important part in changing this situation.

In a recent statement, quite breathtaking in its arrogance and duplicity, Reagan has been quoted as saying that the process going on in Central America and the Caribbean is 'A new kind of colonialism ... not of our hemisphere, but it threatens our hemisphere' — a veiled implication that the process is an import from the Soviet Union. Nothing could be further from the truth. Fundamentally, the revolutions of this area arise from the economic and political relationships which these countries have developed with the United States over the last one hundred years. *Under the Eagle* is a detailed analysis of the way in which these dependent economies of Central America and the Caribbean were run for, and in many cases, by the big multinational companies of the US. Since the mid-1800s when coffee demand increased world wide, US companies have dominated the trade of the region. By 1914 coffee was the main foreign exchange earner of the region. It accounted for 85 per cent of Guatemala's exports, 80 per cent of El Salvador's and 35 per cent of Costa Rica's.

In the late 1800s the peasants were driven from the fruit producing lands and the great fruit companies — United Fruits, United Brands (Fyffes), Standard Fruit and Del Monte, which together control 60 per cent of the region's banana production and 90 per cent of the Export Trade — were built.

Alongside this dependent economy grew up a peculiar political system. Small elites (in



some cases like Nicaragua, one family) received the patronage of the US and dominated political life. Their policies were dictated by the US State Department and their governments were summoned into existence or dismissed in the same way.

Such a transparent system of exploitation could only be maintained by oppressive regimes which stifled any form of independent political expression or action. Jenny Pearce outlines, in detail, the lengths to which the US is prepared to go to train and maintain various National Guards and police forces to keep it this way. Of course, when all else fails, the US government will use its own forces or those of its client states to intervene directly.

The special features of the relationship between these countries and the economy of the US go some way to explain why, for the moment, these countries are the weakest link in the imperialist chain. They all exhibit high levels of exploitation, inequality of income and income producing assets on a scale without parallel in the world, and a weak native bourgeoisie.

By themselves these conditions would not produce the crisis situation which is developing. Two other factors are present. First there is the inability of the US or the ruling oligarchies to win support among middle sections of the population, due to the effects of the world economic crisis, and second, there have developed over the past decade powerful revolutionary organisations whose influence is felt among broad layers of society.

Weber's book, *Nicaragua: The Sandinist Revolution*, is succinct and polemical. He sketches out the political and economic framework for the crisis as a backdrop for his main consideration, the strategy of the FSLN before and after the revolution, and its calibre as a revolutionary leadership. He is unequivocal in his conclusions: 'It was a revolutionary, Castroist organisation, that took

power in Managua, 19 July 1979 ... it knew where it wanted to go. Its ambition was to make Nicaragua the second free territory of the Americas.'

With such an estimation of the FLSN it is not surprising that Weber draws a very complimentary picture of the strategic decisions the FSLN has had to make. He defends, without reservation, the importance the FSLN has given to its strategic alliance with sections of the bourgeoisie, even after the victory of 19 July.

He explains that the broad masses of Nicaragua: 'remembered the active role of the oppositional bourgeoisie in the struggle against the dictatorship. In the hour of victory they did not see that there was now an irreducible conflict of interests between the bourgeoisie and the people. One key function of the FSLN alliance policy was precisely to enable the working people to grasp this conflict through their own experience of the bourgeoisie's attitude in the transitional phase.'

Black's book, *Triumph of the People*, contrasts sharply with that of Weber. Black has produced a book of exhaustive detail which allows the facts to speak for themselves.

Black had access to the files and documents of the FSLN and was able to talk directly with many of the leading figures of the FSLN. Throughout the book this breadth of knowledge and his closeness to his subject is apparent.

The book is divided into three parts. The first is a detailed history of Nicaragua up to the revolutionary crisis. Much of this material has been previously unavailable in English. The second section details the history, growth and development of the FSLN and the leadership role it played in the insurrection. Much of this material is fascinating. Black details the discussions and debates in the FSLN which led to its fragmenting into three tendencies and its subsequent coming together as the mass struggle developed. He shows the way in which the FSLN related through the mass organisations to the developing mass struggle, and the degree to which the masses set the pace in the revolutionary upsurge. Finally he sets out in a detailed way the strategy which the FSLN has followed since the revolution. The difficulties which the FSLN faces in increasing production through the private sector, while carrying on the political battle against the bourgeoisie, the building of the mass organisations and of the Sandinista Party are all covered here.

It's an indispensable book for those who wish to understand the revolutionary process in Nicaragua, not because Black has attempted to draw out these lessons himself, but rather, because of the breadth of this work, and his comprehensive understanding of the processes at work, he allows the revolution to speak for itself.

THE ETHIOPIAN ROAD?

Nick Robin

Michael Lowy: 'The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development: the Theory of Permanent Revolution', Verso, 1981, £4.50; Maxine Molyneux and Fred Halliday: 'The Ethiopian Revolution', Verso, 1982, £5.95.

Michael Lowy's book is overdue, by about fifty years. It deals more thoroughly with the overall theory of world revolution than any work since Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution* which was published in 1928. First he traces the theory's origins in the philosophical method of Marx and Engels. He then examines the development of the concept in order to submit it to the crucial tests posed in the second half of the book: does the theory help us to understand and to change reality? With this format he has produced an excellent educational tool, one which, despite the occasionally stodgy language, will be of great practical use to militants.

The theory of permanent revolution has three major postulates. First, because of the internationalisation of the productive forces and social classes, socialist revolution is on the agenda in even the most 'backward' countries. Second, the passage from democratic tasks to socialist tasks in the revolution is uninterrupted; that is, the bourgeois democratic tasks of the revolution cannot be completed by the national bourgeoisie, but only through socialist revolution. Finally the future of the revolution depends on its extension internationally. There can be no socialism in one country.

Considering that for the last decade this theory has been propagated only by small groups of revolutionaries, the paucity of the alternatives on offer is truly remarkable. Apart from spontaneist ideas the only alternative theories in the workers' movement are the fifty seven varieties of warmed up Stalinist dogmas: the 'national democratic revolution' made by a 'bloc of four classes' determined to take a 'non-capitalist road' towards a 'new democracy' ushering in a 'state of socialist orientation'. It is surely worth noting that many countries which have taken such an option following social upheavals have invariably turned out to be capitalist — and usually dictatorships to boot.

Ethiopia is a case in point. In Maxine Molyneux and Fred Halliday's new book *The Ethiopian Revolution* we are treated to a detailed account of the overthrow of Haile Selassie's imperial regime in 1974. Selassie presided over one of the most backward social systems in the world. Even one year later only 4 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product came from industrial production, while roughly four fifths of the population were subsistence farmers and that many on the left underestimated the depth and significance of the revolution. The replacement for Selassie,



the Derg, (a military cabal with a secret membership of low-ranking army officers) aspires towards modernising the economy, and has presided over an extensive land reform. In its own words it has embarked upon a 'National Democratic Revolution'.

But Molyneux and Halliday lack the analytical and theoretical tools to explain the nature of this revolution. Despite a wealth of description of the power struggles within the Derg led by the 'ruthless and cunning', 'Marxist-Leninist' leader Mengistu, the authors cannot explain why the majority of the people within the Ethiopian state is in revolt against the new rulers. The overthrow of Selassie was a catalyst unleashing a tide of national movements in Tigray, Ogaden, Eritrea and across the Horn of Africa, which threatens not only the unity of the Ethiopian imperial state, but also the very social relations within the region — a point which the authors miss entirely. The Derg's response to this is well known: having eliminated the opposition of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) in the major cities via the 'red terror' of 1977 which liquidated thousands of leftists, Mengistu has mobilised the largest army in Africa against the 'secessionists' in the north, south and east of the country.

The theory of permanent revolution explains these events. While the Ethiopian revolution is saddled with the Stalinist ideology of the National Democratic Revolution and a military leadership it will be incapable of advancing the interests of the exploited beyond a certain point. The Stalinists will no doubt reply that in a country as backward as Ethiopia they have to go one step at a time — first the 'national democratic

revolution' and then the socialist revolution. This argument completely misses the point. It is precisely *because* the economy is so backward that the revolution must go all the way, rather than proceeding in preconceived stages. Of course the lack of a powerful and experienced working class is an added obstacle to the revolution, but the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) is testimony to the existence of forces in the region who *are* prepared to go all the way. The EPLF itself adheres to a theory of the 'national democratic revolution' but *in practice* it breaks from this framework.

The theory of permanent revolution is an alternative perspective to that of the Stalinists and, for that matter, of Molyneux and Halliday: one which explains that the future of the revolution in the Horn depends above all not on power struggles within the bonapartist regime of Mengistu, but on the self-organisation of the masses in the region towards deepening the socialist revolution. That is the importance of the movements in Eritrea and Tigray, and of the class struggle throughout the Horn, subjects which all receive short shrift in the account by Molyneux and Halliday. (The Eritreans are advised for instance that they should, reasonably, offer to swap a piece of Eritrea — to give Ethiopia access to the Red Sea — in return for 'autonomy' for the rest of the nation, p.191).

In reality the Stalinist 'theories' of the 'national democratic revolution' are not strategies for revolution at all. They are simply political expedients for Soviet foreign policy. Whatever best suits the interests of the Kremlin is 'revolutionary', 'Marxist-Leninist' and so on. This theory divides the world into two camps — that of the Soviet bloc and of imperialism — rather than between the two fundamental *classes* on a world scale, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The definition of a regime as 'revolutionary' depends on whether it buys its weapons from the Kremlin, which sea routes it can control and so on.

The travesty of this approach is apparent with the case of Somalia, Ethiopia's neighbour. The Somali Socialist Revolutionary Party was transformed in the eyes of the Kremlin in the course of a few days of 1977 from a 'friendly' traveller on the 'non-capitalist path' to being a reactionary agent of imperialism after the Somali invasion of the Ogaden in 1977. This point is reinforced at this very moment in the Horn where Soviet helicopter gunships flown by North Yemeni pilots began on 16 February to disperse lethal nerve gases across the mountains and planes of Eritrea, as part of the latest massive Ethiopian offensive against the Eritrean revolution.

Lacking the perspective of permanent revolution Molyneux and Halliday end up as apologists for the Mengistu regime and its Soviet backers. As Lowy points out so clearly in his book, this is not an academic argument. From the defeat of the Chinese revolution in 1926-27, to Indonesia in 1965 and Chile in 1973, Stalinist 'theories' have been responsible for huge and bloody defeats of the workers and peasants of the third world. This is the logic of 'two campism' by which theories are concocted not to make revolutions but to gain advantage for the Kremlin in its war of manoeuvre with the imperialists.

EXPOSING CONSPIRATORS

Ronald Kirk

Blake Baker: *The Far Left*, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1981, £3.95. John Tomlinson: *Left, Right: The March of Political Extremism in Britain*, John Calder, 1981, £4.95.

There is a guilty adolescent narcissism about rifling through the index in books of this kind to see if 'we' are mentioned; and the portrait drawn is not totally unattractive: our numbers and influence are exaggerated and we are portrayed as so many romantic Lucifers: dangerous and deadly. But the cheap thrill soon subsides to be replaced by the distaste and boredom.

Two main methodologies are involved in this sort of book. The first involves scissors and paste after a breathless sprint through a library of press cuttings. The second is the classic historiography pioneered in the Bible: the RCP begat the Club that begat the SLL that begat...

The one book that partially escaped these numbing limitations was Thayer's *The British Political Fringe*, now long out of print. Thayer had actually interviewed some of his victims and had a good eye for domestic squalor. His itemisation of the half-empty food tins in a London Maoist flat was a classic of the genre, reminiscent of the observation by a character in one of Mary McCarthy's novels that left-wingers might be identified by their invariable habit of not cleaning properly the rims of their toilets...

Blake Baker is less fanciful. A senior journalist on the *Daily Telegraph*, and a former industrial correspondent, Baker is an old news-hound whose only interest is the facts. And some of these 'facts' are truly amazing. Did you know, for example, that in 'about 1971' (to pinpoint the time more accurately would presumably pose a security problem) the British Port Employers found that dock strikes were being financed by American Trotskyists and made representations via the Washington Embassy to try and staunch the flow of funds?

John Tomlinson was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Harold Wilson and was Junior Minister at the Treasury from 1976 to 1979. That grand old moderate Jo Grimond provides a preface which demonstrates how unflabby contemporary liberalism can be: 'entrism', he argues, is more dangerous than terrorism and 'some changes in the law are necessary to limit the opportunities for our enemies to make trouble'. After several pages of organised rambling on the theme 'can liberals defend liberalism by illiberal means?' and the necessary properly tortured argument, Tomlinson is forced to opt for the end of toleration for the intolerant. The Labour Party must reinstate the proscribed list and its candidates and officials must 'satisfy certain criteria binding on all parties on such critical and basic issues as human rights, civil liberties, national interests, etc'.

It cannot be proved, he writes, that the left is involved in terrorism 'but there is no assurance that they will, may or do not lend local or logistical support to international guerilla groups'. Or fly on broomsticks under

a full moon, he might add; Mathew Hopkins could learn from the moderate Mr Tomlinson when it comes to framing unanswerable charges.

Tomlinson has palpable proof of the subversive treachery of the left. Unfortunately most of this evil-doing is difficult to trace as 'covert and undetected machinations' are 'by definition undetectable'. But 'sources have revealed a quite remarkable and far-reaching development in the case of the *Militant*. Towards the end of January 1980, as the controversy over *Militant's* presence within the Labour Party gathered momentum, the Soviet KGB dispatched from Paris to this country one of its top specialist agents briefed to infiltrate the tendency itself with the object so far as possible of shielding it from complete or damaging exposure'. Blake Baker quotes Tomlinson as his 'source' to reprint the exact same ludicrous accusation. Presumably the next book can now quote two authorities for this 'fact'!

Combining the meticulous research of *Grimm's Fairy Tales* with the literary style of a compendium of world railway timetables, both books are highly recommended bedtime reading: as soporific as Horlicks but containing none of the calories.

David Kogan and Maurice Kogan: *The Battle for the Labour Party*, Fontana, paperback, £1.75.

As a potted history of the new Labour left and the recent battles to democratise the Labour Party, this readable and interesting book is just the sort of thing to help activists step back for a moment to ponder the results and prospects of their campaigning. However, as a work of political analysis to provide some food for thought, forget it.

The full power of David Kogan's Fleet Street journalism and Maurice Kogan's academic dissection are brought to bear in the opening lines: 'The Labour Party has undergone cataclysmic change...The power of the traditional leadership has been broken.' If either of the Kogans have been into the House of Commons recently they can't have looked very closely at the Opposition front bench. The truth is that the structural changes in the Labour Party have not, as yet, produced either a Parliamentary Labour Party or a Shadow Cabinet that would be substantially different from the last Labour government.

Kogan and Kogan then try to explain this cataclysm: 'A new element has entered British politics,' they maintain, 'and has acted with devastating force.' This 'new and extraordinary phenomenon' is 'the groups of the Outside Left'. The book then concentrates on how the left wing organised the campaigns for democracy and accountability in the party. The authors give great emphasis to the tactics employed by the left, like model resolutions and circulars, as if they were something entirely new and alien to the labour movement. The argument is obvious — the left has made gains because it has been more ruthless and better organised than the right-wing. The failures of the Labour government, the radicalisation of sections of the unions, the strength of the left's policies for party democracy and for challenging the capitalist crisis — none of these get a look-in.

Reviews Reviews Reviews



As they explain at the end: 'This book has described the story of quite remarkable changes in a major public institution and how they were achieved by small groups of people...' This 'conspiracy theory' (for despite all the dressing, that is what it is) is not something new. The cry of 'small groups of politically motivated men (sic)' has been echoing around the labour movement for generations. 'The new groups', write Kogan and Kogan, 'call themselves the "outside left"'. That is a lie. I've never come across anyone in the labour movement, or anywhere else outside a football pitch, who would adopt such an idiotic label. The truth is that Kogan and Kogan's 'Outside Left', as opposed to the Tribune 'Inside Left', is just another version of the Labour right's 'illegitimate left' and 'legitimate left'. The derogatory term 'Outside Left' says more about its inventors than about those it is supposed to describe. The right-wing would love to see the 'Outside Left' outside, outside the party, outside the unions and, in some cases, outside the country (Syd Bidwell's advice to Tariq Ali).

In the hands of the right-wing, the 'analysis' in this book will supply greater justification for a witch-hunt designed to stop the left taking 'unfair advantage' of Labour democracy. Its lists of left organisations and individuals will likewise provide useful 'do-it-yourself' kits for the fledgling Stalins of the Labour Party.

Finally, it may seem trivial, but throughout the book Kogan and Kogan insist on calling my union the Post Office Engineering Workers Union (POEW). We are the Post Office Engineering Union, the POEU, and have been since 1919. You'd think such knowledgeable people would be able to get little details like that right. Still, I don't suppose it will stop them laughing all the way to the bank, as their book is probably selling as quickly as it was rushed into print.

MAYAKOVSKY:

Vladimir Mayakovsky was a poet, playwright, script-writer, actor, graphic and poster designer, revolutionary agitator, and propagandist in the Bolshevik Revolution and the establishment of the Soviet Republic until his suicide in 1930 at the age of thirty six. PAUL RUSSELL reviews an exhibition of his work.

A few months before his death Mayakovsky organised in Moscow a retrospective exhibition entitled *Mayakovsky: Twenty Years of Work*, an accumulation of posters, photos, graphics, paintings, scripts, books, letters, criticisms, caricatures, journals, poems, advertisements and reviews. Declaring 'this exhibition

TWENTY

The present exhibition is a painstaking reconstruction of the original, minus the drawing pins! Without knowing Russian some aspects of the exhibition will be lost because Mayakovsky designed the layout of famous magazine LEF (Left Front of the Arts) advertisements with care, whether in poetry, his range of his work gives a good idea of enormous excitement and scope afforded by Russia's relative industrial and cultural isolation prior to 1917. Nevertheles the quantity and innovative artists by the revolution, especially given a socialist agitator wanted by the Tsarist police. In an open letter to the workers he declared: 'The revolution of content without the revolution of form. Futurism, Mayakovsky later moved away from the international Futurist movement and became linked to the Constructivist and Suprematist circles which were specific to Soviet Russia. But he could never be fully identified with any one movement, as most artists were at the time. This was partly due to his creative range, which went far beyond the stylistic possibilities offered by any one area, and partly

tion has been mounted and loaned by the State Museum of Literature in Moscow. It is therefore encouraging to note the enthusiasm for his work by A. P. Efimova, the museum's curator, who writes in her introduction: 'In the consciousness of many generations, not only in the Soviet Union but throughout the world, Mayakovsky has established himself as the greatest poet of the Revolution and of the building of socialism.'



YEARS OF

Mayakovsky opened the exhibition by reading a new poem *At the Top of My Voice* which ends defiantly: 'When I appear above the band of bright decades, of coming poetic grafters and crooks, I'll lift up high, like a Bolshevik party-card, all the hundred volumes of my ComParty books!'

because he was continually searching for ways to communicate and close the culture-gap with the working class audience he always addressed. Under he deliberately chose popular newspapers to print his poems. Under the ironic title *Mayakovsky is not intelligible to the masses*, a section of

the exhibition displays press cuttings of his poems from provincial newspapers. In 1930 Mayakovsky was under attack by the increasingly conservative literary and political authorities, both of whom cherished the bourgeois idiom of realist representation as the appropriate vehicle for proletarian enlightenment. The catalogue barely alludes to this tragedy, no doubt because the exhibition displays press cuttings of his poems from provincial newspapers.

WORK

The exhibition *Mayakovsky: Twenty Years of Work*, along with *Early Soviet Photographers* is at the Museum of Modern Art, 30 Pembroke Street, Oxford until 2 May; Graves Art Gallery, Surrey Street, Sheffield from 12 May to 20 June; and from the end of June at Riverside Studios, Crisp Road, London W6.



The illustrated catalogue, designed by David King, costs £4.50.

