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BACK TO THE
KITCHEN SINK

Tories, the state and the family

100 MARX **Class struggle** EL SALVADOR **The US connection**

IRELAND **Socialists, nationalists and workers**



Water workers voting: Confidence comes from collective struggle

Ballots are a brake

Norman Tebbit is trying to present secret ballots before strikes and for union elections as a way to democratise the Trade Unions. Stuart Ash shows how they are really an attack on workers' organisation.

The response of the trade union bureaucracy to Tebbit's consultative paper *Democracy in Trade Unions* has been unsurprisingly pathetic. Tebbit has said that he wants to see secret ballots before strikes and secret ballots for trade union elections, especially for General Secretaries.

The issue of compulsory strike ballots is not new. Harold Wilson's Labour government proposed in its 1969 White Paper *In Place of Strife* that the Secretary of State should have a discretionary power to require a trade union to hold a strike ballot if there was 'a serious threat to the economy or public interest'. Heath's 1971 Industrial Relations Act contained a similar provision which was repealed in 1974. Prior canvassed the idea again in 1981.

What is common to all these initiatives is the belief by governments, both Labour and Tory, that strike ballots are good things not because they are in some way 'more democratic' but that they are likely to prevent strikes. They do not like decision-making by workers collectively in their workplace. They want to fragment and isolate people away from their fellow workers and in circum-

stances where they are most open to self-doubt and reactionary ideas.

Secret ballots are proposed because they also play on the conservative nature of the trade union leaderships who frequently want to control and contain any initiatives that emerge from the rank and file. A dispute that begins with anger and a fighting spirit can be dampened by the delay in calling and counting a ballot, effectively imposing a two to three week cooling-off period — giving time for employers to regain their position.

In the last three months we have seen a series of examples which reveal the considerable hypocrisy that exists among Tories and trade union leaders alike on the question of strike ballots. Tebbit intervened early on in the water strike to claim that the decision to strike had not been made constitutionally.

Not at the end

The General and Municipal union said the vote had been four to one to strike and anyway whose constitution was it? However at the end of the strike the union leaders who had defended the democratic vote to strike didn't want to know about letting their members vote on the deal that was signed. Pickets outside ACAS wanting a vote on the deal were left in the cold. At least they discovered whose constitution it was. Tebbit didn't want a vote on the ACAS settlement either.

Nowhere in Tebbit's document is the proposition that there should be ballots on final agreements signed by full time officials in the face of the members, which reveals a lot

about his phoney call for democratic procedures. The whole thrust of the Green Paper is to investigate ways of making strike decisions more difficult and if secret ballots can be part of this process, then he's in favour.

But Tebbit also knows that these things can be double edged, depending on circumstances. The Tories know that the pit head ballot system that is used in the NUM has produced strike votes in the past and can do so again. The ballot system was used rather cynically by the NUM executive recently and they got a result that let them off the hook set by the closure of the Lewis-Merthyr colliery. In the NUM the ballot is only part of the process and decision-making is open to who campaigns and who doesn't. The NUM executive called a cooling off period and left campaigning to the Welsh miners. The ballot reflected passivity and not action.

How far Tebbit will go in the direction of legislation for strike ballots is uncertain because he is unsure of what he might be creating. He makes the point himself that an order to impose a strike ballot was used only once under Heath's Industrial Relations Act and it backfired then. In 1972, British Rail workers voted overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action in an imposed ballot. The direction that Tebbit might go in would be to enable employers to run ballots, but he's aware that such powers might aggravate rather than cool a dispute.

Tebbit is also interested in secret ballots for trade union elections. In his words, he wants trade union leaderships to be more representative of the members. But any legislation in this direction is complicated by the vast array of internal procedures that exist in the unions, and Tebbit is unsure of the repercussions of using sanctions against unions which might refuse to comply. The response of the unions to being told they should be more democratic has been farcical, particularly as almost every union general secretary in the country thinks that the procedures for electing *him* (or *her* in the case of the AUT) are the best.

The phoney definitions of left and right wing unions are shown up in the way they have responded. Autocratic unions like TASS and NALGO have declared their sovereign right to appoint officials. NALGO is currently interviewing candidates for the £30,000 a year job of General Secretary to replace retiring leader Drain.

The AUEW and EETPU, which use postal ballots for electing officials have come pretty close to saying they might be happy to accept state funds to continue their methods while the NUM has said it would have nothing to do with the state funds.

Our view of the humbug being talked by both the Tories and the trade union bureaucracy is fairly simple. We'll fight any attempt by the state to start imposing its will on the internal procedures of unions; and we'll also fight attempts by union leaders to change or use procedures to suit themselves. We fight for the independence of the rank and file membership of the unions. We go with officials so long as they represent the workplace membership and we go against them when, more often than not, they act as a constraint on action. □



Building in the downturn

With the failure of the miners to vote for a national strike it is abundantly clear that the downturn continues. We print extracts of a speech made by **Tony Cliff** to the National Committee of the SWP, in which he discusses the implications of the downturn.

We talk about three separate things; the industrial scene, the Labour Party and CND. But all three are connected. The inter-connection between them must be seen at all times.

Industry relates directly to the relation of class forces and always precedes the rest. A year ago we talked about the industrial downturn and the political upturn. We said, because workers don't feel confident enough to fight for jobs or over wages in their own workplace, they look to Tony Benn.

CND is one step removed even from that.

At least the Labour Party has some relation to the trade union organisations, what's happening in industry in other words. The result of the ballot in the mining industry reflects much more of the ideas in the Labour Party than the ideas of people in CND.

But the three are connected and because they are connected you'll find the collapse of CND will be incomparably quicker than that of the Labour Party, and the collapse in the Labour Party quicker than the collapse inside the unions.

I'll start with the industrial side. There is

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Boffins on the Box

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no question about it, the miners ballot was an *absolute* catastrophe, and it's no good sweeping it under the carpet and explaining it with technicalities. I laughed when the *Morning Star* said the intervention of the press was to blame, as if in 1972 all the Tory press said 'Miners: go on strike, we support you, we love you.'

Our analysis is different. Under the conditions of the upturn of the early 1970's the trade union bureaucracy impeded the struggle, but it could not prevent victories. Joe Gormley plotted with Ted Heath in 1972 against the strike but didn't stop the miners winning. In the downturn, the trade union bureaucracy — whether right or left — is a much greater impediment and causes catastrophes in the struggle.

Look at the miners. There is a left wing bureaucracy in the NUM and so the rank and file, instead of approaching the workers in Yorkshire and Kent, went to the area councils. I spoke to a miner in Bolton a few days ago. He told me the South Wales miners came to his pit on the morning of the ballot. You can't influence workers if you come on the morning of the ballot.

In 1969 the right controlled the NUM, therefore the rank and file, including Scargill had to mobilise in opposition to the union bureaucracy. In 1972, the flying pickets were in opposition to the right wing who controlled the union. Even in 1981, with Joe Gormley still in control, the South Wales miners went straight to the rank and file and got Scotland and Kent into action.

But now Scargill's in the leadership — and that's why the tactical mistake was made. Even the style of Scargill, the way he speaks, shows he simply assumes he is the leader and he has the troops.

Loyalty and lies

He didn't just demand loyalty to the union, he told lies to the members and every member knew it. He said we can win the strike in seven to eight weeks, yet nobody in the country believed it. Why? Because the stocks at the power stations are enough for four or five months.

The collapse of the left, the movement to the right and the impotence of the left, shows itself fantastically clearly in the NUM.

The water workers' dispute, was a victory and it wiped the smile from Thatcher's face, but just for a few days. After the miners' defeat the smile's back and it's fixed.

You have to draw a number of conclusions from the downturn. The 'victory' of the left in the NUR is associated with the McCarthy award and the loss of 45,000 jobs. The 'victory' of the left in the CPSA is associated with the defeat of the Civil Servants, and it's almost certain there will be no set-piece struggle between a major union and the government in the coming months.

You have to understand what this means for the work of the Socialist Workers Party. Our intervention in the water workers' dispute was extremely good. We assumed, quite rightly, that the thing would not change the nature of the class struggle in the country.

The Party intervention was low key. It was from the outside; the water workers were a tiny group, just handfuls at any workplace;

twenty percent of them were picketing. Generally they were not willing to go round and collect money.

We have to play it low-key — until the upturn comes — it is better to be wrong on the estimation downwards than to be wrong upwards.

The only people we cheat if we cheat upwards is ourselves. We can always amend it if a group of workers does break the mood. So what? There is no danger of demoralisation.

So, the downturn continues. There are not going to be set-piece confrontations. The question of intervention means individual intervention in individual disputes. In ninety cases out of a hundred we will do it from outside. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred we'll do it in a very low key.

Things will not change in the short-term. The miners did us a fantastic amount of damage in this ballot. It means other workers will feel even less secure.

Now let's turn to the Labour Party. Bermondsey was a cataclysmic event. The editor of the *New Socialist* wrote in an article in *The Times*:

'The Bermondsey result has produced a seismic shock in the Labour Party. It has caused both sides to draw together, not simply as a cosmetic exercise for media consumption, but on the basis of a reassessment of what their past actions have led to.'

'Continued internal skirmishes it is now agreed by left and right alike will merely assist the revival of the SDP/Liberal Alliance and the return of a right wing Conservative government.'

In other words, 'we are going to close ranks. No more shaking the foundations of the Party. Unity, Unity, Unity.'

Even before Bermondsey the process was taking place. Simply see how many people signed the declaration in *Tribune* of Labour against the Witch-hunt. Only five MPs, only two members of the Labour Party executive. Tony Benn didn't sign it; Frank Allaun didn't sign it.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee agreed to register, the CLPD agreed to register and voted by two to one to kick out the Bennites from the leadership of their organisation.

Keith Dickinson of *Militant* was kicked out of the London Labour Party Conference. All this was before Bermondsey. Bermondsey has accelerated the process.

Labour didn't lose in Darlington as they did in Bermondsey, for a number of reasons. Firstly, public opinion (Labour support included) has moved to the right.

Therefore Ossie O'Brien fits, Peter Tatchell doesn't. When Peter Tatchell tried to pretend that he is really a respectable man, the only thing he's interested in is in houses with gardens, nobody in Bermondsey believed it. And if they did people asked, who actually built those monstrosities of tower blocks that eighty percent of the population in Bermondsey live in — Labour.

Ossie O'Brien did much better. Because James Callaghan and Dennis Healey put in a massive effort. I'm convinced the Labour left will sigh with relief. They are looking for a way to retreat.

Benn's recent speeches have been about uniting behind Michael and Dennis, about 'the ten years we had together in cabinet,' 'we managed to work very well with one another.'

Remember 1979 Benn denouncing it as a 'rotten cabinet'. They are going to shoot massively to the right.

What does it mean for us? We won't recruit many Labour Party people. I don't believe there are many people in the Labour Party anyway. Their membership is 250,000; if one in ten are activists, that's 25,000. Now divide that by 600 constituencies — it comes to forty or fifty per constituency. That's not a lot, but we can recruit a few.

Above all, we can raise the confidence of our members. In the last three years we didn't lose many to the Labour Party; our ex-members of course were all in there. But the rise of the Labour left puts us on the defensive. Today, it's exactly the opposite.

Analysis correct

SWP members are confident and proud. And the good branch meetings, where there are two or three Labour Party members present, reinforces our members' confidence because our analysis proved to be correct.

A swamp is going to be created inside the Labour Party with the move to the right and passivity. In the unions the Broad Left is going to the right, into swamp and passivity. That's why there's more emphasis on Jimmy Knapp's election victory than on the loss of jobs through the introduction of one-man trains.

There will be a swamp in the unions and in the Labour Party, but what about the CND? CND will become the worst swamp of the lot! They are bigger and have a feeling of success. But they are not on the up in terms of activity. CND is a passive mass organisation.

The passivity will increase because of the general election.

If you're in CND, you simply say we have between now and October to win or lose. Now if you're forced to get results quickly, you say what forces have we got?

They say we don't have the industrial working class against the bomb, we don't have industrial action against the bomb, so we have to adapt ourselves to the forces that exist. If we had fifty years it would be different. We could say, we'll become active gradually, building up until the day of confrontation.

But because the election is there we have to win by this date or we have to forget about it. The whole thing is finished.

In such a situation you adapt yourselves to the forces that exist. You adapt yourself to public opinion. If public opinion is against cruise but not against NATO, then you forget about NATO and only emphasise cruise.

Just recently the *Daily Mirror* had seven pages on CND. It was brilliant — very hard against cruise and Trident but it was for NATO and Posidon and so on. And when it comes to a general election that will be exactly the policy of the Labour Party.

Look, for instance, at the interview Brian Walden had on *Weekend World* with a woman from Greenham Common. He asked

her what was the answer to the Russian threat — and she said, Love!

Then he went on to ask the same question of the vice-chairman of CND. And he said we have to surround the whole country with conventional missiles to stop the Russian nuclear missiles!

CND are playing to the right and the Labour Party. And because of this they are going to face disintegration. We can even give them a date for that disintegration: the general election. They will disintegrate during the general election.

What will accelerate this process is the fact that they are going to stand candidates. They did the same in 1964. But our system is not the German one where they might get four or even five percent of the vote — over here they will get practically nothing.

Now what is happening around the Greenham Common women is tokenism. You can't just say they are feminists, or separatists. That is not the real reason for their actions. We have to ask why tokens come to the front.

Tokens come to the centre when there are not any real forces to solve the problem.

There are two hundred black mayors in the United States for this very reason. The black riots in America in the sixties did not smash the white capitalist establishment, so if you can't smash them what do you do? You join them. So you try to have a black mayor in Los Angeles, a black mayor in New York and so on.

Tokenism is at the centre of the downturn here. The trouble is it does a fantastic amount of damage.

I don't want to compare the Greenham Common women to the Red Brigades in Italy too much. But there are elements in common. There is the general crisis of capitalism, the general move to the right of the movement, the industrial downturn and so there is a group of people who say 'we will do it for you.'

The Red Brigades did this in Italy, and they did a massive amount of damage. In fact they ruined the movement. One of the tragedies of Italy was that the revolutionary left were a bunch of softies that felt guilty towards the Red Brigades because they thought the brigades were at least fighting.

So when people say to me the Greenham Common women are fighting, I always ask exactly what are they doing?

They tell us *they* will do it and stop the missiles while we remain at home.

It is like the Labour Party. People say, the Labour Party is moving to the right; therefore *Socialist Worker* shouldn't write anything about the Labour Party. On the contrary, now the party is moving to the right it is time to put the boot into them good and hard.

We can't stand back. We have to intervene. You don't intervene by standing back and smiling while they go on their way.

We have to do exactly the same with CND. We have to be very hard because they are moving very fast to the right, towards complete disintegration.

We can not shift a whole movement like CND, we are too small and the period is wrong. But we can talk to the ones and twos. What we can do is say, come down to a water



Picture: Andrew Ward (Report)

Greenham women leaving prison: Tokens come to the front in the downturn.

workers' picket line.

The Bolsheviks didn't come to power in Russia on the slogan of peace — they won on the slogan of Bread, Land and Peace. You don't mobilise a movement except through bread and butter issues that then spreads to take on foreign policies.

Because of the downturn CND is less and less related to bread and butter issues and because of that we have no expectation of being able to build big out of it.

That brings me finally to the state of the party. The party is in a better state now than I remember for years. This is because I think the comrades are very, very optimistic.

To be optimistic as Spinoza says, you don't laugh, you don't cry, you understand.

Three tasks

At conference we talked about three things. We said we need politics in the branch, we need to intervene in disputes and we have to attract the periphery and contacts into the party.

If you achieve only any one of these tasks, you will not survive. You end up with a discussion group if you concentrate on politics only. If you just discuss which paper sale to send new members to, that can lead to demoralisation.

The three elements have to come together. And they have to be in the right order. First the political meetings; if we don't do that, forget about the rest. Secondly, get the contacts along otherwise the political meetings disintegrate. Thirdly, make the interventions. The three things must come together.

There are still branches that don't do this. One of the reasons they don't do it is because they are so small. They decide to take part in a campaign because it gives them a feeling of bigness, but this just leads to demoralisation.

A campaign should be — under the conditions of the downturn — one percent of our activity not 30 percent not 40 percent.

Then there are the branches that are doing the work, but only formally. They are not relating the politics to what is happening on the ground.

Another thing that is very important for us in the present conditions is the centrality of the paper. With the general collapse of the left, the lack of militancy the key thing becomes the politics. People are looking for political answers.

This is why it is good that the paper not only gives replies but itself puts the questions. And all the time the paper is giving an analysis of what is going on.

At the same time we know that the paper is not being sold widely enough. But we have to be careful of saying, 'Sell the paper' because we have branches that have a high paper sale, but they devote all their energy to that. These branches will disintegrate.

This underlines what I said before. You have to have all three elements operating in the branches, and in the right order. The selling of the paper has to connect with the other things.

The selling of the paper is not only propaganda, it is political action.

It is not a question of a few 'star' sellers, there are always those, it is a question of shifting the emphasis to get everyone selling. And that is incomparably harder than the other things we have done.

It took us a year, maybe two to understand the downturn and shift the party towards the branches, and — I believe to save it — now it will take another year or two to shift towards the paper.

And it is terribly important we don't look for short cuts. This is not an upturn where we can sell thousands of copies — we are not in a sprint — we are in a marathon. To sell papers it's going to take a lot of brains and a lot of planning.

Selling *Socialist Worker* is a long-term investment. You should be able to look at sales after three or four years, and count the gains. But you can't measure it immediately. Therefore you need much more stamina because you don't see instant results.

If we don't do this, then as the downturn continues we are going to find ourselves high and dry. The swamp will surround us and get bigger, so we have to build our little island to keep ourselves out of it.

Tories' unsolved problems

Everyone is saying that the recession is nearing its end. Pete Green looks at the evidence, particularly in the light of the recent Budget.

Geoffrey Howe's Budget speech for 1983 was typically complacent, cliché-ridden, and hypocritical. Listening to it you would scarcely have realised that the British economy has now been through three and a half years of severe slump, with manufacturing output falling by 20 percent back to the level of 1967. (In 1929-32 the fall in manufacturing output was only 10 percent, although manufacturing was then a greater proportion of the economy and the impact on unemployment was even more severe than now).

The hypocrisy was blatant. Howe announced that his tax cuts would provide something for everyone. In reality this was yet another Budget which, taken together with the Public Spending Plans announced in February, amounted to robbing the poor to pay the rich.

Howe even had the nerve to declare that his measures were 'designed to further the living standards and employment opportunities of all our people and to sustain and advance the recovery for which we have laid the foundations.' In reality they include further cuts in living standards for the old and the unemployed, and will on balance probably add to the numbers on the dole.

The Tories are cautiously predicting a significant economic recovery this year. Their caution is understandable. Back in the summer of 1981 they argued that the slump was over. Then the American economy plunged again pulling the world economy down with it.

Marginal significance

Again, in May 1982, Howe's sidekick at the Treasury, Leon Brittan announced that signs of recovery were 'all about us' and that 'not even the most blinkered pessimist could fail to see it'. What actually happened was that Mexico declared itself bankrupt, the international debt crisis finally exploded, and the volume of world trade fell by two percent. In Britain that meant another savage round of plant closures and redundancies throughout the winter.

This time round the signs of recovery do look more substantial. The CBI's monthly surveys are showing a 'widespread recovery in demand and output'. 'Domestic order books are now stronger than at any time since December 1979'. The surveys should be taken seriously. They rest on the reports of 1,700 industrial companies and have proved far more accurate in the past than the elaborate computerised models used by the Treasury and other economic forecasters (to

which the old saying, garbage in, garbage out, very much applies). Nevertheless before we get carried away at the prospects of an economic upturn a number of points are worth making.

The most basic is that everything depends upon the fortunes of the world economy. It is true that the United States economy seems to have grown rapidly in the first three months of this year — fuelled in particular by Reagan's massive arms' spending and a relaxation of the formerly tight monetary policy. The American equivalent of monetarism has effectively been abandoned. But that in turn could soon lead to a resurgence of inflation, an increase in the already huge trade deficit, and another rise in American interest rates.

A rise in American interest rates would add to the strains on the rest of the economy. The oil-producing countries are being devastated by the fall in the price of oil. The debt-ridden economies of the Third World are going to remain in deep trouble. In Western Europe, governments in France and West Germany, the Netherlands and Italy are still squeezing their economies, cutting public spending and working class living standards.

All that means that the recovery may be delayed yet again. It does not mean that any sort of recovery is impossible, or that the system is simply trapped in an inexorable downward slide. As in the past, there are cyclical forces generated by the slump itself which can produce an upturn.

In a slump like the one of 1929-32, or the one of the last three years, industrial companies run down stocks of components and raw materials, accelerate the closure of inefficient plant, postpone investment plans including even essential replacement of existing equipment, and lay off workers. Some companies go bust, but most survive. Eventually they have to replace that clapped out equipment and rebuild their stocks of materials. If prices of equipment and materials have fallen significantly it will be easier for them. They also have to resume investment in new machinery if they are not to risk falling behind their competitors. As that happens demand revives a bit, companies may even take on a few workers and so on.

In other words even in a long period of crisis, characterised by general stagnation and low rates of profit, the system continues to go through ups and downs. Periods of deep slump and rapidly rising unemployment as in the Thirties, and the Seventies alternate with periods of recovery in which unemployment may even fall slightly. We can be certain that unless the system crashes altogether (unless for example both Mexico and Brazil default on their debts and push half a dozen major Western banks into collapse) there will be some sort of recovery over the next year or so.

The strength and timing of that recovery

remain unpredictable. But even the most optimistic forecasters expect unemployment to go on rising for the rest of this year, to above the 35 million mark for the Western economies as a whole. Profit rates will rise but remain low by historic standards. Major industries such as Steel, Agricultural Machinery, Construction Equipment, Shipbuilding, Petrochemicals, Aluminium and Vehicles will continue to suffer from chronic over-capacity.

Any upturn in the world economy is therefore going to be weak and uneven. It will not, and the distinction must be emphasised, mean an end to the crisis. It will not mean a return to the boom years of rapid growth and rising employment of the 1950s and 1960s. It will not relieve corporations and governments from the pressures of the savage competition which has characterised the years of slump. Above all, it will not stop governments in all countries seeking to cut wages and slash the welfare state in an attempt to increase the profitability of capital.

Signs of recovery

It is in this context that the prospects for the British economy need to be located. The latest Budget is worth assessing for what it reveals about Tory strategy. But it needs to be emphasised that its significance for British capitalism is marginal compared to the impact of the forces of the world economy.

There are two aspects to the Budget which are worth looking at. One is its overall impact on the economy (i.e. is it deflationary, lowering the level of demand — or reflationary, increasing the level of demand). The other is its effect on the living standards of workers, on the rich, and on companies, through changes in taxation and public spending plans.

As far as the first is concerned the consensus of opinion seems to be that the Budget was mildly reflationary — adding, mainly through tax cuts, something around £2½ billion to the level of demand. But an increase in public spending is a far more effective way of cutting unemployment since it can directly create jobs.

When defence and social security spending are left out of account public spending is being severely squeezed, with a nine percent cut planned for 1983-84. That cut can only be implemented by pushing through redundancies throughout the public sector. That will more than offset any job-creating effects of higher demand through tax cuts. The CBI estimates that manufacturing output could rise by 15 percent with the existing labour force.

The Budget shows that the Tories have stopped trying to squeeze the economy, and have abandoned the deflationary stance of 1980-82. But it also shows that they have no intention of trying to anticipate in Britain a revival in the world economy. It was always a mistake to blame the Government alone for the slump. It will be even more mistaken to see them as responsible for any recovery which occurs this year.

The tax-cutting side of the Budget was presented as if its main benefits went to the low-



Howe's record on monetary policy stuck

paid worker. Certainly tax thresholds (the level of income at which workers start paying tax) were raised by 14 percent, or 8 percent in real terms after inflation. That is going to mean that most workers receive a pound or so extra in their pay packets. But that scarcely compensates for Howe's earlier measures, the benefits of which went entirely to the 'higher income brackets' (the 1979 budget in particular cut taxes massively for the rich whilst pushing up VAT on goods in the shops which hurt those on low incomes disproportionately).

The overall effects of Tory rule in redistributing from the working class as a whole, and the unemployed in particular, to the rich are shown in the table, summarised from the report of the Institute of Fiscal Studies.

On the public spending side the Tories are planning further increases in defence spending (which will have risen by 23.3 percent in five years in real terms, ie not counting inflation, by 1984). They also plan to increase capital spending, which has been at very low levels, to screams of pain from the construction industry. But the plans for 1983-84 also show a slight reduction in real terms for the overall level of government spending (and a fall in its share of GNP from 44 percent to 43½ percent for the first time

since 1977). Where is that going to come from?

The answer lies partly in nasty little tricks like the changed basis for uprating pensions and social security benefits in line with prices.

Otherwise the cuts are going to come from the 9 percent reduction in services. That means redundancies. It means a 3 percent target for wage rises in the public sector next year. It involves a 5.4 percent cut in real terms in the education budget. It involves a supposed 0.2 percent rise in real terms in health and social services which, given the rapidly rising demand for those services, means unprecedented cuts in the actual level of health care provision for the sick and the old. It illustrates that after victories over the health workers and the miners, Thatcher thinks that the time has come to hammer the public sector unions well and truly into the ground.

Finally the Budget contained some substantial handouts to big business. New tax relief provisions in the North Sea have handed £800 million over the next four years to the oil companies. The reduction in the National Insurance Surcharge means that companies have received almost £2,000 million pounds extra from that source in the last year.

The TUC criticised Howe for not abolishing it altogether and not doing enough for big business. But there's not much else in the way of tax cuts that Howe could have done since most large British companies now pay virtually no corporation tax at all (and haven't done since Dennis Healey's days as Chancellor). As the *Money Programme* on BBC — put it the other week, Britain is now effectively an offshore tax haven like the Cayman Islands.

Tax cuts for the rich, handouts to big business and further attacks on the welfare state are all predictable moves from this Tory government.

The more difficult question to answer is why, after such a severe slump, the Tories' have retained their tight, non-expansionary policy. Why did they not cut taxes even further? Why did not they not increase the Public Spending Borrowing Requirements (the PSBR or the difference between what they spend and what they raise in taxes)? That is an indicator of how much money a government is pumping into the economy, adding to demand by more than they take out in taxes. In Britain the PSBR is now only 2¾ percent of the Gross National Product, the lowest of all the major industrial countries.

Rightward drift

Obviously the Tories feel they can win the next election without massive tax cuts, which could even be a liability if seen as 'buying votes'. But more is at stake than that.

One problem is that since the Tories have been unable to control the money supply, the exchange rate or much else in the economy, keeping a tight hold on the PSBR is about all they've got left to prove their financial orthodoxy to the international markets. Certainly a reflationary budget would have been treated by the City and the currency speculators as a sign of weakness.

With the pound falling anyway, it would have accelerated the tendency to get out of pounds into other currencies by all those operating on the currency markets. That is precisely what has happened to the French Franc in recent months, forcing the French socialist government into its latest extremely severe 'austerity' budget.

On top of that, Britain is now a major oil producer. Although output levels in the North Sea have remained high, the falling oil price will undermine an already weakening balance of payments (the massive £4 billion surplus in 1982 was entirely due to oil — with manufacturing imports exceeding exports towards the end of the year). So far the fall in the oil price has not affected Government revenues very much (it's been offset by the fall in the value of the pound, which means that a price set in dollars translates into more pounds).

But should the oil market weaken still further and the oil price collapse, the effects could be dramatic. That would both cut into Government revenues, and send the pound into a spiralling collapse of the sort which forced the last Labour government to turn to the International Monetary Fund. It would also force the Tories to push up interest rates (to attract 'hot money' into the country)

hitting the domestic economy again.

What all that shows is that the Tories, despite all their much-vaunted achievements — lower inflation, cutting public spending and the like — have very little room to manoeuvre in terms of the international financial markets. Any attempt to expand a national economy in isolation from the rest of the world economy is still going to get punished by the markets with flight of capital overseas and a collapse of the currency. But if the Tories face that problem it would be even more difficult for a Labour government. All the talk about a massive reflation coming from Labour and the TUC is absurdly unreal.

A *Financial Times* editorial on the Budget pointed to another problem:

'An economy which has suffered such a sharp and prolonged downturn cannot at this stage be more than convalescent, and to have pushed much harder would have courted the same risks as previous dashes for growth; with inventories lean and much capacity shut down, industry cannot respond to over-bold attempts to stimulate demand.'

Exports squeezed

The fear is that any rapid expansion of consumer demand will simply suck in imports — whilst exports are still squeezed by the continuation of slump elsewhere. But if that's true, it's equally the case that British based manufacturing industry in particular will find it very difficult to cope with a continued lack of demand. Profit rates are at all-time lows. A number of companies are being propped up by the banks and could collapse if the slump continues much longer. Another recent *Financial Times* article was headlined, 'Leaner ... but weaker' referring to the engineering and foundry industry of the West Midlands in particular.

The problems should not be exaggerated. The fact that so few major British companies have gone bust during this slump is a sign that the strength of British capital is greater than the reported figures of a 3 percent rate of profit in Britain suggest. That figure includes the massive losses being made in the nationalised disaster cases — British Steel, Shipbuilders, Leyland etc. It ignores the interest payments which have gone to the banks, simply redistributing profits between different sectors of capital (although those

payments still hurt the companies which have to pay them). Above all it ignores the flow of profits from the massive overseas assets of British based multinationals, although these too have been hit by the slump elsewhere.

The giants of British manufacturing industry such as Courtaulds and ICI, GKN and Lucas have been able to ride out the slump despite sharp falls in their profits. They have sacked 40-50 percent of their workforce in Britain in the last four years and scrapped unprofitable plant on an unprecedented scale. But they will survive even if their operations are increasingly based outside Britain.

In other sectors, especially those tied into the car and steel industries where output has collapsed, the gains for capital of a more submissive workforce scarcely compensate for the savage reductions in capacity they have had to make.

They also knew that their strategy of allowing the market to work, even for a while pushing the economy into slump, was a risky and painful one. Allowing a number of inefficient lame ducks to go bust was the price to be paid for sorting out the accumulated problems of low productivity and lack of competitiveness of British capitalism. But they underestimated just how weak British industry was. Despite misguided suggestions to the contrary the Tories do care about the profitability of industrial capital.

The Tory strategy of letting the slump take its course has for all its partial successes, failed. Indeed, they've lacked the nerve to carry it through. Modern capitalism is now highly concentrated in large units. Within each national economy the effect of allowing huge lame ducks such as British Steel, Shipbuilders and Leyland to go bust would be devastating. Moreover the benefits of a reduction in overcapacity in world markets, from wiping out the less efficient capitalists, will pass to other steel and car companies based in other countries.

British Leyland sums up the dilemmas of the Tories in another way. Instead of letting it go bust, flogging off the profitable bits such as Jaguar and closing down the bulk car assembly plants — they've pruned here, slashed capacity there, decimated the workforce, introduced new technology and done a deal with Honda. In some ways it's been a remarkably successful operation — with Michael Edwards' assault on shopfloor or-

ganisation acting as a model for the rest of British industry. But in terms of the world car industry it has amounted to simply running fast enough to stay in the same place. Every other car firm has done as much if not more. With the world market still heavily laden with overcapacity relative to stagnant demand, the pressures are going to persist. BL's losses may have fallen from £497 million in 1981 to £293 million in 1983. They're unlikely to disappear.

In the context of a world slump, however, governments have no option but to follow the savage logic of capitalism — desperately try and bolster the competitiveness of their national chunk of the system. But whilst the Tories have inflicted some decisive defeats they have not destroyed the trade union movement.

They have ensured that real wages for the average manual worker have fallen on average by 4 percent since 1979. They have provided a climate in which redundancies can be pushed through, new technology introduced, and the pace of work intensified. Real unit labour costs (wage costs per unit of output a measure of the underlying competitiveness) have fallen substantially.

Wage cuts needed

Nevertheless the *Economist* magazine is still demanding wage cuts of 20 percent to restore the profitability of British capitalism. Indeed in recent months the rate of inflation has fallen so fast with the pressures of the slump that wage deals of 6-7 percent have begun to represent an increase in real earnings. More generally the ruling class is worried that any recovery could expose the fragility of the gains employers have made as workers recover their confidence.

Whilst the Tories avoid trying to accelerate the recovery, the discussion in ruling class circles is focussed on one question above all — how to ensure that when the world economy does turn up the benefits go to capital rather than labour — to profits rather than wages. Intriguingly the Tories have borrowed Labour's clothes here in one respect.

The pound in the last few months has already fallen by as much as the devaluation advocated by Peter Shore, Labour's economic spokesman. The Tories are not responsible for that — but so far they have avoided pushing up interest rates to stop the decline, a definite reversal of earlier policy. The potential gains lie in an improvement in overseas competitiveness and profit margins for British exporters. The costs lie in an accelerating inflation rate as the prices of imports rise.

But if wages can be held down then those costs will be borne by workers — an essential if unspoken part of Shore's proposal as well, the only difference being that he would use an incomes policy to achieve the same goal.

The crunch is going to come in the next wage round. By then the Tories will have won the election. By the autumn inflation will be rising again as a result of the falling pound. The economy could, however, be showing marked signs of recovery although unemployment will still be increasing. Some significant battles could be in store.

Winners and losers under the Tories

Category	Gains from Budget	Change overall under Tories
Unemployed family	+ £0.38 (0.5%)	Loss of £15.30 (21.3%)
Semi-skilled worker	+ £1.41 (1.5%)	Loss of £8.05 (8%).
Skilled worker	+ £1.09 (1.2%)	Gain of £1.70 (1.2%)
Couple on pension	- £0.91 (1.5%)	Loss of £1.42 (2.3%)
Middle manager	+ £1.65 (0.6%)	Gain of £6.44 (2.5%)
Company director	+ £11.64 (8.4%)	Gain of £119.80 (24.5%)

(Note: Takes into account effects of wage and salary increases, price increases, as well as changes in taxation—source: Institute of Fiscal Studies)



After the strikes of 1979, steelworkers continue to lose jobs. Mitterrand's austerity and racism have disarmed them



Socialists put the boot in

Mitterrand's 'socialist' government has just introduced new and harsh austerity measures. Bill Webb looks at the background to these latest moves.

When Mitterrand was elected in May 1981, the Labour Left hailed it as a victory and claimed it as proof that the parliamentary road to socialism was realistic. The experience of the last few months, and the results of the municipal elections in March 1983, have shown just how illusory that was.

In the 1977 municipal elections the left

won control of about sixty towns of over thirty thousand inhabitants. This time it has lost thirty-one of them. It was in towns of over a hundred thousand inhabitants that the left's losses were most striking.

There are two main reasons for this development.

Firstly, the mobilisation of the right wing parties, the RPR and the UDF, was not only electoral, but also a direct mobilisation on the ground. Since the left came to power, it has been the right which has taken the initiative on the streets. There have been significant demonstrations by middle peasants, doctors, priests, middle class

supporters of private education, and a demonstration of twenty thousand employers in December 1982.

Moreover, the reactionary positions of the right, which campaigned on crime, insecurity and immigration, disarmed a small minority of workers, the most isolated and deprived, and made them vote for the right.

This shift to the right by the petty bourgeoisie and sometimes by a small minority of workers is expressed locally in the form of a worrying growth in the strength of the extreme right. In Marseilles the rightist list 'Marseilles-security' got more than five percent on the first round (the French system involves a two-round ballot). In Paris the leader of the PFN (Party of New Forces), a fascist organisation, got more than eleven percent of the votes in the 20th Arrondissement, and had one member elected to the municipal council.

Even if this can be partially explained by the sociological evolution of central Paris, and the fact that more and more workers are being pushed out into the suburbs, it is none the less true that the extreme right made gains in districts which still have a large working class electorate.

But it must also be stressed that the racist themes of the extreme right's campaign were often picked up by the parties of the mainstream right, and even by left-wing leaders, thus giving them an appearance of respectability. And that's where the danger lies.

The second main reason is the attitude of the workers and other lower class groups.

On the first round, on 4 March, there was a very high level of abstention, especially in working class districts. Sometimes it was as high as 40 or 50 percent of the working class electorate. It is clear that the workers had chosen this way of showing their distrust of the government's policies.

On the second round, a large part of the abstentionists came out to vote for the left simply in order to stop the right, who were claiming victory in hysterical terms.

But the remainder abstained on the second round too. This is clearly a sign that a section of workers has been depoliticised and demoralised. For on the one hand, it was often in the strongholds of the main working class party, the Communist Party, that this happened; and on the other hand, there was no swing towards the revolutionary left, which seldom got more votes than in 1977. On the contrary, in the majority of the eighty towns where the LCR (French section of the FI) and Lutte Ouvriere were standing lists under the label 'the voices of workers against austerity', the votes gained were less than at the last municipal elections in 1977.

Now Mitterrand has a ready-made excuse for his new austerity programme. The government openly chose the road of austerity in June 1982 by declaring a four-month wage freeze. Although prices were in theory frozen too, in fact the effect was a cut in purchasing power varying between one and five percent according to industry, with state employees being worst hit.

In the coming months the deficit in the unemployment insurance fund will be made up by increasing the contributions paid by those insured. Already unemployment

benefits have been cut. After the great Lip strike in 1974 an agreement was won whereby those made redundant for economic reasons were paid ninety percent of their previous wage. This was reduced by Barre in 1979, and has now been further cut.

The government has even introduced charges for time spent in hospital — twenty francs a day — something the right would never have dared to do. Substantial duties on cigarettes and alcohol, going up to forty percent, are to be introduced.

On the wages front, the government wants to impose a maximum increase of eight percent over the next year. There is a ban on linking wages to inflation, which will obviously be very convenient if inflation should exceed eight percent ...

But now even all this is not enough. To satisfy the employers and French and international financial interests, the President has reshuffled his cabinet to put into the key posts a smaller and more 'efficient' team of technocrats.

The basic reasons for this new development are linked to the difficulties faced by the employers and the French state in international competition. There has been a decline in the competitiveness of the French economy, especially in comparison with Germany and Japan. For example, the sharp rise in demand for cars in France in 1982 was mainly to the advantage of German firms, whose sales rose by forty percent in one year, and of foreign companies in general, whose sales in France rose by twenty-two percent. On the other hand Renault's share of the market has more or less stagnated, and Peugeot's has fallen.

This has led to very serious budgetary deficits and imbalances. The foreign trade deficit which reached 93 thousand million francs in 1982 has got worse in 1983. The French state is in deficit with all the industrialised countries, in particular Germany.

The competitive power of the French economy has been further weakened by capital movements, by speculation which has adversely affected weaker currencies, and by differences in the rate of inflation (the French government has a target of eight percent whereas West Germany is predicting a rate of three and a half percent). Foreign

debts are getting larger and creating a debt repayment burden which will probably reach the level of between thirty and forty thousand million francs a year.

The French government's solution is no different from that advocated by Barre and Giscard, or that practised by Thatcher. It is to cut wages, to restructure and modernise industry at the price of hundreds of thousands of new job losses, and to re-establish larger profit margins.

In practice that means smashing any attempt by any section of the working class to knock a hole through the austerity programme; this will be done by propaganda, by racism, or quite simply by use of the police.

The most important test has certainly been the wave of strikes in the French car industry, since the beginning of January.

Although these have been localised, they have none-the-less been very significant. The Citroen plants at Levallois and Aulnay, and Renault as well as Chausson, and then Fiat and Unic have all been affected.

Wages challenge

The demands varied considerably, but there was the same unifying dynamic. In particular, after the Renault management had given way and granted wage rises of around eleven percent for 76,000 workers, it became clear that the government's policy of limiting wage increases for 1983 to eight percent risked being challenged right down the line. The slogan '300 francs for all' seemed as if it might transform all the sectional strikes into a single movement against the disguised wage freeze.

It was at this point that the right, by means of newspapers such as *Le Figaro*, launched a campaign against immigrants who were said to be spreading chaos throughout French industry. The government picked up these allegations, and Labour Minister Auroux claimed that the immigrant workers were being stirred up by groups of Muslim fundamentalists! A clash between strikers and members of the fascist-type union, the CSL, at Citroen Aulnay, which according to our information seems to have certainly been provoked by the management, gave not only the right wing press but also the government

the green light for sackings in these strike-bound companies.

After racist statements by Mitterrand and Mauroy, Auroux declared that workers who used terrorism in French workplaces had no place in the community of labour. A few days later, the Citroen management announced over twenty suspensions, of which twelve have been confirmed as dismissals. Among the workers affected are several CGT stewards, the most militant in the company, but also the secretary of the CGT union branch himself.

After this the Renault management also announced the sacking of three CFDT stewards. They also asked the authorities for permission in future to bring in the CRS riot police any time the production lines are obstructed by workers.

Krasucki, the CGT leader, several times urged the workers to be calm, and declared that the Citroen management should also make a gesture. It was only when the CFDT section at Renault-Flins, which has a majority in the plant and is led by D Richter, a full time official who is in opposition to the national leadership of the CFDT, called a strike, that the CGT at Aulnay organised some actions. But these were carefully calculated to serve as a safety valve for the strong feelings of the Citroen workers (only a few hours stoppage etc) while avoiding an all-out strike which would have been the only way to make the management and government retreat all down the line.

In the end the CGT bureaucracy obtained a compromise but at the expense of the workers. The factory inspection refused to allow trade unionists to be sacked. But eight workers at Citroen Aulnay have in fact been sacked, and the CGT is trying to cover the matter up by claiming that they have simply been sent on training leave.

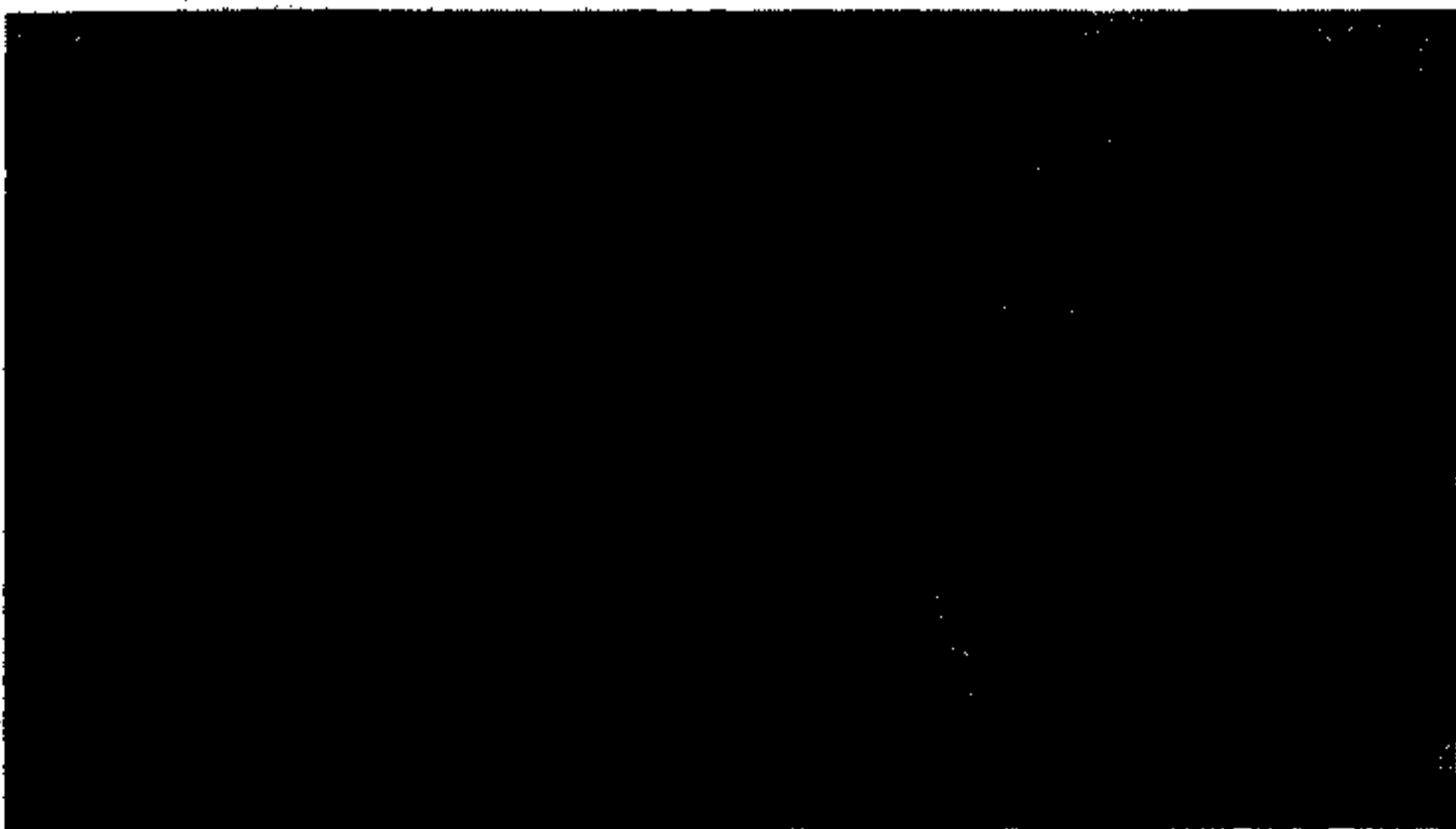
Now the Renault management is retreating and trying to transform the sackings into a transfer and two suspensions. But the Citroen management will not accept the compromise and is appealing to the Minister of Labour.

In this context the racist campaign of the right and of the extreme right, taken up by the leaders of the left, can serve as a weapon to isolate militant workers.

Everyone has had their piece to say. The fascist *Le Pen* campaigned on the theme 'Two million unemployed, two million immigrants too many'. Its slogans were directed against 'the invasion of France'. The official right also used these themes. Santoni, leader of the Gaullist list at Marseilles, declared, 'I'm not giving away anything on the question of immigrants.'

But often the left leaders have been just as bad. A few weeks ago Deferre declared at Marseilles: 'As for immigrants, who is better placed than I am to keep them out of our territory ... At present more North Africans are leaving Marseilles than are staying. I've put an end to fake tourists!' And a poster for this same 'left' racist said: 'The right is illegal immigration; the left is controlled immigration.'

This climate of xenophobia has already had results. At Marseilles there were two violent outrages, one leading to the death of an eleven-year-old immigrant boy. At



Renault Flins workers demonstrate after victimisations.



CFDT leader Daniel Richter addressing strikers at Renault Flins

Chatenay, Malabry, Montreuil, Garges-les-Gonesses and Nanterre, towns in the Paris region, police have shot at immigrant children. So-called 'police excesses' ... One bullet in the head, one in the shoulder.

But after the election campaign, this upsurge of racism will serve, if the government launches a new attack, not only to point to scapegoats, but also to intimidate immigrant workers, who at present are among the most militant sections of workers.

These repeated attacks are happening at a time when, though the working class has not suffered a major defeat, and has kept its organisations intact, it has suffered a series of setbacks.

Despite big struggles in 1979 the steel industry has lost more than twenty thousand jobs, and a new round of twelve thousand sackings has been announced without any reaction comparable to that of five years ago. The left's austerity plans have largely been crowned with success. The level of strikes, although it has risen slightly over the last year, was in 1981 the lowest since the sixties. The labour movement is going through a crisis which is marked both by a decline in unionisation and by a perceptible depoliticisation. Hundreds of union branches have ceased to function, thousands have lost members and become largely inactive.

For revolutionaries, the tasks that this implies are clear. The stress on struggle and on solidarity with workers' strikes must be even greater. For every defeat suffered by one section of the class weakens the rest.

But the main organisation of the revolutionary left in France, the LCR, French section of the Fourth International, doesn't seem willing to draw the lessons of recent years.

While the movement was suffering a serious downturn in 1980, the LCR was agitating for the practical preparation of a

general strike which would 'put on the agenda the achievement of trade union unification.' (Fourth Congress of the LCR, June 1980). It then put forward the slogan of a workers' government: 'We need a government of the workers'. The approach of the elections transformed this ultra-leftist line into an unprecedented electoralist mobilisation in order to 'impose' on the workers' parties an agreement to withdraw in each other's favour in order to beat Giscard, this being presented as the precondition for any offensive by the working class. This same line today leads the LCR to base its whole campaign on the theme: 'We need a different policy.'

Act in solidarity

This would not in itself be an error, if it were understood in the sense that workers must act in solidarity with other struggles, struggles to change society. However, in practice this slogan is not only addressed to the government (the LCR says this is a tactic) but puts the stress on an abstract programme rather than on the mobilisation of workers, while the orientation of the organisation has become more and more electoral.

Above all this has an effect on day-to-day practice, in workers' struggles and movements, for it distances the LCR from the struggle at the grassroots as the focus for revolutionary activity. To take two examples:

While it was running a united campaign with Lutte Ouvriere and sticking up thousands of posters calling on voters to support its lists, the LCR did not carry out a *sustained national* campaign against the sackings in the car industry. This is not to say that it did nothing, indeed in relative terms it was the revolutionary left organisation which did the most. But its campaign of solidarity and information was only a means of illustrating its programme, and not the

centre of activity. This had an impact on the tactics advocated during the strike.

First of all, the LCR never at any time said that only strike action could stop the sackings and never made this the focus of its campaign. To do so would have meant confrontations with the union bureaucracy. Instead it put forward the demand for a united demonstration of all sections, called by the unions and supported by the workers' parties. But when such a demonstration didn't take place, the revolutionary left didn't dare to organise a rally, which thought it would have had only minority support, would have had a noticeable effect on the most militant workers, and in particular on immigrant workers.

Worst of all, at no time did the LCR publicly warn workers and explain to them that the bureaucrats didn't want to lead a struggle, nor did it seriously prepare them for the sell-out by the union leaders.

Similarly at Carmaux the miners struck for twenty-two days in support of the demand for additional staffing and for the opening up of a new mine in order to create jobs. It was an extraordinarily militant strike which, in keeping with the best traditions of miners' struggles, mobilised a whole region and ended in victory. It was only in the course of the last week of the strike that the LCR had anything to say about it, even though two of its members played a leading role. In the last week the LCR sent a delegation to meet the miners and organised a meeting with some success.

But what was necessary was a campaign on a national scale, with collections and propaganda. That would have had an effect a hundred times more important, especially on workers who still have illusions in the left government.

It is up to the revolutionary militants in the LCR to draw the lessons of their organisation's rightward drift.

Baggy-trouserred MPs

27 Greens were elected to the Bundestag in last month's German election. Dick Ellis, from our fraternal organisation the **Socialistische Arbeiter Gruppe** argues that the Greens are not as radical as they seem.

'With the appearance of the Greens in the Bundestag we may at last see an end to the tediousness in parliamentary affairs — provocation is the order of the day, political taboos will be a thing of the past.'

So said *Der Spiegel* on the 14 March. It's certainly true that the run-up to the election was tedious, but the outcome has led to something approaching hysteria from the right.

In reality though, the Greens electoral performance must be a disappointment to them. The track record of the former SPD government, and the apparent demise of the FDP liberals meant that the Greens seemed set to mop up a lot of disillusioned voters.

In fact they only managed to scrape past the five percent minimum required for parliamentary seats. The traditional SPD vote held up fairly well, the swing which did occur was rightwards towards the CDU.

To judge from the comments of the German press this pales into insignificance next to the prospect of 27 Greens sitting in the Lower House.

A group of MPs flaunting open-necked shirts, baggy trousers and promises to publicise all the information they have access to, is being greeted by the liberal press as the dawning of a new political era. Meanwhile the right is in outrage. Franz Joseph Strauss, leader of the hard right Bavarian CSU, has called the anti-nuclear stance of the Greens 'the Trojan horse of the Soviet Red Army.'

But behind all the hullabaloo lies something more serious. The Greens failed to make a major electoral breakthrough because they sidestepped the issues which the voters considered important.

The unprecedented rise in unemployment under the SPD, to 2.5 million, meant a sharp rightward drift by the major political parties. The media constantly spoke of the possibility of an 'investment strike' if the SPD

were re-elected. The employers' federation, whilst quickly denying this, nevertheless admitted 'the election results must of course play a role in our economic considerations.'

Many voters feared for their jobs, and swallowed the arguments about the need of German industry to compete, so they voted for the CDU.

The Greens had nothing to offer workers threatened by the closure of steel plants and shipyards. The very idea of investment in heavy industry is an anathema to their dreams of small-scale community production.

Rudolf Bahro, an influential member of their national council, even condemns investment in pollution prevention, on the grounds that it merely extends the life of modern industrial production!

Left vacuum

The Greens' election programme emphasised small-scale production, and decentralisation of large-scale industry. All this was sweetened with talk about self-management for the workforce, but only as a means to 'alleviate the effects' of a free market economy. For them *industrial production* is the cause of ecological problems, not the bosses who control this production.

By avoiding the issue of who controls the economy, the Greens have opened their doors to some very dubious characters, masquerading as radicals. For example, Werner Vogel, an ex-Obersturmbahnführer in the SA, who was present at the Wansee Congress of 1942 where the Final Solution was adopted, stood for the Greens in the North Rhine district.

The Greens have also showed the weakness of the left. Many socialists who were attracted by the Greens' extra-parliamentary actions have completely abandoned class politics. The left talks about taking over the Greens, in fact the Greens have taken over the left.

The CDU victory has saved the Greens from the acid test of implementing their demands. They were hoping to hold the balance of power in a parliament with a minority SPD government.

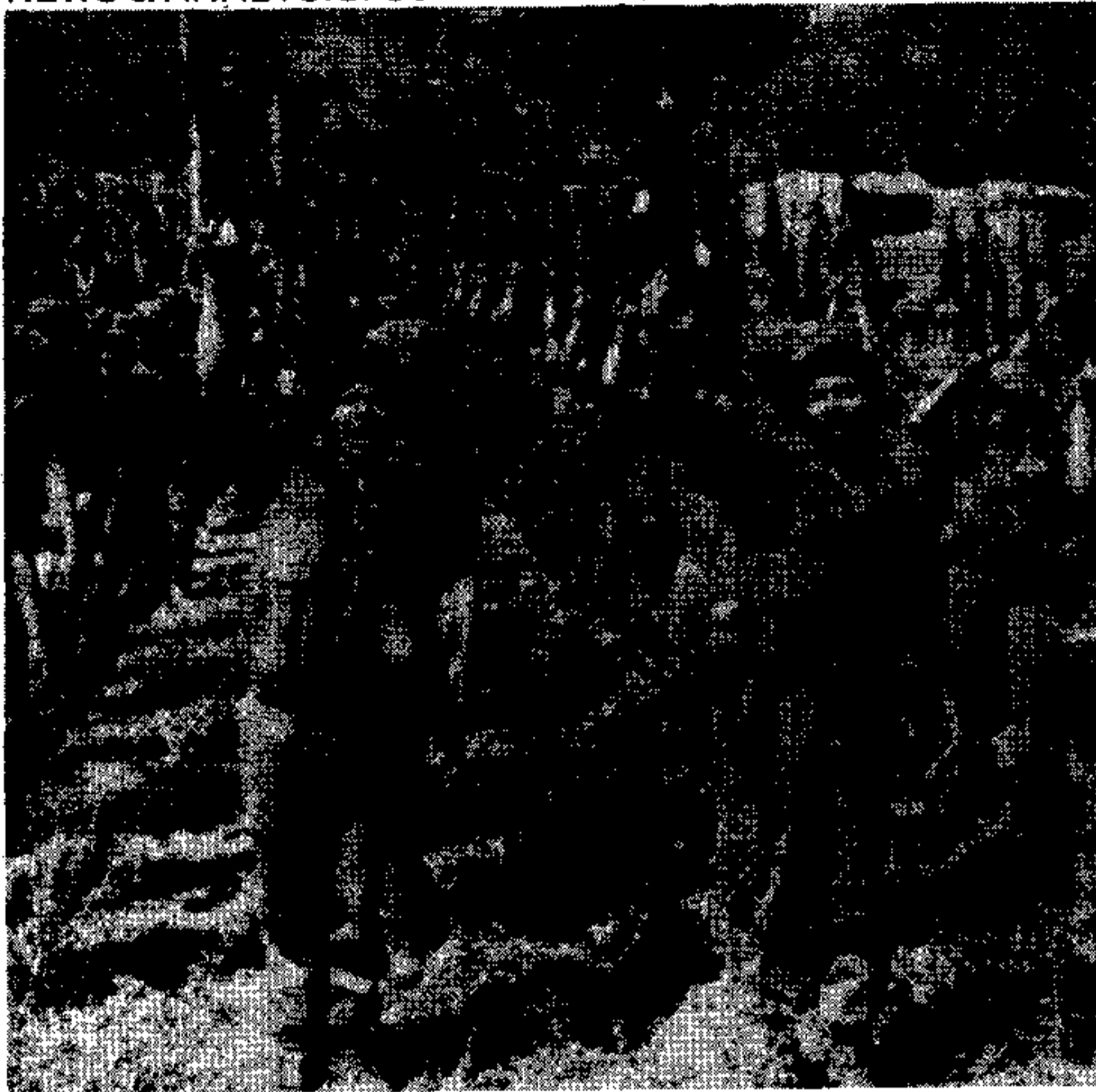
But their performance in local government suggests that they are far from being the radical alternative they pretend.

They supported an SPD minority in the Landtag in Hessen on condition that 2,000 opponents of the Frankfurt airport extension, all facing court proceedings, would not be prosecuted. The SPD were dependent upon Green support for the granting of 1.5 billion DM for their unemployment aid programme. When it came to the crunch the Greens meekly accepted a 2 million DM allocation for apprenticeships in alternative production plants and forgot about their other demands.

There is a huge vacuum on the German left. If revolutionaries are to have the faintest chance of filling that vacuum, we must set about exposing the contradictions of the Green programme. We must show that cruise missiles and atomic power plants are part of the same system which produces factory closures and cuts in social services. You can't fight one without fighting the other. □



Greens from Hesse: The Trojan horse of the Red Army?



US backed Somocistas train in Honduras

The attacks on Nicaragua

At the end of March counter-revolutionaries invaded Nicaragua. The whole region is now in deep crisis. **Carla Lopez** explains the background.

The Reagan administration is pursuing its commitment to a military defeat of the Salvadorean guerrillas and to the pacification of the Central American region as a whole with renewed vigour.

At the beginning of February 'Operation Big Pine' took place in Honduras, 15 kilometers from the Nicaraguan border, and 200 kilometers from El Salvador. These joint US-Honduran military manoeuvres were the most important to have taken place since 1965 when such exercises were first begun. They involved 1,600 US troops, 900 of them flown in from the Southern Command, the US base in the Panama Canal Zone. They also involved 500 of the Puerto Rican National Guard, experts in logistics, transport and medical services who were participating for the first time in military manoeuvres in Central America.

A US destroyer, the William V Pratt, with 375 men aboard, made calls at all the Central American ports along the Atlantic coast at the same time. The 4,500 US troops in the Panama Canal Zone and 500 members of the

Panamanian National Guard were mobilised in secondary manoeuvres. Joint actions also took place between special units of the *Fuerza Publica* of Costa Rica (Costa Rica has no army — as yet) and the US army. Interpretations of the significance of these exercises varied. *Newsweek* suggested they were a prelude to an open war against Nicaragua.

To complete the picture it is necessary to add that in addition to the vast amounts of US military assistance being pumped into Honduras, now the lynchpin of US military strategy in the region, US \$21 million has been specifically earmarked for the modernisation of Honduras' airports.

Last year the Honduran airforce, with as much assistance as the US government can give without questions being raised in Congress, began making great efforts to increase its capacity, already the most advanced in the region. This includes negotiations with the Israeli government to purchase sophisticated Kfir fighter jets. The objective of these efforts can only be to give Honduras the kind of overall superiority it needs in the event of a war with Nicaragua.

Some time in February (the precise date is unknown), members of Somoza's National Guard crossed the border from Honduras into Nicaragua. The *Somocista* counter-revolutionaries have been planning the downfall of the Sandinista government in

Nicaragua since the overthrow of Somoza. About 5,000 of them are concentrated in camps in Honduras where they have received arms and training from the United States. The latest incursion is the most serious of a long series of border raids and acts of sabotage carried out by the Somocistas. It is the most serious because for the first time they have penetrated deep into Nicaraguan territory reaching as far as Matagalpa, 120 kilometres from Managua, where they clearly have expected support from the cattle and coffee plantation owners. While these have kept control of their lands under the Sandinistas they remain resolutely opposed to the revolution.

The difference between this and previous incursions is also the numbers involved and the support given by Honduras. An estimated 2,000 Somocistas are now in Nicaragua and they have been given logistical backing and some reports suggest more direct backing from the Honduran airforce and army. By the end of March heavy fighting was reported in Matagalpa and in the Northern Provinces of Nicaragua; the country began to move into a state of war.

It is too early to assess the likely outcome of this development, but for some time the US has been provoking tensions between Honduras and Nicaragua and the threat of war between the two countries has been latent for many months.

US excuse

The Nicaraguan government maintains that if such a war was to break out it would be an excuse for the US to intervene more directly in support of Honduras and it has refused to be provoked into attacking Honduras. The latest events however, with the increasingly overt collaboration between Honduras and the Somocistas makes the possibility of war much more likely and they should be seen as part of increased US efforts to destabilise Nicaragua and engineer the downfall of the Sandinista government.

But the Somocista attacks in Nicaragua should also be seen against the background of events in neighbouring El Salvador. For some time now the Reagan administration has been convinced that they will not win the war against the Salvadorean guerrillas while the Sandinista government remains intact.

And as the war in El Salvador has dragged on, so it has gone increasingly in the guerrillas' favour. In October 1982 the FMLN guerrilla movement launched a prolonged offensive. This offensive has taken the guerrilla struggle into a new phase. In the past few months the FMLN have launched a number of co-ordinated attacks which have completely outmanoeuvred the army and enabled them to retain the military initiative. More than once they have engaged in a war of position, for the first time using heavy artillery captured from the army. Large numbers of their forces have been involved and have shown a growing capacity to fight regular as opposed to guerrilla warfare. The guerrillas have now moved into new areas of combat such as the department of Santa Ana in the west where previously they had only carried out acts of sabotage.

In February they occupied the second



Sandinistas train to flight back

most important town in the province of Usulután, Berlin. This took the war more directly into one of the most important coffee producing areas of the country. Until recently the guerillas had been strongest in the more backward and remote areas of the country while concentrating on acts of economic sabotage elsewhere.

The temporary capture of Berlin by 500 members of the FMLN clearly worried the Salvadorean army and in particular their major ally, the US. By mid-March the FMLN were still holding on to 30 towns as well as a large base on the slopes of the Guazapa volcano which can be seen from San Salvador. About one-third of the country is in guerilla control.

These guerilla advances have taken place as the Salvadorean high command has shown itself to be riddled with internal divisions and incapable of conducting the war as the US would like. One US official told *Newsweek* in March:

'Our military advisers down there are screaming bloody murder. The army is using the wrong tactics, morale is near zero, and the commanders are fighting each other instead of the enemy. We are sitting on an erupting volcano.'

Minister of Defence General Garcia still sends the army out on large-scale sweep-and-destroy operations rather than in small groups of soldiers to penetrate into guerilla territory. The high casualty rate amongst the army makes the latter kind of tactic, advocated by a number of dissident commanders, a highly risky form of warfare.

But if the war has not been going to the US's liking militarily, it has also faced increasing political problems. The extreme

right under the President of the Constituent Assembly, Robert D'Aubuisson remains very powerful.

Although the US has been exerting all its influence to try and build up a coalition against him, there have been only minor successes. At the same time, the killings of civilians have continued (nearly 6,000 during 1982) and opposition to US involvement in El Salvador has continued to grow in the United States, making it increasingly difficult for the Reagan administration to send the military assistance to the country they would like. In addition calls for 'dialogue' have mounted both within the US and from a number of Latin American countries, notably Mexico, Venezuela, Panama and Colombia.

At the beginning of March the Pope made his bid to act as 'peacemaker'. Behind all these initiatives to force the US to accept some kind of negotiated settlement of the conflict lies a wish to prevent an all-out guerilla victory.

Military or moderate?

The US still believes it can do so militarily, others believe it can only be done through talks which would seek a 'moderate' solution to the conflict in which there would be a 'purge' of the armed forces but not their disbandment, a partial land reform etc.

The Pope's message was very much in line with this way of thinking. While he condemned the violence of the right in El Salvador and spoke against social injustice, he also came out firmly against the guerilla movements. His position was most clearly

expressed in Panama where he told a stadium full of peasants not to seek better lives through 'violence, guerilla warfare and the selfish class struggle, because this is not the way of Jesus Christ.'

The Pope's mission in this visit to Central America went beyond the immediate need to intervene in the civil war in El Salvador. It was also a bid to regain control of the Catholic Church from those elements, particularly strong in Central America, who have sought to align it with certain aspects of Marxism. This Pope is too intelligent to do this overtly, but his subtle appeals against the evils of 'pure economic capitalism and systems of collectivism' are part of an anti-communist crusade which the Pope is engaged in jointly with his close allies in the Vatican, Opus Dei.

Opus Dei is a Catholic semi-secret society of mostly lay people, which attracts young, male fascists. Recently the Pope elevated it to a religious order at the same time as he has moved to neutralise the Jesuits who have become one of the major forces behind 'liberation theology' and the radical church in Latin America. There are known links between the CIA and Opus Dei.

From the United States' point of view, while the Pope's call for peace in Central America may not fit in with its present policies within the region, the Pope's moves against the radical church certainly do. Especially as the Catholic Church in the United States is one of the main opponents of Reagan's policies in Central America.

In this sense therefore, the Pope's visit to Central America went in the Reagan administration's favour. In a move to anticipate the Pope's call for peace the administration launched a political initiative in exchange for which it was even reported that the Pope modified his speech in El Salvador. This initiative was the bringing forward of the elections scheduled to take place in El Salvador in March 1984 to December 1983.

Much US propaganda will now be centred around these elections, but the real thrust of US policy was revealed by the request to Congress, made at the same time as the election announcement, for a further US \$60 million in military assistance to El Salvador and US \$50 million for military training. This is in addition to the US \$26 million approved military assistance for 1983.

The administration also announced a new plan of counter-insurgency based on the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) plan applied in Vietnam. This included the notorious Operation Phoenix, which cost the lives of over 20,000 Vietnamese. In the Salvadorean case it involved a renewed and massive military offensive by the army to a series of target regions, to be followed by a civil action programme. This will aim at economic redevelopment in the 'pacified' areas.

There is no indication that this 'new' strategy will be any more effective than any other, but coupled with events in Niracagua, it is clear that the US is once again escalating its involvement in the region. It remains to be seen whether the conclusion of one US Congressman on the situation is borne out: 'Either we give up or we invade'.



Darkness all day

Arthur Koestler, a darling of the intellectual establishment, died recently. Noel Halifax traces his path through the elitism of Stalinism, to the elitism of the intelligensia.

The work and life of Koestler is similar to that of Victor Serge both in the subject matter of their novels and that they both seemed to have been in the right places at the right time. Koestler saw the rise of fascism in both Berlin and Spain, saw first hand the realities of Russia in the 30's, witnessed the dreams in 1926 and the final product in 1946 of Zionism. In all these experiences it is remarkable that he was always wrong, always on the wrong side. He supported the Stalinist line in Germany and Madrid, even at one time denouncing his own girlfriend, overlooked the faults of Russia, supported Israel.

Koestler was born in Hungary in 1905. By 1926 he was an ardent Zionist who tried the new life in Palestine. He was to return briefly to the cause of Zionism in 1946 to write the novel *Thieves in the Night* supporting Zionist terrorist groups, he supported the state of Israel from the 40s to his death. In 1931 he was a journalist in Berlin where he joined the Communist Party. From then to 1938 he was a devoted Stalinist hack. He travelled to Russia (1932/3), became the correspondent of the *London News Chronicle* covering the Spanish Civil War in 1936. In 1937 he was briefly captured by Franco and wrote as a result *Spanish Testament* which like his coverage in the *News Chronicle* preached the Stalinist line.

By 1938 Koestler was becoming disillusioned with 'Communism' and as a result wrote the novel which was hailed then and now as his masterpiece, *Darkness at Noon* (published in 1940). By now he was settled in Britain where he remained till his death. *Darkness at Noon* is the story of a victim of one of Stalin's purges, set in a Russian prison. It is a tale of mental anguish of a Stalinist trapped by the logic of his own beliefs. As the product of a disillusioned Stalinist it describes the workings of a mind; hard, rigid and hierarchical, beset by doubt — not a pretty sight.

The 'hero' of the novel is one Rubashov, it is said in part based on Bukharin or Zinoviev. Rubashov is haunted by his recent history of Stalinist deeds against the logical 'needs of historical process'. The description of prison life is accurate and obviously based on Koestler's own experience as is the anguish of the doubting Stalinist.

Against Serge's *The Case of Comrade Tylayev* — a novel which deals with the same events and problems — it is shallow and limited.

To any revolutionary socialist the book is also intensely irritating. The picture presented of a Stalinist mentality is well described; how could it be otherwise? The belief in the objective 'laws of history', the 'party' seen as the only force of progress, the working class ignored or viewed as a stage army to be led and duped. The writer quoted to justify the action of 'Marxist revolutionaries' is interestingly, Machiavelli, the ultimate of all writers on bourgeois political practice. In the idea of Communism that is presented there is no room for the self-activity of the working class or anyone else for that matter. But again Koestler in his

denunciation of Stalinism chooses the wrong side, against the horror of Russia in the 30s he offers only liberal capitalism.

In no time in his life was Koestler a revolutionary; he never showed any understanding of the spirit of 1917. *Darkness at Noon* remains one of the most well-known and read denunciations of Stalinism, though it retains all of Koestler's elitist assumptions. It is a Stalinist denunciation of Stalinism.

This also helps to explain why the book was hailed as a masterpiece, not because of the merit of the novel (it is good but not brilliant) but because there was a need for such a book. It captured the mood and needs of the time, at least amongst intellectuals who had been won over to supporting Russia. The fellow travellers needed *Darkness at Noon*. It denounced Stalinism without challenging any of its ideas, now that Russia was no longer our gallant ally.

Darkness at Noon became the intellectual excuse for this rightward switch. Its publication was even blamed for the failure of the Communist Party to win the French election in 1946. This seems unlikely, but it certainly provided justification for ex-lefties to join up with the CIA and take part in the Cold War as anti-Communist crusaders.

In this Koestler outdid most, founding the Congress for Cultural Freedom (backed by money from Washington) publishing denunciations of 'Communism' and calls for the West to rally against the evil (as in *The God that Failed* 1949, or in his most extreme anti-Communist product *The Age of Longing*, 1950). Koestler moved so far to the right as to denounce CND in the early 60s and to fall out with his old friend Michael Foot for being too left wing.

But to return to the comparison with Serge, why was Koestler always wrong and Serge usually right? The basic difference, apart from Serge being a better writer, was their attitude to people. Serge saw himself as part of the class struggle and described and appreciated the power of people to change and be changed by struggle. Koestler, however, shared the view of nearly all intellectuals that people are basically stupid. What is needed is for clever people, such as themselves, to lead society and the plebs to the new future. Hence Koestler's support for Stalin, the right people was 'the Party'; even when he rejected Stalinism he still retained his elitist view of history. In place of the great leader who was to save society Koestler moved to writing about 'great scientists' who changed the development of society.

The other aspect to Koestler's thought is the need to have some sort of god figure to worship. Having rejected Stalin as his *God that Had Failed* Koestler spent the next 30 years trying to discover a replacement, to get back to god via science. He never became so intellectually bankrupt as others (ex-Communist Muggeridge ending up in the Catholic Church and Festival of Light). But he tried to find a meaning to the world in a spirit or *Ghost in the Machine* (the title of one of his later books).

Though he searched for a god he never found one, he was a member of EXIT and appropriately enough for his ideas, committed suicide this year. □

In sickness and in health

Long before the first cuckoo, the Silly Season seems to have burst upon us with the latest revelations from the Tories' secret councils. But behind the more obviously cranky suggestions of Thatcher's team playing *Does the Cabinet Think?* lies a collection of myths about the family and the Welfare State which need to be confronted. **Norah Carlin** examines the question.

At the heart of these myths lies the assumption that the Welfare State has undermined the family and produced a society of irresponsible individuals dependent upon state handouts. Before the Welfare State, goes the story, responsible and caring families provided for the needs of all their members by working hard, saving and providing personal care. By taking over the basic functions of care and provision, the Welfare State has provided too much security, and benefits that are too easy to come by.

Among the consequences are wives leaving home in order to claim Social Security, husbands doing likewise to evade their legal responsibilities, and young unmarried girls getting pregnant in order to receive the princely sum of £25 Maternity Benefit. These last, says a Tory medical man, 'are getting money for old rope, and it should be stopped.'

The response of the left is to defend the Welfare State, repeating the fine phrases of the Beveridge Report of 1942 about a collectively responsible society, universal benefits abolishing the stigma of poverty, and escaping from the present bankruptcy of reformism into pleasant memories of the great achievements of the Labour Government of 1945, which abolished the old Victorian Poor Law for ever.

Firstly, we need to look at the Tory myth of the self-reliant, caring family which was supposedly undermined by the subversive feather-bedding of the Welfare State. Under the 19th century Poor Law, the doctrine of the 'liable relative' (which survived word for word from 1601 to 1948) made families responsible for their own parents, children, grandparents and grandchildren, with poor relief provided only as a last resort. This poor relief, through the workhouse only, was made as unattractive as possible, so that respectable working class families would face all hardships short of actual starvation rather than see their loved ones humiliated. These are the 'Victorian values' admired by Margaret Thatcher.

The fact is that the Poor Law failed utterly to prevent massive poverty and dependence. The ordinary working class family simply

could not provide for all its members from the cradle to the grave. By the late nineteenth century social investigators were pointing out that the working class life cycle was one of poverty in childhood, improved well-being in early adult life, followed by poverty again while raising a young family of their own. Improved conditions for parents with children old enough to work were followed by dire poverty again in old age when the children had married and left home.

At any one time, the proportion of families living below a minimum level of subsistence was about thirty percent, as Booth found in the East End of London in the 1880s and Rowntree in York in the 1890s. This means, of course, that a much higher proportion of working class people passed through the cycle during their lives.

Despite the workhouse principle, outdoor relief was widely given because it was widely needed (and often because the local Board of Guardians realised it was cheaper than building workhouses). Elderly working class people had nowhere to turn but the workhouse in many cases, however, and in 1909 it was found that *one third* of all people over 70 — (one quarter of all over 65) were receiving poor relief. This was despite the fact that the over-65s were only five percent of the population in 1901; they are fourteen percent now.

Low wages, insecurity of employment and the inevitability of periods of sickness undermined the 'caring' working class family and created a huge demand for reform in the early years of this century.

Colossal frauds

The first major reforms were those of the Liberal Government of 1906-1914, and these are often regarded as the foundation of the Welfare State. A system of regular fixed benefits — old-age pensions, unemployment and sickness pay — and some medical services were provided outside the Poor Law altogether. They were not, however, provided as of right, nor were they meant to provide even a minimum subsistence. Unemployment and sickness benefit (together with old age pensions and widows' pensions from 1925) were earned by insurance contributions from workers, employers and (to a very small extent) the state. Married women were entitled to benefits only through their husband's contributions.

Nor was this 'first Welfare State' a break with the tradition of moral discrimination and social control. The old age pension for couples was for respectable married people only, and was denied to any 'who had habitually failed to work according to ability and need and those who had failed to save regularly.' Unemployment and sickness benefit were designed to 'tide over' the thrifty worker as an addition to personal savings or insurance.



Even the origins of the family doctor system were baptised in moralism by the Fabian socialist Beatrice Webb, who believed a free choice of family doctor would not lead to

'stern advice from the doctor about habits of life on which recovery really depends — to look to him to speak plainly about the excessive drinking or

unwise eating which caused two-thirds of the ill-health of the poor.'

In no way did the early twentieth century Welfare State undermine or substitute for the established pattern of family responsibility. And for those families who still failed to keep their heads above water there remained the Poor Law. Outdoor relief was not officially approved, but subject to the infamous Household Means Test, and relief was not given until all the family's 'luxuries' had been sold off. As long-term unemployment soared in the 1930s, National Insurance benefit could not keep pace, and more and more families were subject to this degrading procedure.

During the Second World War, even the most hardened Conservatives began to realise that victory depended on the co-operation and self sacrifice of the working class, and that they had to be promised more than a return to the squalor and misery of the '30s once it was over. It was the Archbishop of Canterbury, no less, who said in 1941 that Britain must oppose Hitler's 'Power State' with a 'Welfare State', and in 1942 a Liberal administrator, Sir William Beveridge, produced his famous Report advocating universal provision of minimum subsistence benefits for all citizens.

Great things were claimed for the Beveridge Plan.

'This approach to social security, bringing the magic of averages to the rescue of the millions, constitutes an essential part of any postwar scheme of national betterment.'

wrote Winston Churchill in 1943. It was widely discussed, with official encouragement, and the Ministry of Information received a report from Clydeside that workers had been heard to say, 'This will give us something to fight for and look forward to. The soldiers needn't hang on to their guns after all.'

Peaceful revolution

The widespread enthusiasm was capitalised by Labour politicians, and it was they who were swept to power in 1945 in the biggest landslide election ever, in the expectation that they would carry out this peaceful revolution.

In fact, the Beveridge Plan was not fully implemented by the Labour Government, and it was far from revolutionary in the first place. The Plan maintained the principle of insurance, and the major benefits — pensions, unemployment benefit and health care — were to be earned by flat-rate contributions from all workers.

The most serious consequence of this principle was that women were left in the same dependent position as before. Indeed, because Beveridge assumed that married women worked only for pin money, he proposed the system of reduced benefits in return for reduced contributions, the 'married woman's stamp' which puts most present day women workers at a permanent disadvantage even though it was abolished in 1978. He found the problem of separated and divorced wives insoluble in insurance terms, and after suggesting that they should benefit only if they were the 'innocent party'



in the marriage break-up, he dropped them from his plan.

Outside the National Insurance scheme, however, Beveridge proposed — and the Labour Government introduced — flat-rate Family Allowances to be paid to all mothers. Women's organisations had been pressing for something like this for many years.

It was evident in the 19th century, and is still evident today, that the capitalist wages' system, despite the myth of the 'family wage', does not provide adequately for family needs. Individual workers are paid the same wages whether they have large families, small families or none at all. Feminists such as Eleanor Rathbone had been arguing for a 'wages supplement' related to family size which would enable all workers, men and women, to be paid the same wages without problems.

In fact, Eleanor Rathbone's arguments for Family Allowances, first published in 1924, throw a rather different light on the scheme, and one that was considered relevant in the 1940s. Wages, she argued, are not too low but are kept artificially high by the 'phantom wives and children' of single and childless workers who are paid as if they had families. These 'phantoms' she estimated, are far more numerous than the real wives and children of families larger than the average who are not provided for. The first sign of government interest in the idea was in 1939-40, as a temporary measure to keep wages down in what it was feared would be a situation of runaway wartime inflation.

Many Conservatives and administrators also began to look more favourably on Family Allowances because they kept the principle of 'less eligibility' alive. This was the principle that workers receiving unemployment or sickness benefit should

not be better off than when they were in work. A constant supplement additional to wages and to benefit could solve this problem.

There was another crucial area in which the 'less eligibility' principle survived, and with it the hated Means Test — not only alive, but very soon kicking as hard as ever. This was National Assistance — still alive and kicking as Supplementary Benefit since 1966.

Beveridge assumed that National Assistance — subsistence level, non-contributory and means tested — would survive only as a safety net for those not provided for by National Insurance or by their 'liable relative'. (Spouses and parents survived 1948 as 'liable relatives'; the only change since 1601 was that children were no longer liable to support their parents.)

The failure of the great reforming Labour Government to provide an actual minimum level of subsistence through National Insurance — an essential, though perhaps unworkable feature of Beveridge's Plan — meant that National Assistance immediately became much more than a safety net. By 1949, a year after the new Old Age Pensions began, 48.2 percent of all National Assistance was being paid to pensioners for whom the pension was not enough. (Since it was based on 1938 prices plus 31 percent, and the rate of inflation by 1948 had been 72 percent, this is not surprising.)

The safety net became the bottomless pit as more 'exceptional needs' became evident. The chronically sick, the unemployed (a need assumed to be exceptional until well into the 1970s), the low paid and the one-parent family all fell into it. They got much the same as the old Poor Law treatment: minimum subsistence, 'less eligibility', intru-

sive Means Testing — given an extra twist by the co-habitation rule — and the old social stigma of pauperism (rechristened the Scrounger Mentality). Like the Poor Law, it was shunned by all who could possibly afford to do without it, and huge numbers entitled to some benefit under this heading still do not apply.

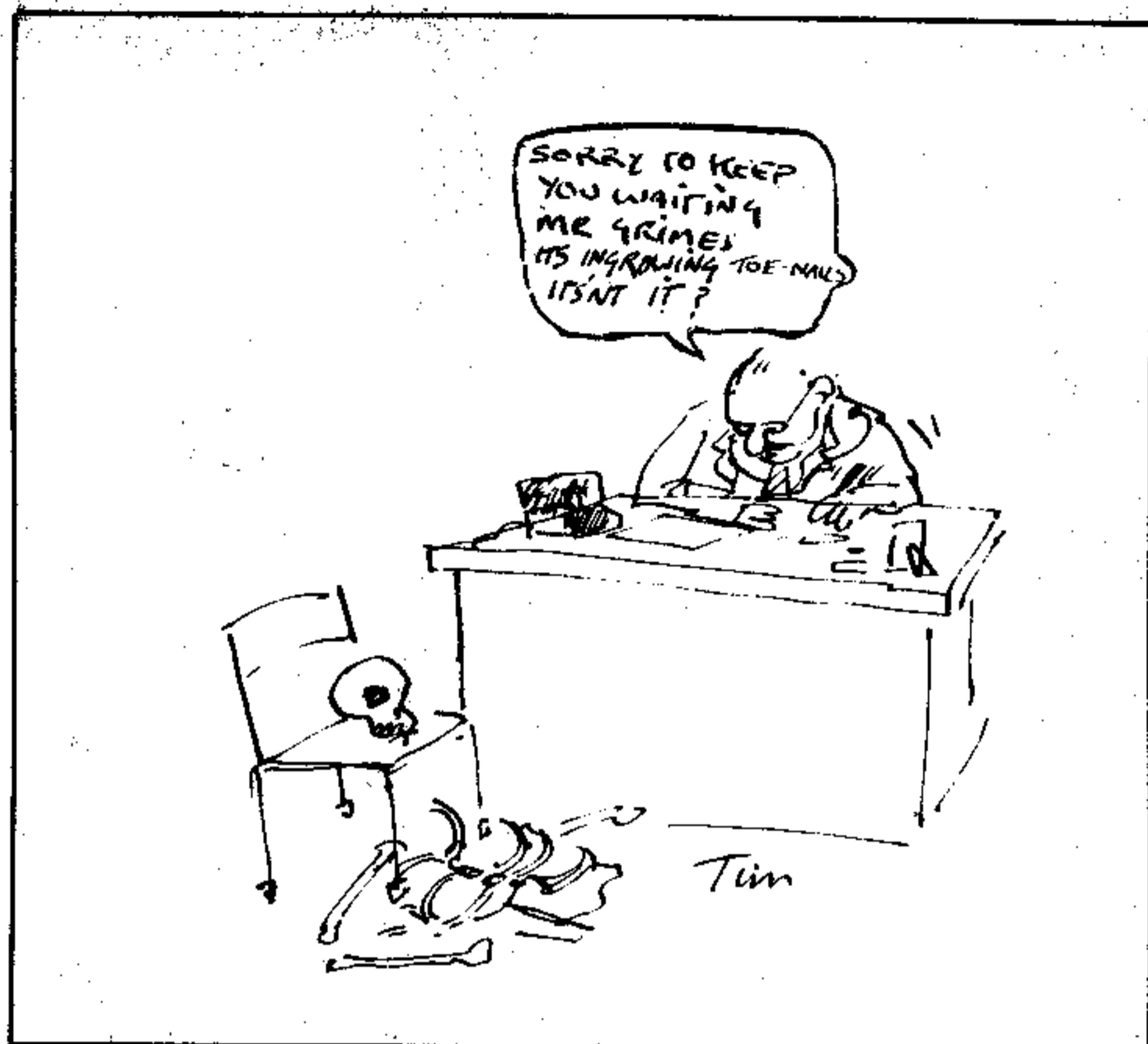
This 'most comprehensive system of social security ever' created this expansion of social services 'to the highest level ever reached,' under which 'Destitution has been abolished' (*Labour Believes in Britain*, 1949) entered the 1980s wearing a decidedly Victorian face.

When families do struggle to behave 'responsibly', to provide care and support for one another, they still get the old kick in the teeth from time to time. Wives, mothers, daughters and daughters-in-law who find themselves having to give up work to look after disabled husbands, handicapped children or bedridden parents find (if they are married) that they have no right whatsoever to the Invalid Care Allowance which is available for unmarried relatives and men in the same circumstances. They are, after all, only fulfilling their natural role of caring.

Housewives who are no longer able to fulfil this natural role because they suffer from severe disabilities may get a Non-contributory Invalid Pension — but they have to *prove* that they are unable to make beds, peel potatoes or Hoover the stairs.

Widows who go out to work to support their children (a practice the Poor Law always encouraged unless the family was very large) are unable to claim sickness or unemployment benefit without having their pensions cut by the amount of the benefit. Not that the widow's pension provides subsistence — its value fell by the wayside in 1948 too. Can it really be as long ago as 1871 that a Poor Law Inspector remarked:

'The condition of a widow, however deplorable it undoubtedly is, is one of the ordinary contingencies of human cir-



cumstances, which may, in some degree or other, be provided against equally with sickness or accident or other bereavement.'

Now once again, we are being told that it is no business of the state to provide for 'the ordinary contingencies of human circumstances.' Is this a sudden and unexpected attack on the Beveridge promise of security for all? Hardly, for that promise could be seen to be a hollow farce from 1948 onwards. Thatcher's Cabinet are not (all) a bunch of isolated cranks — they are simply being honest, in the sense that a wolf discarding

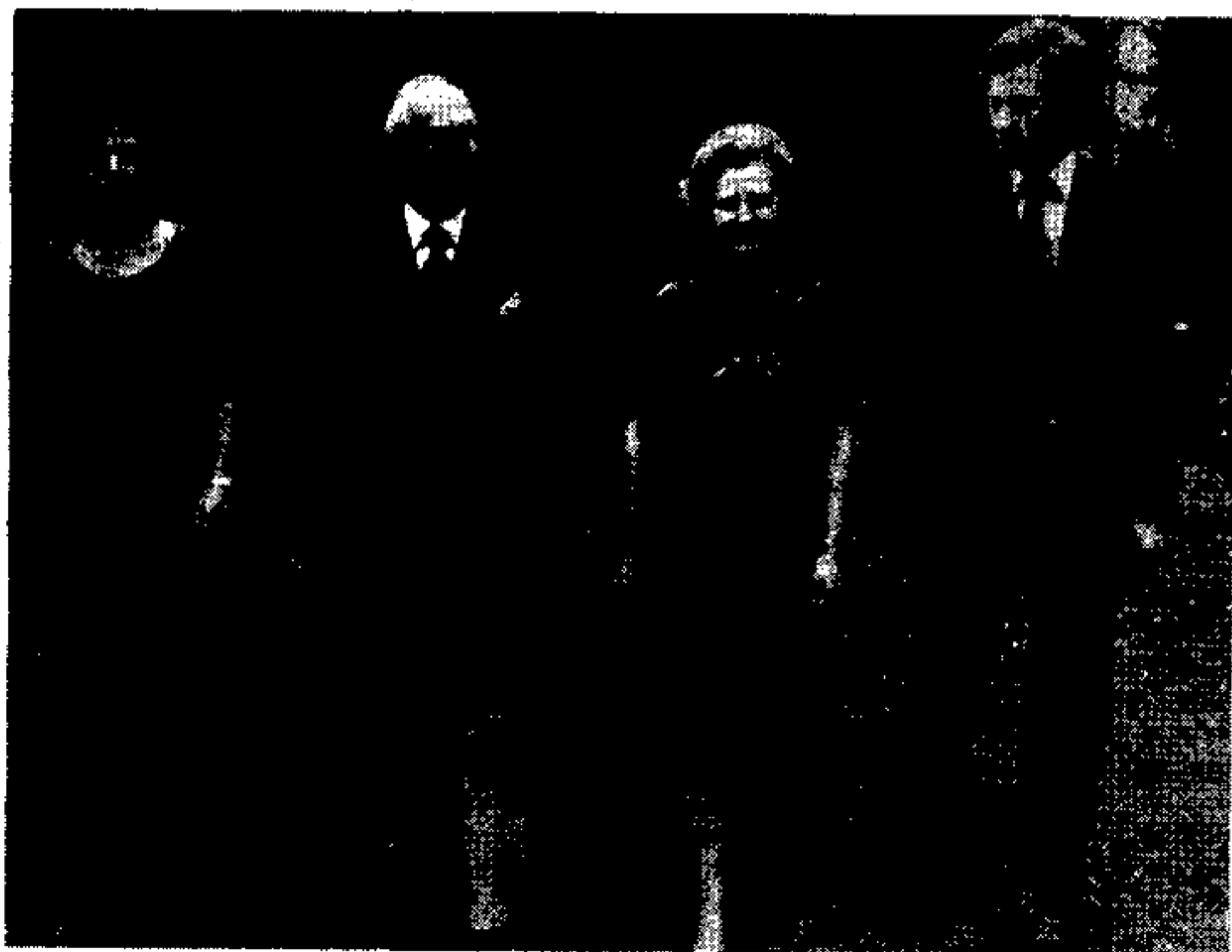
sheep's clothing could be said to be honest.

How are working class families meant to provide for these 'ordinary contingencies?' The answer is, of course, through private insurance. Didn't the Victorian working class save their weekly pennies through the Friendly Societies, before the coming of the Welfare State? In fact, only those in regular and comparatively well-paid employment could afford to do so. In any case, the Welfare State destroyed the old working class Friendly Societies, at least from 1948 on, leaving the field clear for the growth of the giant commercial concerns, with their flashy offices and multi-million turnovers.

Inflation, as the telly ads constantly remind us, cuts the value of insurance policies unless they are regularly updated, and few working class families could afford to do this often enough. Commercial insurance is based on strict principles of individual risk, and since manual workers live shorter lives, suffer more from ill-health and are more likely to become unemployed, the premiums would inevitably be higher than those for the middle class market. That was supposed to be the beauty of National Insurance — that the risk was spread among both rich and poor, and the contributions were flat rate.

The middle, professional and property-owning classes have, of course, gone for commercial insurance in a big way. The existence of the private sector alongside the Welfare State allows them to buy higher benefits for themselves. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Health Service. There, the co-existence of private and public sectors has undermined the latter almost to the point of complete collapse.

A full, free and universal Health Service was yet another Beveridge promise not carried out by the 1945 Labour Government,



A family at war

which allowed the medical profession a dangerous degree of independence within the service. Private practice continued, private health schemes multiplied, and finally private hospitals were built on a scale never seen before.

In the midst of Tory talk about bureaucratic, irresponsible and manipulative professionals in the public service, let us remember that nothing could be more bureaucratic and less responsible to the democratic process than private sector services. Private medicine, private education, private pension schemes are subject to little or no public control, and if people are willing to entrust them with money they can do anything that will keep the customers quiet.

Let us return to the working class family, which continues to suffer from 'ordinary contingencies' while the private sector booms. The working class family is in crisis today, not because of the advance of the Welfare State, but because of its *failure* to provide security for all, free services of the highest standard and equality of access for rich and poor. It has failed to provide alternatives to the family, to relieve it of burdens it never can and never has been able to bear adequately.

No patches

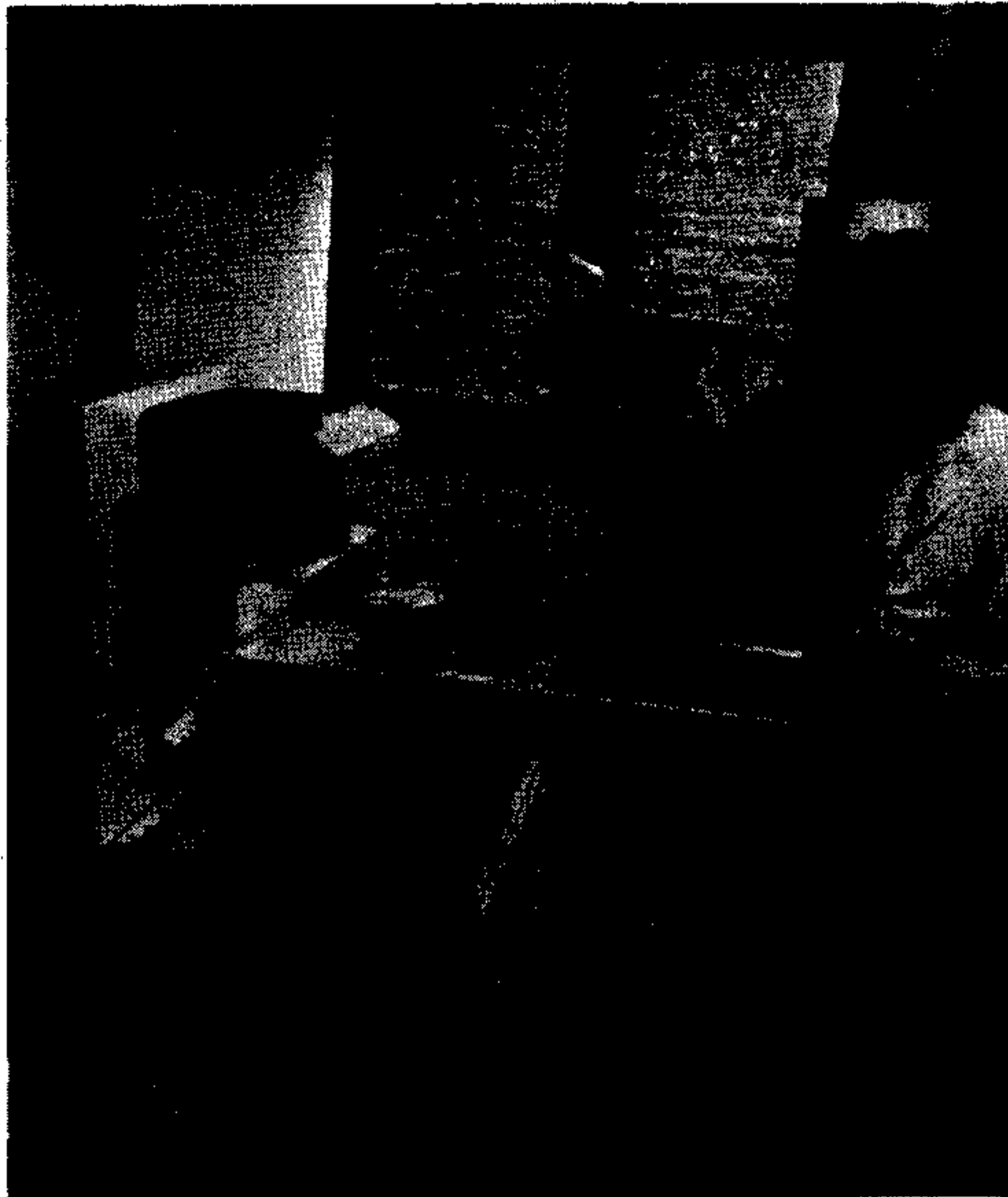
It is not enough to say that we should try and patch up the Welfare State, revive the Beveridge promise, secure equality for women and raise the standard of services high enough to undermine the private sector in turn. Demands such as these perpetuate the illusions of the Beveridge era — that the Welfare State can finance itself through insurance contributions, and can solve all or most social problems without tampering with the essential structure of modern capitalism.

The demand for effective Family Allowances which would give women economic independence and redistribute wealth between the sexes, has recently been revived in a form very similar to earlier feminist campaigns on the subject.

The problem remains the same: that an improved social wage can be seen as a demand for lower wages; that much effort is spent on working out how wealth could be transferred to some members of the working class from others whose needs are 'phantoms' (in this case, the Married Man's Tax Allowance) instead of on fighting for a redistribution between the classes; and that a subsistence-level Family Allowance would encourage women to revert to their 1930s role as housewives and mothers. (It appears that a well-known 'socialist feminist' recently explained on television how this last could help the unemployment problem!)

We must demand more financial support for working class families in need — In 1977 out of 25½ million families in Britain, 1,260,000 were living on incomes below supplementary benefit level. A level which has been described by the Supplementary Benefit Commission itself as providing families with 'Incomes barely adequate to meet their needs.'

A further 2,650,000 families were actually living on supplementary benefit. But because



What price Victorian values?

this level of income is so inadequate, a level 40 percent above supplementary benefit has regularly been taken as an indication of living on the margin of poverty.

This would bring the total of poor families in 1977 to 7,640,000.

Since 1977 unemployment—a major cause of poverty—has risen by at least two million.

When the existence of massive poverty within the welfare state was first 'discovered' in the early 1960s, researchers spoke about the submerged *fifth* of families living on or below this margin of poverty. Today we need to talk about the submerged *third*.

A third of all families in Britain are dependent on the welfare state to provide all the services and some or all of the income they need to survive at an adequate standard of living.

These and working class families for whom self-support is a problem, self-sacrifice is part of daily life and taking on additional responsibilities such as elderly relatives or private insurance is out of the question. Their needs are urgent and they must be relieved.

Benefit should not be based on discrimination against women, whether unmarried or married, divorced or separated, economically dependent or breadwinners, and it should not be subject to humiliating Means Tests. These are reasonable demands with no 'social

engineering' frills designed to make capitalism more acceptable.

But in the long run, there is only one solution to the problems of the working class family. It is the solution advocated by the great Russian Bolshevik Alexandra Kollontai after capitalism was overthrown in Russia in 1917, but before the betrayal and reversal of the revolution in the 1920s:

'It is not surprising that family ties should loosen and the family begin to fall apart. The circumstances that held the family together no longer exist. The family is ceasing to be necessary either to its members or to the nation as a whole ... The individual household is dying ... The state is responsible for the upbringing of children ... The workers' state aims to support every mother, married or unmarried ... The family is withering away not because it is being forcibly destroyed by the state, but because the family is ceasing to be a necessity.'

That is what a *real* welfare state would be like, and it can only be obtained by overthrowing the capitalist system, so that there is no distinction between the wage and the social wage, and no private sector. Then we will be able to see where the family is going, unhampered by the burdens of poverty and insecurity. We must fight as hard for this long-term aim as for short-term improvements.

Socialism or nationalism?

Throughout the history of the Irish struggle nationalists have argued that the National question must be resolved before socialism can be put on the agenda. **Gareth Jenkins and Chris Bambery** show how the two struggles cannot be divorced.

In 1897 James Connolly wrote: 'The Irish working class must emancipate itself and in emancipating itself must perforce free its own country.' Yet throughout Southern Ireland Connolly's name is preserved not in memory of his revolutionary socialism but as a 'national' figure.

Virtually every political party in the South has laid claim to him. Perhaps most importantly for socialists both the Provisional IRA and the INLA claim to be the upholders of the Connolly tradition. Yet that tradition is a socialist one, quite separate from the republican one.

Even as a leader of the 1916 Easter Rising, his guiding principle was that of internationalism. He hoped that with Irish workers largely opposed to the First World War, here in Dublin was an opportunity to strike a blow that would inspire a European-wide socialist opposition to the slaughter.

The Nationalists, the party of Southern Ireland's landowners and capitalists, had supported the war. In return, they had been promised home rule, provided that they accepted partition (which they did). They had fought against Connolly in the great Dublin lock-out of 1913. In Belfast, their leader, Joe Devlin, had put down the 1907 strike in alliance with the Unionist bosses.

The danger of partition was clear to Connolly. In 1914 he wrote:

'Such a scheme as that agreed by Devlin and Redmond (the Nationalist leaders), the betrayal of the national democracy of industrial Ulster, would mean a carnival of reaction both North and South, would set back the wheels of progress, would destroy the oncoming unity of the Irish labour movement and paralyse all advanced movements while it endured.'

At the beginning of this century such unity was no pipe dream. The Belfast 1907 and Dublin 1913 near-general strikes had rocked the Irish capitalist class. Partition was the means to divide the rising Irish working class.

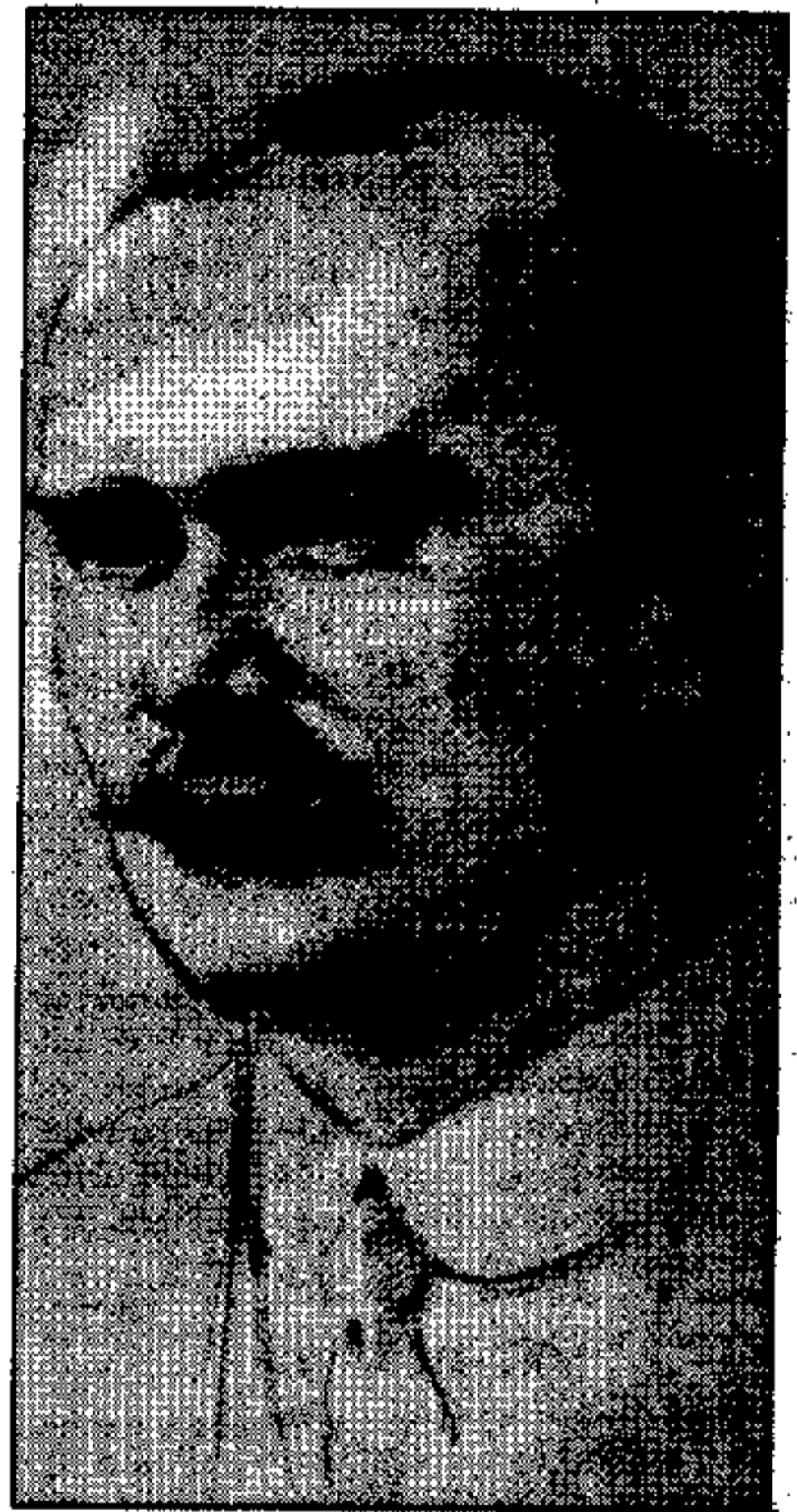
Partition wasn't a 'betrayal' of Irish nationhood (as the Provisionals still argue). It was central to the ruling class both North and South. The events leading to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, which finally ratified partition, proved Connolly correct.

The Easter Rising itself was carried out by an alliance of Connolly's Irish Citizen Army (made up of Dublin trade unionists) and the radical wing of the republicans.

These radicals were men like the poet and teacher, Patrick Pearse, and Clarke, a tabacconist and former Fenian. Anti-war and anti-partition members of the lower middle class, they sympathised with the workers locked out in 1913.

On the right of the republican movement stood men like Arthur Griffiths, founder of Sinn Fein. He was not involved in the Rising, and had backed William Murphy, the major Southern Irish capitalist and opponent of Larkin and Connolly in the Dublin lock-out.

Yet despite his alliance with the radical republicans, Connolly did not drop his class politics nor yield to pleas for moderation.



James Connolly: Irish revolutionary socialist

Right up till the Rising, he was involved in organising strikes, including one in the Dublin docks. 'In the event of victory,' he announced days before the Rising:

'Hold onto your rifles, as those with whom we're fighting may stop before our goal is reached. We are out for economic as well as political liberty.'

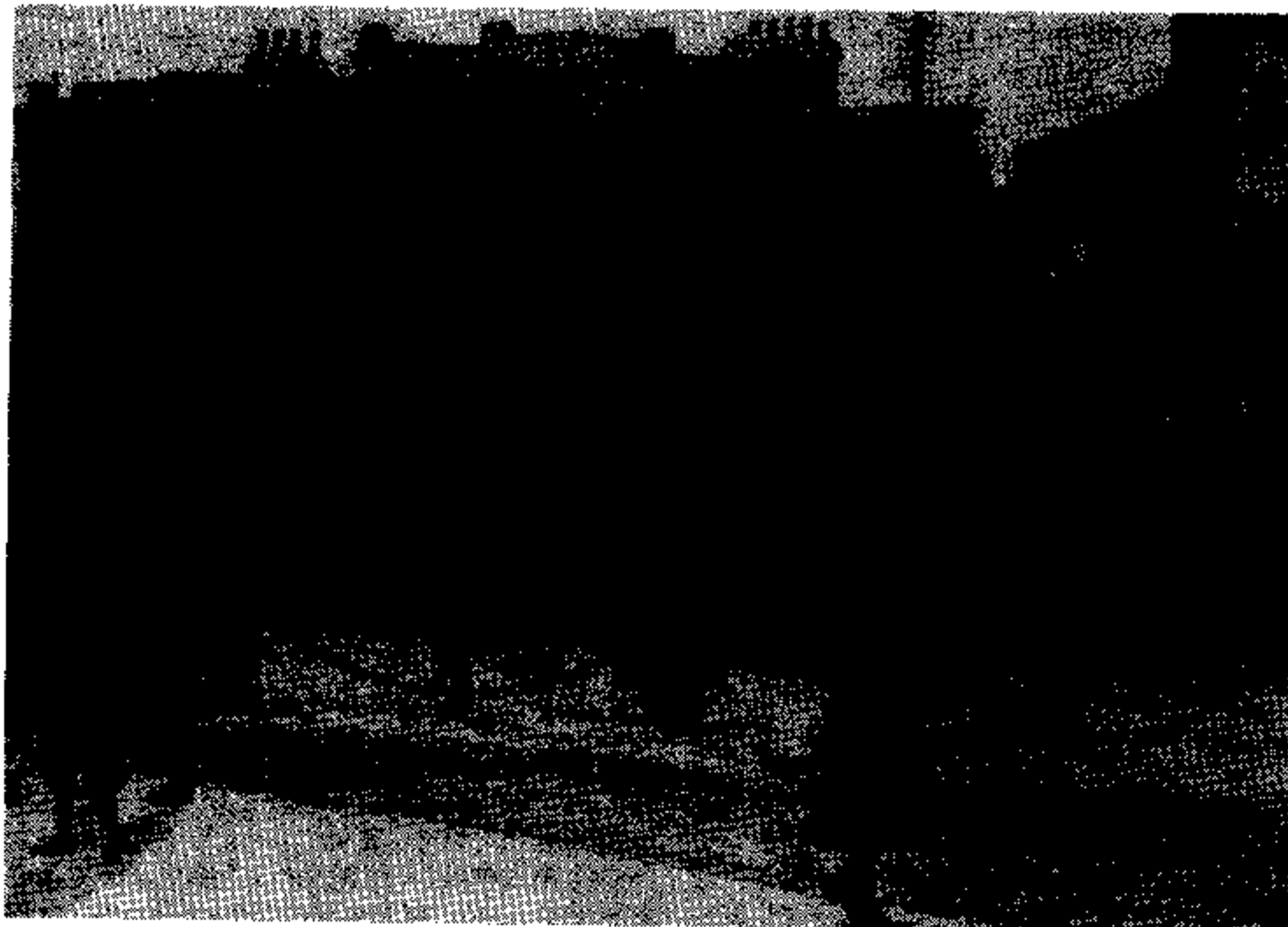
The fight for freedom, for a workers' republic, was as much a conflict with native Irish bosses as with British imperialism. Conversely, as Connolly pointed out to 'republican' Griffiths, attacks on the Irish working class meant undermining the possibility of any rising against British rule.

So when the tricolour was hoisted above the Post Office, Connolly ordered that the Starry Plough (the Citizen Army's flag) should be raised over the Imperial Hotel opposite. The hotel belonged to Griffiths' friend, William Murphy.

Where Connolly failed was in not building any organisation that could carry on the fight for a workers' republic after his execution. It was a failure rooted in his mixture of syndicalism (learnt from the American IWW) and Second International politics.

On the one hand he built both the Irish TGWU and the Irish TUC on the basis that through trade union strength workers could seize the factories and therefore economic power. On the other, he founded the Irish Labour Party as a party not of workplace intervention but of propaganda and electioneering.

What was absent was a revolutionary cadre capable of uniting the opposition to British rule with the economic struggles of Irish workers. The division — which in practice meant subordinating working class interests to the national question — spelt con-



Liberty Hall, Dublin, 1916



The fight for a workers' republic was as much a conflict with native Irish bosses as with British Imperialism

fusion for Irish labour, a confusion shrewdly exploited by Irish capitalism, North and South.

The Nationalists denounced the Rising and called for Connolly's execution. But as resentment at British repression mounted, they were swept away. Within a year Sinn Fein were defeating Nationalist candidates at the polls.

But the leadership of the republican movement changed in the process. With the death of Pearse, Clarke and the others, it passed into the hands of De Valera, a freshly-converted Arthur Griffiths, and a young civil servant who had become the IRA's main organiser, Michael Collins.

The leadership became increasingly moderate in outlook. Time and time again De Valera stressed that 'Labour must wait.' He wanted to stifle any working class self-activity. It was a position only too readily accepted by Labour's leaders.

The leadership also stressed the need for electoral success to bring about an Irish republic. In 1917 both Griffiths and De Valera were returned as MPs, overturning massive Nationalist majorities. The general election in the following year saw Sinn Fein take 73 out of Ireland's total of 105 seats.

In Ulster Sinn Fein agreed that the Catholic Church should divide up the seats between them and the Nationalists. Joe Devlin, instrumental in smashing the 1907 strike, was allowed a clear run in West Belfast. To Protestant workers Sinn Fein must have seemed yet another priest-ridden outfit.

The 73 MPs returned, immediately formed themselves into an Irish parliament, Dail Eireann, with its own (illegal) ministries, courts and police. Two thirds of the deputies

were urban professionals, another quarter were capitalists, and the remaining ten percent farmers. Collins had personally hand-picked the candidates. While representing a challenge to British rule, the composition and action of the Dail reassured the Irish ruling class.

The other side of the coin to this electoralism was the developing military struggle. While the middle class leadership of the republican movement could control events and guarantee the continuance of existing state forms through Dail Eirann, a tight military discipline suited other needs.

At the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 the Irish delegate described the IRA by then the main republican organisation, as follows:

'Its membership consists mostly of proletarians and the peasantry, though on the average mostly officered by the younger members of the petty-bourgeoisie and farmers. The majority of the rank and file look upon the establishment of the Irish Republic as of the first importance, and are inclined to defer the solution of social problems to the successful establishment of this aim.'

He continued:

'The conglomeration of classes comprising Sinn Fein necessarily causes antagonism to develop within the party... As long as endures the co-operation of these classes and the working masses necessary to achieve political independence, this results in its being unable to formulate any definite political and economic programme.'

Tight military discipline was necessary precisely to maintain this all-class alliance and suppress class differences.

On the left the challenge was faint. The Irish Citizens Army had effectively collapsed into the IRA. Larkin was in gaol in America while the Irish Communist Party was founded by Connolly's son Roddy in 1921, too late to influence events.

And yet something more was required to win the support of Irish workers and peasants. So during 1918 De Valera 'President of the Republic' could be found leading peasants in land seizures. IRA units together with local ITGWU branches would divide up the land of the great cattle ranches for tillage between the landless.

Despite Collins' fears that it would 'split the nation', Dail Eirann adopted a Democratic Programme which talked abstractly of the ownership of Ireland's lands and resources by the 'sovereign people.'

Such rhetoric masked the natural division of interest between the propertiless IRA volunteers and the bourgeois members of Dail Eirann to whom they had sworn allegiance.

But as guerrilla war swept through Dublin and much of the South West, class divisions began to emerge.

In May 1920 Knocklong Creamery was taken over and run by its workforce, the first of a number of Munster creamery 'soviets'. Exactly a year later it was the turn of a County Leitrim coal mine. In August 1921 workers in County Limerick seized a mill and bakery and ran up the red flag. In the following month a 'soviet' took control of Cork docks. In County Clare peasants not only seized land but attempted to run it collectively under a 'soviet'.

In the face of all this Austin Stack, Secretary of Dail Eirann, wrote:

'The mind of the people was being di-



An armoured car keeping a crowd moving, Dublin 1920

verted from the struggle for freedom by class war ... There was a moment when it seemed that nothing could prevent wholesale expropriation.'

Republican courts began to systematically uphold property rights of the mainly Unionist gentry against the peasantry. In a number of areas IRA units prevented land seizures.

This fear of class warfare led the republican leadership to explore other ways to gain some degree of independence. Already Griffiths had entered discussions over partition with Unionist politicians from the North, who had experienced similar worries with the 40 hours strike in Belfast in 1919.

De Valera looked to President Wilson of America to bring pressure on Britain. Accordingly, he refused a recognition offer from the young Soviet Union for fear of offending American public opinion. For the same reasons he expressed support for the Monroe doctrine, which allowed the USA political and military sway in South America.

By the beginning of 1921 De Valera, Collins and Griffiths were involved in separate discussions with the Lloyd George government. The basis for a treaty involving partition was already there.

The heavy engineering and ship building interests of Belfast capital were dependent on British and Empire markets. Southern Ireland's capitalists, on the other hand, were more concerned with food and brewing, as well as agricultural exports. What they wanted were tariff barriers in order to protect Irish industry from British competition and cheap British imports.

Naturally, this was an unattractive option for the Northern Ireland bosses. Partition therefore made sound economic sense.

All but the infant Irish Communist Party opposed the truce preceding the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The Republican leaders were not only worried by working class unrest but by the growing crime wave as old scores were settled under cover of war. Collins talked of the need for dictatorship 'to prevent communism.' Griffiths and the Irish capitalist interests he represented did not want to sever completely the economic links with Britain. De Valera, on the other hand, saw the USA as key to developing Irish capitalism.

In republican mythology the subsequent Treaty came as a result of good republicans going 'rotten'. The Provisionals' paper, *An Phoblacht*, still speculates on what might have happened if sounder men had gone to London to negotiate. But between men like Collins and De Valera there was little to choose in terms of political belief. You could, like Austin Stack, still oppose the Treaty and yet be worried about Irish people being diverted into class war.

In the subsequent civil war, the republican opposition had the sympathy of the mass of war-weary workers and peasants in the South. But they fought half-heartedly, and with one eye on a possible compromise. In contrast the new Free State government (what is now Fine Gael) used terror to restore 'order' and lay the foundations of the new state.

British arms

It mirrored the use of sectarian pogroms by the new Northern Ireland state. Both states were armed by Britain, both used religion to maintain their cohesion, and both used repression against any challenge to their foundation on partition.

The republican movement has never come to terms with the outcome of what Ruari O'Bradaigh described at the 1982 Sinn Fein conference as 'the four glorious years.'

This failure to understand the consolidation of a native ruling class is best seen in terms of the republicans' curious love/hate relationship with Fianna Fail, the largest party in Southern Ireland, which retains, despite recent difficulties, the allegiance of most Irish workers.

Fianna Fail was founded by De Valera in 1926 when he split with Sinn Fein (the defeated anti-Treaty republicans) taking a majority of the membership. In 1932 De Valera was elected to power. The IRA, still a mass organisation with over 20,000 members, supported him with the same election slogan ('On to the Republic!') and told its volunteers not to embarrass Fianna Fail.

De Valera needed this support in order to carve out a mass following. Yet for all the republican rhetoric, Fianna Fail quickly came to represent the interests of aspiring Irish capitalism. Within a year in office De Valera had launched the Economic War with

Britain. Tariff barriers went up in an attempt to develop native Irish industry. He defaulted on compensation to former British landlords.

The republican movement was dragged behind Fianna Fail. The IRA devoted much of its energy in the South to its own version of De Valera's Economic War — a 'Boycott Bass' campaign. IRA units destroyed deliveries of Bass beer and threatened publicans that they had to 'buy Irish'. A campaign against British, and in consequence Northern Irish, imports offered little to Protestant workers in Belfast.

Yet 1932 saw not only De Valera's rise to power but the greatest challenge yet made to the Northern Ireland state, with Protestant and Catholic workers briefly united in the unemployed riots of that year. Out of that experience a small but significant section of Protestant workers looked to the South and to the republicans.

In the South, however, reaction was on the march. A fascist movement of some size, the Blueshirts, which briefly encompassed Fine Gael, was eventually defeated thanks to the new Special Branch formed by Fianna Fail and the IRA itself.

Catholic sectarianism was also on the rise. De Valera increasingly identified 'republicanism' with Catholicism and granted the Church greater power. Jim Larkin was witch-hunted out of the Irish TGWU for communism, and the cardinals pressurised the Irish Labour Party to drop any mention of a workers' republic from its constitution.

The IRA was quick to distance itself from the spectre of communism. In 1933 it denounced those volunteers who had helped defend the Dublin offices of the Revolutionary Workers' Groups (the CP) against an incendiary Catholic mob. In the following year it banned members taking part in a campaign against slum housing in the capital.

The end results were tragic. In 1934 three coachloads of Protestant workers from Belfast travelled to the IRA's annual Wolfe Tone commemoration outside Dublin. The then IRA Chief of Staff, Sean MacBride, ordered IRA volunteers to tear down the banners brought from Belfast, one of which read: 'Wolfe Tone Commemoration 1934, Shankill Road. Belfast Branch. Break the

Connection with Capitalism.' To cries of 'Up the Shankill', these Belfast workers fought their way through to lay a wreath at Tone's grave.

The left wing of the republican movement split to form the Republican Congress with the Irish CP and the newly-radicalised Belfast workers. But from the start it was bitterly attacked by the IRA and suffered repression from Fianna Fail who banned its paper. By 1935, with sectarianism on the rise in Belfast and Fianna Fail ruling the roost in Dublin, it collapsed, splitting over the CP's attempts to convert it into the Irish Popular Front and not a movement for a workers' republic.

Having used the IRA to consolidate his position, De Valera got rid of his republican rivals in two ways: he first bought them off, and then repressed them.

Fianna Fail granted pensions to IRA veterans of the Anglo-Irish war. The army, the police and (briefly) a militia force were opened to republicans.

De Valera explained to the IRA leadership that they were now redundant. To many volunteers it seemed too that De Valera's Economic War against the British was successful. IRA membership slumped.

IRA outlawed

By 1935 De Valera reached favourable terms with Britain. He was now in a position to round on a confused and dwindling IRA. He first closed their headquarters and then outlawed them. A slight rise in workers' living standards (due to the Economic War), and benefits for small farmers resulting from abolition of compensation to former British landlords, gave him the popular support he needed. When the IRA attempted a bombing campaign in England in 1939 De Valera cracked down. He brought in military tribunals and internment. Volunteers were even executed.

Fianna Fail has since presided over the creation of a modern industrial state, with economic growth rates being maintained till the late 70s (well after Britain). In the process it created a vastly increased working class. Nearly 60 percent of Southern Irish workers are in trade unions, a higher figure than in Britain.

A National Wages Agreement between the Irish TUC and Fianna Fail in 1967 (which is still in force) could not prevent rising militancy. And despite the impact of the recession the level of fightback is still greater than in Britain. At the time of writing there are two occupations against closure in Dublin.

This rise in class militancy coincided with the upsurge of struggle in Northern Ireland. But no organisation could make the connection between the two. Apart from such high points as the early civil rights marches, Bloody Sunday and the H Block hunger strike, Southern Irish workers have not mobilised in support of the Northern struggle.

That failure is best demonstrated by the growth of the Provisionals in the North and of the Workers' Party (formerly Official Sinn Fein) in the South.

In the Northern Ireland Assembly

elections the Provisionals won five seats by grabbing 35 percent of the Catholic vote, ie the votes of the Catholic working class in opposition to both British repression and the middle class SDLP. The Workers' Party ran 13 candidates and came nowhere.

But in the following month the Provisionals refused to contest seats in the Southern general election on the grounds that they lacked support. The Workers' Party, on the other hand, increased their vote. In Dublin it now nearly equals that of the Irish Labour Party and although they have only two MPs, as compared with three in the last Dail, their share of the vote has been steadily growing (17,000 votes gained in November).

Despite their differences (the organisations were born out of the 1969 split in the Republican movement), they share one common feature. Both seek mass support but on the basis of substituting *their* activity for the self-activity of *workers*. That basis fits both military and electoral politics.

For example, the Provisionals' argument that only a military campaign could defeat Britain determined their attitude to the H Block campaign. Having failed to negotiate a solution with the British government when political status was withdrawn in 1975, they attempted to solve matters by shooting prison officers. They claimed street protests weren't necessary.

At the broad based conference called by the prisoners' relatives and Bernadette McAliskey in 1978, the Provisionals demanded a vote of support for their armed campaign as the basis for any unity. Eventually they swung behind the mass demonstrations. But clearly the movement — the biggest in Ireland for nearly ten years

— took second place in their thinking to the military campaign.

With the announcement of a strategy based on the 'Armalite and the ballot' there appears to have been a change, one associated with the Provo 'left' (of Gerry Adams and Danny Morrison).

But the change was within traditional republican confines (for example the strategy of 1918-21 also made use of the rifle and the ballot). In any case electoral campaigning does not contradict military activity. Both rely on *passive* support.

Unimpressive record

As for the issues working people themselves are *active* in, the Provisionals' record is not too impressive. The Provisional supporters in the De Lorean occupation early last year made little attempt to get involved and build solidarity. During the hospital strike, the Royal Victoria on the Falls Road was one of the most militant hospitals. Yet the Provisionals there either functioned as simple trade union members giving no lead or were not involved.

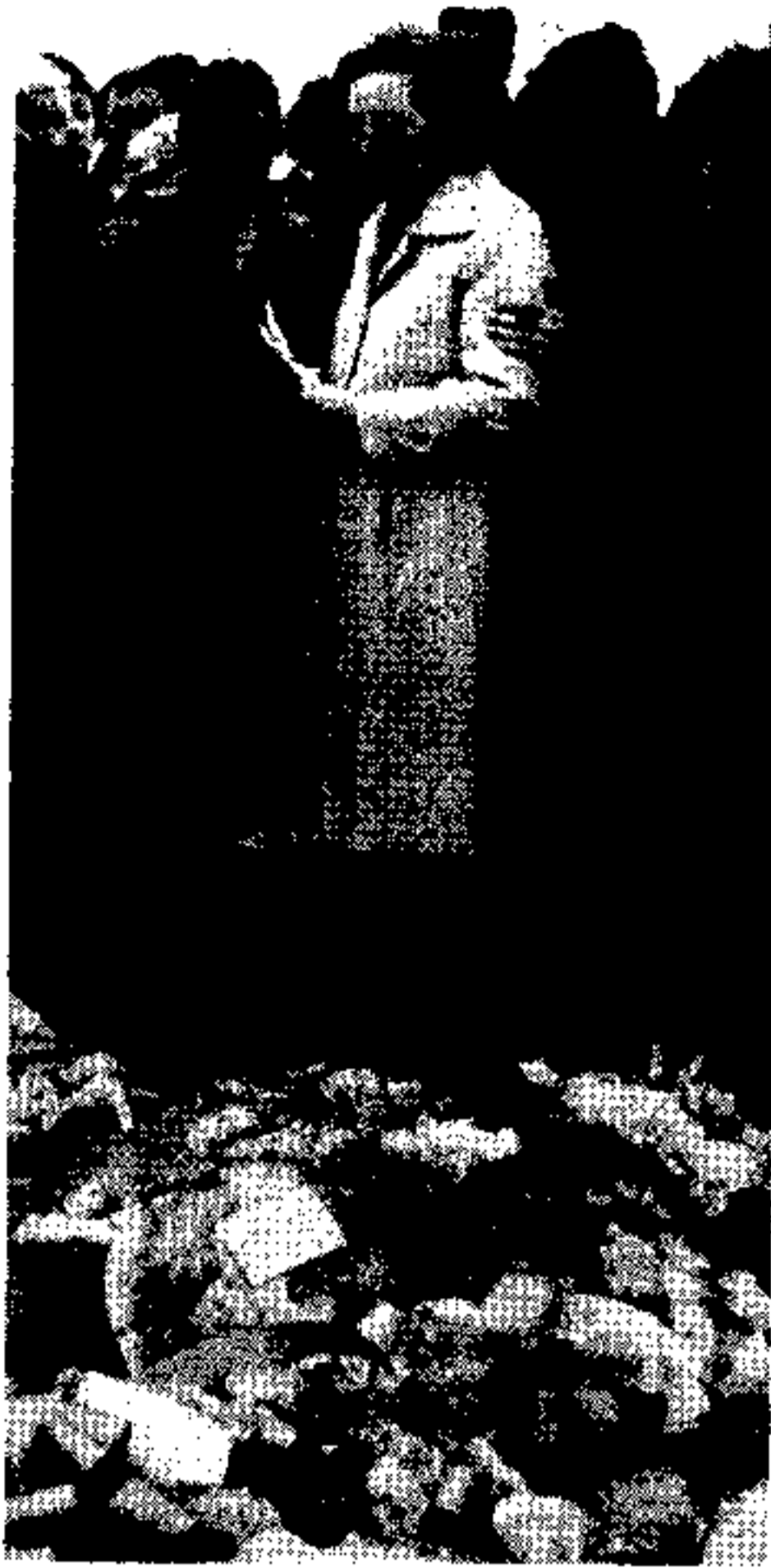
Their emphasis on military struggle is not the only thing that prevents the Provisionals from organising around-class issues. Whatever the talk of socialism, the crucial dividing line for them is not between classes but between 'nationalists' and those backing or collaborating with Britain.

So, following the death of Bobby Sands, Gerry Adams said at at H Block campaign conference in Belfast:

'We must build a united nationalist front against the British government ... The five demands of the prisoners form sufficient basis for unity among the nationalist



Women march in Dublin, 1923, to free De Valera



Bobby Sands' mother at his funeral

grass-roots of all the parties in this country ...' (*Republican News*, 16/6/81).

The conference also agreed on:

'Building towards a workers' indefinite general strike and committing the bulk of the rank and file of Fianna Fail and the SDLP to the five demands.'

The two aims were incompatible. At that moment the Fianna Fail government was backing Thatcher on the hunger strike. It was also pushing through an incomes policy, increasing unemployment and cutting public spending. A general strike against the government party you were trying to win the sympathy of was just not on.

In the election called a week later by Charles Haughey *Republican News* showed which aim it thought more important. The emphasis was on nationalist unity:

'What is required from Fianna Fail candidates is a clear unequivocal public call

on Haughey to publicly condemn Thatcher and to take positive action (by breaking diplomatic links and ending collaboration).' (30/6/81).

'Britain can be beaten when the Free State premier, the SDLP leader and the Catholic hierarchy are forced to apply their muscle instead of as present playing with it.' (13/7/81).

This illusion was being peddled at a time when industrial stoppages over H Block were spreading in the South. The vote that got two H Block prisoners elected to the Dail came largely from young workers who were also protesting against the record of Fianna Fail in office. Jobs, wages and high taxation were the issues.

Failure to couple opposition to Britain with opposition to the Southern State's attacks on the working class meant a wasted opportunity for the Provisionals. Even worse was their suggestion that Haughey, John Hume of the SDLP and Cardinal O'Fiach, could somehow lose their class allegiance and take on Thatcher.

Half those who voted for the prisoners switched to the Workers' Party at the next election. Since then support for candidates concentrating on the Northern struggle has collapsed.

The reason for this is that because the Workers' Party talk about jobs and wages, and concentrate on 'class politics,' they seem a socialist alternative to Fianna Fail. The Provisionals, on the other hand, talk in the same nationalist terms Charles Haughey trots out when it suits him. In the North the position is reversed. The Workers' Party attracts little support because they support the RUC and want a return to Stormont rule, while the Provisionals are seen as opposing British repression.

Yet for all their newfound socialist rhetoric the Northern leadership of the Provisionals are caught in the republican trap. An Armalite can't solve Belfast's housing problems and no number of Assembly representatives can stop a factory from closing. The emphasis is on helping people — through constituency clinics, claimants' unions and advice centres. Instead of organising street demonstrations on the housing issue.

At the end of last year a strike broke out at Eastwoods, an engineering plant on the Falls Road. But because the factory was owned by a republican sympathiser, the Provisionals

saw their role as solving the dispute by bringing nationalist bosses together with a nationalist workforce under their nationalist leadership — as if some sort of common interest linked them.

As long as the sole issue is nationalist unity to get rid of Britain, the Provo left will be trapped within existing republican organisation. Because that in turn depends on support from America, from the largely right wing Southern leadership — and, it must be added, from the owner of Eastwoods — any genuinely socialist direction based on working class struggle is ruled out.

Commenting on the civil rights' marches fourteen years ago *International Socialism* pointed out that 'the limit of what could be achieved by mass mobilisation within the boundaries of the six counties' had been reached. That is as true with the hunger strikes and their aftermath as it was then.

Even with the full support of half a million Catholics the IRA could not force a second Dunkirk on British troops. To defeat British imperialism a civil war is required — not against Protestants but against the *Irish* ruling class. By backing the economic struggles of Southern workers the grounds for that can be laid (something neither the Provisionals nor the Workers' Party do).

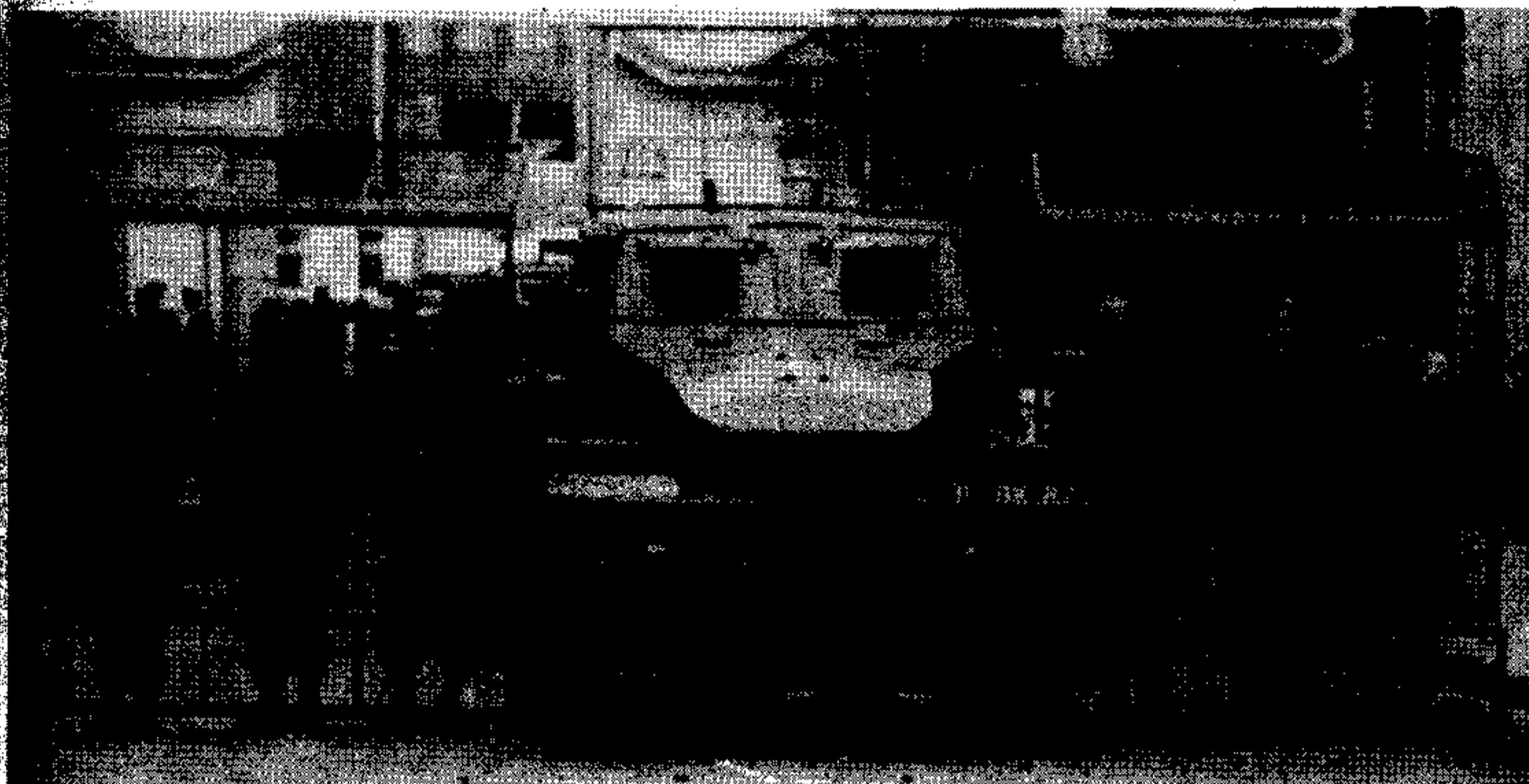
That in turn opens up the possibility of winning Protestant workers to the need for a Workers' Republic, small though their initial number may be.

The notion that Protestant workers in the North resemble South African white workers or the Algerian 'pied noir', or that they form one reactionary block with Unionist bosses and landlords, is false. What privileges they have amount to access to skilled work and slightly better slum housing. Today Northern Ireland has a higher percentage of trade union members than Britain, most of whom are Protestants.

Neither is sectarianism the *automatic* response of Protestant workers. 1907, 1919 and 1944 saw massive strike waves; 1932 the unemployed riots.

The 1907 strike, caused by a lock-out of dockers, was attacked by Unionist politicians and the Nationalist Party, the Orange Lodge and the Catholic Church. Yet it stuck solid, with an independent Orange Lodge joining protest marches in support. In response to attempts by the British Army and the newspapers to provoke sectarian riots, joint Protestant and Catholic picket lines





Defeating British Imperialism means defeating the Irish ruling class

moved onto the Falls Road to keep order themselves.

Leadership was not always in Protestant hands. Jim Larkin made no secret of his socialist beliefs when leading the 1907 near-general strike in Belfast. In 1919, the chairman of the 40 hours' strike committee was a Catholic, while the 1932 riots were the culmination of six years of unemployed activity by the Belfast Communist Party.

What destroyed this impressive unity was not sectarianism but the behaviour of the trade union bureaucracy. In 1907, the Dockers' Union leader, James Sexton, came from Britain to order the strikers to return to work, having gained nothing. Months later, he sacked Larkin.

In 1919 the engineering union and the Boilermakers refused to make the strike official, and the strike ended when the British TUC dismissed the strike committee from union membership. Nevertheless, it lasted four weeks, longer than on the 'Red Clyde'. Starting in the shipyards it spread to all Belfast's engineering plants, the tram and electrical workers.

All this was at a time when guerrilla war by the IRA was sweeping much of Ireland. Despite their best efforts, the Unionist leaders and press couldn't exploit sectarian feelings to break the strike — they had instead to rely on the TUC.

In 1932 the Belfast Trades Council broke the back of the unemployed movement by creating their own moderate organisation which then entered into negotiations with the Stormont Government.

In 1944 a strike in engineering successfully broke a government pay freeze, despite the arrest of leading shop stewards. But it was a strike as much against the union officials, whose no-strike pledge to aid the war effort 'Loyalists' might have been expected to rally round.

Last year Northern Ireland was extremely militant during the hospital dispute. The September 22nd stoppage and a previous

local day of action got more support than virtually anywhere else. Mainly Protestant workers in shipbuilding and engineering struck in support of mainly Catholic hospital ancillaries. The militancy at the joint rallies and pickets was tremendous. Inside the Protestant ghettos it was easy to explain why you were mixing with Taigs, why you had to strike against the government. But with the sell-out in the hospitals those same Protestant workers returned to their ghettos with their tails between their legs.

What all this proves is that sectarian ideas only make headway when working class struggle is defeated. When union officials sell out, it destroys the idea of solidarity between Catholic and Protestant workers. The only way to deal with unemployment seems to be through Protestants sticking together.

Solidarity

Even so the collapse into sectarianism after the sellout isn't immediate. After the 1907 strike with the Home Rule Crisis at its height it took five years before the sectarian riots broke. A year after the 1919 strike, building workers also won a 40 hour week, and 100,000 marched in Belfast on May Day. Labour candidates took 97 seats in local elections in Ulster, forcing the Unionist *Irish Times* to comment that there seemed no great desire for partition.

By the end of 1920 pogroms occurred. Amongst the first victims were the Protestant stewards who had led the 40 hours' strikes. They were chased out of the shipyards. Their pleas for help were ignored by their own unions, the British and Irish TUCs.

Sectarian riots only occurred three years after the failure of the unemployed riots in Belfast, with the sell-out of an all-Ireland rail strike.

With rising Catholic hysteria in the South, witch-hunts in the unions, and a nationalist 'Economic War', there was no real alter-

native to sectarianism for Protestant workers.

The tragedy lay in the absence of any socialist alternative which could intervene round these struggles, gain an audience amongst a section of Protestant workers and keep alive the spirit shown during the strikes. The republicans were incapable of doing that.

In Britain today, under the impact of the recession and the Falklands war, the ruling idea among workers are those of *The Sun* and *The Daily Star*. In Belfast they are even more vicious. The ideas of Paisley, Powell and the Orange Lodge are deep-rooted.

Yet, despite tremendous difficulties, it is possible to relate to Protestant workers in struggle. Our comrades in the Socialist Workers' Movement were able to bring together workers in the De Lorean occupation with those occupying the Clondalkin paper mills in Dublin. De Lorean workers also backed a jobs' march from Waterford to the Dail in Dublin.

That experience showed it was possible to relate to a minority of Protestant workers and still maintain opposition to British repression. It also challenged the ideas of the Orange Lodge that by Protestants standing together Catholics could be kept at the bottom of society.

The key to the Irish problem lies with the creation of an organisation that makes working class activity and solidarity central. The republican tradition can't do that. Instead of talk about nationalist unity the language should be of class struggle, echoing what Connolly once told an Irish-American audience in New York:

'I represent only the class to which I belong and that is the working class. The Irish people like the people of this and other capitalist countries are divided into the master class and the working class and I could not represent the entire Irish people on account of the antagonistic interests of these classes.' □

The essential element

The working class as the centre of the struggle for socialism is one of the foundations of Marx's theory. Colin Sparks looks at how Marx came to the idea.

Towards the end of the first volume, of *Capital* Marx summed up the 'Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation'. He wrote:

'As soon as this process of transformation has sufficiently decomposed the old society from top to bottom, as soon as the labourers are turned into proletarians, their means of labour into capital, as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet, then the further socialisation of labour and further transformation of the land and other means of production into socially exploited and, therefore, common means of production, as well as the further expropriation of private proprietors, takes a new form.

'That which is now to be expropriated is no longer the labourer working for himself, but the capitalist exploiting many labourers. This expropriation is accomplished by the action of the immanent laws of capitalistic production itself, by the centralisation of capital. One capitalist always kills many.

'Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever-extending scale, the co-operative form of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economising of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialised labour, the entanglement of all peoples of the world in the net of the world market, and with this, the international character of the capitalistic regime.

'Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery degradation, exploitation; but with this too grow the revolt of the working class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself.

'The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are

expropriated.'

This is a fine statement of Marx's developed view of the role of the proletariat in the transformation of society. As capitalism developed the means of production everything, from land to machinery, was gradually wrested away from the producers. The peasant of the middle ages usually owned at least some tools and maybe animals with which to work the family plot. The modern worker owns only his or her ability to work. The means of production are held by another class, the capitalists.

But while the means of production became more and more the exclusive possession of a tiny number of capitalists, the nature of production changed too. Factory production is socialised labour. It is work which depends for its completion on the joint efforts of a large number of workers. You can dig potatoes on your own; you can't build motor cars that way.

Socialised labour is immensely more productive than individual labour. It also allows the application of developed scientific techniques to production, further increasing

The working class is not an important part in the struggle for socialism; it is the essential element

its productivity. It takes progressively less and less labour time to produce the things essential for the continued life of society.

Under capitalism, the enormous surplus is expropriated by the owners of the means of production, who invest the vast bulk of it as part of their competitive struggle with each other. In this struggle there are winners and losers, ever more monopolised branches of production and more and more bankrupt capitalists. Society is increasingly polarised into capitalists and wage workers.

From the point of view of the wage workers the enemy becomes a tiny class of capitalists who are responsible for the increasing exploitation and misery which accompanies the growth of the system. But these workers are forced to think collectively by the very nature of the work they are engaged in. Any strike demonstrates that: you cannot go on strike on your own, you have to get all of the workers in at least one factory to go on strike at the same time.

So the struggle against capitalist society takes on an ever more collective form. And

as the crises and contradictions of that society become ever more apparent the struggle against capitalism develops into a struggle for the overthrow of capitalism.

When capitalism is finally overthrown, it is replaced by socialism. This is because the class which is going to take over the running of society is one which necessarily uses the means of production collectively and therefore its ownership of the means of production is also collective.

For Marx socialism is not the result of moral protest against the evils of society. There certainly is moral protest, but that is the result of material forces. Those material forces are the product of the development of capitalism and the conditions for their victory are prepared by the development of capitalism itself. The working class is not an important part in the struggle for socialism; it is the essential element.

Marx did not come to these ideas easily. As Gareth Jenkins showed last month, the utopian socialists, whose ideas provided Marx with his first introduction to socialism, had no idea of the working class as the active agent in socialist change. Their attention to the working class was incidental and the workers were for them objects of pity who needed to be saved from their misery and squalor.

When Marx did first recognise the central role of the working class his position was very much a minority one amongst socialists and communists. The initial appeal of the ideas was as an ethical protest against current evils. Engels wrote to Marx in March 1845 describing the first impact of communist ideas on his home town:

'Here in Elberfeld wondrous things are afoot. Yesterday we held our third communist meeting in the town's largest hall and leading inn. The first meeting was forty strong, the second 130 and the third at least 200. All Elberfeld and Barmen, from the financial aristocracy to grocers, was represented, only the proletariat being excluded.'

Germany was at that time a rather backward country, and it was from the more advanced capitalist societies, particularly France and England, that the central role of the working class emerged.

It was in fact Engels, long before he became a friend of Marx, who first grasped the importance of the working class. He was sent by his family to manage their cotton factory in the very heart of the industrial revolution, Manchester. He arrived in late 1842, just after the end of a massive strike wave which had challenged the government. Labelled the 'Plug Plot' by reactionary historians, this was in fact one of the first modern general strikes and had even involved embryo workers' councils.

The initial impact of British conditions must have come as something as a shock to Engels. He came as an educated radical democrat and found that radical democracy had no appeal to the middle classes. His first article on England, written from London at the end of November 1842, summed up his new knowledge:

'Chartism has not yet been able to gain any hold among educated people in England and will remain unable to do so



You cannot go on strike on your own: Out the gate at Cowley

for some time yet. When people here speak of Chartists and radicals, they almost always have in mind the lower strata of society, the mass of proletarians, and it is true that the party's few educated spokesmen are lost among the masses.'

Engels also had his attention drawn to the fact that new social classes use different forms of struggles. He was soon writing about the strike wave of 1842, but was very disparaging about its organisation and leadership. The struggle had begun over wages and Engels was inclined to dismiss this all in terms reminiscent of some socialists today who use the term 'economism' as an excuse for avoiding a real engagement with the working class. Although he had broken far enough from his intellectual past in Hegel to see that political ideas represented material interests he was still very confused

about the exact relationship.

Within a few months of coming to Britain Engels came to know much more of working class movement and was soon publishing articles in the Chartist press. He was clearly very impressed by the movement and through it started to think about political economy in a serious fashion. We will look at the issues raised by economics in a later article. What is important here is that political economy in Britain had developed into a study which assumed social classes — and in particular a class of people who owned nothing but their ability to labour.

By November 1843 Engels was already writing an *Outline of a Critique of Political Economy*. This article was still a long way from the developed ideas of *Capital* but already Engels was arguing:

'The split between capital and labour re-

sulting from private property is nothing but the inner dichotomy of labour corresponding to this divided condition and arising out of it ... All these subtle splits and divisions stem from the original separation of capital from labour — the division of mankind into capitalists and workers — a division which daily becomes ever more acute, and which, as we shall see, is bound to deepen.'

This is at least the embryo of the language of modern communism. It is a radical departure from the language of the French Revolution, of 'people' against 'aristos' and from the language of German radicalism, of the educated against the philistines.

By this time Engels was starting his collaboration with Marx. He had met Marx a couple of years earlier but they had found little in common. Now, on 29 August 1844 they met in Paris and as Engels later put it:

'Our complete agreement in all theoretical fields became obvious and our joint work dates from that time.'

Marx had stayed longer in backward - Germany than had Engels and his political development had been conditioned by his circumstances. He had been made aware of the importance of social conditions by his defence of peasants' customary rights to use

'But in any case it is among these "barbarians" of our civilised society that history is preparing the practical element for the emancipation of mankind'

wood taken from the forests and by his research into the condition of the wine-growers of the Moselle, but neither of these groups were modern proletarians. Marx's solution was to call for greater democratic rights and in particular a free press.

When Marx moved to Paris in October 1843, he entered a new atmosphere. As Noel Halifax explained in an earlier article in this series, both Marx and Engels owed a great debt to the criticism of religion. One of the things which surprised Engels when he went to Manchester was the fact that the anti-religious movement was almost entirely working class. Marx had a similar experience in Paris. As he wrote to Ludwig Feuerbach in August 1844:

'It is a remarkable phenomenon that, in contrast to the eighteenth century, religiosity has now passed to the middle and upper classes while on the other hand irreligiosity — but an irreligiosity of men regarding themselves as men — had descended on the French proletariat. You would have to attend one of the meetings of the French workers to appreciate the pure freshness, the nobility which burst forth from these toil-worn men. The English proletarian is also advancing

with giant strides but he lacks the cultural background of the French. But I must not forget to emphasise the theoretical merits of the German artisans in Switzerland, London and Paris. The German artisan is still however too much of an artisan.

'But in any case it is among these "barbarians" of our civilised society that history is preparing the practical element for the emancipation of mankind.'

It is clear that when they met, Marx and Engels were moving along converging lines. We do not know any detail about their famous meeting. Engels, who is our main source, was customarily very modest and always attributed the leading role to Marx in any intellectual development. But there is at least a case, based on what they had already written, that it was Engels who clarified and crystallised Marx's developing view of the working class.

Marx had already made his first real statement on the proletariat before they met. His *Introduction to the Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* argued that in Germany the proletariat was 'the heart' of human emancipation. But its thinking active part, its 'head' was to be philosophy.

Marx had also begun to read some political economy, but it was Engels' *Outline* which set him on the road of serious study. He began writing the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* after reading Engels' article and acknowledges his debt. He met Engels just as he had finished them.

However that may be, the revolutionary importance of this work is of the first order. It does not contain the same detailed scientific content as later writings but it does contain the germ of the idea of the working class as an active agent.

As we have seen, Marx's earlier view of the working class was still conditioned by its suffering. At best it was the emotional force, the 'heart' of the revolution. In the first six months of 1844 Marx changed that view. We can see the change taking place in an article he wrote while in the middle of his longer researches.

In June 1844 a rising of weavers occurred in Silesia in the state of Prussia. Put down by the military, both Marx and Engels noted it eagerly as the birth of the German workers' movement. Ruge, a former close collaborator of Marx, published an article denigrating the workers. Many people thought Marx was the author, since it had been attributed to 'A Prussian' to avoid police pressure. Marx immediately published a long and indignant reply.

In the course of his defence of the weavers, Marx argued that the Germans:

'a philosophical people can find its corresponding practice only in socialism, hence it is only in the *proletariat* that it can find the dynamic element of its emancipation.'

This is a different proposition from the proletariat as 'heart.' Not only are socialism and the proletariat naturally linked together but the working class is now the *dynamic* element in social change.

The underlying reason for this change was that Marx's work on political economy had brought him to look closely at the nature of labour. One aspect of that study led Marx

to re-work the old Hegelian idea of alienation in terms of capitalist production, where the products of human labour are ex-

'To assert that division of labour and exchange rest on private property is nothing but asserting that labour is the essence of private property'

propriated from the labourer who does not own the means of production.

But that study of alienation also led him to look at the historical dynamic of capitalist society:

'The examination of division of labour and exchange is of extreme interest, because these are perceptibly alienated expressions of human activity and essential power as a species activity and species power.'

'To assert that division of labour and exchange rest on private property is nothing but asserting that labour is the essence of private property—an assertion which the political economist cannot prove and which we wish to prove for him. Precisely in the fact that division of labour and exchange are aspects of private property lies the twofold proof, on the one hand that human life required private property for its realisation; and on the other hand that it now requires the supersession of private property.'

'Division of labour and exchange are the two phenomena which lead the political economist to boast of the social character of his science, while in the same breath he gives unconscious expression to the contradiction in his science—the motivation of society by unsocial particular interests.'

Labour, real material human labour by which people satisfy their wants, is now at the centre of Marx's theory. So too is the role of private property in both developing the means of production and preparing the ground for its own overthrow by creating a class of workers who labour collectively. Marx had the grounds for a theory of scientific socialism.

Much in the *1844 Manuscripts* would later be substantially altered. For example, Marx speaks continually of 'human' and 'human essence' and 'species being.' These



The Black country around Wolverhampton 1866

suggest some sort of eternal unchanging aspect to humanity which is independent of labour. This Marx was later to abandon for the more properly historical idea of human beings as defined by different sorts of social relations.

In fact, even here Marx was only to grant a very limited scope to the idea of 'species being'. He wrote: 'The forming of the five senses is a labour of the entire history of the world down to the present' and went on to argue that even in the case of food, human consumption was determined by the level of society. But the static idea is still there and is an important limitation.

Despite this limitation, the work marks a decisive shift of interest. From now on the working class would be at the centre of all the major writings of Marx and Engels. Their first collaborative work together, mostly written by Marx, was *The Holy Family*. This was an attack on some of the former fellow-thinkers who were unable to make the shift to new conditions. A number of them, par-

For Marx, then, the proletarian revolution is not a matter of chance or morals but something that arises out of the nature of bourgeois society

ticularly Bruno Bauer, an old friend of Marx, had developed a highly elitist view of social change in which the key agency for change was the intellectual.

Polemicalising against these 'Critical Critics', Marx summed up his new position: 'Private property drives itself in its economic movement towards its own dissolution, but only through a development which does not depend on it, which is unconscious and which takes place against the will of private property by the very nature of things, only inasmuch as it produces the proletariat as proletariat, poverty which is conscious of its spiritual and physical poverty, dehumanisation which is conscious of its dehumanisation, and therefore self-abolishing.

'The proletariat executes the sentence that private property pronounces on itself by producing the proletariat, just as it executes the sentence that wage-labour pronounces on itself by producing wealth for others and poverty for itself. When the proletariat is victorious, it by no means becomes the absolute side of society, for it is victorious only by abolishing itself and its opposite. Then the proletariat disappears as well as the opposite which determines it, private property.

'When socialist writers ascribe this world historic role to the proletariat, it is not at all, as Critical Criticism pretends to



A forge in the 1850s

believe, because they regard the proletarians as *gods*. Rather the contrary. Since in the fully-formed proletariat the abstraction of all humanity, even of the semblance of humanity, is practically complete; since the conditions of life of society today in their most inhuman form; since man has lost himself in the proletariat, yet at the same time has not only gained theoretical consciousness of that loss, but through urgent, absolutely imperative need — the practical expression of necessity — is driven directly to revolt against this inhumanity, it follows that the proletariat can and must emancipate itself.

'But it cannot emancipate itself without abolishing the conditions of its own life. It cannot abolish the conditions of its own life without abolishing all the inhuman conditions of life of society today which are summed up in its own situation.

'Not in vain does it go through the stern but steeling school of labour. It is not a question of what this or that proletariat, or even the whole proletariat, at the moment regards as its aim. It is a question of *what the proletariat is*, and what, in accordance with this *being*, it will historically be compelled to do.'

For Marx, then, the proletarian revolution is not a matter of chance or morals but something which arises out of the nature of bourgeois society. But there is an additional factor. When Marx writes about the proletariat not becoming the 'absolute' in society he is contrasting the workers' revolu-

tion with the revolutions led by the bourgeoisie.

When the bourgeoisie led the struggle against the last remains of feudalism and royal power, as in the Great French Revolution, it spoke in the name of all the 'people'. But it was, and is, a class based on private property. Thus when it won power it, and the type of property it depended on, became the 'absolute' in society. It established a new power over society, more dynamic but every bit as brutal as the royal power it had supplanted.

Because the fact of the proletariat coming to power necessarily entails the abolition of private property it means the end of the domination of one class over another. There is no private interest which needs to be defended by the terror of the state and the lies of ideas. So the proletarian revolution is ultimately in the interest of the whole of humanity.

Marx and Engels still had much to learn. The picture of a proletarian society leading directly to the abolition of classes was one which had to be modified. Experience was to show, and theory to confirm, that the possessing classes would not give up without a bitter fight and that the proletariat would need its own state machine to hold on to power until society was re-organised and classes *really* abolished.

They would also have to learn, in the revolutions of 1848 above all, that the possibilities of workers' revolutions needed tactics, strategy and organisation to become a concrete reality. But they now had the central ideas. □

More Sounds

Dear Socialist Review,

Noel Halifax's article *The Sounds of Struggle* (SR 52) marked a welcome break from the recent cultural policy (or non-policy) of *Socialist Review*. When a boring ex-Trotskyist called Ted Grant was thrown out of the Labour Party, *Socialist Review* dissected the manoeuvre with loving care. But when an exciting black singer called Eddy Grant got to number two in the charts with a record openly advocating street violence, *Socialist Review* did not deign to notice.

Or again, asked to vote for what they considered to be 'event of the year' for 1982 *New Musical Express* readers put the Falklands War second and Greenham Common third. What came first? The break-up of The Jam. The most prestigious bourgeois newspaper in Europe, *Le Monde* sent its correspondent to London specially for The Jam's farewell concert. Once again *Socialist Review* was looking the other way.

Certainly Noel's article was a cut above other recent *Socialist Review* contributions on music. Jennifer Batchelor's defence of Wagner (SR 48) was just a rerun of the tired old argument about 'taking over the best of bourgeois culture' (though why Wagner's anti-Semitic pretentiousness should be the 'best' I don't know). Opera used to be for the elite but now 'we' can all see it on television. Jennifer should ponder Brecht's remark that 'literary works cannot be taken over like factories.'

The other side of the coin to Jennifer's paternalism is Marta Wöhrle's liberalism in defence of disco music (SR 49). Disco is as good as anything else because it is 'quite good fun'. This attitude is nothing but passive consumerism. Many years ago, back in the good old days when he was half-way to being a Marxist, Edward Thompson wrote a crushing rejoinder to this sort of cultural liberalism:

'The imagery is that of the prospectus of a new self-service store. Mr Wollheim will draw Proust and Mr Jones will draw *Seventy Splendid Nudes* and Mr Brown will draw the 'Book of Revelations' and I will draw the *Nibelungenlied* — and what the hell shall we all do with what we draw?'

As against all this Noel asserts quite clearly that music is political, and that the only music worth bothering with is that which comes out of the rock tradition. At the risk of seeming ungrateful, I nonetheless feel obliged to express some reservations about Noel's arguments.

First of all, is it really still necessary in 1983, to prove one's Trotskyist credentials by be-

labouring the Proletcult? The Proletcult was a far richer and more complex phenomenon than Noel's caricature would suggest. I would commend to Noel's attention Victor Serge's 1925 essay *Is a Proletarian Literature Possible?*; this gives a vivid account of what the Proletcult actually meant in practice:

... the fifty workers in the Workers Springtime group have been turning out "extensive work in the last period, having tackled 15 plays, 76 short stories, 261 poems and 20 lectures, in 96 evening meetings attended by 450 writers." Don't laugh at these laconic statistics. Remember that two-thirds of these workers walk in the winter snows of Russia with holes in their boots. They don't go to the cafe. They work and write with the lovely candour of children determined to grow up.

'The Vagranka Group in the Rogoysko-Simimovsky suburb of Moscow is made up of sixteen workers who write for the press. Perkati-Pole, an old Bolshevik writer, a forgotten man, blind and dirt poor, gathers them in his comfortless lodgings and teaches them how to get rhythm into their verse and prose. There are not enough chairs; they crouch in a circle on the floor. They arrive smelling of tar, machine oil and metallic dust.'

As far as the claim that Socialist Realism somehow descends from the Proletcult, this is nothing but an unfounded smear. In any case the relevance of the Russian debate is limited. The cultural level of the Russian working class in 1917 was utterly different from that of the British working class in 1983, and there can be no real comparison as far as cultural struggle is concerned.

I am likewise unconvinced of the relevance of the German experience which Noel discusses. There is nothing unique about the way in which the German SPD used cultural organisations in order to consolidate its base. In 1926, for example, our very own Herbert Morrison had organised twenty London Labour choirs — though the projected London Labour Symphony Orchestra never got off the ground. (Morrison, incidentally, was adept at using music in a manipulative way. His biographers tell us that at Party socials he

'rationed the dances to one person, and never concentrated on the gay young "flappers", but flirted with the more elderly ladies. In this way he built up a core of devoted admirers, his "key women", ... He knew how to charm them and was proud to have them almost fighting each other to get a dance with him.' But all this belongs to a bygone



I don't know much about politics but I know what I like!

age of reformism; we can scarcely imagine the Labour Party developing such cultural practices again. Its lack of an actively involved working class base makes it impossible.

Which leaves us with the question of what is to be done. Here I found the latter part of Noel's article rather disappointing. Noel seems to be so busy looking over both shoulders simultaneously to prove that he is both a swinger and a Bolshevik that he doesn't offer any perspective for intervention. Yet the important thing to be learnt from Trotsky's writings of the twenties is not his critique of the proletcult, and not his defence of the autonomy of art (we have bourgeois critics in profusion carrying that argument), but his insistence on the role of the Party in cultural struggle. Trotsky argues that the Party must intervene sensitively and intelligently with artists groping for new forms to express new situations and new values — but it must intervene.

'The domain of art is not one in which the Party is called upon to command. It can and must protect and help it, but it can only lead it indirectly ... The Party stands guard over the historic interests of the working class in its entirety. Because it prepares consciously and step by step the ground for a new culture and therefore for a new art, it regards the literary fellow travellers not as the competitors of the writers of the working class, but as the real or potential helpers of the working class in the big work of reconstruction. The Party understands the episodic character of the literary groups of a transition period and estimates them, not from the point of view of the class passports of the individual gentlemen literati, but from the point of view of the place which these groups occupy and can occupy in preparing a Socialist culture ... The Party will repel the clearly poisonous, disintegrating tendencies of art and will guide itself by its political standards.'

Noel is quite right to stress the roots of music in working class creativity and self-activity. (The point might well be studied by Colin

Sparks, who in the same issue of *Socialist Review* uses the analogy of the orchestral conductor in a rather sinister defence of the necessity for managers under socialism. A cursory glance at *Top of the Pops* will reveal that it's quite possible to get by without a conductor).

But the problem of 'selling out' is not simply one of an eternal contradiction between working class creativity and the capacity of bourgeois culture to co-opt and defuse radicalism. It may be true that Elvis Presley, John Lennon and Tom Robinson all 'sold out'. But they were not all the same sell out. The trajectory of an individual artist will depend on the state of ideological health of the system, the general level of the class struggle, and the alternative forms of organisation offered by the working class movement.

To take one example among many. Listen to The Jam's *Little Boy Soldiers* (on the *Life in the European Theatre* LP) and ask yourself why performers with that degree of analysis and sheer hatred of the capitalist war machine aren't in some sort of organised relation with the revolutionary left. It's no good saying they're too rich or that Polydor wouldn't let them; Paul Robeson and Charlie Chaplin weren't exactly short of a bob or two. The answer must lie in the relative isolation of the revolutionary left and its lack of adequate structures for cultural intervention. It may well be that *Rock Against Racism*, like the Rank and File Movement, is too ambitious a form of organisation for the present phase of the downturn. But the fact remains that the task of the Party is cultural struggle, not cultural commentary.

As one of the Redskins put in on Channel Four a few weeks ago: 'There are too many rock and roll philosophers interpreting the world; the point is to fucking change it.'

Now shouldn't he be in the SWP?
Ian Birchall

Editor's Note: Chris Moore of the Redskins is a member of the SWP. As we said before, socialists argue over music—any other contributions to this debate, or any other would be welcome.

Oppose the YTS

Dear Socialist Review,

'Youth into the Factories', Dave Beecham's article on the Youth Training Scheme in *Socialist Review* 52 strikes me as being over-optimistic and short on some important political arguments. Dave argues that with 450,000 trainees, in 'work' for the first time, 'the potential is enormous'. To me this sounds a bit like the TUC's analysis plus added militancy. The TUC guide to the YTS says: 'Under the YTS there are large opportunities but also massive challenges.'

Dave correctly points out that the TUC's answer to the challenge—representatives on the MSC (Manpower Services Commission) area boards—is a useless piece of nonsense. It's workplace organisation that will be crucial. But his argument misses out some key issues.

The MSC and government claim that the scheme is about training. It's not in any proper sense of the word. The TUC and the Labour Party tend to go along with this claim. Labour policy is to make some changes in the scheme and to increase the allowance from £25 to £50 a week. Shades of Jim Callaghan's Great Education Debate, where the argument was that the reason for the decline of British industry was that schools and colleges were teaching the wrong kinds of things.

Claims that the scheme is about training look a bit sick when you consider the number of schemes and courses that taught real skills which have been closed down in the last two or three years. The Tories are restructuring education and training. Gone are the days of the sixties when British capitalism needed more skilled labour, and the colleges and universities were opened up a little to allow in a minority of the working class youth who had previously been excluded.

The Tories have a vision of the future where a deskilled workforce, disciplined by intermittent unemployment is the rule, and where only a small minority need, and are allowed to acquire, real skills. The current cuts in education, plus the YTS and attacks on trade union organisation are their strategy for winning this Tory utopia.

Of course any such restructuring succeeds or fails on the strength of the organised working class. As Dave points out, the YTS aims to



drive down wages.

Thatcher's chief economic adviser, Professor Walters, said about an earlier version of the scheme, that he sees it as a first step in removing the 'inefficiencies' and 'distortions' of the labour market created by trade union bargaining.

It's early days yet, but it looks as if the majority of the trainees will not be in the large well-organised workplaces that Dave mentions. The scheme is obviously attractive, to employers, as a means of undermining trade union control through traditional apprenticeship schemes. More often it will be taken up by employers in areas where trade union organisation is weak or non-existent, such as office and shop work.

They can substitute real jobs, enjoy free labour for a year and dismiss the trainees at the end of the year. These are challenges to socialists which must be faced, but we should recognise that the successful introduction of the scheme means we start from a position of relative weakness.

The large numbers on YTS creates opportunities for collective organisation, but one thing that is often forgotten is the ideology behind the YTS and its predecessors, like YOP. The MSC schemes and, in particular, the 'education' component of them aim to destroy any notions of collective action amongst the trainees. They peddle a view that unemployment is an individual problem with individual solutions. In my part of West London, unemployed black youth are told that they should aim to set up as small independent builders!

My conclusion is the same as Dave's, that socialists face a challenge in organising among trainees. What we also need is the political arguments, some of which I've tried to sketch here, about why we oppose the YTS.

Pete Connell

Dear Socialist Review,

Whoa! Dave Beecham is going over the top a little. His description of YTS is no exaggeration. Rather things are worse. A recent story from Manchester makes the point: pilot YTSers, working for Greater Manchester County (GMC) stormed into the office of their training centre. The reason? Pressure had been put on GMC *not* to employ them at the end of the 12 months so as to leave places free for the next lot of trainees.

In the present climate YTS isn't about training at all. It's about jobs. Everywhere there is a surplus of trained skills. YTS is about providing a fig leaf to cover the government's record on youth unemployment. Thatcher is of course using the present slump to destroy any real trade union control ie shop floor control over training. But there is hardly any shop floor training left anyhow. Come the next

boom, training will become an issue again. In the meantime, as the GMC example shows, YTSers are only off the dole for 12 months before being put back on. Organising from scratch in a year is almost impossible. The key demand for organised workers is that, as a minimum, YTSers only come into the workplace if they are guaranteed that any places available at the end of the year go to them. No merry-go-rounds!

It is possible there will be an eruption on YTS. After the riots of 1981 only a fool would say otherwise. But trainees are no freer from the depressing effects of the slump than anyone else. YTS is a time-bomb but don't make out the fuse is any shorter than the dozens of other fuses that are burning away. Roll on the upturn, build the SWP in preparation, but don't jump the gun.

Geoff Brown
Manchester

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They must be mad?

A Question of Silence
Director Marleen Gorris

Three women are on trial for beating a boutique owner to death. None of them had met him before, yet all joined in killing him when he had tried to stop one of them shop-lifting. Also in the court but unknown to the judges are four other women who were present when the murder took place. They stayed silent then and they sit in silence now.

The women have all confessed and all the court needs to do is pronounce sentence. But the judges want to do more than just pass a verdict. They want to pass a moral judgement, they want a motive to explain why the murder took place. They look to the psychiatrist (also a woman) to provide the necessary explanations. But she is uncooperative, she tells them that her work with them has made her conclude that they are sane, ordinary women fully responsible for their actions.

The judges protest, this isn't good enough; the women must be mad; the psychiatrist really must do better. The psychiatrist patiently restates her diagnosis.

'But there must be a motive' cry the judges.

'There are many possible motives, surely it has not escaped the notice of the court that all the defendants are women and the victim was a man?' replies the psychiatrist.

'Ridiculous! Of course we've noticed that, but what difference would it have made to us if the victim had been a woman and all the criminals men?'

Slowly, very slowly, the three

women start to laugh. The judges call for silence but they carry on laughing, in fact they are joined in their laughter by the four silent witnesses, and the psychiatrist. The laughter is infectious; all around me in the cinema women started to laugh; it was a powerful and unnerving moment.

As the psychiatrist said it really was very funny. Unfortunately like the judges a lot of people haven't seen the joke. Rarely has a film received such a divided press. Like the judges' approach to the question of motive much of the criticism has approached the film upside down. The telling of the story has been taken more seriously than what the film is talking about.

In real life the crime would not happen, in real life eyewitnesses to a brutal murder would not stay silent be they all women or not, critics have protested. True, but in real life people have stayed silent. Recently in America a woman was raped in a bar in New Bedford. No-one in the bar tried to intervene. All present were men. They would probably have seen the funny side of the judges' remarks that it wouldn't have made any difference to their attitude if the criminals had been men.

A Question of Silence certainly isn't a socialist film, people are divided by sex and by sex divided they stay. All men unite behind all men, women behind all women. But if a political film's impact is measured by how much it provokes its audience into thinking about the society they live in then *A Question of Silence* scores very highly indeed. It is one of the most sophisticated and powerful political films I have ever seen and I urge people to try and see it despite its politics.

Peter Court

The right to wear trousers

The Color Purple
Alice Walker
The Women's Press, £3.95

This is a beautiful book and it's no wonder that it has made the 'alternative bestseller' lists. Its author is a US black woman, and her writing is deeply informed by that experience.

The story is about two things. Growing up black in the deep south in the time between the two World Wars, and the quest for 'roots' in Africa.

Whites this side of the Atlantic can do little but empathise, enjoy and learn from the 'black' part of the book. Suffice to say that Alice Walker provides an exquisite indictment of imperialism in its

guise of organised religion. She also succeeds in raising unanswered questions about African religion, facial scarification and female 'circumcision' or clitorrectomy.

The book takes the form of letters to and from the central character, Celie. The other main characters are all women, at least until the end of the book where Celie's 'husband' at last acquires an identity and turns out to be a decent sort of chap after all. Until then, this man, Albert is referred to, quite deliberately, as Mr.....

This reflects the fact that the book is actually about women and fair enough. But let male readers be warned; the experience may well be disconcerting.

Alice Walker writes in the

fictional writing which, to the mind of this reviewer at least, constitutes the most important recreational reading available to socialists in English.

What Alice Walker invites us to learn about being a *working woman* may have a deeper resonance for socialists here. Because the book covers most of Celie's life we can see clearly what the family means to the people in the book.

For these women, marriage means being given away out of economic necessity, perhaps to an unwilling man. Children mean pain, agony and loss as well as joy and pride. The book is hilariously funny as well as moving.

In Celie's life, the important relationships are those with the women (and men) with whom she shares common experiences of struggle and pleasure. Celie finds (and loses) the physical love of another woman and the extra intensity of feeling which homosexual love brings. But Celie lives in an all-too real world, and sexual exclusiveness is *not* one of the messages of the book. The right of

women to behave independently of men *is*. In fact one of the many nice little 'sub-plots' is about clothing and women's right to wear trousers!

The book is admittedly a little thin when it comes to explaining how its various characters actually earn a living. It's not so thin that it should *offend* the Marxist in the street but the characters hop about from subsistence farming and setting up clothing factories with disconcerting ease at times.

Since the book is about *blacks* in the period where slavery was a real memory, *class* as a dimension *within* black society is not clearly defined. No matter, for the class enemy in the shape of the white state and the white rich is ever present.

Alice Walker deals skilfully with the relationship between the black extended 'family' and a rather déclassé white woman. She puts her poisonous pen to good use against an utterly anonymous figure of the white ruling class, the local mayor.

If you like your fiction to be pure escapism; a neat story, with a beginning, a middle and an end, this book will pleasantly surprise you.

Sybil Cock

Life remains grim

A Miner's Life
David Douglass & Joel Krieger
RKP paper, £4.50

Since Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* I can't remember a good description of a miner's working conditions, except one rather strained TV documentary around 1973/4 compered, I believe, by David Frost at the height of the miners' militancy. This book is a modern up-date on Orwell, better on the miner's work as it is in part written by a miner (David Douglass), weaker in the overview and life in the pit villages. Though a few details have changed, a miner's life remains grim, the working conditions awful.

The pit described in the book in most detail is Hatfield Main where David Douglass works, which happens to be the only pit I've ever been down. That was about 16 years ago but the description of it today is just as grim as I remember it. Back in the 60's all local kids were given the 'treat' of visiting the local pit

just before their 'O' levels. I dare say they still do it today. It was thought, quite correctly, that the sight of the pit face would spur everyone on to avoid going down, and so they would try to pass their exams. It certainly had that effect on me, for once I realised that some of the things my dad preached to me: 'No son of mine's going down pit' had some sense to it. In fact no miner or relative of a miner wants their sons to go down; it's often the cause of the most bitter family rows. This book shows you why.

Though it's expensive (£4.50 for just over 100 pages) it's the best description I've read of the effect of the 1978 productivity deal on miners' lives. It is not a profound economic analysis or in-depth political assessment; in fact the descriptions of the rank and file movement of the 70's and since is the weakest section, but worth it for the clear and simple descriptions of the working conditions of the miners.

Noel Halifax



Hypocrisy and Lies

Helen Smith Story
Paul Foot
Fontana Paper, £2.50

Those of us in the SWP know Paul Foot as a political writer and great public speaker but tend to forget that he is also an investigative journalist. As this book shows he is probably one of the best in Britain. For those who haven't followed the intricacies of the story in *Private Eye* or the *Mirror* over the past four years, the Helen Smith story is the tale of Helen Smith's father's dogged pursuit to find out how his daughter died in Saudi Arabia.

As a hero, Ron Smith is not the type of person you'd expect a revolutionary socialist such as Paul Foot to champion. He is an ex-policeman, a self-made businessman and a Conservative voter, in fact everything that Thatcher claims to admire. He is also very stubborn and in his quest to find why and how his daughter died, Ron Smith came up against the hypo-

crisy and often downright lying and manipulations of the British diplomatic establishment and the Foreign Office. Against all the odds and the wishes of the government Ron Smith has dogged and nagged. Between the details of the story Paul Foot explains the political reasons for the Foreign Office's actions.

The story gradually unearthed is one of a huge cover-up, of both passive and active resistance by the various branches of the state to stop Ron Smith getting at the truth. It is a gripping tale and one that has not ended yet, very similar to the case in *Missing*, also a true story. If there is a moral to the book it is never seek help from a British Embassy.

It also shows that the closer you examine the workings of the state the uglier and nastier it is revealed to be. After reading this book few people can retain the illusion that the state is there to protect the ordinary man or woman in the street.

Noel Halifax

Deception Plans

Gotcha! The Media, the Government and the Falklands Crisis
Robert Harris
Faber, £2.95

Martin Walker, in a review in *The Guardian* has claimed that this book is a devastating account of media coverage of the Falklands, all set to become a classic of the genre. This sounds exciting; at last someone from inside the BBC is going to dissect the myths about the coverage of the war.

Perhaps at last we would have an expose of the BBC spokesman who claimed that 'in a military dictatorship like Argentina it is easy to put out false propaganda. In a democracy it is political suicide.' Or an explanation of what the BBC chairman meant when he claimed that MoD reports were 'recognised' around the world.

Not a bit of it. Far from challenging or analysing the BBC's output during the conflict, Harris is out to defend it.

But the book does reveal some insidious developments in the relationship between the mass media and other sections of the establishment. Harris says that the Falklands

'illuminated aspects of British society usually hidden from view. It exposes habitual abuses by the armed forces Government, Whitehall and the media.'

Perhaps it should have done, but the collusion of Her Majesty's Opposition effectively ennobled

Thatcher, and helped disguise what was really going on.

For all but the last 20 days of the war there were no British pictures of any action. In the pictures which did arrive images of death and injury featured hardly at all (when 250 Argentinian soldiers were killed on 27 May not one body was shown).

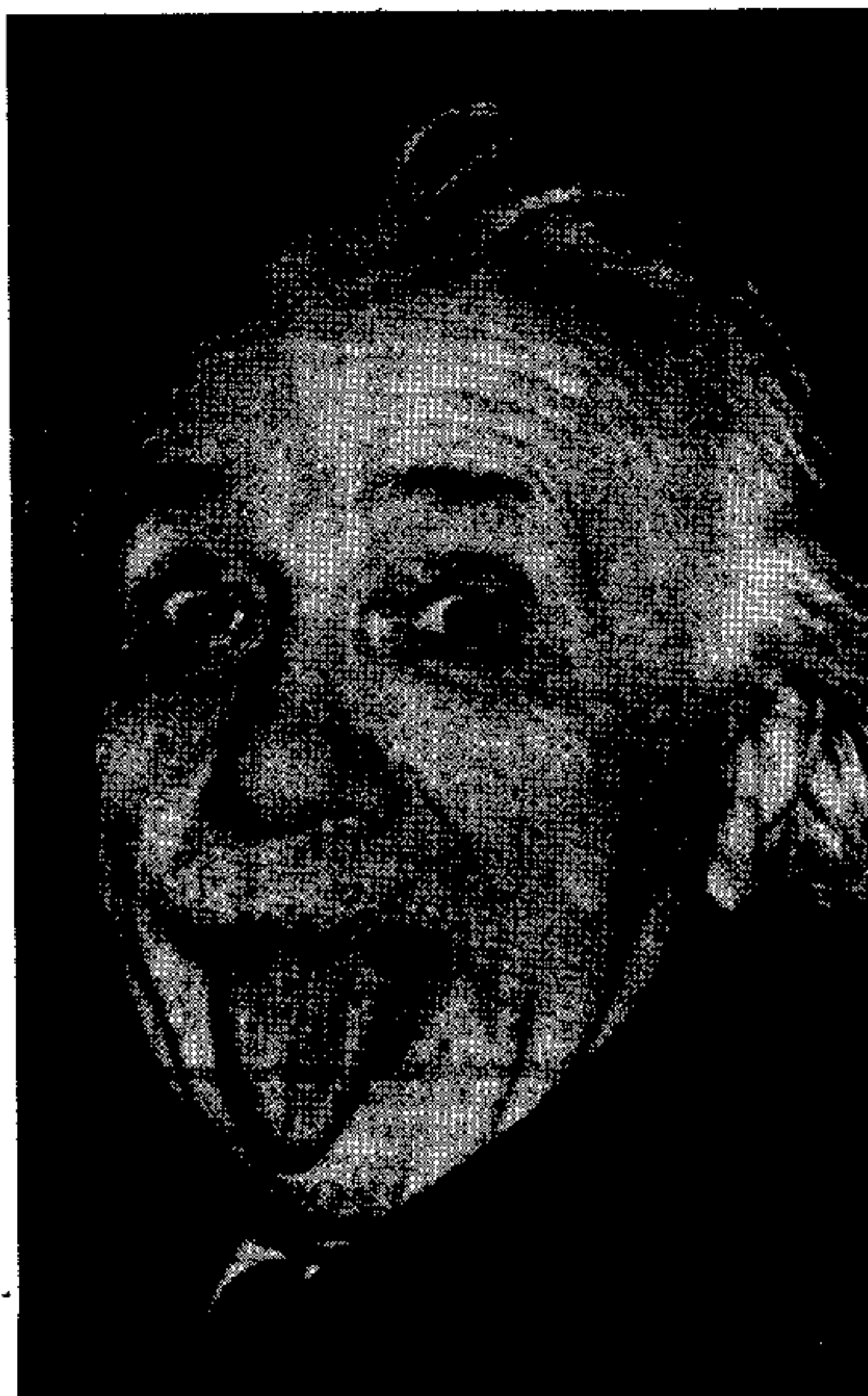
The media showed the military viewpoint, and allowed itself to be used to confuse the enemy. Sir Terence Leiven, Chief of the Defence Staff, applauded newsmen for being 'most helpful with our deception plans'.

A mass of misinformation was transmitted in the press. Harris is justifiably outraged that psychological warfare operations were conducted to such an extent that a Tory journalist protested that he had more help from the Russians when he was covering the invasion of Afghanistan.

Harris complains the 'Falklands War undermined the assumption that it is the other side which lies, never the British'. One wonders why the message of perfidious Albion hadn't filtered through before 1982.

All the media, including the BBC, put the arguments about territorial sovereignty, national interest and patriotism. Instead of giving intricate details about journalists' escapades and squabbles, Harris should have explained this consensus.

Mike Bor



Albert Einstein

The uses of Science

Einstein for beginners
Joe Schwarz and Mike McGuinness
Writers and Readers Publishing
Co-op, £2.50.

This book is one of about twenty in the *Beginner* series. It's quite good. The writing is clear and the pictures are helpful and often amusing.

It is a useful book. Einstein's contribution to the growth of physics has affected us all. More than that, it exposes the fiction that science is neutral knowledge gathering. The reality in our world is that most scientists are directly involved in the research and development of weapons, or in finding more profitable means of factory, office or agricultural production. Those doing 'pure' research or teaching are paid by the state as an investment, which pays off in tomorrow's weapons or industrial profits.

My main criticism of this book is that it doesn't really connect its discussion of Einstein and his work with the reality of science today.

The book goes into three main areas. It traces the history of physics and maths, and the social forces which made that history. It also outlines Einstein's theory of special relativity in simple terms (not an easy job, and the reader might need some perseverance here). And it describes Einstein's childhood and youth, the family and society he grew up in, and how these experiences shaped his later life and attitudes.

But in all these areas the book seems to stop at about 1910. Einstein was politically and scientifically active until he died in 1955.

In those years the growth of physics had far-reaching effects. It's a pity the reader isn't given a chance to link the past history of science with the development and uses of science today. But its worth buying if you want to learn something about the theoretical physicist whose name and theories became household words.

Bill Spence



Changing the World

The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx

Alex Callinicos

Bookmarx, £3.95

Marx 100 Years On

ed Betty Matthews

Lawrence and Wishart, £4.95

Marx: The First 100 Years

ed D McLellan

Fontana, £3.95

Karl Marx Remembered

ed P S Foner

Synthesis/TABS, no British price

The 100th Anniversary has brought the predicted crop of books. These are four of them.

Foner's book is essentially a compilation of the press reports published on the death of the old boy. We discover that *The Times* got the news from its Paris correspondent and got some of the details wrong. Much more importantly, the volume also records the tributes of the working class press in Europe and the USA. It is well worth making sure your local library gets a copy and spending a few hours reading through it.

It is also interesting to compare the reports of 1883 with the publications of 1983. The vast majority of workers' papers in 1883 mourned the loss of a great leader. The bourgeois press acknowledge the death of an enemy. Both saw Marx in the context of the development of the working class movement.

Two out of three of the modern books fail to make that connection a living reality. Only Callinicos

starts from the premise that what is important about the thought of Karl Marx is that it is a guide in the struggle to overthrow capitalism. The other two books are a lot less certain about what they are doing.

It won't do to put down this difference to a simple class differentiation. It is true that the authors collected by McLellan are first division academics: four professors and two ex-professors. Matthews collects some first and some second division academics: five professors, five lecturers in higher education, and two others. But it is also true that Alex Callinicos is a university lecturer — probably near the top of the second division in the view of his peers.

The difference lies rather in what the authors think is essential about Marxism. For Callinicos it is important for militant workers to know about the ideas of Karl Marx because it will help them change the world. For the others, that motive is sometimes present, but it is swamped by an attention to all of the wonderful and problematic ideas Marx posed to academic speciality.

The quality of what is said in the two academic books varies greatly. In Matthews' book some contributions are very slight (Rude), some very dishonest (Hunt), and some quite stimulating (Hall and Cohen). McLellan collects the good (himself), the bad (Bottomore) and the incomprehensible (Williams).

Neither do the disciplines of academic life ensure standards of intellectual rigour and honesty. Take Professor Bottomore for example. His essay is heavily marked with his own obsession with Austrian Marxism between 1900 and 1934. This is fairly interesting. But he does a very neat body swerve around some little problems by writing that both Lenin and Trotsky 'were political pamphleteers and activists rather than thinkers.'

On my bookshelf as I write stand 45 volumes of the work of that non-thinker Lenin. How does Professor Bottomore imagine they got there? Dream writing? Or again, since he is concerned with 'sociology', does he imagine that the theory of Permanent Revolution does not involve thought about the nature of social classes?

I do not know whether Bottomore came to write that staggering sentence because he has not bothered to do the most elementary reading, or because he is lacking basic intellectual skills, or because he is so much of charlatan as to imagine that he can avoid serious issues and hope nobody will notice. It appears, however, that his editor does not exactly agree with him, since McLellan writes that Lenin: 'always based his strategy on a careful analysis of socio-economic circumstances.'

Bottomore is one of the more pathetic examples but the problem is one shared by all the contributors. Even the best of them produce little more than annotated book lists.

The reason for this lies in that central Marxist conception of the relation between theory and practice. The mental world and literary productions of academics, even Marxist academics are deeply influenced by the practical realities of academic life. The concerns and debates, even the language, within which such people operate are marked by the pressures of academic specialism, academicism and the crude need to write according to the rules in order to keep your job.

What is different about Alex Callinicos, and what makes his book a thousand times better than the others, is that he is subject to another pressure. As a leading militant of a revolutionary party he relates to another set of problems: the actual struggles of the working

class. That is why he can write a book about Marxism as a revolutionary theory.

The relation between theory and practice is one of the central ideas of Marxism. It is also a very problematic one. One extreme view, held by Raya Dunayevskaya for example, is that theory is simply the reflection of practice. The opposite pole is held by Louis Althusser, for whom theoretical activity is its own practice.

In the past, Alex Callinicos has been associated with a version of Althusser's position and that legacy is currently the subject of a raging debate in our sister journal *International Socialism*. I can find little evidence of it in this book, despite a warning on page ten that we should read Chapter Five with care.

The only criticism I would make of this book, and it is a criticism marginal to the general excellence of the work, is that it is a little dismissive of Marx's own practical involvement with workers' struggles. Alex quotes Marx's own pleasure at the freedom he gained in 1851 when the revolutionary wave of 1848 had finally been defeated but I think he builds a bit too much on it.

Of course Marx was not Lenin, whose focus on revolutionary organisation was much tighter. And it is true as Alex says that Engels was a better practical organiser. But it needs stressing that Marx seized every opportunity to build a revolutionary organisation. The fact that such opportunities were not plentiful in Britain after 1851 was a misfortune for Marx.

Theory was Marx's enduring legacy to the workers' movement and without a thorough knowledge of that theory we will not be able to change the world. But it is also true that at least one aspect of that theory — the nature of the state — was brought into a new and sharp focus by the Paris Commune.

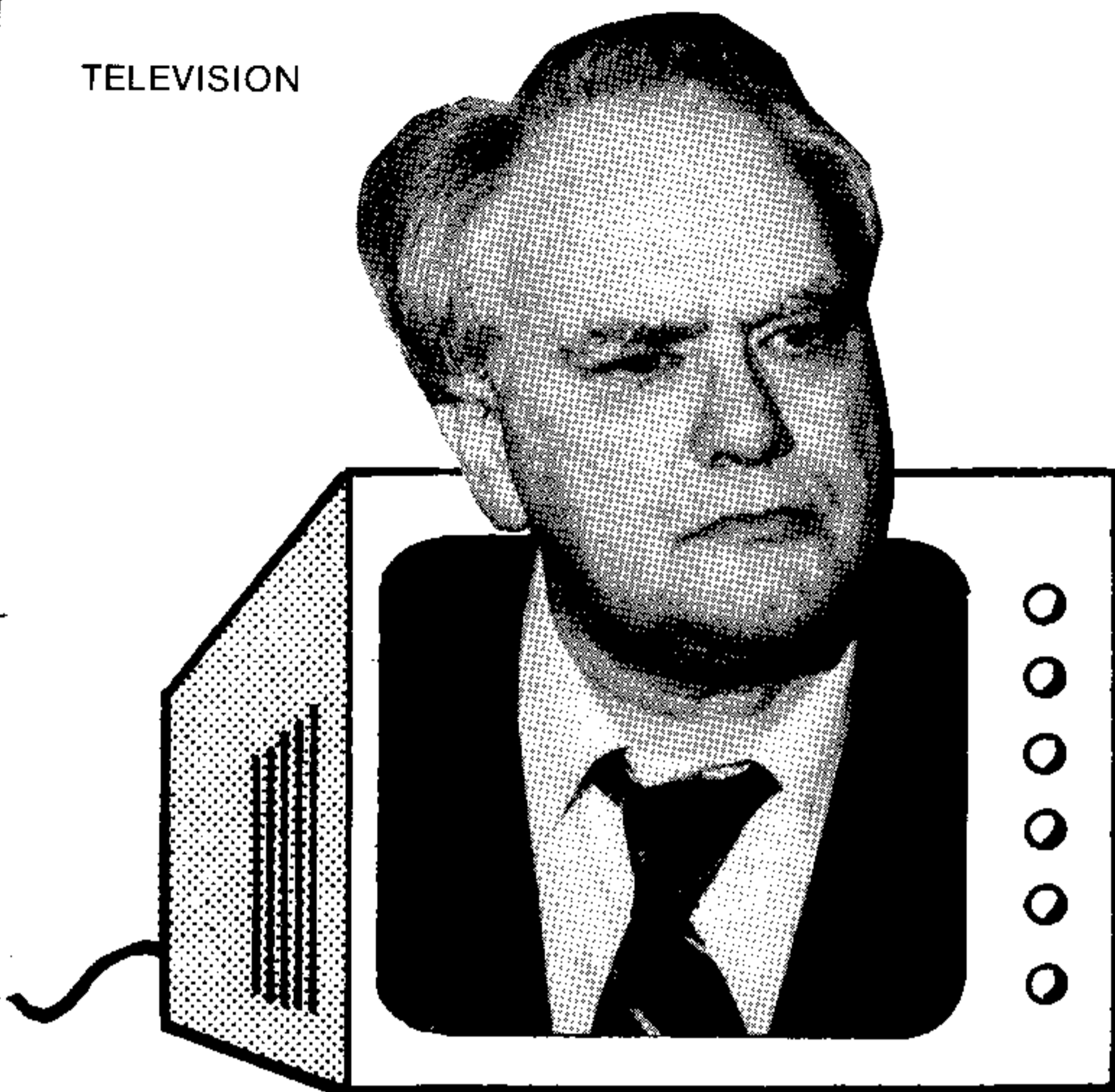
In the context of the strengths of this book though, such reservations are a quibble. Every serious socialist should read it. It is clear and precise and is by far the best introduction to Marxism that I have read. It will teach all socialists something about what they need to know. And just as important, it is a book which militants thinking about revolutionary socialism for the first time will find an eye-opener.

Colin Sparks



OUT NOW!

- The New Cold War: Pete Binns
- Capitalism in Marx's time and ours: Mike Haynes
- Pete Green reviews 'Of Bread and Guns'
- Alex Callinicos replies on Marxism and philosophy



Would you buy a second hand theory from this man?

Boffins on the box

Marta Wohrle looks at the way that TV programmes treat science and scientists.

The pursuit of scientific knowledge and its application as technology is a driving force in modern society. But far from treating science and technology as among the principle collective creative activities (at least potentially), television keeps it within a set of blinkered attitudes and myopic assumptions.

Of course technology is rarely the tool of creative collectives or even creative individuals. Research is guided by the profit motive, scientific expansion is carried out in the interests of the state at the expense of scientific research into medicine, alternative energy sources and so on. But television presents science as though it were value free, as though it were guided by natural scientific laws rather than political preferences of the sponsors (usually governments and big business).

There is a dangerous assumption that science is incomprehensible. This reinforces foolish and outdated stereotypes in the minds of the programme-makers and encourages the scientists to see members of the television audience as imbeciles, unable to grasp the simplest concepts. Hence, the pro-

duction of awful programmes like *Don't Just Sit There* and *Tomorrow's World*, the *Nationwide* of science.

For television presents science as a marginal activity, practised by an exclusive caste, a far cry from the mainstream of everyday life. And as long as it is removed from everyday life the more difficult it is to tackle its assumptions and question its effects.

On the whole television has not outgrown the stereotype of the nutty professor — Magnus Pyke, David Bellamy, Patrick Moore (he's an honorary scientist), Heinz Wolf, Rob Buckman. If it were possible the Beeb would probably issue them with balding white hair revealing spatial domes and Austrian accents. It all stems from the fear that science is difficult and off-putting and needs either tedious explanations or elaborate clowning to get the concepts across.

On the more serious and up market science programmes the nutty professor is replaced by an 'expert', a talking head backed up by a white coat and test tubes. And the talking head has a clear undisputed run. The interviewer is absent from the screen leaving the 'expert' free to construct the story and present it to the cameras as the truth.

The programmes are in one sense 'educating' viewers and on the other they keep them

in the role of children without any critical sophistication. Shows such as the *Sweeney*, *Soap* and the more up-market *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* assume a greater audience sophistication than *Horizon* does of its supposedly elite audience.

Most people watching the manic *Don't Just Sit There* or *Horizon* will never get to hear about how the decisions are made about what fields of research get sponsored and why. As far as television is concerned science and technology are apolitical. So science and knowledge are kept completely separate from social impact. And the impact is itself neutral. Science is one thing, context another.

Breaking connections

And television actually institutionalises this division. *Horizon* does a programme on adipose brown tissue which may explain fatness and thinness; *Man Alive* does a programme on the theme of 'fat is a feminist issue.' No one even thinks to link the two together. *Horizon* does attempt to go beyond the normal content of science and give a token social context. But it does so uncritically. In a programme about sugar production in Brazil, we are told (three times) that 'Brazil has plenty of cheap labour', without even saying why. Its like saying India has lots of thin people.

The result is that most of us do not know anything about the social processes that go into making either household plastics or nuclear weapons. In fact we don't even know that there is a social process. Science on television has neither a social or political base.

So we are presented with a series of modern miracles. When the workings of nature are beyond our understanding they may as well be regarded as magic. The French anthropologist Levi Strauss compared the 'civilised people of the west with "primitive savages".' In the Amazon, he pointed out, people know their environment intimately. We, on the other hand, don't even understand how most of our everyday tools work, or the materials from which they are made.

Knowledge is peddled on television. To understand it requires the subject being sold as something worth knowing about. The very explanations imply that they have been endorsed and approved, this is the truth, the facts, something very important ... Markets are created for knowledge that we could easily do without, or at least, we can do without explanations that have no social base. On the crudest level, it is never explained that whole labs and institutions depend on short term grants and with a shrinking public purse only a handful survive. At the same time there is a growing field of private research that makes no distinction between pure research and commercial research. So only profitable drugs, diseases, chemicals and materials get funded. And David Bellamy cannot be relied on to point these things out.

The absence of these questions from the script is not because the lovable but nutty Bellamy is having an orgasm over an herbaceous border, but because this would taint science's neutral image. □

Abolishing the police

'You can't abolish the state. After all we will still need a police force to stop crime.' Some people argue that even in a socialist society you will have to have a special body of people to keep control of anti-social elements.

The fact is, a police force is the worst possible way to control anti-social activity.

The vast majority of criminal activity arises from the strains existing in capitalist society. Some crimes are simply created by the stupidities of the capitalist class. In the 1920's in the USA the manufacture and drinking of alcohol was a crime. Mixing a Martini could land you in court. A giant criminal industry grew up around supplying drinks. When the law was changed in the 1930's exactly the same activities became legitimate business.

Other crimes are directly related to poverty and misery. Street crimes — the famous muggings above all — are directly related to youth unemployment. That is why they are higher in Brixton than in Surbiton, and why they are higher still in Glasgow. And that is why they are higher today than they were twenty years ago when most young people could get at least some sort of job.

So the first step in 'the fight against crime' is to remove the conditions which lead to crime. For example, most murders are committed by relatives of the victims; they are a response to the horrible strains that the family puts people under. So, create a society in which people have the freedom to choose who they will live with and have the material means to live on their own should they wish, and you remove the major cause of the most terrible of crimes. One good reason for abolishing the family is that it helps to abolish killing.

But, it could be argued, there would still be people who did not quite fit in, who had some sort of mental abnormality for instance, and who therefore would still commit anti-social acts. We cannot prove that this will not happen, so let us assume that it is true. Even then, the last thing you want to control this with is a police force.

Whatever the telly shows might lead you to believe, the police force have nothing to do with preventing or solving crimes. In modern Britain roughly twenty-five percent of crimes are reported to the police. Of these, about forty per cent are cleared up. Many, like crimes of violence where the clear-up rate is eight per cent, are solved because the victim usually knows who attacked them. Similarly, 93 percent of reported shop liftings are cleared up because only those who are caught in the act ever come to the attention of the police.

Another dodge which helps clear up some crimes is the 'confession'. For example, the clear-up rate for burglaries is around twenty per cent. This is because the occasional burglar caught in the act will be persuaded to plead guilty to a string of other offences.

Only around twenty-five percent of

cleared-up crimes are solved by detection. That might sound impressive but do the sums. Detection solves one quarter of the forty percent of crimes which are reported which in turn are a quarter of all crimes. That is twenty-five percent of forty percent of twenty-five percent. The answer is *two point five* (2.5) percent of all crimes are solved by detection.

The police are no better at stopping crime than clearing it up. The average policeman on foot patrol can expect to intercept a street robbery once every fourteen years.

It is not true that this is because there are not enough police. The figures show the exact opposite to be true. Between 1950 and 1980 the number of police doubled. The number of serious crimes reported to the police rose five times. And spending on the police rose five times during that same period. The figures are uncanny: more cops equals more crime.

The 'professionals'

There is a reason for this. The police are 'a special body of armed men'. In order to make them follow orders which involve attacking their fellow human beings they, just like soldiers, have to be cut off from other people. That is why they have uniforms, their own housing, clubs, etc. But crime takes place among other people in society. In order to prevent it or to clear it up, the police need to know what is going on in society.

There are two ways they can get this

information: from paid informers or from ordinary people. Paid informers are an important part of police information about 'professional crime' but they are useless for the vast majority of crimes.

The bigger the police force is, the better it is equipped, the more it sees itself as 'professional' the more it is cut off from ordinary people. It tends to treat people as suspects, to push them around and interrogate them. When they do that, the less people trust them and they become less willing to give them information. So the police become less effective against crime.

The push towards a more professional police force is not an accident. It is a recognition by the ruling class that the police are there to smash their class enemies not control 'crime'. 'Community policing' is simply an attempt to stop the police getting too out of touch and thus totally useless. That is why the community policeman is trained to talk to small children and get them to inform on their relatives.

The answer to controlling anti-social activity in a classless society is thus clear. Such a society has no need for a special body of armed men to ensure the domination of one class over another so it can approach the problem of social control quite differently. 'Policing' becomes the job of every citizen.

Because the citizens are society itself they know what is going wrong and who is causing it. They, and they alone, can effectively control 'crime'. The fact that the vast mass of the population reject anti-social activity and are ready to prevent it if need be is a much better way of controlling society than employing a handful of corrupt and brutal thugs in uniform.

H Brandler

