

WORKERS' ACTION

12 pages
15p

No. 147
July 21-28, 1979



**Joseph says:
Kill jobs to feed profits**

WE SAY:

**35-
HOUR
WEEK
NOW**

**JOBS
BEFORE
PROFITS**

THE Government plans to cut 20,000 jobs in shipbuilding. It will lead to the loss of a further 80,000 jobs in the support industries.

The National Enterprise Board will have its wings clipped, too. Many of its assets will be sold off and it will be limited to 'high technology areas'. The Meriden motorcycle works, which was dependent on state aid, will be shut down.

Thousands more jobs will be lost as British Steel is forced to meet the Tories' 'break even' ultimatum by March 1980. The North Wales steelworks at Shotton, which had been guaranteed a future until 1982 at least, is now to be shut down unless the campaign succeeds to save the works and its 6,500 jobs.

Corby steelworks faces the same threat as Shotton. If the 5,000 presently under threat are sacked the unemployment rate will jump to 30% in Corby.

Corby and Shotton lose £40 million a year, say the BSC bosses. But British Steel loses more than twice as much — £100 million a year — in interest charges.

Sir Keith Joseph has also announced that £233 million will be cut from regional aid grants over the next three years. This means a cut of a third in the regional

aid budget. The result will be a further rise in unemployment coupled with an accelerating rate of depression in the regions. Wales and Scotland will be particularly hard hit.

What Joseph has spelled out makes Heath's lame duck policy look like a dispensary for sick animals. Heath, of course, was forced to retreat on his policy. While he was in



power, the struggles against unemployment — on Clydeside and on the docks, above all — were among the most radical battles of the period.

The fight against unemployment cannot be waged successfully on the basis of preference for this or that region, saving Shotton but cutting Corby or pumping more money into the bosses' pockets by way of employment subsidies.

It can only be fought by demanding a shorter working week.

The fight for a 35 hour week without loss of pay as a first step can unite the working class movement. But it is essential that it becomes more than a campaign. It must become a focus of struggles in the workplace.

What Joseph and Thatcher have announced is nothing but the warcy of capitalist profiteering. Rational planning has no place in this creed; the needs of the mass of the population, the working class, do not figure in their thoughts either.

Capitalism does not give the right to work. It rests on the bosses' right to stop people working if their work does not fit the dictates of profit. Demanding the right to work means stripping the capitalists of their power to decide who will work and who will not, at what speeds they will work and for how long.

The guiding principle for socialists in the fight against unemployment must be work-sharing without loss of pay. The hours of work should be reduced to provide employment for everyone. The system that cannot provide this minimal equality does not deserve to survive.

TUC CALLS ABORTION RIGHTS DEMO

THE TUC is to call a mass demonstration in opposition to John Corrie's Abortion (Amendment) Bill which had its second reading in the Commons last Friday 13th. It is essential that this demonstration, provisionally planned for the 27th October, has the support of women and the left, trade unionists or not, and that trade unions are pushed into actively organising for it.

Voting on the Bill was 242 in favour, 98 against,

and the Government made its support for Corrie clear. Unless we mobilise to defeat it, it will mean the effective repeal of the '67 Act.

The National Abortion Campaign's meeting on Friday, to organise women in a campaign against the Bill, was attended by over 200 people.

Rose Knight, of NAC, explained what the main clauses of the Bill will mean.

■ The substitution of 'grave, substantial and serious' risk

to the health of mother or child, and deletion of the so-called 'social' clause will, according to SPUC (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child) reduce the number of abortions by two-thirds. SPUC, Corrie, and his supporters all ignore the well-established fact that women all over the world risk their lives in backstreet abortions rather than suffer an unwanted pregnancy.

The BMA is reported to be 'strongly opposed' to

the new wording, not least because of the possible width — or narrowness — of interpretation.

■ The conscience clause is extended, despite the fact that the professional bodies concerned have found no evidence of their members being pressurised into performing abortions.

continued
on p.2

Workers' Action public meeting
As the Shadow Cabinet goes for confrontation with the NEC and Labour Party conference over democracy in the labour movement,
ORGANISE THE LEFT TO DEFEAT CALLAGHAN'S OFFENSIVE
Speakers: Stephen Corbishley (CPSA National Executive, in personal capacity), and John O'Mahony.
Sunday 22 July, 8.30pm, at the 'Metropolitan', Farringdon Rd/Clerkenwell Rd.

FUND DRIVE
There has been a slow start towards our first regular £200 a month target.
North London reader £20
Richmond reader £10
Total so far £30
Money should be sent to Fund, Workers' Action, P.O. Box 135, London N1 0DD.
The closing date for the first £200 is August 28th.

INSIDE
MAGAZINE SECTION: The new capitalist crisis; Karl Kautsky on why mass strikes are for Russia but not for Western Europe pages 8-11
Iran: Kurds fight for freedom against Khomeiny pages 6-7
Labour councils buckle under to Tory cuts page 5

TUC CALLS ABORTION RIGHTS DEMO

continued from p. 1

And, as Dr Sheila Abdullah asked, where are the facilities for those doctors whose consciences urge them to perform abortions for women who need them?

■ The reduction of the time limit from 28 to 20 weeks of pregnancy, unless the woman's life is endangered or the fetus severely handicapped, means an effective time limit of 16 weeks.

The BMA is also opposed to this restriction, since abortions this late, under 1% of the total, are usually on the most desperate medical or social grounds.

Most of the debate in Parliament centred around this clause, and with pressure from many MPs and the powerful BMA, Corrie has given an assurance that he will consider amendment to 24 weeks. But the Bill will still be very restrictive. SPUC, LIFE, and other anti-abortion lobbies have whipped up hysterical fears about fetuses aborted at 26 or 28 weeks being viable. No concern is spared for the mother.

■ The restriction on financial or personal connections between referral and operating agencies will most probably mean an end to the charities such as BPAS and PAS, which perform 25% of all abortions (30,000 each year) and have pioneered new and safer methods.

The further condition that advice and pregnancy testing agencies should have medical staff will end the role of the street agencies, women's groups, and others who cannot afford to pay.

Mel Read, of ASTMS and the Women's TUC, noted that the TUC has a policy supporting women's right to choose and opposing any move to restrict the '67 Act. She urged women to pressurise their TU branches to honour this and support the TUC mass demonstration.

She read a letter from her (Tory) MP, Peter Rost, who considers that women who want abortion, other than the very young and the victims of rape, have "already abdicated the right to decide about their own bodies" by becoming pregnant!

Rose Knight also called for a "polite" lobby of the TUC General Council on the 29th July to "remind" it to set a date for the demonstration and to publicise the arrangements.

The meeting then marched to Downing Street, to present to Mrs Thatcher, a supporter of the Bill, the abortion instrument of the future if the Bill becomes law — wire coat hangers. Police stopped and then attacked the crowd of chanting women, threatening them and arresting two for obstruction.

MANDY WILLIAMS

Contact NAC at 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X.

01-278 0153.

Contact LARC at 73 Albion Road, London N16.

A WELCOME PUNISHMENT

MEMBERS of Edinburgh Central LPYS voted for the 'disciplinary action' proposed against them at the July meeting of their Labour Party's General Management Committee.

The YS members were under attack for heckling Callaghan about Ireland at a pre-election rally in Edinburgh. Callaghan was furious and demanded an inquiry. Edinburgh Central passed a resolution after the election to take disciplinary action against the YS and sent a copy off to the Labour Party's

Scottish headquarters.

The resolution was only narrowly carried, and so vaguely worded that it could have meant anything from a witch-hunt to the gentlest of tickings-off. Even so, the response of the Scottish Labour headquarters seems to have been to tell the Edinburgh Central executive to "calm down and don't be so silly".

The result was a very subdued report to the GMC in July with three disciplinary proposals by the executive. These were: a recruitment

drive in the constituency; more regular reports from the YS branch to GMC meetings; and for the YS to produce a document on Ireland explaining why it supports 'Troops Out Now', to be discussed at the August GMC.

These measures were overwhelmingly passed but only after one rather peeved right-winger had put another resolution. His resolution asked the YS to make a commitment that it would not heckle Callaghan again — it was defeated.

Now the punishment is

being taken up enthusiastically by its victims. It is likely also to involve the production of a leaflet summarising the 'Troops Out Now' document which the YS will be 'forced' to distribute to every house in the constituency. If any hopeful right-wingers think that delivering leaflets round the tenements in Central Edinburgh will be enough to exhaust the YS members and to stop them raising the issues in the future, they'll have to think again.

The YS is taking up Socialist Organiser's call for a labour

movement 'Troops Out Now' contingent on the August 12th demonstration against the British army's ten year occupation of the streets in the north of Ireland.

YS members have been active in persuading a number of prominent labour movement figures in Scotland to sign the Socialist Organiser appeal, and have been working with the United Troops Out Movement to take a large contingent from Edinburgh to the demonstration.

JO THWAITES

ANL MOVES LEFT — BUT HOW FAR?

THE Anti Nazi League national conference last weekend (14th) committed itself to policies of no platform for fascists and support for black self-defence groups. It also resolved to organise campaigns against the proposed 'British Nationality Act', 'sus', state harassment, and attacks on Jewish communities.

■ ■

But the conference failed to establish democratic accountability in the ANL to make sure the National Steering Committee followed those policies. And once again the conference didn't take a clear stand for the expulsion of fascists from the labour movement.

On immigration controls, motions were passed 'encouraging all branches to actively oppose all immigration controls' and calling for a 'campaign to expose the

racist nature of immigration controls'. There was, however, a let-out when a resolution from Teachers Against the Nazis was carried, repeating last year's formula that the conference rejected all immigration controls but that this shouldn't be an ANL position.

Unfortunately, Wirral ANL, which made a stand over this issue last year, withdrew their motion for the ANL to oppose all immigration controls before the vote was taken.

The way the resolutions were discussed and voted on was ludicrous. The conference was called with less than four weeks' notice, and the only document circulated beforehand was a declaration written by the National Steering Committee.

On Saturday morning we were presented with a document containing 85 motions from various branches. Gall-

oping through these at a rate of one a minute, the discussion was minimal — and dominated by the platform.

Steering Committee recommendations were only defeated once, when a resolution expressing solidarity with the black struggle in Zimbabwe, and committing the ANL to support ZECC (Zimbabwe Emergency Campaign Committee — set up by Anti-Apartheid) was passed. Similar motions calling on the ANL to campaign against the PTA and anti-Irish racism were defeated.

It was obvious in the discussion that the NSC didn't intend to carry out the conference mandates. This made the discussion on ANL structure a vital one.

The main resolution, supported by a number of branches, called for an elected NSC of 15, regional coordinating committees, and

a national newsletter. Under pressure from the platform all references to the conference actually being able to mandate the NSC were deleted.

Two motions, from the Hendon and Brighton branches, calling for greater accountability of the NSC, were deemed to fall when the main motion was passed.

Like last year, the conference was dominated by the Socialist Workers Party. There were only 200 delegates compared to 800 last year. Many ANL branches are defunct, and many more are demoralised by the lack of focus for activity. But the conference was complacent.

If the ANL is to pull itself out of its nosedive it needs to force its leaders to stop sitting on the mandates of the conference and mount a principled anti-racist campaign to beat the NF and Thatcher's racist offensive.

MARTIN BARCLAY

DON'T LET CHAPPLE'S EMPIRE SPREAD

Although plans to create a huge new right-wing union by merging the AUEW and EETPU on an undemocratic basis have suffered setbacks over recent months, top union right-wingers Frank Chapple, John Boyd and Terry Duffy have not given up.

A Birmingham EETPU member describes the dangers.

MANY EETPU members believe that an amalgamation of our union with the engineers would bring more democracy to our union, probably the most undemocratic one in the country. This might be true for a very short time but any gains would soon be reversed.

It is not the intention of Boyd and Duffy to democratise the EETPU but, on the contrary, they would like to have the same control as Frank Chapple.

Since taking control of the EETPU through the law courts, Chapple has stripped our union of any real democracy and rank and file control. He has reduced the elected full-timers from around 150 to 15 while the membership has doubled, scrapped district committees, and

appointed non-elected full-timers as secretaries in branches that seriously oppose him, where he hasn't just closed them down.

Frank Chapple also edits and completely controls our union journal "Contact", which he uses to support ideas and people he wishes to be adopted and to malign, mainly by innuendo, others who oppose him. He refuses the right to reply, and if members use any other organ to reply they can find themselves on a charge.

A great deal of this 'democratisation' was done during the amalgamation of the ETU with the PTU, under the pretence of combining two rule books. Chapple claims he has brought in more democracy by postal ballots and industrial conferences. These conferences are a complete sham where resolutions are never taken and only one question is allowed from each delegate. They are no more than a stage-managed lecture from our EC.

Some other examples:

* One night at Birmingham Midland Branch there was a very large attendance of people who had never been seen before. A card check was moved. The appointed secretary ruled it out of order. He also moved that the branch meet fortnightly from 1979, stating that he had asked those people up to support the motion. It was carried.

The following week a motion was put asking the EC for December Quarter night to be designated a special meeting to consider the rescinding of the previous resolution. This was granted. On Quarter night we debated the issue and a vote was overwhelmingly carried rescinding the previous motion.

At the following meeting, however, a letter from the EC was received, noting the decision, but saying it was

not normally allowed. Hayes also told lies about Bro. Best, saying he led an unnecessary strike. This was untrue, as the membership came out of their own accord.

The EC let it stand and Hayes was elected by 435 votes. 460 ballot papers were sent to N.G. Bailey's instead of to members homes as normal.

* Wyn Bevan, the recently elected EC member for South Wales, has been stopped from taking up his position



Chapple: attacks strikers as 'terrorists'

not in line with the EC policy and that the original motion would stand.

* Harold Best this year stood for re-election to the EC, after 5 years serving his members in Yorkshire. Opposing him was Bill Hayes, an Associate Director and Manager of the contracting firm N.G. Bailey's.

Hayes' election address criticised Bro. Best, which is

because of 'outside interference' by Rank and File Contact in a leaflet calling for a vote for Wyn. However, when Woodrow Wyatt praised Bro. Chapple in a national newspaper just prior to his re-election, nothing was said. (Woodrow Wyatt owns the firm that prints our union journal).

The list is endless, but let me finish with what

Chapple will offer to quieten the left, and what it would really mean to get the amalgamation.

* Lifting the ban on communists holding office. With the machine Chapple has built to block individuals from holding office, communists will still never get in, nor will anyone else who opposes Chapple.

* 'More democracy' — i.e., postal ballots, more conferences. This would mean election addresses in which only the Chapple candidate could slate his opponent, and conferences that are stage-managed with no resolutions accepted.

* 'A stronger union' — stronger control for himself, Boyd and Duffy to sell us out and raise themselves to positions where we can't get them.

To AUEW members I say this: keep the EETPU out, save your District Committees and elected branch officials and what bit of democracy you have left. Things could get worse.

To EETPU members: don't be conned by promises that won't help anyway. We can fight Chapple and his hatchet men in our smaller union better than if he can hide behind the AUEW. Let nobody forget that Chapple called striking underpaid nurses 'terrorists' and that he brags about the reductions in labour he has made in the electrical industry.



Luis Inacio da Silva, leader of recent metalworkers' strikes

A new workers' party in Brazil?

AFTER THREE years of mass strikes and student unrest the Brazilian military government has finally decided to grant a large-scale amnesty in an attempt to take the heat out of the left's campaign for total amnesty.

Among those who will benefit are the various reformist leaders who have been living in exile since the military coup of April 1st 1964. These include the 81-year-old CP leader Luis Carlos Prestes; Leonel Brizola, a Labour Party governor who tried to organise armed resistance to the coup; and Francisco Juliao, organiser of the Peasant Leagues in the north east which were ruthlessly repressed by the army in 1964.

Brazilian politics has changed a lot in the last fifteen years. Unfortunately the membership of the Brazilian CP can expect little in the way of new political direction from Prestes, the man who has for 45 years led them and the Brazilian workers from one political defeat to another. The party line of maintaining the 'official' opposition party, the Brazilian Democratic Movement as the major focus for political opposition will continue to cut across attempts to organise independent working class action and organisation.

Leonel Brizola, on the other hand, has promised to re-establish a Labour Party. The old Labour Party was a heavily bureaucratized body run mainly by government-appointed trade union officials of the old populist regime. Whether Brizola likes it or not, a reborn Labour Party will be organised by working class militants who have been drawn into political activity via the struggle for free trade unions.

The amnesty announcements came one month after 200,000 car workers ended one of the most important strikes

in recent history, achieving a 63% wage increase. They had in fact demanded 78%, and the fact that this compromise was vehemently criticised by the rank and file indicates that the days are past when trade union leaders could ride roughshod over the members.

The period of military dictatorship has forced the working class to return to independent trade union organisation, which hasn't been seen in Brazil since the early 1930s. The exiled political leaders may want a return to the paternalistic welfare capitalism of the past, but for the workers this is unthinkable.

The Brazilian worker militants of today represent a new political generation — the sons and daughters of workers rather than of peasants. They have no reason to look up to the politicians of the pre-'64 populist state who organised the trade unions from above and initiated large scale social welfare measures. But the new generation needs to look beyond economic activity to political organisation and programme and the task of the revolutionary left in Brazil is to develop these.

The amnesty did not include political offenses in the late 1960s such as the guerilla struggles which were brutally suppressed by the secret police and the government-backed Death Squads who systematically murdered many revolutionary militants.

The regime has also been victimising the socialist newspaper *Versus* in the last few months by slapping fines on it for alleged irregularities in its book keeping. This, and the fact that 25 members of Socialist Convergence are on trial for 'subversion', is an indication that the far left's influence is a major worry for the generals and their capitalist backers.

BAS HARDY

US dumps Somoza

"YOU ARE the new government of Nicaragua", said US ambassador William Bowdler to members of the Sandinista-backed Provisional Government on July 15th.

On July 17th President Somoza fled to Florida, taking 35 of his top congressmen and ministers with him.

While the US has not yet recognised the Provisional Government, clearly it has expected the Sandinistas to win. Dumping Somoza, it has put pressure on the Sandinistas to make concessions on the composition of the government and on its attitude to Somoza's National Guard.

As urged by the US, Somoza has been replaced by a temporary President while the US completes negotiations with the Provisional Government. The State Department has promised economic aid to Nicaragua if the Provisional Government accepts three members of Somoza's Liberal Party in its ranks.

The demand has been rejected, but the Sandinistas have already made a number of concessions. On July 12th the Provisional Government announced that National Guardsmen would be free, when Somoza left, either to quit the country or take posts in a new army.

12 new members have been announced in the Provisional Government, including prominent businessmen, anti-Somoza bourgeois politicians, and a former National Guard officer, Lt. Col. Bernardino Larios, (accused of plotting a coup against Somoza last year) who is to be Defence Minister.

The only figure thought to be unacceptable to the US is Tomas Borge, veteran leader of the Sandinistas and now head of the 'Prolonged Popular War' faction, who has been announced as the new Minister of the Interior. Borge proclaims himself a Marxist, and his faction of the Sandinistas has in the past criticised the dominant Tercerista faction for its alliance with business figures.

The National Guard is suffering from desertions.

Important figures, top government officials, MPs and the wives of National Guard officers left the country en masse. The daily flight to Miami on the only civilian aircraft still in service is always full. Somoza manages to profit even here: he personally owns the airline.

The National Guard is still fighting, though they are on the defensive in most areas. Sandinista military columns resumed their march on the capital, Managua, on July 10th.

safeguard imperialist interests, in alliance with class-collaborationist Sandinista leaders, are the main threat facing the Nicaraguan revolutionaries. The Washington Post has reported a State Department approach to young officers in the National Guard to step in after the departure of Somoza.

So the thousands of young fighters who have joined Sandinista columns are offered the prospect of being in a joint army with the butchers of the National Guard —



The Sandinista fighters have driven Somoza out — but the National Guard remains to be dealt with

Its top command was sacked shortly before Somoza resigned. Over 300 members have fled the country during July and three senior officers have taken refuge in the Colombian embassy. On July 11th an order banned soldiers from leaving the country without permission.

According to an official of the Nicaraguan airline, even before Somoza went,

Heavy fighting is still continuing in Matagalpa, where the guerrillas are on the verge of taking the last National Guard outpost.

The only front on which the National Guard still hold firm is in the south, where they are preventing a 1000-strong Sandinista column entering the town of Rivas.

But now US efforts to

who bombarded Managua's teeming slums with incendiaries, dropped napalm on Masaya, and strafed the towns and cities indiscriminately — an army which will be in charge of maintaining order for the 'Government of National Salvation' stacked out with businessmen, which will aim to limit the scope and drive of the revolution to a minimum.

STATE RACISM IN FRANCE: A MODEL FOR THATCHER?

FOLLOWING a ruling by a court at Pontoise near Paris, two squadrons of gendarmes and two companies of CRS riot police — more than 400 in all — invaded a section of the town Garges-les-Gousses and evicted 231 rent-striking workers from a hostel for immigrant workers.

Personal effects were confiscated and locked up in nearby depositories while their owners were away. Those evicted refused to leave the area and slept out in the open on makeshift beds surrounded by plastic bags, packages and their suitcases.

According to a representative of the immigrants, "The residents refused to pay because they want a bit of comfort. They want the hostel to be a bit more human. The rooms are like rabbit-hutches." The residents had been demanding: tenancy rights, decent living conditions, a fair and legal rent and the sacking of the racist management of the Sonacotra hostel.

This was on June 22nd. Within days, police had thrown 130 people out of their rooms at the Sonacotra hostel in Moselle and 39 more were

evicted from the hostels at Colmar and Ingensheim.

A fortnight later, the French press reported how police near Marseilles attacked inhabitants of Bassens, most of whom are Algerians, Tunisians and gypsies. Dogs were unleashed on them, they were attacked with truncheons and tear gas. Their crime? According to some people, their celebrations of a marriage grew a little noisy.

Such attacks are the ordinary lot of immigrant workers in France. As in Britain this kind of state racism comes on top of daily discrimination.

Also, the government intends to tighten up the laws with the introduction of the Stoleru Act. This follows hard on the heels of the Bonnet Act, aimed against illegal immigrants and penniless foreigners.

Stoleru's claim is that he is trying to steer a middle course between those who scapegoat immigrants for all social ills and those who ostrich-like refuse to see that changes are needed. In practical terms, however, he seeks to decrease the number of foreign workers by about 5% per



Immigrant workers evicted from their hostel

annum. According to the new law, a foreign worker will no longer have a right to stay in France, if he or she has been unemployed for more than six months. Likewise if a foreign worker offends against a contract of employment by returning late from holiday, he or she may be deported.

The number of permits issued will vary according to the employment situation in the various areas. This restriction is dressed up as a protection of the rights of resident foreign workers!

Workers who are not refugees will now have to have been in France for 20 years, not 10 as at present, until they qualify for a privileged permit, which itself is only valid for ten years.

Demonstrations and protests against these new measures have taken place all over France.

It is important to remember that recent changes in Britain's immigration laws have reflected changes in the EEC. The Stoleru Bill is therefore quite likely to cross the Channel as a Tory measure.

JAMES DAVIES

NO RETURN TO THE ROPE!

ON Thursday 19th, Tory MP Eldon Griffiths — with the support of many leading Tory ministers — will move that Parliament brings back hanging.

Hanging was abolished in Britain in 1965. It was a long-overdue step forward from barbarism.

Murder is horrible. But the death penalty is just as horrible — indeed, more so, since it is murder done in calm deliberation by people who are well-off, comfortable and safe, not by crazed or desperate people under terrible pressures, as the crime being punished often is.

The experience of countries which have abolished it shows that the death penalty does not stop murder. It is only a barbaric way for the State to exact vengeance and to try to wash away the stains of the cruelty generated by a rat-race society with the blood of an individual victim — often a wretchedly sick individual.

The death penalty for 'terrorist' killings is just as vile — for the State seeking vengeance is in itself resp-

onsible for the most bloody terror, for example in Ireland.

The more sober-minded of the ruling class recognise that such a death penalty can do nothing but add extra bitterness to armed revolts against the State (as in Northern Ireland). Socialists recognise that many of the 'terrorist' killings (like the killing of Airey Neave) are not crimes at all, but acts of war within just wars of liberation.

The aim of eliminating murderous violence from human affairs is one which socialists fight for. Indeed, only socialists can fight for it effectively.

For that aim cannot be advanced by granting the State — a reactionary force with utter contempt for human life — extra powers to practise a specially horrible form of violence. It can be advanced only by combatting the economic system which exalts individual gain above cooperation, money above humanity, and property above life.

WE HAVE TO WIN POWER POSITIONS

Dear comrades,

I would like to take issue with the report of the conference on local government which was contained in Workers' Action no. 145. This report contained a number of criticisms of the positions and speeches of Chartist comrades at this conference which raise many important questions. However, it would be a pity if the real issues in this discussion were to be lost behind the accusations of witch-hunting which your report contains.

For the record, if anything in the speech by Mike Davis at the conference could or did give rise to fears of witch-hunting we wholeheartedly and unreservedly withdraw the offending comments. The record of the Chartist tendency in fighting for the fullest and broadest democracy in the Labour Party is absolutely clear and needs no defence.

But to turn to the real issues in dispute: it seems to be that the positions advanced by WA comrades at the conference, while expressing a healthy fighting spirit, were deficient in three respects, namely, in analysis, in strategy, and in tactics.

In analysis: WA's position seems to us to fail to understand the nature of local government finance and consequently the powers and limits on those powers affecting local councils, the general social and political climate in which the fight has to take place, and consequently the readiness of the working class to wage an all-out struggle against the new government, and thirdly, the class nature of the forces involved in the fight over rate increases.

Rate increases at present are the only way that a local authority can raise substantial sums of money, independently of central government. Without the limited autonomy that

provides, all talk of a political fight against the cuts is hollow rhetoric. WA's supporters denied that they were asking Labour councils to enter on a kamikaze course of confrontation and bankruptcy. Yet what other conclusions could emerge from the refusal to raise rates?

The climate in which the fightback must take place is one dominated by the Tories' assault on the welfare services. This takes the form both of direct cuts and cash limits and also an ideological attack on the general acceptance of areas of education, health, social services, etc, as legitimate areas of public provision.

There is undoubtedly widespread support for the anti-tax, anti-bureaucratic element of the Tories' cuts programme. In this context, the defence of existing levels of social services and the jobs they provide is a class question. This must be done by whatever means are necessary, even if they include the inefficient rating system.

A successful struggle to force more money out of central government, too, would after all have to be financed out of taxation, short of bank nationalisation or wholesale expropriations.

In this context, it is not surprising that the anti-rate increase lobby such as the CUT campaign, which is linked with the Freedom Association (formerly NAFF), are the open enemies of public spending in general. The effects of such campaigns has already been seen with the success of Proposition 13 in California.

On the strategic level, WA simply do not seem to grasp that the conquest of positions of power and influence prior to the armed insurrection is both necessary to the very possibility of creating the con-

ditions for the direct struggle for working class power and must necessarily involve the compromise of choosing between undesirable options.

Historically, this is likely to be the case even after the seizure of proletarian power.

Consequently, WA comrades were completely unable to answer the question put to them repeatedly, 'What would you do if you were the Leader of a Labour Council?', because they were unable to visualise the possibility of that situation. It is always easier to keep one's hands clean by remaining a permanent oppositionist than to have to make difficult decisions, to substitute the fight which you would like to see for the one which is actually taking place.

At the tactical level, WA supporters claimed they were putting forward a perspective for immediate struggle, unlike the Chartist comrades who wished to delay that struggle. In fact, the perspective advanced by the WA resolution and speeches would have placed the forces represented at the conference in opposition to the councils who are the immediate target of Tory attack — those Labour councils who have raised rates to maintain job and service levels.

Even now Heseltine is working on punitive measures against such councils.

The perspective outlined by Chartist comrades was that of critical support to, and a united front with, such councils against the Tory attack, not a position which would lead to the denunciation with equal vehemence of the Tory government, of right-wing Labour councils cutting services, and left councils raising rates — a perspective for 'principled' isolation.

GEOFF BENDER,
Socialist Charter.



Demonstration to back Poplar Council in its fight against the government, 1921

Rate rises can hit the rich

Dear comrades,

Keith Veness's main fault in his letter on rate rises in last week's Workers' Action is that he makes a virtue out of possible necessity. Correctly saying that rate rises are preferable to cuts — a point on which Colin Foster agrees anyway — he then goes overboard in presenting the rates system as the local government version of Robin Hood's merry men.

But Colin Foster's general argument fails to take into account the one-off redistributive effect of certain rate rises. The Camden rate rise which netted enough to pay their council workers over the odds DID have a redistributive effect.

Because a large part of Camden's income from rates comes from big business and be-

cause the increase was used to pay a rise to some of the lowest paid workers in the borough, there was a positive redistributive effect.

Camden, as a borough with high rateable values which is nonetheless Labour, is an exception. And the effect is indeed 'one-off'. In general rate rises cannot be 'paired off' with particular expenditures (like council workers' pay) but must be considered as part of the whole system of State finance.

ANDREW HORNUNG.

COLIN FOSTER REPLIES:
The evaluation of 'redistributive effects' raises many difficult questions of economic theory skated over in my reply to Keith Veness. But I would

argue that even if it could be shown that in a particular area rates cut profits more than they cut wages, no more would follow than that rate rises would be a lesser evil than rent rises or cuts. (And there is already a much stronger reason for that conclusion: that cuts run directly counter to working class struggle in a way that rate rises don't).

There is no comparable 'ability to pay' as between profits and wages. All profits are robbery from the working class, and to the extent that any tax bites into working-class incomes it is additional robbery, however much it takes from profits. Also, rates hit some lower-paid workers, retired workers, and small shopkeepers in a way that socialists cannot possibly endorse.

Labour heads for a showdown

by
Andrew Hornung

THERE CAN be no doubt that the key debate at the forthcoming Labour Party Conference will be over party democracy. However internal this may seem, however remote from the battles against the Tories, in reality what is at stake is whether the Labour Party continues to be a stable instrument of bourgeois rule or whether it becomes a party responsive to its grass roots activists and to the struggles and needs of the working class.

Heading up the fight for greater Party democracy are Tony Benn and Eric Heffer, who clearly see their proposals also as part of the fight for Benn as Party leader. Benn, in particular, has attacked the power of privilege and patronage that is wielded by the Prime Minister.

"The scale of this personal patronage", he pointed out in Bristol last week, "is breathtaking — no medieval monarch could approach it; nor could an American President". Benn documents the Prime Ministers' use of the power to grant peerages, to appoint ministers and to choose the heads of nationalised industries. The Prime Minister also can set up cabinet committees, make them secret, and decide himself or herself on who has access to information about them.

To break this power, Benn proposes five main changes: abolition of the House of Lords and with it the power to grant peerages; election of the cabinet by MPs; giving select committees the power to summon ministers; insisting on parliamentary approval for major public appointments; and MPs' right of access to government papers.

Benn and Heffer put the emphasis on strengthening parliament against an accumulation of cabinet power and the personal power of the Prime Minister. The emergency resolution they are backing for the next conference is aimed at getting "the choice of Party leader out of the hands of the parliamentary Party, and into the hands of an electoral college, giving more or less equal weight to the trade unions, constituencies, and MPs".

Mandatory re-selection of MPs and a leadership chosen by conference would be more radical steps towards Labour Party democracy. They are both up for debate at this year's conference, too, as is a censure on the NEC and Cabinet over the 1979 Manifesto.

Last week the National Executive's organisation subcommittee decided to propose scrapping the three-year rule which prevents conference from rediscussing an item until three years have elapsed. Another blow for democracy.

The committee also proposed giving constituency Labour parties a bigger vote at conference. They would have one delegate per 400

members instead of per 5,000 as at present. In card votes, the CLPs would get one vote for every 150 members instead of the present one vote per 1,000.

This will be discussed by the full NEC on July 25th, when the NEC will also discuss whether it should have sole authority to decide on general election manifestos.



Benn, Heffer, Scanlon

The latest moves came this week with a report from the Party research department to the Home Policy Committee criticising the last election manifesto as 'remarkably weak'. Plans for reforming the Parliamentary Labour Party are also being pushed. And a Labour rank-and-file conference, jointly sponsored by the Labour Coordinating Committee, the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, the Institute for Workers' Control, and the National Register of Tribune Groups, has been announced for November.

Predictably, the right wing union leaders have jumped in to support King Callaghan with all his feudal powers. Didn't Hugh Scanlon get a lordship last year after defying his union's mandate and casting the AUEW's million-

plus votes against constituencies having the right to reselect their MPs? If once-left Scanlon can become a lord that way, who knows the prizes that await Boyd, Bassnett and Chapple.

Attacking the strengthening of the constituency vote at conference — which is generally thought to be a strengthening of the left in the Party — John Boyd of the AUEW and the Salvation Army protested, "It is the romantic thinking of immature individuals and not a practical proposition". The normally unflappable David Bassnett of the GMWU went further, "It is a provocative suggestion that the unions will not accept".

Extremely flappable Frank Chapple of the EETPU predictably made the most foolish and intemperate attack on the proposals, talking of "self-styled ayatollahs" and a "conspiracy of academics and professional people to keep ordinary people and their views out of the party".

Of course, giving the grass roots activists more power and Callaghan and the cabinet less, drawing more workers into the Party as it becomes more democratic, will do precisely the opposite. As far as the trade union vote is concerned, it could be strengthened by giving trade union organisations below the national level direct representation at conference. What's wrong with the trade union block vote is not that it is the vote of ordinary workers, but that, on the contrary, it often represents nothing more than one or two union bureaucrats.

The argument for democracy is the argument for power to the active membership rather than to those who claim to represent the passive and voiceless millions. In fact, the strongest argument for democracy is that it promotes activity and a healthy Party life. The Boyds, Bassnetts, Chapples and Callaghans all profit from mass passivity and encourage it. Their ideal Labour Party is an alliance of professional politicians and union leaders with control over an efficient vote-gathering machine.

Those who are ready to fight for a different Labour Party have to get organised now. The pressure from the Right will be even greater than in the old battles on unilateral nuclear disarmament, for the issues now are issues of power in a way they were not then.

Having failed to fight the right wing for five years, the Parliamentary and NEC Left have found their voice again now Labour is in opposition. But under pressure they could easily buckle again. Already Benn and Heffer are putting the stress on the less radical measures to reform the PLP and to choose the Leader through an electoral college, rather than the basic issues of the sovereignty of Conference (and the NEC between Conferences).

Labour activists need an organised left wing which will stand firm whatever the pressure from the Right.

Black Queen takes the Red Knight

LAMBETH Council's Labour Group, meeting on 9th July, voted by 34 to 4 to cut spending on council programmes by 4½%. The cuts include £1 million off social services and 800,000 off housing.

Camden councillor Ken Livingstone told Workers' Action: 'After all the posturing as 'Marxist Lambeth', already the right wing councillors here say, 'we'll do no more than Lambeth'. The real tragedy is that Ted [Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight] has given a cover for every right-winger to put through cuts.

'We've all been sharing the same platforms with Ted. We got no idea he was considering these cuts'.

Knight, who was a leading member of a revolutionary Marxist organisation, the Socialist Labour League, in the 1950s and early '60s and declares he has not changed his ideas, won the leadership of Lambeth group on a programme of 'no cuts'. He also last year signed the platform of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, calling for no cuts and no rate rises.

At the group meeting Mike Bright, Chairman of Amenity Services, announced that the programme devised a few weeks earlier as the minimum for a Labour authority was in fact 'full of fat', and that 'comrades ought to be reasonable'.

The local Trades Council was dismissed: 'who are these go-called people?' The local government workers' union Nalgo is imposing a 'no cover' policy in response to the council's decision not to fill Town Hall vacancies if it can avoid it. Ted Knight ridiculed Nalgo as irrelevant to the Labour struggle because they had not proved capable of resisting the Tory council in neighbouring Wandsworth.

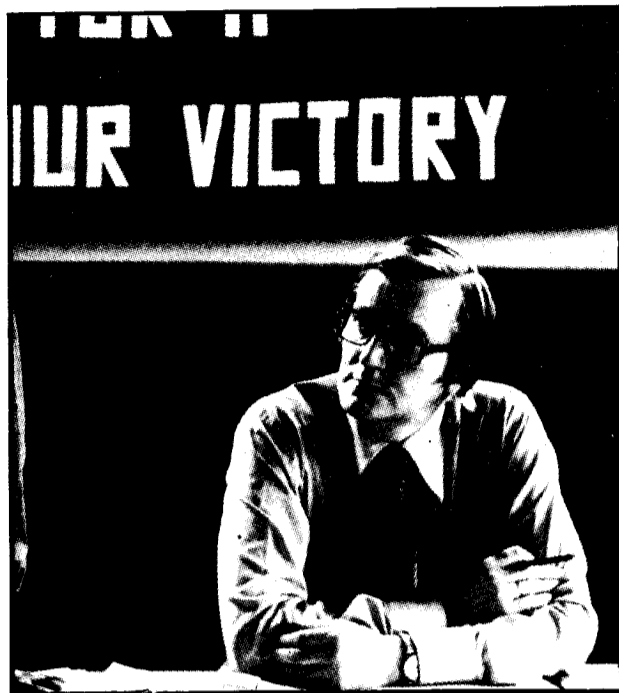
Three councillors and an observer spoke against the proposed cuts. Bryn Davies, former deputy Leader, argued for a supplementary rate rise. If the Council was serious about its programme, he said, it should be prepared to justify another rate rise.

Observer Ian Murray from Vauxhall CLP argued:

■ That the Council should unconditionally support all workers, including the Nalgo workers, fighting the Tory cuts.

■ That the Council should actively use its publicity machine to fight the Conservative Government.

■ That the Councillors should realise they could not go on being the blade of the Tory knife.



Ted Knight: called for a fight against cuts on SCLV platforms — till the crunch came

Murray argued that the Council should face the options of resignation or voluntary liquidation. If any cuts were implemented they should be in the Tory areas.

But Ted Knight heaped scorn on the public sector unions as ineffective. He said that Lambeth Council was already sailing too close to the wind on use of its facilities to fight the Tories, and refused to commit himself further. Nothing could be done until the workers had risen up and brought down the Tory government.

He defended the size of the cuts on the grounds that he was planning next year's cuts in advance so as to have a smooth downturn in Council spending.

Thus the Black Queen has taken the Red Knight in Lambeth. Without a struggle, a fight or even a whimper, Lambeth Councillors have given in — and all this in a week when they rejected new maternity and paternity leave proposals as too expensive at a projected £49,000, but voted to create three new top jobs to cost £45,000 as 'the minimum required to implement their programme'. What programme?

The Labour group meeting also rejected a proposal to postpone the cuts decision until the four local Constituency Labour Parties could have

their say. Norwood CLP has a long-standing policy of opposition to cuts, yet all the Norwood councillors, selected on the basis of being answerable to the General Management Committee's policies, voted for the cuts.

They must be called to account!

Norwood CLP already has an anti-cuts meeting planned for July 27th, and has been making contacts with the trades council, Nalgo, and other unions. The four GMCs are meeting on July 29th. They must instruct the councillors to take a different course:

□ Opposition to freezing or vetting of vacancies, and full support for council workers fighting the cuts.

□ Use of the Council's facilities to campaign against the Tory cuts and the stranglehold of the moneylenders, and to rally local trade unions and community groups for a united fightback.

□ Refusal to implement the cuts.

Supplementary rate rises are not the answer, and nor is voluntary liquidation. If Lambeth starts a fight, and links up with other councils and with the trade unions, then the Tories can be forced to retreat.

Solid support from council workers, and a pledge to take industrial action in case of government interference, could make the Tories think twice about intervening against a militant Labour council.

Supplementary rate rises might be used to gain time if the council were building a campaign. But for now it seems the campaign must be built despite and against the Council.

CHEUNG SIU MING
Norwood CLP

A let-out for every right-winger

'IT'S A disaster. Ted Knight got himself national publicity as 'the Marxist' in local government and now he's supporting cuts. The Lambeth council will sanction every right wing labour council that's making cuts'.

Cllr. Ron Heisler from Hackney summed up the feeling of the first Socialist Organiser extended editorial board meeting over the proposed cuts in Lambeth.

The delegates to the EB from Hackney North CLP and from SO groups in London, Manchester, Coventry, Leicester and Basingstoke decided that the next issue would contain a statement opposing these cuts. It decided to press Lambeth council leader Ted Knight to explain his actions.

The meeting also reaffirmed the position originally taken by the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory of opposing both cuts and rate and rent increases by councils trying to offload the pressures from the government. It was realised that this position differed from that adopted at the local government finance conference sponsored by SO in June, which voted against opposing rate rises. But as the mover of the resolution, John O'Mahony, explained 'We have to set a baseline for our

propaganda on the issue while at the same time encouraging a wider debate in SO.

SO is to take the initiative in building local anti-cuts conferences and will press the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party to name the date for the proposed all-London conference on the cuts.

The meeting heard reports on the campaign launched by SO for a labour movement Troops Out Now contingent on the August 12th demonstration against the British military occupation of Ireland. Stickers, posters and leaflets are to be produced to mobilise support; a number of CLPs, trades councils and union branches are likely to back the call.

The Labour Coordinating Committee was discussed, and while some at the meeting felt that articles in SO had been too hard on the LCC over the arrangements for its forthcoming first conference, it was generally thought that debates with them would be valuable.

SO itself is planning to hold a conference in mid-November open to all the paper's supporters.

NIK BARSTOW

Brent's battle on the cuts

AS ELSEWHERE, the Labour Party in the London Borough of Brent has been debating what the Labour council should do in response to the Tory government's cut in the Rate Support Grant.

The ruling Labour Group on the Council met 3 weeks ago, without prior consultation with the local Labour Party, let alone the labour movement in general, and virtually decided to go for cuts (they decided 'not to consider' a supplementary rate increase which was the only alternative they could think of).

After this, the discussion started in the Labour Parties and trade unions in the Borough. The local NUT branch, representing 85% of Brent's teachers, passed a strong motion opposing any cuts, as did the NALGO branch and a meeting of NUPE shop stewards.

The discussion in the Labour Party was hindered by the fact that all information on what cuts were envisaged was withheld on the grounds that it was 'confidential'. Thus the impression could be given that the cuts were minor ones in order to persuade people that there was little to worry about.

The CLP most likely to reject the cuts was Brent East, which has been left wing in recent years. However, 3 of Brent East's 'left' councillors, elected for the first time in May '78, began to argue vigorously for the cuts. One of them, Martin Coleman, even accepted a place on the 3-man 'vetting committee' set up to review the appointment of local authority employees.

Only 2 of Brent East's branches came out against the cuts. One of those two, under pressure from its 2 councillors, did not even consider how the Council could oppose the cuts. At the well attended meeting of Mapesbury ward, none of the 20 people present argued in favour of the cuts. Two motions were put forward opp-

osing the cuts and calling on the Council to start a fight-back, one from Workers Action supporters, and one from Socialist Charter supporters.

The main difference between them was on the question of a supplementary rate rise. Whilst Workers Action supporters argued that the Council should take a stand now and that a supplementary rate rise could only be seen as a means of buying time once that fight had got off the ground, Chartist supporters took the more pessimistic view that an immediate fight was not possible and that an interim rate rise was a prerequisite for that fight in the future.

The final Mapesbury policy, which formed the main opposition to the cuts at the General Management Committee, was based on the Chartists' motion. It went forward as a statement and resolution to the GMC saying "...in the long term it is not the job of the Council to offload the present crisis in local government and services on to the backs of the working class, either through cutting back on jobs or services, or through rent and rate rises. Instead, we believe that the best way to meet the crisis is by united action of the labour movement and community organisations to force the government to foot the bill."

It called on Labour Councils to: (1) Immediately commence discussions with Labour groups and the Labour movement throughout London and the country with a view to forming a united front against the Tory cuts; (2) Refuse to implement the cuts and use the tactic of running down balances and an interim rate rise, if necessary, plus investigating the possibility of a more generous rate rebate scheme; (3) Organise in conjunction with the LGC, trades council and other local bodies a mass campaign against the cuts, and establish

a democratic coordinating committee which is representative of these organisations'.

At the GMC delegates were faced with this outright opposition to the cuts and a composite resolution from 2 wards calling for 'opposition to a supplementary rate increase and to cuts in services — no compulsory redundancies'. Delegates arguing for this motion attempted to deny the fact that this meant cuts — cuts in jobs through natural wastage. And the composite's opposition to cuts in services



Labour councils are now scurrying to carry out Heseltine's cuts

was also weak, as was shown by the fact that an amendment was passed calling for cuts in 'less needy' areas.

The opposition to a supplementary rate increase was used as a smokescreen by councillors in favour of the cuts. People who previously argued for a rate increase higher than the 39% imposed earlier this year now discovered that rates were a regressive tax. Those arguing for the Mapesbury resolution argued that a rate rise could not be seen as an alternative way of balancing the Council's books (which would logically lead to being in favour of a 100% rate rise next year), but could make sense only within the context of the Council fighting the present system

of local government, finance. This is clear when it is realised that Councils probably will not be allowed to put up the rates next year above a limit set by the government.

Martin Coleman showed the mentality dominant among councillors (even 'left' wingers) when he said 'the Council does not accept the cuts, but it has no choice'. Workers Action supporter Pete Firmin pointed out that this meant that the Council was prepared to implement anything the government demanded of it, and we don't need a Labour Council for that. He also said that support for the cuts would imply support for the Council if local authority workers take action against these cuts — crossing picket lines and working to defeat the unions.

John Lebor, leader of the Council, treated delegates to a 10 minute speech on why the cuts were necessary (and he was prepared to call them cuts). As far as he was concerned he was opposing the cuts — by writing letters of protest to the local press. To criticism of the Labour Group for having made a decision without consultation, he said that it was the job of the Council to lead, particularly as they were the ones with the expertise.

Brent East GMC then decided in favour of the cuts, as did the Local Government Committee of delegates from all 3 CLPs on Friday night. It was only at this meeting that information was forthcoming about the planned cuts, which include the closure of two schools.

Activists now have two tasks: to link up with NUT, NALGO and NUPE and to organise opposition to these cuts in the local labour movement, despite the fact that they are imposed by a Labour Council; and to begin to organise now to force the Council to reverse its position.

JOHN COSBY



Demonstration to save Bethnal Green Hospital — the cuts will hit essential services in the poorest areas.

Iran: the Kurds fight for fr



THE TOWN OF Marivan has become the scene of a major clash between government forces and the Kurds. According to the official news agency, twenty two people have been killed and forty injured in heavy fighting between armed demonstrators and [pro-Khomeini] Islamic Revolutionary guards.

A spokesman of the Fedayeen guerrilla movement said that the demonstrators accused the newly formed 'revolutionary committee' in Marivan of supporting the cause of large feudal landlords trying to regain land they lost in the land reform. The Kurdish Democratic Party has accused the committee

— linked to the Khomeini government — of directly supplying the feudalists with arms.

Andrew Hornung talked to Martin van Bruinessen, a Dutch Marxist recently returned from Kurdistan, about the conflicts between Khomeini's Islamic state and Iran's national minorities.

Khomeini inter-
affairs. We hav
— women and
and we will all
In a village tr
Mahabad I ask
people what
wanted. Before
answer, one m
eared to be r
representative in
spoke up. 'Lir
'we are not se
want work. We
out own langua
own clothes and
where we can g
instead of going

■ ■ The movements of the national minorities in Iran are very uneven, though the struggle of the Kurds seems by far the most developed politically. How has this come about?

□ □ The Kurdish struggle is certainly the most developed of all the movements of the national minorities in Iran. There are about five and a half million Kurds in the country, that is, about a sixth of the total population. And they alone of the national groups at present in revolt ever established an independent republic, the short-lived Republic of Mahabad in 1946.

Of course, 'national minority' isn't really the right term because there is no national majority: the whole of Iran is made up of different national groupings.

Like two of the other national minorities now in revolt — the Baluchis and the Turkomans — the Kurds are overwhelmingly Sunni Muslims. This is important, because Khomeini has emphasised in many of his speeches that 'his revolution' is not simply an Islamic one, but a specifically Shi'ite one. Naturally Sunni Muslims, the majority in the Muslim world but the minority of Iranian Muslims, feel threatened by these pronouncements.

I witnessed one interesting expression of this when I was in Kermanshah. This town, by way of exception, is a town where the Kurds are Shi'ite. I found that when they say they are Kurds they are always very quick to add that they are Shi'ite. And they refer to the Sunni Kurds, especially those from around Mahabad, as 'communists and counter revolutionaries'.

The religious factor

The religious factor is very important even in the case of the Kurds, who are less bigoted in their religious outlook than many. The revolution took on a religious character — not surprisingly, given the nature of the political repression under the Shah — and is being promoted now as a Shi'ite revival.

This is clearest if you contrast the Kurds with their neighbours in the North, the Azeris (Azerbaijanis). The Azeris, of whom there are some ten million in Iran, have traditionally thought of themselves as an oppressed minority. At the time the Kurds founded the Republic

of Mahabad, the Azeris established an autonomous region under Soviet protection based on Tabriz. They have a long tradition of relatively radical political activity too. In fact a disproportionately high number of revolutionary leaders have been Turkish-speaking, and as far back as 1906 the left faction of the constitutionalists was based on Tabriz.

Separation or autonomy

For all that, because the Azeris, like the Persians, are Shi'ites, they identify very strongly with Khomeini. Their leader is the conservative ayatollah Shariat-Madari, himself an Azeri, who played a significant part in the mobilisation that toppled the Shah, particularly the mass revolt in Tabriz.

■ ■ To what extent have the religious leaders eclipsed the political leaders?

□ □ Sheikh Ezzeddin Hoss-eini is one of the Kurds' main leaders, but he doesn't appeal to the people as a religious leader so much as a political leader who happens also to be a religious leader. He appeals to the Kurds not on the basis of Islamic sentiment, but by calling for national rights for the Kurds. He wants a federal state with autonomy not only for the Kurds but for the other national minorities, and 'a socialist economic order'.

Politically he tends to identify himself with the Maoists, but he isn't a member of any of the parties.

■ ■ The Iranian government seems to suggest that the Kurds are calling for a completely separate state. Is this so?

□ □ There is no evidence that I know of suggesting that anyone is calling for that kind of independence. In fact, when you talk to people, they always reply by saying first, 'We are not separatists. We want to stay within Iran'.

Organisations of quite different political coloration are remarkably unanimous on this. Foreign policy, defence, monetary policy and long-term economic planning, they say, should be left to the central government, but all other affairs should be in the hands of an autonomous government in Kurdistan.

In this autonomous Kurdistan, Kurdish would be the official language along with Persian, and education would be bilingual. The important officials should be

Kurds, or at least Kurdish-speaking. The imperial police and gendarmerie (which have now been broken up) should not be reconstituted, but should be replaced with a popular militia — which would be Kurdish of course. Kurdistan would receive a far share of Iran's budget for economic development.

These demands are expressed most coherently by the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and by Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini. I found children and illiterate peasants in mountain villages expressed the same demands — as well as readiness to fight for them. One ten-year-old boy I met near Mahabad told me 'We don't want

■ ■ Is the KDP ant political fore

□ □ Yes, it is.



Above: armed women demonstrate in Sanandaj. Below: at a mosque, men file in to vote beneath pictures of women martyrs of the Kurdish cause.

"AMONG THE FEDAYEEN", said one of their leaders to an interviewer from the French journal 'Histoire d'Elles', "there is no difference made between men and women, though there are fewer women. We accept the same tasks. Moreover, when it comes to maintaining weapons the women are better — they are neater and more thorough than many comrades".

Simin, a supporter of the Fedayeen, told the interviewer that she and her friends were not welcome in some villages because of the propaganda put about by some religious leaders to the effect that such women were of loose virtue.

Nevertheless, they managed to organise a meeting of a hundred women for a debate on the importance of women voting in the elections for the Sanandaj town council. A small

group of women went from door to door to get women to come to the meeting.

"But we did this wearing the chador — though I never wear one — because if you want to raise the consciousness of the Kurdish women you should not shock them if you can help it", said Simin, who saw the question of national autonomy as the key question for mobilising the women. "The political participation of women is important for the struggle for autonomous government in Kurdistan. That is where we have to start."

'Histoire d'Elles' gives the names of five women's organisations apart from the traditionalist 'Society of Islamic Women': Women Awake; Women in Struggle; Union of Revolutionary Fighting Women; Movement for the Defence of Women's Rights; and the National Union of Women.



In Kurdistan Khomeini's committees are not groups and popularly elected councils contest government troops and their committees. In I run by an elected committee consisting of KD from the extreme left groups. There are also

Kurds Freedom

ering in our
all got arms
d men too —
ght'.
the north of
d a group of
t was they
anyone could
n, who app-
e KDP rep-
the village,
en' he said,
arartists. We
want to speak
ge, wear our
go to a judge
eak Kurdish
to Tehran..
autonomous
our province,
ernment can
sign affairs.
a gendarm-
le's militia.
s.'

one really
s are freely
urdistan. In
wns you will
rs where all
re on sale,
at very high
y the Kurds
to pay these

the domin-
?
The Iranian



in control. Armed
power with the
Mahabad the town is
P members and some
district committees.

KDP, led by Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, recruits very widely and loosely: it includes feudal notables, bourgeois and petty bourgeois as well as the urban and rural poor.

■ ■ Equality for women and the eight hour day are in the KDP programme. Are these purely paper demands or do they play a real role in the present struggle?

□ □ The eight hour day is actually a dead letter. Kurds feel the demand for work is vital, but there is no stress on the conditions of employment. Many work from 12 to 14 hours a day.

The tactics of the KDP

Women's equality is, in my opinion, not a very important issue among the Kurds. Kurdish women don't wear veils, but transparent shawls. The chador is not worn in the towns in Kurdistan. In the larger towns too many women have jobs in offices and so on to wear veils anyway.

There are a few women on the revolutionary council at Mahabad, five out of thirty five members, and when

they speak the men certainly listen. There have been door to door campaigns to encourage women to participate in political life.



A member of a pro-Khomeini Islamic militia manning a road block

■ ■ The KDP seems to be adopting very cautious tactics. For instance, after Ghassemlou had been to see Khomeini, he said 'Khomeini is the most open, the most progressive of all the religious notables after ayatollah Taleghani.'

□ □ That's certainly true. For instance, when they sent Peshmergas (guerillas) to Sanandaj, they sent them by way of a long detour. This was their way of telling the government that they were not eager to openly defy them. Likewise, in negotiations with central government no reference is made of armed force.

The other left parties

■ ■ What about the other political parties?

□ □ The People's Fedayeen have branches in several cities. These, of course, have only recently been established and their membership is composed in the main of rather inexperienced people. They are careful about speaking out openly against the KDP, hoping to leave open the possibility of co-operation between them, though as yet this co-operation does not exist. Their main influence seems to be in Mahabad where they probably have about fifty members.

The Maoists are most strongly organised in Sanandaj, though they have some thirty to forty members, I would guess, in Mahabad. They cooperate closely with the People's Fedayeen. When I was in Mahabad, these Maoists, the Organisation of the Toilers of Kurdistan, held a demonstration that attracted about 2,000 people. When the KDP calls a demonstration, however, there are five or ten times that number on the streets.

These Maoists are opposed to the present Chinese line and see themselves as being pro-Albanian. They have no clearly formulated programme.

The Tudeh Party (CP) is still illegal of course. It has branches in Sanandaj and in Mahabad and it also has some influence inside the KDP, though any differences among the leadership that this might cause do not percolate down to the rank and file. The Tudeh uses every means for legal activity. For instance, when I was in Sanandaj there was a

For instance, while I was in Sanandaj there was a book exhibition. It was quite clear to me from the books that it was in reality a Tudeh Party show. I noticed that the members of the Party moved about among those at the 'exhibition' taking trouble to patiently explain — and I thought rather well — the ideas in the books.

The party is of course fiercely pro-Soviet and this diminishes its power of attraction.

There is another Maoist organisation which calls itself the Revolutionary Organisation of the Toilers. It operates clandestinely but has managed to organise the peasants in the Merivan area near the Iraqi border.

The land question

■ ■ There have been reports of clashes between peasants and feudal lords. Towards the end of June there were reports of fighting between landowners and peasants around Mahabad, Piranshah and Sardacht. At Mangor, near Piranshar, six landowners were killed. According to those reports, Khomeini's Islamic committees had armed the feudal lords and some tribal chiefs.

□ □ I don't know how widespread these peasant revolts are. The one in Merivan chased the landlords out and set up a village council to organise work on a cooperative basis.

■ ■ Was there any talk of peasant unions?

□ □ Not as far as I know. I don't think that any of these risings have transcended the local level as yet. The Merivan action was carried out by non-tribal Kurds, that is, Kurds who are not tribally organised and who are generally seen as being of a lower caste, fit for hard work and nothing else. Being without tribal organisation, they are usually unprotected. Taking advantage of this, landlords who had lost land in the land reform tried to reimpose themselves.

The land reform under the Shah brought very deep changes. Feudal lords were forced to sell their land, and in so doing they lost any economic interest in the area — they invested the money they got in industry or commerce — and perhaps even more importantly, they lost their retinue. In many cases too they were forced by the government to live in Tehran.

The workers on the land who were not landowners were either sharecroppers or occasional workers. The sharecroppers had the right to buy land, but in order to pay they often found themselves up to their eyes in debt. Sometimes they had to sell their land to pay off the debts. In several areas in the north of Kurdistan, peasants were forced to donate land to collective-type farms in return for shares in the enterprise. Managers were appointed by the government, and the people hired to work the land were usually more skilled workers from outside the area.

Work has become one of the most crucial issues. The occasional workers who were not able to buy land ceased to be able to find work. The bigger landowners did not need unskilled labour and the local labourers were therefore forced to find work elsewhere, almost always in what has been called 'the informal sector' — that is, casual, non-unionised, unskilled, poorly paid work.

The result is that workers have to travel great distances to find a job and there is very high unemployment in the province.

The Turkoman rebellion

■ ■ The land question played a big part in the Turkoman revolt, didn't it? Was this revolt in any way co-ordinated with the Kurdish struggle?

□ □ The Turkoman rebellion was mainly spontaneous and was sparked off partly when landlords tried to reverse the Shah's land reforms in their favour under the guise of reclaiming it for 'their nation'. The Turkomans, who are Sunnis, have always been badly discriminated against: land that was subject to land reform often was sold to entrepreneurs or military personnel from outside the region. In the cotton industry workers were brought in from outside and this probably increased the national awareness of the Turkomans as well as increasing the desperate plight of the unemployed.

It must be remembered that the religious leaders of the Turkomans are trained in Kurdistan and therefore there is likely to be some cross-fertilisation of ideas

despite the much lower level of political awareness of the Turkomans. This much lower level is expressed in a number of ways: the tribal traditions are stronger, their demands were formulated 'from the outside' — that is, by the People's Fedayeen — and they are fiercely anti-communist. There is also no mass party among the Turkomans, though there is an Organisation for the Protection of National Rights with a rather small base.

Anti-communism is certainly very strong and this restricts any close connection with the Kurds. One incident highlights this: in Sanandaj a group of leftists set out to help the Turkomans, but their group never arrived. It crashed on the road in rather mysterious circumstances.

■ ■ There seems to be a variety of attitudes among the religious and civilian leaders toward the struggles of the minorities. Taleghani, it appears, is the most sympathetic while others like ayatollah Saldari have insisted that 'the Islamic Republic is the best bulwark against the Sunni majority of Kurdistan'. The attitude of Khomeini and Bazargan on the other hand seem to have hardened. 'What attitudes predominate in government circles, and how did the Kurds themselves vote on the referendum on the Islamic Republic?'

□ □ The government's attitude, or I should say Khomeini's attitude, toward the Kurdish demands has become ever more clearly negative. In February, when a government delegation of Muhammed Mokri (a Kurd who was one of Khomeini's advisors in Paris) and Dariush Foruhar (the recently resigned Minister of Labour) went to Kurdistan, the res-



Above: Workers in Khoramsha in the province of Khuzestan defend a building against the attacks of the Islamic militias.

EVEN BLOODIER combat between the central power and a minority people is continuing in the Arab area of Khuzestan. Iranian socialists (members of the Iranian SWP, a sister group of the British IMG) in the town of Ahwaz (in Khuzestan) have issued the following appeal:

'The Arab people has suffered national oppression for fifty years. Today, after the working masses, Arabs and non-Arabs together, have overthrown the tyrannical regime and continue to act for their rights, the government, instead of responding to their demands, uses machine guns, artillery and tanks against them.'

'People of Iran, heroic oil workers and steel workers, Muslims and Christians, the struggle of the Arab people is your struggle. Its victory is your victory, its defeat is your defeat.'

'If the Arab people is defeated, it will open the way for attacks by the government against all the conquests of the Iranian revolution.'

'The same tanks as have been used by the governor against the Arabs will be used to crush us all. Today the Arab people has raised the standard of liberty in Khuz-

estan. Don't let the tyrants' sabre cut the throat of the Arab people. Don't let the sword of tyranny in the governor's hands be drenched in the blood of the Arab people. Don't let martial law, the instrument of the Pahlavi dictatorship, be established at Mohammareh.'

'The working people has nothing to gain from martial law! The workers' tradition is the tradition of aspiring to democracy and liberty. The tradition of the generals is the tradition of sending tanks to intimidate and massacre innocent people. The workers talk of liberty. The generals and the capitalists talk of martial law. Down with martial law!'

'A counter-revolutionary war has been unleashed in the streets of Mohammareh and Ahwaz. The Arab people holds aloft the banner of revolution; the admiral-governor, the banner of counter-revolution.'

'All the workers of Iran should rally behind the banner of revolution. It is in their interest to support the struggle of the Arab people and to condemn the attacks of the government against the Iranian revolution.'

ponded positively to requests for political autonomy. A month later, after serious fighting between leftist Kurds and the Persian army around the army base at Sanandaj in southern Kurdistan, the government representatives who talked to the conflicting parties were much more reluctant and in fact suggested that the demand for autonomy went much too far.

Kurds and the referendum

As a reaction, the Kurds boycotted the referendum of March 30th. Sheikh Ezeddin Hosseini and a number of leftist Kurdish organisations took the initiative and the KDP, coming under pressure from its rank and file, was forced to join in. The boycott was more successful than reported in the Iranian press. In Mahabad, where I was on the first day of the referendum, the ballot boxes were carried away empty and I know that the same thing happened in a number of Kurdish towns. Elsewhere only small numbers took part in the referendum.

This boycott exacerbated the tensions between the Kurdish leaders and the government and, at the same time, between the Kurds and their Shi'ite neighbours who, for the most part, are Azeris. I visited Naquadeh, to the west of Mahabad, on the second day of the referendum. This town is inhabited by a Shi'ite Turkish-speaking ethnic group called Qarapakh.

What shocked me most was the strong anti-Kurdish feelings expressed by the Shi'ites at the polling station. These people see the Kurdish demand for autonomy as a threat to the revolution. In the referendum, all Qarapakh came to vote... for the Islamic Republic, of course; while all the Kurds of the area boycotted the ballot.

Three weeks later the expected conflicts came out into the open. The KDP organised a demonstration at Naquadeh, which was fired on by a group of Qarapakh. Soon fighting spread over a wide area leaving several hundred dead on each side. The central government sent in troops to separate the fighting parties, and used this opportunity to re-establish their military presence in Kurdistan.

The coming confrontation

Once they had done this and strengthened their position vis a vis the Kurds, the government showed a less responsive attitude. The accusation of being 'counter-revolutionaries' — which Khomeini first used against the organisers of the boycott — is frequently heard now. The newspapers that gave the demands and actions of the Kurds most coverage have now been closed down. The recently published draft of the Islamic constitution leaves no room for even a limited form of autonomy.

As I see it, the government leaders are heading for a violent confrontation with the Kurds, and this cannot but have tragic results both for the Kurds and for the democratic potential that still remains in Iran.

Khomeini and his advisors seem the most implacably opposed to the autonomy demands. Khomeini is now surrounded by US-trained advisors, like Bani Sadr and Ghotbzadeh. One might speculate that these people now represent for Khomeini a guarantee that US interests will not be harmed and that therefore they need not seek to intervene.

The Third

by Martin Thomas

ALL INDICATIONS are that the third major post-war world recession has now started.

For 20 years after world war 2, metropolitan capitalism expanded relatively smoothly. There was a tremendous rebuilding of capital after the devastation of world war 2, and a big expansion into new areas of technology. In place of the protectionism and collapse of world trade in the 1930s, trade increased even faster than production. The increased role of the state provided new, safe markets for many capitalist enterprises, and the means for recessions to be kept under control.

The whole process was not nearly as harmonious as the ideologists of capitalism made it out to be. But the downturns were usually mild and never of world-wide scope. In 1961-71 there was the first, relatively mild, world recession since the war. After a hectic and largely speculative boom in 1973, there was a slump in 1974-5. Industrial production dropped 13% between summer 1974 and spring 1975 for the major 7 capitalist countries (the USA, Japan, West Germany, France, Britain, Italy, and Canada).

The recovery, mainly fuelled by US government measures, started in the summer of 1975. But it was slow, faltering, and partial.

The immediate cause of the downturn is a crisis in the US. The US had a feverish mini-boom in 1978. Industrial production went up 13% between March 1978 and March 1979.

However, during 1978 the dollar was slipping internationally. In September-October the slippage turned into crisis. The US government took measures to stop the dollar slumping further in relation to the German mark and the Japanese yen and other currencies. State spending was cut back (to reduce demand, thus imports, thus the outflow of dollars), and interest rates were raised.

Those measures stabilised the dollar's exchange rate. But — as the US government half-recognised — they risked setting off a recession. That recession is now underway.

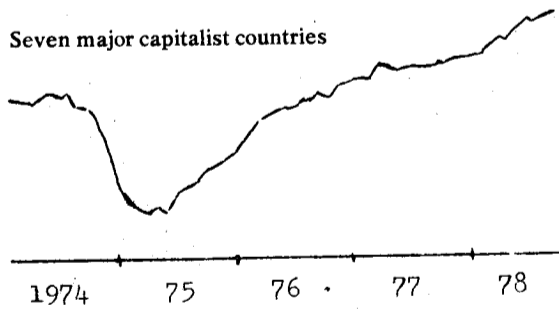
The boom was always very much based on consumer spending. Heavy investment has scarcely increased since 1975, and productivity in the US is static. Now retail sales have declined for four successive months, up to and including April; order books are declining; and employment has dropped by 500,000.

It is not possible to say how deep the recession will be. The downturn in the US may even be a false alarm. But the balance of the evidence is that the third major post-war world recession is beginning. None of the major capitalist powers is growing fast (except Italy, which has its own problems), so it is unlikely that they will be able to withstand or offset the US economy dragging the world economy down. And the effects will certainly be grave.

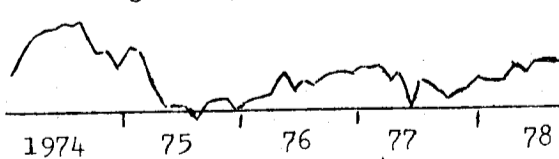
Unemployment in the OECD (advanced capitalist) countries is already 15¼ million, or 5.4%. In the recession it will increase. Britain, which has made a late and especially limited recovery from the 1974-5 recession, stands to be hit particularly hard.

Table 1 shows the trend of industrial production:

Seven major capitalist countries



United Kingdom



What lies behind this crisis?

As in 1974-5, the bourgeois press is explaining it as an "oil crisis". This enables them to lay the blame for crisis on factors outside the capitalist system (in the same way as 19th century bourgeois economists blamed crises on sunspots), and to rally racist feeling against the "greedy Arabs".

In fact the oil-producing states are doing little more than making good the erosion in the price of oil caused by the decline of the dollar since 1975. And the drop in supply, on a global scale, is very small — a matter of one or two per cent. Only because of the irrational nature of the capitalist economy does the "oil crisis" appear as a major problem. Indeed, that "problem" itself is partly engineered by the big oil monopolies.

A recession was probable anyway, irrespective of the oil crisis. Its sources must be found in the fundamental mechanisms of capitalism.

As from the late 1960s (at least) profits have been declining in the major capitalist countries.

Rate of profit (net of stock appreciation) on net holdings of industrial and commercial companies in Britain.

Year	Before tax	After tax
1950-54	16.5%	6.7%
1955-59	14.7%	7.0%
1960-64	13.0%	7.0%
1965-69	11.7%	5.3% (1967-69)
1970	9.7%	4.1%

Source: A.Glyn & B.Sutcliffe, *British Capitalism, Workers, and the Profits Squeeze*, p.66.

Rate of profit (net of stock appreciation) on the capital of non-financial companies in the United States.

Year	Before tax	After tax
1961-65	14.1%	8.3%
1966-70	12.9%	7.7%
1970	9.1%	5.3%
1971	9.6%	5.7%
1972	9.9%	5.6%
1973	10.5%	5.4%

Source: E.Mandel, *The Generalised Recession*, Inprecor 16th Jan 1975.

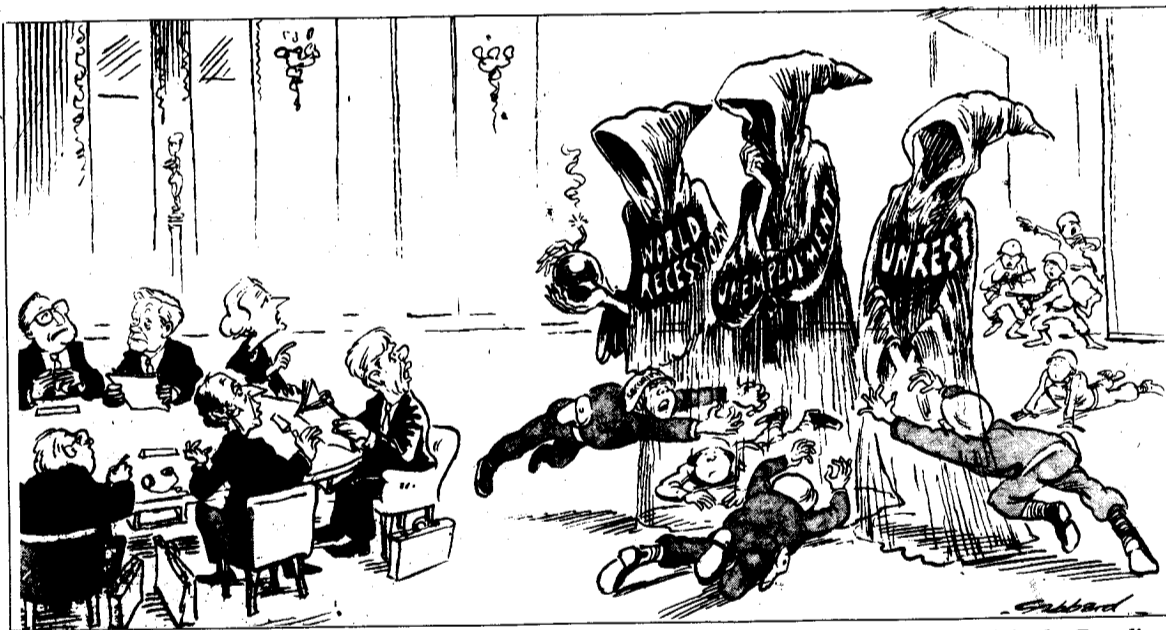
These figures (particularly those of Glyn and Sutcliffe) have been questioned, but the basic conclusion that profits have been drifting downwards now seems firmly established.

In Marxian terms, the rate of profit

$$r = S/(C+V)$$

where S is the surplus value extracted (per year) and C+V is the total stock of capital advanced (C in the form of constant capital: machinery, raw materials, etc; V in the form of variable capital: payment for labour power).

The actual rate of profit for industrial capitalists will differ from this ratio. Landlords, bankers, and commercial capitalists all take a cut of the surplus value produced in industry. The state also takes a very large portion of surplus value. Other factors may also depress or boost the industrial rate of profit. But in general the industrial rate of profit will



Gibbard, in the Guardian

reflect the trend of the Marxian rate of profit, although its numerical value will be rather smaller.

As capital accumulates, it replaces living labour (workers) with dead labour (more machines). Unless productivity in the machine-making industries increases markedly faster than productivity in the industries making workers' consumer goods, or real wages rise very fast, the ratio C/V, in value terms, will tend to increase.

$$\text{Now } r = S/(C+V) \\ = (S/V)/(C/V + 1)$$

So if C/V tends to increase, then r will tend to fall. This is the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

Many counteracting influences may offset this law. Especially important for post-war capitalism have been increased s/v and faster turnover.

Glyn and Sutcliffe, and others, argue that the decline in the rate of profit since the 60s is actually due to a decline in the rate of exploitation (S/V).

An increase in the proportion of national income going to wages and salaries can be shown (1). But the picture is very different when we look at take-home pay as a percentage of national income. According to different measures this percentage dropped from 56% in 1955 to 50% in 1970, or from 60% in 1957 to 56% in 1971 (2). Also, an increasing proportion of wages and salaries are paid to workers who are unproductive in the capitalist sense, like public service workers: these workers produce no surplus value, but are paid out of the surplus value produced by the workers in capitalist productive industry.

The indications are, then, that the rate of exploitation was

rising, rather than falling, in the 1960s.

Moreover, the decline of profits has been a feature of all major capitalist countries, whether their labour movements are strong (and therefore, according to the Glyn-Sutcliffe theory, capable of squeezing profits by reducing the rate of exploitation) or weak. In the USA, real wages have been more or less static since the mid- to late '60s. The rate of exploitation must have risen. Yet the trend of profits has been downwards.

The evidence, therefore, is that increasing organic composition of capital (C/V) is behind the decline in the rate of profit, as in the classical Marxian analysis. Direct statistical measurement of the organic composition of capital is extremely difficult (3). But now even those who argue that C/V declined in the '50s and '60s agree that it is likely to rise over coming years (4). Massive 'de-manning' in steel, cars, and shipbuilding, and the quicker introduction of computer-controlled machinery with silicon-chip technology, clearly point in that direction.

The increased cut taken out of surplus value by the state has also been a factor in the decline of profit rates. That is why many capitalist states want public spending cuts. But — unfortunately for the capitalists — cuts do not necessarily translate into increased profits. The depression in demand caused by public spending cuts can hurt profits just as much as the public spending ever did.

Capitalism's inherent mechanism for overcoming the falling rate of profit is the devaluation and destruction of fixed capital during a slump. Better-off capitalists buy up the assets of ruined capitalists cheaply. C/V can thus be reduced. Speed-up and wage cuts under the pressure of the slump can also raise S/V. The rate of profit is thus raised again.

Under modern capitalism the state partly substitutes for, and partly blocks, this process. Big firms do not go bust. The state props them up at the expense of the surplus value produced in other firms. Rolls Royce, Chrysler, British Leyland, British Shipbuilders are examples. As a result, modern capitalism has a certain ability to stop slumps going so far, or continuing as long, as in the 1930s. In 1974-5, recovery came within a matter of months, where-

as between the wars the "slump" phase of the cycle would last three years on average. However, the "purging" effect of the slump is partially lost. Instead of disappearing, ruined capitalists stay around as well-paid pensioners of the state, draining the surplus value raked in by their more efficient brothers and sisters.

Thus the problems that led to the 1974-5 slump remain unresolved. Undoubtedly the rate of exploitation has increased since 1975. In Britain, the net income of a married couple with two children on average earnings dropped from £74.70 in 1973 to £68.10 in 1977, before making up some ground to reach £73.80 in September 1978 (all amounts adjusted to October 1978 prices)(5).

Profits have increased somewhat. Under the headline "Profits: Yum, Yum!", Newsweek of 5th February reported that US corporate earnings were up 27% in 1978 over 1977. But this figure is really less impressive than it seems, because of inflation.

Suppose a capitalist advances £1000 at the beginning of a year in which inflation is 5%, and makes a return of 5% on his capital in real terms. Then he must have £1102 in hand at the end of the year; his net income is £102. Suppose he now advances £1000 for the next year, and inflation is 10% this year. To make a real return of 5%, he must have £1155 at the end of the year; i.e. a net income of £155. So he has to increase the net income by 50% just to have the same amount of booty in real terms. In addition, accelerating inflation always tends to put nominal profits up, since selling prices are pushed ahead of cost prices.

World-wide, according to the OECD, "There are probably few countries where...profits could be considered normal

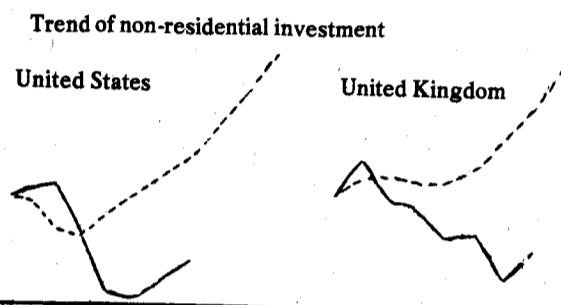
Recession

by past standards" (6). In Britain, the Economist (7) estimates that the real rate of return on capital in 1977 was 4½%, and in 1978 not much higher. It considers this a "pitifully inadequate" amount of swag, and warns: "If the rate of return is pulled down much further, investment will dry up, with production not far behind".

Although the oil companies have had bumper profits since 1974 (in the first part of which year British industry on average had negative profits), other companies are doing badly.

For Capital, profits are what makes life worth living. So if profits are stagnating, the system is sick.

This shows up worst, from the capitalist point of view, in the fact that investment is very low. The general pattern of accumulation of productive capital since 1974 has been very unhealthy, as shown in Table 2.



Broken line represents average pattern of previous business cycles since 1955. Solid line represents trend in present cycle.

The lack of investment indicates that capitalists not only are short of profits now, but expect low profits in the future.

Britain is especially stagnant. The index of production for the investment goods industries was, in November 1978, only just above its 1969 level. Gross Domestic Capital Formation is static, with 1977 below 1970's level. Steel production reached a peak of 28 million tonnes in 1970 and is now running at about 20 million. Steel consumption has fallen from 18½ million tonnes in 1973 to 15 million tonnes a year. In the engineering industries, order books have fallen from a peak of 120 in the second quarter of 1973 (index 1975 equals 100), and since the beginning of 1976 have varied between index 80 and index 85 (8).

British machine tools firms had 8% of the world market in 1971 and have only 5½% today. Industrial production in total has been at a standstill for six months.

World-wide, shipbuilding order books are at their lowest level since 1965. Even Japanese shipbuilding is in trouble — and British shipbuilding faces the prospect of having virtually no orders at all.

The growth of productivity in the advanced capitalist countries has slowed down a lot since 1973 — and virtually stopped in Britain and the USA.

The extremely high interest rates now current help to keep investment low. (On the one hand, capitalists with ready cash are more likely to buy interest-bearing paper in preference to productive assets; on the other hand, capitalists wanting to undertake productive investment, but short of cash, will find it more difficult to borrow). But each capitalist power is obliged to keep its interest rates high, for fear of inflation (arising from easy credit) and drastic decline of their national currency (as speculators sell it in order to buy currencies yielding higher interest rates).

The international monetary situation adds another factor of crisis to the basic trends in profits and investment. In the 1930s, the framework of world trade collapsed because non-British capitalists were no longer willing to take pounds (i.e. credit notes on the British state) as being "as good as gold". Given that capitalist trade could not allow itself to be restricted by the physical limitations of gold production, there was no internationally accepted money for world trade transactions.

At Bretton Woods, in 1944, the major capitalist powers set up a new international money system. Dollars — credit notes on the US state — were said to be "as good as gold", and were made convertible into gold for the purposes of international trade at \$35 for one ounce of gold. But within the USA the dollar was not convertible into gold. US governments could therefore print as many dollars as they needed for domestic purposes, without being strictly tied by the amount of gold in Fort Knox. Eventually, however — as US domination of the world economy lessened, and non-US capitalists became less eager to buy US goods — this meant that the dollar, internationally, was no longer "as good as gold". There was a contradiction between the dollar's function as an instrument of internal US economic policy, and its function as international money.

The matter was brought to a head by the USA's enormous spending on the Vietnam war. That unleashed the rapid inflation which has plagued the capitalist powers ever since, and wrecked the Bretton Woods set-up. In March 1968 international convertibility of the dollar into gold was effectively suspended; in 1971 the dollar was devalued. Since then the price of gold on the free market has touched \$250 an ounce.

The dollar is still the major currency for reserve holdings and for international trade. It has to be, because the US, though losing ground relatively, is still by far the strongest

capitalist power. The contradiction between the dollar as US money and as international money therefore continues to wreak havoc.

As the US "reflated" after 1975, its balance of payments deficits increased. The dollar slid in relation to other currencies. At a certain point, this slide became self-propelling; speculators sold the dollar, not because it was low, but because they expected it to go lower. And so it did go lower. Between September 8th and October 30th last year the dollar dropped 14.4% against the Deutschmark.

Carter has tried to stop the slide, by dampening down demand for goods in the USA. But the dollar still stands at only DM 1.83. And Carter's measures may have brought on the recession earlier than it would otherwise have come.

The US dilemma over re-inflation and "deflation" is only a sharp expression of a dilemma faced by other capitalist states.

Up to the 1930s the orthodox bourgeois theory was that the state should do as little about the economy as possible. The budget should be balanced. The money supply should be strictly linked to the amount of gold in the reserves.

The Keynesian theory which became bourgeois orthodoxy during and after the 1930s argued differently. In a depression the state should spend more than its income. The boost given to demand would have a "multiplier" effect in the economy, mobilising previously idle resources, and producing more than enough new income to pay for the original extra spending.

In post-war capitalism, such extra spending became a norm of capitalist policy. It implied a constant, fairly rapid, increase in the money supply, so that the state could keep ahead of its debts. It thus implied inflation.

But for a long time the inflation seemed controllable — even advantageous from a capitalist point of view, as it constantly eroded real wages. Governments tried to "fine-tune" the economy, adjusting the level of extra spending just sufficiently to keep both inflation and unemployment at moderate levels.

This clever tinkering broke down in the early '70s. The policies of many governments — like the recent British



Labour Government — are now quite at odds with the Keynesian idea. In the midst of a depression, public spending is pared back.

The Keynesian policy was a pain-killer to ward off the effects of a falling rate of profit. In the '50s and early '60s, when profit rates were robust, it worked, more or less. In the late '60s, it turned out that the pain could no longer be killed — and that the increased doses of state spending had made the disease worse, by cutting into the mass of profit in the hands of private capital.

Today capitalist states face the problem that "reflation" — increased state spending — leads to wild inflation and, sometimes, not very much else. Decreased state spending — "deflation" — leads to unemployment, reduced demand in the economy, and stagnation. The Stalinists and left social democrats blindly ignore this dilemma, and call for the revival of the old Keynesian policy — extra state spending — with a few radical trappings. The governments muddle through.

The recession will go hand in hand with rapid inflation — and attempts by governments to blame that inflation on wage rises. What is the reality?

The systematic inflation since world war 2 is something quite new in the history of capitalism. It arises essentially

from the increased role of the state, the expansion of credit, and the swelling of the supply of paper money without any relation to a fixed gold base.

The escalating began in the late '60s — before the big push of wages militancy. Wages have been trying to catch up with prices inflation ever since.

It seems "common sense" that wages cause inflation, but in fact it is not true. One of the highest inflation rates currently of the major capitalist powers is the USA's; but real wages have been stagnant in the USA for over 10 years. In Britain, inflation continued roaring ahead in 1976 and '77, while wages were strictly pegged, then began to slow down in 1978.....as wage increases went over the government limit.

Wages are, after all, just the price of labour power. To say inflation is due to wage rises is to say that price rises are due to price rises. It makes no more sense than saying that inflation is due to increases in the price of bread.

If wages go up, then other elements of cost price do not necessarily follow. What is most important — and most carefully concealed by the bourgeois press! — profits do not necessarily follow. Thus selling price increases do not necessarily follow from wage rises.

Capitalists will of course try to compensate themselves for wage rises by price rises to maintain their profits (though even this, in fact, need not mean price rises in proportion to wage rises). Whether they can do this or not depends (ultimately, and with some serious qualifications) on the money supply. However, the state does not have a free hand with the money supply. Parts of the money supply, like bank deposits, are outside its direct control. And even if the state could control the money supply, an over-strict limiting of that supply is ruled out because it would lead to a disastrous choking-off of demand.

In that sense, wage rises can have an inflationary influence. But it is theoretical nonsense to describe them as the cause of inflation. Inflation is rooted in the state's efforts to patch over the contradictions of capitalism. That is why in modern capitalism prices do not fall in slumps, but rather tend to soar.

The bourgeois economists' favourite idea of the recession being quick and mild seems unlikely, given the unhealthy state of world capitalism. There is no absolute law of nature to stop it being a Great Crash, with world confidence in the dollar collapsing, international trade being thrown into chaos, and companies going bust on a bigger scale than government intervention can cope with. That, however, is also unlikely.

World capitalism is still growing, though slowly (an average yearly rate of .3% on industrial production in the OECD states since 1970), and the strength of the US is still formidable. The capitalist state still has a considerable capacity to 'manage' crises, as we noted in the case of the quick recovery in 1975. Last October the New York share index went down 59 points in one week, its biggest weekly drop in history — but state intervention was able to stop a snowballing crash with little trouble.

Politically, imperialism is facing up to the recession from a fairly favourable position — Iran excepted. Despite stirrings in Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia, reaction still rules in Latin America. Any short-term chance of radical change in the Middle East seems to have been stifled. The agreements with China and the internal difficulties of Vietnam will help keep the peace for imperialist exploitation in south-east Asia. In Europe, the prospect of the CPs gaining governmental power in Italy or France has been pushed some way into the future, and bourgeois democracy has stabilised in Spain.

Radical explosions from less expected quarters are not excluded. In the USA and West Germany, two of the world's most powerful proletariats have recently begun to move out of a long passivity. Although its gold industry is doing well, South Africa faces major economic difficulties because of an outflow of capital which has continued ever since the Soweto rising in 1976.

As for Britain: with mounds of semi-derelict capital, and a bourgeoisie that prefers to make its millions from overseas investment, it has been hit hardest of all the big capitalist states by the sharpening international competition. That allegedly greedy and lazy workers have little to do with it is shown by the fact that unit labour costs are now lower in Britain than in any other big capitalist state. But industrial production in Britain is grinding ever closer to complete stagnation.

From 1900-14, British industrial output rose at 1% p.a. ave from 1919-38,	3.1%
	(but very unevenly)
from 1946-55,	4.8%
from 1955-70,	2.7%
from 1970-78,	1.2%
	(while the average for the advanced capitalist countries was 3% (9)).

We must look at the Budget in this context.

Despite all the press has said, the Budget in no way expressed a new economic philosophy. Its approach was very similar to Denis Healey's. Howe said as much:

"He [Healey] rightly began the practice of setting money

The Third Recession

supply targets, and he claimed to make his public spending plans accordingly.

"This means that I am able to approach my task this afternoon on this one, crucially important, piece of common ground: that the poor performance of the British economy in recent years has not been due to a shortage of demand. We are suffering from a growing series of failures on the supply side of the economy".

Between the late '30s and the late '60s, the Keynesian bourgeois orthodoxy said that if state spending were adjusted to create the right level of demand, then everything would be hunky-dory with capitalism. From a Marxist point of view this ignored the factors within production making for a crisis, and in particular the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

And so it turned out. In the late '60s the increased state spending in itself became an economic problem for capitalism, since it is a large drain on surplus value. The decline of the rate of profit came into the centre of bourgeois economic concerns. Bourgeois economists started saying that the problems were on the 'supply side of the economy' (i.e. in production) rather than on the 'demand side'.

As bourgeois economists, of course, they could not conclude that the problem was a contradictory, crisis-ridden and doomed mode of production. Instead, the influential monetarist school argued that everything would be hunky-dory with capitalism if only the government kept its sticky fingers off free enterprise. One thing the government can't avoid manipulating: the money supply. The monetarists recommend that the rate of growth of the money supply be gradually reduced to and then fixed at a rate equal to the trend real rate of growth of production. If that is done, they say, inflation will be controlled.

In the diluted version of monetarism pioneered by Healey and continued by Howe, targets are fixed for the rate of growth of the money supply, at the lowest level feasible, and then public spending is adjusted accordingly. It does not work very well even in its own terms, since the government has a limited range of choice over the money supply.

The Tories do not really have much idea of what the basic problems are on the 'supply side of the economy'. They say so themselves. "There is a definite limit to our capacity, as politicians, to influence these things for the better" (Howe, Budget speech).

But free enterprise, they believe, can or should do better. Problem: it is gummed up by excessive state spending, greedy workers, and listless bosses. Solution: gee up the workers by reducing their living standards and the bosses by increasing theirs (funny that the same effect should follow from such different causes). In this way the Tories instinctively come round to the notion that raising the rate of exploitation is crucial.

However, the budget, cutting spending power of most people and increasing interest rates, will curb demand both for consumer goods and for investment goods. And there is at least this much truth to Keynesian economics, that this cut in demand will drive the economy towards recession. All the more so given that profits are already declining and liquidity (companies' cash-in-hand) is tight.

The official forecasts confirm this: the Treasury predicts zero or negative growth, 20% inflation, 2 million unemployed. That's why share prices fell after the Budget.

The Tories' attitude to these forecasts is: what the hell. They do not think that the recession can be prevented. In their view any 'Keynesian' measures to prevent it will only make the basic problems worse. That is not to say that they may not be forced to reverse policy drastically if the recession snowballs. But for now their policy is: press on, and never mind the teething pains.

The Financial Times, in its editorial on the Budget, outlined quite clearly what this will mean:

"This could provide a favourable setting for resumed growth, provided that hard experience has taught the meaning of life under real monetary restraint.

"This involves not only a change in attitudes, but a change in the balance of industrial power. Years in which militancy has consistently won money gains have trained people to respond to a militant lead...

"Breaking this psychology — which has in fact been done in some enterprises — means bringing home the realities of risk and reward, which apply in the long run as much to employees as to their employers.

"[In some areas] it could be a ... brutal matter of resisting and defeating militancy. That is the unpleasant prospect for the near term".

It is up to us to make sure that things are even more unpleasant than they expect for the Financial Times and those it represents.

1. Glyn and Sutcliffe, p. 43.
2. A. Gamble and P. Walton, Capitalism in Crisis, p. 188; D. Yaffe, The Crisis of Profitability, New Left Review 80, p. 55.
3. See E. Mandel, Late Capitalism, p. 199-204, for an attempt at some estimates.
4. R. Rowthorn, New Left Review 98, p. 67; Gamble and Walton, p. 160-61.
5. Financial Times, 31 January 1979.
6. OECD Economic Outlook, July 1978.
7. 10th February 1979.
8. Economic Trends, Annual Supplement 1979 and January 1979.
9. British Economy Key Statistics 1900-1970, LCES, and Economic Trends January 1979.

From Kautsky to Eurocommunism: Revolution in Russia but not here ...

INTRODUCTION

by Bruce Robinson

In the fourth section of his article "A New Strategy" Karl Kautsky discusses the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905. He tries to show that Luxemburg's appeal to that experience is not valid because it occurred under different conditions from those existing in Germany in 1910, conditions which made the mass strike inevitable in Russia but inapplicable in Germany.

Kautsky begins with a general discussion of how Marxists should learn from historical experience, particularly the experience of revolutions. He paraphrases Marx's famous passage from the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte that "...in such periods of revolutionary crisis they (men) anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language". Kautsky argues that this is what Luxemburg's drawing on the Russian Revolution amounts to. He is correct to argue that history never repeats itself in exactly the same way, but goes much further. He argues that it is only possible to learn fruitful lessons from history at the level of "causal connections", i.e. the basic relations between classes but not at the level of the methods used and their results. Kautsky arrives at this position by referring to the experience of bourgeois revolutions and their relation to the tasks of socialists at the time he was writing. Yet the Russian Revolution had only taken place five years previously and was precisely the most important proletarian rising since the Paris Commune of 1871.

Although Kautsky correctly argues that tactics can only be applied with detailed reference to a specific situation, he fails to distinguish those elements in the Russian Revolution which can properly be called tactical from those which form a necessary part of all proletarian revolutions. Indeed, he only generally has a hazy conception of what would be involved in overthrowing the capitalist state.

Kautsky argues that the Russian experience is not useful for Germany because revolutionary methods cannot just be transferred at will from one country to another. This is not just a misrepresentation of Rosa Luxemburg's position, but also is used by Kautsky — as with so many reformists and Stalinists after him — to argue that "national peculiarities" should determine the nature of working class political action. It is used to reject any general revolutionary principles. Kautsky's rejection of the 'lessons' of the Russian Revolution of 1905 for Germany parallels the Stalinists' and reformists' rejection of the lessons of the Russian Revolution of 1917 for Western Europe today.

Kautsky emphasises that the mass strike was suited to Russian conditions because of the absolutist regime and the economic backwardness of Russia. This deprived the Russian working class of any form of expression other than strike action, in distinction to Germany where a whole number of legal working class organisations existed. Kautsky argues that the strikes took on a political aspect because the Czarist government left the workers no alternative and that that was why the division into different types of strikes which was valid in Germany broke down in Russia. At the same time, Kautsky points out that the discontent with Czarism following the defeats in the Russo-Japanese War had spread to all classes of society, including the state machine. The state was also faced with special problems due to the size of the Russian Empire and these factors meant that the functioning of the state was relatively easily undermined.

In an even more striking parallel with the arguments of the 'Eurocommunists', Kautsky sees the tactics and the fighting strikes used by the Russian workers as a sign of their backwardness, of the fact that they had not yet reached the higher stage of large-scale legal organisation, which would enable them to defend their interests in a different way. Despite his 'opposition' to transferring the experiences of one country mechanically to another, Kautsky in fact viewed the parliamentary/trade union routine of the German SPD as the norm which the workers in other countries should follow.



For Kautsky, and the Eurocommunists today, revolution in Russia was a sign of backwardness

Karl Kautsky: A NEW STRATEGY

Part 4. Strikes in Russia

We have seen how we became ensnared in a mass of contradictions as soon as we attempted to give a definite form to the slogan of the mass strike, which Comrade Luxemburg insists on discussing. That is certainly a cause for surprise given that Comrade Luxemburg is otherwise such a shrewd and clear-sighted thinker. But it is no longer a puzzle if we step back from her ideas to consider their origins. We then find that the contradictions in the conception of the mass strike which we find in our friend's writings, merely reflect the contradictions between conditions for the mass strike in Russia and in Germany.

Again and again Comrade Luxemburg refers us to the Russian revolution and says we must take its teachings to heart. I am the last person to underestimate the significance of such a massive upheaval and to deny that all of us can and have a lot to learn from it.

But learning does not simply mean imitating. The usual conception of learning from history is that it represents a collection of successes and failures; that its mere consideration shows us the roads which lead to success and the diversions which we must avoid. Nothing is more wrong, indeed more damaging, than this conception. It would only

be justified if history, as many people believe, was really the constant repetition of the same events with only the names, the language and the costumes of the actors changed, while their roles and the course of the play remained the same. In reality society undergoes a constant development into ever more complicated forms as a consequence of the process of technological development; the economic and political struggles which make up history are therefore never repeated in exactly the same way and these struggles become ever more numerous and varied. At various times and in various countries very different methods have been successful and there is hardly a method of struggle, hardly an institution, for which historical proof of its excellence could not be found, whether for Jacobin terror or Christian devotion, for an all-embracing revolution or a reformation advancing by steps, for republic or monarchy, federalism or centralism etc.

In this way one can prove from history whatever one wants to and thus can only too easily be made to look stupid, for history does not repeat itself and behind external similarities between different periods there often exist the greatest social differences.

It is particularly dangerous to appeal to revolutionary models in defence of one's case. A tremendous event like a revolution leaves the deepest impressions which have an effect for generations. The ways in which the revolution achieved its successes are taken for a long time to be the only correct ones. Such an event however also always awakens great expectations in enthusiastic individuals which it does not fulfill, and they are all the greater the more momentous the event itself is. If the revolution finally takes a different course from that hoped for by those enthusiastic disciples, then that is taken to be a consequence of 'mistakes' which are to be avoided next time. Thus a revolution appears always to be particularly fruitful in 'lessons' which show how further revolutions can be led to victory and which mistakes one must guard against.

But such a great revolution cannot pass without fundamentally changing the conditions which it found in existence and under which it took place. It does not always preserve what many hope and wish it to, but it constantly transforms the political and social conditions it finds existing and creates new ones which necessitate new methods of struggle and propaganda so that we are completely misled if we want to apply the lessons of the successes and failures of a revolution later without any further consideration.

It is not however being said that we cannot and should not learn from history and particularly from the history of revolutions. But what we have to take from them is not a collection of successful and inadequate methods, but the understanding of causal connections. By examining and recognising the causal connections of the social processes of a particular period and by comparing them with those of other periods as well as our own period, the understanding of the latter is facilitated for us; it becomes possible for us to separate the important factors of its development from its superficial and accidental elements, to evaluate more exactly specific factors and from examining them to draw more correct conclusions about the future and thus about our tasks in the present than we could do otherwise.

Whoever, for example, considers the French Revolution from the point of view of the advantages offered by the methods of Jacobinism or by the cooperation of peasants, citizens, proletarians inspired by the ethical formulae of liberty, equality and fraternity, will achieve results which are only too easily misleading for the present. It is one of the inadequacies of French socialism that the 'lessons' of the great revolutions still exert an effect on it. On the other hand an examination of the role which the different classes play in the revolution is very important for the understanding of the nature of these classes and their relationships to one another, especially if one compares them with later forms of development, such as those of 1848, 1871 and today. We then see clearly what the proletariat today can still expect from the intellectuals, the great industrial capitalists, the petty bourgeoisie, and the peasants, how far it can cooperate with them or must oppose them. The results of the political and economic experiences of our time are deepened and clarified by their comparison with the experiences of the past.

And a similar situation applies to a comparison of the experiences of different countries. Every country can and should learn from other countries. But not simply by imitating the latter's methods, but by comparing its experiences with those of other countries, by tracing the latter's successes and failures back to their causes and by examining how far the same causes exist, existed or are in the process of coming into existence and thus create or allow us to expect the same effects.

Comrade Luxemburg refers us again and again to the example of the Russian mass strikes which initiated the revolution of 1905.

In what circumstances did they take place?

They began at a time when the Russian government had become the weakest government in the world. No class identified with it any longer, it appeared to all classes, even to the landowners and capitalists, as the cause of the ruin of Russia, as the curse of the country, as a dangerous predatory animal that must be killed. The large-scale corruption, the lunatic squandering of the resources of the country, the complete prevention of its economic development, the disorganisation of the whole administration had emerged in the crassest forms in a war which had been launched in the most lackadaisical fashion, against opponents who were laughed at and scorned and who now inflicted on the army one terrible defeat after another which not only destroyed this last prop of the government but even changed it into a force in rebellion. The officers had found themselves victims of the general contempt of the ordinary soldiers who scorned them and ignored them. And of the officers themselves, all elements who still possessed

honour, vigour and intelligence joined in with the most bitter opponents of the government.

Next to the army the firmest prop of czarism had until then been the peasantry, which had worshipped the czar as a higher being, a god, omnipotent and perfect, from whom they again and again expected help in their desperate situation. This mood had completely vanished in 1905. One peasant rebellion followed on the heels of another.

That was the situation in which the mass strike movement thrived and finally grew into an irresistible force.

On the other hand, we find in Russia at the time a proletariat which in many towns was already very numerous, at the same time was extremely oppressed and embittered, and which however was being deprived of every possibility of legal organisation, legal activity, legal education. If the proletarians wanted to meet, if they wanted to announce their demands, if they wanted to protest against their misery, then only one means was left for them: the strike. On the other hand, it was precisely through the strike that the separate workers were linked to one another; through it they won awareness of their own strength which raises the mass above the individual; they were enthused by it, their hopelessness disappeared, they became open to new ideas which they greedily took up.

The strike was thus a necessity of life for the Russian worker; it was even the mere existence of strikes which encouraged him, without considering whether it was a protest strike or a fighting strike; whether it was directed against capitalists or against the government. The fact that a strike took place was in itself already a success, a victory. The demands and aims of the strike were less important and often were not even clearly expressed. And, on the other hand, every strike, whatever its character might be in other respects, became from the outset a rebellion against legality, it became a revolutionary action.

That had already been the case in the years immediately before the revolution. The war, the collapse of the government, the economic crisis, the poverty stung the workers increasingly often to enter upon strikes which increasingly took on the political character of a protest against the whole system of government, and thus also won ever more sympathy in the circles of the bourgeois opposition.



Members of the St. Petersburg Soviet on their way to exile in Siberia.

The peculiarity of this strike movement was further strengthened by the enormous breadth of the empire and its inadequate communications, its lack of railways, postal communications and newspapers. Russia still does not constitute a single economic unit, it consists of numerous areas which are completely independent, the proletarian masses having no contact with one another. If the strike movement everywhere developed more and more into a fighting movement against czarism in the course of 1905, it was nonetheless far from being unified in all respects. It did not break out everywhere at the same time, but today in Lodz in Poland and tomorrow in Baku on the other side of the Caucasus; then perhaps in the Urals, in Petersburg, in Odessa, later in Riga, finally on the Don. This fragmentation did not however at first damage the movement. On the contrary, it ensured that it did not come to rest, that the whole empire appeared to be in a constant state of movement for the whole year, that the government did not feel safe anywhere, could not concentrate its tools of power anywhere, had to become fragmented everywhere, and finally collapsed when the powerful movement swelled up into a tempest in October which stormed through the whole empire at the same time.

In this the workers of Russian Poland behaved particularly outstandingly. This country is the most industrially developed region of the empire and the workers are the most highly developed intellectually (apart from those in Finland). At the same time however they are subject to even worse oppression than those in Russia itself wherever this is possible and are more inclined to rebellion than the Russian workers, since their nation can look back to a series of large-scale insurrections against czarism.

The revolutionary strike movement in Russian Poland certainly belongs to the most heroic and splendid achievements in the European proletariat's struggle for emancipation until now. I do not at all contradict Comrade Luxemburg when she regards the workers of her native country as the champions of socialism in the present period.

But my respect and admiration for those heroes cannot cause me to call simply to German workers: go forth and do the same. Cervantes already knew that what is heroism in particular conditions becomes quixotic in changed circumstances.

Can we bear children without being slaves?

REVIEW

A UTOPIAN society of the mid-22nd century, in which men and women are so 'equal' they are often indistinguishable, is described in great detail in Marge Piercy's new science fiction novel *Woman on the Edge of Time*. She draws a picture of a society with common ownership of everything from means of production to clothing; with freedom from oppression, and centrally concerned with balance and harmony in the physical, inter- and intra-personal realms.

However, women have only emancipated themselves socially by renouncing or losing their biological roles, and this confusion underlies the social structure of the new society.

Connie, a present-day Mexican-American, is an impoverished New Yorker made a widow and childless by the State. Her fight against the misery of her life is interpreted as insanity, and she is consigned to a mental institution.

She is contacted by a woman from the future American society, and at first mistakes her for a man, as 'he' speaks and moves with that air of brisk unselfconscious authority Connie associated with men.

Connie is enabled to explore in increasing detail the future from which this woman comes: a decentralised village society, acutely aware of personal needs and ecological demands in its deployment of energy and manpower resources.

She feels more at home with her contacts in the future, with whom she develops warm and fulfilling relationships, than in her bleak present where she is forcibly contained and drugged, and coerced into accepting an electronic mood-controlling brain implant to deal with her anger and despair.

The support and hope she gains from the future, particularly from the counterparts of her dead lover and lost child, eventually enable her to take direct action against the oppression that she and others are suffering in the guise of psychiatric treatment. She poisons the medical team which is experimenting with mood control, despite the knowledge that this will condemn her to the worst state mental institution for life. On that note the book ends.

Marge Piercy, in an interview with Spare Rib, acknowledges her anarchistic orientation, her interest in interpersonal behaviour within organisations, and in the way in which Western socialisation precludes the cooperative disposition which is such a pervasive feature of her future.

In this society, women contribute equally and have equal access to the community's benefits. However, this has not come about, in Piercy's description, from social change but from the abolition of childbirth.

Children all come from the community breeder - 'test-tube babies' in our terms - in a population whose genetic mix is predetermined by council. Each child is allotted three

self-selected 'mothers', two of whom suckle it - the men presumably hormonally enabled to do so. In his/her teens, s/he undergoes a 'rite of passage' to become a youth free of his/her mothers, but with adviser 'aunts' s/he has selected. Child- and youth-care and education is a communal responsibility.

'It was part of women's long revolution. When we were breaking all the old hierarchies. Finally there was that one thing we had to give up too, the only power we ever had, in return for no more power for anyone. The original production: the power to give birth. 'Cause as long as we were biologically enchained, we'd never be equal. And males never would be humanised to be loving and tender. So we all became mothers.'

Connie, despite her initial horror of these 'bland bottle-born monsters of the future', has for comparison her own family, wrecked by poverty and discrimination, and that of her brother: he is a successfully Americanised businessman whose family pays for his favours with uncritical praise; he is absolutely powerful over his wife, children, sisters.

And Connie intrudes by mistake into another future, where women, surgically adjusted to a caricature of the female figure, and suitably conditioned, are under contract to provide sex, and occasionally children, and are completely dependent on the contract and the status of their contracted partner in a rigidly classified society.

Piercy's equation of biology with destiny is widespread in the women's movement, and enables feminists to reject socialism as insufficient for women's emancipation.

But even freedom from childbearing does not necessarily entail liberation of women - nor does it entail the 'humanising' of men if they adopt stereotypically feminine qualities. The equation is false. The vision of the free woman could remain even if she still bore and suckled children, since the support of other adults, and of the community, in nourishing, nurturing and educating the child is not dependent on biological feminisation of every member of a society but on the economic bases of that society which ultimately determine its goals and values. It is this, and not biology, that has to be revolutionised in order to free women from the dual role of enforced slave to the family - for lack of any communal resources or concern - and second-class worker for capital during its more prosperous phases or in war.

But Piercy does not set herself the task of accounting for the change in society between now and then: the 'bad' future is an extrapolation from the present; the 'good' owes a lot to the past. So, though the vision is fascinating, more complete and intricately worked than many others, and in many ways attractive, its women have no choice in relinquishing their biological role for their social equality.

MANDY WILLIAMS

* The Women's Press, £1.95.

Leicester: MARCH ON JULY 21ST

THREE anti-fascist protestors, Martin Hughes, George Richardson, and Jack Lemmon, have been jailed for three months in Leicester.

A demonstration in Leicester on July 21st will demand the dropping of the charges against those arrested on the April 21st anti-NF protest, and the disbanding of the SPG.

Big fines and prison sentences are also being imposed. The fines reached a new high last week when one person was fined £700, plus costs. Another defendant, who was fined £300, also had to pay costs of £200, a 'high' for costs.

1pm, Saturday 21st July, Victoria Park, Leicester

The three anti-fascists given prison sentences are in Leicester prison. They are not allowed books or radios, and are allowed only one half hour visit a month. Apart from the two half hour spells of recreation [i.e. walking round the prison yard] they spend the day sewing mailbags for 80p a week [but the prison does operate a bonus scheme, so any prisoner can earn more than this magnificent amount].

Letters of solidarity and support should be sent to them at: Welford Road Prison, Welford Road, Leicester. STAN CROOKE

WORKERS' ACTION



Cops line up to protect managers entering Ryton

TALBOT/CHRYSLER STRIKE: More than pay at stake

FRIDAY 13th was an unlucky day for the bosses at the Talbot (previously Chrysler) car plant at Ryton, Coventry. They arrived for work with 300 administrative and clerical staff who had been operating from hotel rooms since the shop floor walked out over a wage claim on 30th June.

The bosses' planned strike breaking failed when white collar workers (members of TASS and ACTSS) refused to cross the picket lines. About 40 non-union managers did enter the factory, but only with the aid of two dozen policemen under the supervision of the head of the Warwickshire Constabulary.

It was another bid by the Talbot/Chrysler bosses to cripple the strike that has surprised both them and the union bureaucrats with its militancy. The strike was called in protest at a 5½% pay offer. Managers remained in the factory, supplied with campbeds, food and TVs, but the pickets soon succeeded in preventing anyone entering or leaving the factory.

On July 3rd, 3400 workers at the Stoke components plant, also in Coventry, voted with only 12 against to come out on the 10th alongside Ryton. The Ryton and Stoke workers are demanding:

- a 25% pay rise (£20 for production workers),
- a 35 hour week, guaranteed lay-off pay, 25 days' annual holiday, and improved maternity leave.

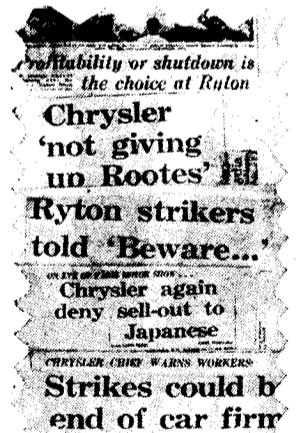
The 5½% offer would have added an extra £4 onto production workers' wages — which are £18 below the average engineering wage in the West Midlands.

The Talbot/Chrysler management justify the 5½% offer on the grounds that it is a bigger overall increase, since the company is committed to bringing other plants up to parity with Coventry. Linwood production workers are to get 10.4% to bring them up to parity with Coventry's 5½%. This means making the Coventry workers pay out of their own pockets for the fact that

Chrysler has kept Linwood wages down.

Many workers feel, however, that there is more at stake than forcing the bosses to negotiate a new wage offer. The 5½% limit shows a hardening of Talbot/Chrysler's attitude to the British workforce. The bosses claim they cannot afford any more, because the company made £30 million losses last year.

That loss is, however, partly due to a loss of exports to Iran following the revolution — a loss for which Talbot/Chrysler was insured. And the workers are being made to pay for the bosses' difficulties.



1400 workers at Stoke have only just returned to normal working after six months on short time. It has recently been suggested that five new factories are planned in France and one in East Germany, while the factory in Iran is being expanded from just being an assembly plant. Peugeot/Citroen, the new owners of Talbot/Chrysler, claim that the Stoke and Whitley plants will be moved over to the production of components. The long-term prospect for these plants is, however, closure.

When Peugeot/Citroen took over Chrysler Europe, it seems they did not see Chrysler as a production system so much as a distribution network.

Weakness on the part of the unions now will put the bosses in a better position to close down factories in the

future.

The strike is likely to be a long one. But the workers are ready for that.

The Coventry holiday fortnight began on Friday 13th, but many of the workers have sacrificed their holidays to maintain the 24 hour picket. The pickets fully expect that it will be 3 or 4 weeks before the Linwood plant (which depends on Stoke for supplies, as does Dunstable) will grind to a halt, forcing the bosses to negotiate. Already the Baginton works, also in Coventry, which packs the car kits for export to Iran, has been forced to close.

Talks are taking place between Coventry union officials and docks TGWU officials at Newhaven and Dover, where Talbot/Chrysler might try to import supplies from the continent for Linwood and Dunstable. Failing official backing, many Coventry strikers are ready to picket the docks themselves.

The bosses have made a number of attempts to break the strike. The events of Friday 13th were repeated on Monday 16th with more police. 300 white collar workers were shipped in buses to the picket line, but refused to cross it. Electricians and toolroom men also refused to go in. Only 47 managers crossed the picket line.

But non-union contractors' labour has been brought in by Talbot/Chrysler for maintenance. And a High Court writ was served on the Ryton pickets, who were occupying factory gatehouses, eventually forcing them to move outside the gates.

The bosses have also tried to split the workers by sending personal letters to individuals and by upgrading the 5½% offer for production workers to 6% for inspectors, 10% for drivers, and up to 29% for some foremen.

After the holiday fortnight, strike pay will be paid at the rate of £6 a week for TGWU members and £9 for AUEW members. Donations are needed: send to Chrysler Strike Fund, Transport House, Coventry.

NICK LAWRENCE

No 12-hour shifts, say Cadbury workers

800 PRODUCTION workers, many of them women, have been on strike at Cadbury's Bournville factory since Friday 6th July. The action was caused by the company's decision to bring in a new shift system (two 12 hour shifts for four days) in the new Creme Egg plant.

The new shifts were brought in despite being overwhelmingly rejected in several company-organised ballots. The most recent ballot was on Thursday 21st June, when 90% of the workforce voted no. Despite this, the company told women in the new plant that they would be sent home on the following Monday, 25th, if they refused to work the new shifts.

A few women were intimidated into agreeing, but the vast majority of the factory blacked the new plant. On Tuesday, 26th, there was a one day strike of all production workers, and for the next ten days chaos reigned as the company tried to keep production going and the blacking became more and more widespread.

Finally, at dinner time on Friday 6th July, TGWU stewards recommended an all out strike of production workers. Since then the whole Bournville factory has been closed down and the gates are being picketed. The action was made official last Friday, 13th.

JIM DENHAM

REGRADING ULTIMATUM FROM BL

BRITISH LEYLAND bosses have announced, in a letter to employees from Ray Horrocks, dated 10th July, that they will implement regrading unilaterally.

At national level the trade unions have ended negotiations with the company on regrading because the company has refused to budge on the question of production workers being in grade 3. [The unions want a 4 grade system with production workers in grade 2]. The company's proposals effectively mean downgrading production workers.

The company has announced that they will introduce regrading anyway, and they're hoping that they can get away with it due to parity money awarded with regrading. They are using the 2:1 vote for the parity package last year to justify this.

Ray Horrocks [Austin Morris] stated in the letter: "We cannot stand by and see employees who are working hard being prevented from receiving, month after month, money they have justly earned".

As the holiday period is beginning, it is difficult to assess the shop-floor response to the regrading. The strongest reaction will probably be at Cowley and Longbridge, where rectifiers have already protested.

NEIL COBBETT

Purge at Bagnalls

OVER THE last few months the bosses at Bagnalls, Basingstoke, have launched a witch-hunt against the distribution of the fortnightly Workers' Action bulletin within the factory — and it is now reaching a peak.

In their attempt to stamp out the bulletin, Bagnalls put notices up around the factory saying that anyone found giving it out would be immediately sacked. Back in March, Martin Timmins, a member of the Boilermakers' union and a WA supporter, was sacked for alleged bad time-keeping.

An Industrial Tribunal in June ruled unfair dismissal.

Despite this, Bro. Timmins has not been reinstated, and in fact the bosses have continued their witch-hunt by victimising other workers who appeared as witnesses for Bro. Timmins. Some have been disciplined and given verbal warnings over supposed malpractices in sick leave.

More seriously, Bagnalls EETPU convenor Mark Stone-man has been sacked after being accused of distributing the Workers' Action bulletin. The apparently isolated incidents of victimisation are really a concerted attempt to get rid of workers who are not willing to toe the line of the bosses, or of the top union leaders.

250 EETPU members had a one-day strike on 18th July in support of the sacked and victimised workers. Although this was a good starting point, other action is necessary.

For example, the Boilermakers' union rule that no overtime is to be worked when there is an unemployed union member in the area must be enforced.

However, the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee has done very little, and seems reluctant to defend trade unionists against Bagnalls' arbitrary disciplinary procedures and their undemocratic ban on alternative information and views being distributed among the workers. The rank and file must demand a change of attitude.

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

SATURDAY 21 JULY. Picket of Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Heathrow: "Smash all immigration controls". 2pm. Organised by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, supported by black and anti-racist organisations.

SATURDAY 21 JULY. Haringey labour movement Anti-Racist and Anti-Fascist Campaign. Assemble 1.30pm Manor House (Finsbury Park), march to Ducketts Common for festival. Speakers: Ted Knight, Rep Race MP.

FRIDAY 27 JULY. Irish Workers' Group/Workers' Power joint public meeting: 'Revolutionary perspectives for Britain and Ireland'. 7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., WC2 (Holborn tube). Admission 20p.

THURSDAY 2 AUGUST. Manchester Workers' Action public meeting, 'The Rank and File Movement'. Speaker: John Douglas, secretary USDAW CWS Packing (in personal capacity). 7.30pm at 'The Packhorse', near Deansgate Station.

SATURDAY 11 AUGUST. Haringey United Troops Out Movement benefit social. 8pm at Caxton House, St John's Way, N19 (Archway tube).

SUNDAY 12 AUGUST. Demonstration in London to call on the British Government to adopt a policy of withdrawal from Ireland. The United Troops Out Movement is organising a 'Troops Out Now' contingent. Coach from Edinburgh leaves at 10pm on Saturday 11th from Waverley Bridge. Tickets £10 return. Contact 031-229 1861.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY 12-13 OCTOBER. 'Critique' conference on the socialist alternative and in defence of Rudolf Bahro. At Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., London.

Published by Workers' Action, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD, and printed by Anvil Press [TU]. Registered as a newspaper at the GPO.

WORKERS' ACTION

For more information, or to subscribe to Workers' Action, complete this form and send to the address below:

NAME

ADDRESS

- I want more information
- I want to be put in touch with Workers' Action supporters in my area
- I want to subscribe for 25 issues/50 issues.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES Rest of the world, air mail
25 issues: £9
50 issues: £16.50

Britain & Ireland
25 issues: £6
50 issues: £11.25

Cheques etc. payable to 'Workers Action'.

SEND TO: WA, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.