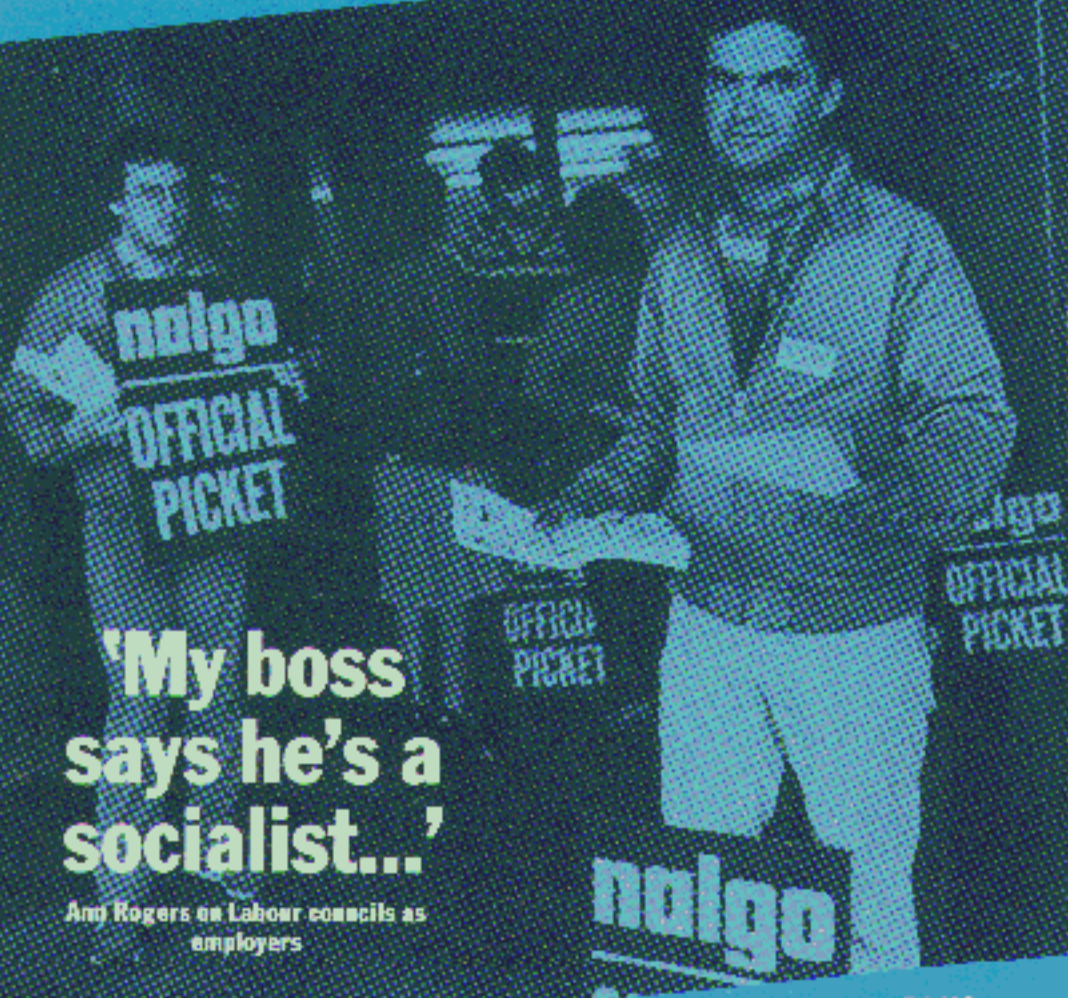


*socialist*  
**REVIEW**

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**INSIDE**  
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discussion section

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**'My boss  
says he's a  
socialist...'**

Amj Rogers on Labour councils as  
employers

**PLUS:**

**Hilary Wainwright and John Palmer defend the GLC  
Tony Cliff on After the TUC**

# Even cold wars can kill

The USSR's destruction of a South Korean airline gave the new Cold War a real boost. Mike Simons looks at the background.

What, the *Washington Post* asked a senior Republican congressman, did he think about the shooting down of the Korean Jumbo jet?

In a reply that matched the Russian action for cynicism he said: 'It obviously strengthens the president's hand for about thirty days', adding that Congress had 'a short institutional memory'.

Reagan didn't need the thirty days. Once his aides could persuade him to stop herding cattle on his ranch and return to Washington, (it took them 24 hours), the full weight of the US propaganda machine was set rolling.

The cold war rhetoric, the abuse and the half truths panicked the US Congress into voting through Reagan's military spending plans unchallenged. The president now has the go ahead for MX missiles, which Democratic congressmen confidently expected to be vetoed, along with new chemical warfare weapons, more Pershing missiles and B1 Bombers.

But that wasn't all. The aftermath of the Korean Airline disaster allowed Reagan to in-

crease US intervention in the Lebanon with US jets and ships pounding Druze and Palestinian positions. Meanwhile in Reagan's 'backyard', Central America, US spokesmen threatened a new policy. If the government forces in El Salvador and Guatemala couldn't beat off the guerrillas, the Reagan aid explained the US would base as many men in Central America as it currently had in Europe or Korea.



To round off Reagan's propaganda coup, political pundits in Washington are now saying that the president's strident rhetoric combined with minimal sanctions against Russia have done much to counteract his image as a warmonger among the American electorate.

So what really did happen to hand Reagan such a propaganda coup on a plate? Was Korean Airlines flight 007 a spy plane or did it just stray 500 miles off course accidentally during the top secret test-firing of a Russian missile?

The Russians were certainly expecting a spy plane. They were just about to test fire a nuclear missile which was bound to interest the US military. Indeed, spying on such activities is written into the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties signed by the two super-powers.

Both America and Russia use what in diplomatic jargon is called 'national means of verification' to check the other side are complying with arms control agreements. The United States has a vast array of spying technology at its disposal. Satellites orbiting 100 miles above the earth's surface can produce pictures clear enough to show the bolts on the deck of a Russian battleship.

Using satellites, 'We know everything they have' a senior CIA analyst told the *New York Times* after the Korean airliner was shot down. He was trying to down-play allegations that the doomed Jumbo jet was a spy plane and take attention away from the RC-135 spy plane the Americans admitted was in the area.

However these military satellites don't tell the Pentagon everything they want to know. They are supplemented by the SR 71 high flying spy plane. These planes regularly overfly Russia. They are fast enough to fly the Atlantic in two hours and they can outrun Russian fighter planes and even their missiles. More than 900 attempts have been made to shoot down the SR 71s by the Warsaw Pact countries, but none has succeeded.

The SR 71 replaced the U-2 spy plane, the type in which Gary Powers was shot down over Sverdlovsk in May 1960, provoking a major international incident.

The third arm of the Pentagon's airborne snooping triad is the RC 135 spy plane. When the White House finally admitted it had an RC 135 in the area where the Jumbo crashed they said it was a passive listening device, able to monitor events but not transmit warnings and anyway, it had landed an hour before the Korean Jumbo was shot down.

An extraordinary article by two former RC 135 pilots in the *Denver Post* gives the lie to much of Reagan's propaganda. They assert that the RC 135s are on station 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in the Sakhalin-Kamchatka area where the Korean plane was brought down. The RC 135, they said 'performs functions that simply cannot be accomplished by satellite or ground listening stations'.

The article makes it clear that the RC 135 could have warned the Korean Jumbo had it so desired. Among the spy plane's features is its ability to gather and instantly analyse air and radar activity of a 'target country'. That information can be transmitted to almost any civilian or military aircraft or ship.

Certainly the US spy plane could have communicated with the Korean Jumbo.

In Vietnam RC 135s were able to warn American pilots the instant North Vietnamese radar began tracking them. Such warnings allowed many pilots to evade missiles launched at their planes.

Alternatively, the spy plane can relay the information back to the highest levels of government in the USA. A message sent to Washington with the code 'critic' would reach the president's hands within ten minutes of its transmission from a plane over the Sea of Japan.

Why then wasn't the Korean Jumbo warned, either directly or via the Pentagon and CIA? There certainly was time. It's a question the US military won't answer.

They are still less likely to admit that the Russians could expect a spy plane to fly directly into their airspace, yet that's precisely what the two former pilots imply in their *Denver Post* article.

The National Security Agency 'assign orbit areas near target nations... The NSA on occasion adjusts the orbit of RC 135s so they will intentionally penetrate the airspace of a target nation. This is in order to bring a target country's air defence system into a state of alert so the NSA can analyse activated systems for potential flaws.'

This is what the Russians assumed happened when they saw the RC 135 'piggy back' the Korean Jumbo to hide from the ground defence radar.

The Russians are claiming the Korean Jumbo's flight path over their top secret military bases was worked out in advance by American intelligence. The Americans have given up offering explanations of why the plane should be so far off course. American civil aviation engineers simply cannot explain how the Boeing 747, with its modern navigation equipment and foolproof backup systems should stray so far, unless it was deliberate.

The pilot of the Korean Jumbo, Captain Byong In, was vastly experienced. He flew Korean Airlines' first Jumbo jet. Indeed his wife declared that he was so conscientious he kept a diagram of the Jumbo's cockpit plan pinned to the wall above his desk!

More significantly, Captain In was still on the Korean Airforce reserve list and regularly flew senior government officials.

He would have been a prime candidate for Korean or American military intelligence and could have colluded with them in planning his flight path.

The only other explanation for the airliner overflying Russian airspace was that Captain Byong In took a 'short cut' to save £1500 worth of fuel...

It's unlikely we'll ever be told the full story of the flight of Korean Airlines flight 007, but it's clear the Russians' brutal destruction of the passenger jet is about par for the course in the new cold war.

The United States has lost at least 140 servicemen in its 'reconnaissance' (read spying) programme. Unknown numbers of Russians have died in similar activities. Now 269 civilians can be added to the tally, victims of the suspicion and paranoia of the rulers of the two super powers and their trigger happy generals.

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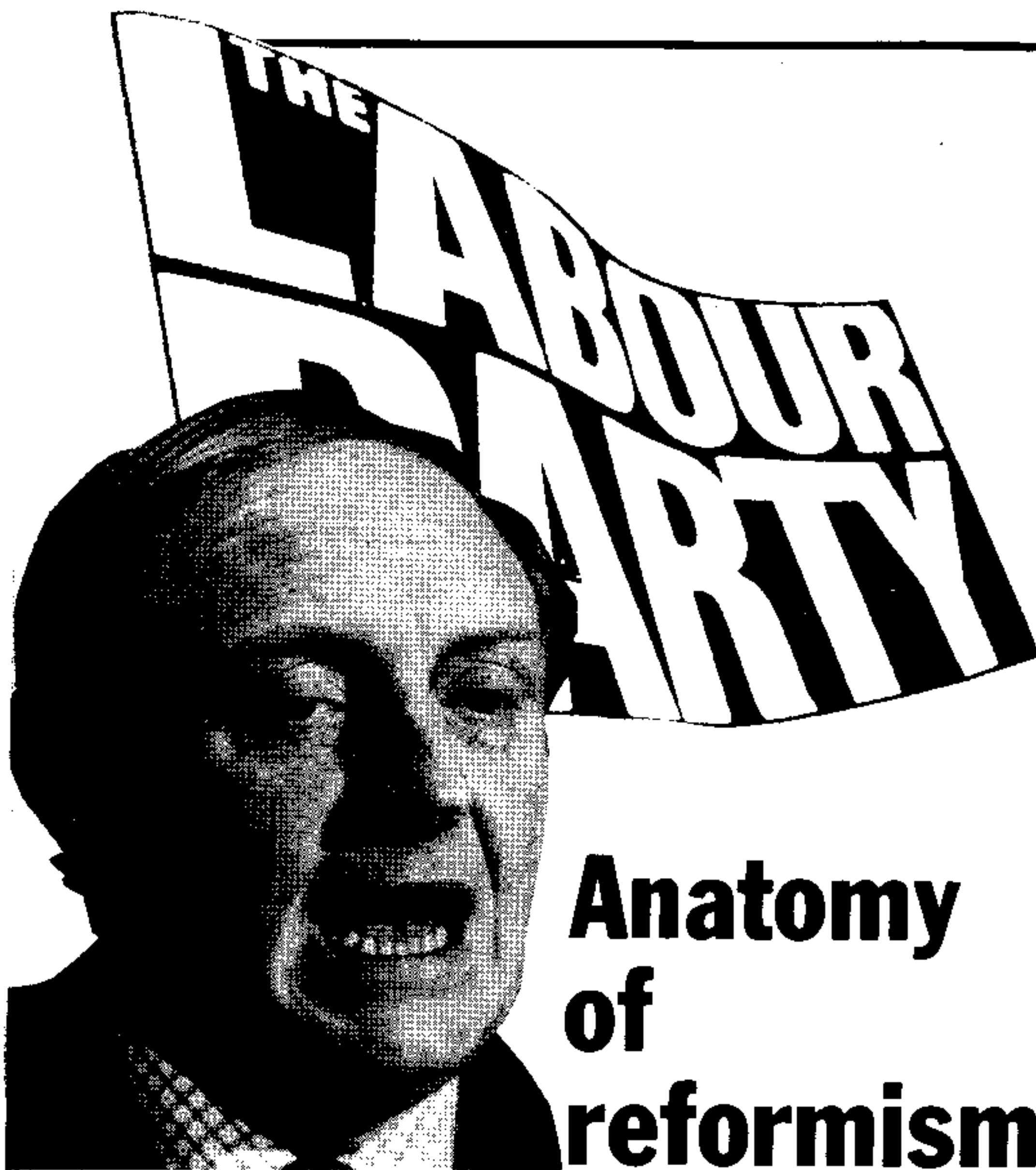
**Happy families?**

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# Anatomy of reformism

The victory of the Kinnock/Hattersley slate reveals just how far right the Labour Party has moved over the past couple of years. This shift is as marked in the constituency parties as in the trade union bureaucracies.

Kinnock's overwhelming victory was expected. It was no surprise that Hattersley got the majority of the big unions. But the fact that Hattersley got over 60 percent of the CLP vote, while the left winger Eric Heffer got only 6 percent of the overall vote shows how much the grass roots activists have changed.

The overwhelming bulk of Labour activists, at least in the constituency and in the lower reaches of the trade union machines, were, two years ago, enthusiastic supporters of Tony Benn. Today they have become enthusiastic supporters of Neil Kinnock.

The two candidates stood and stand for different things. Benn promised a different sort of Labour Party. Kinnock quite obviously does not. On policies as much as on promises the two are very different. Yet the transition will be made without any serious difficulty.

How is this possible? What extraordinary quality is it that allows activists of the Labour Party to make such a sharp turn without apparent embarrassment?

In only a minority of cases is the explan-

ation bad faith. For most of the people we are speaking of there is a recognition that the differences between the two positions are, after all, really rather superficial. It would be nicer to have Tony Benn, but Kinnock, too, is a good socialist, runs the argument.

Whether what either of them stands for is anything that we would recognise as socialism is debatable, but the argument is spot on in pointing to an underlying identity. The fact is that, matters of emphasis aside, none of the tendencies inside the Labour Party has ever suggested its divergence from the fundamental aim: to effect change by parliamentary legislation.

The persistence and tenacity of these ideas should give us pause for thought. They are, after all, fairly widespread both in time and in space. We can find examples in Britain for at least the last century and we can find different versions, inflected according to particular national circumstances, from Poland to the USA.

A further difficulty is that, considered abstractly, the idea that, provided one elects the right representatives, you can effect some change in the system under which you live

seems inherently improbable both from the point of view of social theory and historical experience.

The various subjective explanations—dishonesty, short memories, congenital idiocy, etc—clearly have to be rejected. The only possible reason for the persistence of these ideas is that they correspond to real social circumstances.

The necessity of bargaining and negotiating is built into the capitalist mode of production. It depends, after all, on the regular sale of labour power to the capitalist. That 'wage bargain' is constantly subject to revision. On the one hand the worker, perceiving particularly favourable circumstances—shortage of a particular type of labour, a full order book, or whatever—stands to gain from attempting to renegotiate the terms.

And the capitalist is constantly pressed to change the terms in his favour. A slump, squeezed profit margins, the introduction of new machinery, all of these provide the occasion for trying to change things.

It is, of course, out of this constant bargaining process that trade unions are built. The primary function is to 'regulate the sale of labour power'—to try to make sure that workers get the best possible deal.

### **Modern capitalism**

In modern capitalism that bargaining is very widespread. It does not simply involve the rate for the job and the length of the working day but spills over into questions of welfare provision as well. And it usually involves more than just negotiating with this or that employer—the state also becomes an important actor in the situation.

It is this function of trade unions that is often called, following the phrase of the Italian revolutionary Gramsci, the 'economic-corporate'. It is a very substantial part of what trade unions exist for and it cannot be ignored.

However, this sort of activity also breeds its own set of ideas—ideas that stress the importance of getting the best possible deal within the status quo and which reject any idea of overthrowing it.

This set of ideas is very widespread indeed. It lies behind the 'reformist' wing of Solidarity in Poland just as much as it does behind the business unionism of the AFL-CIO in the USA. It has no necessary connection with even the rhetoric of socialism.

And it is not something which simply fades away. It arises from the real relations of production in capitalist society and can only be removed if those relations are changed. It provides the basis for the large and conservative trade union bureaucracies which seek to dominate every labour movement and to keep it within official channels.

Political reformism of the Labour Party type is only a version of this more general ideology. Its pattern of social change is built exactly on this bargaining process. Just as the negotiator sees a five percent rise this year and a five percent rise next year mounting up to a total of ten percent, so the reformist sees this little change today added to that little change tomorrow amounting to

a change in society.

The basis of such political strategies in negotiating with the system also explains their tendency to become fixated on the state machine. As capitalism ages it becomes more and more the duty of the state to take over the task of reproducing the labour force. It therefore tends to think more in terms of the long term future of capitalism as a system.

If you spend your life trying to gain this or that advance within the system through a process of negotiation, then the state tends to loom very large in your picture of the world. It also appears as an attractive alternative to all of those gangster-like private owners. The private owner is only interested in making a few bob. The state, for example, cares about educating the next generation.

That sort of reasoning explains why political ideologies which are built on this process of negotiation are ones which tend to see the extension and expansion of state power as the great step forward. In their particular, reformist, version, they identify increase of state power, and their own control of that state, with the desirable state of socialism itself. One incidental side-effect is the 'tankism' of the Arthur Scargill type: to the bureaucrat, a society run by bureaucrats looks ideal.

Another consequence, of rather more substance, is that these politics have a real durability. Although particular political forms may change over the time, the basic aspect of negotiation remains intact.

The history of the Labour Party in Britain provides a simple illustration of that fact. Before the foundation of the party, the better organised workers, and in particular the miners, found a political expression in the Liberal Party. The change of tack by the trade unions in 1900 with the foundation of the Labour Representation Committee, and eventually the Labour Party, did not involve any serious change of strategy on the part of the trade union leaders.

Even the adoption of the hallowed 'Clause Four' in 1918 did not involve any radical restructuring of the leadership of the party. The fact is that underlying these apparent shifts there was and is a core of political identity which remained untouched by the differing organisational forms. Compared to this, minor matters like the differences between Kinnock and Heffer, or for that matter Heffer and Hattersley, are hardly ripples on the surface.

### **Economic crisis**

A further consequence of the origins of these ideas in negotiation is that they have a certain tenacity. In their reformist version it might seem likely that these ideas would get weaker as the possibilities for reform faded in a crisis. This does not seem to be the case.

In periods of economic crisis, in which the capitalist class is on the offensive, trying to drive down wages, to cut services, or whatever, the need for bargaining, for negotiation, appears all the stronger. In order to ensure a negotiating position, previous political positions can be abandoned and almost any shift to the right justified.

It is obvious that the core of these organisations and ideas is located in the trade

unions. This is not a peculiarly British experience, although it is clearer here. If we look at the history of the German SPD before the First World War, that is when it was transformed from an organisation preaching revolution to one in practice wedded to reform, we find that much of the muscle behind the shift to the right came from the trade union leadership.

There is, however, a difference between the leaders of such organisations and the mass of their adherents. The fact that reformist ideas have their origin in the social position of the trade union bureaucracy does not mean that every last person who believes such ideas is part of that social layer. That is obviously not true: amongst the organised supporters, and even more amongst the voters, of the British Labour Party there are large numbers of ordinary workers.

They are attracted to such organisations because they seem to deliver the goods. And to a certain extent they do: trade unions do negotiate wage rises, they do affect working conditions, etc. So the ideas have a material base.

### **Winning reforms**

It is because things like this are of real importance to workers that revolutionaries take them very seriously. We reject the abstract propagandism which simply preaches the need for socialism. Such a position has no connection with the reality of working class consciousness. But we have a radically different starting point than the leaders of reformist organisations.

It is perfectly true that so long as we are forced to live under the yoke of capitalism the working class is obliged to negotiate the terms of its own exploitation. To surrender that activity is to abandon any attempt to control our own lives and to give the capitalists a clear field to do as they wish. But for revolutionaries the outcome of those negotiations are not settled by the skill and cleverness of the people sitting round the table but by the balance of forces.

For us, the winning of reforms is a by-product of the organisation and self-activity of the working class. That is why we are the best fighters for reform. As Rosa Luxemburg once put it, the best way to achieve reforms is by revolutionary methods.

In the present period, the scope for that sort of activity is extremely limited, but it does exist. The 'struggle for reforms' is not only, or even primarily, a question of the grandiose battles about national issues. It is much more commonly fought out over tiny local issues.

The strike over wages in the small factory has exactly the same principles at stake as does the much larger struggle. Intervention in that dispute is therefore of crucial importance. It is the battleground on which the differences between reformist and revolutionary ideas are actually tested.

As all of the large reformist organisations move to the right under the impact of the crisis and the Tory offensive, so the room for intervention, though still tiny, begins to open up a little. It is around those points of resistance that the revolutionary alternative can begin to be built.



## The charge of the right brigade

The TUC was marked by a shift to the right. In a speech to the SWP National Committee Tony Cliff summed up its implications.

It is clear what happened at the TUC. There has been a massive shift to the right.

On the question of talking to Tebbit the vote was six to four — six million to four million. And on the question of distancing the TUC from the Labour Party, six to four. And on the reconstruction of the General Council, six to four. These aren't exact figures — they're to give you an indication. There was a massive move to the right — no question about it.

At the same time we have to keep a sense of proportion about the dimension of the thing. We can compare talking to Tebbit with the Mond-Turner talks in 1927. Turner was then the head of the TUC and Mond the head of ICI. The analogy should not be pushed too far. In one way it is not as bad a situation as it was at that time. In another way it is worse than it was then.

The sell out of the General Strike of 1926 followed a whole series of other sellouts, other defeats for the working class movement like Black Friday 1921, the lockout of the engineers in 1922, the smashing of the building workers in 1924. The result was that the trade union movement declined from eight million to four million. That's collapse, a real collapse.

The situation today is that the trade union movement has declined from 13½ million to

11½ million. The truth of the matter is, that is a decline, a very serious decline. But it is nothing like what happened fifty years ago.

Apart from the statistics there is the question of organisation. In terms of shop organisation, no matter what we say, fulltime convenors becoming cut off from the base and so on, the truth is that shop organisation is incomparably stronger today than it was in the twenties and thirties. Take the question of the engineers. When the lockout came in 1922, there were practically no shop stewards to speak of in the engineering industry.

Today, we have still about three hundred thousand shop stewards — that's a rough estimate. Therefore the decline is nothing like as serious as it was after 1926. In politics it is important not just to know the trends.

### Serious retreat

The question of proportion is terribly important. The same story if it is repeated on a big scale is different from if it happens on a small scale.

In another way the retreat is more serious than it was at that time. It is more serious because this phenomenon of the separation of the trade unions from the Labour Party.

In the twenties and thirties the trade unions remained with the Labour Party.

With the appearance of the SDP the question of separation is on the agenda. I'll try to show why this is so important for us.

The erosion of the unions is going to continue. Unemployment is a fact of life. It will continue.

The fact of the cuts in the public sector is

important for trade unionism, because the rate of unionisation in the public sector is twice as high worker for worker as in the private sector.

Cuts in the public sector mean cuts in trade unionism. Privatisation means cuts in trade unionism.

To the extent that there is a shift from manual to white collar employment, it also means a cut in trade unionism. Of course, we are absolutely right to stress that most white collar workers are workers. But the rate of unionisation of white collar workers is considerably smaller than manual workers.

White-collar workers are by and large less militant than manual workers. It is a fact that NALGO workers are not as tough as the NUM in terms of their ability to fight.

People talk about shop steward organisation — shop stewards are appearing but on a much smaller scale. The density of shop stewards in white collar areas is still much less than among manual workers.

More important they relate much less to the rank and file than do manual workers. You still find the phenomenon in schools of school reps who are headmasters.

In the NALGO branches you find that in a branch of six, eight, ten thousand members the branch committee is nearly all managers, that is people who have control over the opportunity of those below to rise in the scale. And you find quite a lot of alienation among the rank and file towards the leadership of the NALGO branches.

The new industries, industries which are terribly important for us in terms of the future — if anyone looks to Slough, Swindon, Reading, Oxford, looks at the new

electronics industries generally — they will see that the new industries are much less unionised than the old ones.

Why? The main reason is the size of those industries. There is a direct proportion, by and large, between the size of the enterprise and the level of unionisation. In factories of 2,000 or more workers, unionisation is massive. In factories of 500, unionisation is big. In factories of 50, unionisation is very low.

For workers to move from Labour to the Tories is a very difficult process. I'm not saying for individual workers — as a matter of fact more workers voted Tory than Alliance in the last election — but in terms of an organised move away from Labour, the SDP is extremely important.

When Shirley Williams says that fifteen trade unions agreed to discuss with the SDP I think she's lying. I think she's exaggerating the number. But the fact is that the Bakers union agreed to discuss with Dr Owen. By the way, the Bakers union is led by the Militant.

I don't believe there are fifteen unions, two million members, but it is a symptom. And the reason is a very obvious one. When in the last election only 39 percent of trade unionists voted Labour, 32 percent voted Tory and 28 percent voted Alliance, then the arguments of Tebbit for the separation of Labour from the trade unions is there. Tebbit is cutting with the grain.

We have to face the reality. Only 39 percent of trade unionists voted Labour. A third of the miners didn't vote Labour. The miners used to vote solidly for Labour. You had as many Tory miners as you had SWP members on the CBI. You took it for granted they were Labour or maybe Communist. You certainly didn't have a third of them voting Tory or Alliance. It is because of that that the separation is on the cards.

### Broad left crisis

I don't think it will happen in 1983. But the threat of it will shape events between now and 1988. Len Murray met Neil Kinnock a few days ago, and I'm ready to bet on what Murray said to Kinnock. He said to Kinnock: 'The TUC is realistic, you must be realistic. There is a threat of separation in the TUC. Unless you behave, we are in trouble.'

The pressure on the Labour Party to move to the right is absolutely enormous.

The mechanism of moving to the right in the Labour Party is not the same as it is in the TUC. It will not be as extreme as it was in the TUC.

Two things depressed me about the TUC. The first was when Frank Chapple spoke. By and large, in his introduction, he got away with it. And he was speaking as an extreme right winger. It was a marvellous conference for Frank Chapple. There is no doubt about it.

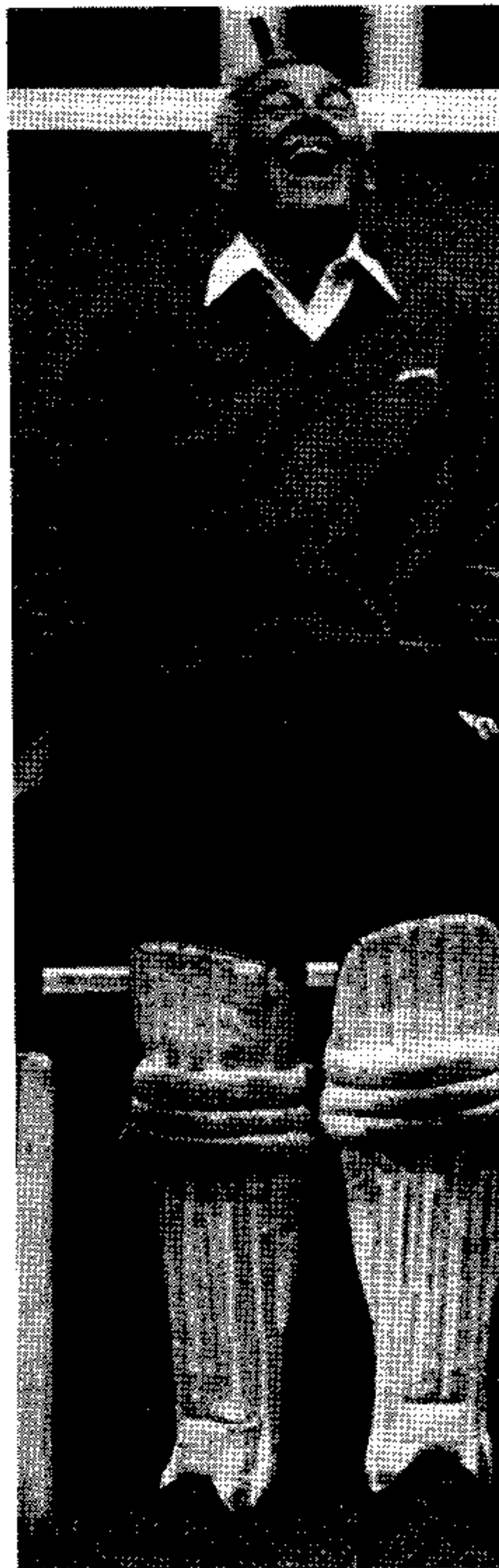
When Scargill spoke, he got a standing ovation. It was a minority — certainly on television it looked like a minority, but he got a standing ovation. I'll tell you what it really means. Come the Labour Party conference, there is the activist element that will give standing ovations to Scargill and so on.

If you look at the six million to four million majority for the right in the TUC. That two million for separation was by and large the unions not affiliated to the Labour Party — NALGO, NUT, CPSA and so on. Those unions will not be present at the Labour Party Conference.

Because of the activists and because of the absence of representatives of the non-affiliated unions, the shift to the right will not be as massive. But the shift to the right is taking place.

There are two other points. One is about the Broad Lefts. Because of what happened in the TUC in the country generally what we have been saying about the Broad Lefts is correct, except we have to be clear about the timing. It is much quicker, much accelerated recently.

The Broad Left is in crisis — that's absolutely true, but is it accelerating or not?



the TUC gave me the answer. The most effective right wing presence in the TUC is not really Frank Chapple — it is Alisdair Graham. He was the most effective speaker for the right wing.

He was standing there representing a union that a year ago was under Broad Left control. Now, he is saying, we are in control, and they shut up. His main target is another union which is still under Broad Left control, in fact the most prominent union under Broad Left control — the NUM.

When Alisdair Graham was attacking Scargill, I was cringing. It sounded so true. Everything he said rang true.

He said:

'Scargill threatens industrial action, extra-parliamentary action for political aims. We are still waiting for Scargill to get industrial action on industrial issues. Scargill has failed three times, while I led the civil servants on strike.'

He doesn't say *how* he led them, but that's besides the point.

You have these two extremes — the NUM, the most important Broad Left controlled union, in complete disarray. And you have this Alasdair Graham, in control, from an ex-Broad Left Union, leading the right. It sums it all up.

I'll tell you what will accelerate it. It is the struggle in the POEU. The POEU are now being put to the test. Tomorrow is the conference of the POEU, and I'm not trying to prophesy what they'll do. But I'll tell you one thing I'm absolutely convinced they will not do. They will not go for an all out strike.

To have selective strikes in the hospitals — you can argue it. It is stupid, but you can argue it. The same in the civil service. But to have selective strikes in British Telecom — you must be completely mad.

When Maggie Thatcher says privatisation is absolutely key for the Tories, they are not going to give it up because of selective strikes. It is like shooting elephants with a pea-shooter.

The POEU is not able to get an all out strike. The selective strikes didn't touch anything. All experience shows that it is more difficult to move from selective strike to all out strike if selective action goes on too long.

### No set-piece action

I don't mind at all if you start a strike in one section of five people and the next day it spreads to ten, the next day to a hundred and the next to a thousand. But to have the same twenty people in London out of a union of 140,000 taking action week after week after week and nobody notices, because managers are doing their jobs and if the managers don't, other members of the union will, is another matter.

Whatever happens tomorrow at the POEU conference I'm absolutely convinced that it will call the bluff of the Broad Left. After the collapse of the CPSA, the catastrophic situation in the NUM and what I think will be the catastrophe in the POEU, there is the NUR.

The NUR is being taken to the cleaners. What you have there is the Broad Left in control, but accepting worse conditions than

Sidney Weighell did five years ago.

The crisis of the Broad Left is very serious. So where does that lead to for us?

We have all the shambles of the move to the right in the TUC and the Labour Party, crisis in the Broad Left, crisis in the Communist Party.

So what remains? Is there going to be big national disputes like the hospital workers? Or better still, the miners on strike? I personally think it is not on.

If I am wrong and tomorrow there is a national strike of civil servants, *Socialist Worker* won't say: 'at the National Committee we said this couldn't happen, therefore it hasn't happened'. Of course not. But it is important not to orient towards set-piece strikes.

Remember how set-piece strikes take place. In 1974 it was the miners who broke through and got something like 30 percent. The result was that the hospital workers got 30 percent. The teachers got a special arrangement. The local government workers got a similar figure. It was one section which broke through — in this case the miners, a very important section, which had an impact on the rest of the class.

### A different process

In 1979 when we had the winter of discontent, it was a different process. In this case it was not the public sector which broke through but the private sector. It was Fords which was out for eight or nine weeks and got 17 percent wage rise. The guideline was at the time 5 percent. British Oxygen got a similar deal and then the haulage workers got 20 percent. Then of course we had a whole lot of other groups of workers getting through and fighting.

This time in the public sector I don't believe the miners are going to fight. I'm not saying they'll accept the 3 percent — I think they'll take 5 or 6 percent. I can't see them at present fighting. Now of course if I'm wrong, the whole picture changes.

In the public sector there is not really one group of workers acting as an example to the rest of the class at present. That is because there are situations where a single success is catching, and situations where a single success isn't catching. It depends on the general mood of the class.

There are also situations where defeat isn't catching. For example, the postmen in the early seventies; out for about eleven weeks and they got nothing. They were absolutely smashed. But it didn't influence the rest of the class because the class was generally confident. Today the class is not confident. And therefore though I believe that Vauxhall are going to get the 8 percent — they have got the offer raised from 5 percent to 6½ percent after guerrilla strikes in Luton and Ellesmere Port — I don't believe for one minute that the 8 percent will be an example to the rest of the class.

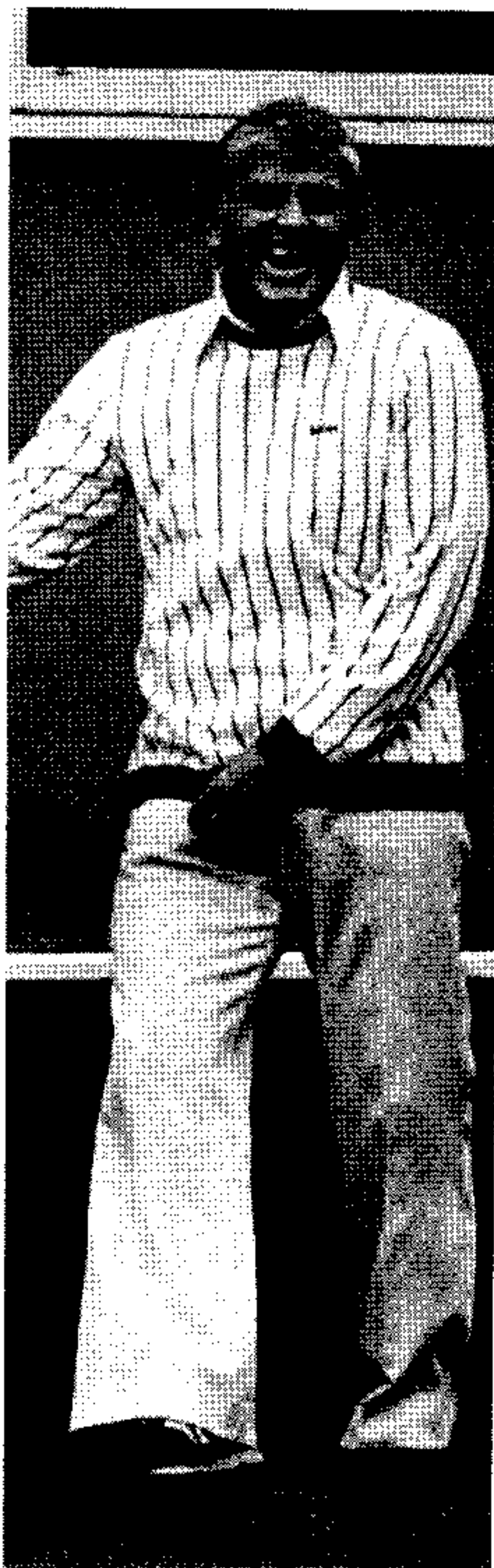
The fact that BL Truck Division accepted 2½ percent at the time that negotiations were going on in Vauxhall, Ford and the rest of the car industry on much higher figures shows that the situation is very patchy, much less generalised. If it isn't generalised in the private sector, it is not going to be

generalised in the public sector. I am not saying there won't be guerrilla war, hospitals on strike here and there, teachers on strike and so on.

That is why our orientation must be on the small struggle. We must put the emphasis there — five times over. The situation hasn't been changed by the TUC — on the contrary, it underlines it.

Everything we have said has been underlined by the events of the last few months and will be accelerated. There will be more and more patchiness and therefore more and more need to relate to these individual strikes and struggles. The emphasis must be on the need to intervene from the outside.

The problem is how do you intervene from outside? For so long we've thought in generalisations that we haven't thought through what it means to intervene from



outside in the present situation.

We have always intervened from outside to some extent. In the period 1970-74 when we intervened from the outside we made some mistakes. The damage that we did was not as serious as all that.

In the present situation it is a different story. Our weight is much greater in our intervention from outside. Therefore the impact of our mistakes is incomparably more serious.

Because the class is in a much weaker condition than it was in 1970/74 a mistake in intervention is much more dangerous.

We must be absolutely clear about our intervention. The first thing is to get the level right. Never suggest things which aren't possible. Never play to the gallery, pretending you can do things which can't be done.

Another thing that worries me is the reception of Roger Cox's article in *Socialist Review* a couple of issues ago. There is a danger that it will get distorted by being taken out of context.

The central issue is *not* facility time: in certain situations you are forced to have facility time because that is the only way you can organise. If you need 100 percent facility time, then the question is: why not share it between five people?

The central question is: how do we rebuild shop stewards' organisation? We are for socialists becoming shop stewards. The conditions we make are that they relate to their base and they are honest about their politics.

That means fighting on issues your own base does not agree with — like for example, Ireland. Of course you will not get 100 percent agreement — you will get elected despite your position on Ireland, but everybody will know what you stand for.

The fact is that today shop stewards are almost always the organisers of picketing in the small strikes of today. I read a study that found that 71 percent of pickets were organised by stewards from the dispute, three percent by stewards from outside the dispute. Twenty percent were organised by local fulltime officials and only six percent were organised by workers who were not shop stewards.

If you are talking about intervention, either from outside or from inside, then you have got to talk about shop stewards, about how their role can be improved and strengthened.

That brings me to my last point. We always talk about the importance of politics in the present period. Of course that means talking about Chile and Brazil, but above all it means stressing the self-activity of the working class. The stress on self-activity runs right through from organising the picket line to win a strike to the fact that socialism can only be achieved by self-activity and not by trade union bureaucrats, Labour MPs or Russian tanks.

Because of the decline of the Labour lefts, because of the crisis of the broad lefts, because of the general patchiness of the struggle, we have the possibility of building the party. We often talk about building by ones and twos. The only thing that worries me is that we don't do it. If we make sure the politics are central, then we can.

# That sinking feeling

Arthur Scargill has been in the news lately—supporting the Polish generals and not supporting the Yorkshire miners. John Deason looks at the background.

The Barnsley miners have openly flouted Tory anti-picketing and anti-secondary action laws. In a few days of unofficial picketing they did more against Tebbit than three years of official speeches by Arthur Scargill.

Many on the left are surprised by such developments—what's happened to the Arthur Scargill that used to walk on water? Why is he so distant from his rank and file, indeed from his own 'patch' in Barnsley? Jack Taylor, the Yorkshire Area President, sold the strike out—but Scargill kept silent throughout.

The sycophantic hero worship that followed Scargill's every speech is for many on the Labour left somewhat tarnished now by his recent outbursts in defence of 'socialist' Poland against Solidarnosc. But Arthur Scargill has always had illusions in Russia's and Eastern Europe's state

capitalist regimes. He is a 'tankist' with more sympathies for the supposedly state planned economies than for the struggles by East European workers against their exploitation by these so-called socialist states.

Scargill is more prepared openly to express such views than the closet state capitalists in Labour left circles. At least he has more courage than them. They keep quiet about such illusions for fear of electoral unpopularity. But nonetheless the essence of Bennite 'socialism' is to see the state as the key agency for change, for implementing the alternative economic strategy. In Russia and Poland there is state intervention par excellence.

Our criticisms of Arthur Scargill are not merely abstract debates about the class nature of Eastern European states. Neither do we identify with the cold war media witch hunt whose hypocrisy can champion Tebbit and Solidarnosc in the same breath.

Our criticism is that Scargill's views on Poland are consistent with his inability to translate his militant speeches into militant action. The establishment are anxious to criticise Scargill for talking about political strikes. We criticise Scargill for failing to organise such strikes. The establishment criticise his views on Poland out of cold war hypocrisy.

We criticise Scargill's denial of any active role for workers themselves in Poland.

Left reformist leaders like Scargill see militant trade unionism as a loyal rank and file responding only when a 'socialist' bureaucracy deems it necessary. He also thinks a state is socialist when it has never had a workers' revolution, has never had any figment of workers' control, and now represses any expression of workers' self organisation. The omission common to both faults is the lack of any confidence in activity and organisation by the rank and file workers themselves.

Contrary to the popular image, since the 1974 national strike, Arthur Scargill has not led or been part of leading any single miners' strike. On the few occasions, such as the 1982 ballot for a national strike against pit closures and for a national wage claim, he wanted to fight he was unable to carry the rank and file. In the majority of instances rank and file unofficial strikes have gone by unsupported, even, like the Yorkshire Rescue mens' strike, denounced, by Scargill.

Unlike the unashamedly opportunist and right wing sections of the trade union bureaucracy Scargill, like all other opportunist left wing bureaucrats, does sometimes believe in the need for political strikes. However the strike is then seen as the pulling out and sending back of the rank and file like a stage army.

There is not the care to nurture and champion every instance of rank and file initiative. For left reformist leaders mass





strikes are not seen as the development of rank and file confidence. They would prefer them to be orderly, disciplined expressions of loyalty to 'the union' and, by implication, loyalty to the leader himself.

Typical of such a stage managed approach has been the mess Scargill and the rest of the NUM left officials have got into over recent ballots. The ballot for the national pay claim, linked on the ballot paper to pit closures was lost. Scargill's barnstorming series of rallies and calls for loyalty to the union did not win over the doubts of most miners. Scargill's arguments did not overcome the miners' worries about large coal stocks, NCB arguments about viability and deepening regional divisions within the NUM. His was an attempt to substitute loyalty to Arthur for rank and file organisation and leadership in each pit—in the present climate of recession and intimidation it was an attempt that inevitably failed.

### Picket or ballot

But even worse than this failure was Scargill's cynicism towards this year's strike by South Wales miners against pit closures. In 1981 the South Wales miners won a reprieve from pit closures because they struck and then unofficially picketed out miners in other areas. This year the South Wales miners were defeated because they were unfortunately persuaded to wait for Scargill to ballot. Picket or ballot was the choice. Scargill preferred the latter even though he knew it would be lost. In an interview to the *Sheffield Evening Telegraph* he explained:

'The idea that good leadership should be ahead but not too far ahead of the membership to leave it behind isn't too wide of the mark, says Arthur Scargill, politely acknowledging a simplistic theory. But sometimes circumstances take control.

'He didn't want the individual ballot vote in February, planning on it some two months later to coincide with the appointment of Ian McGregor. He is certain that on the general principle of pit closures and redundancies and on the right to call action either selectively or on a wider basis, if the need arose, the leadership would have won a massive vote of confidence.

"Unfortunately circumstances dictated the need for earlier action. The options were very limited. We could have left the strike situation in the South Wales area as it was and *provoked near civil war. It would have divided the union. We would have seen men battling with men on picket lines outside the pits, a prospect totally alien to the miners' union and to me.*

"Alternatively, we could conduct the ballot vote in the knowledge that the chances of being defeated were very high. I predicted the result very accurately in a sealed envelope before we started. But *it was better, in my view, politically (and I use that word in its widest sense) to have a temporary set-back at the hands of the members than to have a defeat inflicted upon us in an actual conflict, official or unofficial, by the Government and the*



coal board.

"That was the choice we had to face and anybody who takes comfort from the setback we had in the union, the temporary setback, is a fool. What should be recognised is that *we were able to utilise the democratic machinery of the NUM to contain a very difficult situation within the union and to get the decision, right or wrong, made by the union.*"

Many on the Labour left are becoming more and more embroiled in building electoral trade union machines—'broad lefts'—in order to win positions within the bureaucracy. Within the NUM the lefts don't need such a machine—they control the official union machine. Outside the NUM many broad lefts would love an Arthur Scargill, Polish warts and all.

Left illusions in Scargill exist in abundance still. His statements on Russia and Solidarnosc are put down solely to press witch hunting. At this year's Welsh NUM Area Conference, Emlyn Williams, the

retiring Welsh Area President, drawing lessons from the defeat of this January's strike against pit closures and the lost national ballot, noted that 'the achilles heel of this union is the rank and file...'

There is another side to the NUM rank and file that rejects Scargillian ballot appeals. In the first five months of this year there were 143 registered strikes in the NUM—and now of course, we have just had the 13,000 Barnsley miners on unofficial strike. Everyone of these strikes have been unofficial—nothing to do with rejected militant Arthur.

Scargill and the rest of left officials are completely out of touch with these strikes. Worse, the left officials are invariably quite open in their opposition to these rank and file strikes. Jack Taylor, Yorkshire Area President throughout the Dodsworth strike in Barnsley, attempted to force through the NCB's compromise. Many of the Barnsley strikers feel they are as much out against 'the union' as the Board.

Most of these unofficial strikes are over bonus and related shift/manning issues. Even the recent Dodsworth strike in Barnsley against the victimisation of George Marsh has its roots in the guerrilla war developing on the bonus front.

Worried about some wages drift in areas like Yorkshire, the Board is retaliating with attempts to increase discipline. 13,000 Barnsley miners wanted George Marsh reinstated to his original job but they were also angry with petty discipline and unfair bonus targets in general.

### Bonus grievances

The same rank and file miner who understandably lacked the confidence in a Scargilled national strike against pit closures, does have the confidence to fight one victimisation or one specific bonus grievance.

The arrogance with which apologists for the left officials have written off the rank and file now leaves them with no understanding of a rank and file revolt like that at Barnsley. Worse, they sell it short.

At this year's NUM Conference Scargill rightly condemned those that had supported the introduction of the Pit Bonus Scheme. He described it as the biggest setback the Union had suffered since 1926. Scargill and the rest of the left officials conveniently forget to mention that the prime person responsible for the bonus scheme was the then Labour minister for energy, Tony Benn.

Neither do they mention that despite the NUM Conference and a subsequent ballot of the membership overwhelmingly rejecting introduction of the scheme, still the left officials were unable to stop the right wing from forcing the schemes through in 1977.

The left had no real strategy. They chose to use the courts, twice! Not surprisingly the courts, first through Lord Denning's ruling that allowed the ballot to go ahead in the hope that it would have overturned the conference decision, ruled for the right. And then the courts, this time through Mr Justice Watkins, ruled against the validity of the ballot result! Having relied on the capitalist courts the left then collapsed as the right forced through the schemes. In Yorkshire

Scargill balloted. The wording of the ballot determined the result:

1. Are you in favour of the Yorkshire area NUM conference decision to oppose the introduction of an area incentive scheme; and are you prepared to give the council authority to call industrial action, if necessary, to ensure that the Yorkshire mineworkers are paid, on a day wage basis, no less than other mineworkers in Britain for the same job?

2. The National Executive Committee decided to allow individual areas of the union to negotiate area incentive schemes. In view of this decision, are you in favour of Yorkshire introducing an area incentive scheme?

And to be 'fair', Scargill then announced that he would not campaign during the ballot. It was to be the first of Scargill's ballot surrenders.

Unable to stop the bonus scheme's introduction officials have since completely failed to come to grips with it now that its in. Eloquent speeches describing the divisive nature of the scheme have been accompanied with official abstentions from any struggle around the schemes—hence the lack of official recognition for even one single bonus dispute.

In the recently published Monopolies Commission report on Industrial Relations in the Coal Industry, the figures showing the enormous disparity of bonus earnings between different pits and different areas were censored. The NCB fears too much comparison between the haves and have nots. But the NUM officials also fear publication, out of embarrassment. Scargill and the lefts no doubt think the implicit divisions caused by these bonus disparities can be overcome by keeping them quiet.

### No national unity

Average bonus earnings per shift for the week ending 23/4/83 show the variations to between £90 per week in North Yorkshire to £25 per week in Scotland. And these figures don't show the whole picture. They are the area average figures. Individual pits and individual faces will be on much more than the top figures shown here, and others will be on much less than the lower ones shown. But even this table of comparison is not available to rank and file NUM members.

Such disparity in bonus earnings has contributed very heavily to the break up of national unity felt throughout the NUM after the national victories of 1972 and 74. The different bonus earning systematised into the wage packets the divisions between the profitable and non profitable pits. It is in the rundown pits threatened with closure, suffering harder geological conditions, that the bonus is poorest. Miners in the 'safer' pits—many of whom will have been transferred from shut down pits—are the ones that can make the money. The dangers of this division is obvious. And McGregor is more and more openly exploiting it.

In the current Monktonhall strike in Scotland he has resorted to the arguments he used in the steel industry to set mill against mill. The ones that work harder are safer and are the ones that earn the bonus etc. The

### Production & Productivity Directorate Operations Control Branch Week ending 23/4/83

Area	Average Payments £ per shift				Average Performance	
	Faces	Drivages	Other work	Colliery	Low	High
N Yorks	12.38	18.42	28.96	9.78	17	161
Doncaster	6.04	11.05	0.00	4.53	28	145
Barnsley	11.35	17.42	16.64	8.84	9	232
S Yorks	10.57	15.40	11.37	8.00	51	162
N Derbyshire	10.04	16.62	15.56	7.81	37	139
N Notts	10.64	14.17	13.69	7.72	41	152
S Notts	9.53	15.74	9.13	7.14	53	137
S Midlands	9.59	14.89	14.14	7.08	48	145
Scottish	4.71	5.94	5.09	3.17	26	118
NE	10.20	10.53	12.56	7.15	5	203
Western	9.24	11.75	12.06	6.03	3	141
S Wales	6.21	8.04	5.61	4.41	22	167
GB	8.87	12.24	13.08	6.71	3	232

### The censored bonus figures show huge differences in earnings

irony behind all this is of course that invariably it is the miners on the least bonus that are working the hardest, because of the harder geological conditions and the more outdated equipment.

How then should the left grasp this nettle? First, every strike against the NCB should be championed. Its no use calling on Yorkshire miners to support the union and strike against pit closures in South Wales if the union doesn't support the Yorkshire miners' strike against the bonus scheme.

Instead of keeping quiet about the different bonus figures Scargill should be publishing them in detail and agitating for pit by pit action against the different inequities. The union should also be publishing the different local agreements being struck—such as the recent Kellingley Agreement which allows for averaging out together face and drivage bonuses.

A scheme that has been in operation since 1977 cannot be just wished away. However it can be fought tooth and nail, pit by pit, and face by face. Fortunately some sections of the rank and file are staging such guerrilla action. We should be demanding of Scargill not only that he officially support such struggles, but that he agitate for its extension. Simple questions such as why should a Welsh face worker earn £90 a week less for doing the same job as a Yorkshire miner need to be put forcefully, and *officially*. The right to locally negotiate over every aspect of the bonus needs to be won—ie mutuality over standards, manning levels, average bonus for down time, etc.

Guerrilla action over the bonus can be harnessed to fighting the bigger, tougher issue of pit closures—not through words on ballot papers but through stronger rank and file organisation. The Barnsley strike showed

how much more articulate is the picket line than any ballot paper.

Organisation in the pits needs to be re-examined. 'Fulltime' lodge officers are too distant from the face by face bonus grievances. The problem is not just how distant Arthur Scargill or Jack Taylor is from the rank and file. The local Dodsworth Lodge secretary was also against the strike.

### Wages and closures

Bureaucratisation of the NUM stretches into most pits. Efficient full time lodge officers operating as union bonus clerks are no substitute for rank and file representation from every face, and every gang. The official NUM structure is far too dominated by non-working miners.

And above all rank and file organisation and rank and file willingness to fight, as evidenced by the Barnsley strike, must be infused with socialist ideas. It requires *real* socialist arguments to counter NCB and Tory propaganda about profitability. Traditional left labour arguments for an Alternative Economic Strategy—for a 'Plan for Coal'—concede the concept of profitability. Won to anti-capitalist, anti profit, attitudes miners can both fight every aspect of the bonus scheme and support economically weaker miners fighting a pit closure.

That way wages and closures *can* be linked as issues, issues of struggle. They cannot be linked by any more Scargill ballot tricks. And they cannot be linked while so-called socialists fail to support whatever rank and file militancy comes to the fore—whether it be a Welsh sit down strike against the closure of Tynmawr Lewis Methyr or illegal flying pickets in defence of George Marsh.

# When the boss is a Labour left

Now they are faced with the possibility of abolition, the metropolitan councils, led by the GLC, are attempting to launch a broad based campaign to save themselves.

They are trying to persuade council workers to support them.

But they are faced with a problem. Their behaviour towards their own workers over the past few years is making it rather difficult now to get those workers to defend the institution of metropolitan councils.

Funnily enough, as the threat of abolition looms nearer these councils are under ever greater pressure to attack their own workers. As with the 'fares fair' campaign of the GLC, the left councillors are desperately trying to keep class struggle in the background and appeal to 'common sense'.

Their tactics are to convince influential people of all political colours that councils are the best way of running large cities. So Ken Livingstone is quite willing to set up a stall outside the Tory Party conference in the hope that he can persuade the delegates that he can responsibly manage London.

Of course a very important part of being a responsible manager is keeping your workforce under your thumb. On almost every occasion when a left council has been faced with workers' action, its main response has been to demand the right to manage its council unimpeded by the interference of workers.

Revolutionaries have often said that the logic of reformism means that it ends up trying to manage capitalism better than the capitalists. It must be said that, at least in most cases, the council left have given up pretending that they are doing anything else.

On one level they spend a lot of time trying to persuade the electorate that their way of managing will be better for ordinary people, but on another, in order to try to manage as they want, they have to take on their own workers.

The direction of their politics has been somewhat masked by the downturn. Quite simply fewer workers have been fighting so attacks upon their wages and conditions by left wing councils have frequently slipped by unnoticed by the outside world.

But where workers have taken on left wing councils, the sheer viciousness of these councils' response has been astounding.

To take the example of South Yorkshire council's attempts to implement new technology, two things stand out very clearly—the difference between the rhetoric and the practice, and the fact that the council behaved just like any other management.

The council had always claimed that they were opposed to any job cuts among their own workforce, and promised that they would only implement new technology if it was in the interests of the workers.

In practice, their commitment to this

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Local councils are major employers. Ann Rogers looks at how some who claim to be left-wing treat their workers.

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policy was completely non-existent. They even refused to agree to the standard new technology agreement laid down by the TUC.

This document, as one would expect from the TUC, was far from being a call for workers' power. It merely asked for negotiations between unions and management before new technology was introduced, it gave unions no right to veto new technology.

The council held off for two years, while it attempted various manoeuvres and deals which failed. Finally it decided to confront the unions head on, and attempted to implement its plans. Sadly for them they had miscalculated the situation, and they were met with a general blacking of all new technology.

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## Unholy alliance

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The situation came to a head when 300 workers were due to be moved to a new office block in Barnsley, which had a new technology telephone exchange.

The first group of workers due to move refused to go. The council responded by threatening them with suspension. Just to make sure that the workers didn't make the mistake of thinking socialists might be soft about strikes they actually suspended a leading steward.

When this failed to break the action the council reformists turned to their close friends and allies, the trade union reformists.

The negotiating committee, including a couple of NUM bureaucrats were dismissive of the possibility that mere white collar workers could fight the council's unholy alliance of Labour left councillors and NUM and AUEW Stalinist bureaucrats. They certainly never expected a picket line which succeeded in turning back POEU, AUEW and TGWU members.

Scoffing at white collar workers, especially saying that they are not really workers, has been a favourite trick of Labour left councils. Which isn't surprising really, as the bulk of the council workforce is white collar, and usually the best organised sections are white collar. In order to fend off any embarrassment which might result from a council which said it represented workers being seen to attack its own workers, it seemed a good idea to say that those workers weren't really workers at all.

But using the CP bureaucracy failed, so South Yorkshire was forced to use another trusted management tactic. They hired a cowboy removal firm (which employed kids off the dole queues at low wages) to move furniture into the new offices. They were turned away from the picket line twice. So the police were brought in to break the picket line. Just to guarantee success the council began the removal operation at 3 o'clock in the morning.

The use of tactics like this is hardly surprising when you consider that most senior managers appointed by the council have a long and ignoble history of anti-trade union activity. But they share one important



characteristic with the councillors—both demand the right to manage.

After one week the council had failed to break the strike, despite the use of these tactics, and the workers were having considerable success in spreading the action. 600 workers from all over South Yorkshire responded to a call for support, many of them travelling over 30 miles to join a mass picket. The next mass picket, three days later was even better attended, because support had been better organised, with buses from all over the county being laid on.

It was not just the strength and organisation of the workers which was frightening the council. Just as worrying from their point of view was the fact that the rank and file of the Labour Party were rapidly becoming disgusted at the behaviour of their own socialist councillors.

The workers had made it a priority to visit trade unions and Labour Party meetings, to argue with the Labour Party rank and file activists.

But if the councillors did not have the support of their own rank and file in their party, they could certainly rely upon their supporters within the trade union bureaucracy.

When the issue was raised at Barnsley Trades Council the chairman ruled it out of order. The chairman of Barnsley Trades Council is one Jack Brown, a Labour councillor.

### Beyond reformism

When a second group of workers who were scheduled to move to the new offices not only refused, but made plans to occupy their existing offices, the council finally conceded.

At this point many readers may be asking how councillors who support this kind of policy have the cheek to call themselves socialists. An examination of their reasoning on this point throws considerable light on their general politics.

All their justifications revolve around one idea: that they are the elected council, so they have legitimate power. If workers try to stop them doing what they want this is an exercise of illegitimate power. They differ from Tories in that they prefer to talk to workers to try to persuade them to accept their plans. They differ from the Tories in that they genuinely want to see a wealthier working class. But they agree with the Tories 100 percent that workers standing up to elected governments, whether local or national, is an irresponsible abuse of the power they have if they organise.

Of course workers can be used like a stage army to support the policies of their council, or to support their local MP against the Tory government or whatever, but they must not be allowed to fight for their own interests where these go against the reformists who have appointed themselves defenders of the workers' interests.

There is whole world of difference between thinking up policies which benefit the working class, and being prepared to marshal the strongest forces from the class to defend those policies when they are attacked. Generally speaking most



*Ken Livingstone different from George Lansbury*

reformists will agree to the former; to do the latter means moving beyond reformism.

One of the best examples of this is the history of the Poplar council of the early twenties. Many of the policies which the council implemented were eminently respectable, such things as public libraries and public baths. Many right wingers only objected to their policies on out-relief and high wages for council workers because they knew that the comparatively high wages and relief which Poplar was paying was bound to lead them into a conflict sooner or later.

What drove Labour right wingers, such as Herbert Morrison into a fury about Poplar was that they were prepared to flagrantly break the law, both to implement these policies, and even more importantly to defend them. George Lansbury, the leader of Poplar council, summed it up thus:

'The attack on Poplar,' he said 'is the direct result of Poplar's endeavour to do the things that others only talk about. The issue is larger than an issue of local government. It is the whole question of whether the labour movement means business. Are we going to attempt to carry out what we say on the platform, or are we going to be misled and side-tracked by considerations of statesmanship.'

Furthermore he had a very clear understanding of the limits of what could be achieved by one council, and of the necessity of generalising and fighting:

'I know that we are not going to end Capitalism by Poplar methods. It is for the workers, through their national organisations, to put an end to the system of wage exploitation and slavery.'

The difference between George Lansbury in Poplar and Ken Livingstone in the GLC can be summed up quite simply. Lansbury understood that capitalism could only be fought if the mass organisations of the working class could be lined up to fight it. Livingstone thinks it can be fought if reason-

able people of all classes can be convinced that it is wrong.

So in a very important sense, Ken Livingstone, and all those who accept his analysis are much closer to the Herbert Morrisons of the Labour Party than to the George Lansburys.

Some of the Poplar councillors drew the lessons from their experience and left the Labour Party to join the newly formed, and then revolutionary, Communist Party. Others, like George Lansbury did not, and generally drifted rightwards as the tide of class struggle ebbed.

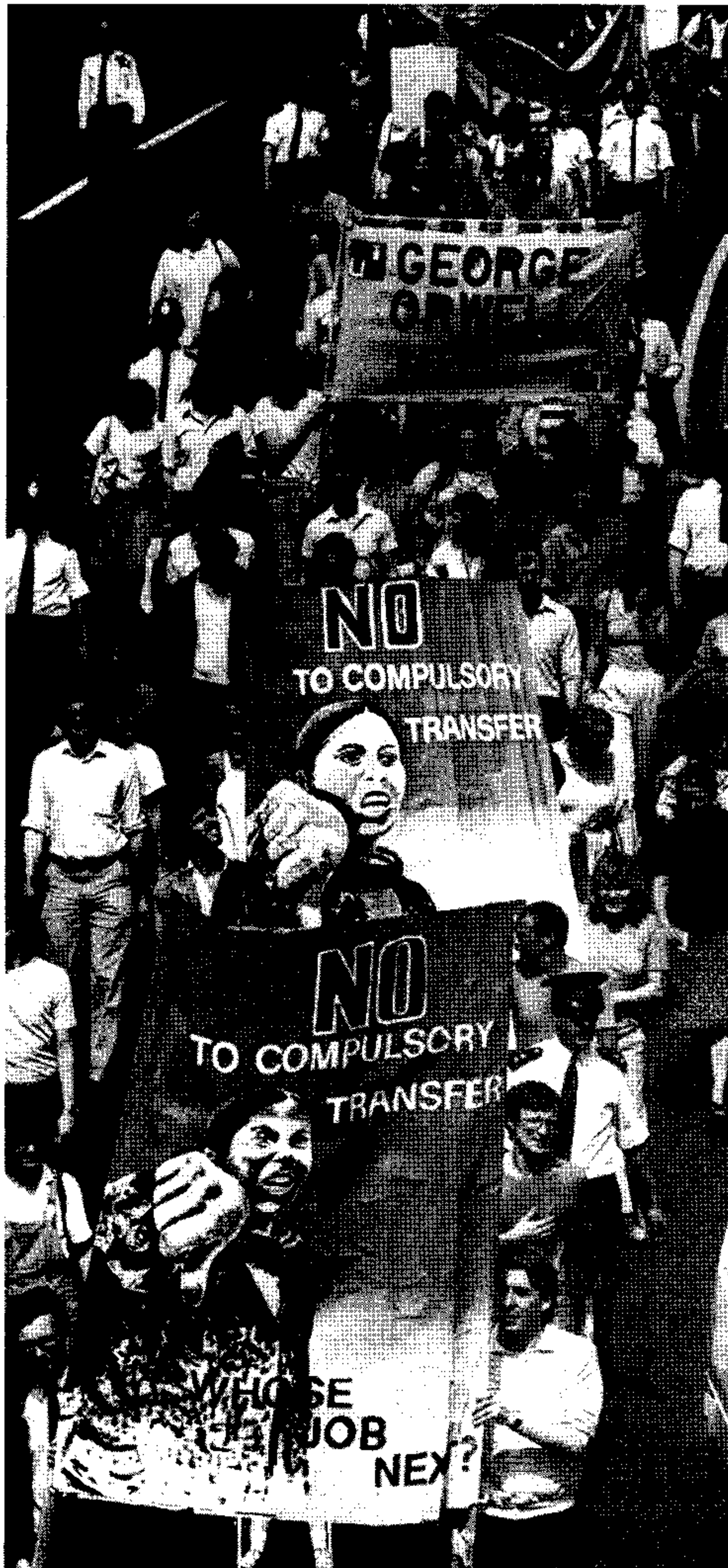
But what was important about all of them in the halcyon days from 1919 through the early twenties was that they were not functioning in isolation. They had been elected on a massive wave of class struggle, and the very existence of this level of activity meant that they were constantly under pressure from those who they represented.

### Living links

As well as large meetings and demonstrations, at which the councillors were called upon to account for their actions, there were also over 70 active trade union branches in the area. Many of the councillors had a long tradition of organising within the unions. Many of the women councillors had long been organising tenant committees and agitating about rents. So they had living links with the working class organisations in the area.

By contrast, the Labour left councils of today have been born from the lack of class struggle, rather than from a mass wave of it. They exist purely and simply because the situation, in the outside world is so miserable that many erstwhile socialists ran to the protection of the Labour Party, and gave it a radical gloss which it had lacked for years.

There have been no mass meetings, no huge demonstrations. The basic trade union organisation which might have sustained



them has withered at the roots. In short they have been isolated from any working class current which might have pressured them into being at the head of an effective fighting force.

Labour left councils today have effectively sat in small rooms, completely divorced from any real workers' struggle and dreamed up policies which were good for those workers.

So these councils do not see workers as a potential power to overthrow capitalism, for them workers are only attractive because they are poor and disadvantaged. This is especially true when the disadvantage is compounded by the workers in question being female or black, or even better both.

So the economic power of workers is not seen as the tool by which capitalism will ultimately be overthrown, rather it is seen in purely negative terms, because of its potential to ruin councillors' pet schemes. Because workers have this power, they become a privileged sector, different from the great mass of the deserving poor, in fact they are the undeserving poor.

Nowhere can this distinction be better seen than in the educational policies of these councils. To take ILEA as an example. As the threat of being dismantled looms nearer and the Labour left try to mobilise support among teachers and 'the community' part of their strategy is to tell teachers not to rock the boat.

But at the same time ILEA is introducing compulsory transfers and temporary teachers are being sacked. The left made a great fuss when they took control of ILEA and said they would now proceed to construct socialism. In fact jobs loss under the left wing Bryn Davies was worse than under the right wing Sir Ashley Bramall.

The argument which the present leader of ILEA, Frances Morrell, is using to justify this job loss is just the same as that used by the Tories over the river. That school roles are falling, and ILEA has smaller classes than anywhere else so can afford to make cuts.

### Change in struggle

The woman who won her position in ILEA in something of a feminist coup is seemingly unconcerned that these cuts are having a disproportionate effect upon women teachers. It is part time teachers who are the first to go and the huge majority of these are women.

The apparent schizophrenia of the reformist left is such that while they are making these cuts, they are desperate to introduce a programme for non-racist, non-sexist education. They have produced endless reports, and employed people on £25,000 a year, to bring this about. Meanwhile their cuts mean that people who belong to the minority groups who they are so worried about are losing their jobs faster than anyone else.

This contradiction can only be understood if we understand that the reformists who run ILEA are stuck in a situation over which they have no control. Or rather they are stuck in a situation in which any attempt to exert control would radically undermine the

basis of their politics. They could only stop cuts by getting more resources for ILEA, to do this they would need to build a mass campaign which could actually put pressure on the government.

To build this sort of campaign would be extremely difficult because the general level of class struggle is so low. But if it could be done it would have to centrally involve the best organised group of workers within ILEA, that is the teachers. But mobilising teachers would mean that they would come up with all sorts of demands which went beyond the role which the ILEA bureaucracy had devised for them. Any campaign which stood any chance of success would show that winning depended upon using the strength and organisation of workers, not upon being reasonable and telling Tories what a good idea education is.

Some of the better ILEA councillors do not like the fact that the organisation of which they are a part is throwing its employees out of work. But they have no clear idea about what they could do to stop it.

### Compulsory transfers

However well intentioned a Labour councillor might be, they do not engage in class politics on a day to day level. They do not have to argue with those who don't agree at work, they do not have the experience of constantly losing when they try to get their mates out on strike. Conversely they never see how workers who have disagreed with every single thing which socialists have said can rapidly change when they start fighting. This fact, which is bread and butter to every SWP member—that fighting, and winning, small struggles leads to a growth in confidence, which leads to a change in ideas, is totally outside their experience.

So, even the best of them cannot survive the present period in the way that SWP members can survive. Because they cannot understand that very small actions, arguing with very few people lays the necessary groundwork for the huge strikes and mass campaigns which we would all like to see.

But the nature of capitalism is such that, if you are not prepared to fight it tooth and nail, then you will be sucked into it. So ILEA ends up claiming that it will not impose redundancies, while it is rapidly increasing its use of short term contracts, (that is employing teachers for one term and then sacking them), which is just introducing redundancies and hoping no one notices.

But the rot spreads much further than Labour councillors. The NUT is littered with people who were once good militants, but have drifted rightwards because they put supporting ILEA ahead of supporting their own members.

This has been particularly evident around the issue of compulsory transfer which means that teachers can be forced to move from a school where they are no longer 'needed'.

Teachers in the SWP had been arguing against *voluntary* transfer for a long time, on the grounds that it was a mechanism for 'encouraging the teachers' unions to collaborate with ILEA in the reduction of jobs'.

For although the ILEA councillors were talking about improving educational provision, and the exciting possibilities presented by transfers, the reality was that it allowed school inspectors to wage a war of attrition with large numbers of teachers in the hope that they would convince at least some of them to move. Their tactics to persuade teachers to move 'voluntarily' included visiting them at home and threatening those who refused to move with disciplinary action.

This 'voluntary' transfer plus not filling vacant posts has meant a decimation of teaching jobs in London over the past few years.

Frances Morrell has been dressing up these transfers in jargon about the need for a more centralised education system—arguing that this will mean a more efficient spread of resources. Meanwhile, people who share her politics who run local housing and social services departments have been trying to decentralise these services, and using exactly the same arguments about more efficient use of resources.

The apparent differences between these two mask the fact that both are essentially attempts to deal with inadequate services without admitting that the real problem is lack of money. Both try to skirt around this problem, so it is not surprising that the major effect of both is to worsen their own workers' conditions and pay.

So, when ILEA began to introduce compulsory transfers they were imposing them upon a workforce already fed up with voluntary transfers. The response of ILEA teachers was excellent, and culminated in the biggest unofficial action seen in the NUT since 1974.

The rank and file feeling on the issue was such that a delegate meeting attended by 120 teachers, representing 50 schools called for total opposition to compulsory transfer, the position argued for by the SWP teachers present.

Sadly the damage that 'left wing' councils can do was seen in the behaviour of the supporters of *Socialist Action* at the meeting. They were to the right of most delegates and were arguing for amendments to the outright opposition to transfers. The straight Labour left displayed all the signs of parliamentary cretinism by arguing that going on strike just before an election, especially against Labour

controlled ILEA, would harm Labour's election chances.

Because of this, only the schools most threatened by compulsory transfer initially took action. They came out on a one day strike, and spent the day visiting other schools to build for the next day of action.

This proved extremely useful, for on the next day of strike action 81 schools were involved, 44 of which were on strike for the whole day, and a demonstration involving 800 people took place. The four worst hit schools began a no cover policy. The level of fight back has been such that ILEA has not dared to force through compulsory redundancies at those schools which have fought back.

When Labour left wingers took over in the town halls they came out with a lot of talk about using the councils as a springboard for socialism. Since the defeat of the Labour party at the election these ideas have been dropped and the only thing left is a purely defensive battle to stop themselves being abolished. But they have used the threat of abolition as an argument to persuade their own workers not to fight them.

The parallel between the way the campaign against abolition is going and the fares fair campaign is astounding. Both are directing their main energies at convincing those on the other side of the class divide that certain Labour policies are best for everyone. Both have ignored the potential of the council workforce to change things.

Because they no longer have a coherent strategy they have relied more and more on accusing anyone who disagrees with them of lining up with the right wing. They have thrown this accusation at revolutionaries with especial glee. In order to guard ourselves against this sort of attack it is necessary to bring politics to the fore. Particularly we should make it clear that we do not see the working class as another minority group, we see them as the people who have the potential to change the world. Against those who would divide up the class into ever smaller fragments we must argue about the question of power.

To do this involves supporting all workers' struggles where they exist, whether they are against a so-called socialist council or not. If we fail to do this then the damage which left councils have done to workers' image of socialism can only increase.

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# Plans, co-operatives and the struggle for socialism

In the past we have devoted a lot of space to arguing against the view that workers' plans and co-operatives provide a viable strategy for the labour movement. Two senior employees of the GLC, **John Palmer** and **Hilary Wainwright**, have written an article counter-attacking. We print that article below, together with replies from **Colin Sparks** on the overall politics of their position and **Dave Beecham** on the detailed record of some of the GLC's efforts in this direction.

Readers of *Socialist Review* and other SWP publications will have been puzzled by the increasing stridence and vehemence of recent attacks on the tactic of developing workers' alternative plans as part of the struggle against unemployment and the wider ideological offensive of Thatcherism.

The criticism has been linked to sweeping attacks on the left-wing Labour leaders of the GLC. But it has been mainly aimed at socialists outside the Labour Party who see workers' alternative plans as part of a transitional politics through which worker militants — and ultimately, wider sections of the working class — will develop a credible political vision linking workers' self-activity here and now to a strategy for transforming society.

Much of what passes for criticism of this approach is mere sectarianism and is only intelligible if the SWP fear the influence of the arguments of those often closest to, but independent of, the SWP, on the party's membership and periphery. That may explain (but cannot excuse) such nonsensical

abuse as the charge in the last issue of *Socialist Review* that the Greater London Enterprise Board (the executive agency of the GLC's industrial strategy) — 'works to undermine struggles against redundancy by offering the meaningless alternative of GLC-financed co-ops.' Note the use of the words 'works to undermine'; why, for what conceivable political motive or to serve what interest?

The SWP ideologues have gone so far as to construct an entire sociology involving a new social class (the new middle class) to provide an explanation of the base for left Labour local authorities such as the GLC. The vacuousness of this 'analysis' will have to be dealt with on another occasion but — before dealing with the central political issues involved in the workers' plans strategy — a few questions of background fact must be dealt with.

The GLC is an institution of local government set up by the Tories, dominated by a reactionary bureaucracy, and with extremely restricted powers in a selected

number of policy areas. As such the institution and its role are fair game for socialist criticism.

Nor are the Labour (including the left Labour) political leaders of the GLC beyond criticism. We believe they can be criticised for instance for their tactics over the Fares Fair campaign, in the handling of the recent dispute with ILEA teachers over mandatory staff transfers and more generally, for not starting early enough to build a base among those workers and unions most affected by GLC policy decisions. Such a base will be crucial in the coming political battle to defend the GLC against the Thatcher government.

But there have been grotesque distortions of the facts concerning the GLC in recent SWP writings on the issue. Firstly, the SWP should know perfectly well that the GLC does not 'control' London Transport and is currently engaged in a battle to enforce its policy on transport which calls for no job losses or reductions in services.

Secondly, you would never know reading SWP material that at a time when authorities nationally have been cutting back on services and employment, there has been an expansion in key GLC services and the numbers employed as is illustrated on the increase over the last two years in the number of ILEA teachers and in the fire brigade service.

We would argue that the SWP should be working alongside the comrades who are defending the GLC and are organising in the labour movement around alternatives to unemployment. We argue this not least because of the very large measure of agreement between us and the SWP about the general analysis of the crisis, the state of working class organisation and the need to rebuild shop floor organisations. It is worth setting out these areas of agreement in order to rid the debate around workers' plans of irrelevant slanders that the whole approach is some reformist plot!



**John Palmer: former member of IS, and European correspondent of the Guardian, now a press officer for the GLC**

**Hilary Wainwright: former member of the IMG, co-author of *Beyond the Fragments*, now heads the GLC's Popular Planning Unit**

We agree that workers' organisations have been severely battered — but not defeated in the way they were in the 1930s. We agree that the trade union bureaucracy is — with a few exceptions — bent on a further rightward move in an attempt to rebuild a new relationship with Tebbit and the Tories. We must expect the bureaucracy to renew pressure on the residual areas of rank and file resistance to the offensive of both the Tories and an ever more confident business management.

We agree that the shop stewards' movement itself has — in too many instances — proved itself out of touch with the membership and all too vulnerable to having its bluff called by management through a judicious mixture of privileges and threats. But we place less emphasis than you on the material interests stewards have in this process and more on the contribution of the rotten political traditions over decades of the stewards' movement to its current weakened state.

Conversely, we believe that the fight back by militants must be, of necessity, intensely political. Frankly, without socialist politics even the best union militants will inevitably tend to adapt or be isolated in the new more difficult circumstances in industry. Like you we have also found there is a minority of shop floor activists — not necessarily stewards — who have been made more politically aware by the retreats and defeats of the past few years and by the way Thatcherism has radicalised and politicised the running of industry and the services.

### Clear mechanisms

We share at least one of the practical conclusions you draw from this analysis: that now is not the time for grandiose calls to action, general strikes to bring down the Tories and the like. Your criticisms of workers' plans sometimes places them in this category of grandiose demands that lead only to demoralisation. But whether or not a demand is grandiose does not depend on whether or not it can definitely be implemented — few SWP members could argue that the demand for the 'right to work' is likely to be implemented in present circumstances, and yet you would not say that it was grandiose and likely to lead to demoralisation. A demand is grandiose if it has no connections with any *mechanisms* for implementing it or fighting for it to be implemented. There are plenty of mechanisms for trying to implement the right to work and sometimes winning partial victories, even though there is no chance of total victory in a capitalist society. On the other hand at the present time there are no mechanisms, no signs of the movement and pressure to make the slogan 'a general strike to bring down the Tories' anything other than rhetorical.

As for workers' plans: we could argue that a workers' and users' alternative plan, for example, for making a hospital threatened with closure more responsive to patients' needs (as part of the campaign to save it) falls into the category of the 'right to work' type of slogan. There are clear mechanisms for fighting to get it implemented even though

the odds are against you. There is always a danger of alternative plans being put forward that *are* grandiose and unrelated to the state of workers' organisations but that is something against which those of us who believe in rank and file politics need constantly to argue. It is not an argument against workers' plans as such.

We share with you an analysis of the Labour Party as an electoral machine that has taken its electorate for granted. It is now reaping the poor harvest of governments that have failed to live up to their promises and a party that has even failed to campaign for its own policies. We do not believe that the Labour Party as a party can be the kind of fighting party that we need, rooted in the working class in production and in the community. We think it is a dangerous illusion to assume that to capture the decaying structures of the Labour Party is to capture the commanding heights of working class politics.

Indeed, the fact that the present GLC leadership have been, to some extent, under this illusion makes their position weak. They are in a position of administrative power without popular support. In spite of this ambiguous position though, they do have the possibility of winning popular support after the event as it were. The extent to which they use their political power to win this industrial and social support will be the key to their contribution, indeed to their survival.

We share your rejection of parliamentarist, fabian socialism and suspect that this kind of reformism has had its day.

We would go on to argue that part of the crisis in the working class at present is that the shell of this politics has dominated working-class politics for so long that an alternative strategy for socialism based on popular mobilisation around 'transitional' demands has not had the opportunity to grow. Now that the shell of Fabian socialism has been exposed there is a vacuum partly filled by Tory populism and partly by sheer demoralisation and confusion.

The strategies of the left entryists clearly fail to connect with the experiences, problems and perceptions of even the militant minority of workers in the sense that their politics are unable to help that minority relate to and ultimately mobilise wider masses of workers. The central problem for socialists now is how to work with this minority — both in workplaces and the community — to rebuild the confidence and will to fight among the majority; a confidence and will necessarily related to a vision of socialism worth fighting for.

The SWP answer to this problem seems to reduce to a crude emphasis on a 'return to basics' — rebuilding the shop stewards' movement and building the party. We think this misses a vital link between defensive trade union struggles and acceptance of a socialist alternative to the present system — a link which also is vital to sparking the will to fight.

Of course elementary improvements in shop floor organisation and response — regular bulletins, organisation across unions and workplaces, victories however modest

for solidarity with workers in struggles elsewhere — are all crucial when worker confidence is low. But for this to happen militants must be able to show there is an alternative — however potential — to the view advanced by management and government that theirs is the only valid way to run society. This must not only mean society in the abstract but specific industries and even workplaces in the particular circumstances of here and now.

In the boom years a vague reformist socialist view of a future alternative society was sufficient to hold together and even episodically to mobilise that crucial minority of workers who were able to communicate the confidence and will to resist. Today such a politics — essentially based on expectations that the goods will be delivered by Parliamentary or TU leaders — has collapsed.

It has therefore become vital even for defensive action to present arguments for the 'practicality' and 'realism' of socialist change — arguments which can and must be shown in exemplary action. That is where the question of workers' plans for socially-useful production come in. Without this dimension to the struggle against closures at a time of crisis and 'over-production' the logic of the capitalist market will be seen to be remorseless and unchallengeable even by militant workers.

Far from such plans and demands for socially useful production sapping the will to fight — they may be a precondition to the rebuilding of that confidence without which there will be no fight, even if there is a weak, temporary and all-too fragile upturn in the capitalist economy. The fight to develop such plans and bargaining positions also enables socialists to illustrate the immense potential of new technology when harnessed to helping to satisfy need. It is precisely this area of 'common sense' which the left must ideologically recapture from Thatcherism if the paralysing impact of conservative fatalism is to be broken among working people.

### Utopianism

The charge of 'utopianism' levelled against those who see workers' plans as a way of re-forging a new socialist consciousness among advanced workers is the opposite of the truth. Indeed the real utopians are those in the SWP who seem to rely on some future economic upturn acting to transform the reactionary and divisive ideology which grips the great mass of trade unionists and which directly impedes widespread resistance to the capitalist offensive. Of course, a brief upturn will help to staunch the lack of confidence among at least some workers but it will require a more fundamental shift in attitudes if the militant minority is to see the possibilities of active struggle.

Of course no political tendency and certainly no local government machine can substitute for the process of developing this more political trade unionism. But the SWP's total rejection of the role of the GLC in supporting the development of workers'



plans and providing (all too limited) resources to help workers face the crisis is unintelligible.

To put the question the other way round, are there really no demands workers facing the crisis in London should make of the GLC? Of course one basic demand should be no job losses where the GLC has the power to prevent them, and that the GLC should take the power where it does not at present have it (of London Transport). But what of workers faced with factory closures, often with a weak or even non-existent shop floor organisation (all too common in London)? Would SWP members oppose demands for GLC money to be put in to strengthen the workers' bargaining position in resisting such closures and the job losses which go with it?

The GLC and its agency the GLEB insists that money it gives (even to workers' co-ops) are conditional on acceptance of far greater rights and powers for the workers and the unions. This requires managements to recognise unions where they do not, to provide workers with comprehensive information about management's production, investment, new technology, marketing, pricing, financing and labour policies and the opportunity to negotiate all these questions. In short GLC/GLEB intervention shifts the balance of power in favour of organised labour, significantly if not decisively.

The idea of the GLC or GLEB shifting 'the balance of power towards organised labour' is questioned by the SWP's claim that at Associated Automation in West London the GLC subverted a decision by the workers to occupy with an offer of finance for a Co-op. This claim is a serious one because our first commitment is to support workers' resistance to closure and redundancy. Co-operatives have serious limitations which no amount of GLC

support can overcome. We would not encourage workers to set up a co-operative as an alternative to fighting management's decision to close. And from our own investigations we find no evidence that the GLC did so in the case of Associated Automation.

There are conditions in which the trade union representatives decide, often after trying other tactics, that some form of co-operative or GLEB takeover is the only way of saving jobs. Then the GLC or GLEB will consider their demand for support. One of the lessons we draw from what went wrong at Associated Automation/Third Sector is that such support must be conditional on the independence of the trade unions from the management of the Co-op. One reason for this is that co-operatives must be seen not as a permanent solution to the problem of closure and redundancy but as another form of defensive and transitional action. Like all such action they are full of ambiguities and should be supported only where they lay the basis for strengthening workers' self activity.

### Demoralisation

A small example of where this was the case was in Romford where Lee Cooper Jeans closed a factory and sacked 140 women. The women were not in a union (management had prohibited it) and there was not collective will to resist the closure. However a small group of the women there at Lee Coopers stayed together to form a co-op making children's clothes. They received support from the GLC. Since then the 10 or so women forming the co-op have stayed together as a group, gained self confidence and organisation and joined a trade union for the first time.

Are the SWP saying that in such circumstances workers should not call on GLC support — limited though it is? What difference is there in principle, in the face of

closure and redundancy, between calling for the GLC or GLEB to take over under workers' control and calling for a state takeover (as the SWP did over UCS)?

No one would deny there are dangers in workers becoming more involved in what is going on in their plants and industries. And such involvement will require maximum independence from management. Moreover, many of the alternative plans and co-operatives the GLC supports are very likely doomed in the long run unless there is a decisive national shift in the balance of class power. But we would argue that these initiatives are themselves a contribution towards achieving this shift. For in the 1980s there is no way shop floor and union organisation will be rebuilt unless workers prepare to question and challenge managerial prerogatives (including in areas traditionally seen as no concern of the unions).

The crisis forces workers to prepare for many of the tasks of power — here and now — a situation which reinforces the importance of transitional politics linking the here and now to a future vision of a society based on production for social need and not profit and on democratic control by working people of the economy.

There are, however, far greater dangers than the possible co-option of workers and their representatives by capital. That is that trade unionism will be seen by the mass of workers to have no credible strategy for tackling the triple challenge of recession, long term restructuring of the capitalist economy and the ideological and material offensive of the government and capital. Without the means of responding at every level to that challenge the 1930s could yet be repeated. To have preserved the 'purity' of this or that tendency in the working class movement at the same time would be no adequate compensation.



Upper Clyde Shipbuilders: was the SWP right to call for a state takeover?

# A reformist strategy

John Palmer and Hilary Wainwright make two claims in their article. They argue that the workers' co-operative represents some sort of solution to unemployment in the present period — although they are very careful to hedge that particular bet with qualifications about the 'long run'.

But they are also arguing that the demand for workers' co-operatives, directed at the GLC is some form of political strategy leading to socialism which is both independent of the Labour Party and much more realistic than the perspective of the SWP.

Those are two radically different claims. Dave Beecham deals with the first, and more important, claim in his article. I will look here primarily at the second.

Of course, it is not possible wholly to divorce the two, since the test of any strategy for socialism is the concrete results it produces in the class struggle. If it leads to better class organisation, greater class confidence, a wider political awareness, then it is a step towards the overthrow of capitalism. If it leads to dis-organisation, splits, demoralisation, depoliticisation then that strategy is positively pernicious.

It is the view of the SWP that the outcome of the setting up of co-operatives in factories faced with redundancies is precisely splits, demoralisation and depoliticisation. The strategy, we contend, is fundamentally a retrograde one. It is not only a bad strategy in comparison to other ways of fighting, but it does not even work in its own terms.

We did not just dream up this view, nor did we pluck it out of some work by Marx or Lenin. We have based our judgement on the concrete experience of at least the last decade of working class struggle.

Indeed, it is not at all the case that there has been an 'increasing stridence, and vehemence of recent attacks.' We were just as 'strident and vehement', or as we would prefer to say, clear-sighted and determined, in our criticism of such schemes ten years ago

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when John Palmer was a leading member of our organisation.

*Socialist Worker* and the old *International Socialism* carried long and detailed accounts of the attempts to set up co-operatives at Kirkby Mechanical Engineering and at Triumph Meriden. In both cases we argued that these were not viable options, that they would lead to redundancies, speed-ups, wage cuts and ultimately failures. The tragedy is that we were right in both cases.

More recently, in both the new *International Socialism* and in *Socialist Review* we have devoted a great deal of space to arguing why the idea of 'alternative plans' was a non-runner. Again, at Vickers and at Lucas, we have been proved tragically right.

Irrespective of the arguments on either side, the *record* attests, and attests decisively, that we are right and Palmer and Wainwright wrong.

When they search their hearts, they know we are right, and in reality the practical outcome of plans for co-operatives is not for them decisive. The real importance of the ideas lies in their ability to give workers a vision of alternatives, which will transform them into socialists.

Now it is a pretty peculiar sort of strategy in which ideas have an impact independently of, indeed quite contrary to, the practical results of their implementation. But it is also an understandable position. It has a great deal in common with the writing of Utopias like William Morris's *News From Nowhere*.

### The record

There is absolutely nothing wrong with the writing of Utopias. True, they are a form of abstract propaganda, but there is a place for them in the overall work of any socialist organisation. Provided they are recognised for what they are — pictures of the possible future and not concrete guides to action — then utopias, or at least well-written and attractive utopias have a definite and honourable place in the struggle for socialism.

But Palmer and Wainwright do not see their work as the construction of abstract utopias. Nor does the GLC. It does not reward them handsomely for their literary imagination. Their job is to try to persuade workers to set up co-operatives as a concrete strategy. Their work is rooted in the here and now of the class struggle.

As they put it:

'The charge of "utopianism" levelled against those who see workers' plans as a way of reforging a new socialist consciousness among advanced workers is the opposite of the truth.'

Plans, apparently, even if their outcome is a disaster, even if they act as an excuse for avoiding a real fight, will rebuild political awareness and socialist consciousness amongst workers.

How this consciousness will be organised is not clear. How it will act to change the world is unspecified. What will happen to, let us say, the GLC in a workers' state is a mystery. Our authors are silent on every aspect of their strategy for socialism apart from the assertion that workers' plans are an important part of it.

There is a good reason for this silence. All of the evidence points to the fact that Palmer and Wainwright want to find some sort of third way between attempts to reform the system and the struggle for a revolutionary overturn. They say they don't agree with the Labour Party and they certainly make it clear that they don't agree with us.

### No third way

This third way is an illusion. The attempt to give it an organised form — namely the Socialist Society has proved a failure and is well on the way to collapse. Whatever Palmer and Wainwright might want, there is no organised third force to hand.

So we are left with two people, very talented and persuasive people, pushing for workers' plans and co-operatives.

Unfortunately this is not taking place in a vacuum. There are real political forces all around, pushing for all sorts of different strategies and the efforts of Palmer and Wainwright have to fit in with that reality.

The part of that reality that they fit into, of course, is the Labour-run GLC. The GLC pays them to use their very considerable talents to push its ideas. And there is no doubt whatsoever that the GLC has a political strategy, fully worked out and publicly proclaimed — they are reformist socialists.

Whether they like it or not, Palmer and Wainwright are part of the propaganda machine of the Labour Party. That is what they are paid for, that is what this current article is all about, and any results they produce in the class struggle are destined to bolster up a reformist strategy.

It is important to be clear what is at stake. We are not criticising them for working for the GLC, or even for being obliged to do things not 100 per cent consonant with revolutionary politics. Many white-collar workers find themselves in a similar situation, the present writer included. But it is one thing to earn one's living conducting, say, post-graduate seminars on the films of Howard Hawks and quite another to trumpet such an activity as a political alternative to the SWP. Palmer and Wainwright, in their own field, are up to the latter.

Their work has a consequence. However much they might claim to agree with the SWP on this and that, and however much they might claim to reject 'Parliamentarist, fabian socialism', the effect of their work is quite clear. It is intended to weaken the Socialist Workers Party and to strengthen the Labour Party.

There is in fact, nothing particularly socialist about the idea of co-operatives on their own: the SDP are in favour of them and they flourished in Franco's Spain. It is only when they are located as part of a programme for changing the world that they become of serious interest to us.

The idea that it is possible to change the world by means of getting elected to local councils is even more absurd than the idea that you can do it by means of getting elected to Parliament.

A Labour government cannot control the economy, even though it has considerable freedom to raise taxes, print money, influence interest rates, affect exchange rates, etc. Even with these powers a Labour government will not seriously affect the level of unemployment.

A local council — even a big one like the GLC — has much less room for manoeuvre. True, they can raise the rates and make working class people pay for the crisis, but that is virtually the limit of their financial powers. Outside of that power they are the prisoners not only of the general workings of the capitalist world economy, but also the detailed economic policies laid down by central government.

Because they have virtually no control over the economic environment they work in, and because the amounts of cash they can dispose of are tiny, there is a natural pressure on councils in the direction of tokenism. The co-operative business stems from that.

True, it is not the wild end of the tokenism: the GLC's senior socialist economist has seriously advanced the notion that the GLC should introduce its own currency. But it is still very tokenistic.

### Rationalisation

So we find Palmer and Wainwright rejoicing that out of 140 women employed at Lee Cooper Jeans, 10 are employed by the co-op and have joined a trade union. They tell us nothing about current wage rates, conditions, work intensity and so on, and it is probably just as well if the example of other co-ops is anything to go by. But they do tell us enough to know that this was not a great victory but a disaster. It is good that ten women still have jobs, but 130 have gone down the road.

It is clear both from theory and experience that the idea of establishing socialism in one factory is even more absurd than trying to do it in one country. The setting up of a co-op does not suddenly insulate a workforce against the world market. At best it can salvage the conscience of the GLC to save a tiny number of jobs.

It is precisely because the strategy is not a serious one that we reject Palmer and Wainwright's rhetoric about joining them to put demands on the GLC. It is not that such demands are 'grandiose' but that they are pathetic.

For our part, we will continue to argue for resistance to sackings and closures. In London at least that job will be made more difficult by the activities of Palmer and Wainwright, who will provide the right wing stewards with an apparently credible alternative to a serious fight.

But of course we have no illusions that committing people to such a fight is ever easy. Struggles of this type are rare. But when they happen, as recently at Highland Fabricators for instance, they are worth learning from. We can learn from the co-ops too; we can learn what to avoid.

## A practical disaster

'You don't want a full-time official — you want an estate agent.' These were the words of Bill Taylor, AUEW assistant divisional organiser for North London, when the shop stewards of Associated Automation in Willesden told him they wanted to set up a workers' co-operative with the help of the GLC.

They are words that sum up neatly the disaster that occurred in a once well-organised factory when the siren voices proposing alternative plans came along.

The facts about what happened at Associated Automation, a GEC subsidiary producing telephones (and some small batch military equipment), are still not well known. It is still possible for GLC propagandists to assert blandly, as John Palmer and Hilary Wainwright do, that 'we would not encourage workers to set up a co-operative as an alternative to fighting management's decision to close. And from our own investigations we find no evidence that the GLC did so in the case of Associated Automation.'

Either these 'investigators' are very selective or they have their eyes shut. The GLC left and its local supporters in Brent Labour Party bear a major responsibility for the collapse of workers' organisation at AA and resulting debacle. They now find themselves hounded by the Tories for wasting nearly £1 million. They will be lucky to extricate themselves from the allegations of corruption surrounding the worker/director shop stewards of the Third Sector co-op.

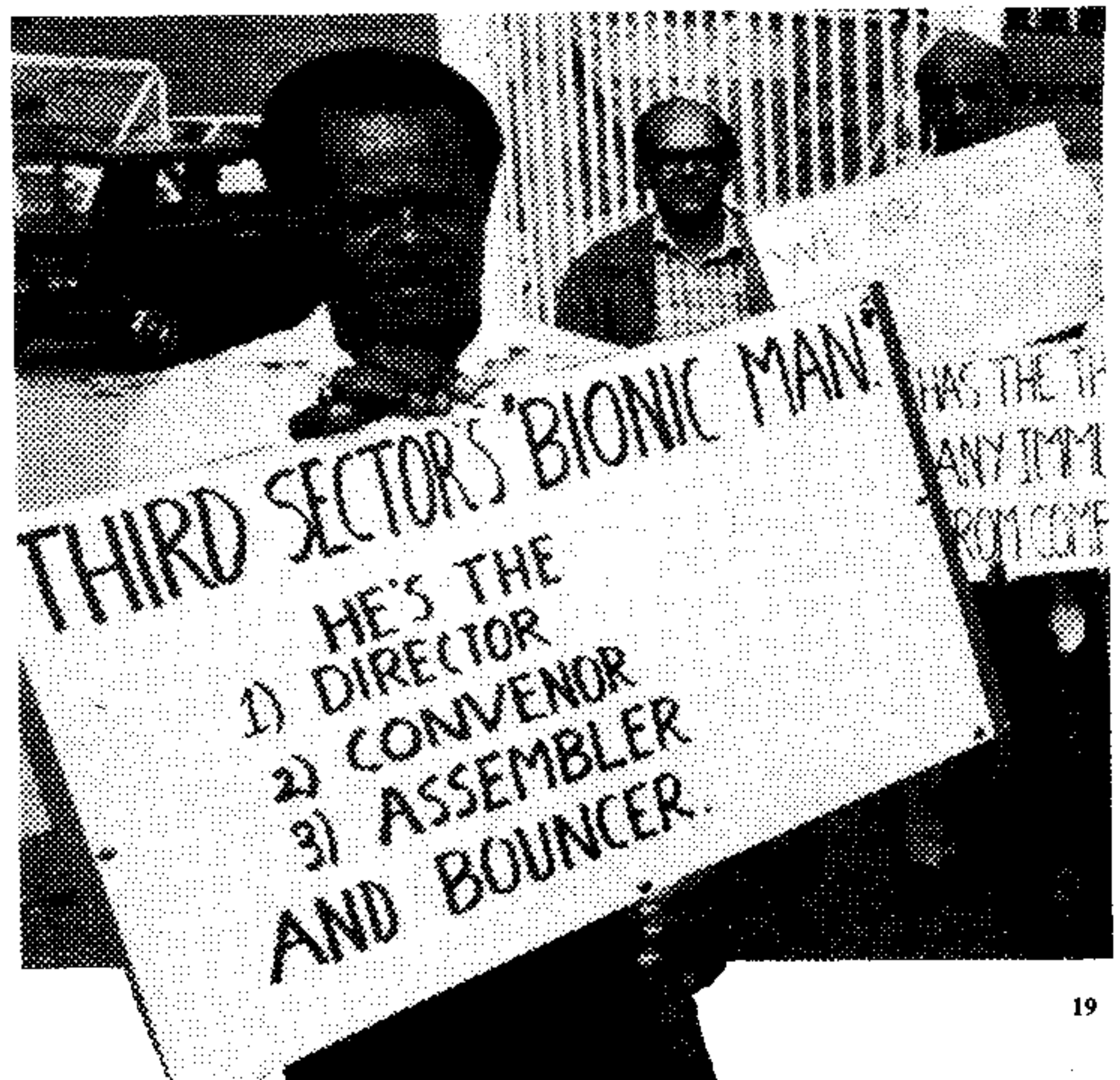
Third Sector is only the worst of the

disasters in which the GLC has entangled itself. Its role at the Austinsuite furniture factory in Walthamstow was simply to support a buy-out of the kind which the Tories have been especially in favour of in recent years. The massive job loss and atrophied union organisation can hardly be blamed on the GLC and the Labour left. Nevertheless it is hardly a great inspiration for those inclined to follow their particular brand of 'transitional' politics.

Far worse was the GLC/Labour left involvement at Metal Box in Clapton. Here there was a major rationalisation and productivity offensive which involved the loss of hundreds of jobs at both the Clapton factory and at Neath in South Wales. The company successfully played one plant off against the other after the Clapton stewards gave up any semblance of a fight in early 1983.

A key role was played by the Labour left involvement of the GLC in preventing any sort of fightback getting off the ground. Meetings, lobbies, campaigns about alternative plans provided the perfect excuse for the stewards not to do anything about the redundancies.

The prospect of resistance was not a fantasy. A matter of days after the redundancies went through, the factory came out on strike over a demand for compensation for loss of shift payments. But those who proposed that the workers take an easy way out and discuss alternatives — most of them extremely ludicrous — rather than a fight, effectively undermined any struggle against



redundancy.

We repeat this accusation, because it seems to be one that John Palmer and Hilary Wainwright are, understandably, reluctant to take on board.

To be clear what it means: at every turn, those faced with redundancies, sackings, closure are under enormous pressure not to resist. It starts with the carrot of redundancy payments and voluntary redundancy. Even assuming workers are strong enough to resist this, there are then colossal pressures to take the easy option.

The most sophisticated companies realise this — witness British Steel's creation of its own 'alternative planning agency', BSC Industry, designed to create alternative employment in places like Corby, Consett or Ebbw Vale, and incidentally rather more successful than the Greater London Enterprise Board. BSC did not set up this body out of pure philanthropy. It was a subtle way of sapping resistance to steel closures, quite openly conceived as an alternative pole of attraction.

There is in essence very little difference between the Greater London Enterprise Board and the paraphernalia of alternative workers' plans on one hand and bodies like BSC Industry on the other. Except of course that one is fearfully left wing and advocates transitional policies while the other is the darling of 'butcher' MacGregor. (In fact it predates MacGregor by several years and was established under the last Labour government.)

Naturally there are no minutes of meetings where GLC functionaries plot to divert workers' struggle. The point is that by their activities and intervention, these people make it that much harder to win the confidence of militants and then the mass of the workforce for a fight in a particular factory or office.

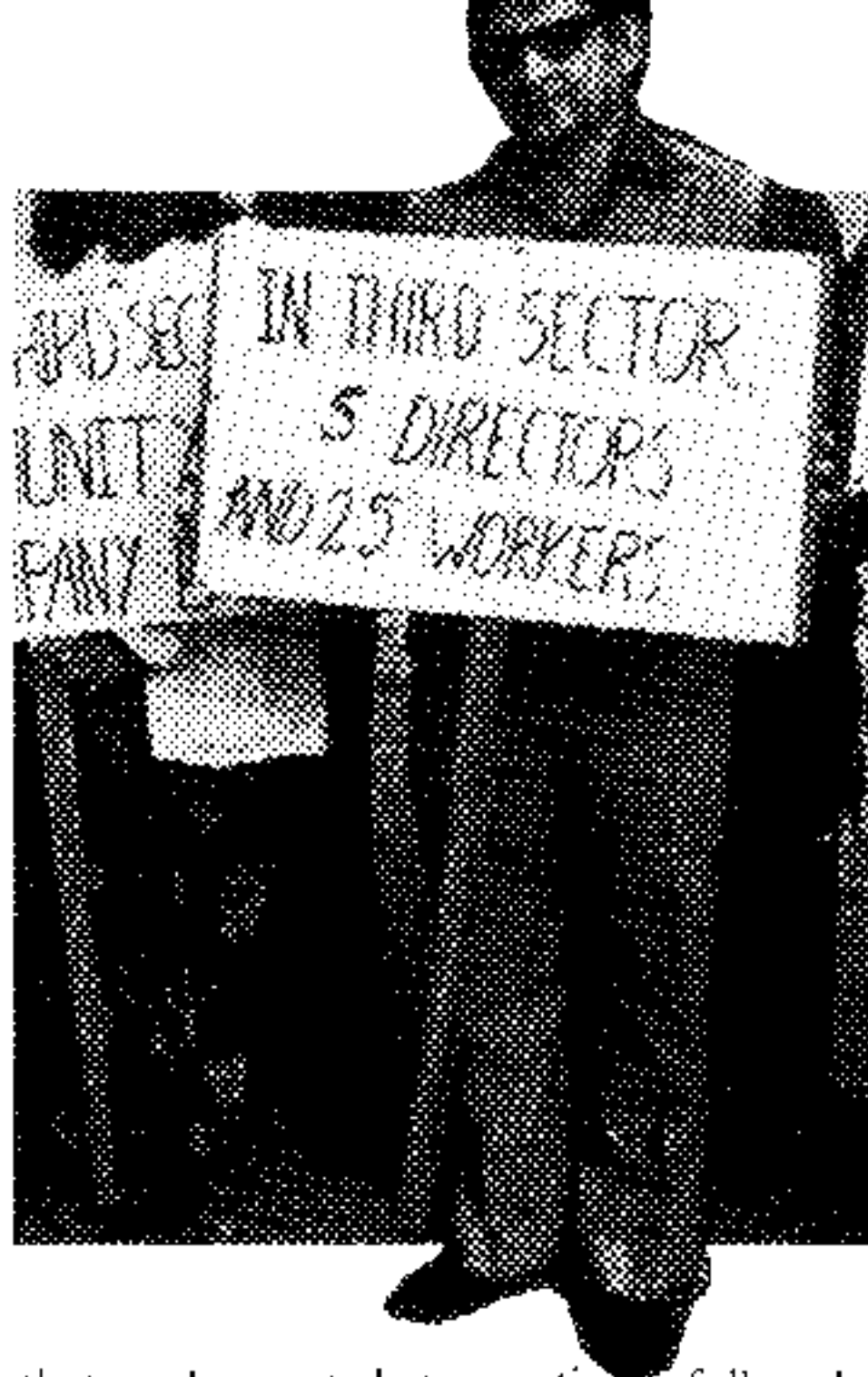
What happened at Associated Automation/Third Sector is a grotesque and horrific example of this.

Associated Automation was the last vestige of the once thriving GEC Willesden site, employing upwards of 6,000 workers in the 1960s. Part of the Weinstock rationalisation was a closure of a large part of the site. The factory which was left still had several hundred workers, and a bitter struggle was fought successfully in the mid-1970s to prevent a complete rundown.

Nevertheless, AA workers faced many of the same problems of the downturn in workplace organisation during the period of the social contract and afterwards. When it came to the Grunwick strike, literally just across the road, a reasonable minority of workers — perhaps 50 out of 350 or so — were prepared to go on strike to support days of action, but the stewards lacked the confidence and ability to organise more than this.

Thus when GEC announced the closure of AA towards the end of 1981 the outlook was not good.

However, just as at Metal Box a year later, the position wasn't hopeless. The workers voted to fight the closure. Palmer and Wainwright in their apologia for the GLC's activities around AA conveniently ignore (or most likely are just plain ignorant of) the fact



that workers voted at a meeting to follow the advice of the full-time AUEW official, Bill Taylor, to resist the closure. The issue was to be put through procedure and the workers were guaranteed full AUEW backing when the point of breakdown was reached.

At the same time, however, the AUEW convenor, Abdul Wagu, was already approaching his friends in the local Labour Party via the Willesden 5 branch of the AUEW to talk about a co-op. The co-op company was registered at a very early stage. The workers remained totally unaware of what their stewards were conniving at with the aid of individuals on the Labour left for several months. The GLC was not involved at the very earliest stage — but it was the Enterprise Board and the poisonous effect of 'alternative planning' which provided a ready-made excuse for avoiding a fight.

## Nightmare

By the summer of 1982, the position at AA had become really bad. Of a totally demoralised workforce (not the bright-eyed hopefuls that the alternative planners conjure up out of their imagination) over half took their redundancy money. Even at the time this seemed the best option left: though the local SWP branch put in a leaflet (on 19 August 1982) arguing that the co-op was a trap, that the workers could still take on GEC, that GEC was the richest company in Britain and that setting up a co-op was a 'cruel trick'.

It gives one no great pleasure to recall what the leaflet said:

'What will happen to the co-op at AA will be the same as has happened with co-ops in other factories. Workers agree to cut their pay. They agree to put their friends out of work. They sack themselves. If those in favour of a co-op were honest — they would admit that a co-op could only survive by employing perhaps 100 workers — maybe even less... What happens to the few who are left is that for a time they'll feel big and important because they are 'businessmen'. And then — if they're honest — they find out that they're much weaker as businessmen than they were as workers.'

This leaflet was in fact the first piece of

serious information that AA workers had received about what was planned for several months. Not surprisingly the aspirant worker/directors stormed out of the factory and nearly assaulted those giving it out. A violent letter to *Socialist Worker* from the Willesden 5 AUEW branch claimed that 'should but one job be saved by the present initiative by the workers of AA Ltd (GEC) this position will be a worth a thousand of your infantile tracts'.

Grotesque and horrible enough already, the subsequent events at Third Sector would seem ridiculous if they were not so tragic. Having paid over £830,000 to GEC for a factory and machinery that was known to be antiquated, the GLC-funded co-op then acted as a sub-contractor for GEC. So the largest, most profitable manufacturing company in Britain got out of its obligations not only scot free but with a profit. And it was then able to sub-contract to a factory employing less than a third of the previous workforce, on worse conditions, at cut rates, with no commitment whatever.

Naturally Lord Weinstock didn't get where he is today without being able to pull a few tricks on naive bureaucrats. But considering the GEC managing director actually informed the co-op that the plant wasn't viable, the GLC's stupidity is incredible. One is reminded of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* and the Tory councillors who municipalised the loss-making gas works in order to be able to buy into electricity and make a killing — except that in this case it is the councillors and their friends who are hoodwinked.

The eventual decline and collapse of Third Sector is a more sordid tale. The end result for the workers who invested their redundancy money has been complete despair. Unfortunately they have not had the courage to go and demand the GLC takes them on as direct employees, which they would be thoroughly justified in doing considering the role it has played over the past 18 months.

What has happened, though, is a very, very long way from the Palmer and Wainwright notion of alternative plans encouraging workers and providing an inspiration to socialists. It has of course provided the GLC Tories with an enormous present, which they will use again and again. The local and regional press has had a field day, arguing that of course workers can't run their own affairs — which is exactly the position the 'socialist' GLEB has adopted with statements that the co-op has failed because it did not employ 'professional managers'. The horror has continued to the bitter end, with GLC/Brent Council bailiffs storming into the factory and hospitalising the co-op's security officer.

Enough of AA. The question is whether it typifies the GLC's industrial strategy. Perhaps it is an isolated aberration. Perhaps, just perhaps, the GLC and the GLEB can play a role in helping workers' struggles as Wainwright and Palmer contend.

Perhaps first of all they should read their own literature. With the glossy blue pamphlet given out by the GLEB in its publicity drive at the TUC comes a rather shorter 'employees' leaflet (coloured red of course — will these geniuses stop at

nothing?). This leaflet on behalf of the Industrial Development Unit (sic) contains a most revealing section on 'Early Warning and the Fight Against Redundancies. What Can We Do?' It says:

'Essentially Early Warning gives us (who?) time to consider *alternatives* to redundancies, rather than simply being confronted with redundancy notices.

'In some cases we may only be able to assist unions in their campaign against redundancies.

'In other cases however this assistance can be extensive and greatly add to the strength of the unions to prevent or at least minimise job losses.

'This could be done in conjunction with the offer of financial or other help to the company from the GLC...

'Where there are Trade Union initiatives to save jobs, the GLC is committed to assist these initiatives by providing resources to help develop *alternative* plans and where appropriate fund the proposal through the *Greater London Enterprise Board*.

So it looks as though:

- 1) The GLC wants to come in before there's any sign of a struggle;
- 2) It does not consider fighting redundancies as the priority;
- 3) It can play a greater role in providing other options to fighting redundancy;
- 4) It seeks to bail out companies rather than strengthen workers' organisations;
- 5) It is mainly committed to funding islands of social ownership.

What happened at AA is apparently not an accident at all, but absolutely in line with the GLC's stated strategy. Of course, there have been some unpleasant side effects, like corruption of worker directors, and slight deviations from the norm (like ignoring AUEW official opposition) but in general the course of events followed the GLC's declared aims it seems. The GLC and its paraphernalia of grand offshoots — Industrial Development Unit, Economic Policy for London, Early Warning System, Popular Planning, Contract Compliance etc etc — proposes to set itself up as a little island where workers can set up alternatives. It is a nightmare. The whole thrust is towards 'saving jobs before it's too late', in other words providing alternatives to the class struggle. A nice corporatist mess the GLC has got itself into!

It only remains to add that the second time round, at Metal Box at the end of 1982, the process of demoralisation was the same as at AA, only much faster. It took a matter of weeks for the GLC to intervene, for the endless circle of public meetings, 'community involvement', alternative plans etc to begin and for any chance of a fight against the redundancies to go out of the window.

Again, of course, the GLC did not intervene out of thin air, it was brought in by Labour lefts, including in this case the Trade Union Liaison Officer of Hackney North Labour Party. The alternatives considered to the company's rationalisation were nearly all totally ludicrous, including the notion of a co-op producing cans in competition with the four giant multinationals in the industry. The other proposition was that the GLC

should actually buy in to Metal Box, rather like government shareholdings in BP (though this comparison was not the one desired). The one SWP member on the shop stewards' committee was in a minority of one when it came to calling for a fight, and the only public figure who came out with a call for militant action was, perhaps predictably, Ernie Roberts MP.

### Grotesque example

As at AA, there was a tradition of some resistance at Metal Box (witness the strike which occurred days after the redundancies went through) but the enormous weakness of sectional organisation meant that, again as at AA, the little battles had not been won, and the big one therefore seemed all the more daunting.

This is of course the ultimate criticism of the alternative planners. Because their notions are always to think 'big', to talk about huge plans, to come from the outside with a lot of resources to set up alternatives — their notions are always removed from the

everyday reality, from workers' experience, and most importantly from the type of struggles which workers feel they can win — especially in the current period, when little issues are often the only thing that can be fought about.

'Of course elementary improvements in shop floor organisation and response' are crucial, argue Palmer and Wainwright, as though this was somehow simply a question of getting things better organisationally. The truth is that to even begin the arduous tasks of building up sectional and workplace strength requires a different political perspective from the world of alternative plans and pretence about alternative strategies for London.

It is not that political ideas are out — on the contrary. But the ideas that the 'planners' want to foist onto militants, and which many are only too willing to accept, is that there are alternatives to fighting management, that there is a municipal road to 'social ownership' and that islands of 'popular control' can be built alongside and in coexistence with capitalism.

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# Breaking Tory laws

The strike at Nigg in the north of Scotland came as a surprise. Peter Bain reports on the lessons.

Easter Ross is more than 600 miles north of London and seems an unlikely place for a bitter and militant strike which involved 1000 pickets and led to open defiance of government anti-union legislation.

The area is dominated by massive estates owned by the likes of the Dukes of Westminster and Sutherland and is dotted with tiny villages. Apart from the workers at Nigg, the only other sizeable concentrations of industrial workers within eighty miles are at Douneray atomic power station and at the oil platform yards at Ardesier and Kishorn.

The yards are products of the North Sea oil boom and government attempts in the sixties to broaden the employment base in the area. The jobs brought immigration into the area, largely of skilled workers from Clydeside. The village of Aness has been described as a Glasgow housing estate stuck in the Highlands.

Highland Fabricators — known locally as Hi-Fab — runs the Nigg yard. It is a partnership between the UK construction giant Wimpey and the US-based oil construction multi-national Braun and Root. Ever since work started in 1972 they have done extremely well out of Nigg.

The ten rigs built there have all earned high profits. When, in March 1982, the world's largest oil production platform, designed for the BP Magnus field, was floated out, the company's own news-sheet proudly stated: 'the job of building it was given to the most experienced and respected workforce of any working in the sphere of

North Sea activity'. They also said: 'The job was on time and within budget.'

The current job, however, is a different matter. A £75m order for Conoco has run into deep trouble. The design was a new one and additional difficulties resulted from the fact that the wrong sort of steel was ordered and used in part of the work. Cracks also developed in the welds in prefabricated sections built in Japan.

There is no doubt that management had got themselves into hot water with the current job, but the workers are in no doubt that management have used these difficulties as an excuse to mount an attack on the working conditions. They aim to use temporary problems as a weapon to ensure that work on new orders would be done by a docile workforce.

## Management offensive

The management offensive started when workers returned from holiday on 3 August. Welders working inside the platform legs or 'cans' were told that they would no longer get liquids, no-one could shower during working hours and management would no longer provide drying facilities.

It might sound as though all that was at stake was a few privileges, until you realise what conditions inside the 'cans' are like. Up to twenty welders at a time can be working in a metal tube between 10 and 40 feet in diameter. They are heating 3½ inch steel to between 100 and 250 degrees centigrade. Even management recognise that no-one can stay inside those temperatures for more than half-an-hour.

When the welders refused to enter the cans they were taken off the clock and struck in

protest. As the news filtered through to other departments pressure for action grew and the stewards were forced to call a mass meeting. The stewards made no recommendation but the workforce voted to strike until the welders' conditions were restored.

The response of the company was to vilify the workforce, sack everybody, threaten to close the yard, and then to offer 1,600 out of 2,100 strikers re-employment on vicious conditions.

In return for a 4½ percent wage rise from November those offered re-employment were expected to agree to additional charges for transport, meals and protective clothing, a longer working period, and general increases in management authority and discipline.

Management claimed the 400 accepted these terms but on 20 August a well-attended mass meeting voted unanimously to stay out until everybody was reinstated and the company accepted that any changes in working practices had to be negotiated.

The company then turned the screw harder and announced they would open the yards to any worker who wanted to go back on their terms on Monday, 29 August. Clearly, they were hoping to get a significant number of scabs, to split and demoralise the workforce, and beat the strike.

They miscalculated badly. As the deadline approached the number of pickets on the gates grew steadily. Up to then it had been 30 or so, mostly shop stewards. On the morning of 29 August, there were six pickets on each gate — and 1,000 workers standing in the car park.

The plan to bus in scabs ran into difficulties even before the buses got out of the village of Aness. 40 women stopped the coaches, boarded them, and had a heated argument with the scabs.

As the buses approached the gates, a well co-ordinated system of signals brought the 1,000 pickets out of the car park on to the road. Two hundred police were left stranded at the gates and the coaches ground to a halt. The police heavy mob tried and failed to drive a wedge through the pickets to get the coaches through and soon they were backing up.

After the yard convenor had spoken to the drivers they agreed not to cross the picket lines. The police then offered each individual scab a heavy escort on foot through his furious workmates. Only about a dozen scabs had the nerve for that.

Two more days of scenes like this and the management admitted defeat. On the Friday of that week they met the national union officials for talks.

Up until then the officials had supported the dispute, and local full-timers had argued for stopping out. The fact that they were simply taking this position in order to force the company to talk to them was made clear by what happened next.

Led by John Baldwin (general secretary of the AUEW construction section) they accepted a deal in which the company reinstated all 2,100 workers, but on drastically worsened conditions.

The local officials were then lumbered with the task of trying to sell this deal at a

*socialist*  
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mass meeting. The stewards argued for rejection and the rank and file voted overwhelmingly to stay out.

Unfortunately, what they voted to stay out for contained a very big weakness. The decision was to strike until the company agreed that any changes would have to be negotiated with the stewards. And the convenor and stewards seemed to agree that because of the company's financial position there would have to be some sort of concessions.

That gave the national officials another chance to get the company off the hook, and they seized it at once. After meeting the company again, they persuaded the stewards to accept a deal described by Baldwin himself in terms of 'half a loaf is better than no bread at all.'

The outcome was that another mass meeting on 16 September voted heavily to return to work and to allow the stewards to start negotiating on 21 points raised by the management.

The fact that the company was forced to take back the whole workforce represents a real victory. The problem is that the conditions that the strikers voted against when put to them by the national officials at a mass meeting are now likely to be recommended by their own stewards section by section as answers to local problems.

But if the company did not get what it wanted in terms of a beaten workforce ready to generate big profits on future orders it was because they miscalculated the mood of the workers. The length and determination of the strike not only surprised management — almost everybody I spoke to outside of the area was amazed.

So why did the Hi-Fab workers fight so well?

There was a deep anger over the way that management had provoked the strike. The company's attacks on the workforce, and the way that press and TV portrayed it as trivial, caused bitterness and resentment, particularly as the management were praising their workforce not a month beforehand.

The threat of closure also made workers more determined rather than frightening them. Amongst the workers who had moved to the area the feeling that: 'we've come here and now we're going to fight for a decent life' was particularly strong. And many of the 'home-grown' workers are only too well aware of what allowing redundancies means in an area like that.

### **Bitterness and anger**

And the threat did not quite ring true either. Right up to the day the strike started the yard was still taking on labour.

The 500 workers who the company wanted to sack had nothing to lose by fighting and no prospect of other work, so when the company tried to open the yard to scabs all of the underlying bitterness, anger and resentment found expression in the mass picketing.

This was the turning point in the dispute. Once the Alness women and the pickets had stopped the scabs, the strikers' confidence grew enormously. In most cases, they believed for the first time that they could really win.

The role of the officials on the other hand should surprise no-one. The national officials showed yet again that given the choice between leading a strike and cooperating with the employer they will chose the latter.

The local officials ran true to form when they swung from supporting the strike because of the company's dictatorial attitude and refusing to talk, through to advocating the deal once their national bosses had sprinkled holy water on it.

The stewards themselves have no record of leading struggles in the past. There are only 25 stewards, including a full-time convenor, for a workforce of 2,100. Last year the stewards recommended a cut in money paid for travelling which cost some workers £40 per week.

In the dispute, the pressure both for the initial walk-out and the build-up of the picket line came from the rank and file.

But what rank and file pressure could not do was to spread the dispute beyond the yard. Although the 'Oil Liaison Committee', involving stewards from other yards, met during the dispute, the Hi-Fab convenor asked only for financial support. Nor was any effort made to get delegations out to other groups of workers, despite the importance of the mass pickets and widespread interest about events at Nigg.

Finally, what the Hi-Fab dispute shows is how, even in a period of working class defeats like the present, as long as working people feel bitter, frustrated and resentful about the way the bosses treat them, then angry militant struggles will continue to erupt in the most unexpected places.

SWP intervention in the dispute was, of necessity, low-key. It involved talking to strikers, selling papers, re-establishing contacts and meeting militants.

That sort of modest activity, followed up over time is what will bear fruit when the events at Hi-Fab become the rule instead of the exception.

# Where will CND be?

As CND prepares for its ritual autumn demonstration, Peter Binns argues that the mistakes of the past year make its future look fairly bleak.

Whatever the size of CND's October demonstration, there can now be little doubt that the back of the campaign has been decisively broken, and the final rout — as a mass organisation — is close at hand. Only a massive disturbance from without (a major blunder by Reagan, a mass fight-back against Pershing in Germany, etc) can now prevent its terminal collapse. The scale of this defeat is probably best measured by the politics that CND has followed over the past year and the bitter fruit it has borne with it.

CND has attempted to build a movement amongst people with fundamentally opposed underlying interests — ordinary workers on the one hand and the likes of Field Marshal Lord Carver (and even Enoch Powell) on the other. Only by building such a 'broad' movement, they argued, could a majority of the population be won over to unilateralist politics and only with such a majority would the government change its politics and ban the bomb.

This implied that anything which Lord Carver and his ilk would disapprove of had to be removed from the activities of the campaign — CND policy against NATO had to be ignored, the generals' arguments in favour of 'improved' 'non-nuclear' defence had to be welcomed and so on. Those of us who argued against this position — as we in the SWP did time and again — were warned, by Bruce Kent, Edward Thompson and the rest, that such proposals would threaten the broadness of CND's base.

Furthermore, since the key task was seen as winning over *new* people, the mass involvement of the activists in the campaign in demonstrations was at best secondary and at worst *counterproductive*. In 1981 and 1982 for instance, in arguing against their extension, Bruce Kent cautioned against 'shooting our bolt too soon'. Rather, we should conserve our energy for the real battle over the installation of Cruise in late 1983.

## Peace canvass

These strands came together in the centrepiece of CND's strategy for spring of this year — 'Peace Canvas 83'. Local groups were to set up canvassing teams to carry the anti-Cruise anti-Trident message on to the doorsteps, and to carry out a survey of opinion on these questions at the same time. This way, it was thought, CND could break into new ground and 'convert' a significant section of new supporters. The reality, however, turned out rather differently.

Instead of registering gains for the unilateralist position in the last two years,

the opposite has happened according to public opinion polls — support has *fallen* sharply to 30 percent. Perhaps, it might be argued, this fall would have been even greater had CND's 'Peace Canvass' not taken place at all; but there are good reasons for believing this not to be the case.

Firstly, the 'Peace Canvass' provided no centrally produced propaganda material for use around it that actually put the unilateralist case. Much of the emphasis on the knocker was restricted to Cruise and Trident anyway.

Even if such arguments had been put, the returns from the campaign indicate that it reached pathetically few doorsteps. The latest issue of *Campaign*, for instance, shows that as late as the beginning of August, only 119 local groups had sent in returns covering a mere 38,491 people canvassed, an incredibly low figure even if one takes into account the fact that some returns may not yet have reached CND headquarters. This figure is about *one fifth* the number of activists who have turned up for recent demonstrations. It is comparable to the number of doorsteps that CND was reaching through mass leafletting in *just one* of the many small towns in the high point of the Campaign in 1980-81 (eg Exeter).

## Freeze focus

In short, even within its own terms, the campaign was a disaster. Worse than that, by dissipating the energies of the remaining activists, it helped accelerate the drain of many activists out of CND altogether. Instead of being strengthened by collective activity and sharpened by collective debate, the movement — what was left of it — atomised itself on to the doorsteps.

CND's strategy for the Election itself followed the same pattern. They labelled it 'the nuclear election', arguing that nuclear weapons were the number one issue for the electorate. Yet the only party with a pro-CND manifesto — the Labour Party — collapsed at the polls, with support down to its lowest level since 1918. A more total defeat for CND's strategy on this would therefore be difficult to imagine.

Isolated on the doorsteps the campaigners found themselves blown whichever way the wind was blowing — and in the Spring of '83, in the run-up to the Election, the wind was at gale force and blowing to the right. It was a recipe for disaster.

Far from the campaigners on the doorsteps converting the rest of the public to support for CND, the opposite happened. The campaigners have themselves been pushed quite considerably to the right. The emphasis is now to be placed on the so-called 'freeze', as the latest CND *Newsletter* (No 2/83) makes clear:

'By highlighting the 'Freeze' as one of the main themes for our (October 22nd) demonstration CND is declaring its

identity with a movement which already has the support of a large majority of the American people. By arguing against Cruise, Trident and Tornado we shall be concentrating on the new weapons systems that have been the focus for the 'second wave' of CND. By putting across the message that nuclear weapons are no defence we start to create the political situation whereby it will not be possible for CND to be attacked, as we were during the Election, for seeking to leave Britain defenceless'.

The issue of the 'freeze' is an important one. The 'American people' with whom the CND leadership is now 'declaring an identity' are, after all, none other than the bigwigs in the Congressional establishment of the Democratic party such as Senator Kennedy, who have the 'freeze' campaign firmly in their own pockets.

Besides, supporting the freeze is *supporting the status quo*. It is to endorse the existing arsenals with their 50,000 or more nuclear weapons. It is to support a world that throws up incident after incident like the Korean airliner. It is to support a system that drives the superpowers into headlong confrontation with each other. Depriving them of *new* weapons will not halt the war drive even if it were possible. To support a 'freeze' under these circumstances is to give up the battle altogether.

At a conscious level the leaders of CND still think of themselves as unilateralists, and therefore one might think that their recent support for the 'freeze' proposal was just another example of confused unilateralism. But a closer examination reveals a different picture. Here is what Bruce Kent, in the CND Newsletter has to say on the relation between unilateralism and the 'freeze':

'We are seen as all-or-nothing people. Without any loss of vision we have surely to prioritise what is immediately possible from that which has to come later. The all or nothing approach may do a lot for the satisfaction of conscience *but it has little enough to do with getting political change.*'

So there we have it. The 'freeze' demand isn't just 'one of the main themes', but is now the *only* one of any practical significance. Unilateralism is OK in its place, but that place is its role as the religion of the peace movement — one may, by all means, genuflect at the shrine of unilateralism ('for the satisfaction of conscience') but it would be a mistake to bring this into the real world of political practice since it 'has little enough to do with getting political change'.

## What counts?

But the whole concept of the 'freeze' is built upon a mass of confusions anyway. What exactly counts as a freeze for instance? Both sides could now claim that each was pretty much 'frozen' already — in the sense of not adding to the total nuclear megatonnage at their disposal (with the SS-20 merely 'replacing' the SS-4 and the SS-5, the Tornado merely 'replacing' the Vulcan and the Buccaneer and so on). Are such replacements to be within or outside the bounds of any freeze?

If the Tornado and the SS-20 are not seen



as escalations in the arms race and are therefore not to be condemned, the whole argument has, of course already been conceded to Thatcher and Reagan. But what about much more minor technological advances? What about the proboscis on the Russian Backfire bomber which permits mid-air refuelling and therefore extends its range? What about the trading-off of blast for radiation in the newer battlefield nuclear weapons (introducing a neutron-bomb effect by degrees and by the back door)? What about the incessant stream of avionics advances that are reported weekly in *Flight International* and *Aviation Week and Space Technology*?

Are these too to be frozen? If not, then Thatcher and Reagan can continue their war drive unabated. If they are, then how on earth is this to be achieved? 'Technological creep' is built into the very structure of the capitalist mode of production itself. It can no more be eliminated within the system than the process of competitive accumulation that produces it.

We shall give one example to prove the point, that of America's giant Titan missile. Introduced twenty years ago, it depends on a crude and outdated liquid fuel for its propellant, upon antedeluvian electro-mechanical parts, upon aerospace metallurgy that has long been superceded, and so on. How exactly is the Titan to be 'frozen'? Only if the *thousands* of firms that supplied its parts and which are involved in both military and civil production can be frozen into the technology that they utilised when the Titan was produced in the 1960s, for without this it cannot be serviced or repaired.

### Freeze impossible

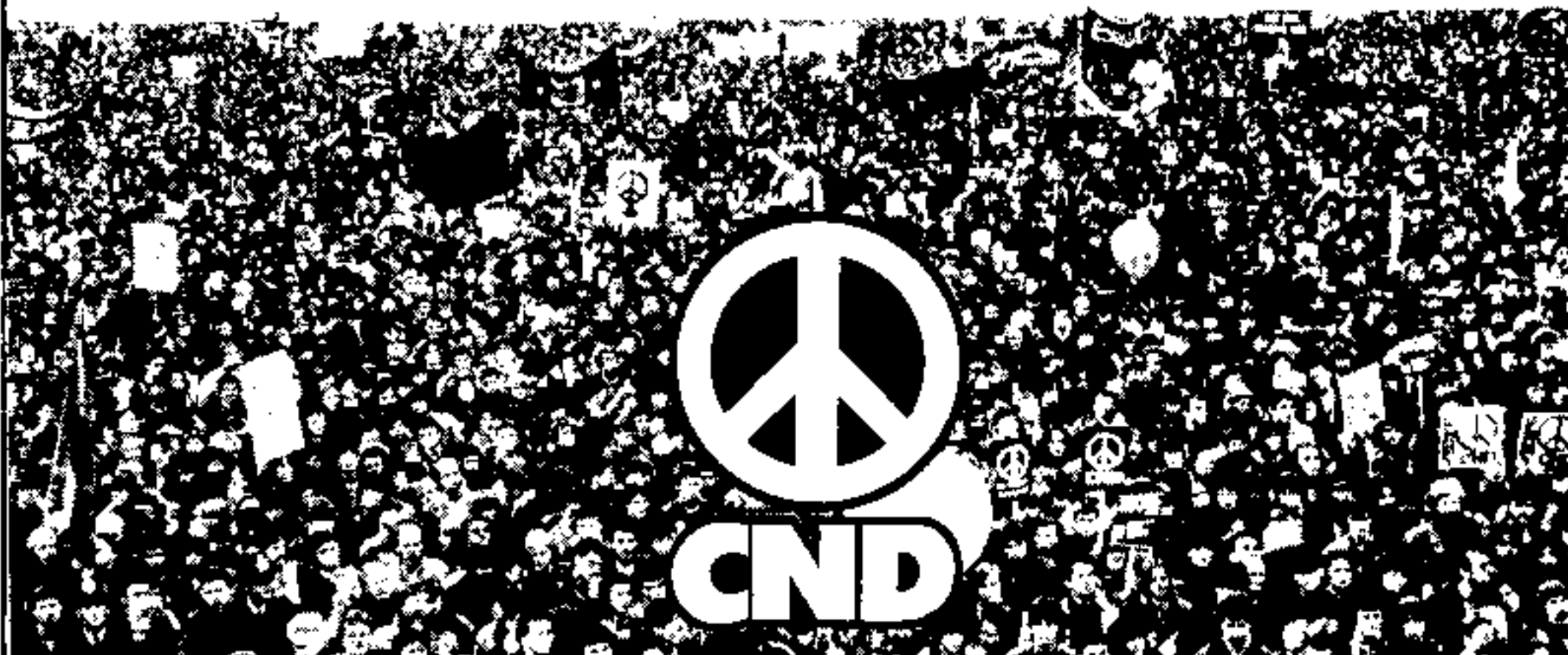
But that is exactly what these firms cannot afford to do. Competition forces them to scrap the old technology and replace it with the new — on pain of extinction if they don't. What is true for the Titan in the 80s will be true for the Minuteman in the 90s and the Trident in the following decade. In short, the only way of maintaining these weapons will be by improving them — more reliable control systems, more accurate guidance systems and so on. The choice of 'freezing' them is just not on.

The notion of a 'freeze' is therefore based on a hopeless confusion. It is completely unachievable under the present conditions of world capitalism, a utopian fantasy in the worst sense of the term.

Unilateralism, by contrast, is the very heart of CND. Quite simply it attacks the right of our own ruling class to wage war on behalf of their own profits — and in the process to sacrifice the working class who made those profits for them in the first place.

A 'freeze' on the other hand does just the opposite. It tacitly accepts — indeed it explicitly endorses — the status quo. Certainly, being a unilateralist is not enough. You have to go on from it to understand that it is capitalism that is responsible for the war drive and therefore it is necessary to attack the ruling class on every front, not just over the bomb. But unilateralism is definitely a step in the right direction. The 'freeze',

# Where will you be?



**11 A.M. SATURDAY, OCTOBER 22.  
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however, is a step in the wrong direction. Instead of being an attack — however partial — on the ruling class that needs the bomb, it legitimises them instead.

So if that were all it would be bad enough. Unfortunately it is not; in making this turn to the right, in trying to make CND appeal to a consensus that is always disappearing over the far right horizon, the left has become somewhat of an embarrassment. The last CND National Council resolved that all future direct action, apart from being 'non-violent', should now be regarded as 'being primarily symbolic', 'to avoid any illusions that we can "stop the missiles with our bare hands".'

They have also initiated a minor witch hunt in two of CND's specialist sections — Labour and Youth CNDs. The latter in particular was justified in an especially pathetic manner by the leadership. They declared Youth CND's July conference as invalid, an important reason being that some of the delegates were suspected of being over 21. But then they went on to disband the executive elected at the conference and replace it with another ... this time containing several members who were themselves over 21!

The reasons behind this move to the right were analysed very well by Gareth Jenkins in the July issue of *Socialist Review*. His conclusion then is still our conclusion now: 'The reason why a "peace majority" failed to win is not because the wrong package was put before the electorate. The case is the same as that which lost Labour the election. When workers lack

the self-confidence to fight for themselves over the most immediate bread-and-butter issues, they are certainly not going to fight over more daunting issues.

'Furthermore, people may be deeply worried about nuclear weapons, as they are even more so over the closer threat of unemployment. But far from radicalising people, such worries can have the opposite effect.

'... under conditions of low morale, a *general* retreat on *all* issues take place, regardless of whether a minority is radicalised on a particular issue, and then finds itself cruelly isolated by the results of a general election.

'... The capacity to force governments to renounce nuclear weapons depends on the capacity of workers to regain their confidence to fight back against all the assaults made on them by the employers and the employers' state. The question of the Bomb is inseparable from the question of rebuilding confidence at the shopfloor level where that power to fight back lies.

'That is a much longer haul, and we may be sneered at as purist fundamentalists. But the current CND thinking for all its apparent realism, smells of panic and despair. Dropping principles in order to gain the support of all sorts of dubious 'respectable' figures is not realism. Nor is it realistic to expect them — or kindly disposed generals — to cleanse the globe of nuclear obscenity. It is a dangerous fantasy we must decisively reject.'

# Elections as window-dressing

The generals who rule Turkey are going to allow 'elections'. T Kaya shows what a fraud they are and looks at the background.

The elections this November will be a complete farce. The generals intend to use the vote as window-dressing while they hang on to power. Only those parties they permit have been allowed to form. The two parties that got the majority of votes before the 1980 coup have both been banned. And out of 1683 candidates not belonging to banned organisations, 672 have been declared ineligible.

The gerrymander is so blatant that to date only the USA and, of course, Britain argue that after the election Turkey will be a 'democracy'.

Behind the facade the persecution continues. 2,000 trade union leaders and shop stewards from DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions) have been on trial since December 1981. In another mass trial 1,000 miners from Yeni-Celtik have been charged with occupying the mines in 1976. Ninety of them face the death sentence.

The organised left faces savage persecution too. 795 citizens of the town of Fatsa are charged with turning the town into a 'people's self-administration'. They are mostly supporters of Dev-Yol (Revolutionary Path), and the takeover of the town followed the 1979 election of a local tailor as mayor on the Dev-Yol ticket.

Other mass trials involve the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK): at Diyarbakir 562 faced trial. At Gaziantep 620 are still being tried; at Mardin, 378. What they can expect is shown by the outcome of the Diyarbakir trial — 35 death penalties were approved.

## Heavy repression

Further mass trials involve hundreds of Dev-Yol and Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left) supporters.

But if the working class and the left are today the victims of heavy repression, the experience of the previous, 1971, coup shows that they are able to recover very quickly. It is therefore very important to look in detail at why the generals have been able to get away with it.

The 1980 coup was in response to the massive wave of strikes and other working class action that was threatening the monetarist policies of the right wing civilian government. At the same time the left and the Kurds had powerful organisations. Yet the generals were able to impose their rule and smash all opposition.

Independent working class organisation is comparatively new in Turkey. It was only after the Second World War that a 'Trade Union Confederation' (TURK-IS) was set up, and this was funded and directed by the



AFL-CIO and the CIA. TURK-IS today is still a legal organisation. The fact that all trade union activity is banned does not worry it.

The development of the working class during the world boom—today around 10 percent of the population are urban workers — meant that this situation changed. In 1963

workers won the right to strike and in 1967 DISK was formed. It originated from five unions expelled from TURK-IS for supporting a strike the leadership did not approve of, but rapidly became a focus for militants discontented with class-collaboration.

Throughout the 1970s DISK found itself at the head of large-scale working class struggles. For example, in June 1970 200,000 workers responded to its call for a protest demonstration against anti-trade union legislation. 1976 saw the first May Day rally for many years and in 1977 500,000 marched on 1 May in Istanbul.

In 1979 tobacco workers in Istanbul occupied. The occupation of the Taxis food complex in Izmir lasted a month and led to armed clashes with the police and army. And before the coup there were occupations by textile workers in the south and in Istanbul.

## Reformist leaders

Unfortunately, this readiness to fight on the part of workers was not matched by the quality of the DISK leadership. In 1976 the pro-Moscow Turkish Communist Party won the leadership of DISK. They spent most of their time trying to keep the revolutionary left out of the unions. Their main positive political strategy was to try to line the union up behind the social democratic Republican People's Party (RPP) led by Bulent Ecevit, in the 1977 general election.

A year later they paid the predictable price. The RPP itself won the leadership of DISK. From that point on the leadership of DISK would have nothing to do with any attempts to change the world, let alone revolution.

The revolutionary left had rather a different history. Much of it goes back to the radicalisation of Turkish students in the late sixties which led to the formation of Dev-Genc (Revolutionary Youth) from which many of today's groups are descended.

Although Dev-Genc rapidly grew into a large and influential force, it made some very serious mistakes. When 200,000 workers demonstrated in June 1970 it was obvious that something was happening. The lesson the left drew was that this was the signal for them to launch armed struggle in the mountains. Although the guerrillas found sympathy from at least some peasants, the military coup of March 1971 soon led to their defeat in mountains and cities.

There followed a period of political re-assessment, mainly in the prisons with the result that, when the 1974 civilian government granted an amnesty, a whole series of new factions and groups developed. None of these succeeded in making any *real* links with the developing struggle of the industrial workers.

Instead, the struggle against the fascist militias became the centre of the left's activity. It is important to be clear that this was often a matter of life and death for the left. Between 1978 and 1980 over 5,000 people died in armed clashes between the fascists and the left, the majority of them leftists.

The fascist militias had been encouraged by the right wing civilian governments of the mid-seventies in order to help control rising

left wing opposition. In the 1977 election their political wing won around one million votes. They were soon launching attacks on left wing areas.

In December 1979, for example, they cordoned off a predominantly Kurdish area in Kahramanmaras for three days and massacred over one hundred people. Similar massacres were repeated in Corum and Istanbul.

Despite the courage and determination of the left, they made a number of very serious mistakes. Despite the statements about the role of the working class in the fight against fascism, it was very often in practice the case that people fighting the fascists were the militants of the left wing organisations rather than any mass movement.

This gap opened up despite the fact that the working class were themselves prepared to fight the fascists. For example, the occupying Istanbul tobacco workers linked their demands for higher wages and recognition of DISK to demands that phoney fascist 'workers' be sacked and a condemnation of the Kahramanmaras massacre.

The Turkish left has never managed to overcome two key theoretical weaknesses. There is a tendency to blur the working class struggle into some sort of 'people's struggle'. This is particularly true of the struggle against the fascists. With that perspective, of course, the real struggles of workers are of secondary importance and therefore the possibility of building links with militant workers are reduced.

And there is a tendency to see the agency for socialism as the organisation itself, a form of substitutionism which sees the party bringing socialism to the workers. With that perspective, again, there is little room for the serious work of implanting the revolutionary organisation in the working class.

### Weakened opposition

So when the generals staged their coup they faced a weakened opposition. Although the working class movement was large and militant its leaders had no desire or intention of leading that movement in a struggle to overthrow capitalism. The best they hoped for was a few reforms.

The left on the other hand, certainly had a perspective of overthrowing capitalism. Unfortunately they were very largely isolated from the working classes and unable to offer an alternative to the reformist leadership of the trade unions.

In Turkey in 1980 the ruling class was split and demoralised. The elements necessary for its overthrow were present in society, but they were divided one from the other. A fusion of the working class movement and the left could have provided a different solution to the crisis.

In the event the ruling class bought itself time by courtesy of the generals. But that has only postponed the crisis. It is a matter of great importance that the lessons are learnt. The left has to learn that phrases about the working class are not enough to change society. In order to do that they will have to root their organisation in the working class movement.



# Marx and the International

The First International was an important step in the development of the workers' movement. Pete Goodwin looks at the role Marx played in organising it.

On 17 November 1852 Marx proposed that the Communist League dissolve itself. The motion was carried. The revolutionary wave of 1848 had been defeated. Political reaction dominated Europe in the wake of the defeat. The workers' movement was shattered. It was to be almost twelve years before Marx actively participated in a political organisation again.

The 1850s were not simply years of political reaction. They were also years of massive capitalist expansion. Marx's hopes for a revival in the movement rested on his expectation of crisis. When a crisis did come in 1857 Marx and Engels were overjoyed. The political effects of the crisis took some time to develop but by the end of the decade there were already distinct signs of a revival in the workers' movement, and that revival continued to gain strength in the early years of the 1860s.

By 1863 a significant socialist organisation had been established in Germany under the leadership of Ferdinand Lassalle. In France rising discontent had led the Emperor

Napoleon III to relax anti-union laws in the vain hope of trying to play off the workers against liberal opposition.

Britain had more than its share of the revival. Stable craft-based union organisation had existed for nearly a decade, but at the end of the 1850s it took a radical turn. A six-month long strike of London building workers, starting in 1859, received considerable response from other trades. A committee was formed of building workers and other trade unionists to raise money and gain support. It organised hundreds of meetings and collected thousands of pounds.

Some of the organisations created during the strike, survived in the form of trades councils, particularly the London Trades Council formed in 1860, amongst whose members were the leaders of the building workers' support committee, George Odger and William Cremer.

Alongside this revival in industrial militancy went an aroused political awareness. Italian unification was a popular workers' cause internationally — Garibaldi being feted when he visited England. The American Civil War, starting in 1861, saw British workers siding with the North and the emancipation of the slaves, while the British ruling class lent strongly to the slave-owning South. And the cause of Polish independence from Russia was always a popular one in radical and working class circles in both Britain and France. So when the Poles again rebelled in 1863 there was

widespread workers' agitation on their behalf in both Paris and London, and French workers were invited to come to London in July for a joint meeting in solidarity with Poland.

In the discussions that followed the meeting the idea of some more permanent international links came up. George Odger, of the London Trades Council, drafted an address to French workers, calling for 'an international gathering of workers' representatives to discuss the great questions on which the peace of nations depends'.

Significantly the address also referred to the employers using the workers of one country to hold down the wages of those in another and the need to counter this by international working class co-operation. International strike-breaking was, then, another important reason for the British trade union leaders' interest in international organisation.

It took months before a final draft of Odger's address was produced and months more while it was circulated in France and a response decided upon. By the time the meeting was held to hear that response in St Martins Hall, London on 28 September 1864, the Polish insurrection was long since crushed.

Nevertheless the meeting was a resounding success. The French representatives proposed the setting up of an international association and the British agreed. A provisional committee of thirty-two was elected from the meeting to draw up the rules and regulations for such an association. No one at the meeting put forward a clear idea of what the association was to do, and as yet it had no name. When a name was decided it was the International Workingmen's Association. That meeting at St Martins Hall on 28 September has therefore gone down in history as the founding meeting of the First International.

What part did Marx play in it? In the preparation, none, apart from suggesting the name of a German representative to speak at the meeting. At the meeting itself, Marx did not speak, but was present by invitation on the platform and was elected onto the provisional committee. Even that was a radical break from his practice of the previous twelve years. He explained why in a letter to a friend shortly afterwards:

'Its English members consist mostly of the heads of the local trade unions, that is the actual labour kings of London... From the French side the members are themselves insignificant, but they are the direct organs of the leading 'ouvriers' (workers) in Paris... Although for years I have systematically declined all participation in any organisation, etc, whatsoever, I accepted *this time* because it involved a matter where it is possible to do some important work.'

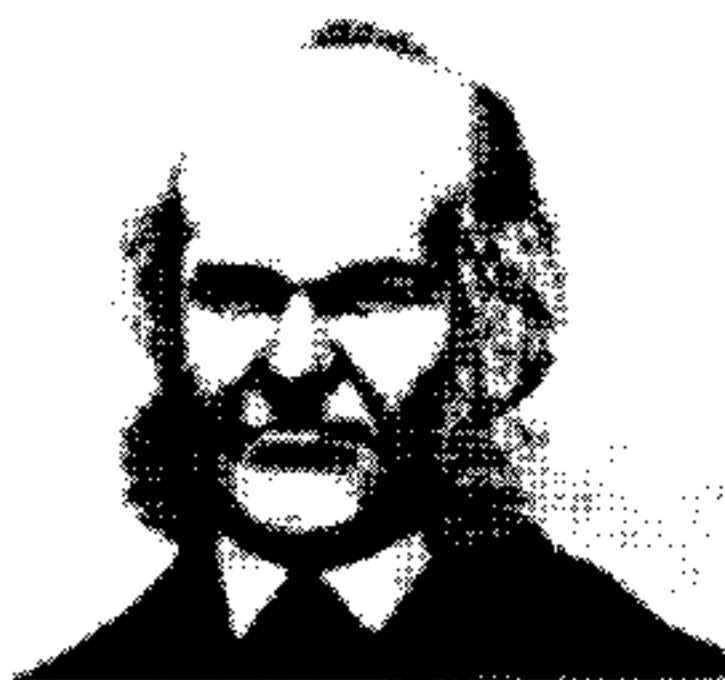
But although the new committee had been brought into being on a rising wave of class struggle and represented real forces, its politics were diverse in the extreme. Apart from a couple of German exiles who had collaborated with Marx in the Communist League, no-one on it shared Marx's politics.

The English representatives were mainly trade union leaders like Odger and Cremer.

They were, as it turned out, prepared to support Marx on a lot of questions, but they were certainly in no way revolutionary, or in any meaningful sense, socialists. They were, however, serious internationalists who believed in working class political action.

The French were mainly supporters of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Despite a certain notoriety for his adage 'property is theft' and as a 'founding father of anarchism' Proudhon was at best a muddled and often a downright reactionary thinker.

He and his followers opposed working class political action, common ownership of the means of production, trade unions and strikes. They considered women unsuited for work. Their ideal was a society of property-owning peasants and craftsmen, with co-



**George Odger: one of the British trade unionists in the leadership of the International**

operative societies for production, consumption, mutual aid and insurance, financed by a people's bank providing free credit. 'Mutualism' they called it.

The Italian delegates on the provisional committee were supporters of Mazzini, a republican quite hostile to both socialism and independent working class organisation!

Not surprisingly the process of drawing up aims and statutes amongst such a diverse body of people proved difficult. Marx found himself on the sub-committee to draft a declaration of principles. He missed its first meetings through illness, and found that it had come up with a draft he described as:

'an appallingly verbose, badly written and completely crude preamble pretending to be a declaration of principles in which Mazzini was everywhere evident, crusted over with the vaguest tags of French socialism'.

He got it referred back, played for time to ensure he 'rewrote' it (in fact he wrote something completely new) and produced an Inaugural Address and Rules which were accepted with small amendments by the committee.

It was the first example of the way in which Marx was to dominate the International by a combination of sheer intellectual power, backed up by a good measure of deft manoeuvring.

Marx expressed his method in drafting the address and the Rules in a letter to Engels: 'It was very difficult to arrange the thing in such a form that made it acceptable to the present standpoint of the workers' movement. It will take time before the reawakening of the movement allows the plain speaking of the past. We must act

*fortiter in re, suaviter in modo* (strong in content, soft in form).'

So the address consisted of a review of the situation of the working class since 1848 which began:

'It is a great fact that the misery of the working masses has not diminished from 1848 to 1864, and yet this period is unrivalled for the development of its industry and the growth of its commerce.'

In the review Marx managed to put over a number of very contentious points (particularly from the standpoint of the Proudhonists). For example, on the co-operative movement, whose growth he praised, he commented:

'however excellent in principle, and however useful in practice, co-operative labour, if kept within the narrow circle of the casual efforts of private workmen, will never be able to arrest the growth in geometrical progression of monopoly, to free the masses, nor even to perceptibly lighten the burden of their miseries.'

The same was achieved in the preamble to the Rules. Just look at its first three paragraphs:

'Considering:

The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves; that the struggle for the emancipation of the working classes means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies, but for equal rights and duties, and the abolition of all class rule;

That the economical subjection of the man of labour to the monopoliser of the means of labour, that is, the sources of life, lies at the bottom of servitude in all its forms, of all social misery, mental degradation, and political dependence;

That the economical emancipation of the working classes is therefore the great end to which every political movement ought to be subordinate as a means...

To have specifically prescribed revolution would have meant a break with the English trade unionists. To say that political movements should be used as a means was already going rather far for the 'anti-political' French. But within those limits the corner stones of the Marxist position are outlined, and outlined to a far bigger audience than Marx on his own could have reached.

The structure of the International Workingmen's Association proposed by Marx consisted of a committee, the General Council, based in London, and an annual congress. The Provisional Committee accepted this.

In fact only a conference was held in London in 1865, the congresses proper being in Geneva (1866), Lausanne (1867), Brussels (1868) and Basle (1869).

Marx used both the General Council and the Congresses to push his politics. One of his most famous pamphlets, *Wages, Price and Profit*, is the text of a lengthy address he made to the General Council in 1865 to answer the arguments of another of its members, John Weston.

Weston was a supporter of Robert Owen and had advanced the idea that wage increases would only lead to higher prices and therefore producers' co-operatives were the only method of raising workers' living stan-

dards. Weston's views were of course in a minority among the English delegates (most of whom were trade unionists) but in answering them Marx not only set out the fundamentals of his economic views, but also toughened up the General Council delegates for the arguments to come at future congresses against the French supporters of Proudhon.

The arguments against the Proudhonists dominated those early congresses. Marx did not attend them in person, but in each case, he wrote reports to be submitted to them and briefed the delegates from the General Council, particularly his German exile collaborators Eccarius and Jung, on the arguments that were going to come up.

The Geneva, Lausanne and Brussels congresses saw the International taking more and more socialist positions and the Proudhonists more and more losing out in the argument. By the end of the Brussels congress they had effectively been eclipsed and the International was clearly committed to strikes, to working class political action and to the goal of the collective ownership of the land, railways, mines and forests.

The intellectual dominance of Marx was symbolised by the passing of a resolution paying tribute to *Capital* and stating that 'Karl Marx has the inestimable merit of being the first economist to have subjected capital to a scientific analysis.'

### Marx on unions

To socialists today these victories against the Proudhonists look like easy ones against a rather peculiar sect. But many of the Proudhonists' beliefs, like rejection of political action or hostility to trade unions, were widespread. Indeed, for much of his life, Marx was probably in a distinct minority among those who called themselves socialists in seeing the crucial importance of trade unions in the struggle for socialism.

The section on 'Trade Unions: their past, present and future' in the instructions Marx wrote for delegates to the Geneva Congress gives, in a couple of pages, a really path-breaking analysis:

'Trade unions originally sprang from the spontaneous attempts of workmen at removing or at least checking that competition (amongst themselves)... The immediate object of trade unions was therefore confined to everyday necessities ...to questions of wages and time of labour. This activity of the trade unions ...cannot be dispensed with so long as the present system of production lasts. On the contrary it must be generalised by the formation and the combination of trade unions throughout all countries. On the other hand, unconsciously to themselves, the trade unions were forming centres of organisation of the working class, as the medieval municipalities and communes did for the middle class. If the trade unions are required for the guerrilla fights between capital and labour, they are still more important as organised agencies for superceding the very system of wage labour and capital rule.'

By 1869 then, Marx had succeeded in gaining a widespread hearing and respect for

his politics through the International. And the International itself had grown significantly in prestige and influence. What sort of an organisation was it at its high point?

Its reputation among opponents was formidable. In 1870, when fourteen of its supporters were tried in Austria, the Vienna police headquarters reported to the Home Secretary that it was 'an organisation with revolutionary aims and a membership of over 1,000,000 covering the whole of Europe and North America.' The *London Times* upped the number to 2½ million. And one observer estimated that the International had at its disposal a fund of £5 million deposited in London.

In fact, the International even at its zenith was a far weaker and altogether less coherent organisation. Its finances were tiny. Most of the money for the General Council came from the British unions, and their contributions were scarcely generous. The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners with 9,000 members gave £2 a year. The Bricklayers, with 4,000 members, £1. In the year 1869-70 the total income of the General Council from all sources was £51 7s 1d—a far cry from £5 million!

Individual membership of the International was also small. In Britain, for example, there were only 294 individual members at the end of 1870. France and Switzerland each had more, but in neither case was it more than a few thousand.

## ANNIVERSARY OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION OF THE 18th OF MARCH, 1871

# PUBLIC MEETING

WILL BE HELD IN

**ST. GEORGE'S HALL,  
LANGHAM PLACE, REGENT STREET,**

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

Members of the International, the Democrats of London  
and the Refugees of the Commune,

**ON MONDAY, MARCH 18, 1872,**

AT EIGHT P.M. TO COMMEMORATE THE

**SOCIAL REVOLUTION OF PARIS.**

President - **CITIZEN JUNG.**  
Vice-Presidents } " **RANVIER.**  
" " **HALES.**

### FRENCH SPEAKERS

RANVIER, Member of the Commune  
LISSACARAY, National Guard  
LONGUET, Member of the Commune  
VAILLANT  
THEISZ  
LEO FRANKEL } Members  
SERRAILLIER } of the  
ANDRIEU } Commune  
ARNAUD }  
DELAHAYE, Member of the Labour  
Committee  
COURNET, Member of the Commune  
CAMELINAT, Director of the Mint  
EDES, Member of the Commune  
JOFFRIN, Delegate from the 18th  
Arrondissement

LE MOISSON, Commissary of Public  
Safety  
BOUTIER, Member of the Central  
Committee

### ENGLISH SPEAKERS

DR. KARL MARX  
HALES  
MILNER  
WESTON  
MCDONNELL  
JOHNSON  
BOGN  
MITCHELL  
BRADNICK

**ADMISSION FREE.**

Individual membership was however not the only form of relation workers had with the International. There were also affiliated political and trade union organisations.

The only significant socialist organisations on a national scale were in Germany and Austria. In neither case were they actually formally affiliated to the International, although in both cases that was largely for legal reasons.

In Germany the situation was complicated by the fact that the General Association of German Workers was regarded with great hostility by Marx and Engels in the first years of the International because of the rather dubious relationship both its founder Lassalle and his successor had with Bismarck.

It was only in 1869 with the formation of the German Social Democratic Party at Eisenach that a national organisation declaring its support for the principles of the International existed in Germany. It was also, under the leadership of Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, the only significant organisation in solidarity with the First International that actually supported Marx's politics. But its Marxism was, from the start, of a fairly wobbly nature and its participation in the International was small.

More important were the International's trade union affiliates. Unions with a total of some 50,000 members were affiliated in Britain, a significant slab of the British trade

union movement of the time.

They supplied, in figures like Odger, Cremer, Applegarth and Hales, much of the active membership of the General Council. They generally backed Marx although never agreeing with his revolutionary politics.

In France and Switzerland too, trade union affiliation was gained. And in the Swiss case 800 silk dyers and ribbon weavers were locked out by their employers for affiliating to the International. But with the aid of collections from as far away as Paris and London, they stuck to their principles and won the dispute.

It was only one of the most dramatic examples of the International's intervention in strikes. Industrial disputes were on the agenda at almost every meeting of the General Council with requests to use its contacts to stop the import of foreign scabs from groups as diverse as Edinburgh tailors and London wire workers.

Widespread collections were made in Britain by the International for continental strikes. The Paris bronze workers, locked out in 1867, received money from London carpenters and bookbinders, and a large loan from the English hatters' union thanks to the appeal of the General Council.

Through these considerable strike interventions the International gained a reputation and influence beyond its individual members. So, although its strength was nowhere near that implied by the bourgeois scare stories, it was nevertheless in the late 1860s an organisation with some serious impact on large numbers of class conscious workers in Europe and North America. Marx's political victories in it therefore counted for something beyond the participants in the congress.

It was, however, still a very diverse and fragile organisation. No sooner had the Proudhonites been marginalised than a new internal opposition emerged in the person of Mikhail Bakunin.

Bakunin was a romantic revolutionist and conspirator with a rather confused 'anti-authoritarian' programme rooted more in the intelligentsia and poorer petty bourgeois than in the working class. He too was against political action and was all for grand gestures like abolishing inheritance or the state by decree.

His anti-authoritarianism went alongside a tight secret organisation of his own supporters which, as the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy, entered the International in 1868. The Basle congress of 1869 was the first at which Bakunin was present.

His entry prompted a vicious faction fight in the International for the next four years between Marx and the bulk of the General Council on the one hand, and Bakunin's supporters, largely concentrated in Switzerland and southern Europe on the other.

In that fight Marx was unquestionably correct politically, but the fight itself was conducted largely on the basis of organisational and personal allegations and counter-allegations (on Bakunin's side at least as much as Marx's it has to be stressed).

But external events also played their part in shattering the International. In 1870

France and Prussia went to war, and in the aftermath of the French defeat the workers of Paris took power in the Paris Commune of 1871.

In a number of respects the Franco-Prussian war and then the Commune provided the high point of the International. In Germany Liebknecht and Bebel, as deputies in the Prussian Parliament, provided a model of internationalism by abstaining on the war credits, sending greetings to French workers and supporting the Commune.

In France many of the leading Communards were members of the International (although in no way under the discipline of the General Council and scarcely any of them followers of Marx).

Marx himself wrote for the General Council his most brilliant pamphlet *The Civil War in France*. Completed just two days after the last Communards were shot down in the cemetery of Père Lachaise, it was a passionate defence of the Commune against the slanders and bloodlust of bourgeois Europe.

But it was also a brilliant analysis of what the commune had achieved—demonstrating for the first time what form workers' power



**Bakunin: his faction fight with Marx dominated the International's last years**

would actually take. The *Civil War in France* was an immediate success, running through three English editions in two months and being translated into most European languages.

When it became known that Marx was the author he rapidly became notorious. As he wrote to a friend at the time: 'I have the honour to be the most abused and threatened man in London. That really does me good after the twenty-year idyll in my den!'

The notoriety, the threats and the abuse extended to the International as a whole. It became the subject not merely of an intense scare campaign in the European press but also occupied the serious attention of a number of European governments.

The French foreign minister, Jules Favre, issued a circular letter warning all governments of the menace of the International. Bismarck, the Pope, the Austrian and Spanish governments, all joined in the campaign for European-wide action against the International. It only foundered on the British government's respect for the right of

political asylum (things have changed since!)

No doubt the witch-hunt had at least some of the usual effect of such things and recruited new support to the International. Certainly it was by no means crippled as a direct result of the repression. But it was seriously weakened.

The movement in France was effectively smashed, and the General Council had the added burden of providing for the Communard refugees and was soon suffering from the squabbles of the new wave of exiles.

In Germany heavy repression kept what were potentially Marx's best supporters, the German Social Democrats, away from any closer participation. And in Britain Marx's *Civil War in France* led to the resignation from the General Council of two of the trade union leaders, Odger and Lucraft. Others stayed—but the International's organisational bedrock in the English trade unions was weakened.

In this weakened state the International was less able to weather the faction fight with Bakunin. At the Hague congress in 1872, the only one which Marx attended in person, he succeeded in winning a majority to have Bakunin expelled. But he clearly felt the danger of Bakunin making a comeback, and taking over an organisation he now felt had had its day. So Engels successfully proposed that the General Council be moved to New York. With that the International was effectively dead (although it was only formally wound up in 1876).

Engels wrote the obituary of the International in a letter to Sorge in 1874:

'The International belonged to the period of the Second Empire, during which the oppression reigning throughout Europe prescribed unity and abstention from all internal polemics to the workers' movement, then just re-awakening.

'The first great success was bound to explode this naive conjunction of all factions. This success was the Commune, which was without any doubt the child of the International intellectually, although the International did not lift a finger to produce it, and for which the International to a certain extent was quite properly held responsible. When, thanks to the Commune, the International had become a moral force in Europe, the row at once began. Every trend wanted to exploit the success for itself. Disintegration, which was inevitable, set in.

'For ten years the International dominated one side of European history — the side on which the future lies — and can look back upon its work with pride. But in its old form it has outlived its usefulness. In order to produce a new International after the fashion of the old, an alliance of all proletarian parties of all countries, a general suppression of the labour movement, like that which prevailed from 1849-64, would be necessary. For this the proletarian world has now become too big, too extensive. I believe the next International — after Marx's writings have produced their effect for some years — will be directly Communist and will proclaim precisely our principles...'

## Women miners

It is a pity Ann Rogers and Colin Sparks had not studied the British coal industry before they rushed to pen a letter attacking me. Their defence of women (and children?) working underground is a mish-mash of misleading statements and errors.

On two points, however, they are perfectly right. The first is that the initial impetus for the 1842 Mines Act came from individuals deeply imbued with Victorian morality and, second, that progress for working people comes through developing their own separate, distinct class organisations.

Ann and Colin would find these propositions advanced in considerable detail if they consulted the book *The Miners' Association: A Trade Union in the Age of the Chartists*, of which I am co-author. In it we maintain the Shaftesbury report, graphically describing the horrors of coal mining not only for women and children but also for men, had the effect of showing the coal owners in a highly unfavourable light while the controversy surrounding the report helped to widen miners' mental horizons, making them realise that their own local problems were not unique but basically the same as miners else-

where and could only be resolved by national organisation.

Two years later, the 1842 Mines Act was passed. Insofar as this restricted the supply of labour relative to the demand, it helped to give the colliers' trade union greater economic muscle. The Miners' Association grew to become the strongest working class organisation in Victorian Britain. So unwittingly — and this sometimes happens — what started as a scream of moral outrage helped to promote, from the capitalist standpoint, an unexpected and alarming development.

Ann and Colin wrongly suggest the 1842 Act was passed because of employers' fears that, if women continued to work underground, the next generation of miners would possibly not be reproduced. In those times, however, all demographic studies show colliery communities had the highest birth rate of any occupational group.

Equally wrong is their contention female miners no longer suited the needs of the coal industry. Rather it was the coal owners' leading representative in Parliament, Lord Londonderry, who argued certain seams were uniquely suited to female labour. He claimed that

without them the quantity of coal mined would go down and the price would go up; since Britain's industrial progress depended upon cheap and plentiful supplies of coal, these do-gooders were threatening the country's entire existence with their silly measure.

Coal owners in Parliament, to a man, resisted the legislation. Their arguments have a somewhat familiar — may I say Thatcherite? — ring to them. They argued in terms of the national interest, of having the freedom to choose employment and of parents' right to do what they considered in their children's best interests. They hated the idea of Whitehall snoopers nosing round their collieries, believing in privatisation rather than public control of mines inspection.

If I were Ann Rogers and Colin Sparks, I would be rather disturbed by the company I kept. Let me challenge them to give me a single quote from the progressive camp — Chartist, trade unionist, miner's wife, Marx or Engels — that comes out in opposition to the 1842 Mines Act. By the same token, can they cite any coal owner who wholeheartedly backed the measure? Currently, I am writing my fourth work on the coal industry, specifically relating to industrial law between 1830 and 1870, so, if they have discovered something I

haven't, it will be of great interest.

But in any case, whatever the response of Ann and Colin to this challenge, there still remains for them my final and fundamental point. Material being determines social consciousness. I recall reading recently that in 1900 the typical American wife did 100 hours of housework a week and was pregnant or breastfeeding a baby for 16.4 years of her life. To the best of my knowledge, nobody has produced comparable figures for colliers' wives of the 1840s in Britain, but it would seem reasonable to assume they were as great, perhaps even greater.

When Ann Rogers and Colin Sparks talk about organising women miners in the 1840s, it is important that they understand the obstacles there are to it — 60 or 70 hours of physically exhausting work underground, often a long walk to and from work, 100 hours of housework, the cares and troubles of the children. On top of all this, our two comrades expect these overworked women to drag themselves out of the house again to a union branch meeting. It is more than Dick Turpin, on his famous ride to York, asked of his horse!

Yet, without organisation, there can be no resistance to oppression: women, like everybody else, remain simply fodder for exploitation.

Ray Challinor

## REVIEW

# Revolutionary writer

Alan M Wald, *James T Farrell: The Revolutionary Socialist Years*, New York University Press.

James T Farrell is interesting both for his realistic portrayal of American workers in novels like *Studs Lonigan* and for his active involvement in Trotskyist politics in the 1930s and 1940s. The trio of Lonigan novels had given Farrell some fame and he visibly participated in literary debates of the day. At the same time, he wrote for Trotskyist papers, opposed the Second World War on internationalist grounds, and raised funds for the jailed Teamster militants of Minneapolis in the early 1940s.

Farrell was one of a group of intellectuals who gravitated towards the revolutionary left. He wrote for *Partisan Review*, as did Edmund Wilson, Wallace Stevens, and Leon Trotsky. Norman Mailer was a young member of these Manhattan based circles.

But many of these writers had only a detached sympathy for the left. By the Second World War, many had explicitly left the left, denounced Marxism, and joined the war effort. Farrell, in response, wrote in print what he liked about

Trotsky: 'He knew how to despise those liberal intellectuals who, behind a set of pretentious gestures, invariably reflected the hypocrisy of bourgeois public opinion.'

When writers like Sidney Hook, Dwight MacDonald and Bernard Wolfe went to Farrell to explain that they weren't interested in the left because of the type of people in it, he despaired of their 'feverish sympathy'.

'As a kind of saving of their own faces,' he wrote in a letter, 'when they look in the mirror at themselves, they adopt the attitude that politics is a matter of personalities... They have an effect of dragging discussions, ideas, everything important in this life down to banalities, down to personalities.'

Perhaps because of his non patrician background (Farrell was an Irish Catholic from Chicago) he brought to his activities an unwillingness to bend to shifts in political winds. He stuck fast to the American Committee for the Defense of Leon Trotsky at a time when committee members were told that their works would never be translated into Russian, their travel to Russia curtailed, and their domestic book sales harmed. And he used his name to defend 18



Norman Mailer

Socialist Workers Party members based in Minneapolis who were jailed for 18 months for opposing the war.

At the same time, he complained about the 'idolatry of Trotsky on the part of Trotskyists' that sometimes got 'so thick that it could be cut with a knife'. And by 1940 he referred to 'red imperialism', saying that 'in order to fight one imperialism, I do not want to join another one. I am against both imperialisms.' So he didn't hold to the 'degenerated workers' state' shibboleth.

This new book, which may be

difficult to find anywhere but in libraries, has the advantage of focusing on James T Farrell the revolutionary. Most of what has been written about Farrell — which isn't much — presents him as a faintly angry realist novelist. This book is a corrective.

The reader will in particular find Wald's presentation of Farrell's in-print battles with the Communists interesting, as well as the details of his support work for revolutionary causes. For anyone who has read *Studs Lonigan*, the *Bernard Carr* series, or others of Farrell's works, Wald has usefully drawn the links between Farrell's literary work and his political state of mind.

The book suffers, however, not only from a stiff style, but from the fact that Wald is a sympathiser of the American SWP. This leads him to underplay Farrell's rather accurate criticisms of the SWP, and at the same time makes him play up SWP intellectual George Novack's role in Farrell's development. Novack is presented as the ever-correct kindly patron who Farrell stumbles along to follow.

But for anyone curious about America and the American left of the 1930s and 1940s, as well as how literary and political work can be related without the sublimation of the former into the latter, this is a good book indeed.

Kent Worcester

# Washington no, Moscow reluctantly

Alex Callinicos reviews Fred Halliday's new book *The Making of the Second Cold War* (Verso £4.95).

Fred Halliday has written an able study of the origins of the new Cold War. As a refutation of many of the myths perpetrated by Reagan, Thatcher and their camp-followers, it would be hard to better it. However, Halliday's analysis of the causes of East/West conflict is fundamentally flawed and this defect is fatal to his entire enterprise.

*The Making of the second Cold War* is less a straightforward political history, comparable, say, to Gabriel Kolko's superb and scholarly account of the genesis of the first Cold War, *The Politics of War*, than an essay in clarification. It is methodologically highly self-conscious, with much effort taken to define what a Cold War is, to construct a chronology of East/West conflict, and to isolate what Halliday calls the various 'constituent elements' of this conflict.

This is not intended, I think, as a scholastic exercise. Early on in the book, Halliday declares that 'it is intellectually implausible to reduce world politics to being the expression of some single cause'. Yet, as he notes, most explanations of the new Cold War do trace its origins to some such cause whether it be the Russian threat, US imperialism, or whatever.

Among such 'mono-causal' explanations the one most influential among activists in CND and similar peace movements elsewhere is probably Edward Thompson's theory of 'exterminism'. This account treats the arms race as an autonomous process motored by the irrational logic of military competition. Halliday rightly rejects the concept of 'exterminism', insisting that the arms race is a product of social and political forces, not military technology.

Halliday also has a political reason for attacking Thompson: the notion of 'exterminism' treats both Russia and the US as equally implicated in, and equally responsible for the Cold War. Halliday writes of 'the shared but unequal responsibility of East and West for the second Cold War'; his emphasis is very much on the second adjective. Washington takes the bulk of blame for the revival in international tensions since 1979.

Halliday's rejection of 'monocausal' explanations of Cold War II is in fact highly misleading. It is true that he analyses at great length the 'set of constituent elements which, in their interaction, profoundly shape world affairs' — the arms race, revolutions in the Third World, the growing instability of Western capitalism, a right-wing political and ideological climate, especially in the US. But one element plays a 'central role', namely, the conflict between two rival social systems, capitalist and communist, what Isaac Deutscher termed "the Great Contest".

This notion of a 'Great Contest' between capitalism and communism provides the framework for Halliday's analysis of the

Cold War. In words of Mike Davis approvingly quoted by Halliday, 'the Cold War...is ultimately the lightning-rod conductor of all the historic tensions between opposing international class forces'. It is a *class* struggle, with Washington taking the part of capital, and Moscow that of labour.

All the other elements discussed by Halliday are interpreted within this perspective. It is the US, he argues, that is playing the aggressive role in the contemporary world scene in response to its relative decline since the era of the first Cold War in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Halliday marshals impressive evidence to show that, contrary to Western propaganda,

**'the arms race is a product of social and political forces, not military technology'**

NATO preserves overall military superiority over the Warsaw Pact. However, the gap between the two alliances has narrowed since the early 1960s, when the Russians reacted to their humiliation in the Cuban missile crisis by building up their nuclear forces and their capacity to operate as a conventional power on a global, and not merely European scale.

It is this latter increase in Russian military strength which enabled Brezhnev to come to the aid of a succession of Third World regimes, Angola, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, whose indigenous origins have not prevented Washington from perceiving them as a threat to US global hegemony. America's dominant position has also been undermined economically by the competitive challenge mounted by other Western capitalist states (West Germany, Japan, etc.)

The American response has been, especially since Reagan's election, to re-establish US dominance by increasing Western military superiority over the Russians, adopting an interventionist stance in the Third World, and dragging their European allies into line. In all this, Halliday argues Moscow has played at worst an 'enabling' role by accepting the logic of the arms race, and building up a strategic nuclear arsenal comparable to the Americans'.

It is surprising, given the stress Halliday lays on the Great Contest, how little care he takes to justify the basic assumption that

East and West embody different social systems. He assures us that 'use of the term "communism" is not intended to suggest that the Soviet Union has attained what Marx or Lenin have described as the communist organisation of society.' However, the USA and the USSR are 'organised on the basis of contrasting social principles; private ownership of the means of production in one, collective or state ownership in the other.'

Halliday's casual equation of collective and state ownership begs a host of questions. If by 'collective ownership' one means, as Marx did, the control of production by the associated producers, then it can be identified with state ownership of the means of production only on condition that the mass of working people directly exercise state power.

It is to Halliday's credit that he claims no such thing of the Soviet Union. He describes it as 'a system based on the dictatorship of the party leadership, and of a social group tied to it by bonds of power and privilege.' Yet he does strive to present Russia's rulers in a better light than those of the US. 'Allegations of a militarist takeover or of increased militarism within the USSR are exaggerated', he tells us. 'Nor is there any groundswell of bellicist public opinion analogous to that which swept the USA in the latter part of the 1970s'.

These claims twist the facts. It is true, as Halliday says, that all decisions, including those concerning foreign and defence policy, are made by the central political bureaucracy as a whole rather than by the military chiefs alone. But there is plenty of evidence of the increased role of the military *within* that bureaucracy.

Zhores Medvedev in his recent book *Andropov* writes that: 'The politician who receives the support of the generals and marshals is in a much stronger position in the power struggle.' He cites as example the part played by Defence Minister Malinovsky in Krushchev's fall and Brezhnev's rise, and the alliance of KGB and military which brought Andropov himself to power.

Halliday also ignores the wider militarisation of Soviet society, the use of the example of the second world war to inculcate into children from their earliest years a militarist patriotism, the xenophobic and racist attitudes stirred up against the Chinese by the regime, the cult of Stalin the great war leader among many young people.

Most fundamental of all, he does not examine the manner in which the imperatives of military competition with the West structure the Russian economy, forcing the bureaucracy to give priority in the allocation of resources to the military sector and related industries. For a recent *Economist* survey admirably put it, 'the Soviet Union doesn't have a military/





industrial complex, 'it is one.' It is the pressure of military rivalry rather than the formality of state ownership that imparts its dynamic to Soviet society, yet Halliday writes of that society as if it could be understood in isolation from the world system of which it is part.

An even more astonishing omission is the absence in an otherwise scrupulous survey of the world scene of any serious discussion of Russia's East European dependencies. Yet once we include this 'constituent element' in the picture, the USSR's role takes on a different aspect from that offered by Halliday. For while it is true that the Kremlin have been cautious and defensive in their conduct of foreign policy, responding to, rather than creating situations, in Eastern Europe they have established, and maintain an empire whose basis is Russian military might. No Pole or Czech or Hungarian would have much time for any talk of Russia's pacifist intention. It is this peculiar combination of global defensiveness and local 'hegemonism' (as the Chinese would say) which defines the Russian stance.

The question is how to explain it, together with the renewed bellicosity of the American ruling class so thoroughly documented by Halliday. In the second decade of this

century the Bolshevik Party developed a tradition of analysis which stressed two key points. The first was the global integration of the capitalist system, the second the growing convergence of state and private capital.

The result was a world system of state capitalism competing militarily as well as economically. These rivalries created a systematic tendency towards imperialist wars, in which the most powerful national capitals sought to redivide the globe among themselves.

From this perspective, the social system prevailing in the Eastern bloc does not embody a 'contrasting social principle' to that in the West, but is merely an extreme case of a trend basic to capitalism in its highest stage, namely state capitalism.

The Soviet bureaucracy carry out the task of capital accumulation imposed on them by military competition with the West on the basis of state ownership of the means of production. But, as in the West, the mass of workers are excluded from control of these means, and compelled thereby to sell their labour-power and submit to the extraction of surplus-value.

Viewed in this light, the conduct of both superpowers is both explicable, and symmetrical. In the case of the US many of

Halliday's arguments are indeed correct: the second Cold War, from Washington's standpoint, is an attempt to reverse the relative economic and military decline of US capital since the era of its complete dominance in the 1940s and 1950s.

The behaviour of the Russian bureaucracy, on the other hand, has its roots not in some non-existent 'communist' mode of production, but rather in the peculiar position of Russian state capitalism in the world system.

Halliday himself documents the USSR's inferiority to the US. Not only does NATO preserve a real, if diminishing advantage over the Warsaw Pact in most categories of nuclear and conventional weapon-systems, but the Soviet economy, less than half the size of the US, and with far lower productivity, has to sustain a military establishment comparable to that of its much richer rival.

The consequence is a much lower rate of productive investment than in Western capitalism, and a highly inefficient civilian economy. According to the *Economist*, 'in the past forty years, productivity in the Russian food industry and light industry has increased only about four times; but in the machine-building, metallurgy and chemical

industries, all of which devote a large chunk of their output to defence, productivity has risen over fifteen times.' (6 August 1983)

Facts such as these help to explain why Russian propaganda is so focussed around the issues of peace and disarmament. This emphasis does not reflect the existence of 'communist' relations of production in the USSR, but rather the greater burden of the arms race on the weaker of the two superpowers. In no way does this contradict the ruthlessness with which Moscow retains its grip on eastern Europe. Three times invaded this century, the Russian state has a fundamental interest in preserving a network of buffer-states to its west.

At the same time, Russia's relative inferiority to the West imposes on her rulers a cautious and defensive global policy. The Kremlin's policy in Africa, for example, is less a product of what the Maoists used to call 'Soviet social imperialism', than a series of pragmatic (and on the whole not very successful) attempts to exploit the opportunities created by instability in regions such as southern Africa and the Horn hitherto completely dominated by the West.

One implication of this sort of analysis (developed at length by Peter Binns in *International Socialism* 19) is that the competing state capitalists are, in Marx's words, 'a band of hostile brothers', having shared as well as conflicting interests. This was obvious at Yalta in 1945, and during the heyday of detente in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but it remains true even now.

Consider NATO's attitude to the most serious social and political crisis since the second world war, Poland 1980-1 (a crisis, significantly perhaps, which Halliday almost completely ignores). Neil Ascherson, in his *The Polish August*, brings out very well how Western as well as Eastern capital feared the disruptive potential of Solidarity:

'The West's supreme fear was disorder. A matchlessly English diplomatic comment in late 1980 went "There are three scenarios. The first: Poland avoids collapsing into chaos, and there is no invasion. Second: Poland does collapse into chaos, but there is no invasion. Third: Poland collapses, and invasion takes place. The first scenario is of course the best. But the second, chaos without invasion, is the worst from the point of view of Her Majesty's Government...'

The existing division of Europe, of which the subjection of Poland to Russian domination is an essential feature, is central to the partition of the globe between the superpowers. Any movement which challenges that division, as Solidarity did, whatever its leaders claimed, runs counter to the interests of both Washington and Moscow.

The competitive struggle between East and West is embedded in the structure of the capitalist world-system at its present stage of development. Any attempt to remove the causes of the Cold War involves challenging that system itself. Halliday does look forward to 'a socialist Europe, which pioneers a new democratic model of society', and would thus 'undermine the political legitimacy of both the USA and the USSR'.



**Krushchev: 'Minimum deterrence'**

But his insistence on conceiving Russia as itself socialist is crippling. It drives him into a position of critical support for the Soviet bureaucracy. And indeed if the Cold War is the class struggle on a world scale, this is the only correct stance to adopt.

So Halliday praises Krushchev's policy of 'minimum deterrence', ie maintaining sufficient strategic nuclear forces to deter an American first strike but not seeking to match the US warhead for warhead, as 'one that rejected the competitive logic of the arms race', and criticises Brezhnev for abandoning it for a strategy of 'maximum deterrence'. But this shift in nuclear strategy was not simply an act of free will on the part of Krushchev's successors. As Halliday himself points out, the Kremlin dropped 'minimum deterrence' after the Cuban missile crisis had underlined the position of military inferiority to which the policy condemned them. That escalation of the

## OBITUARY

### Peter Sedgewick: a tragic loss

The death, in tragic and as yet unexplained circumstances, of Peter Sedgewick came as a shock to many on the left.

Those who knew him personally during his years as a member of the International Socialists, and as a member of the editorial board of *International Socialism*, feel both a personal and political loss.

Those who knew him only through his writing nevertheless feel rather more than simple political regret.

That this is so is largely due to the extraordinary power of some of his work. In particular, the translations of Serge, and their editorial introductions defending the Russian Revolution of 1917 against its critics, are a major contribution to the literature of the socialist movement.

If Serge has the power to persuade us, or to move us when we do not agree with him, that

arms race, like others since, was imposed on the rival parties by the competitive logic of military competition. Thus far Edward Thompson is right: but that logic is itself not an autonomous and irrational process, but an expression of the struggle between rival state capitals.

The practical stance which follows from Halliday's analysis is one of the withdrawn and passive observation of events. He is an admirer of Isaac Deutscher, and once edited a collection of Deutscher's writings on world affairs. It was Deutscher who proposed during the first Cold War that the correct position was to remain outside both Eastern and Western camps, and 'to withdraw into a watchtower instead', from where 'to watch with detachment and alertness this heaving chaos of a world'.

Deutscher, like Halliday after him, combined this detachment with an insistence on the generally progressive role played in the world by the Russian bureaucracy. Underlying this stance is an extreme pessimism about the capacity of the working class to transform society. Deutscher regarded Stalinism as a revolutionary force, substituting for a weak and immature working class, while Halliday is cursory and dismissive in his discussions of working class movements.

As a consequence, *The Making of The Second Cold War* contains many individual insights into contemporary world affairs, but conveys little understanding of the interrelation of the various 'constituent elements' Halliday isolates. The 'systemness' of the world system, the way in which all the different states in it interlock to form a set of rival, competing capitals, is entirely absent from Halliday's analysis. His is a book crippled by the central delusions that the USSR and its like represent a different form of society from Western capitalism.

is perhaps partly due to Peter's translation. And perhaps the excellence of the translation owes a little to an underlying political sympathy.

Peter, of course, felt himself unable to make the transition from the old International Socialists to the Socialist Workers' Party. That was his failing and our misfortune.

There is always a temptation when a sincere socialist dies to try to claim him or her for our own organisation. It is wrong to do that with Peter: he rejected our party because he believed our conception of building the party was too narrow.

But he remained an irreconcilable enemy of capitalism and a firm believer in the need for its revolutionary overthrow. And he was always prepared to co-operate with us on particular issues.

We believe that, had he lived, the experience of the struggle would have brought him back to our organisation.

And we will remember him as the man who played an important role in building the International Socialism group.

# Heroism and cynicism

**British Volunteers for Liberty: Spain 1936-1939**

Bill Alexander

Lawrence and Wishart £15

**Comintern Army**

R Dan Richardson

University Press of Kentucky £15.65p.

The International Brigades that went to the aid of the Spanish Republic in the late 1930s occupy an important place in the historical consciousness of much of the left. Over 40,000 volunteers from all over the world assembled under Comintern control to fight fascism in Spain. Among them were over 2,000 British and Irish.

They fought with immense courage, suffered fearful losses and arguably played a decisive part in the battle to defend Madrid that raged from November 1936 until March 1937. Their role after that while never so crucial still remained important.

As a practical display of internationalism their sacrifice appears second to none. Their experience understandably holds pride of place with those who want to salvage something from the debacle of 1930s Stalinism. While the courage and self-sacrifice of the Brigades stands as an example to us all, the politics of the enterprise were firmly rooted in the politics of the Popular Front and of the accompanying Great Terror then underway in Soviet Russia.

Both these books offer accounts of the International Brigades, but other than their subject they have very little in common. Bill Alexander is a former commander of the British Battalion and later assistant secretary of the CPGB. His book is a celebration of the bravery and courage of the British volunteers, an account of their achievements in the face of incredible hardships and always increasing odds. The politics of the affair are pushed firmly into the background with only an occasional remark to remind the reader that Alexander's reminiscences are not as innocent as they seem.

## Revolutionary situation

Spain in the 1930s was in the grip of a developing revolutionary situation with the workers and peasants in many areas in the process of taking control. Orwell's classic account of Barcelona in *Homage to Catalonia* has provided English readers with a graphic description of this revolution in progress.

The Comintern's Popular Front strategy far from seeking to further revolutionary developments, sought to liquidate them, sought to subordinate the struggles of the working class to the interests of Russian foreign policy. It needed a multi-class alliance against Franco, which would push back workers' democracy and safeguard the bourgeois democracy of the Spanish Republic. Moreover, the methods used to



achieve this were a reflection of those being used in Russia at the same time to eliminate opponents, or potential opponents, of Stalin's rule.

The International Brigades were formed not to further the Spanish Revolution, but to defend the Spanish Republic. Their role was laid down by the Comintern leadership, and this body consistently subordinated the interests of the working class to Soviet foreign policy.

Only once or twice does this political reality show itself in Alexander's book. For example where he writes of the British volunteers' extreme anger against the POUM at the time of their suppression in 1937. Or where he writes that, if anything, the Republican government was too lax in its repression of internal opponents! Otherwise one looks in vain for anything approaching a political argument.

Richardson's book goes to the other extreme. His is an account of the politics of the International Brigades and he spares no illusions. He brings to the fore the 'heroic' Stalinism of the Brigades that is conveniently eliminated from Alexander's account.

The campaign against Trotskyism was, as Richardson establishes, always a high priority with the Brigades' political commissariat and volunteers were force-fed a diet of anti-Trotskyist propaganda, full of praise for the Soviet Union and for its great leader, Stalin.

The daily Information Bulletin of the Brigades, which appeared in some eight languages, carried, in December 1937, articles by John Strachey defending the Moscow Trials, by Sidney Webb praising the achievements of Soviet Communism, and extensive coverage of the Stalin Constitution and the Soviet elections. The denigration of

Trotsky and praise for Stalin and his achievements were, as far as the Comintern was concerned, a crucial aspect of the Popular Front. Those accounts of the 1930s that do not recognise this are simply distorting the historical records.

The Brigades were also blessed with their own secret police unit, the SIM, that was charged among other things with suppressing 'Trotskyism', a label that covered a multitude of sins. Those volunteers from Germany and Eastern Europe who were exiles in the Soviet Union bore the brunt of this particular unit's activities.

The architect of this repression was the Frenchman, Andre Marty, ably assisted by the German, Walter Ulbricht. Marty's penchant for settling problems with the firing squad became so notorious that the French CP actually recalled him from Spain to give an account of his activities.

Marty freely admitted that some 500 volunteers had been executed for various crimes ranging from the refusal of orders and desertion to political offences. According to Richardson there is considerable suspicion that the POUM leader Nin was executed by members of the SIM acting on Ulbricht's orders.

None of this is evident from Alexander's account. All we get from him is a defence of Marty for his 'drive, determination and single-mindedness', although he does concede that he could be 'irascible, suspicious, unpredictable'.

The reasons for his silence on all this are not difficult to understand. The politics of the Popular Front are still the politics of the CPGB, but the heroic Stalinism that was so central to the strategy in the 1930s is no longer acceptable and so is suppressed from the record.

## Stopping fascism

But while Richardson's book is an effective critique of Comintern activities, it completely fails to explain the fact that 40,000 overwhelmingly working class volunteers went to fight in Spain. Attention is fixed so singlemindedly on the Comintern's activities that he misses the internationalism, solidarity and idealism that led men to volunteer. Everything is reduced to cynical manoeuvring.

The truth is, of course, that the volunteers were in the main the dupes of the Comintern leadership. They believed the lies they were told: that Trotsky was a Gestapo agent, that the Soviet Union was a workers' paradise. They saw themselves quite genuinely as fighting to stop the march of fascism across Europe rather than as serving the interests of Soviet foreign policy.

Both the cynicism of the leaders, who were soon to be justifying the Hitler/Stalin Pact, and the idealism of the rank and file have to be taken account of. The history of the International Brigades is the history of the cynical exploitation by the Soviet leadership of the last remains of the internationalism that characterised the great revolutionary upsurge of 1917-23. It can serve as both an example and a warning.

J Newsinger

# Not so happy families

Mum, dad, two kids, a semi, a car and a dog is the pattern of English life which the media would have us believe we all live, have always lived, and always will live.

It is natural, comforting, unchanging, domestic bliss. It also has nothing at all to do with the truth. It does not describe the reality of people anywhere in the world. It does not describe the way people have lived at any time in the past. It is unlikely to indicate living patterns of the future.

Yet even in the 1840s Marx wrote that the crudest attack on the communists were that 'they are going to hold our women in common'. After the Bolshevik revolution the same attack was levied. The only fear greater in the mind of the bourgeoisie than the loss of their property is that a revolution will break up the family.

The family of the owners of capital and the family of the world's propertyless have always been two different things. Just as a revolution will affect these two classes in different ways, so the effects on their family lives will be different.

In the period when the burghers of the town were fighting against feudalism, their fight was to establish the right to own property in their own name, to control that property and to protect it against arbitrary seizure by the lord.

They also had to establish the right to transmit it from generation to generation. The family of the burghers emerged as an economic arrangement for consolidating and accumulating capital out of the extended productive organisation it had been.

Increasingly the owner of capital, his wife and children lived apart from the people who produced his wealth. They had a house. The man and the woman slept in a bedroom. The children had an attendant. The man went out to the place where he controlled capital. The woman stayed in the house.

There was a division of labour between the man and the woman. There was also a division of their lives into public (where wealth is made) and private (where wealth is consumed). And there was a division between adults and children, who did not work and who had lost all economic power. Through monogamous marriage and the wife's virginity at marriage, the man insured that his seed, or power of inheritance, passed from generation to generation. That is still the pattern for the ruling class.

The driving forces on the bourgeoisie, what makes them tick, the fear of being forced into the realms of the propertyless and fear of losing control of their property with death. The family and in particular the eldest male son becomes the eternal insurance policy.

For the proletariat the family has been a different matter altogether. It has been a continual terrain of struggle. It is partly where the social wage is fought over and partly where some sort of emotional repair is

conducted to make returning to work possible and necessary.

Housing, clothing, warmth, food, health, training have been aspects of life which have developed in different ways in different parts of the world, but always as an index of the proportion of its surplus labour which it has been possible to win back from the employers. Security, relaxation, leisure, enjoyment, happiness, have been part of the emotional repair which has followed from the success of struggles against the boss.

But the separation of the public and the private, the division of labour in the home, the alienation from production over which you have no control, children as the only property of the propertyless, have produced a pressure-cooker world of close-confinement, disrepair, noise and tension in which violence is endemic.

## Burdens of guilt

Wife-battering, violence against children, rape, murder, divorce and the endless catalogue of adultery which keeps the pulp press in copy are indications of the weakness of the family structure.

But whenever a marriage breaks up, whenever people can no longer stand the pressure, it seems it is our own fault. It is not the structure of society which is at fault. It is we who are failures. So there is a growth in social services, marriage counsellors, Samaritans, psychiatrists — all committed to keeping the rotten fabric together. The problem for most of us is we can see little alternative.

In a skilled and fairly highly paid job there are chances of breaking out of the pattern. Assuming the lifestyle of a homosexual, becoming a James Bond roué, splitting up and sharing the kids, partnerswapping and contact mags can all to some extent give a

certain freedom, though often only at the expense of new burdens of guilt to balance the higher withdrawals from the bank balance.

But for most even these options are not open. The black factory worker in South Africa, the Bolivian tin miner, the Indian peasant would probably find the worker's lifestyle in Western Europe absolute bliss in comparison to the compound or the almost perpetual threat of starvation.

So if the family of the bosses is about their control of property and the family of the workers is about the success and failure of their struggles for control of their surplus, what is the future? A continual battle over the quality of council housing, hospital services, education, the quality of food, or absence of it, continual battles over faithfulness, love and emotional stability, or some alternative?

Through control of production, by organising production for need and not for profit, we argue that it would become possible to provide an enormous range of options for all these essentials. Food could be taken from the canteen, a range of cheap restaurants, or you could cook up a blissful dish. Time, exhaustion, or the poverty of unemployment would not be the limiting factor.

Housing could be designed for all sorts of different ranges of lifestyle, not constricted to the two bedroom (mum/dad and kids) council flat.

Public transport could be organised to give people freedom to move irrespective of wealth. Childcare facilities could be designed to give people freedom to have or not have children, to be able to share in the bringing up of them, and allow the children choice about how they were to live, much more in peer groups and with more freedom. But to be free they would have to be taking part in the production of wealth.

There is a limit on the value of speculation about the future, and even more so about the future after the revolution. One person's utopia is another's dystopia, but what we can say is that in the struggle for our self-liberation our ingenuity will pass all previous bounds.

John Lindsay

