

# *socialist worker* **Review**

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**THE  
UNITED FRONT**

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# NOTES of the month

TUC

## Will they, won't they?

OVER the next month we will see the TUC's promise of support for the miners put to the test. At the TUC Congress we saw a carefully constructed show of support for the miners.

The centre right, led by David Basnett of GMBATU and Gavin Laird of the AUEW, clearly felt they had to offer the miners something. They declared on more than one occasion that they would—if necessary—ask their members in power stations to take some form of solidarity action.

They did so to try and achieve two things. First, as the *Financial Times* put it, 'to put pressure on the National Coal Board and the government to enter talks'. Secondly, to ensure that for the first time the TUC would be able to intervene directly in the strike.

### Hidden message

The promises from Basnett and Laird were made on the very strong assumption that the TUC's intervention would get talks going again and hopefully bring a swift settlement to the dispute. But beneath the promises of support lay a hidden message to Scargill and the miners. That if the NUM didn't play ball, and agree to any deal the TUC might patch up, then any solidarity action would be called off.

The let-out clauses were there for all to see. The various statements referred to the need to consult their members and to ask them what they wanted to do to support the miners.

To the open relief of virtually everyone at the TUC talks between the miners and the NCB got under way. But Basnett, Laird and the new TUC secretary, Norman Willis, with their love of negotiation not confrontation, had reckoned without Thatcher. The talks lasted a long time—nearly a week—but broke down when it became clear that Thatcher was vetoing any concessions.

Since then Willis has begged ACAS to intervene to settle the strike. He has gone as far as talking to Ian MacGregor in an effort to break the log jam.

Thatcher is under little pressure to settle at



the moment. The strike still hasn't hid hard enough. The Tories are sceptical about TUC promises of support. Certainly the hard right of the electricians, power engineers and steel union have made it clear they will not act to back the miners.

The Tories have also witnessed both strikes which have occurred in the docks fail to provide a strong show of solidarity. The TGWU found it hard even to get registered dockers out. The settlement which virtually restored supplies to the Ravenscraig steel plants was attacked by Scargill, and the union faces a management offensive at Tilbury and Southampton docks.

But the TUC leadership find themselves trapped. They want to settle the strike and many can't conceal their distaste for Scargill. But at the same time if they can't pressurise the Tories into talks then Thatcher can continue to choose to ignore them.

Three unions who are committed to backing the miners can stop the use of scab coal in power stations. Between them the TGWU, GMBATU and the AUEW have a majority of trade unionists in the power stations. Gavin Laird of the AUEW told the TUC, 'We will deliver.' More recently he promised his members could force power cuts during November.

The NUM is claiming strong promises of support at a local level from power workers. But the support they get might still be limited. The *Financial Times* reporting on promises of action from the TGWU and GMBATU reported they will 'deliver a modified form of what the miners are likely to demand'.

The limitations became clear when Moss Evans of the TGWU, a supporter of Scargill,

suggested financial support for the miners should be given in the form of loans from union executives rather than from collections among the rank and file.

The docks strike acted as a warning to union leaders that they might not be able to deliver even limited support for the miners. They will be quick to blame the rank and file in their search for an escape route. But the truth is that with the exception of the rail unions there has been little effort by union leaders to build support for the miners over the last seven months at even the most minimal level.

At the same time they know defeat for the miners will herald an even fiercer employers' offensive.

Over the next month we needn't watch passively as the union leaders go through contortions trying to resolve the dilemma they're in. First, the miners are already beginning to turn their attention towards the power stations. Picketing will be needed to ensure promises are turned into action. Secondly, other trade unionists can ensure the miners have the resources to hold out by collecting cash and food. Stepping up solidarity is the best way of pressurising our leaders into action. ■

### MINERS

## Fuelling the strike

WILL the lights go out? Margaret Thatcher has promised we'll get through the winter without power cuts. It's a promise she might well live to regret.

The much vaunted back to work movement has failed to materialise. The strike is holding. Few would have thought of a strike in the 1980s lasting this long. Any thought that a new generation of miners wouldn't have the stamina of those who saw 1972 and 1974 through can be dismissed. The determination of the miners in holding out is a crucial factor.

The Tories' hopes that they can avoid power cuts rest on the chances of a mild winter, the lack of major breakdowns and the absence of any solidarity action in the power stations. It's a calculation that can

# NOTES

## of the month

easily go wrong.

The danger is that the miners—as we explain earlier—may rely on TUC promises of support, or simply wait for 'General Winter' to bring victory. It will take picketing of the power stations, delegations to discuss solidarity with the workers there and renewed efforts to block movement of coal to bring victory.

In recent weeks the miners have found themselves on the defensive. They have rightly had to concentrate on picketing their own pits to prevent scabbing. Solidarity work for the miners has rightly reflected that. In a siege situation we need to raise the cash or collect the food to be sure the strikers can hold out.

As the possibility of the focus of the strike switching to the power stations gets nearer the Tories are preparing with a change in their police operation.

Since the strike began the Tories have relied heavily on the police and judiciary to crush the miners. They have spared no expense in doing so. A city stockbroker's estimate of the cost of the first 23 weeks of the strike was a staggering £1,380 million.

The biggest single component of that is the cost of using oil instead of coal in the power stations. During the summer that ran at £20 million a week. But policing costs also run into millions. This isn't surprising given the semi-military nature of the police operation. Following the 1972 strike 11,000 riot police from the Special Patrol Groups and Police Support Units were made accessible for national strike breaking operations.

The effectiveness of that operation can be seen in the number of arrests. According to official Home Office figures 6,427 miners had been arrested by 4 September. Of those 21 had been imprisoned—many on relatively minor charges such as obstructing the highway and breach of the peace.

What is more serious is the growing number of miners facing major charges. We are now seeing miners being charged under conspiracy laws and other laws which will bring serious sentences.

In more recent pithead clashes police seem to have concentrated on two things. Rather than carry out mass arrests they now seem intent on doing over as many pickets as possible in an attempt to intimidate them from further picketing.

Those being arrested—often with serious

charges—are often key activists. There are now a growing number prevented from picketing by bail conditions, or the severity of their charges.

This increases the importance of including defence of arrested miners in our calls for solidarity. ■

### BROAD LEFT

## Lobby limits

AS THE TUC opened in Brighton the town prepared itself for a siege by thousands of miners and their supporters. For days the press pictured havoc as a mob would run rampant through the seaside town.

Not surprisingly, none of this happened. But the lobby of the TUC in support of the miners wasn't the success that had been hoped for.

Faced with a much promised return to work on the same day the NUM rightly concentrated on picketing the pitheads. But the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) who called the lobby promised a turnout of 20,000 in its press statements just days before the event.

On the day between three and four thousand attended. A thousand were miners while the Militant (the main force in BLOC) and the SWP turned out several hundred of their supporters. Aside from Merseyside dockers and Fleet Street SOGAT chapels there was a real absence of delegations from major workplaces.

The failure of the lobby to attract support from the car plants, shipyards and main engineering plants or from among unions in the civil service or railways who are committed to backing the miners represented a real failure to mobilise a powerful show of support behind the miners.

### Growing support

That is something we cannot take comfort from. The miners' strike has seen a growing minority in the unions prepared to back the miners. That's been shown through the collections and the support for one day strikes earlier in the dispute.

The priority for the left as a whole is trying to up that support in whatever way we can. At the present we can often only deliver solidarity at the level of workplace levies, twinning with pits or the organisation of food convoys and delegations to pits.

The TUC lobby was an ideal opportunity to develop that support. In addition it was a test of what the left could deliver in the way of unofficial support—through using official statements of support for the miners by union leaders.

The organisers of the BLOC lobby seemed to rely solely on their supporters in the union machine to deliver a turnout. When that didn't happen there was little attempt to organise unofficially.

In the major civil service union the *Militant* have a strong presence on the Broad

Left controlled executive. But the call for office meetings to build support for the rally only went out a week before. Few cases were reported of activists operating independently by calling section or department meetings.

In an area like the West of Scotland where the left has a strong presence in the lower levels of the union machine there was no mobilisation for Brighton at all.

The test of Brighton was important. Throughout the miners' strike we've seen union leaders promise support at even a token level and then fail to deliver. In that situation it is up to union activists to carry through the statements of union leaders at an unofficial level if necessary.

At that level the lobby of the TUC showed the limitations that still exist. ■

### DOCKERS

## Second time around

WHEN the *Ostia* moored at Hunterston iron ore terminal last month it was clear that the British Steel Corporation was determined to take on the dockers union and trigger a second national docks strike.

The result was a defeat for the dockers. The importance of that defeat should not be underestimated. The question to be asked is how such a powerful group of workers could be beaten?

When BSC used scab labour to unload the *Ostia* it not only breached the agreement between the TGWU and NUM over iron ore quotas for Ravenscraig steel works but it broke the National Dock Labour Scheme.

The TGWU had little alternative but to call a national strike. But for the first time we saw a split not only between registered and unregistered dockers but amongst registered dockers as well. Given the tradition of union organisation in the registered ports this was a significant development.

The task of overcoming those drawbacks was made more difficult by the way the strike was led. Although the TGWU have made their support for the miners clear, John Connolly, leader of the TGWU docks section, stressed the issue was simply limited to defending the existing scheme and forcing BSC to accept the TGWU's offer of limited iron ore supplies.

The difference between the quotas the TGWU was prepared to offer and what BSC wanted were very slim. In addition much of the unloading work done at Hunterston was done by steel workers with TGWU approval. Building support for the strike was always going to be more difficult.

The TGWU's continued statements that the strike had nothing to do with the miners could have convinced few. The two strikes were clearly linked. Rather than denying that, it would have been better to recognise the fact, and openly develop links between dockers and miners.

The other key weakness was that from the

start it was always against the odds that non-registered dockers would join the strike. They'd backed the first strike in July but the TGWU hadn't attempted to campaign to extend the scheme with its benefits of better security and conditions to other ports.

The TGWU leadership are committed to extending the scheme but privately believe this is impossible to do under the present government.

Once it became clear that non-registered ports wouldn't back the strike, registered dockers were concerned cargoes would simply be switched to non-registered ports. Port employers used this fear to undermine the strike.

Despite this, 60 per cent of registered dockers joined the strike, including the key ports of Tilbury, Liverpool and Hull. The possibility of extending the strike through picketing was clearly there.

But the strike itself remained largely passive. Little attempt was made to get volunteers for picketing at the crucial first mass meetings. As management tried to create back to work movements, unearthing Tilbury's own Dutch Elm, Medlock Bibby, pickets prevented major scabbing. But officials made no effort to transform this into a show of strength.

Since the strike ended it's become clear that the port employers are set to go on the offensive. While the strike was on they signed an agreement with the TGWU extending the main advantages of the scheme to non-registered dockers at the key port of Felixstowe. This can only increase divisions between dockers.

The Tories, freight owners and port employers have made clear their wish to tear up the scheme. Once the miners are out of the way it is likely they will turn their fire on the dockers. Since the strike ended management have stepped up their offensive.

In the face of that offensive it becomes vital to rebuild sectional organisation in each port. ■

GLC

## A battle, not the war

THE GLC by-elections caused by the resignation of four key figures in the Labour controlled Greater London Council ended with both Labour and the Tories claiming victory.

Thatcher was quick to point out the low turn out — between 20 and 30 percent—and claimed this was evidence that Londoners couldn't care about the abolition of the GLC. Ken Livingstone, the left wing leader of the GLC, could rightly point out that Labour's share of the vote held up well. The SDP/Liberal Alliance failed to come anywhere in a straight fight with Labour.

Certainly opinion polls show a significant swing to Labour in London. One opinion poll, released on the eve of the by-elections, showed Labour would win an overall

majority of the vote in London. This has been borne out by Labour's successes in the Euro elections and recent council elections in London.

Thatcher's attempt to abolish the GLC has clearly rebounded on her. Ken Livingstone in particular has emerged as a popular figure. But despite public opinion being against abolition Thatcher's plans remain on course.

'Red Ken' has attempted to mobilise public opinion through a £3 million publicity campaign. He's attempted to build a broad political campaign, visiting the SDP conference and lobbying Tory peers.

It's all somewhat different from the message coming from Livingstone and the Labour left on the GLC three years ago when they took control over the GLC.

Then *London Labour Briefing* announced 'London's ours'. In an interview with *Socialist Review* Livingstone faced up to the limitations placed on the GLC's power:

'We try to avoid people rushing away with the idea that this is a revolutionary council that's going to bring down the government and transform life in London.'

He went on to say he expected to face a Tory offensive against any reforms the GLC might carry through. Asked how he'd counter this Livingstone replied:

'If a Labour GLC is identified with the industrial struggles that take place in London, the defeats that we suffer should not break the link between the working class and the Labour Party.'

# NOTES of the month

Whatever criticisms we make of Livingstone unlike that other Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, he has come out in support of the miners. But during his by-election campaign the limits of that support were on view.

In one election rally in Edmonton a question to Livingstone about the miners' strike was ruled out of order. The audience was told it was there to discuss the GLC not the miners' strike.

In Edmonton Labour Party activists have been involved in street collections for the miners. But as election day neared that came to a halt as everything was thrown in to getting the vote out. No effort was made to link the attack on the GLC with the attack

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on miners' jobs.

Underneath it lay the idea that political issues — the by-elections to the GLC — are separate from economic struggles of the working class. Elections are what count for the Labour Party. If workers are to fight over jobs or wages that's up to the trade unions.

The same idea has underlined the campaign to defend London Transport. LT has now been placed in the hands of a Tory appointed board. Some 6000 London Transport workers are set to lose their jobs, while tube fares are due to rise. In response in March a one day strike took place. It was a considerable success for a group of workers with little experience of industrial action. In the garages and tube depots there was a feeling that the one day strike was just the beginning of a real campaign of industrial action.

Livingstone himself began to talk about the need for strike action as it became clear the GLC would lose control of London Transport. But hopes for this rested on union officials delivering the goods.

### Officials organise

The GLC published hundreds of thousands of leaflets aimed at transport workers. Most gathered dust in union offices. Regular meetings were held in County Hall — with union officials. As the takeover date neared meetings for the workers were organised. But not at the garages or depots — in the evening, in a hall with platforms made up of GLC leaders and union officials. On the morning of the takeover the only initiative was a leaflet handed out to city centre commuters.

Since then things have gone from bad to worse. A one day strike organised against job losses on London Transport was scrapped when management simply offered talks.

Back in 1981 Ken Livingstone said:

'To succeed in carrying Londoners with us we've got to produce the services. Now the key one is going to be public transport.'

The battle for London Transport has been lost without a fight.

The GLC has won real popularity and annoyed Thatcher. But it hasn't fundamentally dented the power of the Tories. Things have ended up messier than

Thatcher hoped they might but she is set to succeed. For all Livingstone's radical plans and gestures he has been forced to hope for a revolt among Tory peers or a rebellion by Tory backbenchers. The bold talk of 1981 is beginning to fade into the distance. ■

### IRELAND

## More than a problem

'HURD it all before.' That was the headline in *Republican News* which greeted Douglas Hurd's appointment as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

He arrived in Belfast after Jim Prior's decision to call it a day. Hurd has a reputation as a Tory 'wet'. But alongside him, to balance the ticket, is hard line Thatcherite, Rhodes Boyson.

Hurd will be the seventh minister to administer direct rule of Northern Ireland from Whitehall. The post was created in 1972 by the Heath government, following the shooting of 13 civil rights demonstrators in Derry. Overnight the Unionist dominated government which had ruled Northern Ireland for 50 years was swept away.

Since then both Labour and Tory governments have failed to come up with any other option rather than muddling on with direct rule. They have found themselves trapped in an impasse. Continuing



Douglas Hurd

unemployment, and discrimination topped by state repression allows the IRA to continue its campaign. The British army and RUC can contain them but not defeat them.

Over the last nine months the Tories seemed to have toyed with the idea of returning to some sort of Unionist controlled government. They have gone out of their way to placate bigots like Ian Paisley. The RUC have been given a green light to shoot unarmed republicans and to attack marches and even funerals.

The killing of Sean Downes by the RUC has forced a rethink on Thatcher. For while the Tories have toyed with giving power back to the Unionists they have also been considering another option.

Five months ago the New Ireland Forum published its report outlining a series of options for Northern Ireland. Produced by the Irish Republic's main parties it represented an unprecedented alliance of

ruling class opinion there.

The Republic is in deep crisis. Inflation and unemployment are mounting while, in an effort to pay off major international loans, it has resorted to a crash programme of service cuts. Throughout the 1970s the Republic's economy expanded on the basis of international investment. Foreign loans were easily obtained. Today with an international recession and a high rated dollar the squeeze is on.

In that situation the Northern troubles become more than a nagging problem. Various government ministers in the Republic have warned that its hard pressed working class might deepen its identification with Northern Ireland's Catholics. There have been warnings of violence, and certainly electoral support for Sinn Fein has grown.

The Republic's rulers want a solution in the North. A solution which offers some sops to Irish nationalism. The one on offer is joint security, with the Republic being consulted about Britain's policy. What is intended is unclear, but it could mean Irish troops and police on the streets of Belfast, and the RUC and British troops crossing the Border. However, neither side would admit to this publicly, southern politicians because of the necessity of placating Republican sentiment among their own workers, and the British government through fear of a Protestant backlash in the North.

But it does seem attractive to both Dublin and Whitehall. The Republic has shown itself as capable of dealing with republicans as the British. Both Irish states were founded and maintained on repressing republican opposition. Joint security and a say for the Republic over what goes on in the North can be portrayed as a move towards Irish unity.

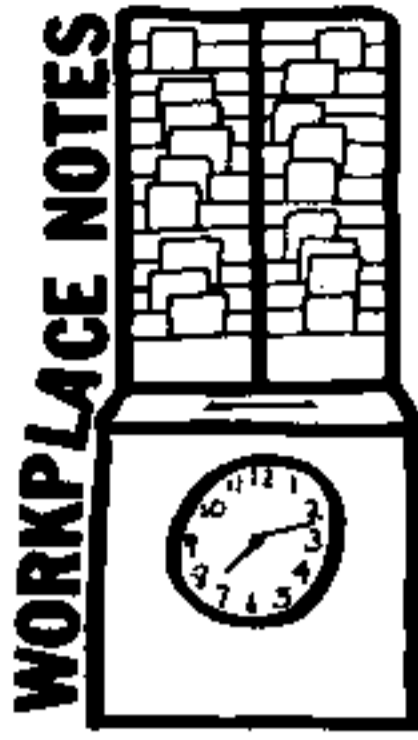
Douglas Hurd seems to be closely identified with this option. He comes from the foreign office which has always looked to some all-Irish solution. Both Hurd and his predecessor Prior welcomed the Forum's report.

But what looks good on paper can come unstuck in the face of the harsh realities of Northern Ireland. Firstly Britain is still linked to the Unionist state machine in Northern Ireland it created, and dumping it would be extremely difficult. Consequently the IRA won't go away. The repression, discrimination and unemployment which fuel its existence will continue.

Finally the Republic's economic position can only worsen. Already this has been reflected in a high degree of political instability. If its troops and police were on Northern Ireland's streets it would help feed identification with Northern Catholics among Southern workers.

All of this suggests that, whatever options being discussed by Thatcher's cabinet, they'll maintain the policy of the last 12 years: muddling on with direct rule, and increasing repression to tide them over difficult patches.

For socialists what happens in the Republic is crucial. There the working class face a ruling class offensive. A successful fight back would bring onto centre stage the one force that can bring a solution in Ireland—North and South. ■



Dick McGrogan is an engineering shop steward in a factory in Manchester. He talked to *Socialist Worker Review* about his experiences of organising in the factory.

I WAS a shop steward at Gardners factory. When they voted to accept enforced redundancies we were the first to go. I got this job in another engineering factory. It was a non-union place with some 200 shopfloor workers.

There was another bloke in there, a member of the Labour Party. We made an effort to try and unionise. We brought in application forms for the AUEW and started passing them around. We got about 60 to 70 per cent to join and hold a lunchtime meeting with a union official. The meeting decided that if any action was taken against myself or this other lad they would support us.

The company used to tell people 15 minutes before finishing time on a Friday afternoon that they were sacked. They did that to this lad. He went straight down to the shop floor and told everyone. About forty per cent walked out immediately. Over the weekend we organised a strike committee and put a picket on the gate. Only one person went through and he came out that afternoon.

### The first real test

The strike lasted six days. We won reinstatement and recognition. During that time we went to the company's other factory in Sale, Cheshire. We handed out a leaflet in the morning asking the workforce to attend a meeting across the road, in a big car park, at lunchtime. We also handed out union application forms. Management must have been frightened. They called us in for talks and we won the dispute.

Now this other factory is also unionised and has its own shop stewards committee. In our place I am now the chairman and the other lad is the convenor of shop stewards.

The first real test of our shopfloor organisation came over the GCHQ Day of Action. We faced two problems on the shop stewards committee. Firstly could we succeed in delivering action, and secondly if we failed to deliver would this strengthen management's hand and demoralise our members? As it happens we got the stoppage. People still remembered what it was like to work without a union, and this made our task easier.

When the miners' strike started we immediately did a Socialist Worker collection. After six weeks we were able to have an official one through the shop stewards' committee. We had a mass meeting which agreed to a weekly levy.

The North West TUC half day stoppage for the miners was a different matter. We had

two miners and two miners' wives at the mass meeting. They spoke well but we were turned over two to one. As the day drew nearer it became clear that we didn't really have support for the stoppage. People were complaining that they were already contributing to a weekly levy.

Looking back what we should have done was to organise the militants and get them to go round campaigning. That's what the management did. The charge hands and people like that took over the meeting. They were the only people to actually speak from the shopfloor. Not even the others stewards spoke.

My main worry was that the company would see the weakness in our organisation and start to move in. And they have made moves. First of all they took the general manager from the negotiating committee and left us with the lower management. They said they could give us no real commitment and would have to go back to the general manager again.

He was making plans to hold a mass meeting with the workforce, to 'put them in the picture' as he called it. We saw this as an attack and held our own mass meeting where the stewards recommended a boycott. It was 100 percent successful.

There was also a spin off. There are no official tea breaks allowed on the production side, only in the tool room. The management moved into one section and gave one of the lads a warning for sitting down and taking his tea. The section got together and the steward asked management to rescind the warning. They refused, so the next day the whole section stopped for a tea break. They all got verbal warnings as well. That afternoon we had an official meeting through the EEF (Engineers Employers Federation) and the union officials. Management refused to discuss the tea break.

In the end they backed down because they knew we would spread the action. They agreed to a status quo and talks about making the tea breaks official. The key thing for us was that the status quo was in our favour. The tea breaks were of 'no specific time' and of 'no specific duration.' We also established that our members liked to read

the paper when they had tea and that this was part of the normal procedure.

We had another dispute a few months ago. Management had agreed to pay a holiday bonus of £25 a week for the four weeks of our holidays. But when it came to the first of the weeks in May, the day-shift was paid but the night shift wasn't. The night shift manager immediately agreed that everyone would be paid. But the next night the personnel department said that they wouldn't.

The night shift immediately stopped and people met in the canteen. We told them to go home and come back for picketing the next day, a Saturday.

A lot of people work overtime in our factory since the wages are so low. We haven't managed to establish a proper wages structure yet.

We stood out there and three or four lads from nights came down. We held a meeting at the factory gate and nobody went in. Management backed down and everyone got the £25.

One of the main problems is being seen as 'political'. The convenor of the Sale factory used this as a reason for not uniting with us in putting forward a joint claim on sick pay. But he has agreed to meet with us monthly. The 'politics' argument was also used when we were turned over at the mass meeting for the half day stoppage for the miners. There is no way round it except to prove that you are not just all talk.

For example there used to be three tool rooms which were amalgamated. In one of them the wages were £9 higher than the other two. The first thing I did when we were first organised was to make sure that there was parity. The argument about too much politics doesn't get very far with these lads.

The workforce is young. The average age is about 30. There are now four SWP members, but they are all in my section. We sell 14 *Socialist Workers* and 7 *Reviews*. The job we have to do now is to get the rest of the factory to take on organisational responsibilities. We need to make sure that the arguments we are pushing about local matters are carried by others. Not just the paper buyers, but also the six shop stewards and the best lads in their sections. ■



'The first real test of our shopfloor organisation came over the GCHQ Day of Action'

What do  
we mean  
by..



# Leadership

IN CAPITALIST society leadership is something learnt on the playing fields of Eton and 'leadership quality' is what the army looks for in inspiring young officers. Margaret Thatcher, we are told, has great powers of leadership. By leadership is meant, first and foremost, the ability to give orders to subordinates, and in particular the ability of bosses to give orders to workers.

Revolutionary socialists have not the slightest interest in exerting this type of leadership. Indeed in the face of it is tempting to join hands with the anarchists in the generalised cry of 'Down with leadership!'

However, there are two reasons why we can't do this. The first is the unfortunate, but unavoidable, fact that in class society people develop with differing abilities, confidence and knowledge and in very unequal social situations. It is therefore inevitable that in any struggle and any organisation there will be leaders.

## Leading to disaster

The second is that the nature of the leadership of the working class invariably exercises a significant influence on the source of the class struggle and at certain times this influence is decisive.

For example, it is clear that if the president of the NUM were Bill Sirs not Arthur Scargill, then not only would the miners' strike have gone very differently but it might well not have got off the ground in the first place. Equally in the General Strike of 1926 it was the leadership of the TUC that ensured the defeat of the strike by calling it off after only nine days.

Even when the rank and file shows a high level of spontaneous activity and revolutionary initiative, a rotten leadership is more than capable of turning potential

triumph into disaster.

In France in May 1968 ten million workers launched the largest general strike in history. It was a spontaneous reaction to the brutal police repression of the students of Paris, and a response to inspiration provided by the students' magnificent resistance. It also expressed the pent up frustration and anger of the working class at ten years of reactionary and arrogant rule by General De Gaulle.

The strike involved millions of workers not organised in trade unions, ranging from professional footballers to dancing girls at the Folies Bergeres. Hundreds of factories were occupied. It paralysed French society and threw the government into crisis and panic.

While it would be an exaggeration to say that immediately a revolutionary or insurrectionary situation existed in May and June, there is not the slightest doubt that the situation was full of revolutionary possibilities. Had the struggle developed and continued the seizure of state power by the working class would have moved onto the agenda. An enormous amount depended on the leadership of the movement and its conduct in these months.

The political and industrial leadership of the French working class lay indisputably in the hands of the French Communist Party, and the trade union it controlled, the CGT. Like all Communist Parties the PCF had a long tradition of Stalinism, class collaboration and betrayal but on this occasion it excelled itself. From the start it had condemned the students as children of the bourgeoisie engaged in ultra-left adventures. When it found itself with a general strike it did its very best to dampen down the strike and ensure its rapid termination.

The spontaneous nature of the strike meant that it began with no clear programme of demands, reflecting a generalised, but not as yet coherent desire for social change. A revolutionary party would have worked to clarify and focus this mood around a programme of transitional demands 'ever more greatly and decisively directed against the very foundations of the bourgeois regime' (Trotsky).

The CP did the opposite. It put forward demands that were narrowly economic.

This gave the government an opportunity for a way out. They made the necessary

concessions and came to an agreement with the CGT. The CGT and the CP then used all their influence and muscle to sell this agreement to the workers. This did not prove easy but eventually they succeeded because of their virtual monopoly of communication between the workplaces.

Having won the real battle of the general strike, De Gaulle then had little difficulty in having his victory ratified in the shadow battle of the ballot box. Thus it was the role of the leadership that managed to transform the greatest working class challenge seen in Western Europe since the end of world war two into a major triumph for reaction.

There are many other examples. In Chile in 1970-73 a prolonged and massive working class upsurge, which threw up the embryo of workers' power in its *Cordones Industriales*, was delivered by the Popular Unity governments of Salvador Allende, into the hands of the waiting Chilean military. For three years the Popular Unity leadership had assured the working class that the Chilean armed forces were 'national, professional and loyal to the constitution!'

In Poland, too, the question of leadership was crucial. Virtually the entire Polish working class supported Solidarity. However, Walesa and the Solidarity leadership pursued until the last moment the search for compromise and national unity where no compromise was possible. As a result the Polish ruling class was able to choose its moment to strike and catch the working class when it was demobilised and unable to resist.

## The missing alternative

The real problem in France, Chile and Poland, however, was not the behaviour of the French CP, of Salvador Allende, or of Lech Walesa. Reformist leaders will be reformist leaders. They will follow the logic of reformism even when that logic leads to outright betrayal or utter disaster. The real problem was that in none of these cases was there a viable revolutionary alternative to which workers could turn.

In France in 1968 there were certain Trotskyist groups but they were far too small and too lacking in a working class base to have an impact outside the student milieu. They were quite incapable of combatting the CP in the workplaces.

In Chile the number of subjectively revolutionary militants with some allegiance to Marxism was much greater and they had far more influence within the working class. Unfortunately, they were largely ignorant of the Trotskyist tradition and were all pulled within the orbit of Popular Unity and support for the government.

In Poland, for historical reasons, virtually no revolutionary socialist tradition existed at all. The state capitalist regime's use and abuse of Marxist language made it very difficult for such ideas even to get a hearing.

The real lesson of all these experiences is that revolutionary Marxists must fight for the leadership of the working class.

The notions that mass pressure from below will force reformist leaders to play a revolutionary role (held by Trotsky until 1917) or that leaders who hang back will be

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spontaneously swept aside by the storming masses (held by Luxemburg at the same time) have both been comprehensively refuted by history.

The position of Lenin, developed first in relation to Russia and generalised internationally after 1914, that the fight for leadership must be theoretical, political and organisational, and that it must be prepared in advance of the actual revolutionary situation, has been repeatedly vindicated.

The fight for leadership is obligatory for revolutionaries. This makes clarity about the nature of this leadership all the more crucial. And here it is immediately necessary to guard not only against underestimating the importance of leadership but also against overestimating it.

Leadership is an essential link in the chain of revolution but it is, nevertheless, only one link in the chain. Revolutionary leaderships, even large revolutionary parties, lead workers' revolutions, they don't create them. Only the mass activity of the working class can do that. 'Without a guiding organisation' wrote Trotsky, 'the energy of the masses would dissipate like steam not enclosed in a piston box. But nevertheless what moves things is not the piston or the box but the steam'.

Consequently we are opposed to all 'substitutionist' conceptions of leadership which try to sidestep the problems of the consciousness, organisation and activity of the class at the base.

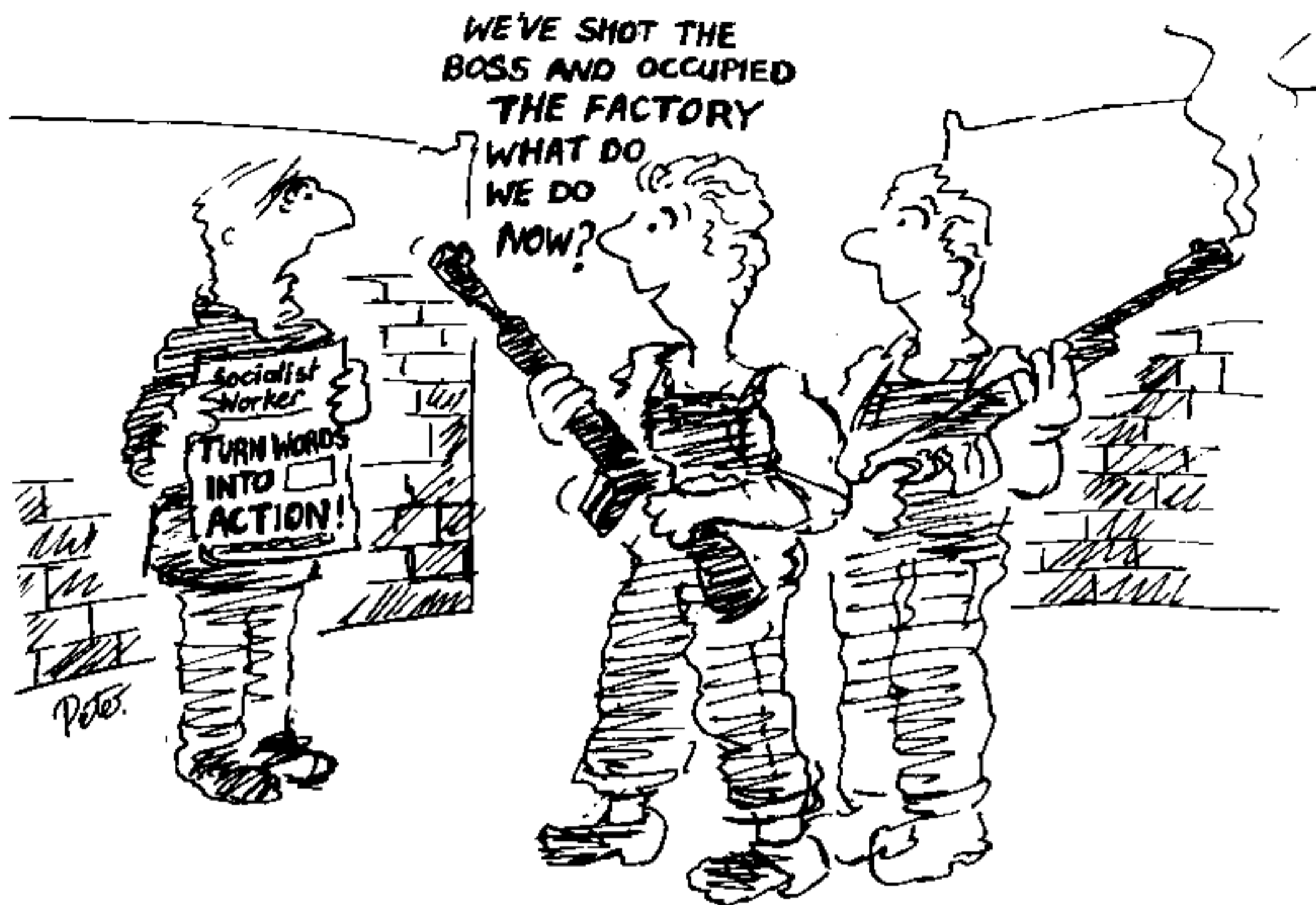
Most crucially in terms of the current situation in Britain, we must guard against the Broad Left view that socialists work in the trade unions primarily as a means of electing left officials and left executives. We do not abstain on this question. We are part of the left, and will invariably support left against right in all trade union elections. But the class struggle in recent years has been riddled with the illusion that the left leadership is enough by itself.

### Firm ground

If it is true that the present miners' strike would have been far weaker under the leadership of Bill Sirs instead of Arthur Scargill, it's also true that the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974, under the leadership of arch-right winger Joe Gormley, were stronger than today's because of the greater unity and activity of the rank and file within the NUM and in the class as a whole.

Elected or (even worse) appointed leaders who lack a base in the rank and file are impotent and the exposure of their impotence by the class enemy will sooner or later drive them to the right.

The example of Scargill allows us to further explain what we mean by leadership having a base in the rank and file. Scargill is not a revolutionary, but he is an outstanding trade union leader who stands head and shoulders not only above the Duffys and the Basnetts but also the Bucktons and the Bickerstaffes. Moreover it is clear that he has, in one sense, a very strong base in the rank and file. No other union leaders' members chant 'We'll support you ever more'. The problem is that this base is not organised independently of the rest of the



NUM official machinery.

This deficiency has two damaging consequences. It means that Scargill lacks an organisational mechanism for mobilising the members over the heads of the regional officials like McGahey, Taylor and Williams, when their bureaucratic vacillation holds back the struggle. It also means that there is no organisation of militants within the NUM to control Scargill, to pressurise him and to hold him accountable.

In this sense Scargill is isolated. Undoubtedly he is tough but the truth is that no one 'walks on water'. As Lenin said of the Bolshevik leadership, 'In politics to rely on good intentions is not serious'.

There is one further false conception of leadership to which revolutionaries may be prone, primarily because historical circumstances have forced them to the margins of the labour movement.

This is the sectarian conception of leadership in which revolutionaries, having plonked their red flag on firm unswampy ground, promptly sit round in splendid isolation waiting for the working class to join them. Of course there is an important element of truth in this. Revolutionary activity does begin on firm ground. It is the ground of Marxist theory and principles and the ground of an absolutely independent revolutionary party.

However these ideas then have to be fought for throughout the working class movement and that may involve treading through some pretty soggy marshes. Revolutionaries do not have a divine right of leadership—they have to win it by proving their effectiveness in the daily battles of the working class. This involves working along side people who are not revolutionaries (without giving way to their ideas) and leading people who are not yet revolutionaries (without conceding to their backwardness).

The performance of this dual task is not easy. It requires maintaining revolutionary principles while actively participating in the

workers' movement. The welding together of fully class conscious workers into a party and the establishment of a relationship between that party and much wider layers of the class is not easy. It cannot be accomplished without strategic and tactical shifts. It won't be accomplished without errors on the way. Nonetheless it is essential if the problem of forming a revolutionary leadership for the working class is to be solved.

In recognising the necessity of waging a prolonged struggle for the leadership of the working class we are proposing not just new leaders for old — revolutionary leaders in place of reformist ones — but an altogether different conception of leadership.

### A collective leadership

This is not a leadership that has carved out a comfortable and privileged niche for itself as the representative of the working class within capitalism. Instead a revolutionary leadership shares the conditions and struggles of the mass of ordinary workers.

It is not a leadership that issues commands from on high and expects the working class to follow, but a leadership which fights for its ideas in every factory, pit, dock and office. It is continually accountable to and replaceable by the people it claims to lead.

Finally it is not a leadership of individual stars and heroes, but a collective leadership, a party, each of whose members is in turn a leader of their fellow workers.

The building of such a leadership necessarily begins with a tiny minority.

However it can be developed only in conjunction with ever broader sections of the working class, and can be completed only as the expression and pinnacle of a mass movement embracing almost the entire working class. It has to become the centralising force within the class that answers in concrete practical terms the question 'What is to be done?' when it is being asked on every street corner. ■

John Molyneux

# Blacks shake apartheid

SEPTEMBER was supposed to be a big month for P.W. Botha, head of South Africa's apartheid regime. Under his new constitution, the all-white parliament would be widened to include representatives of some black people, and would then elect a state president enjoying almost dictatorial powers—Botha himself.

All these things happened. But Botha's enthronement was overshadowed by some of the most serious disturbances in the black townships since the Soweto uprising of 1976.

The riots have so far been centred in the Transvaal 'PWV' (Pretoria, Witwatersrand, Vereeniging) conurbation which forms the heart of South African industry, producing more than half the country's gross national product. They began on 3 September in the township of Sharpeville, where South African police killed 69 black demonstrators in March 1960. The carnage this time has not been so great—40 killed by mid-September, but the events have highlighted all the contradictions of Botha's 'reform' strategy.

Botha has sought since becoming prime minister in September 1978 to modernise the apartheid system. One of the main premisses of apartheid, as expounded by H.F. Verwoerd, its chief architect and prime minister 1958-66, was that the black urban population should be sent back to the various tribal 'homelands' from which they supposedly come.

## Black workers

This side of apartheid has been an abysmal failure. The expansion of South African capitalism since the early 1960s has increased its reliance on black workers. Consequently, the proportion of the African population living in urban areas rose from 31.8 percent in 1960 to 38.3 percent in 1980, and is expected to reach between 60 and 75 percent by the end of the century.

Botha and his advisers now accept that the urban black working class is here to stay. Their response, spelled out in the reports of the Wiehahn and Riekert commissions, has been to drive a wedge between the 'section tenners', blacks who have a right under the apartheid laws to live in the urban areas, and the rest, many of them migrant labourers, who do not, and can be dumped in one of the 'homelands' at a moment's notice.

The idea has been to give the 'section tenners' greater mobility and economic privileges in order to encourage them to identify politically with the apartheid regime. Great efforts have been made to encourage the development of black business in the townships. The legalisation of black trade unions was aimed at the more settled and skilled black workers in the hope of incorporating them in the same sort of class collaborationist arrangements which bind white workers to capital and the state.

The new constitution has been part of the

same package of 'reforms'. Two minority black groups, the 2.7 million Coloureds (people of mixed race) and 870,000 Indians, were each given the right to elect a chamber of parliament. The all-white House of Assembly still holds the balance of power, allowing the ruling National Party to elect their man as state president.

The object was clearly to draw the Coloured and Indian middle classes into the political system as junior partners. The 21 million Africans were left out of the deal. The majority, living in the 'homelands', were expected to have a political say through gangsters like Chief Lennox Sebe, president of the 'independent state' of the Ciskei, whose police mowed down black bus boycotters in East London last year. The seven million urban Africans were given beefed up town and village councils to run their townships, and a cabinet committee was appointed to look into their 'constitutional future'.



**A tribute to those murdered outside Sharpeville police station whilst protesting against 'Pass Books'**

The whole business has now blown up in Botha's face. The United Democratic Front (UDF), a broad alliance in which supporters of the banned African National Congress (ANC) play a leading role, was launched to combat the new constitution. Despite the detention of 43 UDF activists just before the Coloured and Indian elections, their efforts paid off.

The elections, held at the end of August, were a disaster for Botha. Many of those entitled to vote didn't bother to register. Of those who did, 70 percent of Coloureds and 80 percent of Indians stayed away. In the Cape Town area, where half of all Coloureds live, only 11 percent of registered electors

voted. The effect of the 1976 and 1980 school boycotts, in which many young Coloureds clearly identified themselves as blacks rather than second-class whites, was evident. In rural parts of the Cape, Coloured farm labourers did vote in large numbers, thanks to the encouragement of their white bosses who bussed them to the polls.

Then the trouble spilled over to the African townships in the Vaal triangle—Sharpeville, Evaton, Sebokeng, Residensia, Bolpatong, and Lekoa. A variety of factors seems to have been responsible. One was agitation against the constitution—the riots followed a week-long boycott by 120,000 black school-students. Another is the state of the economy, hit by a long drought which has been most severe in the Transvaal, and by the world recession. Real GNP fell by three percent last year. 56 percent of the residents of the Vaal townships are estimated to be 'not economically active'.

The tightening of influx controls, which regulate the movement of Africans in and out of the urban areas, may also have played a part. Concessions to the 'section tenners' have been accompanied by tighter controls on the rest, with the aim of reducing as many as possible to the status of migrant labourers based in the 'homelands'.

The Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill sought to reduce the number of section tenners, and make any 'unauthorised person' liable to arrest after spending more than 17 hours in an urban area. Although the Bill was eventually withdrawn, the number of pass law arrests, which fell from 381,858 in 1975-6 to 158,335 in 1980, rose again to 262,904 last year.

## Black establishment

The regime is still engaged in 'resettlement', a policy which already wrecked the lives of over three million blacks. Perhaps significantly, the townships of the Vaal triangle are being subjected to large-scale removals. Sebokeng and Evaton, where some of the worse trouble took place, are due to receive half a million people in addition to their present population of 300,000. Among those due to be moved are the residents of nearby Bophelong.

Blacks involved in local government were among the rioters' main targets. The deputy mayor of Sharpeville was hacked to death after he had shot two demonstrators. That section of the African middle class which has fallen in with Botha's plans has a very narrow popular base—elections to the new town and village councils last November were widely boycotted, with barely one in ten voting in the main urban areas.

The *Financial Times* commented on 7 September: 'A black proletariat is turning against a black establishment in a pattern which poses grave dangers for blacks ...who have "joined the system" in order to reform it from within.'

'It suggests that the government in South Africa may have to be a good deal more repressive in future than under the previous system where blacks were united in their opposition to white hegemony. The broadening of the base of government by con-



**P W Botha**

sent...creates the danger of polarisation on a class rather than a racial basis.'

It remains to be seen whether the riots will spread. Soweto, the vast black city outside Johannesburg where the 1976 uprising began, has been relatively quiet. But to develop into a genuine class struggle, the battle against apartheid will have to mobilise the collective economic strength which black workers increasingly possess in industry.

In this context, the strike by 40,000 black goldminers on 17 September is of truly historic importance. The African miners' strike of 1946 was a watershed in modern South African history. Its demands, if implemented, would have turned the predominantly migrant workforce into a settled urban working class. Precisely for that reason it was crushed ruthlessly, and when the National Party came to power in 1948 a systematic attempt was made, through the policy of apartheid, to atomise the African working class, transforming them all into migrant workers.

### Gold mining

Underlying this ruthless response was the central role played by gold in the South African economy even today. Gold accounts for half the value of South Africa's exports, earning the foreign exchange needed to pay for the imported plant and equipment on which manufacturing industry still heavily depends. The profitability of gold mining in South Africa requires the large, cheap workforce of migrant labourers which the industry has used since the turn of the century.

Over the last decade the mining industry has suffered considerable labour difficulties. The impact of liberation struggles in the rest of the region forced the Chamber of Mines to replace its largely foreign workforce (from such countries as Botswana, Malawi and Mozambique) with South Africans, at the price of big wages rises (admittedly from an appallingly low base). Moreover, the black miners, kept together in all-male barracks attached their mines, have rioted violently on a number of occasions.



**Harry Oppenheimer**

The most important mineowner, the giant Anglo American Corporation, has become much more sympathetic to the idea of a black miners' union. Anglo's interests stretch far beyond its base in gold mining: it owned 52.5 percent of the shares listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange in 1982, and one of its arms, MINORCO, was the largest single foreign investor in the US. Anglo's long-time boss, Harry Oppenheimer, is a supporter of Botha's strategy of encouraging the development of a black labour aristocracy, and he has never concealed his desire to replace expensive white miners with cheap black ones in skilled jobs.

Anglo has taken the lead in encouraging the recently formed black National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), presumably in the hope that this will help stabilise its volatile migrant workforce. The NUM is affiliated to CUSA, a group of unions heavily influenced by the black consciousness movement the late Steve Biko formed in the early 1970s. Its

leader, Cyril Ramaphosa, claims to represent 90,000 of South Africa's half a million black coal and gold miners. The union has obtained recognition mainly in Anglo mines.

For the past few months the NUM has been in official dispute with the Chamber of Mines over the union's demand for a 60 percent pay claim. Ramaphosa has consistently dragged his feet, which is hardly surprising, considering his dependence on Anglo's good will. Three collieries came out on unofficial strike in July.

### Independent unions

The Chamber's refusal to concede even Ramaphosa's moderated 25 percent claim forced him to call a national strike in mid-September, which received overwhelming support from the NUM rank and file. A last minute improved offer by the Chamber led to the strike call being rescinded, but not before 40,000 miners had walked out.

Seven of the eight mines affected belong to Anglo. Between them they account for a quarter of South Africa's gold output (Anglo has the lion's share of the most productive mines). It may only be a coincidence that the strike took place on the same day that Release Mandela Committee issued a call for Soweto workers to stay at home in protest against the regime's policies, but all the mines which came out are in or near the PWV riot areas.

The Chamber's improved offer (two weeks' wages' holiday pay) may bring temporary peace to the mines, though the strike was followed by violent clashes between miners and riot police. But the development of trade union organisation in the mines is an enormously important new factor in the situation. Already some 300,000 black workers, mainly in manufacturing industry, are members of independent unions. If the miners join them in significant numbers, the black working-class movement will have acquired the power to paralyse the apartheid economy. ■

**Alex Callinicos**



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# The rise of Neil Kinnock

There is one iron law of British politics. Between six and 12 months after the selection of a new leader of one of the major political parties a crop of instant biographies appear.

They have a required format. Begin in the cradle and from there trace the noble saga of the new leader's rise to power. Do this as far as possible in purely personal terms. Include as many jolly anecdotes as you can from 'close friends' of the subject, and as little political context as can be decently got away with.

In short, the instant biographies are also usually instantly forgettable.

All this means that most readers of this magazine will not be falling over themselves to buy *Neil Kinnock: The Path to Leadership* or *The Making of Neil Kinnock*.

Some of the flavour of Drower's book *Neil Kinnock: The Path to Leadership* can be got from its opening sentence: 'The name Kynoch originates from Perth, Scotland, where the first reference to it is to be found in parish records of 1588.' And this passage from the conclusion gives a representative sample of the banality of Drower's political judgement: '(Kinnock) is one of the most pleasant characters on the modern political scene, has natural powers of leadership, pragmatism and patriotism, but were Labour to win another general election there is some fear that he might prove to be just a talented MP, lacking the breadth of mind or the temperament to be a prime minister.'

Robert Harris' *The Making of Neil Kinnock* is a different matter. Not completely different, mind you. It has its fair share of personal trivia. And it certainly doesn't open up profound new vistas of political analysis. But it does present in a readable way much useful material about Kinnock.

## Recent developments

It shows that Kinnock's rise to the Labour leadership is far more a matter of what was going on in the Labour Party than any particular genius of Neil Kinnock. And, as far as he goes, Harris is fairly sensible about recent developments in the Labour Party. All that makes the book worth reading.

How, then, did Kinnock get to be leader? The basic story is a fairly simple one.

Stage One. Get to be an MP at the age of 28. This Kinnock does by having been a student politician of the cheery-beery kind at Cardiff and then a lecturer for the Worker's Educational Association in the constituency for which he was selected—Bedwellty. Being a WEA lecturer is a good way of getting round to meet people and of impressing them with your intellectual credentials. Not that Kinnock had too many intellectual credentials. His main assets appear to have been a talent for cheering people up, and of course his ability to talk!

But one more element was needed. It is

what Harris describes as Kinnock's 'remarkable talent for being in the right place at the right moment'. It just so happens that Bedwellty's previous MP announced in early 1969 that he was going to retire.

Stage Two. Build yourself into a big figure among the constituency party activists. That means being left wing. And this Kinnock was during the Tory government of 1970-74 and even more during the Labour governments of 1974-79. You have to pinch yourself today to remember just how left wing he could be in those days.

One example is worth quoting in full. It comes from the 1972 miners' strike. Then Kinnock had this to say to those Conservative MPs who condemned violence by pickets:

'Hon. Gentlemen opposite have bemoaned picketing. If they had been on strike for five weeks, if their families' total income was seven pounds a week social security benefit, if they were worried about smoking their next cigarette, if they were worried about paying the rent, and they saw some cowboy coming along driving a bald-tyred wagon without a road fund license, what would their reaction be? What would be the instinct of any red-blooded man in this House, having put his family to all that inconvenience and near-misery, if he saw someone riding roughshod over his picket line? I know what my attitude would be. In fact I should be worried if it were not the case.' It was not an isolated example. The left

wing stance eventually brought its reward. In 1978 Kinnock romped on to the constituency section of the Labour Party National Executive.

Kinnock then moved on to Stage Three—establishing himself as an outside contender. That involved two things. It meant front bench office and it meant proving himself to the party establishment. Having got the front bench office, Kinnock proved himself 'safe' with remarkable rapidity.

Kinnock accepted the post of Shadow Spokesman on Education soon after Labour's 1979 election defeat. According to Harris, 'News of Kinnock's advancement met with a certain degree of cynicism' among his left wing parliamentary colleagues.

But the cynicism did not extend to the constituency activists. At the 1979 conference the new spokesman on education found himself second in the constituency section of the NEC only 3,000 votes behind Tony Benn.

Kinnock, however, was no maverick front bencher. In February 1980 he proved just how 'safe' he was by vigorously arguing that Labour could not promise to restore all the cuts that the Tories had made in education. From then until the 1983 election he went out of his way to prove his trustworthiness to the party establishment.

The most crucial incident was of course his self-publicised refusal to vote for Tony Benn in the deputy leadership election of 1981. And he followed that up with votes for every disciplinary measure against the left—on Tatchell's candidature, on Tariq Ali's membership and on the Militant expulsions.

Even Harris, who likes to put Kinnock in the most favourable possible light, is clearly embarrassed by some of this, particularly the Tatchell affair. Kinnock was not above pandering to the anti-gay mood that sur-



Two of a kind!

rounded the affair. 'I'm not in favour of witchhunts but I do not mistake bloody witches for fairies' was his jolly little quip gleefully reported by the *Daily Express*.

And Kinnock's refusal to vote for Benn did cost him much of his support from constituency activists during 1981 and 1982. For many he became the number one hate man. But he still kept his seat on the NEC. Even at the times when they are most strongly roused there is still a deeply soggy majority among the constituency activists.

Logically there should have been a Stage Four in which Kinnock moved from outside contender to heir apparent. But Kinnock had established himself as heir apparent practically as soon as he had become an outside contender. And the reason goes far beyond the fact that he almost immediately became Foot's own choice as successor.

It was once again a question of what Harris calls 'being in the right place at the right time.' After the debacle of the Wilson/Callaghan 1974-79 government, the revulsion against it and the constitutional changes, then any Labour leader had to have left wing credentials. That is why even the MPs voted for Foot in 1980. No orthodox right winger stood a chance once the electoral college system was working.

But to secure the votes of the union leaders, of most of the MPs and even of a good portion of the constituency activists, the potential leader had to be 'safe'. He or she had to have proved that they could toe the line. Michael Foot had done that with five years of loyal and senior cabinet office. And so, as we have seen, had Neil Kinnock, quite systematically from 1979 onwards.

## LABOUR AND THE MINERS

# Two faces of Labour

### Pat Stack looks at Labour's record on the miners' strike.

THE current miners' strike is one of the most important industrial disputes to have taken place since the general strike of 1926. It raises questions of the future of the mining industry, miners livelihoods, the potential destruction of whole mining communities, and the whole government strategy for dealing with trade unions and holding down workers' living standards.

In such circumstances the response of the Labour Party is of some considerable significance. The Tory Party, both wets and dries, are after all firmly behind the NCB/government strategy. There is no public criticism of Ian MacGregor, none of police violence, and no sympathy for the miners' cause. This is as one would expect it. But what of the Labour Party?

Unfortunately, Labour's attitude to the strike does not present the same unity and solidarity. Instead there is a stark contrast between the public face of the labour Party—their leaders in parliament—and the minority of activists on the ground. Although Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley and,

Even before the 1983 election disaster there was no one other than Kinnock (and of course Foot) who satisfied these two essential requirements. There were people supposedly on the left who were 'safe' like Stan Orme or John Silkin, but most people had forgotten that they were ever left wing. And there were left wing figures like Tony Benn or even Eric Heffer, but so far as the union leaders were concerned they were 'unsafe'. That was what made Kinnock heir apparent.

The 1983 election made his succession a landslide. It removed the threat of Tony Benn throwing a spanner in the works from the left. And the bumbling image of the seventy year old Foot just reinforced the appeal of a 'youthful' candidate.

### Toe the line

That was the making of Neil Kinnock. But what does it mean for the future? Harris quotes two reactions from the Labour left. One is from Jon Lansman, organiser of Benn's 1981 campaign. 'All the work, all the effort, all the reforms—now it was Kinnock who would get the benefit.' It sounds both despairing and contemptuous. It was the reaction of much of the hard Labour left in the run up to Kinnock's election.

The other response is from Terry Burns, a former friend of Kinnock's in Bedwellty, now a Militant supporter. 'For all that I think that he was wrong at that time (over Benn and the witchhunt) I still believe that as leader he'll be a million times better than anything we've had in my lifetime.'

Those who claim that Kinnock may not be

the rest of the Labour leadership are critical of the government, and Ian MacGregor's handling of the dispute, they stop far short of calling for a miners' victory, and continually criticise the miners' actions. Unlike the Tory solidarity with MacGregor, they make sure that they keep a safe distance from Arthur Scargill.

This wariness of the miners has been a feature of Labour's behaviour since the beginning of the dispute. In its early weeks, the cutting edge of the right in this country was a demand for a national ballot of miners. Now none of this had anything to do with a profound belief in democracy. Rather it was a hope that the ballot would bring the dispute to an end.

Anybody seriously supporting the miners opposed all talks of ballot at this stage. The Labour leadership, however, far from pointing to the hypocrisy of the ballot seekers, joined them in calling for one.

Again when the key to the dispute appeared to be the mass picketing of the steel works and power stations, labour found itself joining the right in condemning the violence of miners on the picket line. The language they used was different from that of

perfect but at least he is the most left wing thing we've got, have a case, albeit a slender one and one that needs making for them if it is to hold up at all.

Kinnock's politics are indistinguishable from Foot's. However Foot was the prisoner of the right wing. But the right wing is being steadily eroded. For the first time this parliament they don't have a clear majority of Labour MPs. Very few new selections are right wingers. So next parliament the right wing will, for the first time, be in a distinct minority. That is the parliament in which Neil Kinnock may well be Prime Minister.

The right wingers are being replaced by mini-Neil Kinnocks. And the truth is that what these 'soft-lefts' do (as opposed to their rhetoric) is very much the same as the right wing. That can already be seen in opposition.

Has Kinnock really behaved any differently in the miners' strike than any other Labour leader in opposition would have behaved in similar circumstances? Even Hugh Gaitskell would, I suspect, have managed to give as much (or as little) support to the miners. Ramsay MacDonald certainly managed as much as Kinnock in the twenties. It is a historical parallel that does not bode well for today's Labour faithful. ■

Pete Goodwin

### Neil Kinnock: The Path to Leadership

GMF Drower

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### The Making of Neil Kinnock

Robert Harris

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the right, but the effect on potential solidarity much more serious.

On a number of occasions during the strike, miners and their supporters have had to hold their breath as compromises (which could only be damaging to the miners) have looked imminent. On each occasion Labour leaders have expressed their hope that a settlement can be reached. During his speech at the TUC Congress Kinnock took time out to praise the efforts of Stan Orme, shadow energy minister, not for organising solidarity with the miners, but for 'behaving as any good government minister would do'—bringing both sides to the negotiating table.

### Government intervention

Leaving aside whether this would really be the role of a minister if Labour were in power, the attitude tells us much about Labour's criticism of the Government's handling of the dispute. For the major criticism of Thatcher is her 'unwillingness to intervene' in the dispute.

That is, to say the least, puzzling, for the truth is that from the beginning the government have been intervening. It was the government that pulled the NCB out of talks earlier in the dispute when a settlement seemed likely. It is the government that has been earmarking funds to ensure that sufficient police resources are used to help break the strike. It is the government that turned a blind eye to abuses of the law by

those same police. It is a government minister, Home secretary Leon Brittan, that has been making it known that he wants magistrates to impose heavy sentences on arrested miners.

Even more, the dispute is, not as far as the government is concerned, a nasty accident. They see it as a crucial climax to the famous Ridley Plan. This was devised by the government to pick off and isolate one group of workers after another, starting with some of the weaker sections.

Neil Kinnock knows all this, which makes his call for government intervention all the more absurd. But Kinnock's starting point is not a miners' victory. He has other criteria—proving he's fit to govern, winning the next election—as his priorities. For him the strike is an embarrassment, rather than a crucial battle in the war between the Tories and the working class.

None of this will come as a great surprise to regular readers of *Socialist Worker Review*, but it must be a source of worry, to the Labour Party members up and down the country who have been actively supporting the strike.

A number of Labour Party wards have adopted pits in solidarity with the miners. In many localities Labour Party members can be found collecting food and money for the miners.

In Sheffield for instance the local Labour Parties adopt pits. A good example of what this entails is shown by the Walkely Labour Party, who collect and buy food for the miners at the Fitzwilliam colliery. In Cardiff the Labour Party wards do door to door collections in their local wards. The Labour controlled Dyfed council has donated £20,000.

The miners' support committee in Glasgow, which has a heavy Labour Party involvement, conducts a collecting operation in the city centre every Saturday. In Leeds, the Harehill ward Labour Party



**Kinnock: a rare show of solidarity**

does door to door collections, and a couple of weeks ago Leeds Labour Party gave some £1,500 to Allerton Bywater colliery near Castleford. In Birmingham Meriden Labour Party donated £1,000. In Kilburn, London, six Labour Party members, including a councillor, were arrested whilst collecting money.

In many situations, Socialist Workers Party members and Labour Party activists work side by side.

In Glasgow, Labour Party members and SWP members do joint collections in the traditional market area known as 'the Barras'

every Sunday. The arrests in Kilburn have led to a campaign with joint collections and joint pickets of the courts.

In a number of factories and offices individual SWP and Labour party members have worked together. Charlie Kimber an SWP NALGO member in Swansea describes how the fact that he and a Labour Party activist worked together collecting for the strike stood them in good stead when the rightwing backlash occurred in NALGO. At Scott Lithgow in Greenock two SWP members organised with a young Labour Party shop steward to black a local scab firm. Scottish miners turned up to speak in favour of the blacking and the stewards voted to black the firm.

All of this shows that there is an active minority of Labour Party members, who don't just want to see the miners win, but are prepared to help them do so.

Yet even their collecting must raise questions about the approach of the bulk of the Labour Party. The 50p levy for the miners, called for officially by Labour's NEC, has not been collected in the vast majority of workplaces. Proper collection of the levy alone would bring in more than the weekly collections, however good they are.

And even the activists are caught between support for the miners and the electoral aims of the Labour Party. The GLC elections are a case in point—when the priority was canvassing not collecting. (See Notes of the Month.)

These arguments will no doubt come up at the conference. Kinnock's attitude is unlikely to be changed. For the Labour activists supporting the miners the question must surely be asked; if this is how Kinnock behaves in opposition, is he really going to be any different to past Labour leaders when in power? ■

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## THE UNITED FRONT

# MARCH SEPARATELY

# STRIKE

# TOGETHER

**L**eon Trotsky's writings for the last fifteen years of his life were dominated by trying to come to terms with the rise of Stalinism and by one theoretical concept—that of the united front. He wrote against a background of the rise of fascism in Germany and Spain, and of the world moving closer to the barbarism of a second imperialist war. His writings were aimed at the millions of workers who looked to the Communist Parties and the Communist International, and who had the power, even at this stage, to change the course of history, to defeat fascism and to unite to take on the capitalist class.

But the theory of the united front wasn't just about fighting fascism. It was an attempt to try to bridge the gap between the revolutionary party and the working class. It was a recognition that conscious, organised revolutionaries are a minority inside capitalist society. Yet if workers are to make a revolution they need revolutionary Marxist ideas and organisation. If that contradiction is to be overcome, the minority of revolutionaries need to find ways of getting their ideas across to, and organising with much larger groups of workers.

It was also a recognition that revolutionaries attempt to do two things at the same time. They aim to break workers from the old ideas and organisations and win them towards a revolutionary party. At the same time, they try to involve themselves in the day to day class struggle. This means working with people who have a range of different political ideas, many of whom may be hostile to revolutionary ideas but who are willing to unite round specific, often defensive demands. The theory of the united front was in response to these problems.

The theory was first developed by the Communist International in the years after the Russian Revolution. The Theses on Comintern

Tactics of 1922 described it as follows:

'The united front tactic is simply an initiative whereby the Communists propose to join with all workers belonging to other parties and groups, and all unaligned workers in a common struggle to defend the immediate, basic interests of the working class against the bourgeoisie. Every action, for even the most trivial everyday demand, can lead to revolutionary awareness and revolutionary education; it is the experience of struggle that will convince workers of the inevitability of revolution and the historic importance of communism.'

**T**o understand why this tactic was adopted, and why Trotsky put such emphasis on it in the 1920s and 1930s, we need to look at the background against which it was proposed.

The events of the previous ten years had rent apart any idea of a united socialist movement. The outbreak of the first world war in 1914 brought to the surface the massive crisis which had been bubbling for a few years. The support of the overwhelming majority of socialist party leaders for their own ruling classes and for the carnage of war smashed the illusion of a mass Socialist International. The principled revolutionaries who opposed the war amounted to only a handful in most countries.

Gradually that changed. The suffering of the war itself — whether you were a worker in the munitions factory, a soldier at the front, families trying to cope with price increases — meant that dissatisfaction grew. It developed in all countries into massive protests, and in some into full blooded revolutions.

These revolutionary battles — although unsuccessful for more than a short period everywhere but Russia — demonstrated to

*Lindsey German looks at the theory and practice of the 'United Front'*

hundreds of thousands of workers *in practice* the need to break with the old reformist leaders and their parties. These workers joined the new Communist Parties, which sprang up in the wake of the Russian Revolution and which were clearly committed to workers' power as the road to revolutionary socialism.

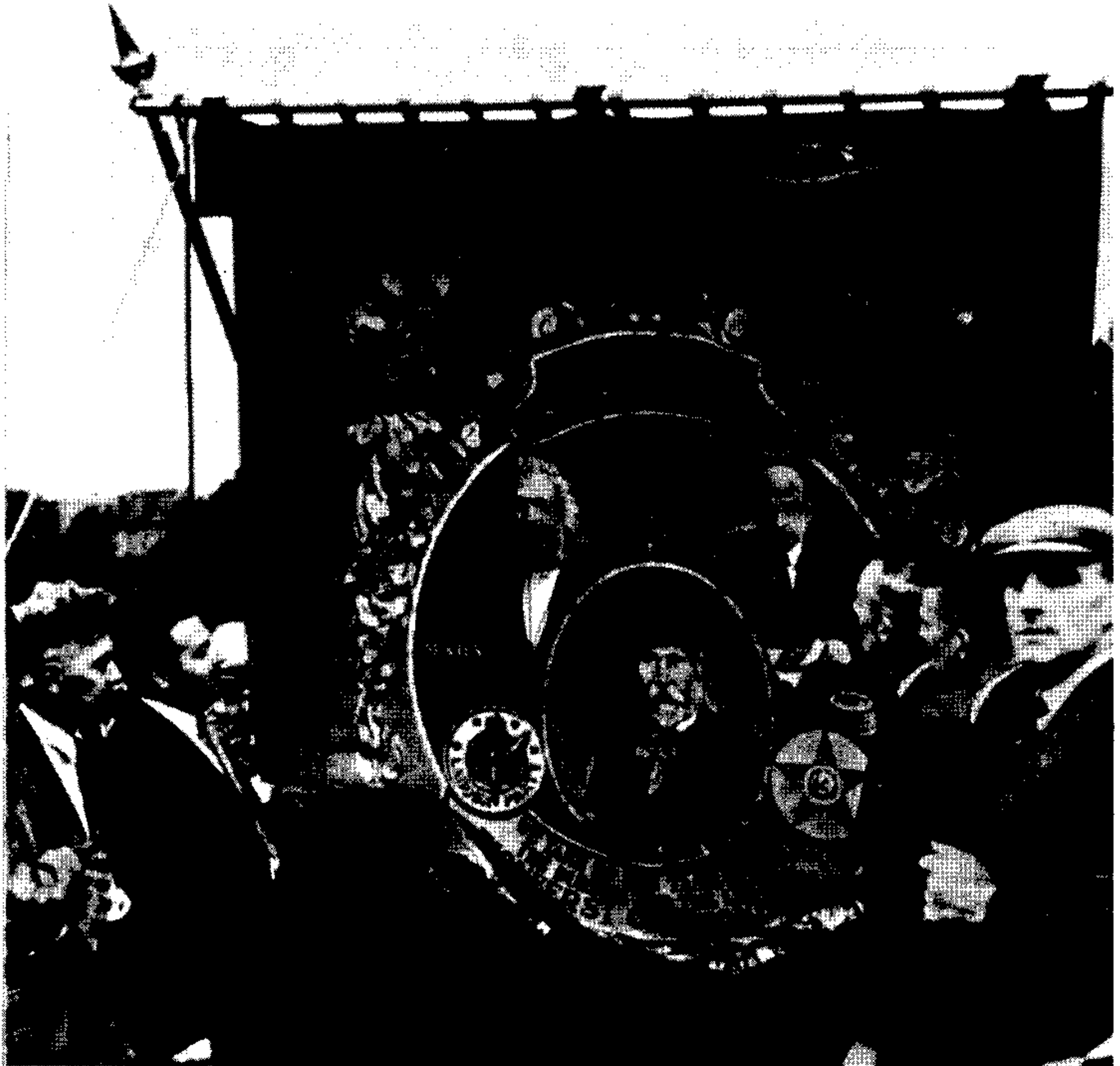
They consciously rejected the old politics and the old political organisations. They split from these parties not on minor tactical questions but on questions of principle: could the old capitalist state be reformed out of the crisis? Could parliament be used to bring workers' power, or did workers councils need to be built as separate organs of power?

But although the questions of principle remained valid, it became clear that the revolutionary onslaught of the early post war years had not been successful in establishing workers' states anywhere but Russia. Not only had the workers' offensives not been successful,

the ruling classes now felt confident in many situations to go onto the offensive themselves. As the Comintern theses on the united front put it in 1921:

'The world economic crisis is worsening; unemployment is growing; in almost every country international capital has gone over to a systematic offensive against the workers, the main evidence of which is the capitalists' cynical and open attempts to reduce wages and lower the workers' general standard of living.'

The capitalist class had managed to re-establish itself intact. The task of making socialist revolution clearly wasn't going to be one of a sharp, rapid offensive. Workers would have to engage in defensive struggles, think out tactical manoeuvres, regroup their forces and so on. This would require united action, which many workers were in any case looking for. As Trotsky put it:



**'To fight the proletariat must have unity in its ranks'—Trotsky**



'Under the influence of the mounting capitalist attack, there is a new mood among the workers — a spontaneous striving towards unity'.

Trotsky repeatedly stressed that the united front stemmed from that objective need of the working class to unite in order to fight capitalism.

'The proletariat moves towards revolutionary consciousness not by passing grades in school but by passing through the class struggle, which abhors interruptions. To fight, the proletariat must have unity in its ranks. This holds true for partial economic conflicts, within the walls of a single factory, as well as for such "national" political battles as the one to repel fascism. Consequently the tactic of the united front is not something accidental and artificial — a cunning manoeuvre — not at all; it originates, entirely and wholly, in the objective conditions governing the development of the proletariat.'

**A** second factor was also clear to those who discussed the united front tactic. The new revolutionary Communist Parties usually had the allegiance of a minority of the working classes in the various countries. Often they were mass parties nonetheless. But millions of workers still looked to the old reformist parties, or to the newer centrist formations (those who vacillated between reform and revolution), rather than to the revolutionaries.

The Communists recognised that for the most part the mass of these workers would only break from their old leaders *through their own experience* in other words through activity and struggle which in practice would show what was the correct way of fighting and which political parties were prepared to organise that struggle rather than just talk about it. This argument could not be won by preaching to those workers, but by constantly trying to propose action which could lead to that activity.

The united front tactic therefore recognised the objective need for a workers' movement which could unite to defend its gains in the face of the employers' offensive. This corresponded to a genuine feeling for unity among the most militant workers, and so helped the revolutionaries to work with others, to overcome their isolation and thereby to begin to bridge the gap between the revolutionary party and the class.

The united front was conceived of as a way of organising round a demand or demands — however limited or small — which could unite workers in struggle and thereby do two things. Firstly, mount a campaign (usually defensive) over a particular issue which, because it involved more forces than those of a single party, had a better chance of success. Secondly, because the united front was based on activity, it could show in practice that the revolutionaries' arguments were correct, and that the reformists (or at least their leaders) weren't serious about fighting round the particular issue.

'The reformists dread the revolutionary potential of the mass movement; their beloved

arena is the parliamentary tribune, the trade union bureaus... On the contrary, we are...interested in dragging the reformists from their asylums and placing them alongside ourselves before the eyes of the struggling masses. With a correct tactic we can only stand to gain from this.' (Trotsky in the *First Five Years of the Comintern*).

**T**he theory seems a straightforward one. Yet its application was much more complicated. There were all sorts of problems—and a few pitfalls—in implementing the tactic. And despite the fact that the 1920s and 1930s provided major and urgent opportunities for this sort of unity—in particular the rise of fascism—the policy of the Communist Parties increasingly moved away from the sort of united front that Trotsky advocated.

So of necessity, Trotsky spent a great deal of time spelling out exactly what was — and what wasn't — meant by the united front. In particular at first he talked of the dangers involved from the old reformist parties. One obvious danger of unity was that far from breaking workers from the old leaders it could foster illusions in them. That could have disastrous consequences for the workers' movement. After all, the revolutionaries had broken from the reformists for very good reasons only a few years before. The reformist leaders certainly hadn't changed their counter-revolutionary colours. How was this problem to be avoided? Trotsky stressed a number of guidelines.

He talked at some length about the need of revolutionaries to maintain their political independence. They must have the freedom to criticise at all times those they were uniting with, to produce their own publications and propaganda, and if necessary to act independently of them. To Trotsky the relationship between party and class could be demonstrated with great effect through the united front. But this obviously demanded party organisation in the first place. In the *First Five Years of the Comintern*, he explains:

'If the Communist Party had not broken drastically and irrevocably with the Social Democrats...it could not have taken the first steps on the road to revolution. It would have forever remained a parliamentary safety valve attached to the bourgeois state.

'Whoever does not understand this, does not know the first letter of the ABC of Communism.

'If the Communist Party did not seek for organisational avenues to...joint, coordinated action...it would have thereby laid bare its own incapacity to win over — on the basis of mass action — the majority of the working class. It would degenerate into a Communist propaganda society but never develop into a party for the conquest of power.

'It is not enough to possess the sword, one must give it an edge; it is not enough to give the sword an edge, one must know how to wield it.

'After separating the Communists from the

reformists, it is not enough to fuse the Communists together by means of organisational discipline; it is necessary that this organisation should learn how to guide all the collective activities of the proletariat in all spheres of its living struggle.

'This is the second letter of the alphabet of Communism.'

In other words the point of a revolutionary party is to develop its own theories and activities, *but not as an end in itself*. These then need to be used to try to win others who have the same goal but who are trying to approach it through other paths.

A second point about the united front was that it was to be organised round specifics. This follows on from the need to maintain organisational independence and political clarity. The different parties could not have unity around the whole of their political programmes without submerging their differences. For the minority of revolutionaries, the likelihood would be that *their* politics would be submerged to the more dominant ones of the reformists. This was exactly what Trotsky and the leaders of the Communist International wanted to avoid. In fact they wanted the opposite. The revolutionaries had to be quite *open* about their differences so that they could unite around areas where they did agree.

**S**o unity had to be round very specific and limited areas. This had another side to it as well. It meant that the revolutionaries did not demand full political agreement from those workers who wanted to fight. Trotsky explained the danger of ultimatism in *What Next*:

'Instead of issuing a one-sided ultimatum, which irritates and insults the workers, the party should submit a definite programme for joint action: that is the surest way of achieving leadership in reality.'

'Ultimatism is an attempt to rape the working class after failing to convince it.'

By 'ultimatism', Trotsky meant the tendency of revolutionaries simply to demand that the working class should adhere to its programme, without trying to win workers through struggle to these ideas.

It is the unity around specific demands and action which enables the revolutionaries to avoid the danger of ultimatism. In proposing unity you are by definition proposing a demand or demands around which many workers can agree. For example, many workers are against the Tory anti-union laws. If we propose action against these laws, we should propose the sort of action, not that sets us apart from them, but that they will agree with. The key is not in this situation how we differentiate but how we lead action which can implement the demands which unite large groups of workers.

The third point Trotsky stressed was the need for the united front to be between organisations of comparable size. Why was this? Not because Trotsky was in principle against tiny organisations linking up with giant ones, but because the united front is not a trick or a

manoeuvre. That means it has to contain real forces who are able to deliver at least *something*, however small.

So for example, there would be no point in an organisation like the SWP going into a united front with an organisation of 200 or so members, because there would be no real new forces involved. That means both that no real campaign can be built, nor are there any people who can be won in practice through struggle. Again, the reverse is true. The SWP's 4,000 members could not try to engage in a united front with the whole of the Labour Party. The disparity in size is so great as to make the tactic meaningless. Most Labour Party members would not notice it. We could only have a united front with a minority of the Labour Party — for example certain sections of the Labour left.

Trotsky time and again refers to a situation where the Communists are a third or a quarter of the organised working class in a particular country. Today in Britain we are talking about much smaller and less significant forces all round. But the same sort of idea applies. The tactic can only work if both sides have something they can bring to it.

None of these guidelines meant very much, of course, unless the united front could be put into practice. Here it is important to understand that the agreement for the united front is not simply an agreement between the leaderships of different organisations.

'The question of the united front is not at all a question of the reciprocal relations between the Communist parliamentary fraction and that of the Socialists or between the Central Committee of the two parties.'

The united front is a united front on the ground. The tactic springs from the needs of the class struggle, from the need of workers to unite to defeat fascism, unemployment or whatever. Therefore it has to be built in individual workplaces, to take on concrete organisational forms and has to be about workers uniting in struggle. Trotsky refers to the soviets, the workers' councils established in Russia in 1917, as the highest forms of united front.

That doesn't mean at all that those proposing the united front can ignore the question of the reformist leaders:

'All talk to the effect that we should accept a united front with the masses but not with the leaders is sheer scholasticism. It is impossible to summon the organised masses to a united struggle without entering into negotiations with those whom a particular section of the mass has made its plenipotentiaries.'

Trotsky's aim is not to win over or re-educate the old leaders — a task he believes impossible — but to expose them in the eyes of the mass of workers. The united front is proposed to the leaders because the workers *look to them in any case*:

'If we were able simply to unite the working masses around our own banner or around our practical immediate slogans, and skip over reformist organisations, whether party or trade union, that would of course be the best thing in the world. But then the very question

of the united front would not exist in its present form.'

**F**or Trotsky all these points were important if the united front was to be implemented correctly. He argued that within these guidelines there had to be a great deal of flexibility, depending on local circumstances. He also didn't believe that the united front tactic was applicable at all times, in all conditions.

The united front is usually connected with defensive struggles. It makes sense where because of the ruling class offensive the reformist leaders are under pressure to fight, however minimally and however reluctantly. In such a situation — for example in defending union rights — the minimum demands of revolutionaries can coincide with the maximum demands of the reformist leaders, thus creating the possibility of united action.

To judge when united action is possible revolutionaries had to weigh up the balance of class forces, to decide the issues around which workers could unite, to decide whether indeed it was possible to build a united front on an issue. But perhaps the most important thing that runs through all Trotsky's writings is the need to avoid two dangers when using the united front. The dangers are of a sectarian abstention from workers' struggles on the one hand, and of liquidationism on the other. Tragically the history of the Communist movement in the late 1920s and 1930s was repeatedly one of an abandonment of the genuine united front and a zigzagging between these two dangers.

The German Communist Party refused to unite around the very important specific of fighting Hitler and fascism. Instead they demanded that the SPD (the German socialists) rank and file break *politically* from their old leaders. In other words they virtually said: if you want to fight fascism you can only do so under the leadership of the Communist Party. They refused to approach the SPD leadership for unity, arguing that rank and file members had to accept Communist Party leadership to fight fascism. They adopted precisely the ultimatum approach that Trotsky had warned against.

All this had the effect of creating a barrier between the revolutionaries — who, however misdirected, wanted to smash capitalism — and the rank and file of the reformist organisations, many of whom could have been won to a similar perspective if they could have been broken in practice from their leaders. The lack of unity in this situation had disastrous consequences. When the fascists came to power, they made no distinction between revolutionary organisations and reformist ones, or between left and right union leaders.

**T**oday the theory of the united front can often seem remote. It seems to deal with such massive historic events—the defeat of revolutions, the growth of fascism, the rise of Stalinism. Yet the lessons that Trotsky drew out in his writings are ones which are

central to those trying to build in the revolutionary tradition today. The united front is about strategy and tactics, about how socialists operate not according to their political principles alone, but according to the sorts of numbers they can influence, to the balance of class forces and to many other factors.

Our circumstances are very different today from those that Trotsky faced. Socialists in Britain are not in a position to build genuine united fronts of the sorts that he described. We do not at present have the decisive influence on the class struggle that many of the Communist Parties had in the 1920s and 1930s.

Much of the time, in fact, it is not possible to even begin to raise the united front. The tactic is only applicable in certain circumstances. Obviously when workers are on the offensive and revolutionaries are able to lead mass struggles, a defensive united front may not be needed.

Equally there are times when workers are on the defensive, but such is the nature of the period that neither they nor their leaders see the need for, or the possibility of unity. The situation of the past few years was like that. It was not in general possible for revolutionaries to build round defensive campaigns and struggles because they barely existed for the most part. When the political situation is stagnant, there are few opportunities for united work. The past year has seen important changes in that respect. The generalised offensive by the ruling class has provoked a number of defensive but nonetheless very large responses. These range from the NGA at Warrington to the fight against the union ban at GCHQ to the present miners' strike. Such issues give revolutionaries far more opportunities to get their ideas across to those outside the party.

In that situation, the guidelines put forward by Trotsky are very useful, even though the level of these campaigns is far lower than that of a genuine united front.

The importance of uniting round specifics, the importance of uniting with those of a comparable size and the importance of maintaining political independence while involved in campaigns, can all be useful lessons to us when we operate in the trade unions, in miners' support committees or in local campaigns.

But although there is a much larger audience for socialist ideas than there was a couple of years ago, the gap between, for example passive support for the miners and the much smaller number who are willing to collect money on the street or go on a demonstration is still very great.

There can still be a massive gap between calls for unity from the left union leaders and what happens on the ground. Socialists should not sit back and bemoan this gap. Instead we should use some of the lessons from Trotsky to work with those other socialists and trade union militants already active in support of the miners, and on other issues, to try to draw more people into activity and hopefully into struggle — even if we're not talking about united fronts on the scale that Trotsky did.



*'If we were able simply to unite the working masses around our own banner... The very question of the united front would not exist in its present form'*  
—Trotsky

# Building with the paper

LAST month a group of SWP miners met to discuss the strike and the party. We print a section of their discussions about how to use the paper to build.

ONE of the problems which some miners had found was combining selling the paper with being the most active on mass pickets. Pete Tait from Wheldale colliery described the difficulties.

'We must lead from the front, that's one of the things which we all agree on. It's no good standing at the back and trying to sell the paper. 'On two occasions I tried standing back and selling the paper. Both times I lost most of the papers anyway and took a hell of a lot of stick off the lads.'

Ian Mitchell from Silverwood colliery in South Yorkshire suggested a way around this.

'I totally agree that the worst course you can take when you're on a picket line is to stand at the back just selling the paper.

'After the picket, when everybody's leaving, you can set up sales.

'At Silverwood, my own pit, it's easy. You know you're going to be hanging around for hours. So you've got plenty of opportunity to go around with the paper. It is much more of a problem on big pickets but it's a matter

of sussing the situation out. It's very easy to just fall into the trap of walking about at the back shouting Socialist Worker. And people recognise that and say 'who does he think he is. He's always spouting on about building pickets and all he's doing is selling his blinking paper.

'But that's the wrong way to go about the thing. When you're on a picket line you're always getting arguments, arguments about politics are always coming up with people. Not just about the strike but about a whole range of other things—Ireland, the TUC, what Neil Kinnock's up to. You can use the paper to start to get our arguments across.'

Everyone agreed that the easiest sales were on picket lines at their own pits. Trevor Brown talked about how he had gone about selling *Socialist Worker* at his own pit, Houghton Main in South Yorkshire.

'I think that it's not practical to sell *Socialist Worker* on mass pickets. But certainly we can begin to sell the paper and to agitate at our own pits. On those picket lines people will be hanging around for two or three hours waiting for the scabs to come in. There we have a perfect opportunity to sell the paper.

'I've been selling the paper at my own pit since the beginning of the strike. One bloke came up to me time and again for the first four months and asked 'are you still a

socialist' as if it was one of those diseases you had.

'A fortnight ago he started buying the paper. You can pick up sales but the key is having the paper with you all the time.'

Norman Strike from Westoe, South Shields added:

'I'd hate people to come away from this meeting thinking that they have to sell the paper from the back of the picket. You can sell it from the front as well.

'There was a picture on the front page of *Socialist Worker* a few weeks ago of Bilston Glen. There's a lad right at the front with a big bundle of *Socialist Workers* in his pocket.

'And he wasn't a miner. And it's important to say that other comrades can come down to the picket line as well.'

But selling the paper isn't enough on its own. Steve Hunt, from South Kirby put it like this:

'We are always the people who are at the front of the pickets, and going around doing a lot of the organising. By making people aware of what's going on we give ourselves credibility. People can see what we're doing, they can see that we're involved.

'But on every picket there is a point where things quieten down, and when people start going away. That's the time when we can sell them the paper. That's by far the best time because they've seen that we've been in the forefront of the picket.'

Gary Marshall from Westoe said that as miners' attitudes had changed during the strike, selling the paper had become easier.

'One thing which has happened through the strike is that blokes who were really hostile at the beginning are now getting far more interested in socialist ideas.

'At the beginning of the strike some blokes were almost threatening me. Now it's reached the stage where I feel I can ask them to buy the paper. I get blokes coming up to me who were really hostile at the beginning who now ask me for the paper.'

## Involving branch members

Steve Hamill, from Silverwood backed up the importance of regular selling:

'We have been selling the paper but we haven't been consistent enough about it.

'Of course if you're on a flying picket and you arrive just as the pushing has started then obviously you don't start selling the paper at that moment. But that doesn't mean that you should go to a picket line without *Socialist Worker*. If you don't always have the paper with you then you will miss out on opportunities to sell.

'Last week we were on a picket line and I had no papers, then three members of our branch came down and started selling and got rid of twelve papers. We should get branch members down. It's not just good for the miners to see others on their picket lines, it's good for the other people as well.'

Selling the paper opens up chances to discuss socialist politics. Ian Mitchell put it like this.

'Arguments come up all the time on the picket line. And you always get a few people who seem to be more interested than the rest.

'We've got to sort out ways of getting those people more interested in the politics.



When a speaker was coming down to our branch to do a meeting we got him to do a little introduction to SWP politics. It was very informal, just a few miners from our pit before the main meeting.

'Once you've got an interest in the paper and the ideas, you can then go on to pull them to SWP public meetings.

'By doing this you are showing people that you've got serious ideas, that you are arguing seriously about the strike.

'By selling the paper and talking about the ideas you can get people to change the way they think about you. People who would have thought of you as members of this loony group start realising you are someone who is thinking seriously about the strike, and about political ideas.

'But there is another audience which is different to this. A second audience that you

meet on picket lines and it's essential that we relate to them as well.

'When I joined this organisation I realised that you had to start sticking your neck out. We've got to start doing that now when we talk about organising on picket lines. It's not just SWP miners, we've got to start relating to other layers as well. On the picket line we've got to be forever arguing what should be done.

'There's always a group of people who realise there is something wrong and recognise that something needs to be done to make a picket effective. We've got to identify with this group of people who want to win this strike. Even though they might totally disagree with us on a whole range of things. They might be in the Labour Party, and they might see some sense in Neil Kinnock, which takes some working out. But these people

who are good militants who want to win this strike, they know something's amiss and they want to get stuck in.

'When all these people are out on that picket line it's an ideal situation to have a meeting. All you need is a megaphone to build it into some kind of forum where things can be talked about.

'As well as that you can use it to start to agitate, we've got to begin to take a lead in the strike. We really need to get the tactics organised.

'That's the only way we can break the situation where there's just a few people who know what to do and everyone else stands.

'We in the Socialist Workers Party are a fighting organisation, a combat organisation. We don't just pass resolutions and forget about them. We intervene. ■

for all teachers. The specific proposals in the memorandum go some way towards the realisation of this objective.

It argues that to match the high point of teachers' salaries in relation to comparable groups of workers reached in April 1975, the average salary would have to rise from the present £9,240 to between £12,082 and £12,380. In order to achieve this level it makes two main proposals: a minimum flat rate increase of £1,200; and the creation of a new basic scale through the amalgamation of the present Scales 1, 2, and 3.

Both of these proposals are to be welcomed since they seek to redress the balance of the salary structure in favour of classroom teachers. Of course there are points of criticism in the memorandum. But the overall effect of the proposals will be beneficial and provides us with a good starting point for the real argument in the union about *how* to achieve this policy. The memorandum has nothing to say about this crunch question. But that is precisely what the major argument at the conference should be.

## Unity in struggle

One resolution has already been passed in a number of local associations and attempts to come to grips with some of the problems.

It calls for a campaign of industrial action to begin no later than the start of 1985; a campaign of no cover for absence; and a rejection of arbitration. There will also be calls to support and link up with other unions in struggle.

Teachers will get more for themselves if they take action alongside other groups in struggle. It will be difficult to win a sympathetic audience for these policies and there is no chance of the conference adopting our amendment in full. But it will serve at the very least to raise the temperature of the debate. All of its components are necessary ingredients for a successful salary struggle. The executive's response is easy to predict. They will try to unite the conference behind the substance of the new policy and plead that it shouldn't 'tie the hands of the negotiators to specific forms of action'.

Given their record in the past that's exactly what we should be trying to do. ■  
Shaun Doherty

## INDUSTRIAL: TEACHERS

# The fight next time?

Teachers' pay has been a bone of contention between the government and the NUT. Sean Doherty explains why.

'ARBITRATION has failed teachers.' This is the considered opinion of Doug McAvoy, deputy general secretary of the biggest teachers' union, the NUT.

Nothing remarkable about that you might think. After all, four months of industrial action has resulted in a settlement of 5.1 per cent after the futile deliberations of the arbitration panel.

But it was Doug McAvoy who was behind the union's policy of using the action not to win the 12 percent claim, but to 'win' the very same arbitration which he now vigorously condemns.

It was the inevitable outcome of an arbitration procedure that is heavily weighted in favour of the government and the employers. The union's nominee on the panel disassociated himself from the award. It was eventually imposed by the government-approved Chairperson, and even he was moved to comment that this procedure was not the best way of settling teachers' pay.

## No independent action

Teachers are understandably bitter at this outcome. The most common response in staffrooms is: 'If they think we're only worth 5.1 percent then they'll get 5.1 percent worth of work out of us.' Sadly, there is neither the confidence nor the level of organisation in the union to initiate independent action in defiance of the executive's acceptance of the award and their instruction to call off the campaign of official sanctions and strikes. The most we are able to achieve is the continuation of the no-cover policy in a relatively small number of London schools.

There is, however, another important focus for militants in the coming weeks. The

executive have called a special salary conference on 28 September to determine the union's salary policy for next year, in the context of the discussions with the employers on restructuring of the salary scales. They have stolen the clothes of their most persistent critics by incorporating flat rate increases, amalgamation of the first three scales and rejection of the employers' attempt to link negotiations on salaries with conditions of service. This conversion is not one that they have adopted willingly.

As their memorandum to the conference graphically illustrates, the existing system of five separate salary scales (excluding those for Heads and Deputies) no longer fits the present pattern of teacher recruitment. The decline in the overall number of pupils in schools coupled with cutbacks in recruitment and lack of opportunity for promotion has meant that many teachers are stuck at the top of their present scale with no prospect of further advance. The memorandum summarises the position very clearly:

'Over 60 percent of all teachers are on Scales 1 and 2 and nearly a quarter of the entire profession are now on the top of these two scales ... For these teachers the only prospect of salary movement was promotion but those prospects have been blighted by falling rolls'

Having identified at least part of the problem the document acknowledges that the present salary structure fails to properly reward the classroom teacher. This is something that the executive have consistently refused to accept. They have to bear the responsibility for accepting the massive increase in differentials which gave the refugees from the classroom far greater salaries than those who remained to do the most important and difficult job in schools. The headteachers, who constituted a majority of the executive, were not slow in protecting their own vested interests. The policy of Socialist Workers Party members has always been to argue for a single salary scale

# The church militant?

A row has developed in the Catholic Church between the old hierarchy and supporters of liberation struggles. Dave Beecham explains.

'Marx's writings lead Christians to rediscover not only the biblical view of man as co-creator, but also the biblical concept of faith... Another element of Marx's system (which is) a neglected Christian truth is his judgement that the relationships of production generate class struggle, exploitation, tensions, rebellion, ideologies, and superstructures.'

'Building on a conception of the Church of the People, a critique of the very structures of the Church is developed. It is not simply the case of fraternal correction of pastors of the Church whose behaviour does not reflect the evangelical spirit of service and is linked to old-fashioned signs of authority which scandalize the poor. It has to do with a challenge to the *sacramental and hierarchical structure* of the Church, which was willed by the Lord Himself. There is a denunciation of members of the hierarchy and the magisterium as objective representatives of the ruling class which has to be opposed. Theologically, this position means that ministers take their origin from the people who therefore designate ministers of their own choice in accord with the needs of their historic revolutionary mission.'

The first of these statements comes from a talk delivered in 1974 by one of the chief supporters of 'liberation theology' in the Catholic Church, the Brazilian bishop Helder Camara. The second comes from the document issued on 3 September this year by the Vatican's 'Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith' which is intended to prevent Marxist deviations in the church, above all in Latin America.

## A counter-offensive

This document, the *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, is the opening salvo in a counter-offensive by the Catholic Church's hierarchy against the involvement of priests, and lay Catholics, in left-wing politics. The intention is to maintain the Church's claim that it stands for liberation of the people, but to exorcise the demon of direct involvement in social conflict.

The Vatican realises it cannot return to the old, conservative ways of the past without losing the mass support it has in the countries of central and south America. The problem is that in moving with the rising class struggle in Latin America (and elsewhere) the Church in countries such as Peru, Chile, Nicaragua, El Salvador,

Guatemala and, most notably, Brazil has adopted a radical, and sometimes socialist, approach.

In Peru, this has largely been confined to the lower rungs of the church hierarchy, led by one of the main theoreticians of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutierrez. The Church



**Moses: the liberator of Israel. 'A people united will never be defeated'**

hierarchy in Peru is entirely under the control of the far-right Opus Dei organisation. But in Central America, liberation theology has influenced the whole church, causing a complete split in Nicaragua, where the Pope was howled down on his visit last year.

Brazil, by contrast, saw a huge welcome for the Pope shortly after his election: but this was before the campaign against liberation theology had begun. Indeed, the Pope embraced the left wing leader of the Sao Paulo engineering workers, Lula, in exactly the same way as he had done with Lech Walesa in Poland.

Brazil is in fact critical to the whole Vatican campaign. Cardinal Ratzinger, the author of the new 'Instruction' has directed his fire against the Brazilian priest, Leonardo Boff, a member of the Franciscan Order, which along with the Dominicans and the Jesuits has provided most of the 'cadre' of the 'new church' and its network of base communities.

Significantly, Boff was supported in his encounter with the Cardinal by two key figures in the Brazilian Church hierarchy. These are Bishop Camara who comes from the poorest, north east part of the country and Archbishop Arns of Sao Paulo. Camara is the more theoretical of the two. It was he who called in the early 1970s for a Marxist/Christian dialogue in order to 'gather all that was correct and discard the dross that envelops the pure gold'. Arns emerged to special prominence in Brazilian

politics after 1978, when he actively supported workers' strikes in Sao Paulo, providing both funds and protection for the new independent unions and rank and file movements.

The theoretical debate between the liberation theologians and the Catholic hierarchy is not a crucial one for us, though it is an interesting one. The liberation theologians take the line that the spiritual freedom of human beings depends on their material freedom; suffering is not a virtue; the capitalist system leads to the coexistence of plenty and misery; and the church must campaign for a fundamental redistribution of world resources.

Some of this, in words at least, is apparently acceptable to the Vatican. In fact the new rightwing document goes out of its way to use quite radical language: 'The scandal of the shocking inequality between the rich and the poor—whether between rich and poor countries, or between social classes in a single nation—is no longer tolerated. On one hand, people have attained an unheard of abundance which is given to waste, while on the other hand so many live in such poverty, deprived of the basic necessities, that one is hardly able even to count the victims of malnutrition.'

## Subversive notion

The right wing are in fact quite happy with the liberationists invocation of the 'poor'. What concerns them is 'a disastrous confusion between the *poor* of the Scripture and the *proletariat* of Marx'. And further that the liberation theologians 'mean by *Church of the People* a Church of the class, a Church of the oppressed people whom it is necessary to 'conscientize' in the light of the organized struggle for freedom. For some, the people, thus understood, even become the object of faith.'

This is of course a very subversive notion. It runs counter to central religious doctrines: submission, order, hierarchy, acceptance, individual redemption, faith, hope and charity.

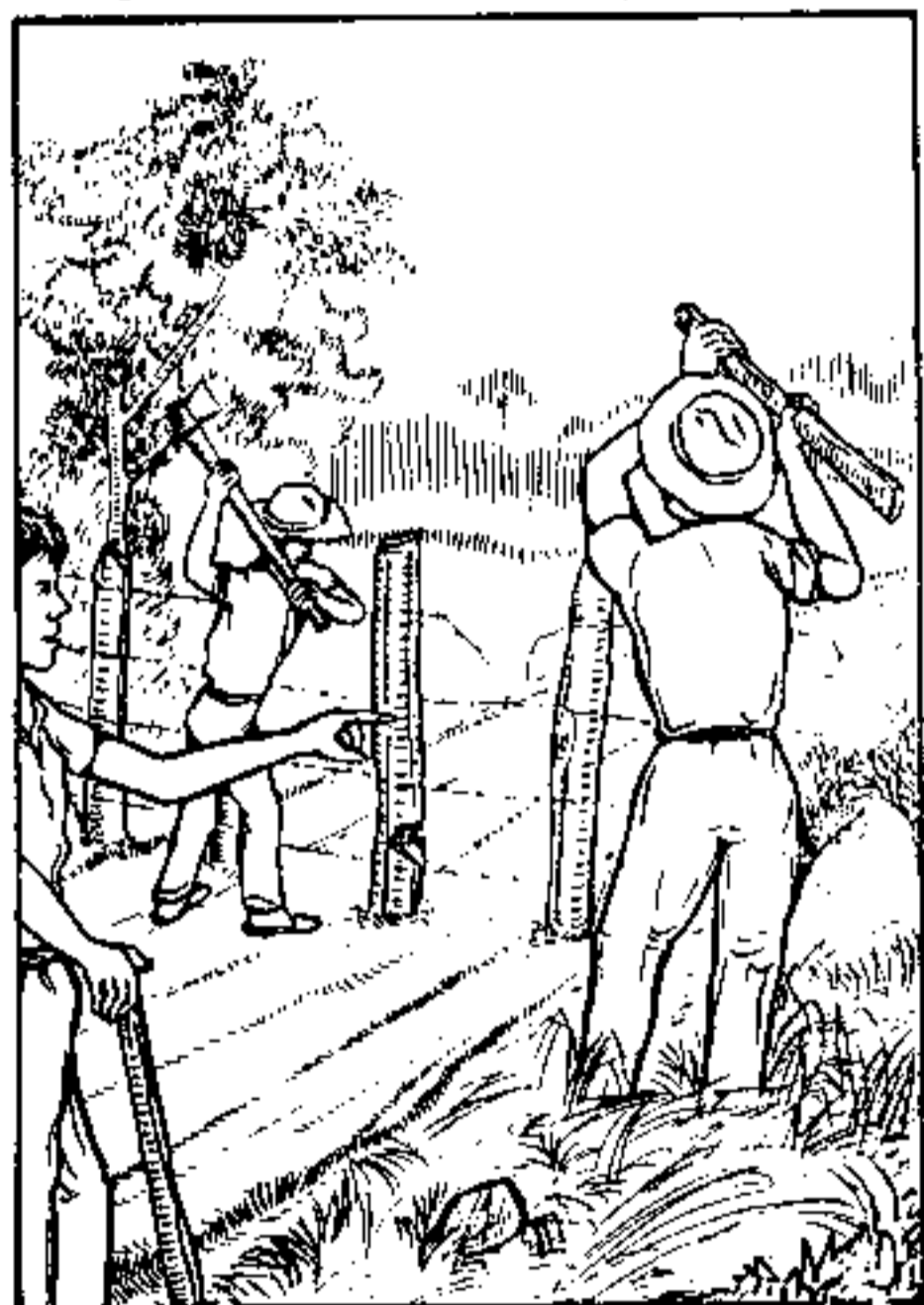
On theory alone, the Vatican is in quite a strong position. Cardinal Ratzinger correctly points out that Marxism is an integrated theory. Plucking bits out if it does not work. In fact his document goes a lot further than many so-called Marxists because it recognizes that the theory of class struggle 'implies that society is founded on violence'. It points out that revolutionary force and the overthrow of capitalism is an absolutely essential part of Marxist theory—'reforms make no sense'.

But the problem for the Catholic hierarchy now goes way beyond theory, however cleverly explained. The notion of the Church of the People has in fact been put into practice. The system of base communities is quite well established: and the church has been gaining support on this basis in Latin American countries.

Is this important for socialists? The first thing to point out is that rebellion within the Church against exploitation and wealth is not something new. There has always been a tendency, sometimes tolerated sometimes repressed, which called for change and a

Church more closely tied to the people. Whole orders in the middle ages, the Cistercians and the Franciscans for example, were founded on this sort of basis. It did not prevent the Church remaining a feudal organisation (in some countries the largest feudal power) nor did the reformers generally remain independent (or live in many cases) for long.

In the same way today the Church, internationally, is a powerful capitalist organisation comprising banks, businesses, land and property and a network of corruption. However much you build base



**Preparing the ways of the Lord—workers take over the big estates**

communities you cannot change these facts without confronting the Church head on.

Secondly the Church in Brazil, for example, nourishes the seeds of revolt on one hand but also coexists quite happily with the landowners, capitalists and military on the other. It has an enormous stake in the status quo. Its leaders thus find themselves in a position rather like that of top union bureaucrats. They represent the demands of the oppressed and seek to negotiate concessions and improvements. But the church, unlike the unions, is not 'a school of war'. It may serve to educate people, to provide protection for those who are struggling, succour for the oppressed and persecuted. It is not an organic part of the struggle.

This means that the grass roots militants in the church do two things. They avoid the question of the church as a whole, as an institution in society (though they may seek to reform it). They also tend to substitute for the struggle.

From a socialist point of view, the criticism of those people who believe in the theology of liberation is not so much that they believe in a god, or an afterlife—although there is a big contradiction about trying to change this world if you believe in one to come. The main point is that those seeking change through the Church inevitably opt for reformist solutions. Many of those identifying with liberation theology see themselves as revolutionaries, including

incidentally a small minority in Britain.

In the same way the guerrillas in El Salvador are in effect 'armed reformists', forced into revolutionary forms of action because of the level of repression, so the radical priests increasingly act as revolutionaries, in shanty-towns, villages, alongside guerrilla movements and even in some cases inside the working class.

The guerrilla movements tend to substitute themselves for the struggle of workers or the poor peasantry and plantation workers. Mass organisation becomes subordinate to guerrilla warfare. The radical church functions differently. There is a tendency towards substitution, but because of the absence of a religious equivalent of Stalinism, the belief in self-activity is far greater.

### Theory of activity

Liberation theology is much more a theory of rank and file activity and development than most varieties of Marxism in Latin America. So for example the priests of the Brazilian shanty-towns are well to the left of the Communist Party (indeed Jesuit priests have been known to denounce the CP for its right wing politics) and the Christian influence on the left of the Brazilian PT (Workers' Party) is very considerable. Similarly, the dominant current in the Oposicao Sindical—union opposition—a rank and file movement inside the right wing unions, tends to be oriented on the Church and organises through church-funded pastoral centres.

The Marxist/Christian dialogue of which Bishop Camara speaks and which became very fashionable about 20 years ago among certain sections of the British Communist Party and Labour left is a meaningless term. The theoretical basis of liberation theology is extremely slim—any dialogue involved is in fact the familiar one between reformists and revolutionaries. But there is one important difference. Reformism of the social democratic kind has much weaker roots in the countries of central and south America than it does in Europe. The tensions inside the Latin American Church are therefore much greater, and so the risks for the Vatican in asserting control are considerable.

Though the influence of liberation theology is marginal in Britain, some of the best people we come across can be influenced

by it. Certainly many on the left identify strongly with the idea of a 'church militant' in Latin America.

In a confrontation between liberation theology and the Vatican there is no doubt where socialists should stand. The history of the Church up till now has consistently been one of support for the ruling class, feudal or capitalist, and indeed of support for capitalism at its most brutal—Spain under Franco or Italy under Mussolini. In Britain the Anglican church is a state institution by its very nature. Catholic Action was (and in rare cases still is) a force behind the



**The people organise themselves**

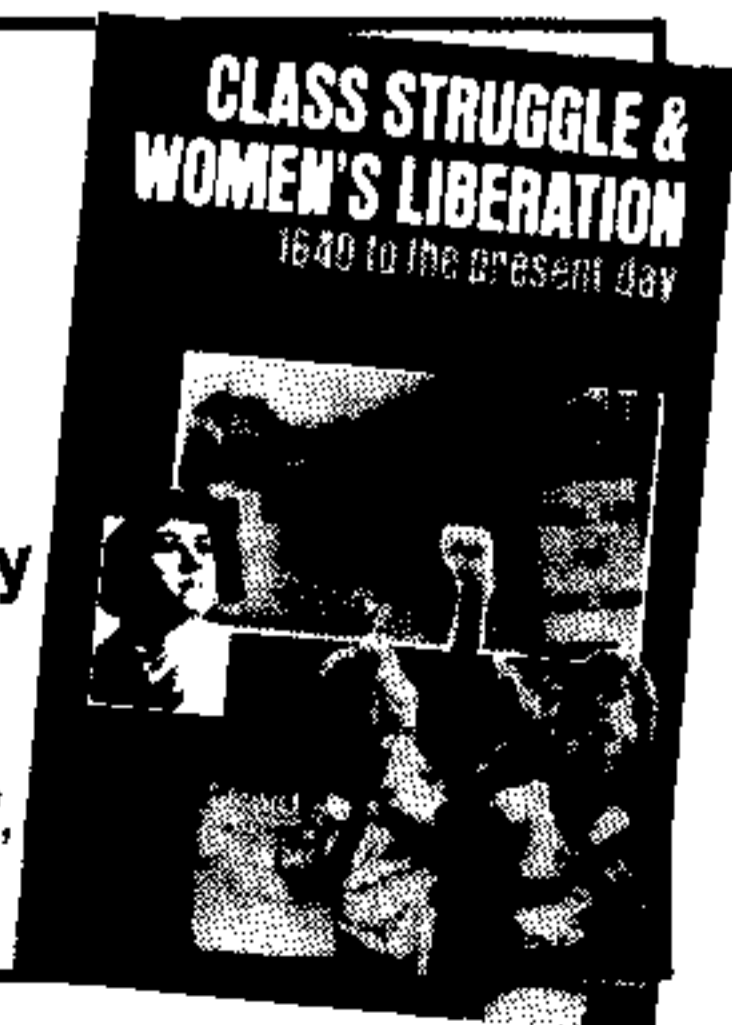
right wing in the trade union movement, witch-hunting the left and preaching the virtues of class collaboration.

A major shift has been taking place in the Church in some parts of the world. Any move to fight the system by those Christians who want to change the world completely is to be welcomed. But the sort of changes they aspire to cannot come through the Church and will be opposed by the Church first in words and then in action. At the same time the prospects for revolutionary change in Latin America have never been better. But this depends on independent political organisation of workers and the rural proletariat which even the most radical priests have resisted. ■

## Women's liberation —two traditions

**Class struggle and women's liberation—1640 to the present day**  
Tony Cliff

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# US workers defensive

**Celia Peterson** of our sister organisation in the US, the International Socialist Organisation, looks at the state of the American working class.

THIS is presidential election year in the US and the attacks the labour movement has suffered under Reagan can lead many on the left to the conclusion that life would be different under Mondale's Democrats. Reagan has after all inflicted some heavy defeats on the working class.

In 1981 the Professional Air Traffic Controllers' Organisation (PATCO) was destroyed and has become a symbol of labour's position under Reagan. But the current crisis did not begin with the PATCO defeat or with Ronald Reagan.

Indeed the process began in the seventies—a decade that in its latter period was dominated by Jimmy Carter's Democratic administration. This is something much of the American left seems to have forgotten.

In 1969, unions represented 25 percent of the US civilian workforce. Today only 20 percent of workers are organised. In the recession-prone seventies, union officials leaped at the chance to cooperate with management.

'Quality of Worklife' programmes sprang up to deal with worker dissatisfaction and increase productivity. And union officials, like Douglas Fraser of the UAW (United Auto Workers), took seats on company boards of directors.

But workers did all the co-operating. Nowhere was this clearer than in the motor industry, where in 1979 Fraser agreed to a whole series of concessions to the Chrysler group. These concessions amounted to wage cuts (or cuts in benefits, which had the same effect). This at a time when consumer goods prices were rising at a rate of 15 percent.

The implications of the Chrysler deal went well beyond one section of workers. It set the tone for wage bargaining in America. By 1982 Ford were looking for a similar deal, and got it. Now in state after state employers facing 'profitability' problems are demanding, and in most cases getting, wage and benefit cuts.

## Auto workers' strike

When the Chrysler deal was negotiated in 1979 it was the first time that the auto workers had negotiated a contract without strike action since 1964.

The recent auto workers' strike involving the General Motors Workforce highlights the problem. Despite the solidarity of the strikers the UAW have accepted a shoddy deal, which endangers jobs, union organisation and living standards. The reaction of the *Wall Street Journal*, and right wing

economic correspondents says it all—the journal described the settlement as 'moderate' whilst elsewhere one pundit was declaring 'On the whole the GM settlement looks like fairly good news for the economy.' All this will do little to help the decline in union membership in the States.

Since 1978 unions have lost more certification elections (ballots of the workforce on union membership) than they have won. The 1970 win rate was 57 percent—already way down from the 1950s win rate of 73 percent.

The low win rate for union elections is influenced by two main factors. One is the general anti-union climate, perpetrated by a right wing movement throughout the seventies, which managed to convince a large proportion of American workers that high wages were responsible for the country's economic problems. In turn the unions are blamed for the high wages.

The number of workers who pollsters say approved of unions actually declined during the seventies. This indicates just how successful the right wing ideologues have been.

The response of US union leaders has been to run expensive TV ads and public relations campaigns, instead of fighting to win real gains for workers.

An aggressive strategy to organise unorganised workers, and to resist concessions would do far more to convince workers that collective activity can accomplish something, rather than doubling the number of TV commercials showing happy, singing unionised workers. Such a strategy however is anathema to practically all US



Walkout of General Motor Workers in September 1984

trade union leaders.

The second reason unions lose elections so often is increased management resistance, fuelled by the growth of anti-union consulting firms which did 500 million dollars worth of business in the 1970s.

By 1980, the AFL-CIO (American equivalent of the TUC) estimated that high-priced consultants are hired by management in nearly two thirds of all union organising campaigns. The consultants have now proved that their presence makes a difference, which will if anything increase the number of firms using them.

Though the National Labour Relations Board has the power to curb consultant activity only 16 cases have been filed by the government against employers using consultants to bust unions. And this is since 1959! In the same period, unfair labour practices charges against unions amount to 29,026.

## The PATCO showdown

When PATCO led the air traffic controllers out on strike, the labour movement held its breath, anticipating the first showdown under the then new Reagan regime.

PATCO had a right to feel confident they would win the strike. For six years the union had led a series of slowdowns and 'sick-ins' sometimes openly defying court injunctions. They had amassed a strike fund of \$3 million, even though strikes of air traffic controllers are illegal.

Paradoxically they had endorsed Reagan's election campaign, and their strike demands included privatisation of the air traffic industry. But while labour leaders held their breath and did little else, Reagan prepared to smash the strike, something made much easier by the lack of solidarity forthcoming from other labour leaders, who acted rather like Bill Sirs has done in the miners strike.

Air traffic controllers in New Zealand, Norway, France and Portugal refused to handle flights from the US, (a lead unfortunately not followed in this country). But in America, machinists' union members crossed PATCO picket lines. Unfortunately it was that lack of solidarity and isolation that led to PATCO's defeat.

And so, the story goes, began labour's downfall under Reagan.

There is of course no question that Reagan's policies have been unfavourable to American workers. His appointments to the NLRB led one Harvard economist to call the board 'the most biased board in the history of the National Labour Relations Act'.

In 1982 wage gains for the first years of contracts between workers and management were the lowest ever recorded. As one American labour journalist put it, 'Concessions during the 1980s have redistributed wealth to the wealthy on a scale not seen since the robber barons of the late nineteenth century.'

But the ease with which liberals and the liberal left blame Reagan for labour's troubles feeds the notion that the hope for unions is benevolence from above, and that the only role workers have to play is to rally behind the Democrats and vote Reagan out in 1984.



# Democrats are different

Many socialists believe the Democrats to be equivalent to Labour. Chris Harman argues that they have little in common.

RONALD REAGAN is almost certain to win another four years in office in next month's US presidential elections. The opinion polls at the end of September gave him a 20 percent lead over his Democratic Party opponent, Walter Mondale.

The prospect of a second Reagan victory is causing panic among virtually the whole of the American left. The Republican Party convention voted for a programme which took a hard, right wing line, and most of the left sees a second term in office for him as meaning the destruction of all the liberal gains made in the past couple of decades. Within weeks of his re-election, it is said, US troops will be in operation against Nicaragua, and that will be followed by a further build up of nuclear weapons, more union busting, the stacking of the supreme court with the nominees of right wing fundamentalist religious sects, and the removal of abortion rights.

From the explicitly reformist Democratic Socialists of America through to the CP and the 'Marxist-Leninist' remnants of the Maoist organisations you hear the same cry: a Reagan victory would be a terrible catastrophe and it must be prevented by mobilising behind Mondale and the Democrats. Typical has been the attitude of the independent socialist weekly, the *Guardian*, which recently explained that this prospect had caused it to drop its 30 year old policy of refusing to opt for either major party.

## The 'new left' experience

The tendency for the left to collapse into the Democratic Party is not a new one. The old reformist Socialist Party (one of the ancestors of the Democratic Socialists) long ago gave up independent electoral activity, and the trade union leaderships have always relied on pressurising the existing party machines (usually the Democrats, but occasionally, as with the Teamsters, the Republicans).

But this was a trend which most of the left of the late 1960s and early 1970s rejected. Black activists turned against the Democratic Party in 1964 when it refused seats at its convention to black delegates from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. New left activists in Students for a Democratic Society soon turned, in disillusionment, away from their 1964 slogan of 'Half the Way with LBJ' (Lyndon Johnson, the Democratic President) to 'Hey, Hey LBJ, How many kids did you kill today'.

The belief of the new left was that students, blacks, anti-war activists and feminists could form links with workers and build a force capable of challenging American cap-

italism. The collapse into the Democratic Party represents the final abandonment of these hopes by the great majority of those who made up this left.

The scale of the collapse is often not understood by socialists in Europe. After all, they say, we urge a vote for Labour in elections, so why should American socialists not urge a vote for the Democrats?

But there are very important differences between the Democratic Party and the European Socialist and Labour Parties.

The Labour Party is a product of the working class movement—albeit a product that is ingrained through and through with the commitment of union bureaucrats and careerist politicians to operating within capitalism even if this means defending it against the pressure of rank and file workers. And so the struggles of workers and the arguments these give rise to find an echo, however muffled and distorted, within the party. Elections find 99 percent of the capitalist class ranged against the Labour Party, and almost all workers with any sort of elementary class consciousness ranged behind it. Socialists cannot avoid having to take sides on such occasions. We have to relate to the aspirations of rank and file Labour Party members, even while trying to build a separate party of our own.

The Democratic Party is a very different sort of party. It developed in the nineteenth century as an alliance of very different social groups that had only one thing in common—resentment at the growing political dominance of Northern industrialists. While the Republican Party united industrialists and 'native born' farmers behind a policy of capitalist development based on free wage labour, the Democratic Party gained support from both the northern urban poor (especially immigrant groups like the Irish, Italians, and East European Jews) and the Southern plantation owners. So at the time of the Civil War in the early 1860s it stood for 'state rights' and the toleration of slavery, and right up to the early 1960s it was the party of 'Jim Crow' segregation in the South.

Industrialisation of the South long ago transformed the heirs of the plantation owners into successful businessmen. Many have been quite happy to climb onto the Reagan bandwagon. As a result the Southern overtly racist component in the Democratic Party is much less important than it used to be, and many Southern racists believe the Republicans are the party most open to their pressures.

Meanwhile the Democratic Party has obtained for itself two new sorts of support. In the 1930s Franklin D Roosevelt's policy of organised capitalism, containing strong doses of state capitalism and elements of welfarism, won endorsements from the main sections of the trade union bureaucracy. And in the 1960s, the willingness of Kennedy and Johnson to enforce the ending of southern

segregationist laws and practices which no longer suited the needs of big business enabled the party to win the support of blacks in much the same way it had won the support earlier of other minority ethnic groups. Machine politicians would promise to reward trade union and black leaders who sought votes for them just as they rewarded those who represented any other 'constituency' of support.

But the core of the party remained, and remains, thoroughly capitalist. At every level its machine depends upon those with business interests which tie them to the present system. They support the Democratic Party because it pushes their particular interests against those of other sections of the capitalist class. And those who rise through the party machine are expected to develop such interests themselves (so no-one finds it strange that one of Jesse Jackson's campaign managers is facing charges connected with sizeable business deals).

The party has promised favours to the unions and to blacks. But it has never seriously tried to deliver these where they have clashed with the real interests of US capitalism. So many Democrats in Congress voted for the legal restraints on the unions embodied in the Taft Hartley Act of 1948.

## Democrats and the unions

The Democratic Party has been happy to receive full mailing lists of the AFL-CIO unions for the Mondale campaign; but union placards were banned from the floor of the party's convention. There is no equivalent within the party to the delegate structures which enable the unions directly to influence Labour Party policy in Britain.

The structure of the party serves to tie in union bureaucrats and the leaders of ethnic groupings to the American political system. But it does not provide any means for their rank and file supporters to engage in discussion of, let alone influence, policy. Socialists who try to exercise such influence through the party inevitably end up campaigning for policies which are absolutely compatible with the aims of US capitalism.

Thus many Central American support groups are putting all the stress on voting for Mondale, but Mondale himself has made it clear that, if elected, he would impose a blockade on Nicaragua and continue the war in El Salvador. The freeze campaign too is backing him; but his running mate, Ferraro, has said she is in favour of first use of nuclear weapons in certain situations.

All this is in line with the party's long history of pressing the interests of US imperialism. It was, after all, Democratic Party administrations that took the US into World War One, World War Two, the first cold war, the Korean War, the abortive Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, the Vietnam War, and the second cold war.

If much of the American left has forgotten all this, it is because its lack of historical perspective has driven it into the same sort of despair that persuaded some of the British left a year ago that the working class was finished and that the future lay in alliances with the Liberals and Social Democrats. ■

# The rule of the saints

'IN the internal history of Great Britain, the principle of peaceful and gradual evolution is by no means as prevalent as stated by some Conservative philosophers. In the last analysis, all of modern England grew up out of the revolution in the seventeenth century.'

Trotsky wrote these words in 1925, as part of his polemic against Ramsay MacDonald and other Labour leaders, who opposed violence as 'unBritish' and insisted that socialism could only come gradually and peacefully (things haven't changed much, have they?).

The English revolution of 1640-60 is certainly a problem for defenders of the status quo. How are they to admit that the entire basis of the British constitution—parliamentary sovereignty—derives from Charles I's defeat and execution at the hands of Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army?

One way round this difficulty is to deny that the events of the mid-seventeenth century were a revolution. Much recent historical scholarship has been devoted to this end. For Tory historians like Hugh Trevor Roper (now Lord Dacre of Hitler's Diary fame) the civil war was an unfortunate accident, the product largely of Charles I's lack of political skill. The 'Great Rebellion' which haunted the imagination of subsequent generations has been dissolved into a patchwork of squabbles between local notables, lacking any wider meaning.

Standing firmly against the current of academic fashion is the Marxist historian Christopher Hill. Starting with his 1940 pamphlet *The English Revolution*, right up to his latest book, *The Experience of Defeat*, he has insisted on seeing the civil war as arising from the clash between developing capitalist relations of production in agriculture and commerce, and the efforts of the Stuart monarchy to establish an absolutist state along continental lines.

## The radical sects

For this he has earned sometimes the most bitter of attacks from right-wing historians. One reason for this hostility is, I think, that Hill writes in such a way as constantly to make clear the connections between his socialist politics and historical research.

Thus his earlier writings are rather 'orthodox', influenced by the view of history developed by Kautsky and Plekhanov and taken over by Stalin as evolving in a pre-determined order from one stage to another. An active member of the Communist Party History Group after the war, Hill tended to concentrate on the historically progressive features of the English revolution, the manner in which it eliminated the obstacles to the development of capitalism set by the quasi-absolutist Tudor and Stuart monarchy.

Hill left the CP in 1957, after the Hungarian revolution had been crushed. He has not abandoned the general analysis of

the English revolution developed earlier, but his interest has shifted to the radical sects which that revolution produced, in whose beliefs and practices a far more thorough going revolution than Cromwell's was pre-figured.

The most outstanding result of this new focus to Hill's work was *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972). This marvellous study of the Cromwellian underground shows how the overthrow of the monarchy took the lid off English society, allowing feverish social, religious, even sexual experimentation briefly to flourish.

Behind many of the weird heresies which flourished during the Interregnum of 1649-60—Ranters, Seekers, Fifth Monarchists, Muggletonians—lay powerful aspirations to create a society which would conform neither to the old feudal order or to emergent capitalism. Hill accords pride of place among these groups to Gerrard Winstanley, and the Diggers, who sought a social revolution in which heaven would be brought down to earth, and the land owned in common.

The radicals' hopes were dashed first by Cromwell's Protectorate, a monarchy in all but name, and then by the restoration of Charles II in 1660. Hill shows how the Quakers evolved into a distinct sect in response to these defeats, abandoning their previous faith in political action, and renouncing violence as a means of realising their ideas.

This preoccupation with defeat was taken

further in *Milton and the English Revolution* (1977). Hill's highly controversial Milton is an intensely political figure, who was employed by the Commonwealth to defend their execution of Charles I, and who shared many of the radicals' heresies, their concern with improving man's condition in this world, not the next. Milton's great poems, such as *Paradise Lost*, were, on this reading, in part a meditation on the reasons for the revolution's failure.

## Jacobins or Girondins

Now in *The Experience of Defeat* Hill widens the focus to consider how, not just Milton, but other revolutionaries responded to the collapse of their hopes. In doing so, he dramatises the dilemma which they faced. For in what sense was the English revolution defeated? Its social and economic achievements were taken over by the restored monarchy as part of the price of the Stuarts' return (when James II looked in 1688 like reneging on the deal, out he went, to be replaced by the more pliable William and Mary).

To dismantle the absolutist regime, the propertied classes of town and country had to mobilise the lower classes, especially the urban poor. By the outbreak of the civil war, probably a majority of the gentry had abandoned the parliamentary cause for the King out of fear of the masses. Those who did not, and especially the tough-minded lesser gentry around Cromwell, found them-

## A DISCOVERY OF THE MOST DANGEROUS AND DAMNABLE TENETS THAT HAVE BEEN SPREAD WITHIN THIS FEW

years: By many Eronous, Heretical and Mechanical Opinions. By which the very foundation of Christian Knowledge and practice is endangered to be overturned.



A contemporary view of the Levellers, from some of their opponents

selves faced after 1645 with the Levellers, who championed the cause of the small property owner and demanded that he be enfranchised. Until they had got rid of the King, Cromwell and his allies leaned on the Levellers. Once Charles was dead, the Levellers were crushed, soon to be followed by the Diggers.

The same pattern was displayed during the Great French Revolution. The bourgeoisie split into radical and moderate wings, Jacobins and Girondins. The Jacobins mobilised the urban poor to beat the Girondins, execute Louis XVI and smash the armies sent against them by the rest of Europe. To avoid the danger of a more radical revolution, Robespierre and the other Jacobin leaders purged their own left wing, only in turn to be overthrown in the Thermidor coup. Subsequent bourgeois regimes reaped the benefits of the revolutionary violence inflicted by the Jacobins and their plebeian followers.

Hill shows how in the 1650s the radicals came increasingly to fear the masses. If given the vote, the people might vote for the restoration of the monarchy or demand an end to enclosures. The radicals opted instead for the rule of an enlightened minority—the 'saints'. Just before the Restoration Milton argued that the only way to preserve the republic was through an oligarchy, arguing that it was 'more just...that a lesser number compel a greater to retain...their liberty, than that a greater number for the pleasure of their baseness compel a less most injuriously to be their fellow slaves.'

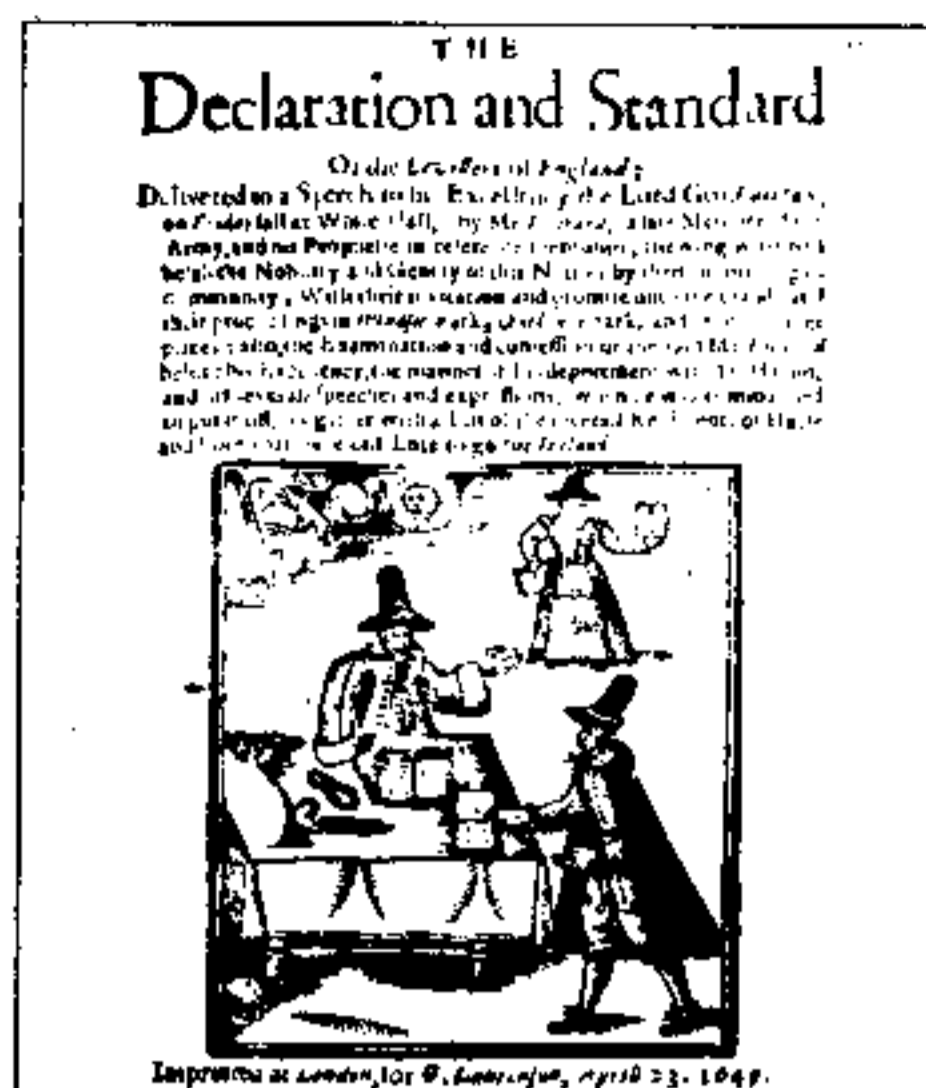
The radicals looked to the army as the guarantee that the 'saints' would rule. Hill in his book on Milton draws an analogy with the Bolsheviks' substitutionism after the disintegration of the Russian working class: 'Similarly the New Model Army substituted itself for the people of England, for whom in 1647-9 it might possibly have claimed to speak and act.' But the revolutionary army was systematically purged in the 1650s. By the end of the decade 'the army had become a police force protecting the gains of its commanders.'

Military rule by Cromwell's major-generals added to the revolution's unpopularity. The 'avarice and ambition' of the generals became a constant target for the radicals. In 1660 their fears were realised—it was a Cromwellian general, George Monck, who brought back the King on behalf of the propertied classes, who believed that the monarchy would offer them more stability.

### Milton's contradictions

Hill argues that, for the honest revolutionary, there were two choices after 1660. One was that adopted by those influenced by the philosopher James Harrington. This was to see the revolution as a victory for a certain form of property, which survived the return of the monarchy. In other words, 1660 was not a defeat for capitalism. This was the view of the civil war taken by those who benefitted, the Whig oligarchs of the next century.

The other choice was Milton's. The great poet is for Hill a contradictory figure—an elitist with a 'strong sense of the necessity of



The Levellers' declaration

bourgeois society' but one who shared the millenary hopes of the late 1640s, when many believed that Charles's fall was a portent of Christ's return to overthrow all earthly thrones. Hill sees 'Milton's confidence in the ultimate victory of good over evil' as bearing fruit in the rebirth of radical politics at the end of the eighteenth century.

In all this, it is difficult not to feel that Hill is drawing a political moral for the present. He no longer has the confidence in the inevitability of historical progress of his CP days. It has been replaced by a pessimism which makes it easier therefore to identify with defeated minorities like the republicans of Restoration England.

Hill constantly compares their lot with those of twentieth-century Marxists. Lenin during the years of reaction after 1905 is cited as a parallel to Milton. Disillusionment with Cromwell is compared to the lost illusions in Stalinist Russia which Hill himself shared. *The Experience of Defeat* concludes with these words: 'In 1644 Milton saw England as "a nation of prophets". Where are they now?'

This concern for the present is both a source of strength and of weakness. Hill has not sunk into bourgeois complacency, like so many ex-Communists, despite his years as the Master of Balliol. His loathing for the society which emerged from the English

revolution is absolutely evident. Yet he draws too readily parallels between bourgeois and socialist revolutions.

Bourgeois revolutions, such as England 1640 and France 1789, are necessarily minority affairs. They are carried out to create the political prerequisites for the accumulation of capital—in other words, to lay the basis of a new form of class society, ruled in the interests of a capitalist minority. The ambivalent attitude of a Cromwell or a Milton towards plebeian radicalism—readiness to use it, yet fear that it might escape control—was absolutely rational from their standpoint as bourgeois revolutionaries.

Socialist revolutions, however, are, as Marx says in the *Communist Manifesto*, a movement of the overwhelming majority, carried out by the mass of workers in their own interests. There is therefore absolutely no reason to slip into thinking, as Hill tends to, that any revolution must inevitably rely on an enlightened minority of 'saints'.

Hill is led into this error, I think, both by his own experience of Stalinism and by the persisting influence of CP ideas. Thirty years ago he wrote an essay called 'The Norman Yoke', in which he showed how English radicals from the seventeenth century till well into the nineteenth tended to see the ruling class as an alien group stemming from the Norman Conquest. This idea was used to justify a populist alliance of all classes against the foreign foe.

Now a bourgeois revolution of necessity involves a class alliance, the capitalists mobilising the working masses to do their dirty work. To apply this strategy to contemporary capitalism is, however, to dissolve class into nation, socialist into bourgeois revolution.

None of this is to take away in the slightest from Christopher Hill as a historian. Anyone who hasn't read *The World Turned Upside Down* has missed a great deal. Anyone who has will enjoy *The Experience of Defeat* when it appears in paperback.

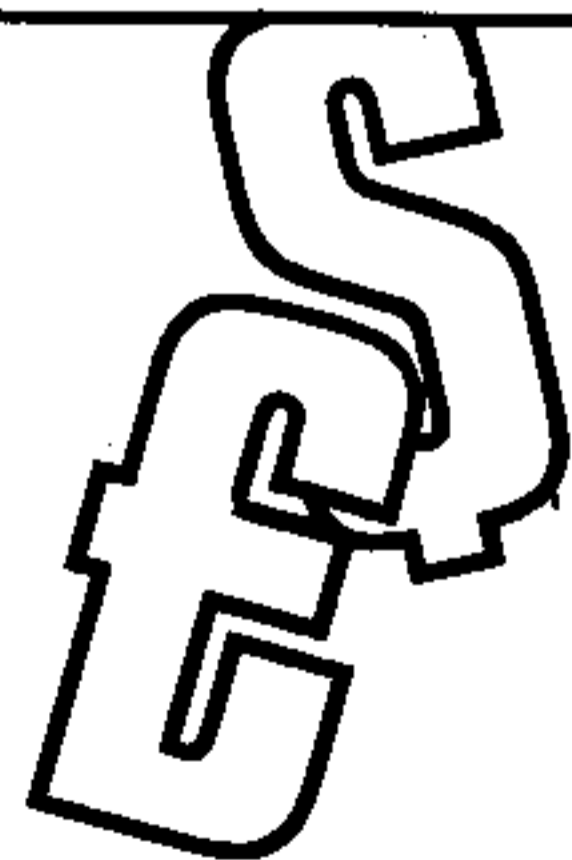
Alex Callinicos

*The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries*, Christopher Hill, Faber and Faber £12.50

# Explaining the Crisis

A Marxist re-appraisal  
by Socialist Worker  
editor Chris Harman

£3.95 from your local Socialist Worker bookstall or (post free)  
from Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2DE



## Bureaucratic vandalism

Writers in Russia 1917-78  
Max Hayward. Edited Patricia Blake  
Harville Press £7.95.

TROTSKY predicted that the Stalinist domination of the arts in Russia would only produce 'an epoch of mediocrities, laureates and toadies'. The collection of essays gathered together here — which span sixty years of Soviet authorship — largely confirm Trotsky's gloomy prediction.

Their author, Max Hayward, was a conventional right wing academic. However, his account of the crimes perpetrated against writers in the name of the official doctrine of 'socialist realism' should be of interest to genuine socialists today.

'Socialist realism' was proclaimed as the *only* permissible art form in Russia in the early thirties. Stalin's cultural thug, Andrei Zhdanov, described the new style as 'revolutionary romanticism'. By this he meant that Russian writers were to write about social life under Stalin with as little honesty as Mills and Boon describe sexual relations today.

Failure to depict the infallibility of Stalin's leadership, the contentedness of Russian workers, and the inevitable triumph of socialism in Russia would result in at best unemployment and official hounding or, much more likely, imprisonment in a labour camp and eventual execution. This was, indeed the fate of many Russian authors under Stalin.

Hayward idealises a restricted selection of writers — Pasternak, Akhmatova, and Mandelstam — who did not completely succumb to Stalin's intimidation. Pasternak, the author of *Dr Zhivago*, is Hayward's hero because of his moral revulsion at Stalin's crimes.

Pasternak conforms to the western cold war view of the Russian Revolution. Stalin was Lenin's true heir; Russia would have devolved into a liberal bourgeois democracy but for 1917; Marxism is a 'utopian ideology' foisted upon the Russian people against their will by a power-crazed intelligensia. This view dominates all Hayward's essays.

However, it can only be sustained by the *same* kind of political dishonesty which Hayward rightly condemns in the Russian literary establishment.

Mayakovsky, for instance, is described as a true Stalinist poet. Yet Mayakovsky committed suicide ultimately because of depression engendered by Stalin's betrayal of the revolution. It is a slanderous distortion of the poet to associate him with any connivance in Stalin's crimes.

Even worse Hayward portrays Lenin and Trotsky as cynical manipulators of the arts who are

only separated from Stalin by the latter's lack of sophistication. This can only be done by omitting to discuss Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution*. Trotsky's book is the Marxist classic dealing with the question. It explicitly condemns any notion that Marxists seek to dictate political correctness in the field of the arts.

Indeed Trotsky was far more consistent in later years than any of Hayward's heroes in his uncompromising condemnation of the bureaucratic vandalism known as socialist realism.

Equally as bad, there is no

## A slightly too flat projection

The World Atlas of Revolutions

Andrew Wheatcroft

Hamish Hamilton £7.95

The New State of the World Atlas

Michael Kidron & Ronald Segal

A Pluto Press Project £6.95

IF THE world itself isn't drifting rightwards, then the authors of these atlases certainly are. Wheatcroft's *Atlas of Revolutions* is an ambitious project, covering over 40 revolutions and colonial wars from the American War of Independence, Europe, Algeria, Russia, Vietnam and so on.

The maps are extremely good, showing where the action took place, and providing a guide to the site of revolutions that most history books and tourist guides prefer to ignore.

But all this is ruined by Wheatcroft's political viewpoint which he sums up in the introduction: 'Like Goya's terrifying picture of Saturn, the revolution devours its own children, and tramples the rest of mankind to death in the process.'

### Bizarre

With this as a framework it's hardly surprising that the pen pictures of revolutions are somewhat cynical and at times bizarre. But if you like maps, and are obsessed with facts, such as how many towns in France had guillotines, it's worth buying. However if you want to understand the social forces that create revolutions, the quote above is ample warning. This book will confuse rather than help.

The *New State of the World Atlas* is full of useful facts and statistics, which for the most part are strikingly displayed.

The maps showing the arms build up, East and West, nuclear and conventional, demonstrate that we live in a world of massive military expenditure and constant war, alongside mass starvation and poverty. They are a powerful refutation of those who would argue that getting rid of nuclear weapons is enough.

As a collection of world

mention in any of Hayward's essays of Victor Serge. No other Russian writer expressed as clearly as Serge the *political* causes for the degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

Serge was imprisoned, exiled and stripped of his citizenship by Stalin for the clarity with which he did this. The mere fact that Serge is not officially recognised by the Soviet literary establishment as a Russian writer is sufficient excuse for the cold war western academia to conveniently ignore his existence.

These omissions expose the pious humbug behind Hayward's

statistics—who owns the world's resources, industrial power, life expectancy, religion, language—it is a useful compendium. But none of this is unique to a socialist atlas. In fact I already have a large proportion of these facts in my copy of the *Times Concise Atlas of the World*, in most instances done with more finesse.

For any socialist the point of choosing this book would be in so far as it differs from standard text books.

When the first *State of the World Atlas* was reviewed in the pages of this *Review* (February 81 No 2) those differences were a lot clearer. The reviewer then wrote: 'there are maps of class struggle, showing urban upheavals in the last two decades'.

In this new edition strikes, revolutions and the strength of the industrial working class have gone missing completely. We get no sense of the power of our class. Only the institutions are shown. Struggles such as those of *Solidarity* or the Brazilian car workers do not appear. Workers in the Eastern bloc are dismissed as being in 'unions nominally independent but severely repressed'. Meanwhile workers in the USA and UK are in independent unions 'effectively free of government control'. Of course this is formally correct, but the class struggle and sense of a world in crisis is missing.

When it comes to the size of the world's working class there is only one map which demonstrates 'most workers in most countries work on the land' (Chairman Mao here we

exhortations about the lack of 'sincerity' in Stalinist writing. They also explain his own political preference for those Russian writers who saw in Stalin's barbarism some kind of comic tragedy rather than the consequence of the isolation and defeat of the Russian Revolution at the hands of the usurping bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, revolutionary socialists can read this book with profit to appreciate the philistine and murderous lengths which that bureaucracy would go to in order to paint its crimes red. The barely readable monstrosities which make up the canon of socialist realism only testify to the impossibility of their task. ■

Jon Gamble

come!).

That the working class have gone missing must be blamed on the authors. That information on the Eastern bloc is either non-existent or misleading may well be due to technical problems. However that doesn't change the fact that it makes it harder to get an impression of an integrated world economy.

### Misleading

Maps of multinationals, banks and finance, world trade and the rate of exploitation either miss out the state capitalist countries completely or are totally misleading. You could be lulled into believing that Russia is a workers' paradise of low exploitation and ecology conscious leaders. It also means that the link between the world debt and the Polish crisis, to give one example, is never made.

Perhaps it's unfair to criticise an atlas for being unable to explain the world crisis, as maps are only flat projections of that visible on the surface.

It is possible that the format that was hailed as revolutionary in 1981 has become a straitjacket, cramping the flexibility needed to make a serious analysis of the world.

If you want to dig beneath the maps, and get a fully rounded picture of the world crisis then buy Chris Harman's *Explaining the Crisis*. You will save £3.

A properly organised field trip may be harder work, but at the end of the day it will prove far more satisfying than a package tour. ■

Andy Strouthous

## Exposing murder

On the spot

Diana Gould

Cecil Woolf £1.95

DAVID OWEN described the sinking of the Belgrano as Thatcher's Watergate. This might turn out to be true — although no thanks to the likes of Owen or the Labour Party leaders.

Certainly any book which raises the issue and its coverup should be welcomed. Unfortunately this short account — by the woman who rattled Thatcher on the TV during the last election campaign — doesn't take us very far forward.

When the Belgrano sank, with it went any possibility of a peaceful settlement to the Falklands War.

During the war and after, the government's account of events remained largely unquestioned. The war itself was regarded as unavoidable by all parties in parliament.

This book is a narrative of how, supposedly, one woman from Cirencester was to have 'sowed the seed of doubt in the popular imagination in a way (no) other politician could have done.'

She comes across as a determined personality, who firmly believes in the force of persuasion and discussion. She is outraged by the unthinking docility and credulity of her local Tories. The war for her is a product of a nation losing its senses.

## Struggles in Bolivia

**Rebellion in the Veins**  
James Dunkerley  
Verso £5.95

THE 1952 revolution in Bolivia was one of the most important revolutionary outbreaks of this century. It saw the working class, with the tin miners in the vanguard movement, overthrow the government, destroy the army and sweep away the ruling class. A populist government of the MNR party was installed in office and was confronted with a situation of dual power which forced it to institute far-reaching reforms.

To all intents and purposes the dominant force in Bolivian society was the trade union federation, the COB, and the armed workers' militia. The Trotskyist POR had considerable influence within the working class. And yet all turned to dust.

Instead of the working class proceeding to the establishment of a workers' state, the COB wholeheartedly collaborated with the government. When the regime undertook to impose economic sacrifices on the workers and peasants, the COB either acquiesced or offered half-hearted opposition. Most damaging of all, the working class stood by and allowed the reorganisation and reconstruction of the army.

### Outbreak

Nevertheless opposition to MNR governments built up until in the early 1960s it seemed that the regime might be overthrown by a fresh revolutionary outbreak. To prevent this, in November 1964, the army seized power and proceeded to crush the trade unions, extinguishing the remnants of workers power and drowning the hopes of 1952 in blood.

In the years since this coup a succession of regimes have attempted to force, bludgeon and compress Bolivian society into the shape required by the International Monetary Fund and the US Government. Despite the heavy punishing blows that they have inflicted on the working class and their short-term successes, they have all failed in the task.

It is moderately interesting reading as an individual's response to the nationalism whipped up during the Falklands, and her persistence that the 'voice of reason should be heard.'

The conspicuous absence of politics — how the ruling classes of Britain and Argentina saw the war as a diversion from difficulties at home, the arms industry that continued to supply both armed forces — is not surprising. It reflects the total failure of the reformist left to challenge Tory jingoism and provide a pole of anti-war argument. ■

Laurence Wong

James Dunkerley's book is a marvellous narrative of this history of revolution, repression and continuing resistance. He writes with both passion and wit, and provides a wealth of detail and first-hand observation.

But there are criticisms that must be made of its politics. Dunkerley provides masses of material concerning the class struggle in Bolivia, but how does he intend it to be used and who does he intend to use it?

We can, for the purposes of this review, divide the revolutionary left that will make up most of his audience into two groups. There are those such as ourselves in the Socialist Workers Party, who see their task as being the building of a revolutionary party rooted in the working class.

On the other hand, there are those revolutionaries who have what can best be described as a supporters' club strategy. They see the role of revolutionaries as primarily one of supporting struggles, whether the struggle of the guerrillas in El Salvador, of the IRA in Ireland, of coal miners in Britain or of tin miners in Bolivia.

In practice they subordinate both themselves and their politics to the struggle and inevitably to the existing leadership in that struggle. What this involves, in effect, is the practical liquidation of revolutionary politics. Unfortunately, Dunkerley's book is clearly intended to service this latter strategy.

This is not a sectarian point. It is a political point of considerable importance. Dunkerley obviously sympathises with the struggle of the working class in Bolivia, but the book does not go beyond sympathy. At only a few points (criticising Guevara's guerrilla focus is one) does he make any political judgements. And yet this is precisely what is required.

It is not enough just to sympathise with the Bolivian working class, we have to *learn from them*, to understand the lessons of their tremendous struggles, and this involves making political judgements. Dunkerley quite rightly rejects the sometimes almost

pathological sectarianism that characterises many of the internal debates of the Trotskyist movement. Learning political lessons from the class struggle is altogether different from scoring sectarian points.

The Bolivian working class and the Bolivian revolutionary movement have a wealth of historical experience from which we can learn. Nowhere else in the world has the class struggle been waged with such intensity over such a long period of time.

The reasons for the failure of the 1952 revolution are of immense interest and concern to anyone engaged in revolutionary politics in this country. What were the limitations of syndicalism? What was the role of the trade union leadership? Why did the POR fail to win the leadership of the working class? Dunkerley answers none of these questions. He provides a superb narrative account of the revolution, but we are left to draw our own conclusions.

When we come to more recent

## The human potential

**Renaissance Man**  
Agnes Heller  
RKP £9.95

THE Renaissance is that period of European history during the 15th and 16th centuries which is marked by a resurgence of cultural, artistic and scholastic endeavour. It followed the weak and barren Middle Ages.

Both the reason for this and the character of the period are captured succinctly by Morton in *A People's History of England*:

'The 15th century was an age of violent contrasts which are reflected in the diverse and contradictory views expressed about it by historians. To some it has appeared a period of general decline, of ruined towns and political chaos. Others have pointed to the real increase in prosperity of the mass of the people, to the growth of trade and industry and to the development of parliamentary institutions in the period 1399-1450. The key to a proper understanding of the age is that both views are correct but neither complete, that while feudal relations and the feudal mode of production were decaying, bourgeois relations and the bourgeois means of production were developing rapidly.' (p.132)

So the rebirth of learning and the flowering of the arts were part of a wider upheaval which shook European society from head to toe.

Like every great change in society's structure, developments which transform the way in which people produce the necessities of life also shake the political, cultural, religious and philosophical ideas with which they think about how they live.

events the strengths and weaknesses of his approach become even clearer. Dunkerley provides a devastating account of the Garcia Meza regime. As he puts it, while the other southern cone dictatorships took their lessons from the Chicago school of Milton Friedman, the Bolivian junta took theirs from the Chicago school of Al Capone.

His account of the popular mass movement that overthrew Garcia Meza, that prevented subsequent stabilisation and that eventually brought Hernan Siles' social democratic UDP to power in October 1982 is much less sure. He writes that there is perhaps nowhere else in the world where socialist revolution is more likely to be the outcome of the struggle for national liberation. But he does not provide any detailed analysis of the state of the working class.

Of course, such an analysis would involve the exercise of political judgement and this he evidently does not see as part of his job. ■

John Newsinger

The Renaissance was no exception: Michelangelo, Machiavelli, Botticelli and Leonardo da Vinci are among those whose names have become a byword for the creativity of the age in which they lived.

They have also become prime examples of Renaissance Man; the phrase has come to mean much more than simply those people who lived through this particular era. Renaissance Man has developed into a term which describes a kind of ideal, rounded human personality which knows no division between art and science, politics and literature, and is equally at home in any of these fields.

### Harmonious whole

Like many aspects of the Renaissance culture it is a conception whose origins lie in the classical civilization of Ancient Greece. This was seen as a society where all the different aspects of human potential were integrated into a harmonious whole—body and mind, intellect and passion, the individual and society—complimented and enriched each other's development—unless, of course, you were among the, most numerous class in society—the slaves.

There can be no greater contrast to that classical conception of human potential than the reality of contemporary capitalist society. Just compare the recent Olympic Games with the original event from which they are supposed to draw inspiration. In Los Angeles everything—including, paradoxically the athletes well-being—is sacrificed to rigid specialisation, monomaniac training programmes and obsessional competition in the

name of greater national glory. The regimented division of labour that exists in the capitalist factory is reflected in every other aspect of social life.

Heller argues that for a brief period at the dawn of capitalist development before the division of labour was cast for good, and while limited commodity production was the order of the day, a many-sided human potential was an ideal aspired to by at least some of the rising bourgeoisie.

The difficulty with Heller's book is that although it refers to the level of production and how it affected the different development of, for example, Venice and Florence, the connection is never explained.

There are insights but never an analysis. In his *History of the Russian Revolution* Trotsky gives a masterly analysis of Russian society. An analysis which stretches from the long-term economic and social development of Russia through the role of the different political institutions within the Russian State and which ends in an integrated explanation of how the ideas and activities of various individuals—Lenin, Kerensky, the Tsar—mesh with events of which they are a part.

Material analysis of the conditions is indispensable to a correct and meaningful analysis of the role of individuals and their ideas. To make a short-cut, to simply

make allusions to the historical context and conditions, is to become an idealist by default.

That is Heller's method and the book's downfall. When dealing with cultural analysis material circumstances are more, not less important. So, no matter how suggestive and dazzling the connections that Heller draws between say, the life of the Renaissance and the Christian tradition, it all has the feel of gossamer. An intricate web of ideas which remain unexplained because the real motor-force of events, the classes locked in decline or ascendancy, remain forever in the margins of the narrative. Meanwhile, their ideas change to a

pattern whose final causes in the struggle of social classes is never adequately dealt with.

A book by a pupil of the Marxist philosopher Georg Lukacs dealing with a crucial period in the decline of the old feudal ruling class and the beginnings of the rise to power of the class which still rules us today—the bourgeoisie—should be worthy of any revolutionary's attention. And so this book is, but more as a guide to what not to do in writing history than as a model achievement.

There is a fascinating book to be written on this subject. This book could be part of the source of such a book but it is not the book itself. ■  
John Rees

## Creeping censorship

The Video Nasties  
edit Martin Barker  
Pluto paper £3.50

LAST year one of the toughest censorship bills ever seen in this country went through parliament without any opposition. Both the Tories, Labour and some 'new lefts' and feminists seemed to agree that the video nasties bill was a good thing or at least nothing to worry about.

In fact the bill gives the state wide powers of censorship. Every video dealer has to submit their videos to a censorship body and has to pay for it to be checked. The video is checked against a secret set of guidelines. The guidelines are drawn up by the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Home Secretary and are a closely guarded secret. If it fails the test it is banned.

The success of the bill was due to the media campaign started by the *Daily Mail* and Mary Whitehouse.

It is no surprise that the right should want state control on what people can or cannot watch on their videos, or that working class folk are not to be trusted to censor their children's viewing diet. What is slightly more surprising was the support the bill got from all sections of the Labour Party.

This book is therefore to be welcomed. It argues against the bill, tries to analyse why it was so successful, and examines the reactionary ideas about the family and 'protect people for their own good', that lay behind it.

Unfortunately it is weak and obviously hastily cobbled together. At £3.50 for a paperback with only 118 pages of written text it is a rip off.

The book consists of small articles, in part re-writes or reprints from newspapers and magazines. Indeed the best written and most articulate argument for freedom of expression and against censorship is by Nigel Andrews of the *Financial*

*Times*.

The politics of the book are liberal, against censorship of the arts from an individualistic point of view. On this issue revolutionary socialists find themselves arguing alongside the liberals.

Any increase in the powers of the state are to be opposed. Powers that give the state the right to limit and ban freedom of expression, whether of the printed word or in video we oppose.

In the 1930s the state gave itself extra powers of limiting public meetings on the excuse that these powers were to be used against the fascists. Many on the left fell for this argument. In fact the powers were hardly ever used against the right

In a sick and oppressive society it is surprising that sickness should be expressed in popular culture? The sickness will not go away merely by trying to control cultural expression of it. It is not a huge step to move from arguing that violent videos be

banned to arguing that documentaries on wars or the news be more censored.

In the 1930s Trotsky argued that the workers' state should not try to control artistic creation or censor creative production. He cited the socialist realism of Stalinist Russia as a sign of the transformation of a society where workers ruled to one where workers were ruled over to the point where even their dreams had to be controlled and censored.

What is true in a workers' state of Russia in the early twenties is just as true in a capitalist one. Believing in the need for censorship is at heart an elitist and patronising attitude to ordinary people, who are not to be trusted to make their own decisions but must be looked after from above. It is unfortunately a view which is not only found on the right but in many sections of the left, and one that we need to argue strongly against. ■

Noel Halifax

### —FILM—

## Sadness of an exile

The Wall  
Director: Yilmaz Guney

A TURKISH prison. Grey, bleak and harsh. Life, if it can be called that, is the struggle for survival. The prisoners, men, women and children, are penned in together and treated like wild animals. One word or deed out of place results in torture or death.

A young boy escapes only to be returned later beaten and bruised. Before dying he explains that there is no freedom on the outside either. It is still prison. You are still hunted. You still have to fight for survival.

'Exile is merely exchanging one form of prison for another.' These words of Guney, the director, on his own escape provide the key to understanding the film.

This last film of his, made in exile in France before his death last month, tells the true story of a revolt in 1976 by children in Ankara

prison. For nearly two hours there are continual scenes of brutality and hardship as the prisoners fight for survival. Although they are shown to be united by their hatred of the warders and to understand that revolt is the only way out, in the end their aim and dream is limited to being moved to a different prison. This, along with the relentless portrayal of suffering and degradation, leaves one with the sense of numbness and hopelessness.

It is sad that his last film should leave such feelings. He was a socialist, intellectually committed to the struggles in Turkey. In recent interviews he spoke of his commitment to Marxist ideas and of his rejection of the 'socialism' of Russia and China. 'My demands are minimal, but they are important—to end torture, a political amnesty, more trade union rights, less pressure on the country's intellectuals.'

The role he saw for himself was to influence 'intellectual opinion' with his films. The problems with this approach to political struggle, along with his own background and political experience, are reflected in his work.

Born the son of a Kurdish farm labourer, Guney's early years and experience remained a strong influence to the end of his life (shown in his films *The Herd* and *Yol*). He left the countryside to study economics in Istanbul and then began to write short stories and novels. In the early sixties he was imprisoned for writing a 'communist' novel, interrupting the beginning of his film career.

On his release he turned to acting 'good gangster' roles in box-office hits and quickly rose to stardom. In 1967 he began directing films but again was sent to prison in 1974—this time for allegedly shooting a high court judge who was annoying him in a restaurant.

In 1980 he escaped while on a week's release and spent the rest of his life in exile.

Throughout these years he directed films. They are a testimony to what he witnessed and lived through.

International fame came when *Yol* won the Cannes Film Festival's Golden Palm award in 1982. As with his other films, the heroes are the downtrodden and are shown resisting their oppression but, unusually for the cinema, they invariably end up defeated and punished. 'What I denounce in my films is the notion of individual liberation.'

Unfortunately, in the case of *The Wall*, the message comes dangerously close to denouncing all hope for liberation. It cannot have been his intention judging from his life and writings. Perhaps the effects of years of isolation from the struggles in Turkey, both in prison and in exile, left too deep a mark.

1980 witnessed the highest number of strikes and workers on strike (84,832) ever in Turkey. Post war industrial expansion coupled with a massive growth in size and organisation of trade unions, followed by economic crisis laid the foundation for serious working class struggles and resistance.

The military takeover in September 1980 was the ruling class's response to its inability to impose the necessary economic sanctions through parliament. Using a combination of brutality and intimidation (not a new phenomenon for Turkey) the junta

effectively wiped out the leadership of the socialist movement and silenced the intelligentsia.

A new economic programme was imposed including the inevitable assault on wages. This was only made possible by suspending all trade union activity. DISK (the independent Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions) with its half a million members was banned and hundreds of its leading members were arrested.

The post coup years have shifted the balance of class forces against the working class. Real wages have fallen by 25 percent. The political

organisations, unions and anger are, however, bubbling just beneath the surface and any relaxation by the regime will undoubtedly mean a resurgence of activity.

The depth of the economic crisis facing Turkey plus international economic pressure on the rulers are posing severe problems for the military. Despite the rise of fascism the history of workers struggles in Turkey and the surviving organisation means there is serious hope for radical change in the near future.

Guncy's films do not focus on this area of political struggle and

because of this tend to be sad. Nevertheless, his films are excellent, exposing not only the realities of oppression and some aspects of struggle, but also his talents at film-making.

His life and films were dedicated to the fight for freedom in Turkey and his isolation from the daily battles was neither self-imposed nor sought after.

Guncy died of cancer at 47. Had he lived longer he would undoubtedly have contributed a lot more to the cinema and to the political struggle in Turkey. ■  
Clare Fermont

## MUSIC

### Still some heroes

Christy Moore  
Ride On

IT'S HARD writing about your heroes. Nobody's impressed with a string of unqualified superlatives. But it's worth risking it for Christy Moore. His latest album more than confirms his reputation as the prime mover behind many of the best developments in Irish music over the past fifteen years. With Planxty he created a much wider audience for traditional music and with Moving Hearts he broke the mould of the stereotype by using rock and jazz musicians and more contemporary material. And when his voice and lyric writing are harnessed to a commitment to worthy political causes ranging from the hunger strikers to the

miners we have an even bigger incentive for sitting up and listening.

No album can match the atmosphere he generated a few weeks ago in the crowded back room of a London pub, but his latest, *Ride On*, is well worth shelling out a fiver for. The range of material is staggering: a haunting lament for El Salvador alongside a joyously anarchic celebration of last year's music festival at Lisdoonvarna. The wistful *City of Chicago* summons up the isolation of emigration

My favourite track, *Back Home in Derry* tells of the transportations to Australia at the start of the nineteenth century and has a refrain that you can't help giving voice to without warning. But it was

irritating to say the least to have to rely on the *Guardian* to discover that it was written, along with another track on the album, by the late Bobby Sands. The lyrics of all the tracks are printed on the album cover with no indication of authorship and since several are written by Christy himself this is either an error of false modesty or omission. The record is produced by Donal Lunny who also helps out on a number of tracks together with Declan Sinnott, another borrowed heart. The album is dedicated to Christy's own hero and friend, Luke Kelly, whose cruelly premature death occurred earlier in the year.

If you want to overcome any prejudices you have about Irish music this is the album most likely

to do it and if you're converted, the previous album, *Time Has Come*, is another gem. It features the song, *Give the Wicklow Boy His Freedom*, which probably contributed more than anything else to the successful campaign to get Nicky Kelly out of Portlaoise prison after he had been framed for a mail robbery.

Finally, just to prove that I'm not taken in by everything that Christy Moore sings, I'll own up to the fact that the new album ends with the worst bit of musical schmaltz I've heard for years. Sample lyric, 'To end wars and quarrels, make John Lennon's dream come true. To build a new set of morals, it's the least we can do.'

Never mind, all heroes have feet of clay. ■  
Shaun Doherty

## LETTERS

### Better or worse

I HAVE to take issue with Noel Halifax's review of *Sound of the City* (SWR 68).

Noel seems to be saying that Dylan was taken as some sort of messiah—which is true—whilst the real messiah was 'the rough and rebellious dance music of the working classes'. This is appalling. Whether or not Noel intends it, the implications are that somebody's politics can be measured by their musical taste and that there is such a thing as politically better and politically worse music.

Our mistake is in searching for any messiahs—whether 'rough and rebellious' or 'carefully crafted'. Political ideas are formed by life experience, particularly that in the workplace. I would hate to try and draw a line between the collective experience of the rough and rebellious dancefloor, the collective experience of the 'vast, arranged and managed' 1970 Shepton Mallet Festival at which Country Joe and the Fish did three encores of *Feel Like I'm Fixin' to Die*, and the collective experience of the football supporter.

The main point is that if we believe that discussions of the

political significance of different musical forms are important, then this will (and does) push the real political activity of selling *Socialist Worker*, organising in and around the workplace, visiting supporters and intervening in disputes just a little bit into the background.

'Go ride the music'—any music you happen to enjoy—but don't think that your politics are improved or diminished by it. ■

Ian Wallace,  
Sheffield

### Irritated

IT comes as no great surprise that *Socialist Worker Review* prints reviews which treat feminism as an alien and hostile force in the struggle for socialism.

What does irritate, however, is the dishonest way Chris Harman chooses to belittle my book. I spent some time writing *Morbid Symptoms*: Chris Harman read it while suffering from a mild dose of flu. He saw Italian and French restaurants—I never wrote any. He sees parties in Hampstead—Kate Baier never went to one. I know

### A serious study

An error has crept into my review of John Callaghan's *British Trotskyism* (SWR September issue). It needs to be put right: not only because it is grossly unfair to Callaghan but also because it can mislead interested comrades.

The review, as printed, reads 'Callaghan has *accidentally* done serious research and his rather numerous errors ... etc.' I didn't write that and certainly didn't mean it.

Callaghan's research is thorough

and, I am certain, not at all accidental. For example, his description of the absurd and increasingly dishonest economic perspectives for the post war period advanced by Ernest Mandel (on behalf of the Fourth International) and Tony Cliff's devastating reply (on behalf of the British RCP) are clearly outlined in Callaghan's book.

The contrast between Callaghan's treatment of the matter and, say Tariq Ali's hilariously fictionalised account in *The Coming British Revolution* indicates that Callaghan has seriously studied the available material and sources very carefully, and the same is true of his handling of other disputes.

I don't withdraw one word of my criticism of Callaghan's rightward moving centrist political judgements, or of his numerous factual errors, or of his consequential failure to understand the real problems of revolutionary politics today.

But Callaghan's book (unlike Ali's) has to be treated as the serious, well researched, work of a political opponent. ■  
Duncan Hallas

that critics have a right to say what they think, but is it too much to ask of Chris Harman that he sublimate his anti-feminism long enough to read the book accurately?

Gillian Slovo,  
London N5

PS Okay, so now I know we're not allowed to go to restaurants or to parties in Hampstead. But are we allowed to go to parties at all or to eat pasta in the privacy of our own homes?

# Limited by Liberalism

Reagan and the world

Jeff McMahan  
Pluto Press £3.95

'MY impression is that the book gives a lot of useful information, surrounded by centrist filth', said the Reviews editor when asking me to write this piece.

By the time I'd finished the book, it was clear that he'd underestimated how right wing the book was. A centrist is, after all, someone who claims to be a socialist — and McMahan makes no such claims. He is (despite occasional criticisms of the species) essentially a liberal, appalled at the drift towards war and the systematic denial of human rights in the third world, but lacking any notion of what should be done about it. This is not to condemn the book outright, but merely to describe its limitations, which are massive. But within those limitations it is quite a useful book.

Taking the two broad areas of nuclear weapons and intervention in Central America, the book aims to disentangle the real aims of US foreign policy from the lies and hypocrisy of official statements, and to document the real effects of these policies. And this it does very well.

Little of the information will be new to regular readers of SWR, but it provides a great amount of useful ammunition for us in our arguments against the new Cold War and against American aggression in Central America — important and timely arguments in the run-up to Reagan's re-election. It should also help to dispel the prevalent myth on the left that Reagan is simply a geriatric nutter who wants to blow the world up.

## Superiority

So, for instance, the chapter on arms control talks breaks down each separate American package in terms of what it would have meant to both American and Soviet arms stockpiles. It shows how each was designed to be rejected by the Soviets, so that their rejections could be used to justify further arms build-ups. McMahan uses this evidence to attack Reagan's 'duplicitous', but it can as easily be used to further our argument against any reliance on arms control talks.

McMahan almost suggests this conclusion himself in the chapter on the increase in nuclear arms spending. He argues that the huge expansion plans aim at ensuring American superiority over Russia by jacking up arms spending to a level which the Russian ruling class will be unable to afford.

He backs this up with a detailed examination of all the proposed new weapons systems. It's one of the best summaries of the topic I've

seen, necessarily somewhat technical, but free from the usual jargon overkill.

The material on Central America is far less detailed than in Jenny Pearce's excellent *Under the Eagle*, though it is a useful supplement to her account. The chapter on Grenada is, again, one of the best accounts I've seen. Maurice Bishop is presented here as the honest reformist he really was, not the latter-day Lenin most of the left make him out to be. And the invasion is documented in terms of American imperialism's need to reassert its military power by a show of force, rather than the (secondary) fear of the spread of the 'Grenadian road to socialism'.

## Function

So, a well documented account of American imperialism's intentions and actions which highlights the very real threat of further military intervention in Central America. Generalised through an understanding of why the world crisis pushes Reagan to try to reassert American might, and a clear politics that understood how to fight this, it could have been an excellent book. Unfortunately, it's precisely that generalisation and those clear politics that are lacking. So the book comes across as a series of essays on single-issue campaigns, all of which are seen in isolation from each other.

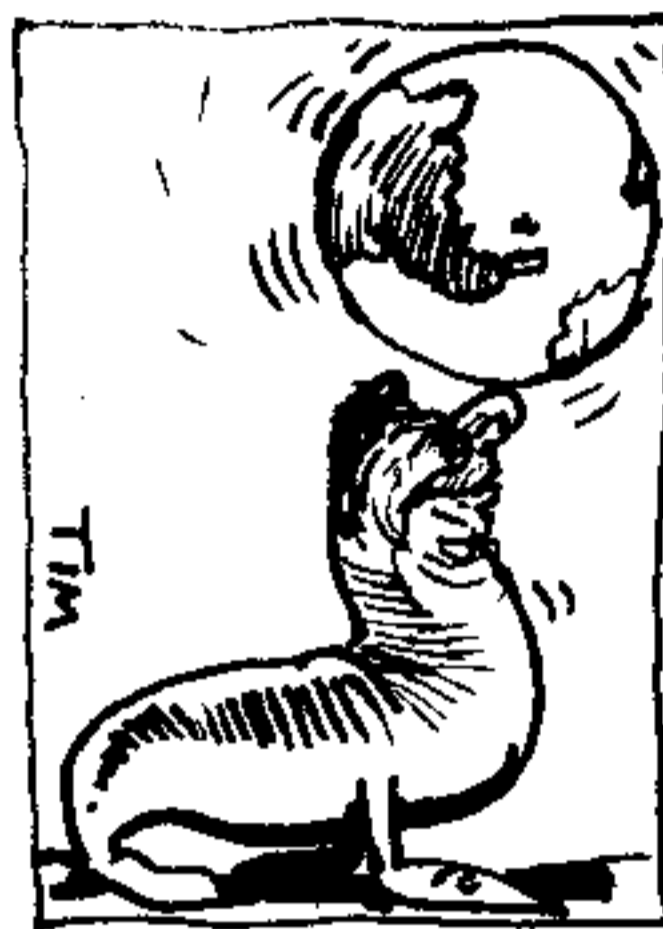
What this means is that the arguments against each facet of the new Cold War are put in terms of accepting the state of the world as it is, while simply arguing that in terms of *their own needs* the Reagan administration is mistaken in particular moves it makes.

In the section on MX missiles, McMahan spends a page arguing that they won't fulfil the function that they're designed for. He then outlines in some detail how the same increase in warheads could be achieved at far less cost! But perhaps the best expression of the argument is the end of the chapter on El Salvador ('In making itself the enemy of the world's poor, and a symbol of oppression, the US is defeating its own ambitions. For there is no number of nuclear weapons that will enable it to control a world by which it is despised.')

It is the customary bleat of liberals down the ages: 'If only we could have a nice, humane imperialism ...' Because these people see capitalism as rational and logical, the lunacies of nuclear war or invasion of tiny Central American countries appear as mistakes rather than the necessary responses of a crazy and murderous system. And this leads them to address their arguments, not to those who want to fight the system, but to those who run the system,

trying desperately to persuade our rulers that they are acting against their own best interests.

This comes over most clearly in the section on what should be done to fight the drift to war, which occupies a whole four pages (one of which is given over to the amazing discovery that the American media are biased!) The author has the basic sense not to put any faith in a



# Black man's burden

White Man's Country  
R Miles and A Phizacklea  
Pluto, £4.95

THIS book is a comprehensive and readable introduction to racism in British politics over the last 25 years. From a Marxist standpoint, it analyses the link between racism, the uneven development of capitalism and its need for migrant labour. It explains how and why workers hold racist notions that change according to their direct experiences of struggle. By doing so it is an improvement on others in this field.

The author sees the development of racism within three main phases. Initially from 1945 to 1962, a minority of racist MPs identified black immigrants as the cause of social problems. After this minority had waged a campaign on local and national level their demands for control were conceded in the 1962 Immigration Act.

The second phase, from 1962 to 1971, saw the growth of institutionalised state racism. Pressure from right wing Tories and backward workers led the Labour Party to implement stiffer immigration controls. Labour's nationalism led it to define the 'British people' in terms of skin colour and culture, in effect increasing the divisions between workers which already existed.

The final phase is described as the drift towards repatriation from 1971 to 1983. Alongside this has gone the alienation of black youth from society, their increasing treatment as a criminal problem, and the

Democratic president being any different — though you would have to be very stupid indeed to have any illusions in Walter Mondale.

Instead, you see, public opinion must be mobilised around 'alternative policies which are both 'plausible and attractive', including of course our old friend, alternative defence strategies. As to how public opinion is to be mobilised, or what these policies are — not a word. Where the book should have conclusions it simply collapses under the weight of its rotten politics.

And on what should be done by readers in Britain there is literally not a word. This probably won't damage its sales, given the nature of its intended audience. For its lack of answers is not simply the failing of an individual author, but also an accurate reflection of the dominant ideas of the Labour left and of CND.

But despite that central weakness, there is much in the book that revolutionaries will find interesting and useful. Read it, but if possible, without parting with the money for which you could undoubtedly find many better uses. ■  
Charlie Hore

riots. The authors argue that as immigration controls cannot now satisfy the racists, the last demand for compulsory repatriation will. It is the inevitable logic of 'common sense' thinking on racism that if blacks are causing problems repatriation will restore harmony.

This is a major contention of the work that I believe to be false. It is a pessimistic and apocalyptic vision of the near future which still has to reckon with the resistance of black and white workers. Compulsory repatriation at present remains a crazy demand of the far right.

## Reformism

Quite rightly, Miles and Phizacklea see the struggle against racism as part of the general class struggle. Black and white workers have a common experience of exploitation and hence the collective strength to take on the system. It follows from their analysis that the Labour Party is unable to tackle racism because of its reformism and nationalism. And neither can the autonomous black movement as championed by the *Race Today* collective, who don't relate to the general class struggle. They may work round single issue campaigns, but are at a loss when it comes to other struggles involving black and white workers.

This book provides a more detailed account of the post war period than is presented in Peter Fryer's *Staying Power* (reviewed last month). Nor is it marred by the third worldism of Sivanandan's *A Different Hunger*. I recommend it. ■  
Stephen Philip