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Women and Cars
Battle of Bethnal Green
Interview with John Licher
News and Reviews

socialist REVIEW

**It's a special model
designed to rescue
industrial capital,
but Peugeot plan a rough
ride for the
workers...**

SEE PAGE 3



THE ASSEMBLY OF A MULTINATIONAL

Sorry, Roger!
Our apologies to Roger Huddle and to our readers. His excellent article on the politics of Rock against Racism was spoiled by the fact that a production problem made part of it very difficult to read.

People will find, however, that the effort involved in reading it will have been well spent.

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NEWS

analysis

AUEW

SU: Opportunity knocks

With the confrontation between the Amalgamated of Engineering Workers' executive and the British Leyland toolmakers a trial of strength for the new AUEW right-wing leadership has emerged as early as anyone could have expected. If the union's leadership forces the SU Carburetter toolmakers effectively to drop their claim for parity with Rover workers, it will represent for more than a crushing blow to the idea of separate organisation within the BL toolrooms.

The coming election for an AUEW executive council No 4 division which covers the stronghold of the union's membership from Birmingham to the North West.

The left's candidate for this election is John Tocher (see interview in this issue), already faces the considerable disadvantage of the geographical distribution of the membership being biased against Manchester and in favour of Birmingham (see *Socialist Review* No 3).

A major victory for blacklegging in the Midlands would reinforce the right-wing hold on a demoralised membership. And it would provide the background for the decisive discussions between the enginners and the electricians on a merger designed to strangle AUEW democracy.

Different

But if the SU toolmakers stick to their guns the picture could be very different. The 32 men concerned are after all defending the principle of existing agreements: parity for SU was agreed in 1975, in AUEW negotiations ironically led by Bob Wright, the man Duffy

beat to become President.

If Duffy's particular brand of anti-trade unionism is resisted, whether the SU men win their specific case or not, the AUEW right wing will be in considerable disarray for some time to come.

BL's bosses are keen to rid themselves of Duffy's bunglings, which they blame for many of the misunderstandings while he was involved in their national negotiations, while AUEW General Secretary

John Boyd is considering replacing Duffy on many of the negotiating committees which the union's President normally heads.

A defeat for Duffy at the hands of those most unlikely militants, the BL toolroom committee, would provide the left with an opportunity to undo a lot of the damage wrought by the right-wing's recent triumphs.

Dave Field

Car industry

Protect jobs at Chrysler

Much of the comment by the British left on the takeover of Chrysler-Europe by Peugeot-Citroen has naturally focussed on the 'multinational' aspect of it. The job of thousands of workers in Coventry and Glasgow depend upon the outcome of a secret deal between Detroit and Paris.

The 'planning agreements' and 'participation' schemes that management, union officials and convenors claimed will guarantee jobs, have proved to be worthless because they in no way control the machinations of international big business.

At one level the argument is harmless enough. It gets across in a very direct way the futility of class collaboration, the unbridgeable gap that separates those who make decisions from those who suffer from them.

But there is a conclusion that is often drawn from this

argument—by much of the 'broad left'—that is very dangerous. They argue that the way to deal with such 'multinational' machinations is to urge bodies like the National Enterprise Board to intervene, to build up a national car industry to fight the multinationals. On this basis, it is claimed, an 'alternative economic policy' can be developed to protect jobs and conditions.

But the case of Peugeot-Citroen does not justify this conclusion. Because what is involved is not just a 'multinational' operation, but above all an attempt by French big business and government circles—to protect a 'national' car industry against the already existing multinationals.

A dozen years ago it seemed that the French car firms were going to fall, one by one, into

the embrace of more powerful foreign concerns. All of de Gaulle's nationalist rhetoric could not prevent Chrysler's absorption of Simca, or the buying by the Italian giant FIAT of a powerful minority holding in Citroen.

It seemed that the time could not be far off where the pattern in France would be similar to that in Britain, with a solitary all-French (nationalised) company, Renault, surrounded by branches of foreign-based multinationals.

But measures were taken to obstruct the trend. State funds were already being used to maintain the expansion of Renault, regardless of considerations of mere profitability. So in the '70s, while car output in Germany stagnated, and declined in Britain and Italy, it rose steadily in France. Ten years ago French and British car output were roughly the same: today French output is double British.

Bailed out

Then the merger of Citroen and FIAT collapsed. During the oil crisis of 1973-4, Citroen faced very much the same problems as British Leyland. It was bailed out, by the French state on the one hand and the aggressively private capitalist Peugeot family on the other. A merger with Peugeot was masterminded by a new recruit to Peugeot's top management, a top civil servant who had previously been a government nominee to the board of Renault; it was lubricated by a £115 million government loan.

The merged company was highly successful in the French market, surging well ahead of Chrysler-Simca and just overtaking Renault. By European standards it was a big company - nearly on a par with Volkswagen and Ford Europe and with twice the output of British Leyland. But that left its scale of operations well down in the Second Division when contrasted with the world-wide output of the American and Japanese firms.

Above all it lacked the penumbra of overseas subsidiaries which make it so easy for the US firms to gobble up foreign markets.

The takeover of Chrysler Europe provides the final, crowning glory for French capital's car dreams. At a stroke it will have broken through on several fronts. The absorption of Chrysler-France into the French company will mean that American capital no longer has

A Dirty Word

'How will the Peugeot family, so successful at excluding trade unions from their business in France, come to grips with having to negotiate with British trade unions?' asked the Economist on 19 August. Not too well, if Peugeot's record over the last ten years (at least) is maintained.

It was after all just ten years ago that the only worker actually shot down during the May/June events of 1968 was murdered - on a picket line at Peugeot's Sochaux factory. Jacques Beylot was killed by riot police called in by Peugeot management.

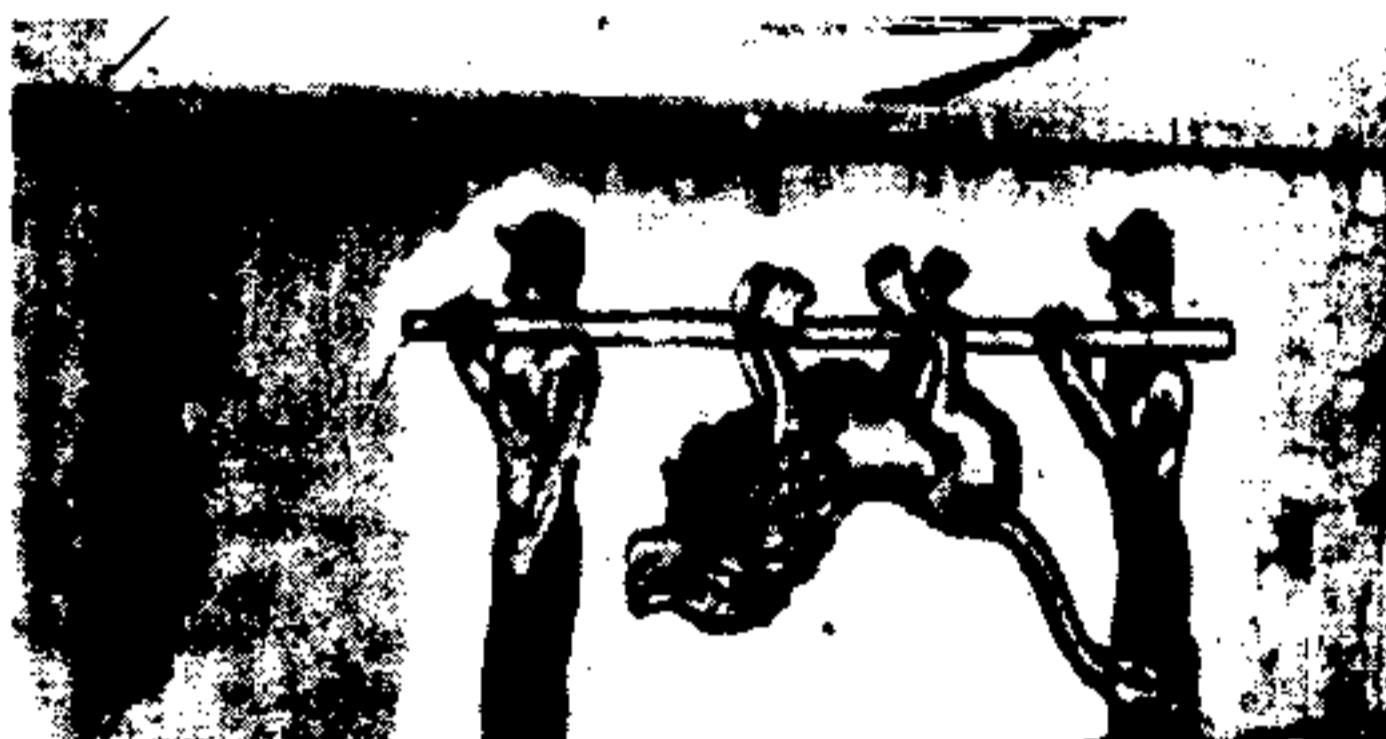
And the company's track record since then is not much better...seven workers sacked in a lockout in March 1969...union militants harrassed...the fake union - CSL - boosted at the expense of genuine unions (France's two main unions have only about 10-15 percent membership on the Peugeot shop floor)...ballot forms for workplace elections defaced or fiddled in March 1971 etc.

Citroen's record is if anything worse. Company union ... frame-ups of shop delegates. Late in 1971 at the Javel factory in Paris for example the company tried to rig elections so that only delegates of individual skilled groups would be accepted.

In June 1972 at the St Ouen plant Citroen resorted

to the tactic of calling immigrant workers in one by one and demanding where their CFT (company union) card was: no card, no contract of employment...

Such practices mark the history of the growth of Peugeot-Citroen into what, with the addition of Chrysler, will be Europe's largest car manufacturer.



What the workers thought of Peugeot during the 1968 strike

any foothold at all in French car production.

The French firm will gain production facilities in Britain, and will push itself into second place, behind SEAT, in Spain. This in addition to Peugeot-Citroen's existing plans to produce cars in Rumania and transmissions in East Germany, its supply of knocked down parts to Iran, and its 15% stake in Mitsubishi. Its agreement with Chrysler US provides it with easier access to the US market. And, above all, the firm emerges as the only one in Europe comparable in size with the American and Japanese giants. Effectively, French capital has warded off the threat from foreign based multinationals by building up a French based multinational.

The story may not end with the merger. Despite the apparent incompatibility of the nationalised Renault and the staunchly private Peugeot collaboration exists between them. After all, Peugeot and Renault have had an agreement for sharing components for ten years: according to the *Sunday Times* 'their most vigorously competing models share the same engines, gear boxes and transmissions'.

In any case the ramifications for the other car firms in Europe will be immense. Motor production is an industry where increased size means increased competitiveness.

As the *Financial Times* noted earlier this year: 'The battle (for

Militants at the Sochaux plant have recalled how time and again the company resorts to provocation, uses security guards with telephoto lens cameras to identify individuals on a picket line or in an occupation, then sacks and blacklists those concerned.

The company is especially renowned for employing armed thugs as security men - even in France where private armies are considered quite normal . . .

car markets) has been going unmistakably to the big battalions in recent years. If the trend continues, and the bigger battalions grow even bigger as they grow multinational, what place will that leave for the smaller competitors?

Even Ford have been shaken from complacency by the implications of the merger. As they told the press the day it was announced, 'We were number one in Europe this morning. If this deal comes off we shall be swamped'.

Conditions are going to be very difficult for many of the much smaller fry which in Britain means, above all, British Leyland. Its output is barely a third of that of Peugeot-Citroen-Chrysler Europe. The new giant will be half as big as

the entire British car industry!

However much Leyland workers accept 'participation' arrangements and unite with their management to raise productivity, they are likely to be in a losing race.

It only remains to be added that the coup pulled off by French capital is of no tangible benefit to the workers in the French car factories or their new British subsidiaries.

Peugeot has been able to push itself to the top of the European car industry because it has been completely untrammelled by trade union resistance to low wages and bad working conditions. According to the *Sunday Telegraph* a recent survey of French industry showed that Peugeot demands the longest working week (42½ hours) and pays the lowest minimum monthly wage (£254)... It is least generous in its payment of wages during sickness and comes a close second to the state Renault company on its accident record'.

Fewer than 10 per cent of Peugeot's workers are unionised. Citroen and Simca have been the other two great centres of non-unionism in France, with contingents of security guards ready to beat up organisers from either of France's main union federations, the CGT and the CFDT. Not surprisingly, both union federations were distinctly unhappy about a merger which means domination of the European car industry by an anti-union employer.

Like the so many other 'rescues', the rescue of Citroen by Peugeot four years ago means a considerable loss of jobs: from 64,000 Citroen jobs then to 52,000 now. Although the full range of Citroen and Peugeot models was maintained, they were increasingly made out of a single set of components, so allowing a continual cutback in the number of workers.

Lapse

Presumably a similar approach will be applied with the latest merger. A certain lapse of time — a year or more perhaps — will be allowed to avoid any immediate, politically embarrassing confrontations. And then a full-blooded rationalisation of the group's operations will be pushed through.

This would probably leave certain assembly and storage facilities in the Spanish and British factories. But in all likelihood, when it comes to the

manufacture of engines and components, the unionised British and Spanish workforces will be told that the precondition for keeping these will be 'voluntary' acceptance of conditions and wages as bad as those enforced by crude repression in the French factories.

All these are part of the cost which workers are having to pay for the defence of French capitalism's car industry against its American and Japanese rivals — for 'an alternative economic policy' designed to protect 'French national interests'.

Alternative

If the supporters of a 'British alternative economic policy' want to resist the French and the Americans they will have to demand even more vicious attacks on British workers,



since, the British car industry is so much smaller now even than the French.

But then talk of 'alternative economic policies' has nothing to do with socialism. It is talk of how, through state intervention, a particular national capitalism can stand up to the multinationals run by some other national capitalism. Our starting point has to be quite different — from the defence of workers jobs and conditions, against all capitalisms, national, multinational or 'foreign'.

Our call for nationalisation under workers control, is a call for state intervention to protect jobs and conditions against the increasingly chaotic effects of national and international competition; not a call for a more efficient 'national' intervention in that competition.

Chris Harman

Dissidents

Seeing through hypocrisy

Ten years after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia the shadow of repression in the so-called 'socialist countries' looms over the Western labour movement. The recent trials of Soviet civil rights activists have become a major political issue in the West. They are being used to justify increased arms spending and an end to the thaw between Russia and the West.

Within the British trade union movement, the right-wing leaders of the engineers and the electricians, Terry Duffy and Frank Chapple are using the issue of repression in the USSR as part of their campaign against the left. Are we on the verge of another cold war, in which the spectre of Stalinism will be used to drive socialists onto the defensive and legitimate a massive arms race?

The question of human rights in the eastern bloc has become a major issue especially since the signing of the Helsinki agreement by 39 states in 1975. The pact was a result of a conference which the Soviet bureaucracy had long demanded as a means of legitimising their conquests in eastern Europe after the second world war. In the event, Helsinki has boomeranged against Brezhnev and Co.

The agreement included a clause on human rights. No doubt the signatories of the pact, both Eastern and

Western, saw this clause as having no practical significance. They turned out to be very wrong.

In the Soviet Union the Helsinki agreement gave the dissident intelligentsia a new focus for their activity. Groups of activists to monitor the implementation of the Helsinki accords sprang up in a number of centres — Moscow, the Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania. The decision by the new Carter administration in Washington for its own reasons to make human rights a major theme of its foreign policy no doubt gave the Helsinki groups an added encouragement.

Emergence

Perhaps the most significant single development was the emergence of a group of working-class dissidents — the Free Trade Union Association of Soviet Working People headed by Vladimir Klebanov (see *Socialist Review* No. 4 July 1978). The dissident movement has, up to now, been predominantly one of intellectuals, heavily influenced by elitist, anti-working class and reactionary ideals.

The willingness of a group of workers to link their own economic grievances to the demand for human rights represents a new phase in the history of the Soviet regime.

There are signs that at least some of the human rights activists were prepared to respond to this development — notably Yuri Orlov, founder of the Helsinki monitoring group and, according to his evidence at his trial, a turner who only went to university as a mature student.

The regime's response has been a wave of arrests and trials aimed at crushing the Helsinki groups. Their leading members — Orlov, Alexander Ginzburg, Anatoly Shcharansky, Mykola Rudenko, Oleksa Tikhy, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Merab Kostava, and, most recently, Alexander Podrabinek — were given heavy gaol sentences for 'anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda' (and in Shcharansky's case espionage).

The response in the West has been a chorus of outrage in all quarters. Even the French Communist Party, traditionally one of the most Stalinist and pro-Moscow of the Western CPs, supported a demonstration against the trials.

Leaving aside the hypocrisy of many of the protests — the same governments who denounced the repression of Soviet dissidents are quite ready to supply arms to bloodstained dictators like the Shah of Iran — the most significant feature of the present hue and cry is the

way in which it can be used to justify a new arms race between East and West. In our last issue Fred Hall showed how the Western propaganda campaign about the Soviet military build-up in Europe serves the interests of the NATO military establishment.

The Carter administration, despite its liberal rhetoric, has made increased arms spending one of its chief priorities since taking office in January 1977. Last year Carter demanded that NATO countries commit themselves to increasing their defence spending by three per cent (in real terms) a year over the next five years. The US, Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Belgium have all adopted this target. The NATO summit in May approved a Long-Term Defence Programme which commits the alliance to spending \$60 - 80 billion between now and the 1990s.

Advantages

A recent editorial in the *Economist* pointed out the economic advantages for Western capitalism of a new arms race. Defence spending takes up 13 per cent of Soviet gross national product. The comparable figure for the US is five per cent, well below the figures for the cold war era (ten per cent) and Vietnam (nine per cent). The figures for other Western countries are even lower - 3½ per cent of GNP in West Germany, Canada, Italy and France.

A new arms race would put severe pressure on the Soviet economy. It would also help to end the recession gripping Western capitalism. The *Economist* suggested that 'reflation via rearmament could have a distinct appeal for Western governments'.

Of course, things are not quite that simple. A big increase in American arms spending, unless it were matched by comparable increases by its main Western competitors, would simply make the US economy more vulnerable to imports from West Germany and Japan.

It would also unleash another wave of inflation. But the trend is nonetheless evident. Especially since the wars in Zaire and the Horn of Africa, US policy towards Russia has hardened considerably.

Already in Britain the Labour government is beginning to reverse the cuts in the defence budget made in 1975. 6,000 soldiers will be added to the army, restoring half the

numbers chopped off three years ago.

But human rights in the eastern bloc is an issue for the labour movement as well. The decision by Chapple and Duffy to put forward a joint motion on Soviet dissidents at the TUC this month has very little to do with any genuine concern with human rights. Chapple still uses the Stalinist methods he learned in the Communist Party to run the EETPU.

It fits in with their plans to merge the engineering and electricians' unions into one massive right-wing monolith. Soviet dissidents are a good issue, because the CP-dominated broad left is vulnerable on it, traditionally more interested in junketings with officials from the Russian trade union machine (including the ex-KGB boss Shelepin) than in the position of Soviet workers.

The defenders of the Moscow bureaucracy in the British labour movement have been helped the right-wing antics of leading dissidents. Every speech by Alexander Solzhenitsyn in which he invokes the virtues of a Tsarist theocracy in Russia, every incident like that in which Vladimir Bukovsky spoke at a rally organised by NAFF, helps to preserve the pro-Moscow traditions of the British left.

Nonetheless, we should not allow the reactionary politics and middle-class origins of many dissidents to obscure the basic issue: should we support the fight for democratic rights in the Soviet Union? The answer must, surely, be, Yes.

Arouse

As the Czechoslovak revolutionary Peter Uhl put it: 'The demands themselves for democratic freedoms and civil rights which cannot be realised under dictatorships can arouse the working class and other important layers of the working population, can heighten their fighting power, and shake the very foundations of the dictatorship...'

'The pro-capitalist illusions and reactionary myths that may guide this struggle initially weaken to the extent that the self-consciousness and self-confidence of the working class are raised'.

Alex Callinicos

November copy date

Letters and contributions for November issue must be received by 10 October.

Pay policy

Quick exit Stage 4?

The government is now openly relying on the employers to hold the pay line - at least until the election. Official trade union hostility to an unprecedented fourth round of wage restraint was a certainty - if only for the reason expressed by Len Murray when he remarked that pay controls might become an unbreakable habit.

Even if the government sees its new five per cent limit as an interim pre-election policy it has now clearly given up its pretence of a jointly agreed programme for 'this great movement of ours'. Instead we have the vague call for a 'national consensus' and a 'broad understanding' of the TUC/Labour Party liaison committee agreement *Into The Eighties*.

While the Government has taken up the employers' positions on the 35-hour week and made its position absolutely clear by getting the CBI to issue its tough guidelines on productivity, the call is now for tripartite agreement on the German model.

The recent White Paper states that it is 'the Government's view that the country should aim at a long-term approach in which collective bargaining is based each year on a broad agreement between Government, unions and employers about the maximum level of earnings.'

Below, we examine the changes which have led to the demise of the social contract and given rise to this new line.

Successful incomes policies must work at two distinct but interrelated levels. The first is the political (in the broadest sense of the word). Success for the Government at this level comes from the development of an ideological climate in which the wages/inflation relationship is the primary economic feature and the establishment of a national consensus on a pay 'norm' is the major political feature.

The second level at which incomes policies operate is in the workplace. The relationship between the two was clearly recognised by the TUC in its

1975 document *The Development of the Social Contract*, which said 'there must be a far greater degree of association in the future between trade unionists themselves and the Congress position. There has to be an identification and a commitment to the action to follow.'

The first two stages of the Social Contract held because the political and industrial dimensions were successfully integrated. Workers largely accepted the idea that wage increases cause inflation and the consequent need for controls. It was also accepted by the official trade union movement although this was tempered by ritual genuflections towards an 'alternative economic policy'.

Central

Any action against the pay guidelines that was developed in the Social Contract period was easily characterised as highly sectional, unofficial and disruptive to the economy. This was the central element in successfully implementing the pay policy on the shop floor.

As for the political battle from 1974 onwards, incomes policy was to be seen as coming from the TUC itself. In the *Attack on Inflation*, White Paper of July 1975, the TUC Social Contract statement was reprinted alongside a Government statement 'supporting' the £6 limit.

In the *Attack on Inflation - The Second Year*, the Government again found itself able to reproduce 'the TUC pay guidelines endorsed by the Government, for the coming year.'

It was only in the third year that the Government failed to put the TUC into the position of setting the bargaining limits. But the Government reproduced the TUC statement instructing unions to adhere to the 12 months rule and Stage 2, and not delay settlements - as many were - in the hope of winning more under Stage 3.

This facade of unity took another battering during the last round, with the TUC formally having nothing to do

with the 10 per cent figure, though voting narrowly to let the firemen go to the wall. The current White Paper acknowledges that Labour must go it alone, but announces that it is 'necessary for the Government to give guidance' on pay.

The second means of securing union co-operation on pay has been the quid-pro-quo. When the Labour Party was returned to office following the Heath debacle, it offered a programme of reform of industrial relations legislation.

This was not much of an offer, as the unions had already rendered the Industrial Relations Act inoperative, but it was enough to steady the Social Contract and provide two years of good will. The trade-off for effective acquiescence at the top for the third stage of pay policy was the reduction in taxes made as part of the April 1977 Budget.

This time round, there was nothing tangible left for the Government to offer the TUC. They were stuck with a single promise - on offer throughout the Social Contract period of course - of rising living standards through the control of inflation.

Even this had begun to ring a little hollow at the TUC, with the Government attempting to fix a pay norm below a current rate of inflation that showed every indication of rising before the end of the next year.

A third element in the first two stages of the Social Contract period was the Government's 'commitment' to the low paid. A £6 flat rate policy was designed to give the biggest percentage increase at the bottom end of the scale - but only for those with the strength to bargain for it.

The 5 per cent policy had a minimum element of £2.50. 'Help' for the low paid was absent from the Stage 3 guidelines but has re-emerged this time round with the Government stating that it is prepared to see pay rises above 5 per cent 'where the resulting earnings were no more than £44.50 for a normal full time week.'

Updated

This is not a great step forward when three of the most important unions representing low paid workers, NUPE, GMWU and USDAW had already set their sights on £55 or £60 a week. The Government informs us in the White Paper that it has updated the TUC

minimum pay target of £30 set in 1974-5. However, that target figure was set at two thirds of annual earnings and by simply adding the pay policy supplements, the Government has achieved a clever sleight-of-hand.

The present day equivalent of £30 a week in 1974, calculated on the basis of either price inflation or of two thirds of male manual earnings, is £55 a week - the trade unions' target figure.

Return

Last, but by no means least, the Government's commitment to a return to free collective bargaining has been lost without trace. Only a year ago, Labour was calling Stage 3 of the pay policy 'a period which must mark an orderly return to normal collective bargaining.' Now it is looking for 'broad agreements' for ever.

To show that the pay policy is coming under increasing pressure at the ideological and political level is not enough to predict its collapse. If the Government can impose a couple of well-publicised deals at an early stage, then the power politics may hold, especially if backed by a general election.

The crucial question is whether the new policy can cope with developments on the shop floor.

The ten per cent limit was actually formally broken at an early stage by the 57,000 manual workers at Ford, who got increases in pay of around 14 per cent without using the productivity loophole. This was followed by a period of resounding silence as union negotiators learned that the Department of Employment was monitoring pay policy from publicity.

They also learned that there were three ways of getting above the 10 per cent limit in the private sector: firstly, by reaching collusive agreements with employers and keeping very quiet about them; secondly, by introducing some form of 'self-financing productivity deal' and thirdly, by using Schedule 11 of the Employment Protection Act or the Fair Wages Resolution. This legislation was designed to raise low pay to a prevailing level but over the last year or so it has been used extensively by two unions - ASTMS and TASS - to raise the pay or improve the working conditions of small groups of relatively low paid staff in highly paid sectors of industry.

The effect of these awards, made by the Central Arbitration Committee, has been quite important. Over 400 cases have been heard already this year, and awards have been made up of up to 15 per cent in addition to Stage 3 deals.

The effect of these developments has been to leave the pay bargaining initiative in the hands of the employers and trade union 'technicians' who can compile the evidence necessary for arbitration claims or carry out the calculations on productivity deals.

It is impossible to calculate the number of settlements that have taken pay beyond the limits, and indeed a considerable number of private sector companies stuck to the rules. Many employers used the guidelines and the threat of Government sanctions - never of course applied at Ford - to resist claims successfully.


In the public sector, the Government has made every effort to ensure that the guidelines were enforced, and it has met with some considerable

success. Not without the use of a number of safety valves, however - pay comparability for policemen and firemen, changing pay dates at Leyland, Central Arbitration Committee awards at British Shipbuilders and productivity agreements for the power workers in Electricity Supply and the miners.

During the last year, a considerable head of steam has built up in the public sector from those groups who failed to secure any 'extras' eg civil servants and local authority staff. Nurses have also secured a commitment for discussions on payments, to compensate for the fact that they are unable to negotiate productivity bonuses in the Health Service.

Erosion

In the private sector, pay anomalies have built up at a rapid rate over the Social Contract period. In particular, pockets of skilled workers are becoming increasingly militant about the erosion of differentials and parity between plants. In the last weeks there has been



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a flood of stoppages by craftsmen in the car and engineering industries.

The five per cent policy leaves very little room for manoeuvre on this point. Healey said in his speech introducing the White Paper, that he hoped unions and employers would use the flexibility within it 'in particular to restore differentials where appropriate'.

The flexibility within the White Paper turns out to be the possibility of amending salary and differential structures within the 5 per cent overall limit. This is barely enough room to stretch the muscles.

For example, in the engineering industry, companies must implement the minimum rates established in the new national agreement. The importance of this is for shift and overtime pay and it could add two or three per cent to a wage bill.

If the £6 pay policy supplement has not yet been consolidated into basic pay, then the addition of this with its subsequent follow-through on to premiums could add a further couple of per cent, which leaves little or nothing to bargain about.

However, in the same way that the growth of political opposition to pay policy does not necessarily signal its demise, neither does the development of widespread 'industrial relations' problems. The two operating together have a greater chance of success.

Emergence

For a fourth round of pay policy to become a non-event, a number of developments must emerge. Most obviously, an election and a change of government would throw the whole issue into the melting pot, but there are three other closely linked factors necessary for a successful campaign against incomes policy.

The first must be a well-publicised breach in the public sector that is not hedged in with 'special case' status. Perhaps, in this respect the miners will return to the forefront, this time with no possibility of another productivity gerrymander in the pits.

In the private sector it is of vital importance that the trade unions do not continue to cooperate with the employers in hiding their settlements. ASTMS, for example, has continually crowed in its journal about the settlements it has been able to reach - in companies A, B and C. The egregious Clive Jenkins has

actually instructed his officials not to talk about pay agreements they sign.

And this emphasises the importance of the third aspect of any wages movement. There is no official monitoring body and the Department of Employment must act in an ad hoc manner. Its intimidation is far less likely to be successful where

West Germany

Right hysteria

On 11 February 1978 the German teachers' and scientists' trade union - GEW - expelled ten members of its local Bochum committee.

They were excluded because they dared publish the text of a proposal in the union's local magazine which protested against a pending prohibition of West German 'K groups' (various communist parties and movements).

The background to the affair was the latest attempt by the German christian democrats (CDU) to ban the K groups. The ban remained unsuccessful because of the demand by Franz Josef Strauss's right-wing Christian Socialist Union to outlaw the Moscow-line German Communist Party - a move rejected by the CDU for tactical reasons.

The moves to expel the Bochum teachers - and effectively lose them their jobs because of the *Berufsverbote* regulations - coincided with the period of general hysteria about the 'extreme left' which followed the killing of Buback and Schleyer by terrorists. All sorts of institutions and organisations hastened to declare their unlimited loyalty to the German constitution and purged their rank and file.

This was just at the time when opposition forces inside various

a co-ordinated campaign has been initiated.

The Government can lean on individual companies or isolate some groups of workers, like the firemen. Its task will become next to impossible if shop-floor activity extends successes across companies and makes sure that everybody knows about them. *Bill George*

unions had been strengthened in response to rising unemployment. Complacent union officials were faced with a threat.

The Bochum committee of the GEW decided to publicise the motion against the CDU proposals in November last year. In a note explaining the motion - which of course had still to be passed by a general meeting - a broad front of different groups - including the local boy scouts! - drew attention to recent increasing repression of all left-wing activity in Germany.

Forbidden

The national executive of the GEW started proceedings to expel 18 local teachers from the union (12 committee members and six members of the magazine's editorial board). The reason given was that the publication of the motion itself constituted support for K group activity - which is forbidden under union rules.

January and February of this year saw a widespread movement of solidarity in local branches of the GEW and other unions all over Germany. The entire Berlin GEW committee protested strongly against the executive's intentions.

Danish, Dutch, and British (NATFHE West Midlands) unions sent letters and

telegrams. Numerous meetings and rallies were held to support the Bochum 18. Attempts by the union's regional committee to smear the Bochum 18 as an extremist minority were countered by petitions signed by hundreds of Bochum GEW members.

Nevertheless ten members were expelled on 11 February. Among them was Christian Holtgrewe, Bochum's long-time chairman, and other local committee members. The remaining eight members were threatened with procedures concerning so-called activities harming the union.

The annual Bochum GEW elections were held in May. The union's hierarchy tried to influence the elections massively by writing personal letters to every Bochum member, as well as local newspapers, in which they described several candidates as the 'red opposition', as supporters of violence etc. The most disgraceful letter was signed by Erich Frister, GEW national president, himself.

Despite all this a secret ballot saw all 11 seats on the local committee won by the so-called 'minority fraction', by a margin of 2 to 1. All 11 new committee members gave as one of their priorities activity to reverse the expulsion of their predecessors.

The remaining eight members threatened with proceedings were acquitted. But the most important result to date has been the general feeling of new-found optimism and strength concerning local union activities.

This affects the fight for better working conditions, wages and above all against all kinds of restrictions of basic human rights, for example *Berufsverbote*, wherever they may occur - even inside the unions.

The final appeal for the ten members expelled comes up in October and their supporters in Bochum and elsewhere are



Schmidt or Strauss: who will be the champion witch-hunter?

appealing for letters taking up the case to be sent to the GEW's board of appeal in Frankfurt.

Letters should be sent to: Hauptausschuss der GEW, Unterlindau 58, 6000

Frankfurt/M, West Germany.

Send copies to the national executive as follows: Hauptvorstand der GEW, Erich Frister, Postfach, 6000 Frankfurt/M. West Germany.

And to the Bochum committee at this address: Ortsvorsitz der GEW, Marita Hester, Girondelle 39, 4630 Bochum, West Germany.

from a special correspondent

boycotted by solicitors and others who gave evidence to Amnesty.

Solicitors have also called for a review of past cases and have discussed boycotting the Diplock courts which accept confession. Further evidence of middle-class disillusionment with the security forces has been the withdrawal of two members of the Police Authority because of the non-cooperation of the RUC.

Most of the protests in the last few months have been sparked off by the conditions of the 340 prisoners in H Block. Fighting for a return of political status since the first prisoner went on the blanket in September 1976, the men have escalated their campaign through a no wash protest.

This protest helped make political status an issue in the media. The protest and the support given to the men have helped break the wall of silence which surrounded H Block for the past two years. The government policy of criminalisation and denial of political status aimed to isolate the Republican movement and its prisoners. By ending internment they hoped to end the mass opposition to an openly coercive policy.

For a while they partly succeeded. For the past two years the centre of H Block opposition was the Relatives Action Committee in Belfast. Made up of relatives and friends of prisoners, supporters of the Republican movement, and socialists who supported the demand for political status, the RAC campaigned aggressively in the North and South, in England and in Europe. It never got much more than its initial support in the North.

But as the number of prisoners in H Block increases, as hundreds wait in remand prisons, and as the RUC works on more suspects every day, the bankruptcy of the British policy is becoming more evident to all. Men who have not been active for five years are being charged with crimes committed in 1971. Men who were never in the IRA receive 30 year jail sentences. Young boys who never got around to joining are harassed by the Army and jailed for years.

Relatives Action Committees have been formed in country areas for the first time. 2000 march in Toome, several hundred in Strabane, a protest in Dundalk. These are new names for protests. 20 RACs were involved on planning the Coalisland march.

Northern Ireland

Message from H Block

Ten years ago in August 1968 2,500 people marched from Coalisland to Dungannon in Co. Tyrone in Northern Ireland. Led by the moderate middle class Campaign for Social Justice, they were protesting about discrimination in housing carried out by Unionist controlled rural and urban councils in the area.

Predictably Ian Paisley intervened and obediently the RUC kept the march from Dungannon town centre. But that march marked the beginning of protests, marches and demonstrations that developed into the present struggle for independence from British rule in Ireland.

On August 27 this year thousands of people marched that same route. It was at one and the same time a commemoration of the first civil rights march and a continuation of the political struggle against British imperialism.

The people were different. Young republicans who grew up fighting the British Army were there, workers who have organised against repression throughout Ireland marched, as did mothers whose children wear blankets in H Block. There were few civil rights campaigners from the old days.

The banners also were different. They no longer call for jobs and houses, though discrimination and unemployment are more rampant than ever.

The march called for an end to British rule, repatriation of prisoners from English jails, and most of all, the restoration of political status for political prisoners. The march, led by 340 women wearing grey blankets, and marching in the shape of an H, focused on the struggle being carried out by Republican and socialist prisoners in H Block, London Kesh.

Growing

Most important about the march was the new and growing groups of people who have

become active in the past few months in the fight against H Block and repression. But the government's policy of repression is becoming more blatant and is affecting greater numbers of people than since, perhaps, the early days of internment.

It has become clearer to more and more people that there is no room for negotiation with the Brits. Under the hard nosed Secretary of State, Roy Mason, policy is to crush resistance, no matter what the cost.

That policy has resulted in over 3000 prisoners in the North, continual use of torture by the RUC and the killing of innocent people by the British army. Covert activities by the Army and the RUC have been stepped up since May 1977 when during Paisley's work stoppage, Mason gave in to the Loyalists major demand of tougher security measures.

Since December 1977 the SAS, previously restricted primarily to border areas, have become heavily involved in urban undercover operations. The SAS is supplemented by regular soldiers who are being trained in undercover methods to take part in 'SAS type activities'. These operations have resulted in 8 killings in Derry, Belfast and Cookstown. That includes two who were not involved in IRA activities. As well two innocent people were wounded.

In retaliation four undercover soldiers were killed. The most infamous undercover incident was the killing of 16 year old John Boyle of Dunloy, Co. Antrim. His murder clearly exposed the army's practice of shooting without warning and army disregard for its own yellow card instructions. Boyle's death brought even Ian Paisley to criticise the British Army.

A month after his murder, no charges were yet made against a British soldier. Now the SDLP, which for years has tried to support the British Army and the RUC, has been carrying out

a campaign against the 'Kill, Don't Question' policy.

There have been increasing protests against the torture regularly carried out by the RUC in its interrogation centres. This is a major component of the government's policy which intends to get as many prisoners behind bars as possible.

Signed confessions, obtained by RUC torture or threats are accepted by the juryless courts. 80 per cent of the prisoners in H Block are there because they signed a statement. Evidence is not necessary for the courts to convict. In the past year workers have been using their work place organisation and strength to fight repression. The hanging of trade unionist Brian Maguire in May this year brought a storm of protest from workers and from several political parties. 3000 workers from several areas of Belfast took off work for mass marches organised by the Trade Union Campaign Against Repression.

Pressure

For the first time rank and file pressure is being placed on trade union leaders to take a stand against the torture. A few delegates forced the torture issue to be brought to the floor of the conference of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. It didn't get much discussion or any real promise of action but the issue was taken up.

Separately workers in the loyalist dominated GEC plant in Larne walked out because of RUC torture in Castlereagh. They were convinced to go back to work by their shop stewards, as Paddy Devlin and other trade union leaders have tried to do in Catholic areas.

The Amnesty International report on torture in Northern Ireland further indicted the British government. More infuriating than the report was the government's response to it. Carefully documented evidence of torture was rejected by Mason. But the government's private inquiry is being

The support for the men on the blanket is no longer limited to republicans and their periphery, but is beginning to widen to include many who oppose the policies of the Provos.

It is this growing publicity and support that can explain Archbishop O'Fiach's, Ireland's leading Catholic churchman, important and unprecedented condemnation in which he compared H Block to the sewer pipes in Calcutta slums. He made the obvious point that these prisoners are in a different category from the ordinary.

Struggle

During the struggle of the past ten years the Catholic Church, following its traditional conservative role, has only come out in support of a protest under pressure from its own followers. There have only been a few priests, like Fr. Denis Faul, who have been regularly willing to speak on the prisoners' behalf. Normally the church leaders have been silent or condemning in their attitude toward the anti-imperialist struggle.

O'Fiach's statement is evidence of the growing support for the prisoners and the pressure put on church leaders to do something about them. At the same time, the respect given to O'Fiach shows the power the Church still has over public opinion in Ireland today. Parties like the Alliance and the SDLP, who are opposed to political status, were forced to respond to the conditions of the men in H Block.

Conservative nationalist groups, like the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association), have actually begun to come out in support of political status since the archbishop's statement.

Response

Unfortunately the Provisional Republican movement's response to this growing support has been a new emphasis on the military struggle. The city centre hanging bomb campaign began again in August and the attacks on the security forces continue. They even include an attack on a workmen's van in Febragh, killing one Catholic, in order to shoot a member of the UDR.

The Provos have reorganised themselves into a new cell structure which allows for greater protection from security leaks and greater flexibility in planning military operations.

This turn can only send the mass campaign back off the streets and prevent the rebuilding of confidence of workers to use their own power to fight repression.

October will see a general election in Britain. The 'Northern Ireland Problem' will, despite the efforts of the

Daily Mirror, in all probability be relegated to the bottom half of most politician's list of priorities. But however much British politicians would like to see the problem fading from view there are distinct signs that their wish will be unfulfilled.

The thousands that thronged the four miles between

Coalisland and Dungannon carried with them a clear message. That march and the many more that will be coming up in October show that ten years is much too long to march and to fight. But people here have no option but to keep fighting until the Brits get out.

Joan Kelly

Facing up to a depressing choice

'The most important general election for a generation' will take place, so the pundits tell us, on 5 October. From the evidence of the opinion polls its result will be finely balanced. Therefore, the propaganda put out by the two main parties assumes a particular importance.

The Tories, cashing in on four years of mass unemployment and wage restraint, are concentrating the attack on Labour's economic failures. Saatchi and Saatchi's now notorious poster, 'Labour isn't working', implies that unemployment will fall under a Conservative government.

Yet the Tory party's years in opposition have been ones during which a new, strident right wing, embodied by Margaret Thatcher and her closest advisers like Keith Joseph, Airey Neave and Norman Tebbit, have acquired increasing power.

Their ideas have helped to shape Tory economic policy, so that a Thatcher government is pledged to yet more cuts in the welfare state.

In their wilder moments, Thatcher's advisers talk about letting unprofitable firms like British Leyland go to the wall. Even if shrewder representatives of the ruling class were to gain the upper hand in a Thatcher cabinet, there is no doubt that a Tory victory would be a signal for further attacks on working-class organisation and living standards.

If the Tories win, there is no doubt as to who will be to blame. The Wilson and Callaghan governments have presided over the steady erosion of the organisation and living standards the Tories are now threatening. Labour's propaganda suggests the party leadership recognises

that any appeal to socialist ideals from them won't wash. 'Labour's good for Britain': Callaghan, Healey and the rest seem to have appropriated the traditional conservative themes of family and nation.

This is a depressing choice for any socialist. It is clear the idea of a revolutionary socialist alternative to Labour will remain, for this election at least, a matter of propaganda. Callaghan still commands the loyalty, however reluctant, of the mass of British workers.

At the end of the day, socialists will have to support the return of a Labour government as the lesser evil. Our job during the election will be to argue for the socialist alternative to Labour and to warn workers that, whatever the outcome of the election, they will still need to fight to defend their jobs and living standards.

PO Engineers Strike

35 hrs campaign hots up

In the first major national dispute in the Post Office since the tragic 1971 strike by postmen and telephonists, the PO engineering workers have shown remarkable tenacity and solidarity in winning a partial victory in their battle for a 35-hour week.

After a long campaign, pursued officially for nearly nine months by the Post Office Engineering Union with all the enthusiasm of a powder puff fighting its way out of a paper bag, the combination of escalating sanctions and responding to suspensions by walk outs forced a partial backdown by the Board.

The agreement reached stems originally from an arbitration report that there should be a two-stage 2½ hour cut in the working week. The engineers

have won more than this, but only on condition that they accept a restructuring of work schedules.

What is proposed is staggered working hours and mealbreaks, effectively providing some overtime cover not paid at overtime rates.

This formula—still to be accepted by a special conference on 16 September—met with a lot of opposition from a rank and file convinced that its tactics were working and that it was a matter of time before the Post Office and the government gave in.

Certainly the POEU membership in a number of areas responded to management lockouts in a way which shook their employer. Engineers in several different parts of Scotland, in the North

West, the South Midlands and in London all came out at various times against the suspension of groups of workers for applying official sanctions.

There is a lot of evidence that the Post Office thought that suspensions would cower the majority of members of a union which previously had only a single one-day national strike to its credit. What happened instead was that hitherto dormant areas of the union became militant, a fact symbolised by the placards waving outside POEU headquarters when the executive met to ratify the compromise: 'Exeter PO Engineers Say no.'

It was London, however, which saw the most imaginative tactics of the dispute: in particular the blacking of the Stock

Exchange and the campaign against City firms trying to bribe engineers to break the strike. These tactics brought the impact of the strike out in the open just as the POEU leadership was trying to dilute or call off the overtime ban.

London also saw one of the most solid union demonstrations against Labour when 35,000 engineers struck for the day and some 6,000 marched. Significantly their route took them past Congress House, where an increasingly familiar protest against TUC inaction was registered.

Coming at the beginning of the new round of incomes policy and as the first national action for the 35-hour week, the engineers' dispute has probably done more to bring the hours' issue into focus than all the tons of conference documents and research papers produced over the past few years.

The shorter week is now a major item on the agenda of some 20 TGWU claims, mainly in industries where Friday-night shifts are worked. It could be this issue which produces the next flashpoint in the movement towards 35 hours.

Dave Field

Mixed blessings in union plan

A significant report by the government-sponsored Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) has recently recommended a much greater regularisation of management/shop steward relations in the Health Service. ACAS is clearly worried at the number of industrial disputes in the NHS: its own interventions rose from 146 in 1976 to 208 last year.

The report chooses to ignore the major cause behind new militancy in the hospitals—the cuts—and concentrates on the familiar ACAS medicine of training specialised industrial relations experts in management and pulling formally-recognised shop stewards into joint bodies.

ACAS sees the Whitley system of joint regulation at national level being undermined by stewards' local autonomy and wants a more flexible system with 'Joint Consultative Committees'

Behind the report (which

is a background paper for the Royal Commission on the NHS) is ACAS's concern for a 'more comprehensive and coordinated industrial relations policy', for which the responsibility 'must rest with the DHSS and Regional Health Authorities.'

It is likely that many, if not all, the report's recommendations will be welcomed by health service union leaderships. Union activists need to be aware of the increasing pressure there will be from such sources to pursue grievances through the 'usual'—and increasingly bureaucratic—channels.

An ACAS suggestion of the formation of district joint shop stewards committees could, however, have considerable benefit for strong trade unionism in the NHS—as long as such committees are not strangled at birth by being pulled away from responsibility to the rank and file.

Dave Field

tion it maintained a semblance of 'stability'.

That blew apart in 1975 when the Lebanese police and army (Maronite controlled) and the fascist militias of the Maronite community (like the Phalange, Ahrar, and some dozen others) initiated the killings against the Muslim and Palestinian population—who were organised in the Lebanese National Movement (the Socialists, Communists and others) and the various Palestinian forces.

Defeat

The right-wing Maronite forces, backed indirectly by the US and directly by the Israelis, were on the point of defeat, when President Assad's Syrian invasion army turned on their 'comrades' of the Lebanese Left and the Palestinian organisations to crush them, and ensure the survival and continued control of the right.

Lebanon was effectively partitioned into a northern sector (Maronite), a central and southern sector (LNM and Palestinian), with a further Maronite enclave in the far south on the border with Israel.

The circumstances of today's fighting are influenced by two main events of the last three years. First was the Syrians decision to stay in Lebanon under the guise of the 'Arab Defence Force' (ADF). They began with complete military control and succeeded in restricting the activities of the badly-mauled Palestinian and leftist forces to very limited areas in the south.

The second event was the Israeli invasion of February this year. Ostensibly in retaliation for the Palestinians Tel-Aviv bus raid, the Israelis in reality carried through a well-prepared plan for driving the Palestinians out of their remaining strongest positions, and creating a classic 'security belt' inside Lebanon which has been filled with the well-(Israeli)-armed troops of the fascist militia. The Christian enclave of the south has in effect been expanded into a northern province of Israel.

Pressure

Since the fighting of 1975-6 the Palestinians have been under constant pressure. The forces of the LNM, the Lebanese left, have been badly weakened. In contrast the forces of the fascist right have had the time and resources to re-arm and reorganise.

Despite some internal squabbles they are now stronger

Lebano

Palestinian nightmare

A walk through the city centre of Beirut, capital of Lebanon, is a walk through a vast horrific film set for the last word in disaster movies.

In a square mile of the centre there is almost complete silence. Empty crumbling streets run down from the markets to the harbour. Nothing moves but swinging window frames and rusting iron girders hanging over half-demolished verandahs now covered in weeds.

And the most eerie and unexplained part of it all - each of the decaying shops or tenements still stands. Beirut was devastated not by the massive weaponry of the super-powers' nuclear arsenals, but by the hand-held guns of thousands of men and women fighting street by street over months of civil war.

The clues are there in the still-habitable buildings (though no-one dares move in). Each is peppered with hundreds of tiny holes. Each was fought over in what was perhaps the most savage, vicious and destructive war for a generation. 60,000

died. Journalists who had covered the events in Vietnam and Southern Africa were appalled by the fury of this 'trench warfare'.

Rivalries

Now the fighting has begun again. Three years ago, when the civil war was at its height, it was just possible to unravel the complicated web of rivalries.

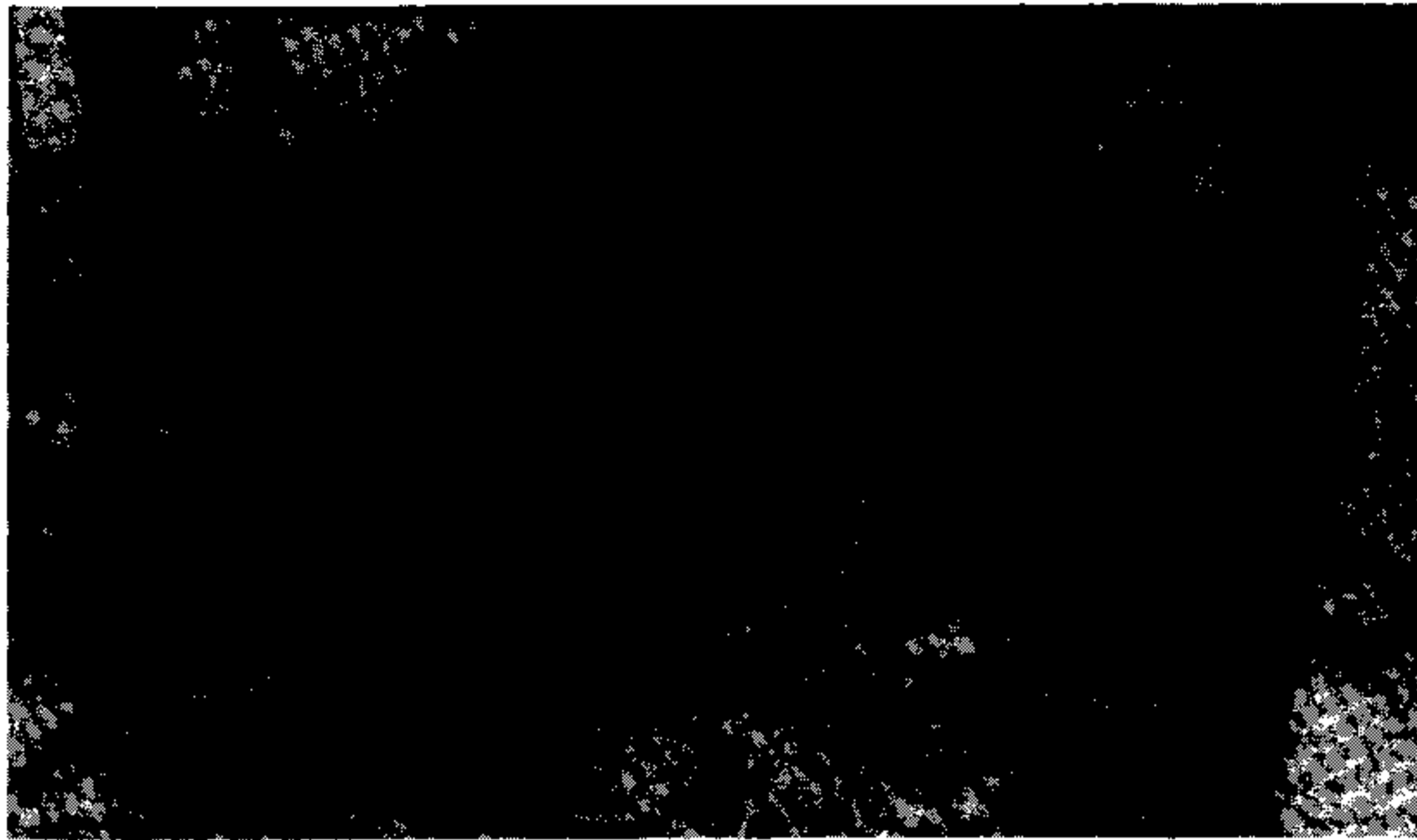
It was always likely that

Lebanon would split along precisely the lines the French had devised for it when they carved Lebanon out of Syria in the 1920s. The pro-French and wealthier Maronite Christian community were given built-in guarantees of greater wealth and of political control over the poorer Muslim community.

The system heaved and strained, but with Western, especially American interven-



Israeli troops move into Lebanon



Ahem Hamoud searches for belongings in the rubble of his bombed south Lebanon home — all his family killed

than ever, with the Kataeb (Phalange) in a dominant position.

The right now feel confident enough to again begin talking about a partition of Lebanon. Though in the past split about the wisdom of partition—leading rightists are wealthy Maronite businessmen who have a big stake in a 'unified' Lebanese state—many are now ready to make a move to an independent 'Free Republic of Lebanon'.

Different

For years the leading rightists—Gemayel of the Phalange, Chamoun of the Ahrar, Franjeh and others had called for the 'Lebanisation' of Lebanon. They consider that 'Lebanese' (Maronites and other Christians) are not Arabs, but descended from the Phoenicians, and are racially different and superior.

What was needed in Lebanon was the expulsion of all Palestinians, and the controlling of other 'Arabs' (Muslims). Now that their full control over the whole of Lebanon has become less likely, the younger militants are voting for partition.

The Syrians have now openly accused the right of preparing for a 'Free Republic'. They describe the areas under rightist control as 'Israel II'—not unreasonably in view of the massive Israeli military support. For the first time since their own invasion in 1975 the Syrians feel seriously threatened.

They were unable to contest the Israeli invasion, being far weaker militarily. The southern 'security belt' is a no-go area for

their forces. Now even the fascist militias in the north have become a threat.

The result has been the fighting of the last month. Again casualties are very high. Hundreds have died in Beirut, where there have been scenes like those of three years ago. But new areas of the city are involved. The Syrians have shelled and attacked the rightist strongholds of East Beirut. The Phalange and the others, far better armed than the left have retaliated.

For once the left and the Palestinians have been able to stand back and watch. But they have not been applauding the Syrian forces. Once he has 'dealt' with the right, Syrian President Assad can easily return to his well-organised repression of the Palestinians and the left.

But can he effectively take on the rightists without provoking a major conflict and a real attempt at partition? Any fighting on the scale of the 1975 events will this time bring in the Israelis who have a big stake in the survival of the rightist camp.

Not only have they armed and supplied the various fascist militias, they have incorporated part of Lebanon, and repeatedly warned that they see themselves as 'defenders' of the Christian population against the 'terrorists and communists'.

Assad is playing a delicate game. He needs to cope with the growing confidence of the right: he cannot risk any engagement with the Israeli forces. Finally he still has his own ambitions in Lebanon, perhaps, he hopes, to be part of a 'Greater Syria'. Partition will make any such plan impossible.

The signs do point to more open conflict, with the Syrians fighting the rightist forces and probably the 'reconstructed' Lebanese army, supposedly independent but under fascist control. The role of the Israelis, especially in the south, will depend on how much they think they can get away with, par-

ticularly in view of the 'strained' relations with their patrons in the United States.

But Lebanon is a tiny country. It is less than half the size of Wales. What a further war will do is almost unimaginable, though the evidence is there in Beirut. The concentrated fire power of the armies and militias can reduce the lot to the nightmare landscape of the capital. For those who have seen Beirut, it really is a possibility too horrible to contemplate.

There is worse to think about however. Israel and Syria have huge well-equipped armies. The fascist militias have some 12,000 men under arms. Despite their present differences and rivalries all have one thing in common. Each has fought the Palestinians.

For each the Palestinians are still at the centre of events. For Israel and the fascists the position is clear, the Palestinians must be 'repatriated' (to nowhere in particular), or, more honestly, eliminated. But what is the conclusion that the Syrians draw?

Phil Marfleet

Economic Briefing

Crash of '79?

One of the main issues in the coming general election is unemployment. The Tories point at the dole queues and claim that 'Labour isn't working'; Labour replies by saying that things would be much worse under Thatcher.

In fact, whichever of the two main parties forms the next government, the fate of the British economy will be settled, not in Whitehall, but by factors outside the control of any single national government.

The once-might dollar, lynchpin of the world monetary system, is in steady decline. In the last twelve months, the other main trading currencies have risen dramatically against the dollar:

Percentage change against \$	
Yen	+28.9
D-mark	+14.3
Swiss franc	+31.9
Sterling	+9.8

This drastic fall is a product of many factors. Most obviously, the American economy is importing far more than it exports. In 1977 the US current

balance of payments deficit was \$15 billion. This year it may be as much as \$19 billion.

This huge deficit is normally attributed to the US economy's growing dependence on imported oil. But it reflects more deep-seated factors. In 1975 the US had a current surplus of \$18.5 billion. At the same time, America's real gross national product fell by 2 per cent. The US economy recovered from the 1974-5 recession much more rapidly than the other Western economies. So America has been importing from West Germany and Japan, each of which countries have been running up massive balance of payments surpluses (Japan's will be between \$12 and 16 billion this year) while their domestic economies grow much more slowly than the Americans'.

Method

The devaluation of the dollar is one method which American capitalism has been using over the last year in order to regain the competitive advantage against the West Germans and

the Japanese. The effect of the decline of the dollar against the yen and the D-mark is to make American goods cheaper than West German and Japanese goods. So imports into US become more expensive, while American exports become more competitive on the world market.

Tactic

Already there are some signs that this tactic is working. According to the *Economist*, 'in April-June 1978, the volume of Japanese exports fell for the first time since the slump in 1975, while the rise in import volumes was the fastest for 15 months. In the first half of 1978, exports of the three strong-currency countries grew less rapidly than the industrial world's average. . . . And American exports appear to be picking up, though it is doubtful that they have been so rapidly affected.'

The problem is, however, that the process of devaluing the dollar can quite easily get out of control. The dollar is still the world's main reserve currency, used extensively for trade and investment purposes.

A steep decline in the dollar is likely to frighten off those, like the oil producers, with large dollar holdings. In April-June 1978 official agencies in industrial and oil-exporting countries reduced their holdings of US Treasury securities by \$18.3 billion, amounting to a net reduction of \$5.4 billion in these holdings.

In the same quarter, OPEC countries reduced their dollar assets for the first time since 1974. The existence of vast sums of liquid funds in the hands of the rulers of Saudi Arabia and the other oil states, which can be easily shifted from one currency to another depending on the rate of return, builds tremendous instability in to the world monetary system.

Measures

At the same time, the other Western capitalist countries are adopting defensive measures to protect their economies from the decline of the dollar. Fears for the competitive position of West Germany lie behind the plan adopted at the insistence of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt at the EEC summit at Bremen in July. Under this plan, a European currency unit (ecu) will be created, backed by reserves of \$50 billion.

The *Economist* explained: 'Mr Schmidt is worried that his country's currency will become

increasingly vulnerable to speculation against the dollar, and hence over-valued, which will hurt German exports. So he wants to tie the mark to other, less attractive, European currencies such as sterling and the French franc, and to create a new reserve currency which will serve as an alternative to the mark - the ecu'.

The reaction to the fall of the dollar by the EEC and OPEC (the oil price is calculated in dollars, so the oil producers have seen their earnings fall sharply in the past few months) explains Jimmy Carter's statement that he is 'deeply concerned' about the plight of the dollar.

There are a number of things the US administration could do about the situation, from various sorts of technical tinkering around with the exchange controls to the sort of package Nixon announced in August 1971 when he devalued the dollar in quite similar circumstances: wage and price controls and an import surcharge. The effect of the Nixon 'shock' was savage international competition, the biggest boom of the post-war era, followed by take-off into galloping inflation and the 1974-5 recession. No-one wants to repeat that chain of events.

The most likely development would be an increase in American interest rate calculated to make holding the dollar more attractive. There is already a heated debate in US government and business circles as to whether the American economy is overheating or not.

The inflation rate has picked up in the last year - 7½ per cent since June 1977 - while industry is working at around 84 per cent of capacity, compared to 70 per cent in 1975. The demand on Wall Street for a credit squeeze to prevent inflation escaping control again could tip the American economy into recession next year.

The OECD predicts that in any case real growth in the US will fall to an annual rate of three per cent in the first half of 1979 (compared to 4 - 5 per cent a year since 1975), which will mean a sharp rise in unemployment.

Boom

When America sneezes the world catches a cold. The British economy is enjoying a boom in consumer spending, fuelled by the steep rise in earnings (16½ per cent in the last year) and Labour's pre-election tax cuts.

Retail sales rose at an annual

rate of eight per cent in May-July 1978. Car sales are at an all-time high. Although industrial production has risen, under the stimulus of this consumer boom, to its highest level since 1974, it is unable to keep up increasing by only 0.8 per cent in April-May-June.

The result is that imports are filling the gap: the volume of exports fell by 1½ per cent while imports rose 3 per cent in May-July. Already, despite the impact of North Sea oil, the balance of payments is £114 million in the red so far this year.

The fall of the dollar can only make this situation worse. Terry Burns and Alan Budd of the London Business School calculate that the pound had risen in real terms against the dollar by 30 per cent since the height of the sterling crisis in October 1976.

The Labour government's policy of devaluing the pound in order to make British exports more competitive is in ruins. The London Business School argues that reliable forward indicators 'point to a significant slowdown in activity by the end of the year and into 1979'.

So, whoever is in office, the winter of '79 will be cold.

Alex Callinicos

Docks

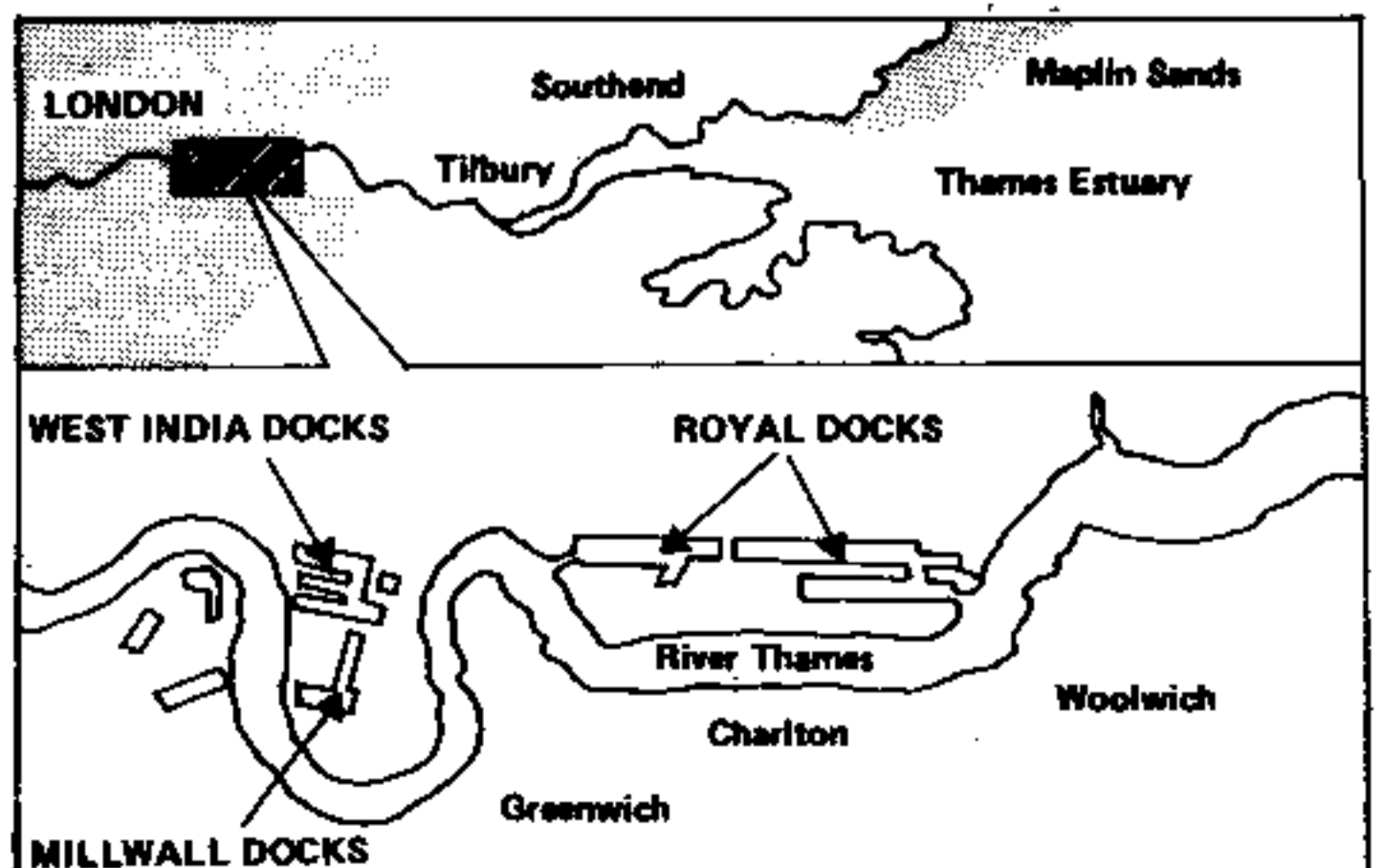
Port in a storm

The Government averted a potentially disastrous confrontation over jobs in the East End of London when it decided to fork out £35 million to put off the closure of the Royal Group of docks.

The decision to overrule Port of London Authority chairman Sir John Cuckney and keep the Royals working is a cynical calculation based on the reckoning that another two years of buying out jobs will allow a peaceful shut down as well as the transfer of a few individuals downriver to the Tilbury container berths.

By any standards the story of the rundown of the docks is a scandal. Comparisons of productivity between London and the Continent have omitted the heavy subsidies paid to the major European ports; specialist docking facilities have been developed elsewhere which have left London with the more difficult and dangerous cargoes.

Above all, the £50 million



John Sturrock (Report)

Time Out

accumulated resources of the PLA were frittered away, largely as a result of the collapse in the property market. Meanwhile the PLA has benefitted from an amazing stability in the Royal Group's pay bill, including one year when the cost of employing the workforce actually went down despite a 5 per cent wage increase.

Figures released by the PLA in May to justify the proposed closure showed that 'payroll costs' for the Royal group rose by only 7.3 per cent between

1975 and 1978, a period when prices rose by 43.8 per cent. Between 1976 and 1977 payroll costs fell from £11.1 million to £10.6 million.

The employers' only explanation for these extraordinary figures has been the reduction of the workforce because of the flow of men from the Royals to Tilbury and, believe it or not, that the 1975 productivity scheme has been so successful that dockers have worked 'too hard' and so increased idle time.

Behind this claim lies the

truth of the matter: that the decline in world trade hit the upriver London docks extremely hard and that management did not adapt to changed circumstances.

But the PLA and the Government still face problems in disposing of the Royals.

Voluntary severance is tending to get rid of those who don't want to stay in the docks anyway: those who remain may be those prepared to fight the blood-suckers to the finish.

Dave Field

government to Cypriot businessmen is equally given to foreign firms. On top of this, there are absolutely no restrictions on the transfer of profits, interest, and dividends or the repatriation of capital. As a consequence American and Greek capital has been pouring into the economy.

Important

More important is the fact that wages have hardly increased at all since 1974. This was achieved through the co-operation of the government and the trade unions which are largely controlled by AKEL. With the Industrial Relations Act signed last year with AKEL approval the working class was put in a situation where wages remain practically constant and strikes are effectively banned.

Thus the 'economic miracle' is taking place on the back of workers, through workers' sacrifices, while the benefits of development go the other way.

As long as workers continue to follow AKEL's advice of passivity 'in the interest of national unity' this situation will continue. This, however, is unlikely. The last four years of rapid industrialisation have brought large numbers of young peasants into industry. These new workers are not influenced by AKEL's traditions of nationalism and class-collaboration. It is with them that the future of the Cypriot working class lies.

When they start to organise for their rights and for socialism, in unity with the workers of the North, it will be possible to talk of economic development for all Cypriots, not a handful of industrialists.

SWP Cypriot Worker Group

The SWP Cypriot Worker group can be contacted at 40a Stroud Green Rd, London N4.

Cyprus

Partition of Cyprus

In the four years since the attempted fascist coup and the Turkish invasion that followed it in July 1974 the partition of Cyprus has become a reality. The negotiations and proposals that occasionally hit the Western press are essentially about the terms of partition, the precise division of the territory, etc.

Partition, in whatever surface appearance, serves the interests of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot ruling classes (and the imperialist powers with stakes on the island) very well. It divides and therefore weakens the Cypriot working class. It ensures the continued application of the age-old policy of divide-and-rule.

It enables the ruling class on both sides to engage in extreme nationalist and chauvinist propaganda, diverting workers from their class interests. In short, it prevents the creation of a united working class movement—the only movement which can offer Cyprus a future.

What follows outlines some of the developments on the island since 1974.

After the coup and invasion of July 1974 the economy of Cyprus was thrown into violent chaos. In an economy dependent mainly on tourism and agriculture the effects of war and of the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people were clearly disastrous.

The economic development of the island since 1974 has proceeded in a way which not many expected. In what is now the Turkish sector (the north) there are no surprises. The economy is still based on agriculture; tourism has not been revived due mainly to incompetent administration; inflation and unemployment

continue to be serious problems; and a militant working-class movement does not allow the capitalist to make the workers pay for the problems.

'Superior'

In the South, however, the situation is very different. What many claim is an 'economic miracle' is taking place. Leaving acts of God aside, it is true that a major restructuring of the economy is under way.

As seen in the first three development plans, there is a conscious emphasis on achieving two main targets: firstly, transforming the economy into one with a firm industrial base. Secondly, locating it within the Middle Eastern sphere of foreign trade as a supplier of manufactured goods.

Towards the first aim of rapid industrialisation numerous measures have already been taken: work to develop infrastructure (such as the reconstruction of Limassol port, the Limassol-Nicosia motorway), active government interest in industry (credit guarantees, industrial extension schemes, government partnership with private industry in many fields, provision of factories on low rents, etc.)

The government has also taken steps to encourage the export of manufactured goods such as machinery, transport equipment, chemical products, in addition to traditional agricultural exports. New trade centres have been opened in Germany, Dubai, etc., an export insurance scheme has been set up.

After four years the results are indeed quite impressive. In 1975 alone 474 industrial units were established or re-

activated. The production of cement increased by 150 per cent, shoes by 50 per cent. Exports in 1976 rose by 90 per cent over 1975. Unemployment which was 25 per cent in 1975 is now about 2 per cent, inflation was only about 8 per cent in 1977.

All this sounds very good and it appears that the ruling class is sticking to its promise of creating a strong economy for the benefit of all. However, we have to ask how this rapid development has been possible. The reasons are, as always, not only economic but also political.

There are two major reasons: the first is the role played by foreign capital, mainly American and Greek. The second is the passivity of the working class and the role of the Cypriot Communist Party (AKEL) in this.

Encouraged

As a matter of public policy, all encouragement given by the

Speaking for the members

Shop stewards communication with the rank and file can vary enormously, even in a small plant with a tradition of bargaining section by section. According to a recent report, communication between AUEW stewards and the members in one motor components factory took up as little as 11 per cent of one steward's time, while for two others the time spent was nearly 40 per cent.

The most active stewards tended to find themselves face to face with departmen-

tal management, while the less involved spent much more time with foremen and with the Joint Shop Stewards Committee. One steward spent almost 70 per cent of his time on matters connected with the JSSC and saw his main function as liaison, while the works convenor spent just a bit more of his time talking to various levels of management than with other stewards and his members.

Dave Field

'The Activities of Shop Stewards' by Bruce Partridge, Leeds University, in *Industrial Relations Journal* Vol 8, No 4.

UPTON SINCLAIR:

THE FADING OF A REBEL

'There are learned people who can tell you out of the statistics that beef-boners make forty cents an hour, but, perhaps, these people have never looked into a beef-boner's hands.'

'Here was a great hole, perhaps two city blocks square, and with long files of garbage waggons creeping into it. The place had an odour for which there are no polite words; and it was sprinkled over with children, who raked in it from dawn till dark. Sometimes visitors from the packing-houses would wander out to see this "dump", and they would stand by and debate as to whether the children were eating the food they got, or merely collecting it for the chickens at home. Apparently none of them ever went down to find out.'

'The woman worked so fast that the eye could literally not follow her, and there was only a mist of motion, and tangle after tangle of sausages appearing. In the midst of the mist, however, the visitor would suddenly notice the tense set face, with the two wrinkles graven in the forehead, and the ghastly pallor of the cheeks; and then he would suddenly recollect that it was time he was going on.'

'The woman did not go on; she stayed right there—hour after hour, day after day, year after year, twisting sausage links and racing with death. It was piece-work, and she was apt to have a family to keep alive; and stern and ruthless economic law had arranged it that she could only do this by working just as she did, with all her soul upon her work, and with never an instant for a glance at the well-dressed ladies and gentlemen who came to stare at her, as at some wild beast in a menagerie.'

'There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was mouldy and white—it would be dosed with borax and glycerine, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it.'

'It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together. This is no fairy story and no joke; the meat would be shovelled into carts, and the man who did the shovelling would not trouble to lift out a rat even when he saw one—there were things that went into the sausage in comparison with which a poisoned rat was a titbit. There was no place for the men to wash their hands* before they ate their dinner, and so they made a practice of washing them in the water that was to be ladled into the sausage.'

*A euphemism then as now.

Anyone who has ever read it will know at once that there is only one book in the world these quotations could have come from, and that is *The Jungle* by the once great American Socialist writer Upton Sinclair, who was born 100 years ago this month and died nearly ten years ago at the age of 90. And if you're a socialist, and you haven't yet read that smash-hit exposure of the horrors of the Chicago meat-packing industry, first published in 1905, and if those quotations don't send you out looking for a copy, I don't expect much else I can say will do the trick. It is in print as a Penguin Classic, price 80p.

The Jungle was written on a commission from *The Appeal To Reason*, a Socialist weekly with a circulation between three and seven hundred thousand, which could shoot up to four million briefly when the struggle was sharpest.

Sinclair laid the foundations of his immensely successful career (a gross income of \$300,000 between 1906 and 1926) in the golden age of the tabloid newspaper and the mass circulation magazine, the period when the new public education systems had just begun to produce widespread literacy in Britain and the United States, but when there was still only one mass medium in the enormous market for information and entertainment—the printed word.

Between 1870 and 1910, for instance, the average number of years in school for Americans rose from four to six, and the number of pupils from nearly seven millions to nearly eighteen. But America's first radio station went on the air only in 1920—two years later there were 564. And cinema only broke through into the world of words with the perfection of properly synchronised sound at Warners in the late 20's; the American cinema audience shot up from 57 million in 1927 to 95 million in 1929 accordingly, and thousands of musicians were put out of work just in time for the Depression.

Sinclair's best novels, *The Jungle* (1905), *Oil!* (1927) and *Boston* (1928) came at the beginning and end of his best period. In between lie some other competent novels, such as *Love's Pilgrimage*, *King Coal* and *Jimmie Higgins*, and his great factual muck-raking books *The Profits of Religion*, on the churches, *The Brass Check*, on the press, and *The Goose-Step* and *The Goslings*, on education. Such work took great physical courage in an America where the bosses habitually resorted to violence and murder

against their enemies. At least one of the muck-rakers was in fact killed in this way. One of Sinclair's friends wrote to him in 1920:

'No doubt your name has been prominently displayed in the "son of a bitch" list heretofore, but it is quite certain that now you have published *The Brass Check* you have been placed at the head of the "god damned son of a bitch" list....I think you had better quadruple the amount of your life-insurance, because any man who has the ghastly temerity to write such a pitiless expose will have to sleep thereafter with one eye constantly open. I wouldn't wager two cents that you will live another year.'

Sinclair's most abiding value for socialists lies in his successful fictional presentations of working class struggles and experience. Besides *The Jungle*, *Oil!* is a very fine account of the Teapot Dome scandals (an early version of Watergate) and of struggles by the Industrial Workers of the World, and *Boston* is an overwhelming dramatisation of the Sacco and Vanzetti case for anyone who can survive its 734 pages. *King Coal* tells the story of miners' struggles against John D. Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, and of the 1914 Ludlow Massacre of miners' families by hired gunmen.

The Flivver King, presenting the socialist case against Henry Ford, was published by the United Automobile Workers in 200,000 paperback copies at 10 cents, and was called by Victor Reuther (Walter's brother) 'the best single organisational document ever written'.

One thing Sinclair never stopped doing was writing bad books; with a life's output of around ninety titles, that was perhaps unavoidable. But around 1929, when he had worked up an unshakeable opposition to revolutionary violence and contempt for the deep divisions within the Left in *Boston*, when he had paused to reflect on his fifty years with a bland and nervously flippant autobiography, and when his second wife's hypochondria and persecution mania had advanced to the point where they became the dominant centre of his life till her death in 1961, the heart finally seemed to go out of him. It was a disaster, a living death, for a man whose heart had been his one essential, merchandisable, creative faculty, a man of whom Lenin rightly said: 'Sinclair is an emotional Socialist without theoretical grounding'.

The 1930s were a barren decade for

Sinclair, littered with wretched books, and marked by his second and final exit from the rump of the Socialist Party and an impressive campaign as Democratic candidate for the governorship of California in 1933. But Sinclair the liberal patriot finally bounced back with a new formula for himself, on which he based what was virtually a second writing career.

With the Lanny Budd series of eleven novels, published between 1940 and 1953, he surveyed the twentieth century as the conservative liberal he had finally become. There had been all too many omens of this future self, even in his best and early years. There was his Southern poor-white racism, his puritanism, and the bourgeois idealism behind the arrogance with which he supposed that the world might be changed by working people's passive reception of ideas from writers like himself.

Increasingly it began to seem as if his humanity and tolerance had never been founded on anything stronger than conscious moral principles and efforts of will, a foundation which steadily crumbled as he had to recognise the failure of idealist socialism, and which was replaced, not by new understanding, but only by cynicism.

Thus his attacks on the Communists, and above all of course on Stalin's Russia, became more and more devoid of any positive socialist content during the period of the cold war when, as Merleau-Ponty so well expressed it, it was impossible to be an anti-Communist and it was also impossible to be a Communist.

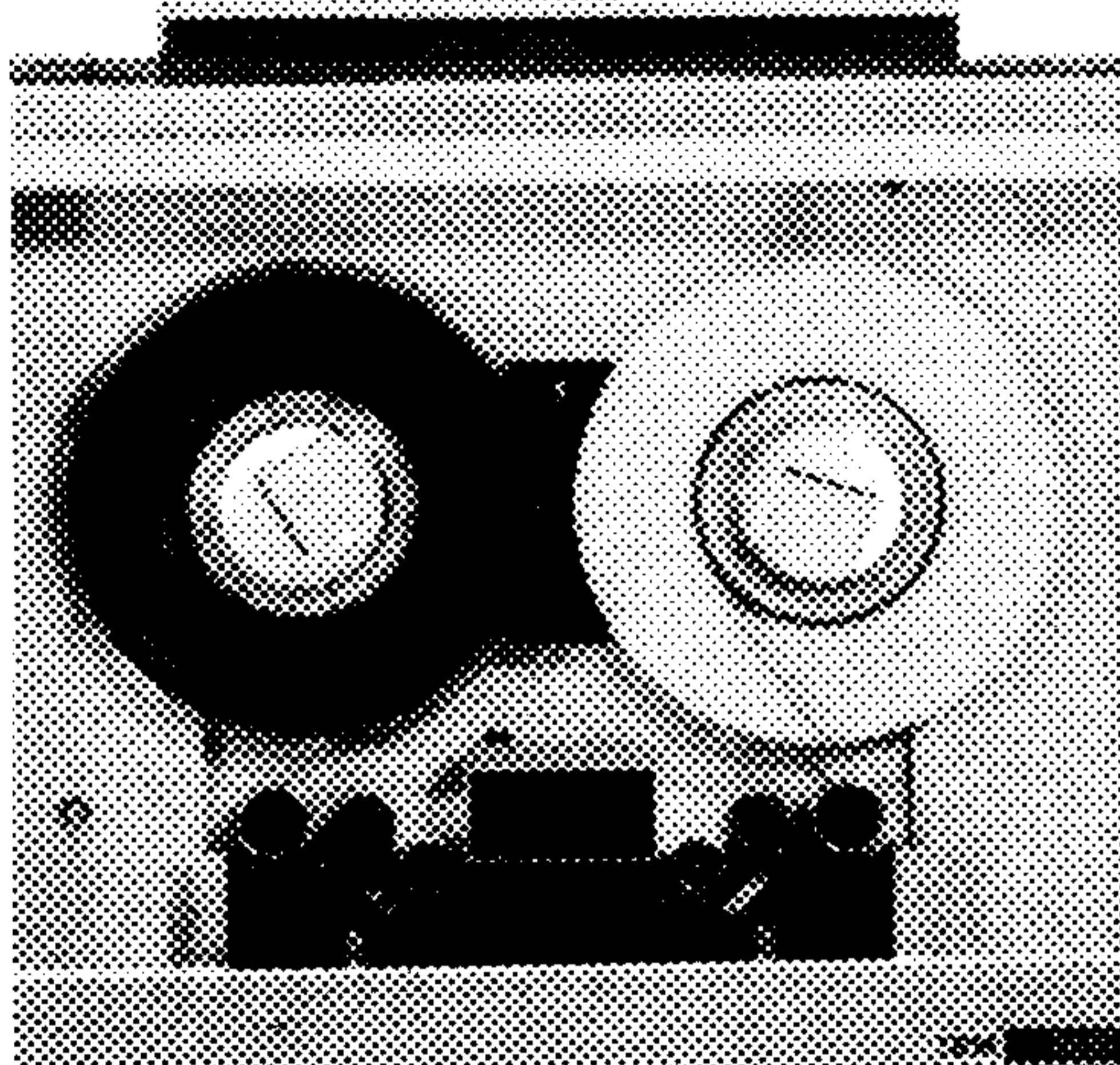
By 1952 Sinclair had found he could indeed be an anti-Communist; he wrote to the American Civil Liberties Union, which he had founded thirty years before to defend his own and other people's freedom of speech against exactly similar arguments from the Californian bosses, to say that he no longer felt that the Reds had any right to civil liberties after all.

And in 1953, with the last Lanny Budd volume, he took the revenge of a disillusioned idealist on his own liberal friends.

Sinclair firmly states in the novel that the methods of the good guys are just as unprincipled as those of the evil Communist enemy. Sidney Hook was horrified: 'My only criticism is that you unnecessarily make the democrats adopt the kind of immoralism which characterised the Communist outlook'. But Sinclair responded sourly that after thirty years of seeing his liberal ideals betrayed by those leaders who had pledged to uphold them, he had no qualms at all about expressing his bitter disappointment with his own side for once.

Sinclair himself always used to say of *The Jungle* that, in addition to its weak ending as a novel, it was in any case more failure than success, since he had aimed to hit the American people in the heart, but had only hit them in the stomach. And the limitations of reformism were shown up when he was wheelchair'd out, a year before his death, to decorate the signing of Lyndon Johnson's Wholesome Meat Act, which plugged some of the loopholes still to be found in the legislation which had followed the novel sixty years earlier.

A bad ending to a brave and brilliant beginning. We should learn from the beginning. But by thunder we should also learn from the ending! *Rip Bulkeley*



FOR BETTER FOR WORSE?

by Paul Harrison

Computers are usually associated with the threat of mass unemployment and the state's information-gathering activities. In particular the silicon chip, or microprocessor, has been singled out as the harbinger of a new age: an age of increasing wealth and leisure; or will it be an age of poverty and unemployment? Similarly the Police Computer at Hendon can be seen as a 'powerful weapon against crime' or as Orwell's Big Brother six years early. Computers, in the hands of capitalists are being used against workers' interests; but we also need to look at their possibilities under socialism.

The development of electronics and the electronic computer has been largely due to defence expenditure starting in the Second

World War. Microprocessors are the latest development - a computer's central processor can be etched on a small chip of silicon. The result is a massive reduction in size and lower prices due to mass production techniques.

Their potential is summed up by the *Observer*, 16 July 1978, 'A machine with a microprocessor in it becomes a formidably more effective tool: more reliable, more flexible, less dependent on human intervention. And microprocessors are now so cheap that they will soon be dispersed throughout the economy, in factories, offices, homes, shops and schools'. In Germany they call them 'job-killers'. Tony Benn has said that the advance of electronics is about to race through society cutting jobs 'like a scythe'.

How can all this amazing technology be used under socialism? While the type of mathematical models currently used in Management Information Systems have the profit motive enshrined in them, information systems incorporating different models and different criteria would be very useful in the democratic running of a socialist society. With information about production possibilities and about peoples' needs the computer system could be used to accurately spotlight deficiencies in production and distribution and make proposals to rectify problems.

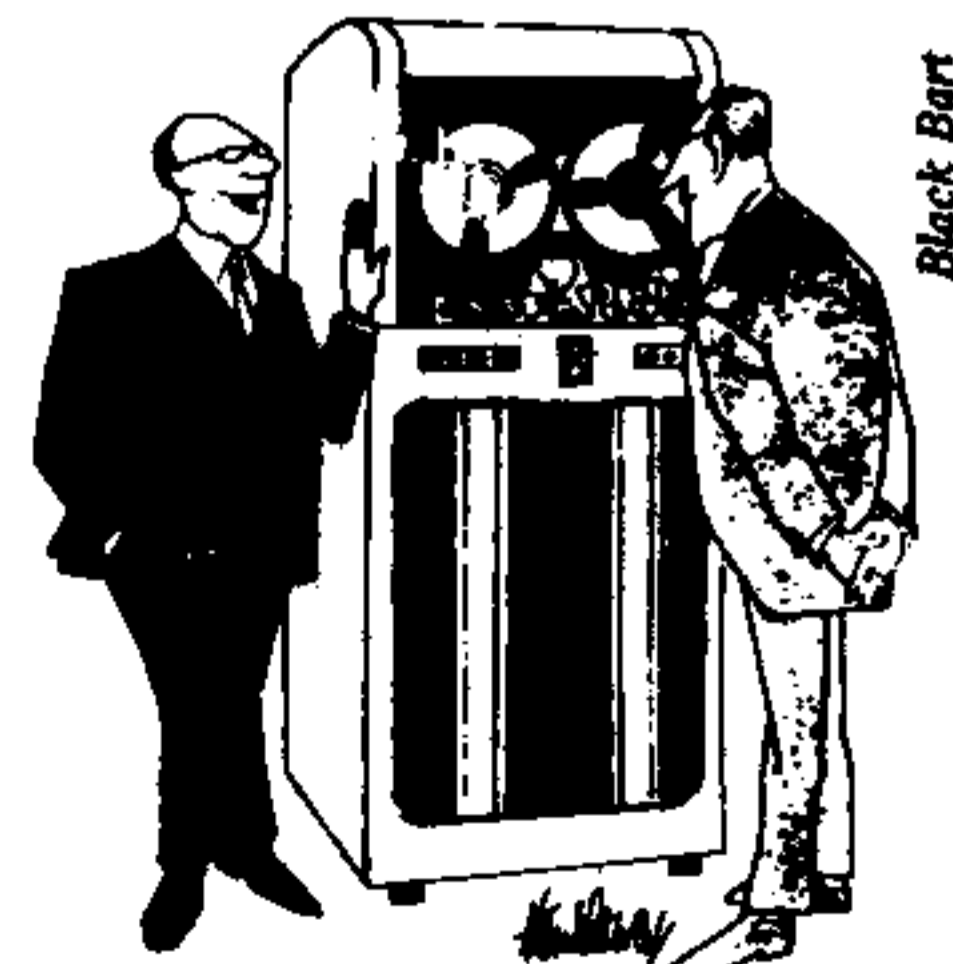
The democratic resolution of problems would be greatly aided by the use of two-way communication devices (eg. computer-telephone-video screen), making the available information accessible to groups in different geographical areas, for instance and enabling them to feed back information and decisions to the computer system. Existing computer technology, suitably adapted, could thus be used to collect and process information on the needs and abilities of different groups. It would enable them to take part in political decisions with all the existing information freely accessible. Widespread dissemination of information is the key to effective workers control. All units at all levels in society over wide geographical areas could communicate in a way never before possible. Secrecy is strictly for the capitalists.

Computers then clearly have great potential for a socialist society where production is for need, where the drudgery of repetitive jobs is largely replaced by automation, and where decisions can be arrived at democratically on the basis of freely available information. But while computers remain in the hands of the ruling class they offer a grim prospect. Once again the Bourgeoisie stands in the way of the Good Life.

Further reading

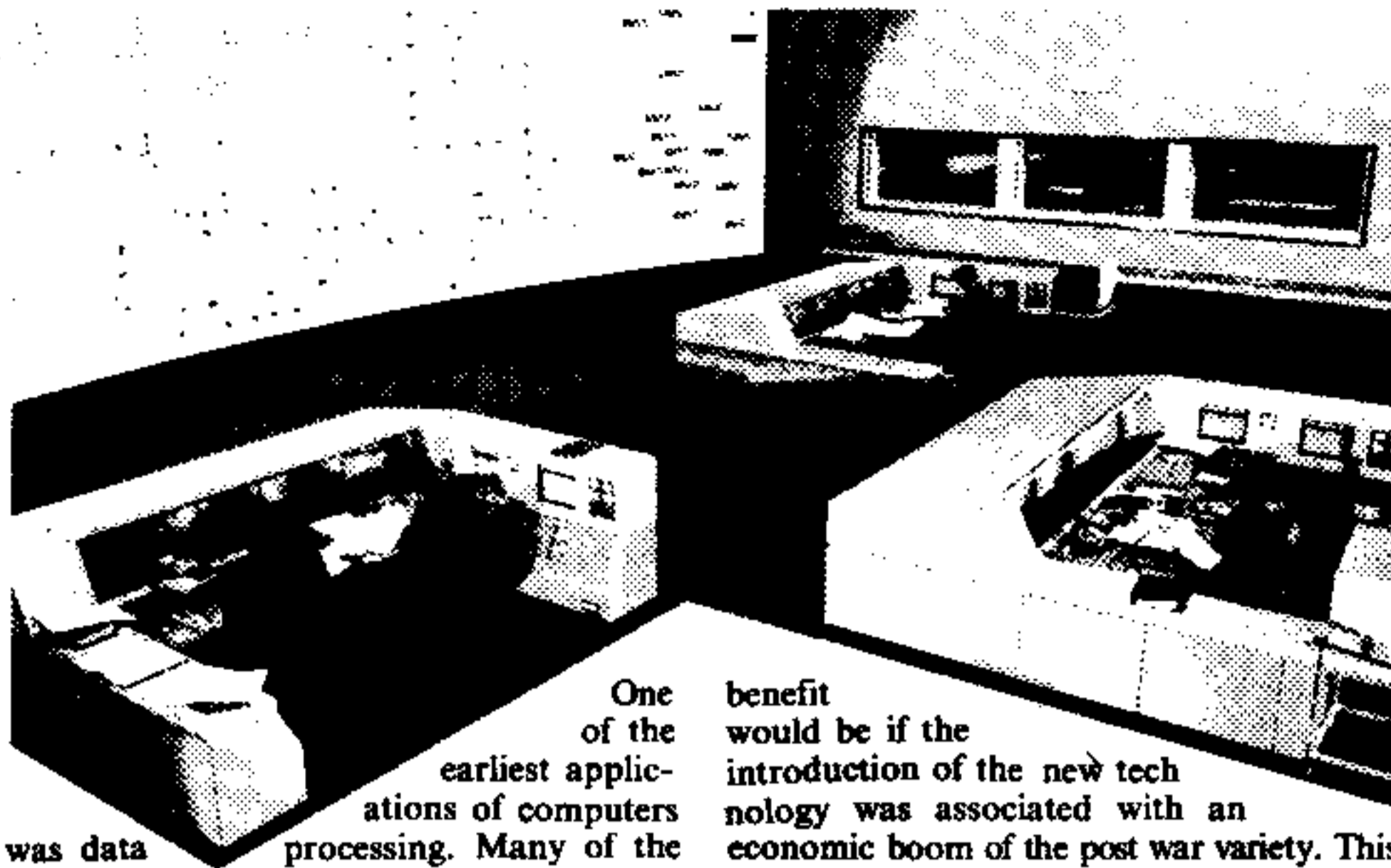
Computers And Socialism, Stephen Boddington Spokesman Books 1973

Labour and Monopoly Capital, Harry Braverman Monthly Review Press 1974



Black Bart

"Once you've programmed one of these little fellows, you know it will always share your basic assumptions, which is more than you can say for employees."



was data processing. Many of the routine tasks of clerical workers were computerised e.g. payrolls, bills, etc., Now a new section is under threat: typists. The machines are called word processors. Text can be typed into the machine; then by typing simple instructions it can be rearranged and amended. When the text is in the required form it can be automatically printed to any specified format and stored in the machine for further use.

The production of reports and letters becomes much more efficient as complete retyping when making amendments is unnecessary. The typists productivity will increase and jobs will be lost. Computer typesetting works on similar principles and we have seen considerable resistance to its introduction in the newspaper industry. Computers are now about to 'scythe' through the post office. Once information is stored in a computer it is a simple matter to transmit it down a telephone line. Word processors attached to telephone lines could decimate the postal service. The GPO is currently introducing System X, an electronic telephone exchange system which will drastically reduce the need for switchboard operators and maintenance staff.

Industrial robots are another important development. British Leyland is building two new welding lines at Longbridge which will include a number of industrial robots, most of them welding machines, making Longbridge the most automated factory in Britain. Robot welding equipment will allow the new Mini to be produced with far fewer rejects and to a far greater accuracy thanks to constant line checks and the precision with which line spot weld guns can be controlled. Similar machinery is already in use in other countries— Japan and Sweden—and it is said to greatly increase the productivity of the workers who still have a job.

Work is now in hand in Britain and the US to develop automatic assembly machines. Already machines have been developed to assemble several simple units at speeds up to eight times faster than the best a human operative can achieve, and they can go on doing it round the clock until the machine is switched off.

The above examples of computer use indicate that Tony Benn could well be right, for once. Whoever is reaping the benefit we can be sure that it is not the working class. The only way workers could obtain any

benefit would be if the introduction of the new technology was associated with an economic boom of the post war variety. This prospect seems unlikely and workers are going to have to resist the introduction of new technology in order to defend jobs and living standards. This is not to say that we are Luddites and against new technology.

As the Journalists Charter pamphlet, *Technology in the Print*, put it 'We are in favour of new production techniques—but only if they are introduced for the benefit of the workforce and under its control.' In a socialist society where production is for need, not profit, where workers have democratic control over what is produced and how it is produced, the introduction of new technology would be for the benefit of the working class as a whole.

Recent developments which could be a major benefit to democracy in a socialist society are information systems. These expanded massively since the introduction in the late sixties of the multi-access computer, ie, one which can be used simultaneously by a large number of people using their own telephone link. Thus centralised data banks can be accessed from many different geographical locations.

The use of centralised banks has mushroomed. They are now used by industry and commerce, government departments, the police and the armed forces. In Northern Ireland the British Army has computerised files on large sections of the population and patrols can radio in directly for information on 'suspects'. The republican forces restructured into smaller units to counter-act the increased effectiveness of Army intelligence.

A further development links together a number of separate computers. Honeywell now has a network of three connected computer centres, one in Europe and two in North America, which through telecommunication links can be used from most parts of the world. Thus branches of a multinational corporation can connect up to a common data bank by buying computer time on the Honeywell network.

Data banks have been extended from simple files of information to complete Management Information Systems. These combine information on such things as production levels, stocks, investment, personnel, and the state of the market together with mathematical models which give management much greater control in order to maximise their profits and minimise their risks.

Socialist Review

POBox82

London E2

Lots of you guessed that this is the address to write to SR and we have had to make a selection. The great 1900 debate is being held over till next ish. Anyway, just because we have gone up to 40 pages doesn't mean that we have lots of space to spare. But keep on telling us all how good/bad SR is, and arguing with our formal contributors and with each other. And write reviews, offer articles etc etc....

POBox82

Natural laws rule, OK

I would like to make a short comment on Glyn Ford's 'Even the Truth is Relative' (*Socialist Review* July-August).

I have no quarrel with the author's conclusion about the dangers of nuclear power under capitalism. Indeed he could have strengthened his case by reference to the fact that since 6 August 1945, when the US Air Force obliterated Hiroshima, we have all lived under the shadow of the nuclear bomb and that 'peaceful' nuclear power production and nuclear weapon production are closely connected technologies.

But some of Glyn Ford's argumentation is, in my view, very dubious to say the least. And, since similar views seem to be fairly widespread on the left (including even sections of the SWP), they need to be challenged.

What is at issue is whether there is or is not a real distinction between science (objective, operational) and ideology (more or less systematic mystification and false consciousness). Glyn Ford seems to cast doubt on the matter, if I have understood him correctly.

Marx and Engels took it for granted that there was such a distinction. In fact Marx's

criticism of the post-Ricardo 'vulgar economists' is meaningless otherwise.

Putting it very crudely; there is bourgeois economics and there is marxian economics but there is no bourgeois physics and no marxian physics. There is only physics, which is operational and even 'value free' (although there are serious objections to this term) in the sense that, say, the laws of thermo-dynamics are the same for a marxist, a liberal, a conservative or whatever. They represent real (ie. operative and objective) knowledge, or an approximation there to, not ideology.

That is to say science, scientific knowledge properly so-called, is part of our heritage and is an indispensable prerequisite for the construction of socialism. What is called social science in bourgeois institutions is, on the other hand, largely ideology. There can be no objective social science in a class society except in so far as it is revolutionary.

Naturally this does not mean that science and technology are somehow produced independently of society. That would be an absurd proposition, an idealist mystification. Very obviously technology develops in accordance with the requirements of the rulers of society. And not just technology. The same is true, at one or more removes, of the purest of 'pure' science.

Many years ago the Russian physicist Hessen wrote a paper for an international congress on the history of science entitled 'The Social and Economic Roots of Newton's *Principia*'. In it Hessen showed, as he put it, that 'the formation of ideas has to be explained by reference to material practice' and specifically demonstrated in detail that Newtonian mechanics was a synthesis made possible by the actual development of technology (socially

conditioned) in the fields of transport, mining, gunnery and so on.

To put it very crudely again, even the austere mathematical logic of the *Principia* is not unconnected with the class struggle, though the connection is fairly remote. But, and it is a very big but, Newtonian mechanics is nevertheless objective, operative knowledge, is science, whereas Hobbes's *Leviathan* or Locke's two *Treatises on Government*, both products of the same epoch, are ideology.

The fact that Newton's mechanics does not represent some 'absolute truth', that it was profoundly modified by the twentieth century 'revolution in physics' (relativity and the quantum theory) in no way alters its scientific character.

Does it matter? I think it matters a good deal. At a time when, as your editor points out in another connection, various 'left-wing' authors are mounting 'a thorough going attack on the theoretical foundations of classical marxism' (I do not mean, of course, to suggest that this is Glyn Ford's purpose) *Socialist Review* has the duty to defend them.

Not only because classical marxism is true (and I agree with Glyn Ford that even the truth is relative) but because truth, to a marxist, is operational, because there is an indissoluble connection between theory and practice, because marxism, unlike every trend in bourgeois social thought, is also *scientific* as Engels rightly claimed.

Duncan Hallas.

POBox82

No nukes is good nukes

I would like to reply to the article on nuclear power written by David Turner in *Socialist Review* No. 2 (May 1978).

I do not think his criticism of nuclear power goes nearly far enough. Nuclear fusion may be slightly less dangerous (if it can be developed) than nuclear fission, but it still has many of the same or similar defects.

Nuclear fusion is unsafe. If developed it will continually leak radio-activity (probably as the gas tritium). The problem of waste radio-active material (from the metallic neutron shield) will only be marginally

less than that from nuclear fission reactors.

Nuclear fusion is not needed. Much energy can be saved through insulation and such things as district heating schemes. Far safer forms of energy production are possible (solar, waves, tidal etc.) which David mentioned and them proceeded to ignore in his article.

Nuclear fusion, if developed, will present the same problems to working-class organisation as do nuclear fission reactors. The dangers and expense of a shut down through strike action etc., will almost certainly lead to great restrictions on union activity in nuclear fusion generators.

It is expected that by the time fusion power is developed, the technology to develop a fusion atomic bomb, without the need for a fission 'detonator', will have been developed. The dangers of diversion of the nuclear fuel for bomb making will still be with us.

But even if all the above arguments are ignored, nuclear fusion is very unlikely to provide the safe, cheap, limitless supply of energy that David expects of it.

Nuclear fusion is not known to be technically possible, as David claims, but is only thought to be. Nuclear fusion still has many great technical hurdles to overcome. It was expected that a proto-type nuclear fusion generator was to have been developed in the 1950s—this is still not near to being achieved.

The final argument against nuclear fusion is that although the fuel may be very plentiful and relatively easily obtainable, the metals needed for shielding the reactor core are very rare and even now are a limiting factor in research into nuclear fusion.

In conclusion, 'no nukes is good nukes' (of any sort) is the best motto, certainly under capitalism and I think almost certainly under socialism.

We must campaign against all nukes and for far more research into renewable sources of natural energy—the sun, wind, waves and tides. These will provide the safe, cheap, abundant sources of energy that David is looking for, for the future socialist world economy.

Yours fraternally,
Andy Wynne,
Ashford, Kent.

RAR & all that

Rock Against Racism's achievement in establishing a relationship with youth is a triumph as is its success in mobilising certain forms of music and sections of their audiences against the fascists. Despite the distortions of our position voiced by Huddle, Widgery, Gregory and Shelton, we have never suggested otherwise.

We agree that punk and reggae contain significant elements of cultural rebellion, and that the combination of the two is dynamic. However, these phenomena are also riven with contradictions, and the refusal of RAR and our critics to recognise these looks very much like an abdication of political responsibility.

No amount of abusive rhetoric will succeed in suppressing the real contradictions between the progressive elements of punk and, for example, its tendencies towards sexism, hostility to anyone over twenty, trendiness, nihilism, and political ambiguity. And to present the politics of reggae in the simplistic way Huddle & Co. do is patronising in the extreme.

The contradictions of punk, in particular, account for the ambivalent response it arouses. For many people its energy and accessibility is off-set by the fact that they find it emotionally and ideologically limited. Its tendency to resist frequently fails to prevent its early commercial recuperation. What is more, its anti-authoritarianism and anti-racism - as witnessed in the music and interviews (some in *Temporary Hoarding*) of such figures as J. Rotten/Lydon, Mark Perry, and Jimmy Pursey - often masks an apolitical individualism which declares a plague on the houses of both right and left, and which bears a startling resemblance to the similarly contradictory philosophy of the hippies.

The importance of cultural rebellion cannot be overstated. Just the same, punk and reggae don't provide all the answers. So in addition to supporting RAR we also support (without

representing) Music For Socialism in its attempts to deal with other musical forms. (Unlike Huddle & Co., and whatever Big Youth says, we do not think John Coltrane died in vain; nor did Woody Guthrie, nor Kurt Weill.)

To pose RAR against MFS as mutually antagonistic practices is mere sectarianism. So long as RAR remains so exclusive, MFS will continue to be necessary, and vice versa.

We will not be bludgeoned into silence by our critics' attempts to foreclose discussion. The suggestion that our article should not have been published because our views differ from theirs is disgraceful.

Our critics presume to speak on behalf of 'the kids'. We question a politics founded on tailing 'the kids'. Roots rebellion and punk shock tactics do not necessarily lead to revolutionary politics, neither do they provide the only possible direction for revolutionary culture. Crucially important though they are statements like 'Youth have... ten times more idea of what's going down than your pretty average Marxist Editor' are rubbish and considering who wrote them, hypocritical rubbish at that.

John Hoyland
Mike Flood Page

POBox82

Buttonholing Rose

Reading John Rose's RAR article (*Socialist Review* 3 June 1978) on the last bus home a few pints after the *Socialist Workers* didn't turn up I found myself getting angrier. Here was me, Super Prole, going back to my pebble-dashed concrete status symbol parents' council house reading this bleeding apology. And — great! — everybody was a pre-pubescent 14 year old — even Tony Cliff.

Seriously, though, we've gotta sing despite the pessimism (as the bard puts it) which is what we all did at the Carnival even if Rosie baby didn't. That little article stunk of a leftie's patronisation, and there's enough of that around without having to read drivel. So what if

Tom Robinson's manager refused *Socialist Worker*? Haven't you seen 'em all, the T-shirt wearers, kids with TRB badges buying *Socialist Worker*, when we all do our Saturday stint? They're more important than TRB's management. Surely it's the bosses right to get uptight in such a situation? After all, it's not meant for them.

The brothers and sisters who listen to the words and get off on the music and then do both and hate the Front and don't quite like our gay-oppressors and then raise two fingers in the direction of the Archbishop and his sideglance, at those responsible — 'cos we know who they are as every day goes by, these days — witness the *News of the World* 'Pack of Perverts' leader the other week — these are a redefinition of Soweto's kids with a restriction more cunning because of our TV straitjackets. Make no mistake matey: it's only that sophisticated very dirty trick that's been played on us from the cesarian-section upwards that taught us to call blacks wogs, women birds, and us gays queers just so that the bosses can get on with it.

Robinson's not quite the same as 'em? Of course not — so the trendy left comes to his concerts and looks trendy but have you ever looked at the kids in the audience?

I don't think that the TRB — or the Clash — or any of the white bands playing today are the weapons for smashing capitalism. Sure, they're great implements of that tool, anyone saying 'oh, they only came for the music' rejects the politics of the people on that stage — with music like this the listeners are politicised — the kids that reject school prefects and parental authority, the age of consent

and drinking laws.

Tom Robinson's manager isn't responsible for the end political result of TRB's output — and neither will TRB be — or the gays (like me) that Robinson dragged out of the stinking fucking closet in the Ffordre Greene one night, too late for the Gay Liberation Front and its brilliant noises or the strike that brought down Sailor Heath. What's the Pentonville Five mean to all the pre-pubescent 14 year olds that weren't really?

To be honest, Tom Robinson's done more for the revolutionary left than all those hundreds of middle-class kiddies that comprise all those sectlets and swamp the working class with verbal garbage in the guise of politics on a plate. These people aren't our political necessity, and for John Rose to patronise us 'At last! Super Prole on the march! They do exist, after all', is not quite on brother.

And what about the music papers? So they played a crucial role in mobilising and use an anti-NF headline from time to time, jump on the great punk bandwaggon and we'll sell a lot more papers — lads — and get a fatter pay-packet, unlike the woman tightening screws on the assembly line. Parsons and Burchill? Maybe it's not pink triangle time quite yet, but they're just shits. What's more important — music or critics? Answer: the music. Faint out of shock!

Rosy's article is the most terrible trite apology to the revolutionary left about a fantastic event that must have politicised a tiny piece of each of those 80,000. At the risk of sounding pompous to my middle-class lefty comrades a lot of them kids must have left

with a *Socialist Worker*, a badge, or proud to be homosexual and black even, and that's where the bloody argument begins.

Surely, for the sake of the revolution, we have no scruples about whose backs we ride on if it brings us closer. I certainly haven't. The argument's certainly with the kids, even the pretty pre-pubescent 14 year olds who weren't really, and not the trendy lefties with their false eyelashes, Volvos, grey Cortinas and herb gardens.

The revolution is in the streets and the heroes have got to be dragged through the gutter in the process. Somebody, I think, told me it was Marxism. Perhaps, though, it's the library books I read. Perhaps it's the music I listen to. Perhaps it's also 'cos I jump about a lot.

Fraternally,

Paul Furness, Leeds

PS: Print this, don't chop it up, and don't relegate it to the dustbin either.

POBox82

No sectarian advance

Firstly, I would like to say how much I welcome the establishment of *Socialist Review* by the SWP in an attempt to provide a forum for debate by revolutionary socialists, free from any narrow and self-defeating sectarianism.

However, having said that, I feel compelled to attack the highly sectarian attitude taken by Duncan Hallas of the SWP in his review of Ernest Mandel's book, *From Class Society to Communism*.

The primary reason given for this criticism is to be found in the old IS-Fourth International disagreement about whether the USSR is 'state capitalist' or a 'degenerated workers' state'.

Obviously discussion about the USSR is crucial for revolutionary socialists, but the state capitalist degenerated workers' state has taken on the characteristics of a sterile academic debate over mere semantics, for each side defines the vital concepts (such as 'capitalism', 'surplus value' and 'commodity production') in its own specific way, and so arrives at the conclusions it wants to.

What is soon apparent in any study of the Soviet Union is that a unique socio-economic and political system in which the division between oppressors

and oppressed still exists, but in which the structural and functional characteristics of the dominant class are different from the ruling class in Western capitalist systems.

Both Mandel and SWP theoreticians such as Cliff and Harman attack the Soviet Union and call for Soviet Democracy along the lines laid down by Lenin and Trotsky, so what does it matter what phrase is used to define the essential nature of the USSR?

Duncan Hallas' next criticism of Mandel is that he has made 'past deviations'. So what? What deeply minded and deeply critical socialist has never made mistakes?

Did not Lenin and Trotsky commit deviations?

Finally, Hallas criticises Mandel for 'his exaggerated worship of an abstract "democracy" in the workers' movement' and refers the reader to pages 97-98. But what does Mandel actually say in these pages?

He says that the 'workers' state is characterised by an extension and not a restriction of effective democratic freedoms for the mass of working people', that it 'will be more democratic than the state founded on parliamentary democracy in that it will extend direct democracy', that it 'will create the material bases for the exercise of democratic freedoms for all' 'by opening up the means of communication' to access by 'any group of workers which wants to use them'.

Workers' democracy will also, according to Mandel, encourage free debate and rights of organisation to all tendencies, 'including opposition ones', replace the standing army and the repressive state apparatuses by the armed people; and ensure the election of all judges and the hearing of all cases in public.

This represents a forceful and necessary reiteration of all the democratic aspirations of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, Gramsci and Luxemburg, and if the SWP rejects this notion of proletarian democracy, then what exactly does it stand for?

Thus Hallas's rejection of Mandel's book reveals a highly sectarian attitude which will prove disastrous for the future growth of the SWP as a hegemonic force on the revolutionary left.

Dave Pryce.

POBox82

This mag. is awful

Socialist Review is awful. That's not because all the articles in it are awful. It's not because the people who produce it don't work hard enough.

Socialist Review is awful because it is aimed at the wrong people. It is aimed at intellectuals and semi-intellectuals. What about all the working-class people who are just becoming interested in socialist ideas? They are the most exciting people in the world and there are more of them about now than for many a long year.

There is not a hint in *Socialist Review* of the thousands of political discussions that go on among ordinary people every day. Everything from profit and unemployment to sexual relationships. Many revolutionaries in the past have written about these things in a way that appeals to working-class people. They had that much respect for workers. It is this respect that is so sadly lacking in *Socialist Review*.

Finally, I think that it's very important for an organisation like the Socialist Workers Party to have a monthly magazine that clearly belongs to it and argues its politics. Debates with other socialists certainly (as long as they represent a presence in the working class at least as important as ours). But let's stop fooling around pretending that the members of the editorial board just happen all to be in the SWP by chance.

Pete Glatter, North London.

POBox82

This mag. is useful

Judging by the content of the first two issues, *Socialist Review* has the potential of becoming a widely read and, more importantly, a widely understood journal of left commentary on 'issues of the day'. Highly useful to socialists is the kind of article that gives a background (historical or structural) to a subject rather than assuming a reader's already having a working knowledge of it. Here I have in mind such accounts as those on the US miners, the French Left groups and Scotland.

Another vitally important

function that this publication can fulfill is in helping committed revolutionary socialists to form links with and win over the 'hesitant socialists' among their workmates, colleagues and fellows. By these I mean the growing number of people who, as the capitalist crisis continues, perceive increasingly the meaninglessness of the rhetoric, the hypocrisy of the professed morality and the bankruptcy of the economic, social and environmental policies of the governing institutions of national and world capitalism in tackling the needs and problems of today and tomorrow.

Of course it is true as many would point out that commitment to real socialism is crucially dependent on class struggle but workers/consumers have to feel that there is a rational alternative towards which to struggle otherwise there is a real danger that left groups may find themselves being treated with the same cynicism and apathy often accorded to establishment politics, if not largely ignored altogether.

Here lies the value of clearly but accurately written features (that is, not oversimplified to the point of misrepresentation in getting at the essentials) such as 'Economic Briefing' and 'Science in Society'. These should be articles that can be reread and referred to—that can be passed around the workplace or wherever to our comrades wanting to know what we have to offer as alternatives to the conventional wisdom of Fleet Street, the CBI and the Healey's, Murrays and Thatchers of this world.

Such a journal as this must maintain the correct balance between the journalism appropriate to a daily or weekly paper and the more searching analysis on which it must rely for its success as a monthly.

Of special interest to me is the 'Science in Society' feature as I agree wholeheartedly with comrades MacLintosh and Turner that discussion on the left, of energy and, by implication, environmental issues as a whole, has been sadly inadequate and I would be happy to contribute to this feature in future on ecological and medical aspects of society.

Hoping there have been plenty of useful readers' comments.

Andy Herring, Shop steward, Hammersmith Hospital.



In issue 99 of International Socialism June 1977 the predecessor to this journal, Gerry Dawson reviewed the impact of the health service cuts and the strategies for resistance. Here he makes a progress report on the battle of Bethnal Green Hospital and the fight to stop the cuts.

The Battle of Bethnal Green

The Green is a medium sized general hospital in a part of East London with notoriously high incidence of illness and a community health service which is only now emerging from decades of neglect. It has about 280 inpatient beds and sees nearly 48,000 cases each year in its casualty and outpatient clinics.

It is no medical derelict; from the specialist hip replacement unit, its patients' kitchens, reputed to be the best in East London to its excellent postgraduate Medical Centre it's a busy working hospital with high medical standards and unusually good relations with general practitioners.

But, Enter The Cuts. The Tower Hamlets District not only have the national nil-growth ceiling now strictly enforced by the cash limit which was introduced as part of the IMF's loan terms. It also has the RAWP (Regional Allocation Working Party) tax to pay.

RAWP is a classical social-democratic cock-up; designed to level up the regionally uneven levels of medical spending noted by socialist critics in the 1960s. Now in the 1970s it has become a formula for rationalising cuts. RAWP shifts still more money out of the Thames regions, long overdue fireproofing and internally financed pay increases for junior doctors further reduce the Tower Hamlets District coffers already ravaged by the rocketing supply costs, especially of drugs.

It's a national story but East London is feeling the full impact first and hardest. The Tower Hamlets Health District are attempting to 'save' £2 million or 300 beds (beds aren't strictly the things with mattresses on but a unit of medical currency). This abolishes at a stroke, 1 in every 3 acute bed in the district although last winter the existing beds were frequently chock-a-bloc.

The scheme was to smother the Green quietly, under the guise of a conversion, labelled temporary but likely to be permanent, to an all geriatric ghetto. This would achieve the required acute beds cut without involving the other better organised hospitals and care.

But the plan blew up in their face and the battle to save the Green has achieved the widest working class action against the cuts so far in London this year.

An increasingly vicious management succeeded in smashing the 24-hour casualty work-in which had run throughout July on 1 August by withdrawing staff and threatening senior medical staff involved with legal action. But it has proved a Pyrric victory and at the Council, the Community Health Council, the hospital and general unions against them and the East London public in angry mood.

There is now no chance of conversion to the all-geriatric unit unless at least some of the demands of the Campaign—retention of medical beds, open X-ray services, the Post-graduate Centre, a 9-5 Casualty Station—are met.

What is important to realise is the very slender basis from which the campaign was nursed. The Green has an unhappy trade union past and was clearly seen by management as a push over, especially since the all-geriatric future gave the impression that jobs would be safe.



Mark Rusher (IFL)

For months a tiny committee of staff who wanted to make a stand, and local people, did careful groundwork, sat through visiting know-alls who would monopolise a meeting and not be seen again, petitioned GPs, tried to change the pessimistic mood inside the hospital. Only two years ago when the Metropolitan, a Hackney hospital opened in 1886, was closed, its secretary said, 'The staff have been incredibly loyal and have steadfastly refused to strike and now it is us who face the chop'. The Green could easily have had the same obituary.

Carefully argued critiques of the plans were put into the complicated ritual of paper shifting called 'consultation' but at the same time Green campaigners knocked, wrote, and implored the entire local trade union movement to rise to the issue.

After two highly successful public meetings, the biggest the York Hall could recall, the Campaign called its first two hours stoppage on 10 March and in much trepidation. Myrna Shaw, NALGO shop steward remembers: 'We stepped out of this hospital yesterday to give two hours to the community and in the true spirit of the East End we found the community waiting for us.

'Anyone who could not be stirred by the sight must be dead. There were the massed banners of the trades councils and the trade unions. The Ambulance men were there and the Tenants' Associations. St. Bartholomew's turned up and St. Leonards, St. Mathew's and St. Clement's.

'We picked up contingents from Mile End Hospital and The London on the way. Hospital chaplains marched—so did doctors, nurses, social workers, town hall staff, GLC staff, people from the breweries, local industries and teachers. Apologies to anyone left out.

'If you lost your place in the procession it was hard to find anyone you knew when you went back. Best of all our own staff

marched—from every Department in the Hospital'.

Behind that unity lay careful groundwork. 103 local GPs had been canvassed and stated that the closure was 'a disastrous mistake'. The local community nurses stated 'it would be difficult for us to cope with a large increase in our work load even if our staffing levels were increased'.

The social workers stated 'The hospital has greatly enhanced the service we are able to give, its loss would greatly diminish it'. But the 1974 re-organisation scheme has established a pattern of medical autocracy which is virtually impossible to dent with reason and damned hard to affect with force.

After a three month reprieve which was clearly designed to defuse rather than encourage the supporters, instructions were issued for closure of the Casualty, the first step in the change of use, on 1 August at 8.00pm.

Once a closure date had been stated, down to the hour the phoney war was over. A Joint Trade Union Co-ordinating Committee elected by the East London Health Shop Stewards had been arguing out the implications of the Green's closure for the general patterns of cuts in East London and tightening up its own organisation and communications.

When it called strike action, even at notice of days rather than weeks, the response was splendid. The day before the attempted closure nine local hospitals stopped simultaneously. St Barts and The London were solid for 24 hours, and many industrial supporters came out spontaneously too. 300 locals were outside the hospital gates as 8.00pm arrived and at 8.01 a sign went up 'Casualty OPEN under staff control'. Within minutes, long planned agreements with the ambulance and emergency bed service unions went into action.

Over the next few weeks, the Casualty,

which the administration still insisted was closed, saw and treated more patients than in the same month the previous year. And the pickets outside the hospital now really had something to defend. The six point motion moved by Mrs Henrietta Cox of NUPE had done its work in each respect:

'The staff of Bethnal Green Hospital declare that the Casualty Department *will* stay open. We declare we have no confidence in the DMT. We resolve to elect a committee representing all the staff to make sure casualty runs as usual. We call on ambulance staff, the EBS and local GPs to support us. We call on workers in other London hospitals to take any action necessary to support us. We call on our unions to organise supportative action. *We ask the people of East London to support us!*

It took the management a full month to break the Casualty work in. After early attempts to withdraw staff and victimise the other hospitals and ambulance men who defied their official instruction that the Green was closed, direct and legal pressure was put on the rebel consultants and nursing staff forcibly transferred within the district.

It is important to realise that a work-in is not a universal panacea. Its remarkable success at the EGA depends on the special cases of consultants in the very specialised women-treating-women field, for which no real equivalent alternative can be offered. But in most hospitals, consultants can be only too easily bought off with promises of new, perhaps better, facilities in other hospitals in the districts.

And such is the independent power of the consultant in the NHS structure that medical work simply cannot continue without their approval, even though they are only on the premises for a small part of the time. Management, too, are learning from the EGA, especially in finding ways to pressurise nursing staff who are most vulnerable to hospital discipline.

The Bethnal Green work-in could never have worked without the very remarkable devotion of a consultant physician John Thomason and the hospital's casualty officer, Kutty Divakaran.

But the Health Authority still hold the trump card: the ability to transfer staff. Short of running an alternative private health

service, paid for by collection, within the hospital there was little to do but protest when an 'Invisible Hounslow' took place.

There was further strike and public protest on the day of the final forced closure. But the battle has now moved into a second phase, to prevent the conversion to the all-geriatric dumping ground so many staff and locals oppose because its notorious effect on morale and nursing and medical standards by insisting the remaining medical, postgraduate, X-ray, ECG and outpatient services stay put.

This time round it will be that much more simple to convince the Community Health Council, the Council and the statutory bodies who found the initial package plausible, of the real intent of the management; quite savage cuts in a area which is crying out for more resources. And to prevent the destruction of an excellent community-based hospital with no planned alternative.

Already there are 'lessons' galore. DMT's all over the country are finding increasing resistance to their attempts to enforce cuts. Not only are older community hospitals like St Nicks and The Green (which *do* need change but, with imagination, could find an important inner city role) being forced into closure, but completed new hospitals are unstaffed, and long promised and long needed facilities, such as Hemel Hempstead are postponed. 30 threatened hospitals joined a torchlit vigil on the 30th Birthday of the NHS in London alone.

Despite the BMA and Ennals, medical staff and unions *are* finding common cause and using sophisticated types of industrial action to force their case—at a time when the rest of the labour movement has its fists firmly in the pocket. Occupations live, it seems, in the NHS, if they have been forgotten in Clydeside. For the Bethnal Green battle and that of the EGA and Hounslow before it, will have to be repeated all over Britain as we descend further, further down the course established by Ennals, who is to British hospitals what Henry the Eighth was to British monasteries.

Here in East London the particular emotional significance of the hospital, and the genuine gratitude felt to the NHS, has given the campaign a moral pungency and

unity which have done something to revive the flagging fortunes of East London labour whose greatest days seemed all to be in the Museum. With the steadfastness of the young Bengalis in Brick Lane, the limbering up of the docks unofficial committee and the fightback on the hospital cuts, the sleeping lion of East London labour is stirring.

If hospital workers just plead for passive support, it's simply a case of wishing them well. But once the hospital unions take strike action or mount a work-in, the question becomes active. We are doing something, what are you going to do? Suddenly the all powerful authorities can look extremely isolated.

As for the politics of the situation, the weakness of the Communist Party is quite startling. Even ten years ago they would have delivered a formidable industrial punch but now their support is well—meaning, inexperienced and a bit airy fairy.

The left of the Labour Party, especially ousted councillors, have been excellent but must face the fact that it is a Labour minister, Roland Moyle who gave the Green the Ministerial Kick in the teeth. Even Mikardo, who has taken up The Green like the fighter he is, may oppose cuts in his constituency but voted for the package nationally. On the ground it has been independent trade union activists, local socialist feminist groups and the SWP who have run the campaign.

The lack of response from the hospital unions at a London level or nationally has been trully scandalous. Reviewing the annual conferences this year, it's clear that the bureaucracy considers cuts were last year's thing. It seems even possible that NUPE and the DHSS have an agreement, off the record, to let certain hospitals go without a fight.

Fisher has made not one visit to a hospital where his members are putting their necks on the block against the very cuts that he used to establish his own credibility as a campaigning union leader. The informal networks, *Hospital Worker*, and now the excellent *Fightback* co-ordinating committee based on the shell of Hounslow Hospital have been worth 100 times more than another Alan Fisher TV appearance.

The success of the cuts is not just a financial saving and a worse service. It is a code word for a social counter-revolution, a cruder, harsher Britain. The hospital service planned for us will consist of highly centralised (and incidentally absurdly expensive) units run more and more like factories to achieve maximum efficiency in 'through-put' and a few sub-hospitals for geriatrics and sub-normality practicing third world third-class custodial medicine. The sick who fall between those two stools will have to trust its luck to something called 'the community' which is itself busy being destroyed.

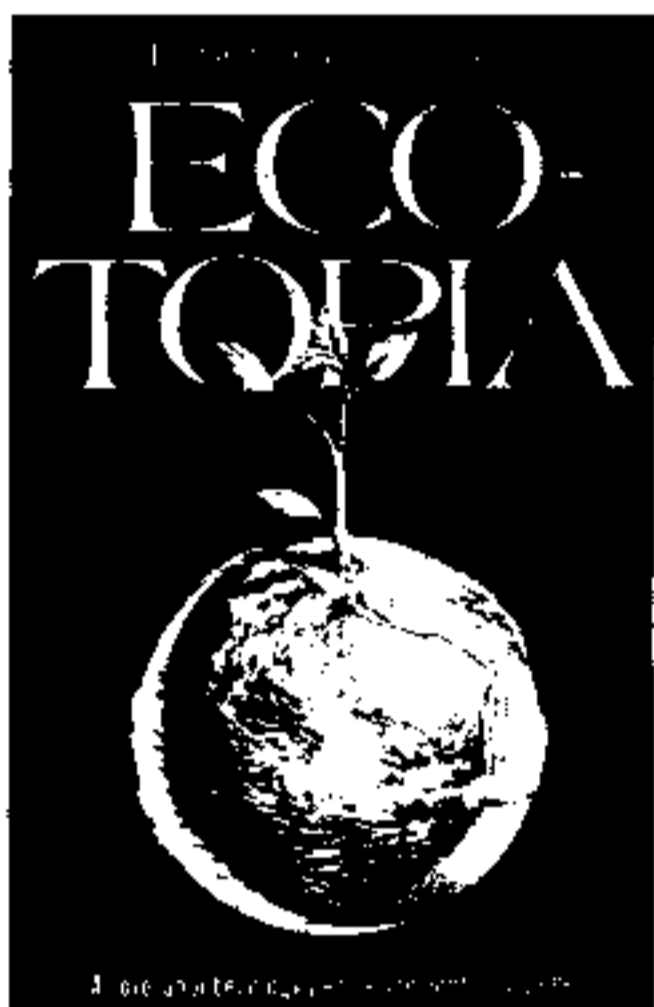
It is this Dismal New World every cuts battles faces head on. And because of the degree to which the Labour Party has become the agent of financial capitalist orthodoxy, that even the most minor closure has to be fought up to cabinet level. The battle against the cuts, like the battle for the right to work, are part of a bigger battle to reshape the priorities of modern Britain. If it seems at times unrewarding, it is where real socialists should be building.



Books Books Books

Freedom for a few

Ecotopia
Ernest Callenbach
Pluto Press
£3.60 hardback, £1.20
paperback



One of the best things in recent years has been the development of Pluto Press to the point where its publications now get regular attention from the national media, an advance made without any sacrifice of political principle. Its newest move — into the fraught area of novel publishing — is a welcome venture.

But one of its first attempts in this direction — Ernest Callenbach's novel *Ecotopia* — is in my view a mistake, though probably a mistake worth making.

Superficially, *Ecotopia* is one of the most challenging texts to have emerged from the American underground in recent years. Published at the author's own expense in California in 1975, it sold 32,000 copies on the grapevine before being 'discovered' and re-issued by Bantam Books.

The novel is made up of the diary entries and newspaper articles of Will Weston, first US journalist to visit the breakaway state of Ecotopia, formerly the west coast of America. He's writing in 1999, nearly twenty years after independence, and in a series of reports he describes the radical society that has evolved, touching on everything

from the design of belt buckles to the recycling of sewage.

In the end, he's won over by the place. He decides against a return to grubby old New York and its complications — wife, kids, mistress — and settles down with the delicious Marissa and the good vibes of San Francisco.

I know it's considered bad form to give away the ending like that in a review, but it's necessary here if we're to grapple with the politics of the text because it is as a political text that, rightly, the book offers itself. As the blurb puts it: 'In a blending of socialist and anarchist ideas Callenbach creates the most dramatic vision of a possible future since William Morris's *News from Nowhere*.'

Looked at in that way, the book certainly has things to offer, and the reader is reminded of the debt that Marxism in recent years has owed to the convulsions of American radicalism—the civil rights marches, the women's movement, gay liberation and so on.

Of course Marxists 'knew' about (for example) the exploitation of women—it's all been there in *Engels's Origins of the Family* since 1884. But that knowledge was dormant and peripheral, and only jerked into analysis and activity a decade ago when a few American women started making bloody nuisances of themselves.

Similarly here, Callenbach's novel presents a series of bold insights into the way a society could actually be organised round recycling and pollution-free production, and in those areas is years ahead of some European socialists, still blindly planning growth without a thought to the consequences.

But... and it's a but, I'm afraid, that wipes out most of the earlier compliments. *Ecotopia* also has many of the weaknesses and gaps of American radicalism. Central here is the book's sense of the evils of capitalism being a

matter of *size* rather than *system*. Break it all into little bits, Callenbach suggests, and there'd be few problems.

'Small is beautiful' is the watchword, and so Ecotopia is a mass of tiny private enterprises — schools, fisheries, farms and so on — all competing away cheerfully through TV advertising. It's the illusion of populist frauds the world over.

With that issue missed, the novel is free to spend much of its time devising ingenious ways of avoiding the use of plastics and turning goat shit into methane gas — the life style, in short, of the BBC's *Good Life*. How much of a threat that sort of thing is to civilisation as we know it may be judged from the fact that it's the Queen's favourite TV programme.

A final point. How, you ask, does the west coast manage to secede? Surely the rest of the US wouldn't let them? Answer: by planting atomic bombs secretly under major American cities and threatening to set them off as soon as the US Government attempts to intervene.

It's here that the book stops being just wrongheaded and becomes plain nasty. It offers not even socialism in one country but a kind of freedom in a bit of one country, a kind of freedom that within its own boundaries is ecologically deeply sensitive but is quite ready to secure itself by turning the rest of the continent into a nuclear desert.

Since the novel invites comparison with Morris it's worth pointing out that it's exactly a hundred years ago that Morris said: 'I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.'

But it's freedom for a few that this book is all about. At the end of Morris's *News from Nowhere*, the hero leaves his dream of the socialist future to return to struggle with the rest of us in the messy present, where the future is made.

But at the end of *Ecotopia*, Will Weston lazes significantly in a womb-like hot bath and decides to drop out of the difficulties of his life in New York and hang around in San Francisco, safe behind the nuclear screen and working only at achieving the ultimate fuck with Marissa. Bully for Weston.

Meanwhile the rest of us might enjoy this as a holiday read but will have to look elsewhere for inspiration as we grapple with that messy present.
Paul O'Flinn

Shock! Horror! Panic!

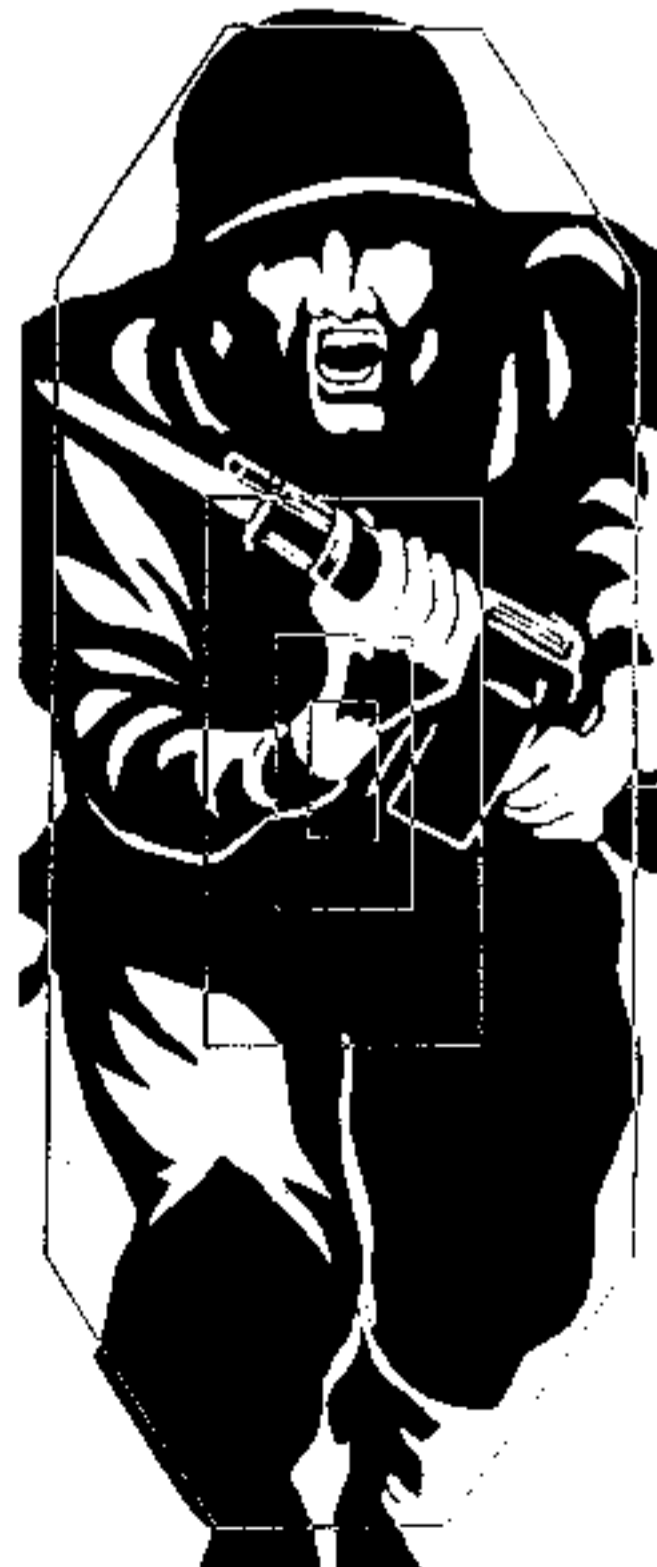
Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order
Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, Brian Roberts
Macmillan £4.95 paperback

We live in 'iron times', the authors of this remarkable book tell us: Britain is a country for whose crisis there are no viable capitalist solutions left and where as of yet there is no political base for a socialist alternative.

Society is stalemated. And yet throughout the land can be heard the ominous sounds of a society battering itself down for a long haul.

Through the crisis, nerving itself for the distasteful but necessary exercise of more than usual law to ensure more than usual order. The situation is a grim one that requires analysis and investigation, and this book is one of the most stimulating and exciting attempts at this so far.

The authors, all of whom work or have worked at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, began their investigation as a study of the 'mugging panic' that dominated the news media in 1972-73. In particular, they were concerned



with the sentences imposed on three Handsworth youth for an admittedly brutal assault on an Irish labourer. One youth, Paul Storey, was sentenced to twenty years detention, and the other two to ten years each. The savagery of these sentences led the authors to attempt to place the 'mugging panic', of which this case was in many ways the climax, in a wider social and political context, and from this developed their critique of the British crisis.

They argue convincingly that mugging was not a new crime—all that was now was the label—and that the category of street crime covered by the label was not dramatically more widespread in 1972-73 than ten years earlier.

What was new was that many of the offenders were now black and that the ideological climate had undergone a drastic change. These two factors interacted to produce a panic that had no statistical basis, that legitimated police harassment of black youths, and to which the courts responded with nineteenth

century ferocity. Reading their account one is left with the uncomfortable feeling that if the law had allowed, Paul Storey would have certainly been hanged.

The authors locate their study of the 'mugging panic' within what they term the crisis of bourgeois hegemony in Britain. They detail the economic underpinning, first of the years of consensus in the 1950s and early 60s, then of the years of crisis, before proceeding to a chronicle of the post war period that is essential reading for anyone concerned to understand the situation that confronts us today.

As they define it, the crisis marks a profound rupture in the political and social life of the country. From a situation in the 1950s where the consent of the working class to the continued existence of the capitalist system appeared to be 'spontaneously' generated, we have moved to a situation where that consent has to be actively policed; from a situation where the imperatives of the capitalist system



appeared unchallenged, we have moved to one where they are contested, often bitterly contested.

The response of the state towards this crisis, under both Tory and Labour governments, has been a tilt away from the pole of consent towards that of

coercion.

The turning point that heralded the coming of 'iron times' was the 1966 seamen's strike. Since this dispute, the central concern of British politics has been to curb the strength of the organised working class.

The trend towards coercion was carried furthest in Heath's attempt at imposing a 'final solution' to the British crisis at the expense of the unions. This was defeated and the present Callaghan government represents a retreat from a policy of full-scale confrontation.

At the same time Callaghan still represents a social democratic variant of the law and-order mentality that possesses the governing institutions of the the country, the trend towards coercion has been pushed back but not ended.

The breaking of the firemen's strike, the massive police mobilisations to protect the activities of the National Front, the day-to-day harassment by these same police of blacks, the deportation of Hosenball and Agee, the continued repression in Ulster—all presided over by a Labor government whose one claim to fame is that it has succeeded in enlisting TUC support for the cutting of working class living standards.

Where the account breaks significant new ground is in its treatment of the ideological level of the crisis, and for this reason alone it deserves to be welcomed. In particular the discussion of how the news media come to report events the way that they do represents an important extension of our understanding.

Where their account falls



Phil McCowan



Phil McCowan

down, however, is in its failure to adequately discuss the working class response to the ideological shift that has taken place, the impact it has had on working class consciousness and how it has affected the conduct of the class struggle. These concerns are discussed in general terms but not in anything like enough detail.

Similarly they do not discuss in enough detail the social democratic variant of the law-and-order society. Their account does not help to explain the success of the Labour government in damping down industrial conflict and at the same time effecting significant cuts in working class living standards.

For socialists intending active intervention in the struggle, these are surely the most important areas to be investigated. More satisfactory is their account of the black response to the racism of British society and to the law and order mentality that casts them as a principal scapegoat.

Another criticism is that some parts of the book are unnecessarily obscure and academic. These ideas are too important to remain confined to the Universities. The battleground of ideas, within which the authors see themselves as intervening, extends throughout society.

Unfortunately this defect is compounded by the fact that the book continues the trend towards asking hardcover prices for paperback books. *John Newsinger.*

The stuff that myths are made of

William Gallacher MP
Revolt on the Clyde: an autobiography
Fourth Edition 1978
Lawrence & Wishart £2.75
A Bookmarx Club choice.

This is one of the most widely read and influential working-class autobiographies ever written. For this reason alone it is well worth reading. It is certainly readable.

Gallacher tells the story of Red Clydeside during the First World War and its immediate aftermath at a spanking pace. The narrative sparkles with colourful incident, and with sharply drawn portraits of the leading actors. If you can read *Revolt on the Clyde* without feeling some excitement then you are no socialist — or a very sophisticated and world-weary one.

This is an heroic fantasy, written for inspirational purposes. As such it is a very successful book. But don't mistake it for *history*.

Its relationship to the actual events on the Clyde is often remote. Gallacher's vivid thumb-nail sketches are often unfair. And the interpretation is deeply perverted by the political purpose of the book.

Revolt on the Clyde was first published in 1936. Gallacher's task was a difficult one.

On the one hand he wanted to communicate the excitement of the wartime struggles to the whole new generation of militants moving into communist politics in the later 1930s. On the other hand, in doing this, it was important to avoid giving ammunition to left critics of the Communist Party, and, in particular, of its Popular Frontist politics of the later 1930s.

And such ammunition existed in abundance in the history of those more revolutionary days. Gallacher solved the problem by avoiding serious historical analysis, suppressing anything that might be politically embarrassing, and reducing the crucial political disagreements within the revolutionary movement on the Clyde to mere personality clashes.

This last technique is the key to the book. There is never

much doubt about whose personality the good comrade reader will find most appealing. Behind closed doors or on the platform Gallacher always has the last word.

The Lloyd Georges, the Arthur Hendersons retreat white and shaken from his brilliant — and brilliantly recalled! — invective. So much for the class enemy.

Characterising the socialists is rather more complicated. Those who were to become leading figures in the Communist Party (McManus, Campbell) are either paragons of virtue from the state, or (Tom Bell) late developers. Those who later fell by the political wayside were either bad eggs all along (Peter Petrov, Kirkwood), or were honest revolutionary fighters tragically broken, even driven insane, by capitalist repression (Johnny Muir, John MacLean). All very neat; all very convenient; all very unconvincing.

Meanwhile, in the background, the Glasgow proletariat — solid, brave, undifferentiated — march up and down, winning some and losing some, but always with the future shining in their eyes: figures from a socialist realist painting.

There is no space here to expose Gallacher's misrepresentations in detail. Most notorious is his scurrilous treatment of John MacLean and of MacLean's friend Peter Petrov. Personal abuse and insinuation is used here to obscure completely the very serious political disagreements that existed between Maclean and the leadership of the Clyde Workers' Committee during the war, and between him and the Communist Party after the war.

The best corrective to this will be found in Walter Kendall's *Revolutionary Movement in Britain*; Nan Milton's *John MacLean*; and Harry McShane's recent autobiography, *No Mean Fighter*. The latter in particular is compulsory reading. It is a fine account covering much of the same ground as Gallacher, and, by contrast, it is a model of honest political accounting.

Gallacher's dismissive remarks about the Socialist

Labour Party — the most important political force in the Clyde Workers Committee leadership — should be compared with Ray Challinor's, *Origins of British Bolshevism*. Those who wish to understand the importance of the CWC in the development of revolutionary politics in Britain will find little to help them in *Revolt on the Clyde*.

The imperatives of Popular Frontist politics in the later 1930s hardly allowed Gallacher to expound the theory and practice of independent rank and file organisation. In any case Gallacher was no theorist.

J T Murphy, the Sheffield shop steward leader, wrote the best account of the shop stewards' movement by a participant, in his *Preparing for Power*. My own *First Shop Stewards' Movement* also deals with this aspect, and attempts to place the revolutionary dynamics of the CWC within the context of a labour aristocratic elite — the engineering craftsmen — reacting to the threat of its own downfall. One of the most surprising weaknesses of Gallacher's account is his total neglect of this — craftist — dimension of his story.

However, there is no need to take a course in labour history to read and enjoy *Revolt on the Clyde*. Have a break, indulge your fantasies — but don't believe it, any of it.

James Hinton

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WOMEN

In our June issue, Sheila Rowbotham reviewed the women's movement over the last ten

The women's movement, or more accurately women's movements, have grown up throughout the world in the last ten years. The members whom the women's movement tend to attract reflect its origins: predominantly young, single, graduate, white-collar workers.

It was this area which saw one of the largest expansions of women's employment in the 1950s and 1960s: teachers, social workers, lecturers, civil servants and so on. The women's movement grew out of women's entry into the workforce. The new and expanding white-collar jobs gave at least the illusion of equality and promotion along with men. This and higher education raised the expectations of many women, offering something which seemed to be more fulfilling and rewarding than simply housework and motherhood. This expansion into the workforce led to the challenging of sex roles in all sorts of areas: notably, it became widespread although by no means universal, to encourage girls to train for a 'career'.

The women's movement has established itself on two levels: it has clearly raised the consciousness of many women by addressing itself to the stereotyped sex roles which are rife in capitalist society; and it has campaigned on many specific reforming issues eg. rape or battered wives, which ten years ago would not even have been regarded as political questions.

Some of these campaigns have been successful. The abortion campaign has involved tens of thousands of women in activity. There are battered wives' centres and rape crisis centres in most major cities. However the women's movement's major failing has been an almost total failure to relate to the mass of working-class women on a direct or organisational basis. It is true that many of the ideas of women's liberation have been accepted by working-class women, but the movement itself has not.

One reason for this is the importance the women's movement places on alternative lifestyles in the here and now. These lifestyles

require a certain freedom of movement which is not available to most working-class women. It is all very well to talk of alternatives to the family, but for the woman in an overcrowded council flat without a car or any of the other advantages of a good salary, the alternatives are non-existent. If she leaves her husband the council will refuse to rehouse her and will encourage her to return home. The women's movement has done little to confront this problem.

The second reason is that the problems facing women workers are not simply caused by their oppression as women but are increased and added to because of their position as workers. So the problems of housing, unemployment, low wages, come to the fore. Then the problem becomes one of not merely fighting for reforms which may help women: it becomes that of fighting against capitalism itself. It is in this context that the demands of women's liberation may mean little to women workers: many will have a half-conscious feeling that they alone will do little to shift their inferior position in society.

It becomes more obvious in such situations, in a period of crisis, that a purely feminist solution is not enough, and that socialism has to be the only way to achieve women's liberation. Whereas in the 1950s and 1960s it was possible to campaign for equal pay, contraception, nurseries and so on as part and parcel of the increased living standards of workers which capitalism was conceding, now one comes up against the arguments about national interest, women's place being in the home, and so on. The only way to cut through that is to present the alternative of a planned socialist society.

An interesting aspect of this is the way in which the women trade union bureaucrats

have been restricted in their room to manoeuvre. Despite a certain level of feminist rhetoric from white collar unions trying to recruit members, there has been a growing reluctance to take action in defence of women's rights. The women's energies have been channelled into ACAS tribunals, rather than into collective action to win equal rights.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the crisis has forced a fair number of feminists to turn to a socialist solution. Hence the emergence of the socialist feminist current within the women's movement.

This current contains women from revolutionary and reformist organisations, and, more importantly, non-aligned women (often ex-members of revolutionary organisations) many of whose ideas are articulated by Sheila Rowbotham (*Socialist Review*, No 3 June 1978).

One of the main concerns of the socialist feminists has been to define the relationship between feminism and the left organisations. When the women's movement developed in the late 1960s it was received with some suspicion by left groups. The heritage of Stalinism in particular meant that what tradition there was of feminism built up in the early decades of the century had been wiped out.

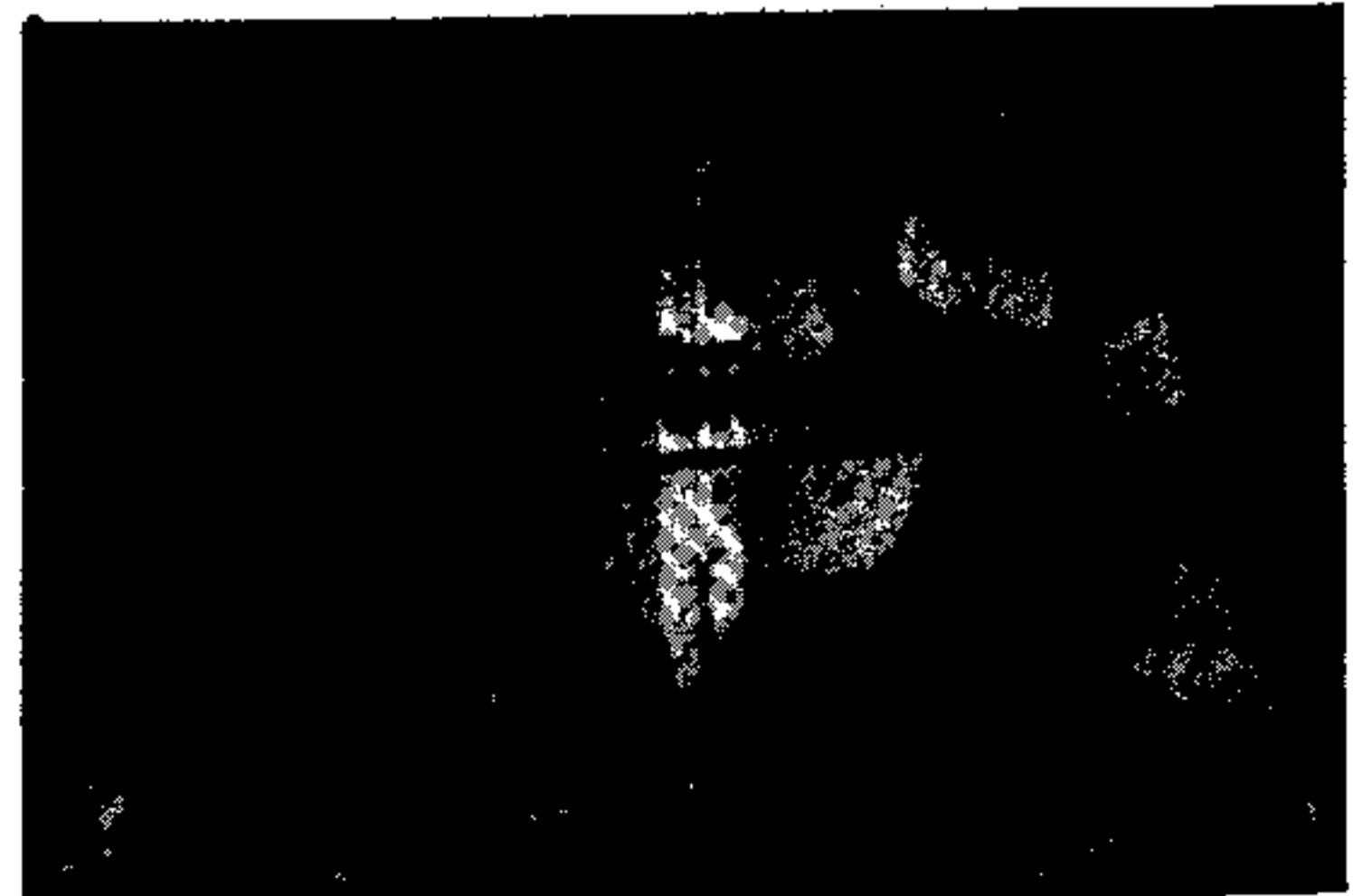
The rehabilitation of the family in Russia in the 1930s (to coincide, as Trotsky said, with the rehabilitation of the rouble) had implications for the Western communist parties. Questions of women's equality and the right to control their bodies were very low on the agenda. In addition, women were only episodically part of the workforce, not a major section as they are today.

It is hardly surprising therefore that when the women's movement developed, it was faced with an exceedingly male-dominated left, who simply did not consider the problems of women's liberation and who looked to the most central section of the working class — whom they saw as all men.

In addition it is important to remember



Selling Women's Voice



Women's Voice rally, Sheffield 1978

& CLASS

years. Lindsey German questions (and provides alternatives) to the ideas of that article.

that the left in 1968 was very different from what it is now. The revolutionary left was at a much earlier and weaker stage of development, and the Communist Party was much stronger than it is now. It was the reformists therefore who were dominant.

The situation was repeated to a greater or lesser extent throughout Europe. The ideas of women's liberation influenced many women both in and outside left groups; but the reception to these ideas inside the left groups was often unfavourable — both from men and women.

This in turn has led over the years to some women leaving these organisations. In Italy, many left en bloc; in England, it has been a trickle of individuals. Other women stayed inside and tried to change the organisations, with varying degrees of success.

Many of the women in the socialist feminist current are from such a background. They have rejected a specific organisation but retain a commitment to socialist politics as well as women's liberation. However, this rejection of a particular socialist organisation has also led to a rejection of Leninism in many instances. What is actually meant by that is less clear.

The argument goes that the Leninist Party is economic; that it bases itself on the skilled male working class; that it only concerns itself with what goes on at the point of production; and that it is therefore inaccessible to feminists. Sheila Rowbotham in fact talks about people in Britain developing new forms of non-Leninist socialist practice.

When trying to analyse this critique of Leninism it is difficult to recognise which organisation is being described. One must assume that she is talking at least in part, about the Socialist Workers Party. Does this description fit? Like most caricatures, there is a grain of truth in it.

It is true that we see the working class as the potential revolutionary class, and this is why we place our main emphasis on work around it, and around production. We are

not economic, but we do see the importance of trying to generalise economic struggles as a means of raising consciousness.

But we also concern ourselves with and often lead dozens of other issues and campaigns which aren't simply 'economic' or based on the point of production: anti-racism, anti-imperialism, black community work, housing, abortion, students, agitprop, gay liberation. Hardly an economic list.

W

hat I suspect Sheila means is that we don't subscribe to a vague spontaneist form of populism, current among much of the European left today, which sees the working class as just one among many social strata who make up a 'revolutionary bloc' and *not* as the vanguard class.

What such ideas do not take into account is that oppressed sectors of society can be thrown into struggle very quickly, but their struggle can die down just as quickly. Although we should try to win them to socialism, we should recognise that only the working class has the organisation, the traditions and the power to change society permanently.

This argument of course leads on to the question of the party. One of the arguments against Leninism is against centralism, against the idea of elected leaderships making decisions. Sheila admits to the problem that if you don't have any centralism, how do you decide what to do. She doesn't really have an answer to that. But there are greater problems.

If you have, say, ten members in a factory strike, how do they operate except through democratic centralism — discussing tactics, deciding which ones to adopt and sticking to it. Or should they all get up and argue against each other in mass meetings? Everyone ever

involved in a dispute will know how preferable the former is. And that is what democratic centralism is about in practice — not central committees.

Sheila admits in her article that she doesn't see the Leninist form of organisation as purely male; male/female conflicts arise in all forms of left organisation. So what is her objection to Leninism? Fundamentally it comes down to emphasis on the point of production, and authoritarianism. But what it seems is that Sheila sees *any* form of organisation as authoritarian. She makes great play about talking of 'non-Leninist forms of practice', but what exactly does she mean?

In the past there have been many attempts at 'non-Leninist forms of practice'; in fact pre-1914, it is difficult to think of any organisations which *were not* non-Leninist. Leninism, or the particular forms of politics and organisation associated with Lenin, arose from the crisis in the left internationally when the majority of the Second International supported the imperialist first world war. The establishment of the Communist Parties was an attempt to build marxist organisations which would not betray the class again.

Today the Communist Party has a non-Leninist form of practice. Its members barely maintain the pretence of being in a democratic centralist organisation. It denies the centrality of the working class. But does Sheila believe that this degeneration brings socialism any nearer? On the contrary, it helps maintain the status quo.

What then, is Sheila's strategy for socialism? It is very hard to find one. She talks about the importance of the socialist feminist current, yet gives no idea of the way in which this current argues for its position within the women's movement, or what its members are doing on the ground.

One gets the impression that the socialist feminists are quite happy to go as one current within the movement, winning one person here, two there, without fighting for



Occupation of Liverpool clothing factory by women in March 1978

John Smith (FL)

their politics. Some socialist feminists justify this sort of approach by citing the autonomy of the women's movement.

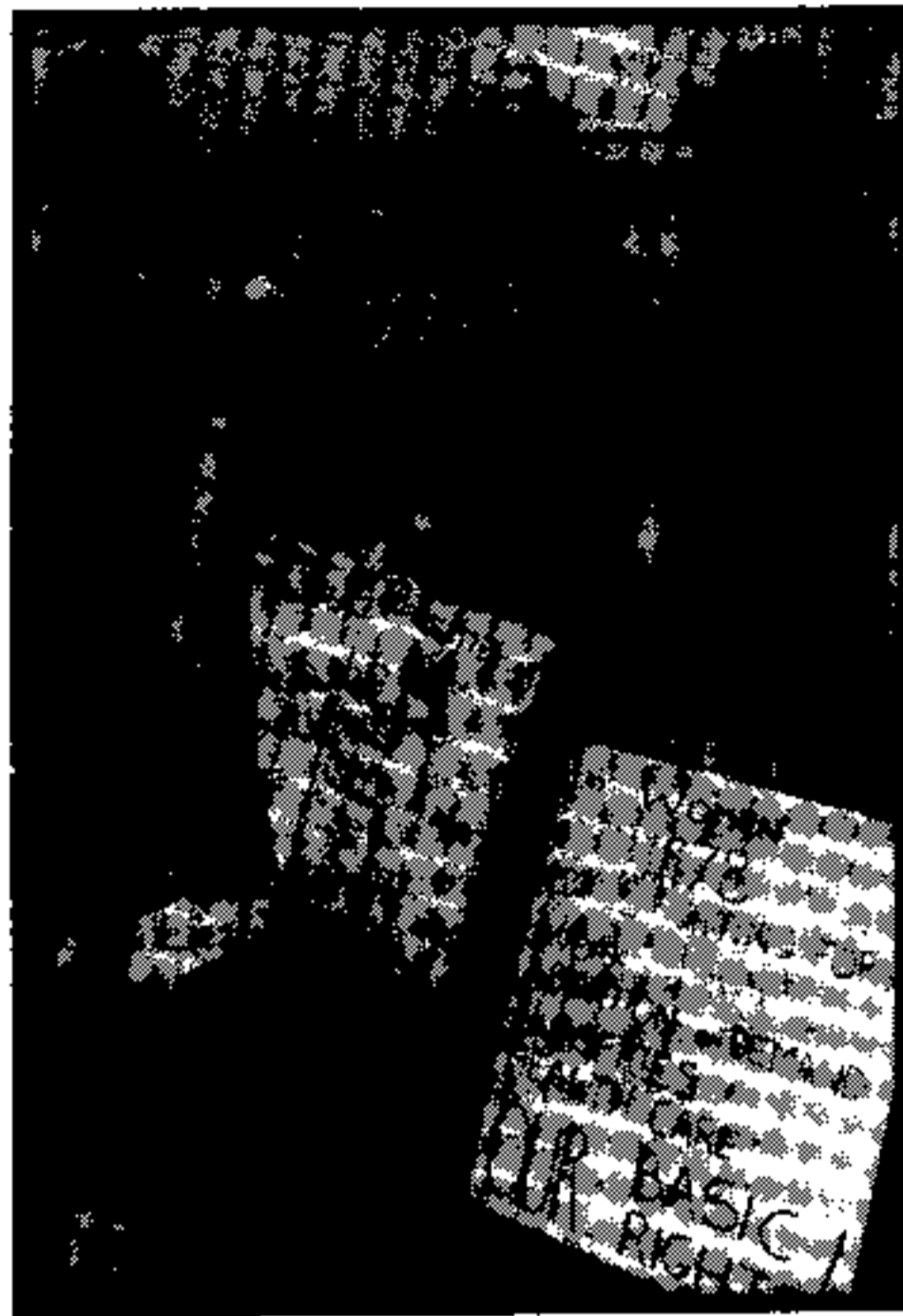
What is generally meant by this is that the a women's movement is not under the political domination of any one political organisation. The conclusion which follows from this often seems to be, unfortunately, that political organisations should not fight for their ideas inside the movement, but should respect this 'autonomy'.

This conception completely fails to come to grips with the importance of ideology and the way in which ruling-class ideas are perpetrated in society. One can talk about the trade union movement as 'autonomous', but this does not mean that it is somehow a neutral body within which different tendencies discuss and argue.

On the contrary, it is dominated by reformist ideas, and those ideas will in the long run come down on the side of the status quo, the people running society, for fear of bringing about something far worse. Because no organisation can remain un-influenced by ideas, it will not remain neutral.

The task of revolutionaries within the trade union movement is to fight to change these ideas and to win trade unionists to revolutionary ideas using the bridge of the rank-and-file movement. Of course, today revolutionary politics is accepted only by a tiny minority. But in a pre-revolutionary situation, we would expect huge sections of the trade union movement to be under the hegemony fo the revolutionary party. That is the goal we fight towards constantly, even though we recognise it is a long way off. We don't say the trade union movement is autonomous, so let's forget the battle of ideas.

Yet this does seem to be the attitude of some socialists in the women's movement. What it leads to in practice is often a position which says let's not raise political affiliations at all, just concentrate on where we agree, we aren't into male sectarianism. Nothing could



be more harmful. Unless there is political clarity among the different sections of the women's movement, brought about by friendly debate, it will not develop.

That brings me to the most serious criticism of the women's movement, including the socialist feminists. It is all very well to declare oneself a socialist. Thousands of people in the Labour Party do that. It is quite another to organise as a socialist.

The failing of the whole of the socialist wing of the women's movement has been its inability to map out any way of seriously beginning to organise women, or any strategy towards socialism (the first being prerequisite of the second). There is no concerted attempt to reach women on estates; there is no attempt to organise women in the unions at a rank-and-file level (the only level at which they will be organised at all).

Everything is done at a localised and at a quite internalised level. Working-class women are related to most in the areas where they are weakest (in battered wives' refuges or rape crisis centres) rather than where they are strongest (in the unions and tenants' associations).

The rationale of the *Womens Voice* organisation launched by the Socialist Workers Party in June, is precisely to organise women in these areas, to build up a strong organisation of women committed to socialism who will fight for their rights. We have all sorts of problems in starting out. The level of women's struggles is at an extremely low level, and so we will not immediately recruit large numbers.

Most of our members are from white-collar or student backgrounds. We are pitifully weak among manual women workers. But at least we have an orientation towards the female working class, and a commitment to building there.

Womens Voice contains a large section of industrial and workplace news, as well as general articles on women's liberation. The women's movement does not have such an

orientation, and has shown itself so far incapable of building there. The task of organising women workers can't be left to the women's movement, unless it breaks fundamentally with its past. *Womens Voice* is trying to do that.

The long-term aim is to build a mass socialist women's organisation. In the meantime of course we work with sections of the women's movement around the country on specific issues, but the present women's movement cannot be the nucleus of that mass movement. This is not simply a question of orientation, but one of class.

The fundamental division is not between the sexes, but between those who produce the wealth in society, and those who rob them of it. Of course, within such a society women through their oppression are inferior to men. That is why we need a women's organisation.

But an organisation which does not accept the class division in society as the main source of antagonism is doomed in the long run.

The suffragette movement and its leaders moved away from any socialist ideas they may once have had. The greater the crisis in the outside world grew, with the strikes and lockouts of 1911-13, the more the suffragettes retreated into individual acts of terrorism and a rejection of the mass struggle. Symptomatic of this was the expulsion of Sylvia Pankhurst precisely for having an orientation on the East London working class.

The logical conclusion was in 1914 when the suffragette leaders gave full backing to the imperialist war. A social crisis in the future will force the women's movement to take sides, and, it is only those who accept socialism who will be able to continue organising for women's liberation.

Alexandra Kollontai understood this well when she said what was needed was 'a communist women's movement'. Only one which ties itself to the active fight for socialism can have any chance of success.

More reviews

A family affair

Woman's Body, Woman's Right: birth control in America

Linda Gordon
Penguin £1.50

I picked up this book feeling slightly daunted both by its length and its subject matter. The term 'birth control' suggests to a British ear either the oppressive population policies imposed on Third World countries and the poor in general, by a capitalism scared of the explosive possibilities of the 'population bomb'; or the discreet gentility of your local Family Planning clinic. A book on social history of the United States also seems difficult to one who knows little about American history in general.

Linda Gordon's book is triumph — not only because of the way that she puts these phenomena (Family Planning clinics as well as population policies) into their proper political and historical context, but also because her account is both readable and absorbingly interesting.

If the book is long, it is because she insists always on the wider social movements of struggles over birth control have been part, and manages not to divorce them from either changing definitions of sexuality or from demographic issues.

Her main history starts in the 1870s with the growth of the US feminist movement and a notorious law of 1873 (by which all contraceptive devices were designated obscene, and thus couldn't be handled by the postal service). At this period the demands for 'Voluntary Motherhood' of the free love, the social purity and the suffrage movements was seen as a direct attack on the family and an invitation to immoral behaviour.

As the strength of the socialists movement grew in the early years of the twentieth century, the right to birth control was one of its major demands; the reversal over the next few decades as the birth control issue was abandoned by the left and increasingly appropriated by the right, forms the central part of the book.

And yet the argument never

degenerates into a simple left versus right see-saw; our unfamiliarity with American history ceases to be an obstacle because the issues are so familiar, and yet presented in a way that does not dodge the complexity and ambiguity of women's struggles by applying labels. The effects of the Depression and the Second World War led capitalism to promote contraception, both to

bolster up the family and in response to a changing dynamic of capital accumulation, but this does not mean that birth control ceased to be a revolutionary and a feminist issue.

Today it is in the hands of the medical profession, of the chemical industry, of policy-makers dominated by international capital; as a result it is often seen as a 'bourgeois feminist' issue or, especially in the Third World, as an imperialist plot.

However, as Linda Gordon shows, such attitudes merely reflect the way that capitalism has separated birth control from the wider issues of family forms, of sexuality, of control

over women's reproductive capacities.

Her book is essential reading for anyone who is concerned about these areas of struggle, because of the way she explores the varying interests of the different groups who fought for birth control at different historical periods. It is also a thought-provoking case-study of the way a particular issue which at one point is revolutionary can be coopted and used for completely different purposes by capital.

Nonetheless she refuses to draw the cynical conclusions that one might expect from such a history, and uses it instead as a basis for formulating truly feminist and socialist demands. As she concludes:

'These manipulations are not part of an unending chain. Their limits are set by the strength and intelligence of the political opposition to them. Indeed, the twists and turns of the rulers of women, attempting to adapt their supremacy to new situations, help to educate their subjects. The lesson to be learned is that reproductive freedom cannot be separated from the totality of women's freedom.' *Olivia Harris*

And...

Jeremy McMullen's *Rights at Work* (Pluto £2.25) will be published this month. It is available from Bookmarx as a current choice in their Club. Coming shortly are two books of interest to *Socialist Review* readers: there is John Molyneux's *Marxism and the Party* (Pluto £2.95) which examines the theory of the revolutionary party in the writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Gramsci; and there's Nigel Harris's major work, *China* (Quartet £3.50). Both of these titles are to be Bookmarx Club choices.

Penguin have just published *Windscale Fallout: A Primer for the Age of Nuclear Controversy* by Ian Breach (90p) and *Private Police* by Hilary Draper (95p). Allison and Busby have recently published *Homosexual Desire* by Guy Hocquenghem in paperback at £2.95.

We Shall Be All: recent chapters in the history of working class struggle in Scotland edited by Laurie Flynn is newly published by Bookmarks at 90p.
Alastair Hatchett



A hot desert wind

Khamsin

Journal of revolutionary socialists of the Middle East

Khamsin: Journal of revolutionary socialists of the Middle East, Issue No5.

Pluto Press
£2.00 single copy

'Khamsin is a journal by revolutionary socialists of the Middle East. *Khamsin* is a committed journal. It aims not merely to reflect and express, but to be part of the struggles for social and national liberation.'

Until now there has been no publication in which revolutionaries could talk about what needs to be done in the Middle East. Plenty of academic journals, packed with 'development' statistics have prattled about this and that. Almost no-one has set out to discuss what revolutionaries do.

First, of course, this is because the important arguments are taking place in Arabic, in Farsi, in Turkish or Kurdish. But it is also true that the gap between the 'western' revolutionary tradition and that of the Middle East has been very great.

To a large extent Middle Eastern revolutionaries have been cut off from the ideas of the workers' movements in Europe and elsewhere, even from the influence of China which over twenty years has swept much of the 'third world'.

Capitalism did come late to the Middle East and as a result industry has developed only over the last generation. It's no coincidence that it is in Turkey and Iran that some of the ideas of Stalin and Mao have been most enthusiastically received — it's here that development has occurred the fastest.

But in the Arab world as a whole and even in these countries Marxist ideas in general, and especially those which are obsessing us now — how to strengthen the workers' movement, nationalism and the workers' movement, how to build workers' parties, — all

these have received little attention.

Now the Middle East is developing at a rapid rate. Oil wealth has transformed the Gulf states and North Africa.

Areas which until ten years ago were open desert contain huge towns and the beginnings of 'industrial cities'. The working class is growing fast, with huge numbers of immigrant workers brought in from all over the world.

The most extreme development has been in Iran, which western countries predict will achieve 'superpower' status if present rates of growth continue for five or six years.

But much of this growth is apparent rather than real. Most has been carried out by the multi-nationals who have repatriated their profits. These companies and the western banks and finance companies have together with a few fabulously rich members of the Middle Eastern ruling classes comprehensively pillaged the region.

Inflation is high, and still rising in most countries. With population increases and an often declining food production poverty is becoming more general. Migration to the cities is now taking place at nightmare speeds. Cities like Istanbul, Tehran and the incomparably horrifying Cairo are high on list of 'crisis cities' — well up with Calcutta, Djakarta and the rest.

The key question about political change in the region turn on what is happening in these urban industrial centres. How to build a revolutionary socialist party which can organise within the powerful Egyptian working class; — how to direct the tremendous energy of the Turkish workers whose 'strike rate' must be amongst the highest in the world; how to redirect the dead-end strategy of the Iranian urban guerrillas; how to effect the organisation

of the poverty-stricken immigrant workers of the Gulf?

Only these workers' movements have the power to bring down the corrupt regimes of the 'Arab socialist' leaders: Assad of Syria, the pathetic Sadat of Egypt — or the dictatorships of Saudi Arabia Jordan and the Gulf. In the last instance only their strength will be sufficient to threaten Israel, sweep away the Zionist state and offer the chance of a socialist Palestine.

Khamsin, its editors spell out, is a 'committed journal'. It will be 'part of the struggles for social and national liberation'. It must concern itself then with *these workers'* struggles, and with how revolutionaries intervene in them.

The first *Khamsin* in English (it previously appeared in French, and is due to come out in Arabic and Hebrew) suggests that it will do so. Lafif Lakhdar, writing on Egypt, documents the development of Sadat's crisis, and the parallel development of the workers' movement, culminating in in the massive demonstration of January '77. This is far and away the best short analysis of what has happened in Egypt since Nasser. For this article alone, *Khamsin* is well worth a careful read.

But Lakhdar's syndicalism means that he does not take up the question of how Egyptian revolutionaries have fared in their various attempts to build workers' parties: he is interested in 'autonomous' groupings which will 'dissolve themselves as soon as the class struggle

explodes into civil war'. The future of the Egyptian movement is the most pressing in in the Middle East. It is up to others of us to take up the discussion which *Khamsin* has got off to a good start.

Apart from a short article on the Palestinian movement, the rest of *Khamsin* is devoted to aspects of Zionism, and in particular the history and political position of the Oriental Jewish community. These articles are fascinating, and fully bring out the racism in Zionism, and the way in which racism is built into the Israeli state.

All those who want the detailed arguments about Zionist racism will find them here. But these pieces leave the reader with the feeling that *Khamsin* is rather 'Israelo-centric', a suspicion heightened by Avishai Ehrlich's analysis of political developments in Israel which goes without any mention at all of Israel's huge Palestinian population!

Khamsin plans future issues on women in the Arab world, and on the Communist Parties of the Middle East. It promises to be essential reading for every revolutionary interested in the region.

But if it is to live up to its commitment to be an involved journal and avoid the decline into a sort of *New Left Review* of the Middle East (a publication to which *Khamsin* bears a disturbing physical resemblance) *Khamsin* must fight hard to contribute to the living struggles of the workers' movements. *Phil Marfleet*

Listen, Brother!

Achilles Heel no. 1: a magazine of men's politics
Men's Free Press, 7 St Marks Road, London, E8
40p

Well, us men have spent years being forced to react to the Women's Movement. In some ways that has been the only relation for most of us to sexual politics. But in the background there have always been 'men against sexism' and similar, and now there is building up the 'second wave' of 'men's politics'.

Because a short review cannot do justice to a 40-page magazine filled with a great variety of articles, I will try to justify the idea of men's sexual politics and a men's magazine. For *Achilles Heel* for me



Symbol adopted by men in Denmark, and now here.

reflected my feeling that it is time for men to make their/our own serious contribution to what has been women's politics, and should be sexual politics.

I first came across *AH* at the men's conference this spring. In many ways the magazine

Macho socialist concept of the working class. Is this an attitude we want to perpetuate?



reflects accurately what the conference was like—about politics, about socialism, about sexual politics, about men getting around to confronting all of them, as men.

It is quite frightening to start confronting yourself, rather than just reacting to the confrontation posed for men by the attempt of women to liberate themselves. It is also quite confusing; and *AH* is full of the confusions, about being sexist, about trying not to be quite so sexist, about living in a sexist society.

Lots of guilt about being masculine, even about being male; an almost exaggerated gentleness in an attempt to get away from masculine aggressiveness, competitiveness and unemotionality. But also some quite clear and hard political thinking going on.

Most of the pieces in the mag are accessible and personally challenging. The long introduction by the collective that produced *AH* gives their view of 'men's politics'. There are pieces about NSU, sexuality, and a major article on masculinity and fascism, that I feel has been overrated—but the subject is vital.

I am uneasy about the feeling that comes out of *AH* that there is a 'men's movement'—which I feel is both untrue, and anyway unnecessary—carrying along a lot of the assumption of the Womens Movement.

What we don't want is a parody by men of women's struggles. But

neither do we want women to carry the responsibility for changing us. The assumption of sympathy with the idea of men's politics, without being clear that there is a real difference between men's politics and women's politics, is both wrong, and probably off-putting to men who do not share that assumption.

Men get together with men for different reasons than women get together with other women, different things to gain—though in the long, long term the same—and must therefore do it differently. But *AH* is nevertheless a good start—a tangible attempt by men to involve themselves more widely in directly challenging sex roles and sexism in our sexist society.

The magazine is quite tattily produced, which can be discouraging, but the content is really challenging. I don't however want to pick on any one bit to praise or criticise. I think that its very existence is much more important.

Every socialist man must deal with his own sexism, in the widest sense of all the attitudes and ways of behaving we have in a fundamentally stereotyped sexist society. And like all political tasks, that is best accomplished by discussing and doing with others involved in the same struggle.

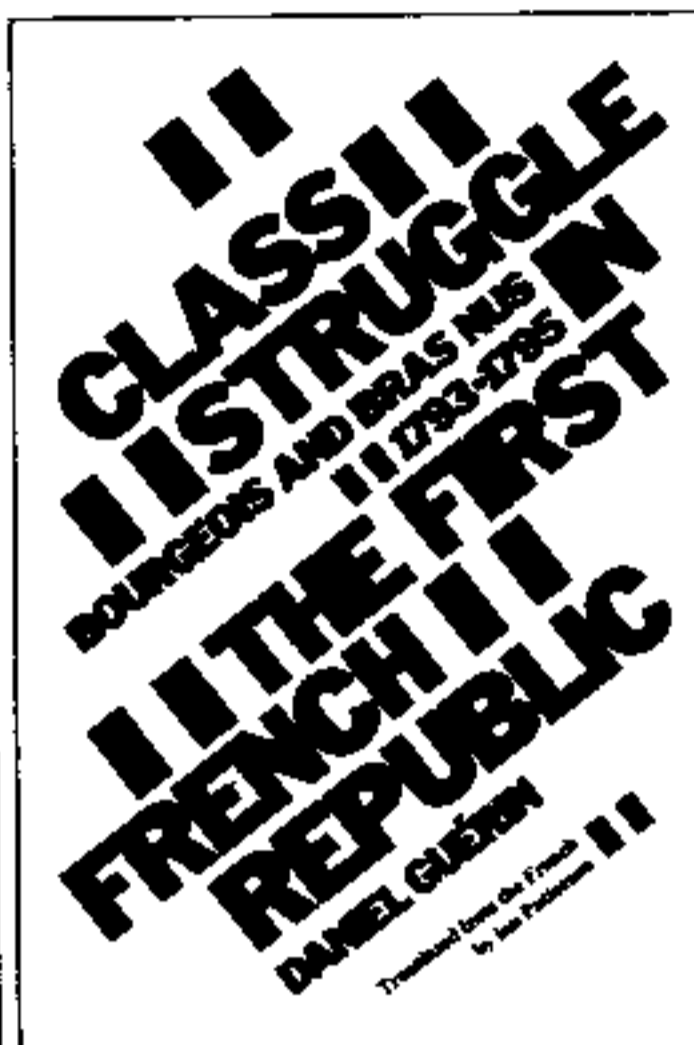
Maurice Herson

Footnote: a men's centre is being set up at Bread and Roses, Upper Street, London N1.

Books

Jacques of all trades

Class Struggle in the First French Republic, Bourgeois and Bras Nus 1793-1795
Daniel Guerin, trans. Ian Patterson
Pluto Press £3.60



At last, Pluto Press has given us an English translation of Daniel Guerin's important work on the Parisian working people during the French Revolution.

In a new introduction, the author explains how the revolution of 1789 had by 1793 become a struggle for international power between the French bourgeoisie and their English counterparts. But the main theme of the book is how the Jacobins, led by Robespierre, took over the revolution when a section of the bourgeoisie wanted to backtrack on the gains of 1789, and reunited the bourgeoisie by smashing the popular movement among the people of Paris.

The Parisian workers and artisans — here called *bras nus* (bare-arms) to distinguish them from the shopkeepers and small businessmen — had been at the forefront of revolutionary action since 1789. Now the Jacobins far from repressing the working people as they claimed, took up their demands for economic controls and terror against the enemies of the revolution, and turned them on the popular revolution itself.

Price control, demanded by workers and artisans as a basic protection of their standard of living, was soon overshadowed by wage control; while the Terror was centralised, taken out of democratic control, and

turned on popular leaders such as Hebert and the Enrages.

Dechristianisation, which the Jacobins at first encouraged as a diversion from the basic economic and democratic demands of the 'bare-arms', was soon abandoned by the government and used as an excuse for getting rid of 'extremists'.

The women's movement, too, was outlawed in the autumn of 1793, and Guerin quotes some anti-feminist diatribes by leading Jacobins. The very institutions of popular democracy, the sections of Paris, were curbed by the Jacobins; Guerin discusses how basic to the outlook of the working people this direct democracy was.

The *bras nus* were not the same as the working class, for they included many artisans who had not yet been absorbed into capitalist industry, but Guerin shows how important the wage-earners became to the resistance against Jacobin repression in the strike wave of Spring 1794. It comes as no surprise that the working people did not defend Robespierre when he fell in the reaction of Thermidor 1794, though they rose again to defend themselves against his successors in Spring 1795.

Finally, Guerin discusses the rising of Babeuf and the Equals, the last popular action of the revolution and the first to declare that 'the French Revolution is only the forerunner of another greater, more serious and impressive revolution, which will be the last' — the overthrow of capitalism itself by the working class.

Unfortunately, this translation is of only the short version of Guerin's work published in 1973 as *Bourgeois et Bras Nus 1793-1795*. The original version of 1946 (*La Lutte de Classes sous la Première République*) contained crucial passages on the theory of Permanent Revolution from Marx to Trotsky, without which Marxists may find Guerin's position on the class nature of the 'bare-arms' hard to understand.

The second edition of *La Lutte de Classes* (1968) restated

this position in relation to the criticisms that had been levelled at it since 1946 both by the ideologists of the French Communist Party and by bourgeois academic historians.

It is a great pity that neither of these is made available here to English-speaking readers; nor is there any indication that these longer versions exist.
Nora Carlin

Conspiracy theories?

The Nuclear Axis
Zdenek Cervenka & Barbara Rogers
Julian Friedmann Publishers
£7.95

In Search of Enemies
John Stockwell
Norton, New York \$12.95

We all know that the news of the outside world, received via newspapers and television is only a pale reflection of reality. Two books have been published recently that demonstrate just how distorted that image can sometimes be.

The Nuclear Axis is thoroughly researched, and based to a large extent on files stolen from the South African Embassy in Bonn a few years ago. The book argues that South Africa has the ability to manufacture nuclear weapons, and, it seems to imply, might actually have tested them in underground explosions.

The fact that South Africa had a nuclear capability was tacitly admitted by the United States and Russia when their satellites discovered a nuclear testing site in the Kalahari desert in August 1977. But not admitted was the fact that this bomb was the direct result of collaboration by West Germany, the United Kingdom, France and the United States.

Starting in the 1950s, both authors reconstruct the growth of the South African nuclear industry hand in hand with the civil and military nuclear development of the Nato countries. Cervenka argues that there was in West Germany a legacy of nuclear expertise developed during the Nazi period of I G Farben, the giant company that was an ally of Hitler.

After the war, this work continued, carried out by the same scientists now working for companies like Krupp, Siemens, Degussa A G Brown Boveri etc.

Yet the problem for the Adenauer government in the 1950s was that the price for rearmament as part of NATO was a complete ban on nuclear weapons research on West German soil. So any research

that the German scientists conducted, for the enrichment of uranium for peaceful purposes, is inspected by the International Atomic Energy Inspectorate, or is jointly owned with the UK and Holland.

The need to close the energy cycle, and create an unsafeguarded enrichment plant to produce weapons grade uranium is the reason why West Germany supplied to jet nozzle technology to South Africa, creating the only unsafeguarded enrichment plant outside the nuclear powers.

The way in which this was done, and the extent to which the conspiracy involved the active collaboration of West German scientists, officials NATO Generals and company directors, makes fascinating reading.

Yet there is one fault to the book. Most of the documentary evidence is from the Bonn files. There is a natural tendency to unbalance the book with a concentration on the role of Germany and the military dreams of nuclear weapons.

Yet other countries, like the United States and Great Britain have been even more important to the growth of the South African nuclear industry.

If the files stolen from the Paris Embassy in 1975 for example could have been made available by the African National Congress, they might as Barbara Rogers suggests, have revealed why the contract for the Koeberg reactor was given to a French consortium, and not a German one.

Yet the real question is what will South Africa do with the bomb? Here the book makes some intelligent guesses which are being born out.

The United States has consistently refused to break off its agreements with South Africa about the supply of nuclear materials. The reason has been that to do so would force (sic) South Africa to go it alone, and there would be no pressure on her to sign the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty.

Well that particular chicken is coming home to roost, as the South Africans are forcing





major concessions out of the US in the nuclear field as a quid pro quo for signing the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty.

Presumably they will promise not to develop a weapon which it has been admitted they already have.

Yet to a large extent South Africa is now, through her contracts with Iran, Brazil and Israel, threatening to make an absolute mockery of international attempts to control the spread of nuclear weapons.

Equally revealing and frightening is *In Search of Enemies* by John Stockwell, all about the CIA operations in Angola in 1975. I review it not because it's been published in England, but because it should be.

John, you see, was the person who ran the CIA task force designed, not to defeat the MPLA, at least not at the start, but to make their victory more expensive. He had fought in Vietnam, and got more and more worried that Angola was going to end up just like that.

The story of what happened is really a rattling good yarn, but the bitterness and contempt that Stockwell develops for the CIA old guard, cuts through the story like a razor.

Along the way is revealed standard stuff that Kissinger was lying in his teeth when he denied to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that arms were being supplied to Angola, that the head of UNITA was supplied with an exclusive jet by Lonrho, that the CIA had absolutely no recent knowledge of either the MPLA or Unita.

What is also revealed is the corruption and internal decay of the CIA, and the ideological bankruptcy of Kissinger and the remnants of the last Republican administration.

Stockwell left the CIA because he wanted to reform it and criticism was impossible from inside. His argument is that only a small percentage of time and money is spent on intelligence gathering, while CIA Chief of Station officers live in the lap of luxury, are as corrupt as Nero and as exposed as Nelson's Column.

Stockwell wants a return to a clean intelligence gathering organisation. Unfortunately, what he doesn't realise, is that if you are in charge of an empire as big as the western world, not only do you need to know what is going to happen, you have to be able to stop it. In that context, the boot boy section of the CIA is absolutely essential.
Mike Rossiter

Compromising stuff

Books

Eurocommunism and Socialism

Fernando Claudin
NLB £5.50

We are supposed to be impressed by Fernando Claudin. For 30 years he was a leader of the Spanish Communist Party. Then in the mid-1960s he was expelled for criticising the old Stalinist orthodoxies before criticism itself became the orthodoxy.

Since then his writings have been eagerly embraced as one of the 'latest things' in Marxism by those who want something more impressive than the Communist Parties have to offer, but who do not want to be so 'doctrinaire' as to go back to Lenin and Trotsky.

In short, his is one of the fashionable names that rub against each other in the pages of *New Left Review* or the lists of trendy left wing publishers.

Like so many others, he employs apparently irreproachable Marxist terminology. Like so many others, he impresses with his erudite turn of phrase and his occasional incomprehensible term.

Unfortunately, also like so many others, if you cut through the terminology you find simplistic arguments that can be answered by anyone who has been to a couple of SWP educational meetings.

Claudin's theme is Eurocommunism—the 'new' interpretation of 'Marxist' tactics that enables the Italian Communist Party to support the country's Christian Democrat (ie Tory) government, and the Spanish Communist Party leadership to hobnob with a king appointed by Franco.

The criticism of Russia which has impressed most commentators is a by-product of these tactics: you can't make friends with the cold warriors who still run Italy or Spain unless you are prepared to declare yourself an enemy of their enemy.

So the abandonment of anything that Marx or Lenin or Rosa Luxemburg ever said against class collaboration at home, is accompanied by the blinding revelation that the Soviet Union is not really a workers' paradise.

Claudin is critical of certain Eurocommunist formulations: he has no difficulty in showing,

for example, that it is madness in advance to claim that gradual encroachments on capitalist power will never be met with a vicious counter-blow from those who control the armed forces of the state.

However, the main burden of his book is to accept, critically, the tenets of Eurocommunism.

In the past, he claims, the workers' movement has been divided between those who accepted democracy, but saw it necessarily as bourgeois democracy and therefore tried to keep the workers movement within bourgeois limits, and those who stood for revolution and rejected democracy.

The Eurocommunists have rediscovered that it is possible to transcend this false opposition and to exploit the democratic content of bourgeois democracy to go beyond bourgeois society.

'The strategy of the Eurocommunist Parties is to win progressively more posts in the present state structures by a combination of electoral activity and mass struggle—in practice putting the emphasis on the former.....'

'Once a left coalition has been brought to power by means of the ballot box on a programme of "a transition to socialism" it will carry that programme through by democratising the institutions and machinery of the state.....*This strategy seems to me well founded*'

There is no need for a struggle between the organs of a revolutionary working class and the old institutions. Instead, what is necessary is 'a system of multiple, shifting alliances and convergences—not just alliances between political parties, but also trade

Marxism and the Party

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union and other mass movements and organisations; various forms of rank and file democracy and forms of representative democracy in parliament and municipalities....

'Of course, the relative weight of the various components—the political parties, the trade unions, the organs of representative and grass root democracy—will vary according to the real circumstances of the class struggle. Representative democracy cannot substitute for grass-roots democracy or vice-versa.'

Nor is there a need for a new revolutionary party. 'The party of the working class is a myth....the synthesising function, the development of a general orientation....can only be adequately exercised by a political alliance of a very diverse kind'.

Two points need to be made about these arguments. First, they are false.

Of course, in a relatively stable political situation 'theorists' can talk about 'combinations of institutions', about 'advancing democracy', about 'political alliances', and so on. But when it comes to a time of huge social conflicts, real choices have to be made.

Do you abandon a general strike in return for the vague possibility of a 'left' government? Do you stop the struggle to keep ahead of the cost of living so as to give the 'left' government a chance?

Do you become obsessed with 'freedom of the press' or do you try to develop a struggle against the lies of the capitalist press? Do you make abstract statements about 'democratising the state' or do you build up secret revolutionary groups within the armed forces committed to destroying the power of the officer class?

Do you play with 'alliances' with parties who want to save capitalism through reforming it, or do you try to build a revolutionary party that is out to 'smash' (in Gramsci's words) the hold of these other parties over the workers?

On all of these crucial points Claudin wants to have it both ways—although at the end of the day he comes down in favour of the first set of options: 'The formulas broached by some groups of the far left like "dual power" or the "outflanking" of the traditional "reformist" organisations one these have come to power, far from offering a panacea, could

scarcely lead to anything but defeat.'

Does Claudin matter? As an individual probably not. But his ideas are not just *his* ideas.

A whole wave 'Marxist' thinkers go along with him in his belief that the Eurocommunists and the Social Democrats can be pressurised into 'using democracy' to smash capitalism—in Italy Luco Regis Margri and Rossana Rosanda, in France Debray and Nicos Nicos Poulantzas.

This obsession with democracy in the abstract has even found a reflection within the revolutionary left, with people like Ernest Mandel suggesting that a revolution does not involve the working class censoring or suppressing the bourgeois press and that parliament 'might' continue to play a 'subordinate' role within a workers' state.

The final point that needs to be made about Claudin is that his ideas, like so much 'New Marxism' are not new at all, but very old. During the years immediately after the first world war a whole range of Social Democrat thinkers tried to channel behind themselves the new revolutionary enthusiasm of many workers.

They could only do so by raising slogans like 'parliament and workers councils', the 'anchoring of workers councils in the constitution', the 'unitisation of parliament by the mass movement'.

These slogans enabled them to continue to play social democratic games, even when these games served only to preserve capitalism—as when the far left social democrat Barth joined the Ebert-Scheidemann government in November and December 1918, or when the 'Marxist' theorist Hilferding joined the Stresemann government in August 1923.

The political crisis in Spain or Italy today is not nearly so severe as it was on those occasions in Germany. But what can be said with certainty, is that life would have been much more difficult for Franco's successors in Spain and for the Christian Democrats in Italy but for the cooperation of the Eurocommunists. The prolix platitudes of Claudin and his co-thinkers only serve to disguise the simple and elementary fact: the role of Eurocommunism today is identical to that of the mass social democrat parties sixty years ago.

Chris Harman

Films

... and all the stars on stage



The *Last Waltz* is probably the liveliest wake you'll ever go to. The bulk of the two hour film is a record of the Band's farewell concert at San Francisco's Winterland ballroom, featuring cameo performances from various rock'n'roll greats.

Where else could you pay for one ticket and see Muddy Waters, Ronnie Hawkins, Dr John, Van Morrison, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and Bob Dylan among others. Oh and not forgetting the Band themselves, although it's quite easy to see as another guest saunters on stage.

As a rock film, *The Last Waltz*, has what many of its predecessors lack — restraint. Director Martin Scorsese (who edited *Woodstock* as part of his apprenticeship) films the whole proceedings straight—not a split screen fantasy in sight. The camera concentrates on shots of the whole stage, interspersed with close-ups of various performers.

Connecting these are a series of chats with the Band themselves conducted by a sometimes embarrassingly adulatory Scorsese. Usually chosen to introduce the next big name, they range from the explanatory to the amusing (although in Joni Mitchell's case, the downright insulting), but always subservient to the 'important' business — the music.

On this count, *The Last Waltz* stands with the best of its

kind, but at the same time, it highlights some of rock-on-celluloid's underlying weaknesses. The obsession with letting the music speak for itself seems to preclude anything more than an uncritical anecdotal dash through the Band's career and the legends that have grown up around it.

Maybe the best rock films are those that use the music and the lifestyle as a backdrop and a highlight, like *American Graffiti*, *Performance* or Scorsese's earlier *Mean Streets*.

But despite these underlying doubts, *The Last Waltz* remains a highly enjoyable film. If you've got no interest in music over two weeks old, it won't do anything to change your mind; but if you have, well, it's better than sitting at the back of Earls Court with a pair of binoculars.

Elaine Fraser



This tasteless badge has now been reprinted in *vile* blue with disgusting orange and white lettering. You can get it for 20p (+7p p&p), 10 for £1.70 post paid, from M.A.A.M., that is Movement Against A Monarchy, Box M, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1.

The wonderful world of the weekend

**Saturday Night Fever/
Thank God It's
Friday**

Disco, the fastest-growing recreation of them all, is brought to the silver screen in an effort to bring people back to the movies; both films have been successful, but there have been no reports of dancing in the aisles. This is not 1956 revisited. Neither film manages to portray the excitement of disco or succeed in involving the audience.

Of the two films, *Saturday Night Fever* is undoubtedly the worse and disco is only an

disco is full of better exponents of the art. *Saturday Night Fever* is above all slow; you feel the seat.

Thank God It's Friday is corny, unpretentious and makes no attempt to explain its subject; it is obvious yet it is funny. Again, centred around a dance contest, the story is of little interest. The film's asset is its humour: anti-racist, anti-sexist jokes which quite accurately describe the atmosphere in the better clubs. It spends more time on the dance floor than *Saturday Night Fever* and what goes on there is of slightly more interest



Travolta and Gorney

excuse to spin a confused moral tale. John Travolta's escape from his 9-5 life is to win a dance competition. While people do go to discos to escape it is not thought to be one of the great bridges to the greener side. When all is said and the contest is won, Travolta rejects the prize—he thinks a Puerto-Rican couple danced better. Improbable in a film which has shown for eighty minutes the survival of the 'fittest of the fittest'.

The film spends little time on the dance floor and what dancing there is, is terrible. John Travolta and Karen Lynn must be among the least talented movers on two legs. Technique above soul, arse above application. Any London

but it's still not up to the standard of Ronnie Scotts on a Thursday for example.

Musically both films are failures. *Saturday Night Fever* depends largely on the ever-so-pleasant and ever-so-bland Bee-Gees who play pop disco with vocals owing a lot to 50's Do-wop. *Thank God It's Friday* is financed by Tamla Motown and Casablanca, who supply the Commodores and Donna Summers respectively. There is little variety as the artists all come from two record labels.

Disco is one of the greatest soothers around, it is also a good way to keep fit. Contrary to general opinion it has been the root of a lot of great music and still is.

There are two much maligned

middle-aged, middle-class, liberal blacks from Philadelphia, called Kny Gamble and Leon Huff who wrote and produced a song for the O'Jays in 1975 called *Living on the Weekend*. It not only tells you everything you will ever

need to know about escape from the eight hour day, but it is also a great and powerful piece of music.

Neither of these films is worth as much as a night out at a good club, neither film embodies the spirit. *Adam Kidron*

The joys of war

As if timed to prove that Hollywood hasn't taken a dramatic lurch to the left recently, with newly found liberal attitudes towards women, Vietnam, and even, in forthcoming films like *FIST* and *Blue Collar*, trade unionists, *MacArthur* hits the screen.

This is the screen biography of General Douglas MacArthur, the US officer who became known originally, when he led armed troops against Bonus Expeditionary Force—the World War One veterans who marched on Washington to demand adequate pensions in the 1920s. Strangely, this episode is omitted from the film.

Instead, it shows MacArthur winning the war in the Pacific after being reluctantly evacuated from Japanese occupied Phillipines. He is keen to launch an immediate invasion of those islands, because he promised the inhabitants—'I will return' and Douglas MacArthur is a man of his word. When he does return there are one or two divisions of Marines plus half the US Navy, with him, but he has kept his word.

After he has accepted the surrender of Japan and rebuilt their society along new lines, he gives thanks to God 'for one last

present to an old warrior' - the Korean war. MacArthur is for an all-out war and wants to invade Red China, but President Truman (who is portrayed as a cross between George Burns and Bob Hope) forbids this and this is when the Moral begins to creep in.

The director is explicitly supporting MacArthur and condones this aggressive stance by implying that only Truman's weak will prevented the defeat of China back in the 1950s. If MacArthur had been given a free-hand in 1953, and A-Bombed the Chinese, there would have been no Vietnam war 15 years later. Instead, the politicians merely tried to appease the Commies.

So, according to this film only the military can be trusted to deal with America's enemies and detente is a dangerous strategy. It also suggests that generals have a duty to the 'country' which overrides their loyalty to the Government, and they are sometimes right to disobey the President. Now I had expected to see a right-wing film, but I was surprised to see such a collection of near Fascist ideas expressed in such a cliched way. Perhaps the film should be edited and re-dubbed for the South American market, re-titled *Pinochet-The Rebel General*. *Paul Cunningham*.

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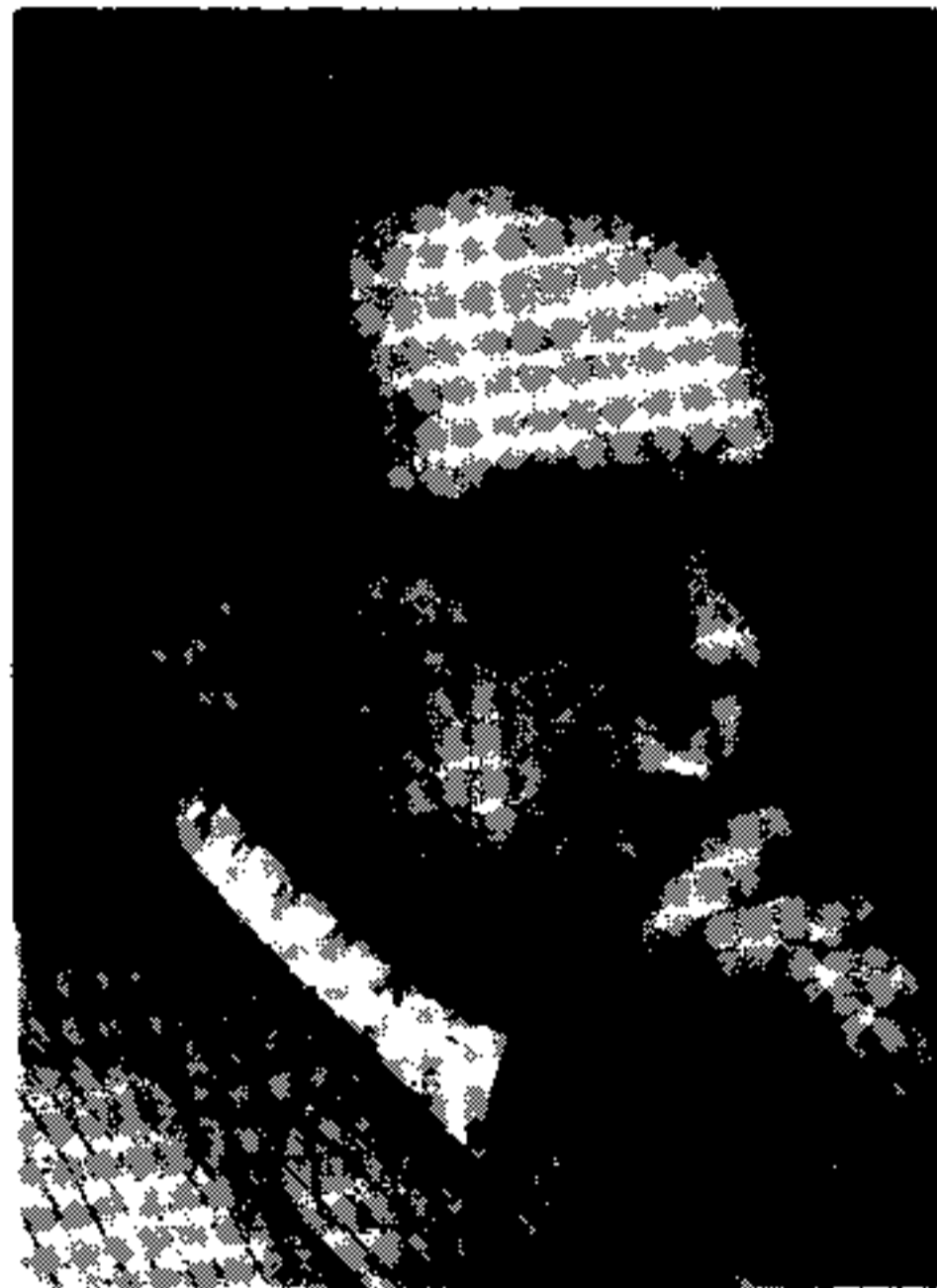
THE past nine months have seen a number of major setbacks for the left-wing in the British labour movement—the defeat of the firemen's strike and the victory of the right wing in the AUEW elections being the two most notable. The Labour government seems set on presenting itself in the coming general election as a safe, conservative administration.

Clearly this situation requires a thoroughgoing debate within the British left. In our first issue, Tony Cliff raised a number of major points for discussion. We continue this debate with the following interview with John Tocher, who talked to Dave Field and Alex Callinicos about the state of the left in the AUEW.

John Tocher, AUEW Divisional Organiser for the Manchester area, was the only left-wing official to increase his vote in the last union elections. Formerly a leading member of the Communist Party, he is now a member of the Labour Party and an active supporter of the Anti-Nazi League. He is the Broad Left candidate in the forthcoming election to the AUEW Executive Council place for Division 4.

INTERVIEW

The desire for change



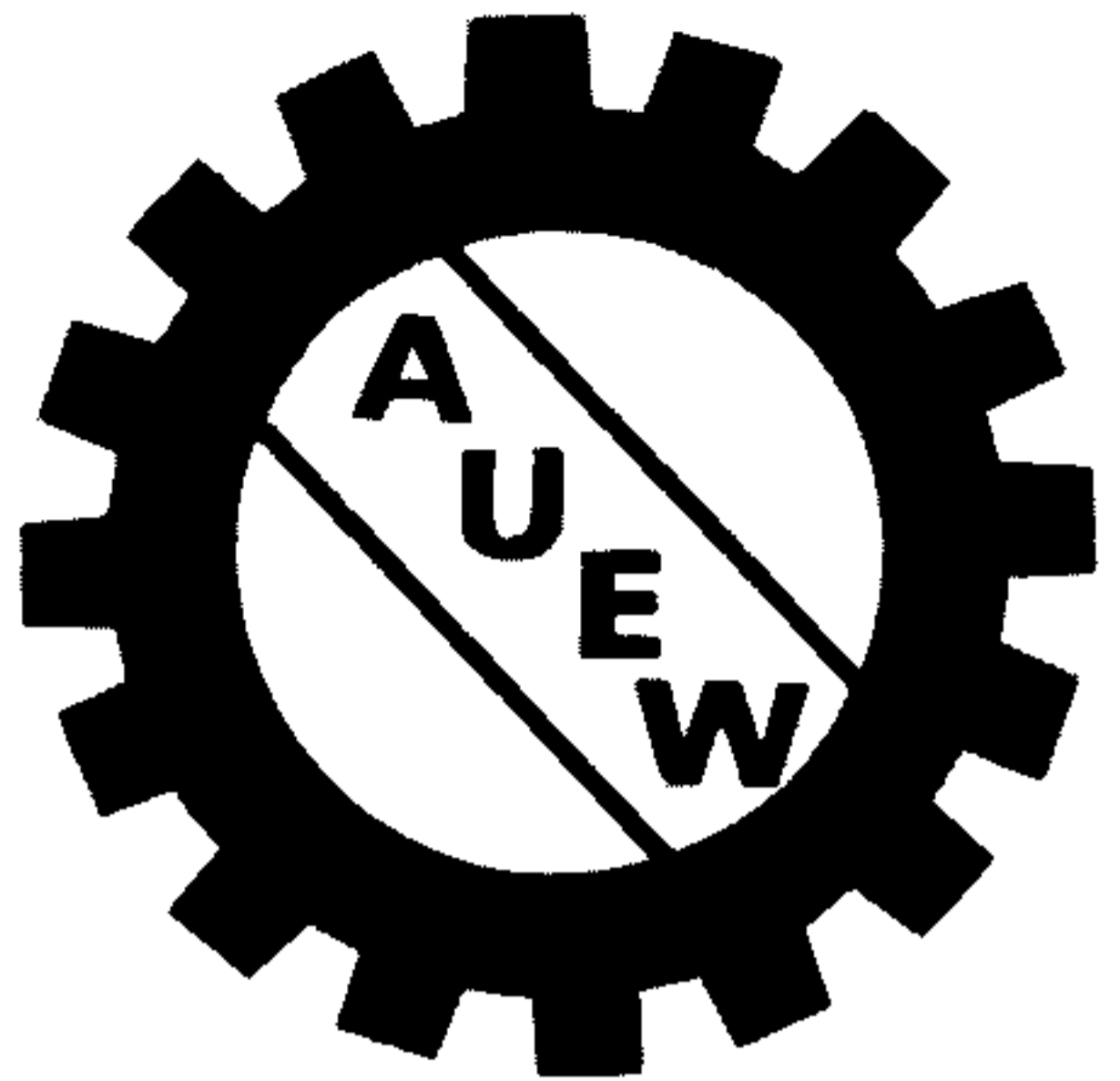
John Tocher

What was the background to Hugh Scanlon's winning the AUEW presidency in 1968?

Immediately after the war there was a very similar problem to the one we have in the AUEW today. The Amalgamated Engineering Union, as it was, had what is now termed a very moderate leadership—I'm talking of Jack Tanner and subsequently the late Lord Carron. On the Executive Council and the National Committee the left was in a very bad position.

This led in the early 1950s to a generalised dissatisfaction with the leadership. This disenchantment affected all manner of people—I don't mean just the Communist Party or the Labour Lefts. Here in Manchester I think we led the way in developing what is now termed a broad left. In other words, at that time we were seeking to set up a forum in which all people from centre to left or extreme left could come together and voice their opinions.

There were very good meetings in the early stages of the broad left in Manchester. It was a real forum for bouncing around different ideas—not just on elections, but on general politics, what should be done and so forth.



There were some very capable people involved—for instance, Hugh Scanlon, Norman Atkinson, Stanley Orme, Eddie Frow, Bob Wright, Stan Cole, even Mather, people like myself.

People came together and there was a general consensus that there had to be a change. We were all agreed that we should organise not just on the factory level, but also on the electoral scene.

Immediately after the war and some years afterwards there was a hell of a battle between the employers and ourselves, and when I say ourselves I'm talking about the shop stewards. This battle was fought not only in the branches and the district committees but on the factory floor, between the employers and the shop stewards' movement.

The shop stewards' movement was recognised during the first world war, but between the wars, with the Depression and in the aftermath of the General Strike, it became completely demoralised. In the engineering industry after the three wage-cuts in 1922 only 1/6d was negotiated on the national wage rate between 1922 and 1937—that gives you some idea of how little bargaining power the engineers had.

But after the second world war, the younger people who'd been in the forces had all sorts of ideas and this manifested itself in a sharp struggle with the employers on the shop floor. The aim was to obtain full recognition of the shop stewards, which had never really existed before.

We had all sorts of problems during the Carron era, when the national leadership of the engineering union tried to stop the development of the shop stewards' movement by taking away stewards' credentials, disciplining people, suspending people from office, all this sort of thing. We used to get letters: 'Why were you in this district?', 'What were you doing attending a meeting in Birmingham?' 'Was your District Committee informed?' It was a witch-hunt. Nonetheless we came out of that quite well, I think.

It was the left movement in the main that led the battle. London has always been

pretty solid, far more than here, although more oriented to the Communist Party — here it's been a broader sort of thing. All the efforts that were made during that period were manifested in Hugh Scanlon's election. He personified the aspirations of many people — the aspirations for democracy in the union, for adherence to National Committee decisions, fundamental, elementary things like that.

Scanlon won the presidential election ten years ago, in 1968. He's now retiring, and his replacement is Terry Duffy, who is, if anything, more right-wing than Carron. The right are fully installed in control of the AUEW leadership. What went wrong? How was it that Scanlon was not successful in fulfilling the hopes — for union democracy, a more militant lead, etc — that he embodied?

Well, there's two aspects. First and foremost, in the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a return to the implementation of National Committee decisions. The other thing that one cannot take away from the AUEW under Hugh Scanlon's leadership was the way in which our union's policy was carried out in opposition to the Tory Industrial Relations Act. I take the view that the AUEW was responsible for the fact that the Act never came into effect, even when it had been passed into law.

But the major problem that arose in the union was the decision of the Rules Revision Committee to replace the branch ballot in the union elections with the postal ballot.

This decision was part of a well-thought out strategy. People who represented right-wing thinking in the union were getting worried. We had reached a stage where one third of the 180 full-time officials were to the left of centre, and where we were within two or three votes of a majority (in terms of general philosophy) on the National Committee. On the Executive Council the left could sometimes carry the majority. So the right-wing thought things out and they came to the conclusion that to stop us they had to introduce the postal ballot.

From the moment that it was introduced, people no longer had to go to their branch to vote: they were no longer in the environment of debate. When you have a problem in the factory and you have a mass meeting, do you give all the workers ballot papers and send them off to vote on their own? Of course you don't. Decisions are taken through debate, collectively.

The aim of the postal ballot was to make the individual union members susceptible to the pressure of the press and the media when it came to voting in elections. Quite frankly, since then, we haven't been able to adjust the broad left machine, if you want to call it that, to get to grips with the power of the media. That's one side of the problem.

The other side is that there was a period when people thought, 'Well, we've elected people like Hugh Scanlon, Bob Wright, Les Dixon to the Executive, now we can go to sleep, we needn't bother any longer, they'll look after it all'. For instance, when you look at the number of resolutions we'd get ten years ago from shop stewards' committees and so forth on a specific issue to do with their wages, their conditions, their hours,

etc — we don't get anything like that number now.

Fitting into the last point — that rank-and-file pressure is less than it was in the past, you talked earlier about how shop-floor organisation was built up during and after the war and how Scanlon etc came out of that. It's been argued that recently, particularly since the Labour government came in in 1974, shopfloor organisation has been in decline — certainly in particular industries like the car industry and the engineering industry generally. What do you think of that argument? Has shop-floor organisation become weaker over the last five years?

Its potential has not become weaker, that without a doubt. But, what is true is that, if a company wants to declare redundancies, by the time you've got there and you're arguing 'We're not going to have it', you find that they've got more volunteers for redundancy than they need.

Sometimes it's a problem the other way round. I can understand workers approaching the latter part of their working life, being offered £3,000 — the greatest amount of capital which that man or woman has ever had the opportunity of getting hold of, knowing that they're nearing retirement, that their pension doesn't amount to much, and taking the redundancy money. But when younger people are prepared to take their chances . . .

The other aspect is that, if you take the middle ground of activists, who in the main, especially a lot of convenors, are lifelong members of the Labour Party, many of them local councillors, etc — people like that have a hell of a problem with a Labour government in power. Despite all the disenchantment and cynicism that exists, I don't believe that a Tory government would have got away with half this government's got away with.

Compare the battles against the Tories in the early 1970s. That was the first time in the history of this union that we took industrial action for political reasons — one-day stoppages, protests, the refusal to carry out the Industrial Relations Act. The middle of the ground activists are the people who take movements along. If you can persuade them that it's right to fight, they will fight as well as you or I. They saw the Industrial Relations Act as a great threat to them and they were prepared really to push, shove, go. It's when the activists in the middle ground get moving that you can really go places.

Following from that, you described how this circle of militant socialist activists emerged in the AUEW after the war and provided Hugh Scanlon with his launching pad. What's happened to the broad left in Manchester? Does that still operate to anywhere the same extent as it used to?

Well, it always goes up and down. At the present moment there's a lot of people who were very demoralised by the election results. A lot of fine people had worked for years to see their efforts end up in right wing dominance, the sort of thing which they thought they had eradicated from the union.

Also, when the left starts winning it becomes arrogant with people. I've noticed this with district committees and individuals and the like — instead of maintaining a grassroots sort of position they start telling people what to do. But you can't rule by committee: you can't inject militancy into an establishment. Obviously leadership is very important, but you mustn't forget the people whose views you're reflecting — what they'll go along with and what they won't.

I'd put it like this. Large sections of the British working class are among the most class conscious workers in the world, albeit this class consciousness is instinctive. At the same time they have what to other European countries is a very moderate level of political understanding. That's the ground we've got to fight on. We need to develop a level of understanding such that, when Woodrow Wyatt attacks the left in the *Daily Mirror*, there's a terrific anti-reaction to him.

An important way to develop that political understanding is through a community of militants that co-ordinates, spreads ideas, builds up solidarity. Now the picture that you've painted of the past was of a very effective group of this sort in places like Manchester. Looking over the past five years, how would you say it's performed? Has it changed considerably?

Of course, in the period I'm talking about, of course, people have come and gone. People have adopted other philosophies, they've died, they're retired. Younger people have emerged with a different expectation of life. A person would have to be 50 or 60 years old to have experienced pre-war unemployment. Younger people have come through a different environment altogether. They've seen changes, their expectation of life is greater, they've been given to believe that apart from certain pockets of the country there's full employment, that there'll always be a job for them.

So it's very difficult to compare what things were like after the war to the situation now. I believe there's a hell of a lot of ignorance of what socialism is all about. The pre-war ills of capitalism are rather vague now.

But last year I addressed a number of mass meetings and I had a feeling in my bones — there's a good reaction coming through. I remember the meeting at Massey Ferguson's — they sent 200 or more to lobby the TUC at Blackpool last year. There's as strong a desire for change as there ever was.

But it's not quite as we saw it twenty odd years ago. What we were fighting about then — like the proper recognition of shop stewards, they have won in their own right. Workers have shown again and again that they're not going to have their stewards bullied or sacked or victimised.

So one can become depressed in one way when one's dealing with adversity all the time — closure, redundancy, wage restraint and that sort of thing. But on the other side, on the positive side, I think that among young people in industry there's this desire for change. It's a question of going back and trying to manifest that in a collective way — if they want to do it that way, because there's so many young people who don't believe it

can be done that way. They're very cynical in some respects.

Looking back over the past period if you wanted to identify the one moment that it began to go wrong for the left as a whole in the AUEW was in 1972. The Tory government had just been given a bloody nose by the miners, the struggle against the Industrial Relations Act, which was to culminate in the gaoling of the five dockers later in the year, was beginning to develop, and the AUEW put forward a claim to the employers for higher wages, a shorter working week, and so on — and left it to individual districts to take action in support of the claim. In the end, Manchester came out solid, but was left to fight it out alone by the national leadership. What effect has that had? Is that experience still in people's minds?

First of all, the decisions of the Executive Council to leave action to local initiatives was a negation of leadership. You either decide on national action for a national claim or don't take action at all. Then they put forward 13 points in the claim. Quite frankly, we here did not see — and I still believe we were correct — that you could go and rally people around 13 points.

So we sorted out three points here in Manchester — wages was number one — we wanted a substantial movement in wages with special consideration for women leading up to equal pay. Secondly, we were seeking additional holidays. Thirdly, we were seeking a shorter working week.

Now we held six, maybe seven mass meetings of shop stewards. The first was at Houldsworth Hall — very well attended. There was some criticism of the way it went, but in the main they accepted our recommendations.

We gave the employers a certain period of grace — if they hadn't met us on the three points by a certain day then we would declare day-work. The reaction of some of the employers was to lock their workers out. Our reaction was: 'No you won't, we'll sit in'. We even drew up a code of conduct for sitting in — we had about 36,000 people involved.

There were quite a number of people who made considerable gains — I'm not talking about the people who went the 16 weeks to the bitter end, I'm talking about those who settled in the first week, who got a 38-hour week and a substantial increase. They think the sit-ins were OK.

But then you had the large companies affiliated to the Engineering Employers' Federation like Hawker Siddeley's and GEC who held out come what may. Manchester was the only district to come out in support of the claim — Sheffield went up the hill once or twice but never got there, so the employers were able to pour money into Manchester, using the indemnity fund they set up. Manchester engineering firms were getting all sorts of concessions on delivery dates and so forth.

In fact, I think Manchester saw the rebirth of the employers' campaign for 'the right to manage'. It was one thing for the workers at UCS to sit in to protect their jobs. But the lockout weapon has been so successful for the engineering employers — especially in 1922 when the nine-week lockout led to the



wage-cuts. Now they found it counter-balanced by the sit-in: the employers found themselves out on the streets kicked out of their own factories. That did alarm them — I know that to this day many of them still have contingency plans in the event of a sit-in happening again.

The biggest problem came when the Executive told us to come off the hours and to settle for more money and holidays. We could have settled for money and holidays weeks before on very generous terms if we'd forget the hours issue. But we wouldn't compromise on the demand for a shorter working week — until the Executive instructed us to.

I won't say that we lost, because it wasn't the workers that capitulated or anything like that, it was the national leadership who dropped out. We lost because for the first time in many years the dogs were let loose at a local level. If they'd been let loose in other parts of the country as well or if we'd co-ordinated things nationally, we would have got somewhere.

Yes, there was a lot of disillusionment after the sit-ins. I was up for re-election that year and I only won by 200 odd votes out of 17,000. People had sacrificed a lot, many of them got nothing while other people had gained the lot. I wouldn't relish the task of calling the Manchester engineering workers together to take a unilateral action again. I wouldn't rule it out ever, by the way. But I still attend meetings where I'm reminded: 'Don't you start off on that track again'. Time's a great healer, though.

Finally, the right have more or less swept the board in the last AUEW elections. The Broad Left's vote held up much better here than in most places, but the signs are that the right are pressing toward a merger with the Electricians in the hope of abolishing the election of full-time officials and turning the combined union into a real bulwark against militant policies in the British labour

movement. Faced with this grim picture, and with the prospect of another year of wage restraint, where do we go from here?

My own personal view is that we have to develop as much unity as possible amongst what is termed the broad left. From there, the left must go into the centre ground forums. Whoever wins the centre-ground will win the day. I think if you go over the various political issues of the day over the past few years, from the Common Market to incomes policy, the stance the left has taken has been proven correct, far more than it's been wrong.

Now the ideas of the left must be projected into the middle ground. It's the middle ground that we've got to move.

I believe that a reaction will develop against the right. There'll be an economic reaction, especially with the new five per cent pay limit — we can't live with wage restraint much longer, and the people who advocate it are in for a rough time.

I also think that there will be a revitalisation of shop floor organisation. The forums the left develop will be of importance in this process.

One swallow doesn't make a summer — the electorate can turn against the right as easily as they did against the left. The moment the right starts altering the union rules to weaken internal democracy, the rank and file will reassert itself. Much the same happened in the TGWU — in fact the T&G have been moving towards the sort of structure the AUEW has — at a time when the right in the AUEW want to move away from it!

Undemocratic changes will bring about a reaction — we've a lot more progressive forces in the union now than we had 20 years ago. So in the long term I'm optimistic.



Carlos Aguilar was convenor of the Siam di Tella engineering factory in Santiago, Chile.

He was a leader of the Vicuna Mackenna industrial 'cordon' and communal command.

He was in prison after the coup in September 1973 and came into exile with his family in July 1976.

He is now a TGWU member in a London engineering works.

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POPULAR UNITY

On 11 September 1973 the Army overthrew the government of Salvador Allende.

When Allende's Popular Unity government took power in Chile in 1970 it was the culmination of 50 or 60 years of growing consciousness of the working class. People saw it as undoubtedly a left-wing government compared to previous governments, and as a great victory for the workers. The government offered a programme, the perspective of changing a society, an alternative to bourgeois legality, a new way of constructing socialism. And it was the whole orientation of certain political organisations to work towards taking a quota of power by the parliamentary road. The election was the end of 30 or 40 years of daily struggle by these sectors.

The first year of the government saw an attempt to try to solve the nation's problems. I say the first year because after that the right mobilised, first through legal means, then through violence and manipulating some strikes of less aware groups of workers. October 1972 was the moment when the working class took to the streets—we saw that the government's attempts to implement its 40 basic measures were doomed. That was when the right also moved—institutionally, constitutionally and through violence.

I had been working since 1965 in a medium-sized plant of 500 workers in one of the most important industrial areas, where there were some 25,000 workers employed. We managed to achieve some coordination and organisation of the workers in the different industries.

THE CORDONS

It was then that we organised what later became the Vicuna MacKenna industrial cordon—a body which led first to the coordination of the majority of the local leadership and then of the rank and file itself. We organised so that we could work together on the tasks facing us like the nationalisation of industry and the attitude to take to the development of the bourgeois offensive. It was quite a rich experience, even though its development wasn't complete.

The traditional organisations—unions, federations, the CUT (TUC)—even the political organisations and parties—were

ORGANISING FOR POWER

overtaken by the demands of the rank and file of the working class. And it was then that we felt the need for a more agile organisation, flexible to the demands of the new political period we were living through in Chile.

In a way the cordons were replacing these union organisations but the perspective was to transform them into much broader organisations, called communal commands, which would include representatives of the community, peasants, students, all the sectors that were necessary. And these mass organisations would fight at first for the Popular Unity programmed but then for what is very dear to the heart of working people—the building of socialism.

The link between industry and the community was vital. You can't really draw a sharp distinction between the two in Chilean society. Frequently the industrial struggle was about immediate issues: wages rises and so on, nationalisation, building up workers' control. But the community was the next barricade we could fight on: and there would

be immediate issues there too: problems of food, housing...

These different problems were really one problem: how to raise the collective awareness of the working class. This is where the idea for transforming the industrial organisation into a much broader one came from: so we could develop a united programme of action and fight for it together.

These cordons and communal commands went much further than other organisations in raising the level of consciousness. They raised the question of power. But they lacked the political ability to create a single, united programme of action for the whole Chilean working class—a programme of real demands around which we could mobilise the forces at our disposal.

And the representation on the cordons themselves was inadequate because of the bureaucratic inheritance, because of the parliamentarist inheritance, because of the inheritance of the traditional ways of organising: there wasn't a break with the old



Political prisoners in Santiago Tres Hamos camp awaiting release at the end of 1976. They had been held under the State of Siege laws.

Pepperfoto

CHILE SE PONE PANTALONES LARGOS



'Chile puts on long trousers' — poster celebrating the nationalisation of the copper mines under Popular Unity.

style of operations of the political organisations. And this was just at the moment when we needed to confront the enemy.

The cordons could have been transformed, in the view of many of us who were active in them. They could have become the bases of working class power that were seen in the great revolution of October—the soviets. They could have become a real voice for the people, where the popular programme could be decided, the struggle could be developed, where the preparations could definitely be made to prepare conditions where we could go forward and finally take power. I mean the conquest of total power through mass insurrection, through the destruction of the old state and its replacement by a workers' state.

THE BREADTH

The experience of the period of Popular Unity for me meant the experience of the

class struggle and through it of the need for working class organisation itself. The situation produced by the coup was without doubt a massive defeat for the working people of Chile and without doubt also the defeat of the idea of a 'different way' to socialism—the peaceful, parliamentary way.

It was the overthrow by big capital of the gains made by the workers through years of struggle. But the main thing is to understand what happened in all its breadth, all its aspects. And I am sure that the workers have learnt many lessons and, despite all the tragedy they have witnessed, are seeing clearly.

We have to reorganise, to build anew. We need new forms of class struggle against the repression. And we have to develop politics which will deal with the problems of Latin America, because military dictatorship exists throughout Latin America. We have to build working-class organisation from the base up so as to be able to take advantage when the time comes of the moment of the dictatorship's greatest weakness, to be able to

present the alternative to the military—the proletarian alternative.

Now this a perspective of hard struggle. I can't talk about time scales—it depends on the accumulation of our strength and it depends on the development of contradictions within imperialism and within the bourgeoisie. We need a mass organisation of the people which will be able to talk not just of defence but of winning socialism. And with the experiences of Popular Unity, of the way the bourgeoisie reacted and of the coup itself no one will be able to claim as their perspective a return to the past.

BREAD & BUTTER

I would like to say just a little about Britain. Here the structures, the content, of politics are very different to Chile. But some things are necessary by definition. One of these is the absolute necessity that the working class builds itself an organisation that understands the problems of the society and formulates demands to deal with them.—and that requires building up the idea of what socialism would mean in Britain.

All this means that the most pressing problem is the problem of the party. It is only a working-class party which can draw together the different experiences of the whole class and transform them into a series of political demands. The trade union organisations in Britain have a wide experience and a history of great combativity—but in a struggle for bread and butter demands only. And what must take place is that through the working class this perspective is transformed into a much wider perspective—a political perspective.

