

Chartist

SOCIALIST CHARTER BI-MONTHLY JOURNAL No 79 MARCH/MAY 1980

50p



Focus on the Cuts

Hounslow Hospital occupation

Ted Knight interview

The cuts: their strategy and ours

**South Africa • Eurocommunism • State
repression • Tories and racism • Reviews**

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Chartist is the bi-monthly journal of the Socialist Charter incorporating the monthly *Chartist* newspaper and the journal *Chartist International*. Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the editorial Collective.

Individual copies are available for 60p (inc. p&p).

Subscriptions are £2.50 (\$6 US) for five issues.

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This edition of *Chartist* was produced by an Editorial Collective consisting of: Geoff Bender, Martin Cook, Alan Crisp, Mike Davis, Don Flynn, Keith Savage, John Spencer, Hudson Pace, Paul Hoggett and Mark Douglas.

Contributions for the next issue should be sent to reach us not later than May 1st 1980.

Printed by Anyway Litho, 252 Brixton Road, London SW9.

Typeset by RT Studios, 74 Shakespeare Rd, London SE24 and Bread 'n Roses, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1.

Published by Chartist Publications, 60, Loughborough Road, London SW9 01-733 8953.

Editorial :

COLD WAR,

HOT WAR

The last few weeks have seen a dramatic heightening of class and national conflicts on a global and domestic level. These have brought to the surface quite starkly the world-historic choices facing humankind but in a social climate in which the progressive forces of the working class and oppressed have been found lacking in either the social weight or political alternatives to counter the international offensive of Western capitalism.

Their system wracked by recession and inflation, national leaders are resorting to more radical and sweeping measures to arrest the seeming resistance of capital and its producers to a return to stable accumulation and profitability.

Detente is in ruins, the arms race is accelerating once more and the chill winds of the Cold War and militarism once again begin to blow. The spectre of World War Three which haunted the world in the 1950s and early sixties again casts its shadow.

AFGHANISTAN

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on December 19th came at a good time for the Carter administration in Washington. With popularity sagging, Edward Kennedy's bandwagon on the road and US labour bucking against austerity measures Carter has apparently been able to reverse the trend in this election year through the simple device of international sabre-rattling. However, despite all the hoo-haa, the humiliations of Vietnam, Angola and latterly Nicaragua and the hammer blows of international slump will not be easily removed.

The Tories under Iron Maiden Thatcher, also taking their cue from Afghanistan – not that they needed prompting, have been quick to step into the vanguard of Western imperialism's anti-communist crusade. Here the loudest voices are raised for boycotting the Olympics in Moscow, for stepping up arms sales and handouts to the murderous military dictatorship of General Zia in Pakistan, for more trade and aid with the Chinese bureaucracy and for a strengthening of NATO. To add insult to injury the Tories have restored full diplomatic relations with the barbarous regime of General Pinochet in Chile – just in case you hadn't got the message about the kind of 'democracy' the Tories favour.

HYPOCRISY

The Chartist opposes the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan because we do not believe they can substitute themselves for isolated indigeneous revolutionary forces, not because they are imperialist. The bureaucratic nature of the Soviet Union's approach to socialism, especially in other countries, cannot be a solution to essentially political problems of building an international socialist movement. But the role of socialists is not to join the hypocritical chorus from the West. Britain has occupied Afghanistan three times in the last 150 years and is no stranger to military subjugation of other nations or upholder of the sovereignty of nation states. We need look no

further than Oman in the Gulf, the north of Ireland or Zimbabwe to find evidence of British troops keeping down the "rebels". Although the US's overt use of troops ended with Vietnam, covert operations courtesy of the CIA and stooge-regimes continue throughout the world, not least of all in the vicinity of Afghanistan. Moreover, the Russian occupation of Afghanistan was preceded by several sabre-rattling incidents on the part of western imperialism. The US Congress had refused to ratify SALT II after Brezhnev had declared full Russian support. On December 12th NATO decided on a massive new arms 'modernisation' programme, with the production and employment of new medium range nuclear missiles in W. Europe. It was also early December when Carter had been threatening Iran over the embassy hostages (still being held) with a military build-up in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf.

The Cold warriors had been well on the march before the Russian action. Thatcher had commissioned new cruise missiles with alternating nuclear or chemical warheads and £4,000 to £5,000 million had been allocated to a new nuclear deterrent force to replace Polaris. While the Tories and their friends promote and expand spending on means of destruction, oppression and war, the means of constructive production for human enrichment and liberation are laid waste. Every industry and socially useful public service finds itself the target of Thatcher/Joseph/Howe "led it bleed" policy of savage cuts in funding and jobs. As unemployment nudges nearer the two million mark, with predictions of three to four million by 1981-2, primary sections of British industry are projected back into the satanic days of the 19th Century for 'market forces' to do their work. The Tories monetarist fantasies might salve their ideological consciences but they are clearly finding disfavour from those who live in this end of the 20th Century. The CBI have opposed Keith Joseph's cuts in Regional Aid Policy: the Tory-controlled Association of Metropolitan Authorities and County Councils have opposed Heseltine's local government cuts, splits are beginning to reopen in the Tory front benches. Even President Carter's 1980 *Economic Report* attacks the Tories "restrictive monetary and fiscal policies", for a predicted 2% drop in GDP. But it is amongst a beleaguered labour movement that the most significant reaction - though uneven and confused - is mounting.

STEEL STRIKE

British Steel was one industry where the Tories calculated they could impose their financial straight-jacket with least resistance. However, the anger of the steelworkers at the insulting 2 per cent pay offer is now, through the course of the national strike, being transformed into a tenacity to win not just on the 20 per cent pay claim but on jobs as well. The links are certainly being made in the valleys of South Wales where a 200,000 turned out to strike on January 28th against the threatened loss of thousands of jobs not just in steel, but in mining and manufacturing.

However, whilst rank and file steelworkers are drawing more radical conclusions from the strike experience (in which hundreds have now been arrested) union leaders and most Labour spokespersons fail to challenge the 52,000 redundancies themselves, but simply the timing, wanting them spread out over a two year period instead of this Autumn. The greatest barrier to any deep-going optimism on the outcome of the national steel strike - the first for fifty years - is the abysmal lack of *political* alternatives coming from within the unions or the Labour and far left. Neither militant cheer-leading and solidarity with pickets however important and necessary - nor alternative schemes to make the British Steel Corporation 'viable and profitable' are adequate.

TWO-PRONGED STRATEGY

What is required, both for British Steel and British Leyland where 25,000 jobs are going with 50,000 more workers threatened with lay-offs, is a two pronged strategy. The first prong based on the demand for a 30-35 hour week and

work sharing with no loss of pay. The other for an alternative plan for the industries which would be drawn up by the workers themselves - as at Lucas Aerospace. This would examine the amounts of steel/cars, required, the possibilities of alternative products with proposals for any re-training on a guaranteed basic wage. Access to the BSC and BL accounts would be essential to discover the extent of interest and compensation payoffs to old owners and banks, and backdoor denationalisation scandals like the joint venture of BSC and GKN where the private firm comes off the winner. Such an investigation would help reveal the impossibility of maintaining profit as the mainspring of production, its irreconcilability with defence of jobs and the need for more sweeping measures to eliminate private capital.

With rank and file involvement through branches and shop stewards committees the worst that could emerge would be an irrefutable case for enormous state support, the best a powerful workers movement conscious of the need to assert control in an expanded and dominant state sector of production.

Overall, whilst the storm clouds seem to be gathering for a class-wide confrontation with the Tories, with the South Wales TUC postponing their call for a general strike to March 10th, and even a frustrated Len Murray declaring a TUC 'day of action' against Prior's Employment Bill on March 9th - "we are in for a rough time and I mean very rough", it would be a mistake for the left to overestimate the depth of readiness to bring down the Tories or underestimate the possibilities for compromise on the part of trade union leaders and Tories.

In these conditions the call for a general strike could be suicidal unless politically and ideologically prepared. The parallels with 1926 and the defeats which preceded it are ominous. Let us not forget that most steel workers, 20,000 at Corby included and a large majority of BL workers had voted not to continue resistance to thousands of redundancies. Moreover, this is but a paler manifestation of the wider confusion and ideological defeats represented by the Tory victory at the polls.

The cold war internationally and the hot war in Britain mean that the left has got a lot of political homework to do if we want to avoid the disasters of the 1930s.

IN THIS ISSUE

Our main feature this issue is on public spending cuts. GEOFF BENDER examines the contradictions of monetarist policies and the responses of the Labour movement and the left. We also examine more closely two test cases in the struggle against cuts - the Labour Government's and the Tories. PETE ROWLANDS looks at the Hounslow Hospital occupation, drawing some lessons for future battles against closures and our interview with Ted Knight, Lambeth Council leader, focuses on the experience of fighting cuts in this typical inner city area and the strategy and perspective - attacked from left and right - Knight is pursuing.

JOHN SPENCER puts the spotlight on South Africa in analysing the tensions and conflicts which are bubbling in that racist state and the interactions with developments in neighbouring countries. In our next issue we aim to cover the main source of current conflicts - Zimbabwe - and draw a balance sheet on the elections. DON FLYNN contributes a discussion piece on Eurocommunism which challenges the assumptions of the orthodox Trotskyist movement and calls for a new appraisal which abandons the blinkered responses of "the same old Stalinism" and recognises the positive forms of analysis, though not necessarily content, of the left Euros.

In our Survey section, BERNARD MISRAHI continues our assessment of the Tories racist policies and once again underlines the significance the left should attach to campaigning against existing immigration laws and state racism. JIM BARROW complements Geoff Bender's more theoretical piece on the modern state in *Chartist 77* by looking at moves towards a more repressive, strong state in Britain. As usual we have Reviews and Observations compiled by Intervention Collective. If any of our readers have short pieces, letters or reviews or just simply ideas don't hesitate to send them in.

SURVEY

Tories and immigration – turning the racist screw

As the Tories published their 'Proposals for revision of the Immigration Rules' (HMSO Cmnd 7750, £1.50) the movement against immigration controls is stronger than ever. About ten thousand were on the march through London against these new proposals last November. As far as we know, that was the ONLY national demo of any size against racist controls ever to be held in this country. Just as important as the size was the composition of the 'Campaign Against Racist Laws' which was the co-ordinating committee of organisations that got together specially to organise the march. Naturally, organisations that were set up specifically to fight the immigration laws – such as the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants and the Campaign Against the Immigration Laws were there. But so were the Anti-Nazi League, all three Indian Workers Associations, and all the major immigrant organisations.

DEPORTATION

Over the last eighteen months local campaigns have sprung up to prevent individuals from being deported or removed – Abdul Azad from Oldham, Nasira Begum from Manchester, Akram Dogar from Oxford. Some of these struggles were successful, some weren't, others are still being fought, such as in Rochdale where Anwar Ditta is fighting the Home Office to bring three of her children from Pakistan to join her, her husband and her younger daughter. It isn't clear whether more black people are being persecuted now than before. What is certain is that many more are finding the courage, through support in their local community and the anti-racist movement to fight back. At least they are making Timothy Raison, the immigration minister, complain about the number of appeals he has to deal with.

The Campaign Against the Immigration Laws (CAIL) was formed over eighteen months ago by the labour and anti-racist movements, just after Thatcher's notorious 'swamping' speech and the appalling Select Committee Report, but before the current increase in racist controls, CAIL languished at first as every meeting was filled with tedious,



BERNARD MISRAHI

repetitive debate about whether the only tenable campaigning position was 'Scrap ALL controls', as opposed to trying to build a movement to unite all those prepared to fight existing racist laws plus any proposed laws which promised to be even more racist.

Almost all the campaigners thought all immigration laws would be racist, and could think of several reasons for opposing any that might not be. The majority however did not want to take a position that would immediately cut off any debate with those very people who agreed that existing controls were dreadful but did not agree with CAIL activists on the alternatives.

CAIL GROWTH

When the scandal of the virginity tests was exposed there was a sudden increase in interest in immigration control procedure, and CAIL picked up. It now speaks at many labour meetings, anti-racist and student meetings, explaining how the laws operate, so that an informed opposition to controls can be built. It also produces a quarterly bulletin – CAIL NEWS – and organises the occasional picket of prisons or the Home Office to help keep the issue alive. Like many other campaigns on the left much of the work is talking to the converted, but at least it is informing, rather than preaching, to them.

It is certainly encouraging to hear of the sudden conversion of Merlyn Rees and Brynmor John who as Home Secretary and Immigration Minister in the Labour Government were responsible for virginity tests on Asian women, the jailing without trial of hundreds of 'illegal immigrants' –

everything in fact that the Tories are now doing. 'Racist, sexist and morally indefensible' was Rees' comment on the Tory proposals on foreign husbands and fiancés. Very apt – but equally applicable to his decision in 1977 to accuse all black people coming here to marry, of marrying for convenience, and compelling them to submit to a year's probation to convince the Home Office that their marriage was genuine.

TORY PROPOSALS

This increase in resistance to controls is encouraging but should not lead anyone to believe that the Tories can be forced to back down on the main immigration proposals in their manifesto. The only concessions they seem to have made are on grounds of practicality – the register of dependents – and unexpected delay in drawing up the necessary legislation on nationality law.

The proposal to draw up a register of dependents from the Indian Sub-Continent has been dropped for the time being, ostensibly on grounds of cost. It would be very difficult to administer and was not in any case designed to actually reduce black immigration but only to 'allay fears' about the number of black immigrants still expected to arrive. It is unlikely to succeed in this intention, if only because the knowledge that only those on the register could ever hope to enter Britain would encourage many who had no intention of emigrating

in the near future to put their names down, just in case.

What about the election promises they have kept? The restriction on foreign husbands and fiancés of women living in, but not born, in Britain is well known. It is striking that the Tories have changed their original proposal so as to make it unlikely that British-born women will be affected. The clauses relating to this rule give complete discretion to the immigration officer (the Entry Clearance Officer in the country of emigration in this case) to judge whether he or she thinks the 'marriage was one entered into primarily to gain admission to the UK or that one of the parties no longer has any intention of living permanently with the other as his or her spouse or that the parties to the marriage have not met'. The Entry Clearance Officer can then decide, without any need to justify his or her decision to anyone, whether to grant or refuse the necessary Clearance to enter Britain. Under existing rules, immigrants have been deported if their marriage broke down years after they entered Britain. Nasira Begum is threatened with deportation for this reason.

LESS PUBLICISED CHANGES

Another change in the rules that has been less well publicised concerns the entry of parents and grandparents and children of between 18 and 21 years of age. Previously it was very difficult for black people to bring them into this country to join them, even if they undertook to maintain them so they would not have to claim any welfare benefits whatsoever. Now it will be virtually impossible as the relative must have no-one at all in his or her country to turn to and must be living at a significantly lower standard of living than is normal in that country. Yet any remittances that the sponsoring son or grandson has been sending to the relative will raise the relative's standard of living, in a country like India, sufficiently to disqualify them from entering Britain under that rule. The Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants say that no-one has ever qualified under this 'Distressed Relatives' rule when it was applied to more distant relatives such as uncles.

There are other changes. Previously, those with an income not derived from working here, or with a bit of capital could settle as 'people of independent means'. Now they will need an income of £10,000 per year or be able to invest £100,000 in a business. Another small loophole for black immigration is thus closed up.

The issue of work permits was already so restricted that the Tories could not keep their manifesto promise to restrict it further. They did threaten in their manifesto to totally remove the possibility of holders of work permits eventually settling in Britain after about four



20,000 March in London on November 1979 against Tories racist immigration laws.

years. They have in fact allowed permit holders to stay if their present employers want to continue employing them. But once settlement rights are granted there is nothing to stop the worker from changing jobs. So keep your nose clean for about five years and you'll be alright.

ABNORMAL SEXUALITY

The Home Office and Foreign Office work hard implementing these rules. The Department of Education and Science will exclude thousands of overseas students by raising the fees to colossal levels. Not to be outdone, the Department of Health and Social Security issued confidential instructions to Medical Inspectors at air and sea ports to refuse entry to those described as of abnormal sexuality. It was not stated what was meant by this term, how exactly they detected it (by x-rays perhaps?) or why 'abnormal sexuality' was so undesirable that those 'afflicted' with it must be kept out. The DHSS is also asking to look out for illegal immigrants who 'haven't paid their stamp'.

Perhaps nothing encapsulates the motivation of the restrictionists better than their rule to exclude elderly dependents. In true mealy-mouthed British fashion, the rule does not actually state in cold print 'No black grannies!'. It is just carefully framed so that they will be excluded.

According to popular racist myth, black people take our jobs and housing and crowd our schools. None of these elderly dependents can do this, by definition. Only a few hundred a year would come in anyway. This is not to argue the numbers game whereby 'letting a few in' is all right - no number is 'too many'. It is simply that we are seeing the logic of decades of escalating controls. As black immigration is almost totally stopped, further restrictions cause greater and greater anguish to fewer

people who are thereby divided from those they want to be with. But they create a climate where all black immigrants - especially those of Indian or Sub-Continent origin - fear the knock on the door from the police, not to mention other racial violence from the fascists and continuing discrimination in jobs, housing and everywhere else on the basis that 'black people don't really belong here'.

HARSHER MEASURES

Because these new rules restrict so few extra black people, Tory right-wingers like Ronald Bell aren't satisfied, and lead the clamour for harsher measures. The next step was in fact stated in the manifesto. Whitelaw promised that he would 'help those immigrants who genuinely want to leave this country'. Pressure from Ronald Bell and from the NF will certainly also spur them to 'intensify counter-measures against illegal immigration'.

Faced with this reality most people in the anti-racist movement have shifted the focus of their activity from fighting fascists to fighting state racism. Unfortunately, this movement is diminishing before our very eyes as activists switch to where the current action is (what else would activists do?) in the anti-cuts campaigns. So while anti-controls campaigns are flourishing in some areas - notably Oxford and Greater Manchester - the framework to fight deportations in other areas often doesn't exist. Some people in CAIL think that while we originally defined our role as a ginger group within the anti-racist movement to make that movement take state racism seriously, we might now have to play a major role in giving that movement some direction and play a large role in regenerating it. We all hope that the Campaign Against Racist Laws will be able to do this. Yet it is one thing to gather diverse

forces for a one-off event and quite another to maintain a permanent unified structure that can gather these forces time and time again.

LONG FIGHT

We can expect a very long fight. We argued above that only concessions on a few individual cases can be expected from the Tories. The long-term purpose of the struggle will therefore be to build an opposition to immigration controls within the labour movement strong enough to stop a future Labour government from continuing to operate these racist laws. On the face of it this does not seem too difficult. After all, the 1976 Labour Party Conference voted against the 1971 Immigration Act. But which delegates bothered to continue the fight to make sure the composite was implemented?

Furthermore, while it is relatively easy to stir people to oppose a particular deportation, and even to

persuade local newspapers to publish favourable human interest 'these people must be allowed to stay' appeals, (a welcome change from '£600 a week Malawi Asians' stories), it will be rather more difficult to win the argument for major revisions in the law such as the JCWI or the Action Group on Immigration and Nationality (AGIN) are demanding, let alone the 'No controls' position. In fact, the Tory proposals have aroused such horror from most of those attending the Labour Party and union branches CAIL have spoken at that all further discussion is often shelved.

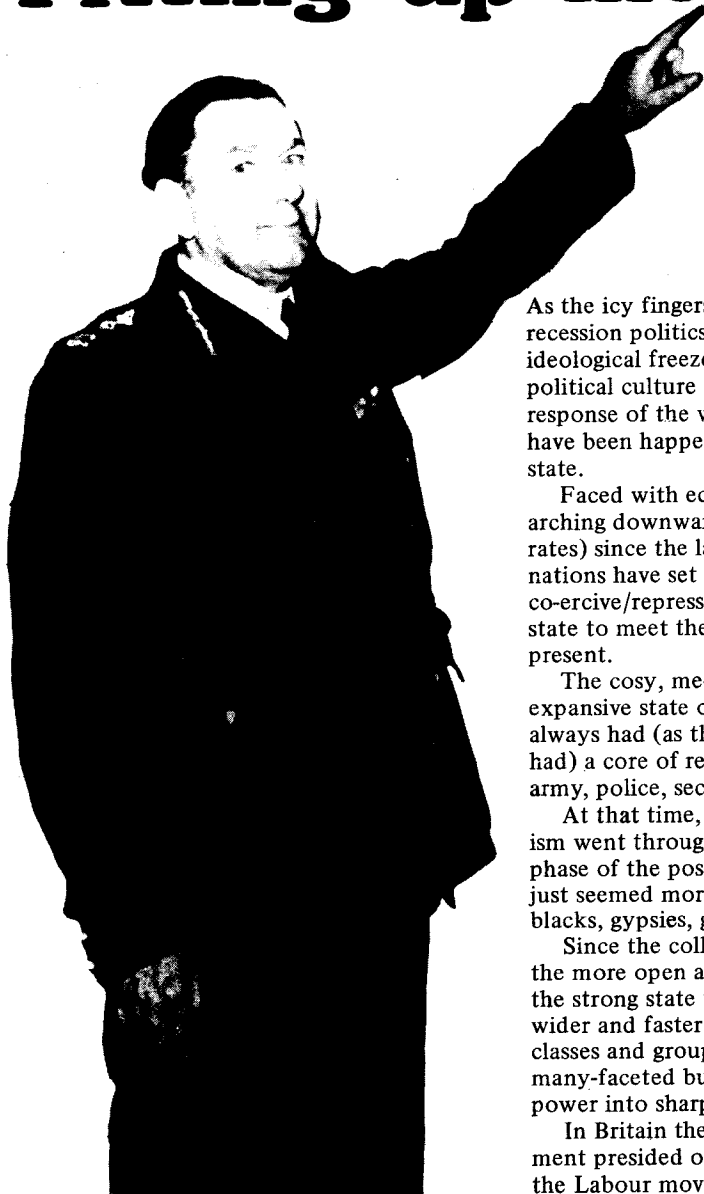
Part of the long-term strategy of building this opposition to controls to force major changes in the law (culminating in the scrapping of all controls) is the occasional picket and demo that CAIL, like any other left-wing campaign, organises. Perhaps over the next few years a few variations on these traditional left

routines can be developed to make these protests more lively and attractive to those outside the radical milieu and, if possible to cause more chaos and confusion, if only for a few hours at a time, amongst police, immigration officers and all our other adversaries.

OPTIMISM

That final comment applies equally to most left campaigns. The general point that it makes cannot be developed in this article. The conclusion which we hope that this article has made is that fighters against racist immigration controls, not to mention the victims of them, can expect a much harder time over the next few years, but they will not be so utterly isolated as before. (For years before any section of the left seemed to notice the existence of immigration controls, the JCWI was conducting almost a lone fight.) In our view, that is sufficient grounds for optimism.

Fitting-up the strong state



Commissioner McNee

JIM BARROW

As the icy fingers of cold war and recession politics extend from the ideological freeze-boxes of Western political culture to numb the political response of the working class, things have been happening within the state.

Faced with economic fortunes arching downward (albeit at different rates) since the late sixties, Western nations have set about filling out the co-ercive/repressive sectors of the state to meet the future — and the present.

The cosy, mediating, welfare-expansive state of the early sixties always had (as the state always has had) a core of repression — courts, army, police, secret service etc.

At that time, however, as capitalism went through the self-adoration phase of the post-war boom the core just seemed more distant (except to blacks, gypsies, gays, Irish people etc).

Since the collapse of the boom the more open and strident calls for the strong state to move harder, wider and faster against dissident classes and groups have brought the many-faceted build up of coercive power into sharper relief.

In Britain the last Labour government presided over police attacks on the Labour movement (Grunwicks, the Hotel and journalists' strikes), the Women's Movement (the Reclaim

the Night Demonstration), Gays (Chief Constable Anderton's attacks on clubs in Manchester), countless blacks and anti-racists, supporters of Irish self-determination and investigative journalists.

This record — bad as it is — will look like a script for 'Listen with Mother' if the present Conservative administration succeed in their full programme of law and order.

At the level of formal politics the introduction of the 'short-sharp-shock' detention centres represent a further institutionalisation of brutality within the prison system.

The proposals on immigration controls — which the Tories want to enforce rapidly — abortion restrictions, and criminal law have been noisily demanded from within the 'sharp' end of the state.

POLITICAL INTERVENTIONS

The police have, in fact, been making stronger and stronger overt political interventions for an expansion of their powers and resources. For sections of the police, surveying mass unemployment (rising), factory occupations, the continuing war of national liberation in Ireland and the forcing of politics back onto the streets (opposing the NF, mass demonstrations) a police state — covert or overt is being canvassed.

Last Summer the newly appointed Chief Constable of Lancashire called for a national police force, stating:

"In days of widespread unrest and protest, of terrorist violence and the like, when every force may be under great pressure, a lack of coherent command could become a serious,

perhaps crippling weakness."

A police state — he said — was used only as a technical term in Europe and should not be seen as a term of abuse.

Since the mid 60's Chief Constables and the Police Federation — 'trade union' for rank and file policemen — have been amplifying their demands on the Home Office and government by public intervention.

Work done in this area suggests that the significant breakthrough came with Robert Mark, then head of the Metropolitan Police. He used his Dimbleby lecture of the mid-seventies to stage a full-frontal attack on 'permissive society', corrupt lawyers and lawlessness.

He was followed by a wedge of 'hard' Chief Constables, principally his successor in London David McNee and James Anderton in Manchester, driving home their demands via TV, press and even pulpit.

LEGALISING THE ILLEGAL

When faced with a yawning gap between their own day-to-day police practice and what the present law should allow them to do they simply carry on and demand that the law be changed to legalise their own illegal practices.

Mark successfully stopped the right of pickets to stop drivers and talk to them being included in the 1975 Employment Protection Act with the connivance of Roy Jenkins and justified it by saying:

"To some of us, the Shrewsbury pickets had committed the worst of all crimes, worse even than murder, the attempt to achieve an industrial or political objective by criminal violence, the very conduct, in fact, which helped to bring the National Socialist German Workers Party to power in 1933."

The anti-working class/dissident bent has seen a shift in policing practice with the massive attacks on anti-racists and joint exercises with the army on working class estates.

The strong-state freaks within the police have been onto a winning streak and in Scotland the Criminal Justice Bill, if passed, will introduce longer periods of detention without charging or trial, more harassment of the working class inside and outside the police station and a further veil of secrecy over what is happening inside police stations.

POLICE POWER

This growth of police power and intervention in the field of formal politics (for many years Chief Constables were able to use their presence on Home Office committees for what they wanted) has been accompanied by the development of Special Patrol Groups and similar units in most forces with a qualitatively different approach to violence

as a legitimate political weapon against Trade Unionists, Blacks and youth.

This highly trained, heavily armed, police commando unit has drawn on tactics used by the army/police in order to continue the occupation of the North of Ireland. These tactics in turn have been used on the Labour movement and dissident groups in society.

In addition an increasing number of 'ordinary' policemen are receiving — or will receive — special training in computer technology (to keep tabs on us and our friends), riot and firearms techniques (to intimidate us) and the backing of an arsenal of equipment including sub-machine guns, CS gas, shotguns, bigger batons, riot shields (good for thumping with) etc.

This more overt intrusion into civil society — accompanied by media blasts and the deaths of Blair Peach, Jimmy Kelly, Liddle Towers and others has been noticed and started a debate on what is actually happening to the police.

However, the 245 deaths in police custody from January 1970 to June 1979 (23 of whom had no inquest), plus 47 in Scotland since 1975, have as yet raised but a little stir. A *Guardian* columnist contrasted the rightful protest and outrage at Steve Biko's death in the gentle custody of South Africa's police to the almost deafening silence at like events by the British police. Is Jimmy Kelly's 'heart attack' (the likely result of his 32 bruises, crushed vertebra, and fractured chin) so very different from Steve Biko's murder?

Having seen off internal inquiries by other police officers into the killings, the wedge of Chief Constables and Police Federation are busy trying to maintain the status quo in their image, despite the material changes in resources and operating methods.

PROTECTING THE IMAGE

They have been content to have the outlines of their role muddled by what one writer has described as their image;

"the unarmed friendly constable helping the aged. . . the young and those in distress; the determined but scrupulous pursuer of the offender; the neutral protector of life and property, using a minimum of violence and intelligent crime prevention techniques in the 'public interest'!"

With this cosy image under threat the chairman of the Police Federation, Jim Jardine, moved to attack the debate over the role and tactics of the police as "a vicious attack on the integrity of thousands of police officers."

He was immediately joined by a gaggle of Chief Constables anxious to defend the limits to which they had pushed their role and resources and to demand more.

This growing autonomy of the police as a political pressure group has

been accompanied by a shift in emphasis and attitude within many inner city areas. The intensity of harassment and short-sharp-arrests has increased to such an extent that many working class youth are looking upon arrest as one of those hazards of everyday life.

In order to muffle opposition and stunt its development it is essential that the state maintains the maximum control over the flow of information about what is happening within the different sectors of the repressive apparatus.

It is for this reason that any further initiatives to open up the administration of the police, army or Government itself are likely to disappear down the Parliamentary toilet.

The state and the Labour and Conservative legal functionaries were caught with their fingers in the machinery of the so-called fair trial.

According to the 1974 Juries Act the selection of juries should be on a random basis. However in 1978 it emerged that checks had been made on the records of potential jurors in 25 important and exceptional trials on the authority of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

JURY VETTING

The Labour Attorney-General, Sam Silkin wrote in *The Times* that "a practice had grown up" by which the prosecution privately checked the jury list against the records of the police.

This followed the 1978 Official Secrets Case against investigative journalists Aubrey, Berry and Campbell in which 25% of the first jury called were found to have signed the Official Secrets Acts.

It was stated that "the only sources to be used were the Criminal Record Office, Special Branch files, and local CID files."

These secret guidelines confirmed by the Home Secretary, Attorney General and Director of Public Prosecutions were used to "ascertain if a potential juror is known to be an associate . . . of those known to be sympathetic or antagonistic to his cause."

The interference — call it jury-packing or vetting if you like — once revealed, was then justified. Secret guidelines which were a blatant breach of common law were then forcefully justified by the state as being in the public interest.

Vetting of the jury in the stage-managed trial of six anarchists accused of conspiracy to rob followed a bout of state-inspired hysteria in which the Special Patrol Group, Anti-Terrorist Squad and various police units draped in hardware and surveillance devices surrounded the anarchists with ludicrous theatricals.

The prosecution — finding themselves woefully short of evidence to support their fantasies — did rapid backpeddling of accusations of conspiring to cause explosions. They also

backpeddled on letting the defence know details of jury vetting.

The fury of the state was refracted through the Judge when the jury found the anarchists not guilty. Judge King Hamilton (of "I wish you well" fame when acquitting fascist Kingsley Read) took the unusual step of ordering them back into court to vent his fury on them for not coming up with the verdict for which the anarchists had been 'fitted up'.

STATUS QUO JUDICIARY

What happens in the area of law is not actually a foregone conclusion in favour of the ruling class — as individual victories against the state have shown. What does happen in periods of political unrest and crisis is that the judiciary inclines (generally) on the side of the status quo against dissidents (see J.D.Caspar's book, *The Politics of Civil Liberties*).

The formally announced reinforcement of the coercive role of the state is being accompanied by internal adjustments and changes in practice which require little public attention.

The excellent magazine *State Research* has been painstakingly documenting many of the areas in which the coercive sectors are becoming stronger and more and more pervasive.

In addition E.P.Thompson, the radical historian, has pointed out the way in which slight changes of emphasis and meaning in the interpretation of law by the state and judiciary are crowding in alongside the repressive new laws.

One example is the way in which the Civil Power's right to call in the army in exceptional circumstances has been redefined in the 70's.

Thompson points out that before 1973 the Civil Power was regarded as being a J.P. or the Mayor (someone subject to some form of election). After that date the civil power was re-interpreted as being the Police — not subject to election and rapidly marking out greater autonomy from local police committees/authorities and Parliament.

An uneasiness over the way in which these changes are feeding off and contributing to a heightened

ideological offensive against working class and oppressed groups is appearing among broader layers of society.

STRONG STATE

However, with the stepping up of the cold war climate and the association of internal dissidents with the 'Soviet Threat', the conflict over attempts to combat the rapid encroachment of the strong state is likely to become sharper.

The battery of restrictive trade union, immigration, criminal, abortion and other laws linked to the more aggressive police presence calls for a much broader and determined opposition than we have seen to date.

The increasing sections of the working class moving into opposition to the government policy in economic areas provide the opportunity for this broadening — the question is whether campaigns and class can reach the level of struggle necessary to halt and turn back the encroachment of the strong state.

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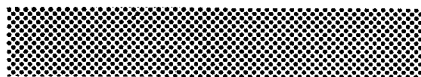
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OBSERVATIONS

'Observations' is written by members of the 'Intervention' editorial collective. It is planned to be a regular informal commentary on matters which the Left either ignores or treats in a mechanical, obsolete, or unimaginative way. The articles (which are the responsibility of the individual authors) will usually be meant to pose awkward questions rather than to provide simple answers (which generally need much more space); and we don't intend to apologise for this.



ARMED FORCES

It was galling to see the majority of Labour MPs following Callaghan's line and abstaining in a recent Commons vote on Thatcher's proposals for re-equipping the British armed forces with Carter's "new generation" of nuclear weapons.

Heaven knows, on domestic issues Labour in opposition has hardly been vitriolic in its attacks on Thatcherism. On foreign policy questions, however, its attitude has either been indistinguishable from Thatcher's (e.g. on Iran) or, where real disagreement has existed (as, for example, over Zimbabwe Rhodesia), it has been muted, to say the least. The pattern was there for all to see as soon as Thatcher arrived in Downing Street and announced a massive programme of spending cuts, a programme however which excluded the military apparatus of the State where considerable increases in spending were simultaneously announced. Labour's response to the calculated cynicism of this move was near total silence.

All this underlines a disturbing tendency within Labour as a whole, and the PLP in particular, a tendency not to "interfere" with the military, and an unwillingness to challenge the *de facto* autonomy of the military state. It seems one only has to invoke the phrase 'national security' and

political discussion in this area deferentially suspends itself. The only exception appears at the moment to be E. P. Thompson, who has not only pulled to shreds the "logic" of the developing new Cold War, but had the temerity to propose (in the *Guardian*) the strategic alternative of the dismemberment of the military state.

The power of the state is clearly expressed in this silence that it can command where speech is said to be free. Bourgeois democratic states operate through the medium of consent. However the coercive state was the historical precursor of and is still the backdrop to, and necessary condition for, modern consent. It's not just that in exceptional moments the coercive state enters the centre of the stage to crush movements that threaten to undermine its base; for during normal times it can also be observed in activity all around society's geographical, political, social, and moral margins. The "marginalised" then constantly encounter a different kind of state, not at all benign—on the contrary, an agent of terror, whether operating in Ireland, within the black community, upon hallucinogenic drug users, or wherever.

There is more to the coercive state than this, however; during "normal" times it also operates freely and undetected within the heart of society itself. An analogy would be useful here. Imagine a family governed by a stern patriarch. For a child in this family to question the nature and exercise of the father's authority is almost impossible. Through his terror the father can not only force others to swallow their dissent, but moreover he can induce them to perceive him as "firm but fair", a reasonable man. To regard him as a child abuser is unthinkable. It is surely through this mechanism that terror hides itself and works unseen; and surely this applies essentially to the operation of the bourgeois state: it is through this mechanism that it can command silence and still enquiring minds.

Whereas the sphere of popular

consent tends to determine *how* we think about issues, the sphere of coercion determines *what* issues we can think of and speak freely of. It seems clear that many even of the Left within the PLP, are terrified even of asking the military state to account for itself, let alone of demanding public control of this autonomous yet powerful body.

P.H.

COUNTRYMAN

The inquiry into corruption in the Metropolitan Police, Operation Countryman, rumbles on. Nearly 18 months ago investigating officers announced that Countryman might take "as long as a year" to complete—and still no end is in sight. A computer has been installed at Countryman headquarters to collate information, and what began as an investigation of the tiny City of London branch seems to be spreading its net ever wider. Sir Robert Mark's attempt to clean up the Force (he "asked" five hundred detectives to "resign") is now said to have touched only the tip of the iceberg.

Great, I hear you say, but so what? Us commie reds always knew the Force included plenty of bad pennies (or bent coppers). We've been exposing their misdeeds for years without much political consequence. It's not as if Countryman could abolish the police.

This is true. However, for a lot of people in this country, the police have always had a rather special ideological power which is denied even to governments. For the mass of law-abiding citizens, the police have been free to define as good or right whatever measures they proclaimed necessary to protect public order and wage the war against crime. Thus an officer who beat up a suspect was more likely to be defined as an unsentimental realist than as a criminal. Even more so with police infringements of humanitarian abstractions like the Judges' Rules or habeas corpus. Tirades against the Sus laws have not stirred the souls of those for whom the police are not mere administrators of society's rules, but actually embody rightness, their very existence a sort of crystallised navy-blue essence of legitimacy.

There has of course always been an informed middle-class fringe which is sceptical of the police (and an even more informed working-class layer, but they're in no position to shape public opinion). This fringe gained ground through the 70s and came into public conflict with increasingly outspoken senior officers. Countryman, and Mark's "cleanup", were a necessary part of the top brass' thunderous reply to the liberal denigrators of the Force. How gratifyingly ironic, then, that these measures should have ended up vindicating many times over all that liberal sniping. And not by any mere uncovering of deaths in police custody or exposure of police racism (incidents which the middle- and working-class

authoritarian positively welcomes) but by proving corruption! The one police crime which can't be justified as the over-zealous pursuit of law-n-order!

Whether or not the enormous question-mark this has placed over the police's self-legitimising privilege is going to be around in the long term is anyone's guess. Perhaps not, since the socialist subculture in this country isn't in the position to step in and fill the ideological vacuum with its own proposals (traditionally, a call to replace the police with a "People's Militia"—whatever that means exactly). Still, there must be some gains for our side in this situation. No doubt the Establishment is mopping its collective brow and hoping that the piercing eye of Countryman won't look beyond London.

ANIMAL LIBERATION

The growth of the movement against institutionalised cruelty to animals draws little interest from the Marxist Left. The reason usually given is that factory farming and laboratory experiments on live animals are irrelevant to the class struggle; both Paul Foot and Tariq Ali replied to this effect when questioned by *Time Out* late last year. But is there really a part of society which stands outside the class arena?

Factory farming, at least, is a direct attack on the agricultural working class, in that it has raised productivity, and reduced levels of skill (and job satisfaction), thus tending to cut down the number of agricultural jobs and weaken the workers' bargaining position. Opposition to factory farming could help agricultural workers to climb from their present position near the bottom of the wages table.

This does not mean, though, that socialists can treat factory farming techniques just like any other technological advance. We can resist the introduction of new forms of newspaper production, for instance, so as to win a good deal for workers in that industry, while recognising that in a socialist society such resistance would be unnecessary. But if a state which called itself socialist was to press ahead with a programme of increased factory farming, it would be a sign that something had gone seriously wrong with the revolution.

The reason that factory farming is different, and intrinsically limiting to human freedom, is simply that it involves suffering. It is hardly conceivable that a society which incorporated unjustified suffering in part of its productive process, could maintain its vigilance against suffering and injustice in the rest of its relations. A society's ability to perceive, register, and eliminate suffering must rest on just that type of sensitivity which most Marxists dismiss as "sentimentalism" in vegetarians or anti-vivisectionists—and which Joseph-type Tories, in turn, dismiss as "romantic idealism" (towards workers

and the oppressed) in the Left.

Such sensitivity is as necessary now, in opposing an uncaring order of society, as it will be in constructing a free society. Otherwise victories against the wrongs of capitalism in one area will simply be balanced by increased—and often unnoticed—suffering in another. It is only in the last ten years, for instance, that the Marxist movement in the West has begun to be able to recognise suppression of free sexual activity as a real form of suffering. While not at present a paramount issue for socialist campaigning, we ought to recognise that, in the same way, cheap meat—or for that matter, cheap medical research—at the expense of painful and unhealthy lives for millions of animals, is too high a price to pay for a slight easing of the production difficulties of the capitalist economy.

ALLEGED HUMOUR

(Scene: an upstairs room in a pub near King's Cross. The atmosphere is semi-opaque. A dozen or so comrades are slumped—their bodies not being sufficiently sensitive to register the sharpness of the plywood edges—here and there among rows of stacking chairs. The more vivacious cough into their Watney's Reds. One stares dejectedly out of the window, muttering. . .)

Cde. staring dejectedly out of the window: *There's nobody else coming. I told you so.*

2nd Cde: *The Snurts have turned up.*

Cde. at window: *They always do.*

(They notice that for the last thirty seconds the Chairperson has been ineffectually clearing his throat, and each takes a seat.)

Chpsn: *Comrades! (His face brightens as he notices that a Cde. in the front row is eating chips out of a union journal.) Brothers and er. . . (scans room.) Er. . . before I introduce the Speaker, I have been asked to announce that. . . (he peers at a piece of paper through congenitally cracked glasses) . . . we are holding an all-night mass paper sale on 24th December. . . (While this announcement is in progress the entire audience continues either to read Workers' Predictable or to scribble notes for their intervention during the Period for Discussion. So they fail to notice that the alleged Speaker is in fact an Imposter, lurking behind his briefcase.)*

Chpsn: . . . *who is tonight's speaker, National Secretary of our organisation, and a leading militant. (Turns to Imposter.)*

Imposter: *Comrades, there is one thing we have to grasp about the current political situation. It is that a whole number of you—in fact all of you—have been glued to your seats with a new and immensely powerful adhesive, placed there by myself before your arrival. For many of you this will be*

a new experience. You may be anxious as to what perspectives to adopt regarding the coming period. While it is not our policy to extract revenge for the immeasurable suffering—the hours of boredom, the crushing of the imagination, the attempts to sabotage the pursuit of pleasure—which sects such as yours try to impose on those around them, we of the Hack Saboteurs' Association. . .

Cdes: *The HSA! Gasp! (The air is filled with perceptive analysis: "Petty-bourgeois swine!"—"Stinking revisionist!"—etc.)*

Imposter: . . . *we are sometimes forced to take action which is initially distasteful to our. . . er. . . victims.*

A Cde: *You fiend! (He attempts a defiant rendition of "The Internationale", but falls silent after two lines, this being all he can remember.)*

Imposter: *Calm yourself. (He exhibits what appears to be a perfectly ordinary Graduate Hack's briefcase, bulging with unsold papers.) You are all privileged to be the first to undergo an as yet untested cure for pathological Orthodoxy. (Opens briefcase. Clouds of billowing lilac vapour start coming out: they spread heavily across the floor.) The gas is almost entirely without severe physical side-effects. On the other hand, once the fumes reach nostril-level, none of you will ever be the same again. You will find to your surprise that you need no longer envy the style and easy grace of Fred Astaire. The words "Gene Kelly" will become a source of comfort to you. Your one regret will be that the era of Buzby Berkely is past. In short, the talent of tap dancing is about to be yours! (He pauses. Stupified silence. The gas has reached knee-height.) I see scepticism written on one or two of your faces. Probably the implications are not clear. From tonight, you can be the life and soul of every party. You will no longer need the personality defence of taxidermised Marxism. Sexually attractive persons will seek your company! Careers on stage or screen will be yours for the asking! (He pauses, as if expecting gratitude. The gas is level with the chin of the least vertical Cde, and is rising fast. All are straining to elevate their noses. Imposter shrugs his shoulders and makes to leave, remarking that. . .) The glue will dissolve of its own accord in a matter of days. (Exit, L., through a door—only to reappear, on tip-toe above the vapour, and add. . .) There is a pair of second-hand tap-shoes under every chair. (He glances in satisfaction across the sea of vapour, broken here and there by the top of a Comrade's head. Exit. After a tiny pause, the first tentative shufflings are heard:) Tap. Tap-tap. Tap-tappity-tappity-tap. . .*

THE END.

B.J.D.



FEATURES

Cuts: their strategy and ours

"The problem that forms the ultimate barrier to the economic thought of the bourgeoisie is the crisis. . ."¹
 "The reality is that less tax means more jobs. . . Again and again it's not the state, it's private enterprise which has created hundreds of thousands of them. No blueprints, no planning agreements, no strategies, no working parties — just that revolutionary idea — private enterprise. Free to spring up at will and free above all from the excessive overheads, the taxes and restrictions which put paid to the hopes of countless youngsters looking for a job."²

"Public expenditure is at the heart of Britain's present economic difficulties".³

If the current assault on the public sector is to be successfully fought it needs to be understood. Are we dealing with a clear-sighted Government wielding the axe with precision along the lines demanded by the imperatives of the process of capital accumulation, acting as the "executive committee" of the bourgeoisie? Or on the contrary, is it the Mad Axewoman and the Mad monk whom we are facing — fanatical ideologues driven wild with lust for a mythical capitalist golden age of untrammelled private enterprise where products will once again stream from our factories with the whole world falling over each other to buy them and the money supply under control once again.

Certainly, there is much in the practice and statements of the present Government to suggest that their understanding of the workings of the capitalist system stopped somewhere in the early years of the last century. Certainly, their policies put them to the right of almost every government in the developed world — with the possible exception of Fraser in Australia who seems to inhabit the same ideological universe. For them, it seems, John Maynard Keynes and the state-sponsored post war boom was an aberration and the last thirty years with the unprecedented expansion of state intervention was a ghastly mistake.

Yet, despite the absurdities of the Thatcher-Joseph outlook, despite their nostalgia for days alleged to have gone by, they operate the same system, with the same Civil Service advisers as their predecessors in post-war governments. They have the same constraints imposed upon them. It is important that we should know how far their crusade for market economics and monetarism is window-dressing and how much it is for real.

Without wishing to pre-empt the argument in the rest of this article it seems to me from the outset that a number of positions held by sections of the left are mistaken. It is wrong to i) imagine that Tory policy is solely and directly dominated by the interests of capital — even if these were clear and indivisible, and ii) that there is no correspondence between the interests of capital and Tory policy. At this point, many on the left might argue that they don't know

GEOFF BENDER

if the policies of Thatcher and co. are in the interests of the ruling class, and this is a sufficient enough basis on which to fight them. This may be true, as far as it goes. Nevertheless, it is important to attempt to grasp the process by which the competing interests of capital are thrashed out, take a political and ideological form and are subsequently translated into government policy and then, how that process relates back to the economic pressures out of which it arose. Concretely we need to know just how much support and for how long Thatcherism can muster amongst the ranks of the ruling class.

It is not that we anticipate the emergence of a 'progressive', anti-cuts, pro-public services and unions sector of the bourgeoisie, this is not likely; but the combination of cuts, hence loss of public sector markets and tight monetary policies, that is dear money and credit, are likely to lead to as harrowing a time for many entrepreneurs — especially the small ones, that the Tories are so anxious to see succeed — than high taxation, Employment Protection legislation and trade union power ever did. In this context, the openings of cleavages amongst the ranks of the ruling class, could under the impact of a working class offensive, create the conditions for a leap forward from the defensive position into which our movement has been forced.

THE TORY VIEW OF THE CRISIS

If George Lukacs is right then the workings of capitalist crisis must remain a mystery to the ruling class. To understand too clearly a) would be impossible because of the way their social experience structures their conceptions, and b) would lead to a crisis of confidence, were it possible, in which the bourgeoisie would be confronted with the eventual possibility of its own demise. In this context, it is important to grasp just how the bourgeoisie views its crisis, who it blames — its diagnoses, remedies and prognoses. The sudden success of Milton Friedman and monetarism amongst the British ruling class does not indicate that it offers a more coherent, intelligent or subtle analysis of Britain's current economic decline than that offered by post-war Keynesian orthodoxy. Rather, it is more in keeping with the moods, interests and fears of those sections of the ruling class which currently dominate the Tory Party; it appeals more to their petty bourgeois base; it preserves, for the time being their political cohesion. Whether, ultimately, it is more useful in political and economic terms than the Keynesian option adopted by Heath after 1972 remains to be seen, the answer to this question can only be resolved on the plane of class struggle.

The analysis offered to back up current Tory policy on the public sector and the money supply is frighteningly



● Michael Heseltine

simple yet frighteningly wrong even in bourgeois terms. The greatest danger is that its consistent failure to produce the desired effects will be continually laid at the door of the unions, of previous governments, of dole queue scroungers, and even immigrants⁴. That we have already seen three 'red scares' in as many months (Blunt, 'Red Robbo', and the Militant) should be a warning of what is likely to come. Also, it is clear, that without a dramatic and traumatic lesson this government will also attribute its failures to achieve the industrial regeneration of which they talk on their own failure to apply their programme with sufficient vigour and determination. Thatcher, at least, it is clear is keen to push through as much as possible, as quickly as possible. She has already spoken of a further £2 billion cut in public spending this year, while Cabinet hawks are berating what is seen as James Prior's 'velvet glove' approach to the trade unions.

What is the basic analysis underlying the Tory views of the crisis? How do their proposed remedies affect the situation?

Kevin McDonnell⁵ explains the development of bourgeois economic thinking over the past few years thus:

"The previously dominant cost-push school, which attributes inflation and the crisis to the monopoly power of trade unions allowing them to initiate a wage-price spiral, has been increasingly challenged. The major alternative explanation of inflation has been advanced by the monetarists. They believe governments cause inflation and therefore the crisis by allowing the money supply to grow faster than output. This has occurred because governments since the Korean War have increased public spending to maintain full employment. The only way to prevent inflation is to drastically reduce this expenditure. Wage demands are not the cause of inflation, but the mechanism by which excess demand is transformed into price rises. Cutting state expenditure restores the responsibility of responding to wage claims to individual employers. This means trade unions do have the power to create unemployment. For if state aid and excess demand are ended, firms could no longer raise prices and excessive wage increases would mean bankruptcy."

One can see here that monetarism is posed as the alternative to statutory pay policies and involves an ideological justification for extricating the state from industrial conflict and thus attempting to de-politicise the industrial struggle. Unfortunately, for the Tories this path is closed because of their commitment to legislate on industrial relations to impose certain limits on trade union power.

Kevin McDonnell goes on to spell out a variant of the monetarist position, that of Bacon and Eltis,

"They believe that the crisis is the result of the rapid growth of the non-marketable goods and service sector,

which is primarily the state sector. Their answer is to cut back on these services, thus releasing labour and productive capacity for the production of marketable goods."⁶

This is a crude bourgeois version of the views developed by the RCG⁷ on productive and unproductive labour and has gained a certain ear in some of the manufacturing unions organising in the private sector. It is an extremely dangerous and divisive view insofar as it gains a foothold in the working class.

For the bourgeoisie and its representatives in the Tory government, the finer distinctions between monetarism of the Friedman variety and Bacon and Eltis are lost, McDonnell writes. "It is probable that only a few Conservative politicians have read Friedman and the opposition to public expenditure is based more on traditional beliefs about reward for effort and freedom from the state."⁸

The point here is that under the impact of ten years of defeat for incomes policies, the continual failure of capital to invest adequately to maintain growth and modernise British capital, the Tories re-grouping after their humiliation in 1974 have found a new ideology which echoes their most cherished traditional values to the hilt. Thus monetarism provides a rationale for holding wage levels down without pay controls (or, at least, attempting to), of de-politicising the industrial struggle (or trying to) and of reviving and propagating values basic to the survival of capitalism as a legitimate economic and political system. The Tories appeal is to individualism — or, at best the individual and *his* family, tax cuts are offered in opposition to public services and so forth. The popular version of the justification of cuts — we cannot go on living beyond our means accurately pinpoints the centrality of credit in the inflationary process and appears to offer an explanation i.e. too much money chasing too few goods. At the same time this explanation offers a reinforcement to the basic accumulationist ethic of an earlier period of capitalism — thrift.

In fact, the whole monetarist, anti-state Tory argument is topsy-turvy. Cause becomes effect and effect cause in the Tories schema. The nationalisation of basic industries — coal, gas, steel, railways, public corporations like the GPO as well as social services have all served in the post-war period to keep down costs by providing goods and services which capital could not provide, and through health care, housing, education and social services reproducing the labour force. In addition to this, the public sector has provided contracts, compensation and through transfer payments, markets without which British capital would have declined quicker than it actually has. The development of the public sector since the war has been very largely a response to the structural weaknesses of British capital and an attempt to stave off and ameliorate the effects of the crisis tendencies at work.

Not that this process has not generated new problems for the reproduction of capital leading to stagnation and decline rather than sudden collapse which might well have occurred without it. But even on an empirical basis the Tory arguments on the pressure of the state on private industry do not stand up to examination.

The CPSA/SCPS document *The Other Half of the Picture*⁹ deals one by one with the monetarist case:

"The attack on public services continues to be based on vague assertions that public spending is 'too large'. Sometimes it is said to be too large because it causes too much taxation — . . . Sometimes it is argued to be too large because it 'crowds out' the private sector. . . A variant on this is the view that it supports too many unproductive people 'on the backs of real workers' — a view which may be superficially attractive to a fair number of trade unionists. . . Most common of all is the assertion that public spending is just 'too big', as though there is some natural level which, like the temperature of the 3 bears porridge, is 'just right'."

In fact, calculations on what exactly constitutes public spending and at what level it currently stands is a matter of some dispute. Grahame Thompson's paper *The Concept-*

ualisation of Government Expenditure¹⁰ cuts through a lot of the mystification on this subject and clears the air. He quotes Friedman:

"Total government spending in Great Britain (central and local) amounts to some 60% of national income. . . It is hard to see how Britain can avoid the fate that Chile experienced. . . I fear very much that the odds are at least 50-50 that within the next five years British freedom and democracy, as we have seen it, will be destroyed." (Milton Friedman — "The line we dare not cross. The fragility of freedom at 60%", *Encounter* November 1976)"

Thompson goes on to quote Roy Jenkins and Edward Du Cann in similar vein. He then goes on to challenge that 60% figure which they all attach so much significance to. In a comparative exercise the paper reveals that on all relevant figures government spending is well below the magic figure of 60% and that the arguments of those like Bacon and Eltis and Yaffe who would see all government spending as a drag on the private sector miss the point that public expenditure is not an unvariegated whole.

Returning to the figures used by the CPSA/SCPS pamphlets these show public spending as a proportion of National Incomes in the EEC countries as the following:

Country	Year
	1976
Belgium	49.0
Denmark	52.6
France	49.0
W. Germany	50.1
Ireland	51.8
Italy	50.8
Netherlands	62.0
United Kingdom	51.2
Average	52.2

Relatively speaking then, UK public spending remains low. The good citizens of Amsterdam and the Hague too, would no doubt be amazed to learn from the wise guru of monetarism, Dr. Friedman, that they are in imminent danger of a 'Chilean situation'. Monetarist politics is even cruder than monetarist economics and Friedman's economic determinism would put even the most vulgar Marxist to shame.

One-by-one *The Other Half of the Picture* graphically exposes the myths concerning levels of public spending and its effects on industrial investment. They reveal how public spending has fallen since 1976 except in the area of transfer payments, benefits, etc. — which have risen largely as a result of unemployment increases, themselves due, in part, to the effect of cuts (Manson, Fryer and Fairclough argue that the Labour Government's June and December measures alone cost 200,000 jobs and that since some 70% of public sector spending is on wages and salaries, cuts inevitably mean further job loss. The Tory cuts will have even more serious effects on employment levels not only because of their scope but also because of their impact on local authority revenue on current account items rather than the concealed impact on Labour's cuts which fell largely on capital spending.

The CPSA/SCPS pamphlet also deals with the impact of public spending levels and the public sector borrowing requirement on money available for private investment in productive industry. They quote their previous pamphlet *The Cuts that Puzzle* thus:

"Companies actually seem reluctant to use the available funds. . . the basic problem. . . is that no matter how much is made available in the way of 'resources' by cutting public spending and other means there is no mechanism in the British economy for ensuring that such funds are channelled into industrial investment."¹²

The problem with this position as we pointed out at the time¹³ was that it fails to explain why the owners of those 'resources' fail to invest in industry. However, as an empirical statement of the way things are it can hardly be faulted, as the Treasury were to acknowledge the following year,

"It is doubtful whether the level of the public sector expenditure and the size of the PSBR over the last 3 years have in fact made much difference on balance to the flow of funds to private industry or have inhibited investment. . . there is no evidence that there have been real constraints on the supply of funds to industry."¹⁴

The CBI concurred:

"The clear conclusion of an overwhelming majority of our members is that it has not been a shortage of external finance that has restricted industrial investment. . ."¹⁵

The authors of *The Other Half of the Picture* correctly conclude that:

"The possibility of 'crowding out' only arises if an artificial limit is put on the total amount of bank borrowing permitted, thus potentially putting the public and private sectors in competition for the same limited funds. Such limits are precisely what monetarist policies apply. . ."¹⁶

In fact, it is hard to imagine conditions less likely to produce industrial investment with the current level of minimum lending rate (17½%), the removal of exchange controls, the ultimistic approach to British Steel, the government's commitment to a stand-up battle with the unions over the Employment Bill, and the £233 million cut in regional assistance to industry. Almost anywhere but domestic industrial investment must seem attractive to British businessmen with the possible exception of gold mines in Afghanistan or copper in Zimbabwe.

CROWDS

The argument that the public sector crowds private industry out of the market for jobs and resources is again answered by the civil service unions' pamphlet. From 1975 to 1978 the unemployment rate in public administration rose from 2.7% to 4.8% as a result of public spending cuts. The idea that redundant clerks, health workers and others in the public sector are desperately sought by private firms is almost self-evidently absurd. Between March 1976 and an March 1979 clerical, managerial workers were the only occupational group to suffer a major increase in male unemployment: women were affected far more sharply in all occupations. Yet at the same time, between September '75 and September '78 vacancies for skilled engineering workers rose from 15,622 to 30,599. This imbalance is underlined in an almost bizarre way by the current government's plans to close skill centres and reduce training opportunities still further.

The only area where there might be possible grounds for the claim that the public sector possesses labour resources which are looked at with an envious eye by private industry



is local authority Direct Labour Organisations. This is because of the cyclical fluctuation in the property and building market and the complete failure of the private sector to train skilled workers.

FACT OF LIFE

It has been a fact of life in all industrialised countries since the war that the service sector, including public services has expanded relative to the decline of employment in the productive manufacturing sector. In Britain, if anything, this decline has been slowed up by the failure of British capital to invest in new plant and equipment which would have increased productivity still further, removing the need for still more workers in manufacturing.

Between 1960 and 1977 employment in manufacturing industry fell by 12½% while productivity increased by 60%. Without the growth of the service sector on the economy unemployment would be in the region of 2.2 million rather than 1.5 million.

Since then, it can be clearly seen that the Tory monetarist policies mean higher unemployment, less industrial investment, expensive money which could very easily lead to a spectacular spate of liquidity crises and bankruptcies for small firms, why are these policies being persisted in by the present government.

Certainly, the pronouncements of the government are honest, if often wrong. The commonsense way in which the civil service unions pamphlet present the case against monetarism does leave one wondering whether the ruling class has collectively gone off its head, but it would be dangerously underestimating their cunning to believe this is so.

The first aim the Tories are committed to is 'squeezing inflation out of the system' — credit controls, through high interest rates and public spending cuts are seen as a part of this. Inflation is seen as flowing out of the growth of the money supply rather than as a result of the attempts of capital to overcome the crisis of realisation by the expansion of credit to create markets to absorb industrial output.



A second strand of Tory policy is to discipline the labour force. This not only involves breaking trade union power through new laws, but creating the conditions for, and beginning to restructure the labour process through new styles of work management, productivity deals and new technology.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Both these policies require massively increased unemployment levels to succeed. These can only partly be disguised by the present attack on the unemployed which serves the function of dividing the working class, of reinforcing the work ethic and blackmailing the redundant worker into accepting less skilled and lower paid work.

Deskilling and increasing job mobility is the background against which public spending cuts are taking place. At present the welfare state and unemployment benefits mean that both the process of the reproduction of labour power and its costs to the capitalists are relatively high. They are maintained this way in part by trade union action especially resistance to deskilling and redundancy.

The ruthless purging of inefficient capital is also a part of the Tories' strategy. Behind the ideological smokescreen of the appeal to the small business the Tories represent, as they have done consistently, the interests of large capital. The near future is likely to see both bankruptcy and merger as inefficient capitals go to the wall and are taken over. Should the Tories succeed a new and even more highly monopolised economy will ensue. There is a curious parallel here behind the smokescreen of extending the powers of local authorities to make decisions, they are, in fact, ruthlessly centralising the power of the central state. In both politics and economics the name of the game is restructuring.

THE RESPONSE OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

In the previous section we have attempted to understand how the Tories see the crisis, how their perspectives while wrong, nevertheless do reflect the fundamental interests of their class and though their ideas may be off-beam, their class instincts remain sound. If we are right and the 'restructuring of British capital and of the British state' is at the heart of the cuts strategy rather than a purely economic consideration — e.g. reducing inflation, cutting the PSBR — then the response of the Labour movement is crucial. To succeed the Tories must inflict massive defeats on the working class the effects of which will be around until the end of the century at least. Despite the defeats suffered already on the cuts front under labour it is still possible for a massive resistance to be built up and the struggle taken forward.

Before going on it is worth looking at the cuts so far. Labour's cuts already inflicted severe defeats and raised unemployment levels. The Tory cuts were not just a different ball game, but in a different league.

LABOUR'S CUTS

Labour's axe fell on 4 main occasions:

April 1975	£1,100	million
February 1976	£4,595	million
July 1976	£1,012	million from 77/78
December 1976	£1,513	million from 78/79.

The Labour government also introduced the system of cash limits which ensured spending below even the reduced levels budgetted for as senior civil servants, local authority and health service bureaucrats fell over themselves demonstrating their 'efficiency'. As in so many other areas the Wilson-Callaghan governments paved the way for the current Tory offensive. What was implicit in Callaghan's cuts has been made explicit. Cast limits have now become an instrument of policy. So in addition to the centrally-planned cuts made by government decree, hidden cuts are to result from administrative decisions behind closed doors. Labour cuts fell especially heavily on local government capital programmes. The effect of these cuts is only just being worked through in effects on services, although at the time they ensured a deepening of the recession in the con-

struction industry and high unemployment amongst building workers.

THE TORY CUTS

Labour's cuts served to prepare the way for the Tories and made the idea that cutting public spending was the way to solve the 'country's problems' appear part of the shared commonsense ground of 'moderate' politics. At the same time, the Tories were able to launch a campaign to show that as far as they are concerned cuts far from being an unpleasant necessity were actually to be welcomed and rejoiced in.

Tory cuts thus far have followed hard upon each other and coupled with high interest rates, a continued rise in inflation and attacks being made on the ideology of welfare services, constitute a central axis of the Tories strategy of restructuring the economy and the state.

Quantitatively they break down thus:

1979/80 CUTS

- 3% reduction Civil Service Manpower
- 3% reduction in other Cash limited expenditure including Local Authority Rate Support Grant
- General squeeze on Cash limited expenditure by limiting inflation allowance for non-pay items to 8-9%
- £1.6 billion cut in spending programmes
- £1 billion sale of public sector assets

1980 ONWARDS

- 10-20% cut in Civil Service Manpower and related services through the Rayner review of civil service labour costs
- 5% cut in 1980-81 Local Government Rate Support Grant
- Cuts in Regional Assistance.
- £4-5 billion cut in spending programmes

Thatcher is still looking for a further £2 billion cut elsewhere in the financial year 80/81. Inter-departmental wrangles at Cabinet level as well as protests from the Tory-led Association of Metropolitan Authorities have thus far inhibited further cuts. If, as in past years, the underspending due to cash limits continues, additional unplanned cuts be made.

Cuts to QUANGOS have already been made on, quite often, an explicitly political basis. First the Price Commission was abolished, then the Royal Commission on the Distribution of Income and Wealth. The Personal Social Service Council published two reports drawing attention to the effects of cuts on personal social services which completely exposed the government's pretence that the most vulnerable would be protected. The PSSC was next for the chop.

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND THE CUTS

Various explanations have merged in the labour movement to account for cuts and for the public expenditure at which they are aimed. Whereas some socialist economists consider that they are a part of a distributional struggle over the "social wage" others argue that they are a product

Public sector workers—a new force



of government attempts to offset the falling rate of profit and that public expenditure constitutes a drain on total surplus value.

As Kevin McDonnell¹⁷ and Feargal O'Hanlon¹⁸ point out neither of these two approaches are adequate. The first leads to an essentially reformist notion of a struggle around public expenditure along much the same lines as traditional trade unionism has fought around the wages question.

The second, showing the connection between capitalism and the cuts, leads to an ultimatum — the cuts defend the interests of capitalism, therefore to fight the cuts capitalism must be overthrown. This ignores the contradictions in the policy, the conflicts between large and small scale capital and the political tensions within the state apparatus which the cuts provoke. All is purely black and white. In fact, large sections of the capitalist class have good cause to fear the cuts strategy though it might just preserve their class rule it may cost them dearly. Many civil servants and high ranking corporate executive in town halls as well as elected members even in Tory areas may find the cuts making their lives harder.

The Labour movement needs to know how to exploit these contradictions. The struggle against labour's cuts showed few obvious successes. Today the lines are drawn more sharply. Many of those in the front line against Tory cuts had their first taste of industrial action against Callaghan's five percent limit. The press hysteria hospital strikers and others faced will be easier to expose when strikes are taking place against a reduction of services and patients lives are threatened by closed hospitals, run down wards, limits on open heart surgery, pacemakers and so forth. Nevertheless, striking in the public service sector may not always be the best form of industrial action. Attempts to treat public services as one huge car plant cannot provide an adequate basis for the fight against the cuts.

Pete Rowlands' account of the struggle against the closure of Hounslow Hospital in this issue gives some indication of the possibilities and limitations of the anti-cuts fight.

THE QUALITATIVE QUESTIONS

The point made in the analysis of the cuts presented by Kevin McDonnell points to a conception of alternative forms of struggle in the public sector which pose qualitative questions about the nature of the service provided by state finance. No socialist can seriously argue that there is no waste in local authorities or nationalised industries and services yet at the same time to pose this question means either support for cuts or some conception of the development of embryonic socialist alternatives within the public sector.

This poses some very difficult questions. When funding for existing services is cut do socialists support attempts to provide alternatives on a collective basis? Do we adopt a perspective that argues for 'alternate plans' in cuts battles e.g. where schools are threatened with closure due to falling rolls or hospitals are closed as general hospitals but can be put to community use, or do we fight 'every cut' not only in the sense of degree of provision but also in type of provision?

Many socialists and trade unionists facing the flood tide of the Tory onslaught may feel that talk of 'alternatives' (is misplaced and utopian). When every effort is required to hang onto every service and every job. Yet, if users — 'clients' of services, if people at home, in neighbourhoods, in schools, in non-public sector workplaces are to be drawn into a defence of what, under government pressures, possibilities of constant industrial action and the withdrawal of service, may well be deteriorating services, then it will be imperative to begin asking questions about control and about what services are required.

NEW FORCE

The public sector unions in this country are a massive force which has grown rapidly. Unionisation has increased faster than the rise in public sector employment — NUPE alone more than doubled its membership between 1968 and 1975. The public sector is also one of the few areas where

there is relatively high unionisation among women workers (38% of female TUC members in 1975 and this does not include T & GWU or G&MWU members who work in the public sector).

Despite formidable obstacles to union organisation at rank and file level due to the various complicated local and national negotiating machinery (Whitley Councils, the Purple Book, etc.) the introduction of techniques of capitalist management — corporate management in local authorities, health service re-organisation, the use of work study and bonus schemes have led to a tremendous acceleration of the development of local representation. NUPE now has 15,000 shop stewards for its half a million members. Many obstacles still remain — the fragmentation and inter-union tensions — to a united fight back and, as we have said, the question of adequate tactics is vital. Yet, the public sector workers will undoubtedly constitute the core of resistance to public spending cuts. From the 1970 'dirty jobs' strike to last year's 'winter of discontent' they have shown a determination and militancy which few workers, outside, perhaps, of the car industry in the manufacturing sector could match. In many respects, for instance, the Civil Service unions led the fight against the Social Contract and cuts; NUPE were in the van of the low pay fight.

CENTRE OF RESISTANCE

This raw militancy, moving from the cuts struggle towards concepts of workers' control and broader political horizons can be the key to stopping the Tory government in its tracks. Linked with local cuts campaigns, local Labour Parties, with other trade unionists through trades councils the strength can be there, the need and the vision to turn the defensive battle into a real fight for jobs and services which genuinely are geared to meet need rather than act as agencies of control. A successfully defended public sector beginning to be transformed in this direction would provide a glowing contrast to the shipwrecked and decayed industrial base the Tories policies will leave. The socialist case will begin to take on a new substance.

The total character of the Tory attack, which gives it its almost manic quality, must be repulsed by increasingly united and total solutions. The Labour movement must place defence of the public sector at the centre of its resistance.

NOTES

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- 4 *The Guardian* 24.1.'80 Joseph blames decline on migrants
- 5 Kevin McDonnell *Capital and Class* no.4 Ideology, Crisis and the Cuts CSE Spring '78
- 6 Kevin McDonnell op.cit. p.45/46
- 7 Bullock and Yaffe and Howell in *Revolutionary Communist* 3/4 Nov. '75
- 8 Kevin McDonnell op. cit. p.51
- 9 *The Other Half of the Picture* SCPS/CPSA p. 9. This pamphlet is probably the most sophisticated trade union response to the cuts yet to appear.
- 10 Grahame Thompson *The Conceptualisation of Government Expenditure* CSE Conference Document 1979.
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- 18 Feargal O'Hanlon *Big Flame* Feb. 1980. *Fighting The Cuts and Beyond* Supplement. *Explaining the Cuts*. The best attempt yet to concretise in a popular way the implications of the concept of restructuring and the limits of 'Social wage' and 'capital' theories.

FIGHTING CUTS IN LAMBETH

The *Chartist* interviewed Ted Knight, Leader of Lambeth Council, not primarily to find out what the rent and rate increase would be, but what long-term strategies he had for continuing the fight in defence of local services.

Since the interview (and the accompanying article) Lambeth Labour Group has voted to increase rates by 49%, and therefore not to start work on new leisure centres and some other small projects. More importantly, they voted for a rent increase which will average £1.50 per dwelling. While this is the first increase for three years and while Lambeth's rents were relatively low, this increase is still regrettable as it will, in our opinion, hinder the fightback by council tenants alongside the council — their landlords. As far as we know, every single other council in London had also raised the rents.

We hope this short introduction can put the interview in some perspective.

Against this setback, the fight has to continue — we hope this interview will show how Lambeth Council might wage it.

Chartist

The *Chartist* has supported even very large rate increases if that gives the council time to prepare the struggle for the time when rate increases will not be viable because those rate increases will be taken back in full. Here in Lambeth a 56% increase is being proposed. How will the Council use this time to carry on the fight?

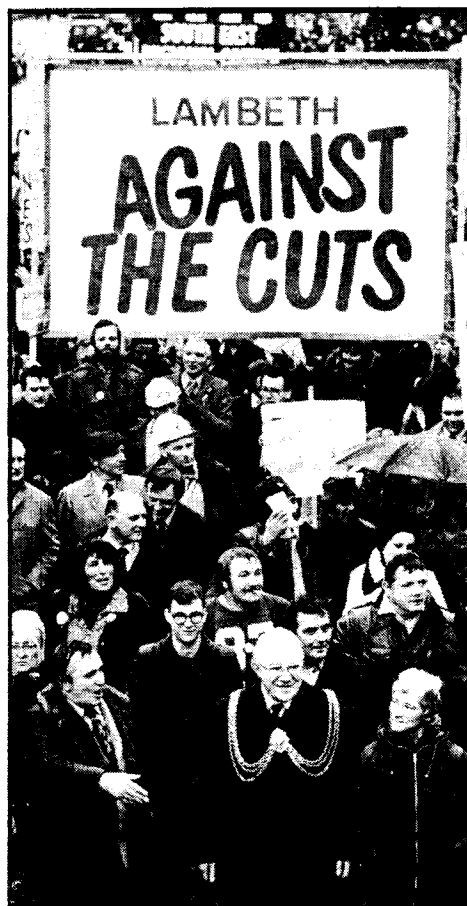
Knight

Well, first of all we haven't quite decided what the rate increase is going to be, but it certainly looks as if it will be in the 50% region.

We consider the services and jobs the council provides are essential to the community, and therefore as the government funding is not being provided, then in order to preserve those jobs and services we have to raise the rate by that amount.

Now, in so doing we are arguing that the reason for the rate increase is because of the attitude of the Tory Government and its economic policies and we are maintaining the campaign against them. We are about attempting to strengthen the relationship between Lambeth Borough Council and the other Labour councils not only in London but elsewhere, and we have argued that other councils should follow us and refuse to cut and therefore raise the rates. Indications would show at the moment that the majority of Labour councils in London are following

“The object is to build forces to defeat the Tories, not to prepare ‘heroic stands’”
Ted Knight



Mark Rusher/IFL

Marching against the cuts in Lambeth. Ted Knight (left foreground).

that course of action. In fact we can only identify about 4 or 5 out of the 14 which are making any significant cuts at all. And as a consequence all boroughs in London are going to be increasing rates by 40 — 50%.

Chartist

Lambeth will then be in company with others.

Knight

That is our argument, and it is our argument against those comrades in the movement who have been saying that we should not apply a rate increase, but should also not cut, because such a situation would have meant the bankruptcy of Lambeth Council in February of

this year following our decision of the Labour councillors. If we had taken or we do take that decision, we shall be totally isolated and we would not only be engaging in an illegal action, but we would not be fighting the Government itself, we would be fighting the receivers, and the City of London.

So, we have argued that if Heseltine pursues a policy of inflicting penalties on overspending councils in November then he will not just be placing Lambeth in the penalty box, but will be facing a major number of Labour councils in all of the inner-city areas. So we will be fighting the Government then, (as it will be a Government decision to withdraw the RSG), in unity with other boroughs.

I don't think that if Heseltine pursued his penalty policy that we could be able to impose a supplementary rate because, as far as we could see, that would merit a further penalty. But I believe that Heseltine would find it exceptionally difficult to impose those penalties and I think that we have an opportunity of defeating him on that issue. If he were to select Lambeth, and possibly one other borough, which could be Camden, as meriting a penalty, then I believe we would even be able to defeat him in his own court on that issue because he would be exceeding his powers as a minister in seeking selective penalties on particular boroughs. So, I am fairly confident that Heseltine will be unable to select just one or two boroughs, and he would find it exceptionally difficult to confront all of the major boroughs in the inner-city areas.

Chartist

The proposal for 56% rules out an increase in the rents. Several councillors in Lambeth have been arguing that the District Auditor has been threatening that if the rents are not raised by approximately £1.40 per dwelling per week that the councillors

will be liable for surcharge and that housing subsidies will be withdrawn to the amount that rents are not collected. Do you take these threats seriously?

Knight

The District Auditor has certainly drawn the attention of Lambeth council to the fact that the balance between its rents and the interest of the ratepayer at the present moment are "not satisfactory". Our own council officers say that if we don't put up rents in the coming year that it may be that the balance will be termed 'unreasonable' believing in which case the District Auditor would certainly take action against us as councillors. That is an undefined risk as nobody can really say; My own view is that I am not in favour of putting up the rents. We don't intend to penalise a particular section of the community, namely council tenants, in order to offset a rate increase for everybody. Some Councillors are arguing that rent increases are necessary because private tenants have suffered rent increases and the owner occupiers have suffered mortgage increases, over this period, and so have the GLC tenants. But my view, frankly, is that we are not required to equate poverty by putting up rents just because other people have suffered rent increases. The DA might take a view that is unfavourable to us but personally I think it is possibly worth taking that risk.

Chartist

So at the moment you would recommend no rent increase?

Knight

Yes, that is my recommendation—at the moment.

Chartist

You were optimistic that other Labour councils will also refuse to cut, and that come November, you'll all be in it together and Lambeth won't be alone. But we fear that many of these councils will buckle under the pressure and that in the end there might not be many apart from Lambeth, Camden, and perhaps a county council like South Yorkshire, that is prepared to continue to defy the government. While we don't want to crystal-ball gaze, if Lambeth is isolated AND unable to increase the rates, would you be willing to take the council to an all-out confrontation, with a strong risk of bankruptcy?

Knight

Well, I think this is crystal-ball gazing, and this is my criticism of those comrades in the Fightback Campaign. It assumes the Tories will remain in office for a full term so that they can continue their policies without interruption, and the working-class movement generally isn't going to challenge them. I do believe,

that the working class is going to challenge this government with major conflicts occurring over the next twelve months. And I think that if you accept that view then you cannot determine what the balance of forces are going to be next November or April next year.

If the Tories could do all of these things, and nothing can stop them, then we may as well all get out of struggle and let the civil servants take over. Because our own officers can well manage Lambeth under the Tory policy. But I don't believe that is the purpose of our being in the labour movement. I assume that we can challenge and we can win.

Chartist

Indeed we can challenge. But even if the Tory Government fails to run its full course, we saw the most important events happening over the next year — like the removal of the power of councils to raise sufficient money — and possibly before the really big industrial struggles. Councils might then be pushed into a position of struggle at a time they would not choose.

Knight

It may be the case, but I don't think one can build a policy on the anticipation that the Tories are invincible. Will we put on a rate increase next year? I frankly don't know. If we haven't been able to thrust back the Tories on this particular issue and there isn't a major class struggle taking place, then, frankly, we would have to reassess the situation. It may be that we would even have to retreat — I don't know. But I'm not building my perspective on the basis of retreat but on the basis that we can win.

Chartist

We weren't talking about possibilities of retreat but of trying to assess the obstacles that are likely to come up ahead.

Knight

That's very true, but then the assessment of these obstacles place you in most impossible situations. I don't know what we would have to do in that time. Whether a head-on confrontation would be the best course of action. I don't see how one can forecast that situation now. In fact, Heseltine, in September of last year had told us that he was going to make penalties this year. He hasn't done so. He now tells us he is going to make them next year, but he has met a fairly consistent opposition not only from the labour movement but from Tories on this question. They are very much opposed to the penalties. It may be that pressure from inside his own ranks may force a change of policy. I don't know; But I know that he certainly didn't move this year when he intended to.

Chartist

So you are taking your policy from one six-month period to the next.

Knight

I think so, but in the meantime what you are continually doing is building up a movement against them, and I see the struggle — the role of the Lambeth Council over the next twelve months is not to anticipate disaster but is to say how best we can build a movement to stop the Tories. I think we will play our part in that. One of the ways in which we shall be doing so is not only building support with what we've got here in Lambeth. We shall be attempting to build support in the Labour movement generally and we will be linking up, as we are doing, with the public sector unions to tell Heseltine that if he embarks on this course of confrontation, the forces he will be dealing with will be far greater than we have now.

Chartist

What forms of action are you preparing to follow on from the march through Lambeth last November.

Knight

We have got an agreement with our own unions that we will have a further march in the early part of this year. We are committed to holding a conference of the Labour Councils and Labour Parties in London to strengthen this position. We are building up through our own unions a network of contacts with the other public sector workers in the other authorities. I think we should take advantage of the Days of Action the TUC have been forced into. We will be putting forward the slogan that there will be no retreat under the Tories, and that the object is to build forces to defeat them, and not to prepare 'heroic stands'.

Chartist

Now the Chartist too is cynical about heroic gestures, but we wonder how long the tactic of very large rate increases can be sustained. We see it as a tactic with severe disadvantages which cannot be continued for very long. While the tactic you seem to be pursuing is to carry on one step at a time and hope the Government keeps backing down. But maybe the Government won't back down. Some people outside the Labour Group in the Fightback Campaign would like to know how far the Council are prepared to go and what exactly do you mean by retreat?

Knight

I see a situation where we were totally isolated then we would have to consider what to do. I don't know what we would do.

Chartist

You would have to consider some

cuts?

Knight

Well, we may have to do so, but I've never built my perspective on that basis. I think you can only consider that situation in total isolation. I see us maintaining a No Cuts position into next year, if the Tory Government hasn't been forced to back down. I don't see that rates increases are that divisive. I think that it is possible to explain your case, and provided we are mobilising at the same time then we may be able to carry the tactic into the following year.

Chartist

While you must explain your case as best as you can, most people have a very cynical attitude towards the council, built up over many years. A very dismissive view whereby the only way they know the council is there is that it takes money off them. So it's against this apathy and cynicism we are working.

Knight

That assumes we can't defeat that cynicism - I think we can. I think we've shown that the people of Lambeth do know Lambeth council and see it in a different light to what they saw it before. We have recently won a bye-election from the Tories on the basis of that campaign. So I don't think we are heading for rejection from the Labour electorate at all. Also you cannot see the local government situation in isolation from the class struggle overall; I believe there are going to be major struggles over the coming year. The Tory Government is going to be confronted on all fronts. We are part of this situation. We are no substitute for it, and in no way can we become a substitute for it...

Chartist

Your links with the town hall workers are clear enough, but what links have the council got with active tenants associations with a view not only to informing them but also mobilising them against the Tories. We remember the programme of 'ward consultations' held last year. Do you see a similar programme, specifically on the fightback, as being useful in supplementing the work of trade unions and Labour Parties?

Knight

I certainly do. In fact what we have proved by the Ward Consultation Programme we engaged in is that the Council is able to call people to meetings. The attendance at these meetings has varied from a minimum of about 50 to a maximum of about 180. So we have over the last six months talked directly to about 1500 people in Lambeth. We are also engaging in public meetings explaining the situation as councillors. Our councillors

are also very active in relation to their own tenants associations in their wards. We have also mobilised in the fight against the government - the voluntary groups in Lambeth - and in the black community. We held a meeting of all representatives of the voluntary groups. Something like 400 representatives - 2 or 3 from each group - came to the meeting in which we laid down fully our position and got their support. We are very much linked up with organised opinion within Lambeth. Our problem is to get outside of Lambeth that is where we must try to make the breakthrough. That is why we organised November 7th march. Not just to mobilise people here in Lambeth, but also to show outside that you can do it. And that is what we will be pursuing over the next twelve months. And I think we'll be talking with allies because other Labour councils are going to be in the same situation as us.

Chartist

We were talking about possible rate increases, but obviously not only hasn't the rate-making meeting been held, but nor has the relevant Labour Group meeting. What sort of opposition is there to the plan for a possible 56% increase?

Knight

I think we are going through the biggest consultation exercise in the Labour Party that is operating in the entire country. Every ward branch of the Labour Party in Lambeth has had a paper from the Labour Group spelling out the financial situation and the various options that we see. Also, each of

them are discussing with ward councillors where they have ward councillors and with themselves if they haven't as to what options they think we should take. The present overall position that's coming through at the moment is that basically the party wants the council to refuse to cut, although everyone is unhappy about the extent of the rate increase. The general move is to contain the rates increases within the 40s position. We certainly can do that by cutting out not programmes in existence but some of the proposed building programmes we have for amenity provision. Then there are comrades who are arguing there should be a rent increase, which would affect the rate increase. Overall, the policy of the parties will be 'No Cuts', and a rate increase that is necessary to prevent that.

Chartist

So you think the policy will be against that of what one might call the trimmers who oppose cuts but favour not going ahead with the recreation centres?

Knight

It may be that the recreation centres will not be proceeded with because they haven't yet been programmed, they are not in contract, there is nobody working on them, they are not a service that is being provided, and I think people will argue that at the present moment they are not valid projects for council expenditure. But that will only marginally affect the rates. So you are still round about the 50%, and if we adopt that position, unless there is a rent increase which

HESELTINE'S BILL

Heseltine's Local Government Planning and Land Bill has three main prongs directed at local authority spending.

The Environment Minister, Michael Heseltine, will have power to order a council to disband its direct works department and sack all its building workers. Direct works departments will be banned from projects outside their council's area. Within the area, for contracts above a certain size, they will have to tender for the work in competition with at least three private firms.

Direct works departments which do not make what the Minister considers a satisfactory profit will be disbanded.

The Government will set a ceiling on the level of capital spending for each council. This replaces a more complex system of project-by-project controls.

Heseltine will have power to cut off central government funds for councils which he reckons are overspending.

By 1981-82 a new block-grant system will come into operation. This will replace the present more complicated system, based on allowing for the needs of an area and for its ease or difficulty in raising money by local rates. At present the Rate Support Grant is 60% of a council's spending - recent cuts have hit some local authorities with a loss of £3m plus.

The Tories plan will centralise finance and give Westminster more power in deciding how much each area should have. The grant will be equal to the difference between the calculated amount each council needs to spend and what the council's rates income would be if levied on a notional standard level of rates.

Heseltine has threatened if planned spending "is in excess of 'standard expenditure', the rate of grant will be reduced, and reduced progressively as expenditure increases still further." Hence in this way, Heseltine aims to penalise the so-called "overspending" boroughs like Lambeth or Camden or Sheffield who oppose making cuts by ending any real autonomy in locally raised finance.

The interim measures for 1980-81 could well mean a conflict in November when councils should get the second tranche of their current RSG.

will knock it down a few more percent, we will be in a situation where we will have made no cuts either in staffing levels or in services provided, and I think that will be the final position of the council. We will maintain the standard of last year.

Chartist

There seems to be a strong argument from many comrades in Norwood Labour Party and some in Vauxhall for no rate increase, or a tactical rate increase (of 20% - see note)?

Knight

There are comrades who are arguing that, but I would suggest that they are not winning ground. In actual fact there is only one ward in Norwood that has adopted that position and another ward has called for a 20% rate and 20% rent increase and then we should resign, but to date, three other branches have made a very clear statement of no cuts and a necessary rate increase, and I would anticipate

that the fourth branch that are meeting tonight might do the same. In Vauxhall, I've only heard of that view being put forward in one branch. So, I think that the resignation line and the bankruptcy line is frankly not winning. Also, of course; our own unions in the town hall have taken a fairly clear position; NALGO is yet to meet, but the leadership of NALGO is basically in favour of a rate increase.

Chartist

Of what magnitude?

Knight

As necessary. The indications from shop stewards of the manual workers' unions are that they are also in favour of a rate increase as necessary to maintain jobs and services. And I think that they will have an impact on the Labour Group itself. After all, we have 10,000 employees here, and they certainly have every right to express a view on what the council should be doing.

are not.

Incidentally, the main opposition to massive rates increases in Hackney, Islington, Southwark and Haringey last year came not from working class residents but from small businesses. In some main streets almost every shop had a 'No to the rate increase!' poster in the window. Islington Council collapsed under this pressure. At a council meeting besieged by CUT (the anti-rates increases, pro-cuts campaign) the Council shifted from what had been a reasonable position. It decided to go for a lesser increase and cut law centres, and other services, instead. In Lambeth, where the Tories on the Council were more numerous, there was no more than a whimper of opposition.

While the Chartist is not quite as optimistic as the Leader of Lambeth Council, we far prefer this optimism to his first reaction to the last round of cuts announced in the Budget last June. This brought forward a proposal to freeze vacancies and cut spending in all departments by 4½%. There was strong opposition from council workers and the local Labour Parties and, in a commendable example of accountability to the movement, the original decision was reversed. Unfortunately, not everyone fully trusts Ted Knight to continue fighting.

Ted Knight believes that many other Labour Councils will be joining in a 'No Cuts' fight. We hope so, and, *Chartists* in some of the key London boroughs will be working hard to realise Knight's hopes. Our view is that Lambeth must maintain its position anyway, not expect much support from other boroughs, then fear the worst from Heseltine. It is good to be optimistic - but what if the best situation doesn't happen? Then Knight will reluctantly have to recommend retreat - which means

cuts.

We think he will find that will stir up as much opposition next time as it did last summer. Rather than cuts, the Chartist would consider refusing to balance the books - that is, bankruptcy. Can a council go bankrupt without the councillors being surcharged? What forms of industrial action can council workers develop to seriously hinder any administration that the Tories impose, without harming Lambeth residents even more? The experience of the public service workers' strike last winter isn't very encouraging. Tower Hamlets Council were unmoved as rubbish decomposed in the street markets and even when they were locked out of their town hall.

Such a perspective is not defeatist. It is designed to make all the potential protagonists in the struggle think very seriously about what they are going to do - particularly those opposing rates increases, and how far they are prepared to take their struggle against the Tories. At the moment, many anti-cuts campaigners have little confidence even in the more progressive labour councils. It is felt that these councils will maintain services by increasing rates - for as long as they can - and when they can no longer do so, they will cut.

Amidst all this talk of defending services we hear little of what kind of services do we want and how the consumers of these services - especially council tenants, but not only them - can have far greater control of them. The more progressive councils have given a lot of attention to this issue and have set up many committees where users have a say.

Lambeth has about ten District Housing Management Committees where tenants have a go at councillors. With reason! Despite a large direct labour force, the repairs on estates are woefully inadequate. Lambeth Council blame the Central Government for not providing enough resources. While Lambeth is certainly short of resources, their system, despite changes, is still over-bureaucratic and protestations that 'we're not responsible for the mess' don't always cut much ice.

I am just using this as an example. Opposition to cuts will only move beyond the radical left milieu inasmuch as people believe that their services are worth defending and they can see ways in which they can personally work to improve them. How do we fight to make all the institutions of the welfare state less alienating? How can we take more control of all these agencies that not only are operating 'for our own good' but claim to know better than us what sort of care or welfare we need? How can we turn the preceding rather vague and woolly phrases into the beginnings of a programme to fight on? Let's turn our attention to this, rather than indulge in mock heroics around 'No rates increase.' **BERNARD MISRAHI**

COMMENT

It is unfortunate that the argument over rate increases had dominated the fight against the cuts in local services, to the exclusion of developing a strategy to mobilise the necessary forces to carry the struggle against the Tories, if not to a successful conclusion, at least to an honourable one.

To most of the left outside of the Labour Party, and a growing proportion within, rate increases are anathema - as bad as cutting services. Although most rates are paid by businesses, these comrades object to working people having to pay any of the remainder. They usually make no objections to income tax or purchase tax. Rates, for them, are different.

It is very likely that this will be the last year that councils will be able to levy big rate increases, and be allowed by the Government to keep the money. Then, if Labour councils are to avoid the responsibility of directly implementing Tory cuts, they will probably have to refuse to balance the books, face bankruptcy and almost certain removal - possible surcharge too. We do not see rate increases as a means of postponing the fight - but of prolonging it . . . This time should be used to continue with progressive policies in housing, social services and other departments that actually deserve being defended, and use a variety of means - Days of Action, local meetings, contacts with other Labour Parties and workers in other boroughs - so that the maximum numbers are involved in the struggle and know what is at stake - particularly if the council goes bankrupt. We appreciate that rate increases could be used to delay struggle - our job is to make sure they

FIGHTING HEALTH CUTS

The Hounslow

Hospital experience

PETE ROWLANDS. Secretary of Hounslow Trades Council, and an active participant in the occupation to keep Hounslow Hospital open, examines the lessons of the struggle.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cuts in public expenditure have been a significant feature of the political landscape since 1973. This article looks at the response of the left and the trade unions to cut through the experience of one particular struggle – the work-in and subsequent occupation of Hounslow Hospital.

2. CHRONOLOGY

In the summer of 1976 the Joint Shop Stewards Committee (JSSC) of the Hounslow Health District supported by Hounslow Trades Union Council, began a campaign against proposed cuts in the local health service which threatened the closure of three small hospitals. A series of demonstrations and public meetings were held, but in February 1977 the Ealing, Hammer-smith and Hounslow Area Health Authority (AHA) formally decided on closure, having been reluctantly supported by the Community Health Council (CHC). The closure date for Hounslow Hospital was fixed for August 31st, and in March a Work-in began, led by a Defence Committee drawn from the hospital staff, the local health unions and the trades council. The hospital was kept open past the closure date on which a large demonstration and meeting was held, and with the support of ambulance-men and doctors it appeared that it could remain so. However, on October 6th the hospital was raided by management using private ambulances, and patients transferred to the local

District General Hospital, West Middlesex. The Defence Committee, including staff, immediately decided to occupy the hospital until the AHA meeting the following week, when despite widespread strike action by hospital workers in London on that day the closure was confirmed and the occupation continued – it was to last until November 28th 1978! The original staff occupants agreed in December 1977 to be transferred to other jobs, but the occupation continued under a committee, drawn mainly from the local health unions and the trades council.

In February 1978 **Fightback** was launched as a national organisation against health cuts and in the summer of 1978 a detailed plan was widely distributed as part of a campaign to re-open Hounslow as a community hospital.

The 'raid' had attracted national publicity and the occupation was initially seen as an important focus of the fight against health cuts. However, as time wore on this was less the case and the occupation eventually ended. Following a series of meetings with the AHA at which it was agreed that the hospital would re-open at an unspecified future date. The hospital has been used as offices since then, but a further round of cuts recently has seen the AHA reneging on its pledge to re-open, the hospital. The campaign to defend it continues.

3. PERSPECTIVES

From the outset of the campaign the health cuts in Hounslow were seen to reflect a national pattern which could only be effectively responded to by building a broad anti-cuts movement, aimed against all cuts and embracing the organised trade union movement outside the public sector as well as those within it. Militant local action as at Hounslow could provide the springboard for such a movement which should be firmly based in the official trade union and labour movement. The crumbling social contract and increased concern with cuts by the trades unions made this perspective seem realistic, although in many ways it was not consistently followed.

Those constituting the Defence Committee (DC) and Occupation Committee (OC) which followed it were drawn from a wide spectrum of the left, with no particular 'group' or 'line' controlling the campaign. Following the raid many militants were drawn to the hospital, and major debates ensued in which it became apparent that there were marked differences between the majority of the OC and the representatives of Hospital Worker and CLASH (A London Hospital Shop Stewards Organisation) groups dominated by the SWP and IMG respectively, with the WSL actively involved. (The CP, while it had members on the OC, did not appear to have many active militants within hospitals in London). While there were differences between the groups,



Andrew Ward (Report)

Hounslow Hospital after the raid on 6th October 1977

they generally agreed that indefinite strike action in the hospital should be pressed for and demanded from the union leadership involved (NUPE and NALGO), that this action should be extended to industrial workplaces, that only such action could force the re-opening of the hospital, and that (by implication) all other forms of action or any long-term perspective on the occupation was futile.

The OC's news differed in that while they agreed that substantial strike action would re-open the hospital it was unrealistic to suppose that it could be immediately achieved, and that a one-day strike officially supported by NUPE and NALGO (held on October 14th) would only be extended by them if there was clear support for it. In the event the attempt to continue the strike in the hospitals failed, while the print and airport workers although sympathetic, showed little inclination for strike action.

The Hospital Worker/CLASH perspectives were clearly ultra-left, and the OC, while blamed for failing to provide 'leadership', felt that a one-day strike was an achievement which may not have happened had there been a call for indefinite action. It was still open for the hospitals involved to stay out, but in the event no hospital (except West London) did so for more than two days.

'Keeping Hospitals Open' and 'Fightback Bulletin' available from
FIGHTBACK — 30 Camden Road NW1

4 OCCUPATION — INDUSTRIAL ACTION OR POLITICAL CAMPAIGN?

The occupation happened as a spontaneous response to the raid, although it followed from, and probably would not have happened without the 8 month work-in, during which management control of the building was challenged. However, there was no conception of continuing it for very long, certainly not without the workers (nurses and porters) originally involved. The occupation was regarded as a sanction, a means of fighting the dispute, and negotiations to re-open the hospital took place with local management, rather than political confrontation with the AHA.

These errors were painfully rectified. The occupation was almost terminated when the nurses decided to accept other jobs in mid-November it was the decision to remain in occupation that turned it from an industrial dispute into a political campaign, although negotiations continued to be held with local management, the futility of which became increasingly apparent, as did the notion of occupation as a sanction — it was an empty building.

A long-term view of the occupation now began to evolve, although until February it was still regarded as a hindrance which could not be given up without eviction, which was expected. However, the OC were victims of their own propaganda — having successfully exposed the brutality of the raid they were hardly likely to be exposed to a publicity-generating eviction, at l

least until emotions over the issue had subsided.

It was not until March that a 'positive' attitude towards the occupation was adopted by the OC, having come to terms with not having the original staff occupants and not being likely to be evicted. The doubt and demoralisation that had plagued the occupations subsequently evaporated. It was now fully located as a significant focus and symbol of opposition to health cuts which the OC saw as their responsibility to project as part of the growth of an anti-cuts movement

This was right, but it took a long time for the OC to understand the significance of what they were doing and begin to exploit its potential.

5 'FIGHTBACK'

This orientation had begun to emerge soon after the beginning of the occupation, when intensive discussion between militants from various hospital campaigns in London produced a booklet 'Keeping Hospitals Open', probably still the best practical guide to campaigning against hospital closures. In November 77 members of the OC spoke to trade union and campaign meetings on a pre-arranged tour of the Midlands and North, and in London a conference called by the OC attracted 150 delegates. These activities laid the basis for a further conference in February 1978, which was able to establish 'Fightback', as a national campaigning organisation against cuts in the health service. This was perhaps the most important political achievement of the

campaign. Based on a real movement, politically independent and non-sectarian, it attempted to link the militant activity on which it was founded to political analysis. It adopted a positive and non-ultimatic approach of working with the official trade union and labour movement, with whose powerful defence traditions it was 'cutting with the grain'. At the same time it attempted to link the defence of the health service to socialist criticism of health care and the NHS. It has been amongst the most genuine and meaningful 'rank and file' movements to emerge in the recent period.

6 A COMMUNITY HOSPITAL AND 'LOCALISM'

During the summer of 1978 the campaign in Hounslow focussed on its projected re-opening as a community hospital, for which detailed plans were drawn up by the OC. This was positive in that it drew on local community involvement and also challenged the elitist and hierarchical structure of hospital administration, laying its emphasis on community involvement through local GPs. However, its liberal attractiveness (virtually everybody supported it) local stress and attention to technical detail tended to obscure the key political question of how it was to be achieved. The campaign did attract broad support and its aims remain the policy of Hounslow Borough Council and CHC.

While there certainly was local support for Hounslow it is doubtful whether the anonymous suburbs of outer West London are identified with as they are in the older working class areas such as London's East End or the South Wales valleys where similar campaigns mobilised greater local support. These differences, and the negative inwardness of 'localism', even where it is strong, were not sufficiently appreciated at the time by the OC.

7 THE TRADE UNION AND LABOUR MOVEMENT

From the outset the campaign was based within the trade union movement, the work-in defence committee and subsequently OC being largely drawn from the local health unions and the Hounslow Trades Union Council (HTUC). However, official support for the work-in and occupation (by NALGO and NUPE) ended after their members involved had agreed to go to other jobs, and some local health unions withdrew their support. Concern with member's jobs did not extend to fighting cuts illustrating the actual though not necessary limitations of much trade union involvement in cuts issues.

However the HTUC remained throughout the work-in and occupation in official support and was able to extend the campaign through the Greater London Association of Trades Councils (GLATC) and the South East Region of the TUC (SERTUC) with considerable effect. This and the pub-

licity given to the raid drew trade union support from all over the country. Donations totalled £15,000. Scotstown Marine Shop Stewards sent a regular £10 per week. A huge mailing list was built up which was regularly used and maintained support for the campaign. Local TU support was strong, particularly from Heathrow, the AUEW and local factories.

Without the active involvement of HTUC the campaign could not have achieved the strength and support it had, and similar campaigns elsewhere suffered from isolation through lack of such involvement. This illustrates the importance and potential of trades councils, something more widely recognised by the left in recent years.

The local CLPs supported the campaign, although they should have been encouraged to become more actively involved. The leader of the Labour Council had originally proposed the closure of Hounslow on the AHA — This was publicised at the time of the raid, although he was not party to that. Prior to the local Borough elections of May 1978 he was not selected as a council candidate in his own ward, although he subsequently gained nomination in another ward, whereas three OC members were nominated and stood as Labour candidates on a 're-open Hounslow Hospital' ticket — two of them were elected. This extension of the campaign was a significant lesson in accountability to labour AHA members others of whom had voted for the cuts, and the projection of the campaign through the local elections was one of its most positive features.

8 THE AHA AND THE CHC

Initially these bodies tended to be written off as incurable agents of government policy, but pressure was increasingly applied to Labour AHA members (as mentioned above), and an orientation towards influencing the AHA developed. This contributed towards them almost refusing to make the required cuts recently, which would have been an important boost to the stand taken by Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark AHA. However this did not happen and the Hounslow council have mistakenly withdrawn their members. CHC policy was influenced through similar pressure. The presence of good trade union representatives on the AHA and CHC who kept in close touch with the OC was important. It was right to attempt to influence these bodies, at the same time demanding (as the OC did) that they be made democratic and accountable. It is no accident that the Tories intend to abolish AHAs.

9 ORGANISATION

The campaign was conducted throughout by a DC and OC which met regularly and frequently (at least 3 times per week during the last 4 months of the occupation), and this was essential to maintain cohesion and thrust. There

was an initial tendency to a somewhat elitist division of labour, but this was solved through the sharing and spreading of functions and better monitoring of all aspect of the occupation by the OC.

Considerable attention was paid to publicity. Masses of well-presented leaflets were produced. Media coverage was carefully considered and systematically sought, and contacts cultivate. This ensured extensive publicity often on favourable terms.

The campaign, like others held demonstrations, collected petitions and appealed for support. These activities were often ill considered, as they are by many. Demonstrations were not always connected with a specific event — they were most successful when they were. Petitions were collected passively and at random. 'Support' was not always specified — it is necessary to be precise about what is being asked.

The varied skills of the OC — typist, electricians, accountants, carpenter — illustrates the practical importance of the different unions that together form a trades council.

The OC opened the hospital to various community, trade union and political groups who met there regularly, and this helped to increase local involvement with the campaign.

The time and effort devoted by those involved was essential, (including a virtually, full-time commitment by a number of retired trade unionists). So was the enormous financial support which the publicity attached to the raid generated and helped maintain.

10 CONCLUSION.

The projection of Hounslow Hospital as a focus and symbol of militant resistance to cuts and the attempt to promote a broad movement based on that and similar campaigns must in part justify the activity and energy expanded in the occupation. It did contribute towards a growing awareness of the extent and damage of cuts in the health service. It helped to develop greater expertise in the campaigns that grew during this period. However it probably outlined its usefulness in its latter stages and became an end in itself, although the problem of learning without achieving the re-opening was difficult and the subject of much bitter debate on the OC.

The campaign around Hounslow and the movement of which it was a part, while having made advances, has yet failed to check the widespread belief that while cuts are to be regretted there is little alternative to them. The emphasis on the inhumanity of cuts and militancy in defence of past gains, while necessary, was at the expense of an ideological thrust — seeing, cuts as an attempt to solve capitalism's crisis at the expense of the working class. It is in this area that we must concentrate now.

New tactics employed to stabilize regime

South Africa's strategy of aggression

Much has been made in recent months of changes taking place in South Africa and its apartheid regime. Carefully timed and well-publicised press events have been organised to convince "friends in the West" that some movement, some liberalisation, is taking place.

At the same time the spotlight has been on Southern Africa as a whole. The agreement carved out by Carrington has only temporarily stabilised the situation in Zimbabwe. But what is less well-known is that South Africa is fighting a *war* in that part of the Continent, designed to protect its borders from incursion by guerrilla fighters, using Mozambique, Angola and possibly Zimbabwe as bases.

Changes in policy have followed the arrival of P.W. Botha as Prime Minister. Much more than his predecessors Botha fears revolution in South Africa.

So he has pursued two facets of policy, which carefully complement each other; they are designed to strengthen the regime internally and externally. The question is—will such a policy succeed? For both within S. Africa itself and in relation to surrounding states, a number of tensions exist which may snap. Equally, S. Africa may be helped in solving some of those tensions from outside quarters, not least from Britain, which over the last year has quietly been engaged in a foreign policy initiative in this arena, and not merely as a backdrop to the pressing Zimbabwe problem, but in a more long-term sense.

This article will look at the various attempts the South Africans have made to change the face of their regime and the tensions their attempts have reacted to, and in many cases exacerbated. It will attempt to reveal the nature and extent of the war. And it will look at the role of British foreign policy in this light.

PART 1: REORGANIZING APARTHEID

Since the Soweto uprising in 1976, the S. Africans have realized that the Black working class, particularly the young, cannot merely be policed. To be effective a policy of repression must take a number of forms. The chief initiative the S. Africans have made is to try to make it appear that the structure of apartheid is being dismantled, in order to reorganize apartheid on a more efficient basis. Under Botha's stewardship (a man



chosen to succeed Vorster, incidentally, because of his hawkish views) a number of cosmetic changes have been introduced. Some, in areas of so-called petty-apartheid, have de-segregated beaches, parks, theatres and some hotels and restaurants. Others have encouraged the growth of a black middle class, with products and advertisements directed specially at them. There have been attempts to divide the non-whites by appealing to "Indians" and "Coloureds" as "favoured partners" in a future federal South Africa. There has been talk of ending the Pass Laws and the Immorality Acts. Piet Koornof, Minister of Co-operation and Development (formerly Bantu Administration) made a statement during a tour of the USA that apartheid "as you came to know it in the USA is dying and dead."

The fact that he was denounced by the right wing of the Nationalist Party as a traitor is not the major point. He was also wrong. Such a statement bears no resemblance either to what has happened so far, or to any policies currently being proposed. Behind changed appearances (and these when you look carefully are only sporadic and thinly spread) the essential features of apartheid remain.

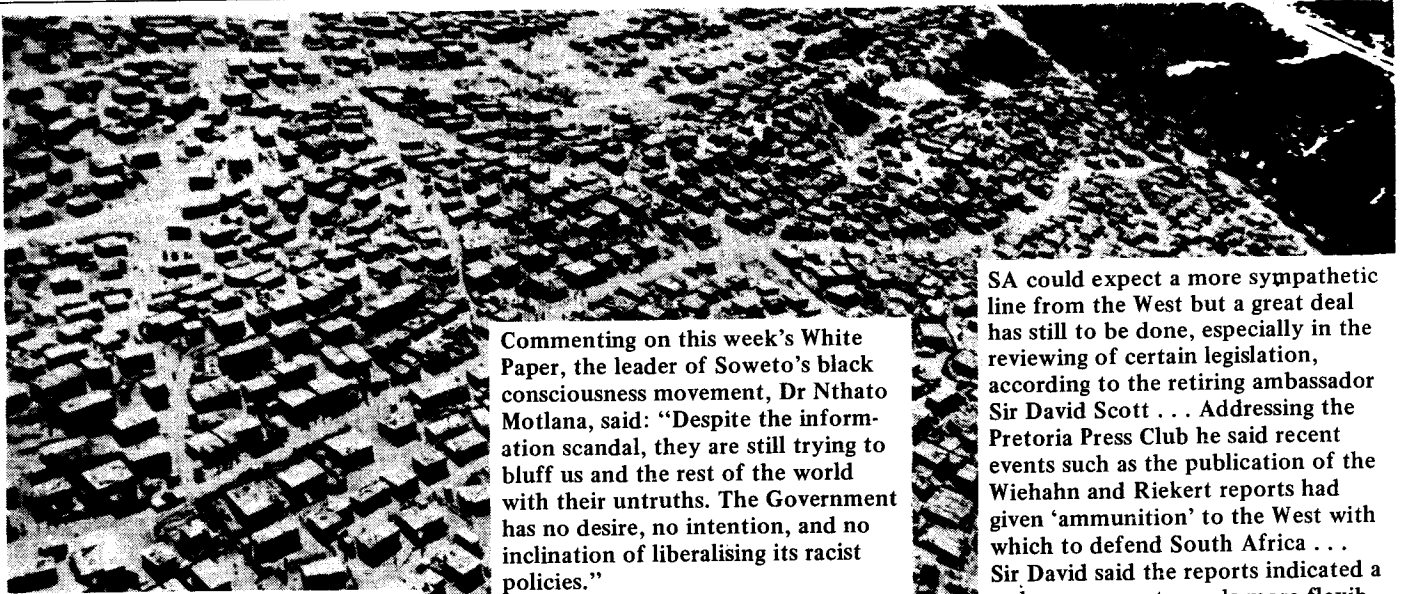
It can be no other way. The S. African economy, now one of the strongest in the world thanks to the enormous rise in the price of gold, rests on the continuation of cheap

black labour as its means of maintaining high rates of profit. It cannot countenance large scale changes which would involve truly independent trades unions, social security and welfare rights for all, and an end to restrictions and banning which seeks to regulate the flow of labour between the poverty-stricken "homelands" and the industrial centres.

Yet paradoxically it must have changes too. As the economy expands and industrial production increases, there is a requirement for more skilled labour, from technician-level upwards. This cannot be provided by whites. Many capitalist firms—particularly those owned or funded by overseas interests—would like to train blacks for these jobs, but they are restricted, not necessarily by law, but by agreements with their white workers, who strictly maintain apartheid on the shop floor.

It is significant therefore that the Wiehahn Commission report on Trade Unions and the ensuing government white paper—hailed by the British media as an end to job apartheid—was largely welcomed by white trade unions. They saw its proposals as a more effective means of protecting their entrenched position. Its major proposal, that statutory job reservation should go, is pointless, since most reservation is not enshrined by law. It is maintained by the white closed shop which the government has made clear it will not ban.

The overall effect will be to repress black trade unionism still further, since it proposes a registration system. Unions qualifying for legal status (all others will be by definition illegal and subject to prosecution) cannot be racially-mixed, and the Industrial Registrar must be satisfied they are not contrary to any other factor "which would serve to maintain peace and harmony . . . and the national interest in general". Most revealing of all, migrant workers and "commuters" from Bantustans and "homelands" will be excluded from legal definition of 'employee' and unions will have to



Commenting on this week's White Paper, the leader of Soweto's black consciousness movement, Dr Nthato Motlana, said: "Despite the information scandal, they are still trying to bluff us and the rest of the world with their untruths. The Government has no desire, no intention, and no inclination of liberalising its racist policies."

Quote from Dr Nthato Motlana in Guardian article 'Pretoria rejects . . .'

The Corporation acknowledged the need to establish special programmes for black employees who have the potential for job advancement, in recognition of the various obstacles that stand in their way.

One of the programmes being undertaken is a scheme, ambitious in concept and likely to be difficult of execution, to recruit, educate, train and develop high-quality black matriculants who will form a pool of potential managers in the financial and engineering fields which are at the heart of our business. The scheme is financed jointly by the Corporation and De Beers, and we estimate that it will cost rather more than R3 million over the next five years. We look upon this as an investment in the widest sense, for once the scheme has proved itself it will be made available to other employers and educational institutions in the country.

We are looking forward to employing blacks for careers in the significant decision-making areas of our business. We are determined to give meaning to the concept of equal employment opportunity, and in so doing to make our own small contribution to the development of a just society in South Africa.

Extract on 'Employment Practices' from Anglo American Corporation Report.

"The thought most basic to our submission is the need to ensure a stable, contented urbanised black community in our metropolitan and industrialized areas . . . The emergence of a "middle class" with Western-type materialist needs and ambitions has already occurred in these areas. The mature family-oriented urban black already places the stability of his household uppermost and is more interested in his pay-packet than in politics. Our prime point of departure should be that this "middle class" is not weakened by frustration and indignity. Only by having this most responsible section of the black community on our side can the whites of South Africa be assured of containing on a long-term basis the irresponsible economic and political ambitions of those blacks who are influenced against their own real interests from within and without our borders."

Quote from Transvaal Chamber of Industries report (post-Soweto).

SA could expect a more sympathetic line from the West but a great deal has still to be done, especially in the reviewing of certain legislation, according to the retiring ambassador Sir David Scott . . . Addressing the Pretoria Press Club he said recent events such as the publication of the Wiehahn and Riekert reports had given 'ammunition' to the West with which to defend South Africa . . . Sir David said the reports indicated a welcome move towards more flexibility and humanity. However, he said it was all very well to do good by stealth, but suggested that an overhaul of legislation in the labour sphere was needed . . .

Rand Daily Mail 17.5.79

The British Ambassador to SA, Sir David Scott, has announced that the British Government had allocated funds to finance an expanded programme of aid for blacks in SA. He was addressing the SA Institute of International Affairs, and said that for a number of years the British Council had helped both black and white with bursaries and scholarships. The Council had helped blacks, particularly in the homelands, with teaching aids, English text books and in other ways . . . Sir David said the programme had been approved by the Labour Govt but was being implemented by the new Conservative Government . . .

The Citizen 18.5.79



(Top) Crossroads, black shanty town near Cape Town (below) French supplied Mirage fighters of S.A. Airforce.

expel any such workers currently members (one in three at present). This body of workers are placed in a no man's land and faced with Hobson's choice—stay and starve in the "homelands", or try to get work with no rights whatsoever.

A recent government law has imposed penalties on employers who give jobs to unregistered black workers. It is intended to regulate the flow of blacks from rural areas; for despite the "influx-control" laws they had been coming in large numbers. Less and less will now survive since few employers will risk incurring penalties. And even those who registered—some 60,000—will not be safe since they are now known as illegal immigrants and could be transported back to the rural areas at any time.

One further twist is that the industrial centres actually need a large reserve army of labour close at hand. The regime, if it is to survive economically, must compromise its ideology of separatism to some extent, retaining large numbers of workers in shanty towns and ghettos, creating large scale problems for its repressive apparatus. If it maintains a policy of dispersal and a policy of attraction, the contradiction created is insoluble.

SOWETO

Following Soweto, a foretaste of the conflict engendered by such a contradiction, a frightened government promised many improvements in living conditions, and property rights in the black townships. It also gave way to pressure not to dismantle the squatter camp of Crossroads, situated on the outskirts of Cape Town.

Now after several years, the conditions in Soweto remain exactly the same—overcrowding, poor housing, no medical facilities, few schools and fewer teachers (many banned), no drainage. And large numbers of the

"The Chairman of the Commission on Trade Unions, Nic Wiehahn, was entrusted simultaneously with another job—two years ago the Minister of Labour asked him to organise a campaign to undermine international Trade Union action against South Africa."

population unemployed. Every day Pass Law raids hunt down those without permits or who have overstayed, returning them to the Bantustans or the newly—"independent" Homelands. Rather than try to buy off at least part of the population with improved amenities, the regime's ploy has been to promote fictitious democracy within the township. The result is revealing.

In the election for the Community Council in Feb. 1978 there were no candidates at all in 19 out of the 30

wards, and in the only two wards which were contested the turn-out figures were 3.8% and 7.3% of the electorate. Compare this to the treatment meted out to the unofficial Soweto Local Authority Interim Committee, commonly known as the "Committee of Ten", whose members were detained in October 1977, and since release have been generally harassed.

Similarly, Crossroads. Within six months of the reprieve, three-quarters of the families are about to be evicted from their homes and deposited in the "homelands". The government is confident it can succeed. It replaced the threatening bulldozers with more subtle and less public intimidation. Night-time pass raids were carried out, with hundreds arrested. Government officials cut off the water supply at night, and in the early morning blockaded the area, preventing those with jobs getting to work. Negotiations between a group of Crossroads residents and Koornof were a farce, resulting in a plan for rehousing which is vague and ambiguous, and which it now turns out does not include anything like the total number of residents. At the very same time Koornof was agreeing to the new, stiffer penalties for employers of "illegal" workers.

Hopes for a relaxation in the Pass Laws have also been ended. It was a major recommendation of the Rickert Commission of inquiry into Manpower Utilisation. A government white paper ended speculation that it might be implemented. Prosecution of "illegal" black residents and those staying more than 72 hours in white areas continue. Only a week before the White Paper Koornof had said (to an American audience) that he hated the Pass Laws and they were being reviewed by his department!

CONSTITUTIONAL FUTURE

One further change has been bandied about. Yet one more Commission is sitting—the Schibusch—on South Africa's constitutional future. It consists of members drawn from the white Parliament only. In proposals submitted by the Nationalist Party, three Parliaments are envisaged, for whites, "coloureds" and "Indians", with each Parliament "controlling its own affairs" and having representation on a Council of Cabinets dealing with matters of common concern. Black representation is not proposed, since they will by then have their own "independent" countries. Only after pressure were some tame Blacks allowed to make submissions. However the "federal" bandwagon was stopped spectacularly in its tracks, by Botha himself. Meeting with "Coloured" leaders of the Labour Party (the ruling Party on the Coloured Representative Council) he abruptly ended the meeting by warning the delegates against

unconstitutional action.

The "coloured" leaders had refused to make a submission to Schibusch and had had the temerity to propose universal suffrage and a single Parliament. Botha's reply was simple: "I say one man, one vote in this country is out. I now want to say something further: don't try to do something unconstitutional or you will be sorry for yourself."

He went on to warn them that if they did not co-operate with him he would have to find coloured leaders who would.

Professor Willem Kleynhans, Professor of Political Science at the University of South Africa, said: "The rank-and-file of the National Party is conservative. They don't like Mr Botha's policies. He has offended his supporters by telling them he wants a free hand to change policies without party congress approval. He is showing contempt for the folk-ways of his party."

Even the few changes effected so far and talk of others have brought about a right-wing backlash among Afrikaners. Contrary to media presentation the recent loss of a NP seat in Johannesburg to the more liberal Progressive Federal Party (PFP) and reduced majorities in other by-elections, was due more to NP abstentions and to desertions to the neo-fascist Herstigte National Party (HNP), than to any massive liberalisation among white South African voters. It can be conceded only that there has been some movement back to traditional allegiances among English speakers, who have been assiduously wooed by the NP over the last 20 years. The self-righteousness of Afrikaners was certainly shaken by the 'Muldergate' scandal, which revealed widespread corruption amongst Nationalist Party leaders. It led to the downfall of the "heir apparent" to Vorster's leadership, Connie Mulder, and to the embarrassing resignation of Vorster himself from the Presidency. The simple belief, held by many Afrikaners, that their leaders were guided by God, was shattered; confidence in politicians and State officials has not been entirely restored. But the NP leadership, having had its Night of the Long Knives, has weathered the storm. Presumably, however, the relationship between the State and the (white) Citizen will never be the same.

Again, there is undoubtedly some dispute between so-called 'verligtes' (enlightened) and 'verkrampptes' (narrow) within the NP, but it is not a dispute about basic philosophy, since all agree that apartheid must continue. The current NP leaders, largely 'verligtes', are now under constant pressure to reverse the

changes and retreat into the 'laager'. The government will obviously be tempted to take the gold money and run.

PART 2: THE WAR

Yet it cannot retreat too far. It requires greater integration with the Western capitalist economies and a trouble-free world to maintain full production. It is therefore conscious that it is increasingly surrounded and threatened by independent Black states. For this reason Botha cannot and will not return to the world isolation experienced in earlier years. It is the reason why S. Africa is now inextricably involved in a war in the southern part of the continent.

Since their assumption of power in S. Africa in 1948, the nationalists have made no secret of their ambition to put themselves in economic and military control of the sub-continent. They believed they could do this economically by hegemonising the post-colonial states which had been decolonised with no industrial base, and diplomatically by corrupting Black governments such as Banda's Malawi and Mobutu's Zaire and supporting colonial Portugal and white-racist Rhodesia. The situation has changed dramatically with the victory of the liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique and the growth in strength of the Patriotic Front in Zimbabwe. Suddenly, S. Africa realised that it could only achieve such aims by more aggressive and military policies.

This "Common Market" of Southern Africa is a vital aim; it would guarantee the S. African economy all the minerals and raw materials it needs and would provide a vast area of protected exports markets. Politically it would establish a series of buffer states which would have to "fall" before it was S. Africa's turn. To achieve that aim now, it must first de-stabilise the anti-apartheid states of Angola and Mozambique, prevent independence in Namibia and retain its traditional control over Zimbabwe.

MILITARY AGGRESSION

The evidence of its aggression is manifest. A continuous series of bombing raids, infiltration of sabotage teams by land and sea, and constant pressure on Zambia as the pivot of Black states' resistance. Between 12 November and 29 December 1978 there were 19 airstrikes against civilian targets in Mozambique: in Angola 52 airstrikes were recorded in just 10 days in March 1979. Pretoria maintains a strong motorised infantry and armoured force in Northern Namibia on the Angola border.

Military aid to the Rhodesians was massive. S. Africa supplied US helicopters, French fighters, and British

patrol aircraft, between 1977 and 1979. The eight-fold increase in the Rhodesian military budget 1974-78 can only have been achieved by S. African subsidies reckoned by the *Guardian* at £30m per month. Even following the so-called armistice and peace settlement, S. African troops have continued to stay in Zimbabwe with the complete agreement of the British.

General Peter Walls, commander of the Muzorewa-Smith forces certainly knew which side his bread was buttered. Speaking during one of his visits to S. Africa in March 1979 he said:

"We have less than five years to get it together. With the resources in Southern Africa we can be a world power."

He saw the need for a 'common economic market' and a 'possible loose political tie among the various countries in the region'. Sentiments echoed more recently by the Foreign Minister Pik Botha in Zurich, and the Prime Minister when he called in

"Every time gold clocks up another dollar in London, Pretoria's coffers swell by \$13m in extra tax receipts from the mines, while Anglo-American, the largest of South Africa's seven mining houses, finds itself with another \$8m on its hands."

December 1979 for a 'constellation of states' in the region. The bulk of the states destined for this bright future have, however, been less than keen on the idea.

There is no doubting the strategic importance of Zimbabwe to S. Africa's plans. The regime is fearful of it falling into Marxist hands, creating, in the words of General Malan, chief of S. Africa's defence forces, "a solid belt of Marxist states across the sub-continent cutting off and isolating S. Africa. (In this version of the domino theory Zambia would be pressurised into Marxism and Botswana would 'fall prey' to communism). The implication for S. Africa is obvious.

PART 3: BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

The British and Americans share S. Africa's concern. The Kissinger-Vorster agreement which started the push for an 'internal settlement' in Zimbabwe was eagerly taken up by the British. It is particularly alarming therefore that recent significant changes in British foreign policy towards S. Africa should have chosen to ignore S. Africa's aggressive intent, indeed to have actually supported it, and to have become dazzled by the chimera of reform within the Republic itself. In the event of a major conflict, this

adds up to one thing—Britain would side fully with the S. African regime.

British governments, both Conservative and Labour, have always collaborated with apartheid. The new policy therefore could better be described as an adjustment brought about in the wake of Soweto, with a view to promoting "rapid, peaceful and fundamental change" by giving aid directly to the black population of S. Africa with funds allocated for black educational and social projects. Apart from the obvious crassness of the proposals (who can believe that the regime will stand by and watch the British bring about fundamental change?) it runs directly counter to the liberation movement's call for isolation of the regime and any relationship which would help to perpetuate the system.

Already, having accepted the regime's terms for aid-giving, the British have found an open door beckoning them ever-further into the labyrinth.

The aid plan was devised following a visit to S. Africa by the then Foreign Secretary, David Owen, in 1978. The British Ambassador was a moving spirit leading a committee which subsequently put forward the specific proposals. It deplored Britain's white-orientation and called for contact with black "homeland" leaders and other "establishment figures" (sic). Owen was especially anxious to cultivate black opinion in the urban areas. Obviously Soweto had shaken Britain's rulers as it had S. Africa's and they needed to adjust, to seek out those who might wield power in the future and cultivate them, simply in order to protect British economic interests and investments. The emphasis on 'peaceful change' and 'evolution rather than revolution' is however a nonsense in view of the philosophy of apartheid, which must be all or nothing. Moreover it flies in the face of the liberation movement's assertion that ultimately only armed struggle and popular revolt will topple such a total system.

The British aid plan is in operation now, with scholarships for blacks, visits by UK academics and more money available for information and books inside S. Africa. In so doing, the British government—now doubly enthusiastic since Thatcher—has tacitly accepted the farce of the "homelands" and the wretched Bantustans, which diplomatically it still pretends not to recognize. It is reinforcing the regime's attempts to create a compliant Black elite, and by supposedly aiding development, gives the S. African government an excuse to do even less.

It is a policy therefore which must be exposed and eventually reversed. Pressure from within the Labour movement would be a first step. ●

JOHN SPENCER

DEBATE

Eurocommunism: What does the future hold?

DON FLYNN

The Eurocommunist phenomenon has suffered something of a set-back in recent times. The three communist parties¹ who signed the two declarations of 1975 which laid out the principles of the Eurocommunist tendency, have all suffered electoral reverses which brought them back from what once seemed the brink of governmental power.

These reversals began with the collapse of the French Union of the Left between the socialist, communist and small radical left parties. The unseemly fracas which broke out between PCF leader George Marchais and the PS head Francois Mitterand immediately prior to the important general election of March 1978 on the exact content of the programme of the Union led to an electoral defeat which had seemed most improbable only one year before.

The Spanish general election in March 1979 saw the failure of the PCE to advance significantly beyond its ten per cent share of the popular vote, while the overall political climate confirmed the parties of the centre right as the heirs to Franco's Spain.

But most alarming from the overall standpoint of Eurocommunism have been the set-backs suffered by its most influential component, the PCI. After decades of steady growth in electoral terms, culminating in a 34 per cent share of the vote in 1976, the party saw the first drop in votes in thirty years. In 1976 the apparently unstoppable PCI seemed to be on course for participation in the government of Italy by the end of the decade. However, the 1979 results indicated a large degree of disillusionment with the party's strategy of 'historical compromise' with the Christian Democrats, particularly amongst young voters who indicated their disapproval by transferring their votes either to the far left (2 per cent of the total vote) or the Radical Party (3.3 per cent). The PCI lost one half of the votes it gained in the big push of 1976, allowing the corrupt Christian Democrats to claim that they had halted the 'red menace' and thereby paved the way for another 30 years of their own rule.

A further turn in the screw has come more recently from PCF leader Marchais who has for the time being returned to a 'Soviet Union — right or wrong' stance; never far from the surface of the French communist tradition since the days of Thorez². Marchais broke ranks with his Eurocommunist allies over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Returning from a visit to Moscow at the height of the American-inspired sabre-rattling over the invasion, Marchais is reported to have told journalists that the only difference between himself and Brezhnev was that Brezhnev is already in power. Such remarks must have caused deep dismay in the ranks of the Italian and Spanish CPs. The latter parties have gone to great lengths to distinguish themselves from Soviet foreign policy: the

Spanish openly stating that the Soviet Union is not socialist and the Italians opposing Soviet support for the Ethiopian regime in its war against Eritrea and also announcing their willingness to allow Italy to remain within NATO should the PCI ever participate in an Italian government.

For many political commentators all this adds up to the great failure of Eurocommunism and its collapse as a political force to be reckoned with. Supporters of this view believe that the Eurocommunist strategy was always, first and foremost, an electoral strategy designed to bring communist parties into power by peaceful means. With clear evidence that the tide of popular support at the ballot-boxes has been turned, one view has it that pressures inside the mass CPs of the main Latin countries in Europe will build up for a return to the traditional 'socialist family', with the Soviet Union firmly ensconced as head of the household.

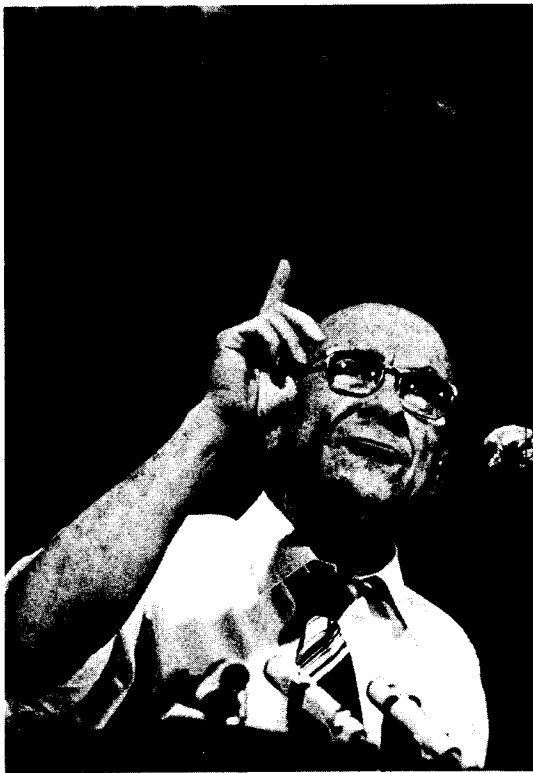
Any true picture of the likely future for Eurocommunism has to begin with an assessment of what the Eurocommunist strategy was all about in the first place. Has the Stalinist wolf been stripped of its sheep's clothing? Can we expect to have heard the last of claims that a fundamental change has taken place in the nature of these parties; that their commitment to the maintenance of democracy at all costs has now withered on the vine?

Or rather is it just possible that real changes did take place in these parties in the early seventies; that the elements of a completely new strategy for anti-capitalist struggle were hammered out during that period? And, most importantly, irrespective of the short-term set-backs and switches and turns in the positions of individual parties; is there anything of value in the Eurocommunist tradition that can be salvaged for the wider international socialist movement?

THE LEFTIST ANALYSIS

The radical left throughout Europe has held the strongest cynicism for Eurocommunist claims to have reformed the Western European communist tradition. Various analyses emanating from the far left have made claim that the principal foundations of the 'new' Eurocommunist strategy lie with old-fashioned Stalinism and the social democracy of Karl Kautsky and the Second International. Foremost amongst the advocates of this view is the Belgian leader of the Trotskyist Fourth International, Ernest Mandel³.

RES et RESP



Carrillo (PCE), Berlinguer (PCI) and Marchais (PCF)

In his book *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism*⁴, Mandel argues that the emergence of Eurocommunism is linked to a crisis of Stalinism⁵. While not the same as the doctrine of monolithic and uncritical support for every aspect of the political and social life of the Soviet Union, Eurocommunism does rest on certain basic assumptions which are central to the orthodox Stalinist outlook – most importantly, the possibility of building ‘socialism in one country’. As Mandel argues, “. . . the threads of Eurocommunism were woven into the future of the world communist movement from the very moment the theory of ‘socialism in one country’ was born”.

From this point onwards, impetus was lent to a movement which could increasingly lay claim to the right to work out separate and independent roads to socialism: each one taking its primary orientation from the specific national conditions which prevailed in the different countries.

Where does this new orientation ‘inevitably’ (in the Trotskyist parlance) lead to? For Mandel, it leads not to a new strategy but to the very opposite – a “political and ideological regression by a section of the European workers’ movement”, to a form of social democracy a la Karl Kautsky and the Second International. (Mandel insists that this should not be confused with contemporary social democracy.). Rather than propose anything new, Eurocommunism is simply offering up the old Kautskyst ‘attrition strategy’ which argues against a head-on confrontation between the workers’ movement and the capitalist state, and instead proposes a ‘siege’ whereby the workers’ movement literally surrounds the various bastions of capitalist state power and gradually erodes their defences by sapping and mining at the walls.

At a superficial level Mandel’s analysis appears to have much to commend it. It is indeed possible to draw out quite an impressive list of points which Eurocommunism appears to have in common with the older strategy of Kautsky (Mandel places seven items on his own particular list; no doubt others might wish to improve on that total). With so many points *in common* with old-style social democracy it doesn’t seem too wild a leap into the improbable to suppose that Eurocommunism must therefore be exactly *the same* as the aforesaid. And as Kautsky – it hardly needs to be stated – was proved bankrupt then we should have no compunction about announcing a similar fate for his latter-day offspring.

Following on from this type of analysis the far left appears to hold two possible prospects for Eurocommunism:-

- a) With the failure of its own independent national road it will succumb to pressures for a return to the old-style Stalinism of the past;
- b) It will continue to resurrect the forgotten ideologies of the Second International, eventually to be assimilated into the mainstream of modern social democracy.

Thus, for the far left, Eurocommunism appears as a transitory phenomenon, with no right to claim an independent existence for itself. It is always caught between two poles; Stalinism on one hand and social democracy on the other. As the capitalist crisis increases then pressure both from within and outside the workers’ movement will force Eurocommunism to complete its journey in one or the other direction. The working class movement will have nothing to show for its brief experience of the ‘new’ ideas of the erstwhile period of Eurocommunism – the tactics, the alliances, the contact with radical social forces outside the working class, the attempts to re-examine Marxist economic and social theories, the debates around the nature of the state . . . all this and everything else that has formed the experience of Eurocommunism simply counts as nothing and all questions devolve back to the basic, fundamental issues of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; of ‘them’ and ‘us’.

OBJECTIONS TO THE LEFTIST ANALYSIS

Mandel’s analysis, like those of his parallel thinkers in other strands of the Trotskyist and radical left movements⁶, holds together only as long as one accepts that ideas are primarily determined by their ideological lineage. It is crucial to the leftist argument to be able to prove that threads of continuity can be traced between different socialist tendencies at different times, and to assert the overwhelming importance of these threads in determining the shape and structure of the descendent ideas.

As we have already quoted, Mandel writes of how the “threads of Eurocommunism” were interwoven into the workers’ movement with the adoption of the theory of socialism in one country. Later on another theory comes into play to supplement this: that of the Popular Front; “. . . If socialism in one country led to national-communism, the theory and practice of the Popular

Front led to a political line which fuelled a gradual process of Social Democratisation. Such are the principal roots of Eurocommunism.”

And of course, the third erroneous strand in the Eurocommunist current is the regression to the social democratic ideas of Karl Kautsky. . . .

In this way the far left is able to piece together a critique of Eurocommunism which rests solely on comparisons made with other currents and tendencies which have existed at various times in the past inside the international workers' movement. In short, Eurocommunism will fail because it is too similar to the socialism in one country of Stalin; the Popular Front of Thorez; and the gradualist, attrition strategy of Kautsky.

A critique of this nature must be rejected as hopelessly inadequate and sectarian. This is the case for three reasons:-

– Firstly, because even if Eurocommunism did reproduce exactly all the mistaken theories of Stalin, Kautsky, etc., it tells us nothing of the reasons why the working class movements in three major European countries have once again been driven across the same ground. The important threads are not those between Berlinguer and Kautsky, or Carrillo and Stalin, but those between the specific forms of the world economic and social crisis of capital which exist in each individual nation-state, and the consciousness and the traditions of the working class movement in each nation. A discussion around these themes is completely absent from the writings of Mandel and his co-thinkers and because of this we really learn very little about the importance of Eurocommunism to the workers of the principal Latin European countries today.

– Secondly, the methodology of Mandel's analysis is wrong. The principle that similarity equals total identity has more to do with scandal-mongering journalism than any serious scientific approach.

Socialists are familiar with arguments which trace the common identity of Plato and Marx because both favoured social planning rather than something called an 'open' society. More recently we learn that anti-racists and fascists are the same because the supporters of both these viewpoints sometimes get involved in fights with the police.

These two examples should make us acutely aware of the dangers inherent in such statements that because Kautsky was in favour of a gradual undermining of the foundations of capitalist power, and because the strategy of the Eurocommunists could be described in broadly similar terms, that therefore the one must be exactly the same as the other. From a Marxist standpoint the *differences* between the view of the state adhered to by the PCI or the PCE and that of Kautsky and the Second International are every bit as important as their similarities. Without an understanding of the points at which Eurocommunism becomes quite distinctly a strategy for socialist struggle for the final quarter of the twentieth century rather than the first, then any resultant analysis is at best partial and crude, if not totally misleading.

– The third and final error involved in the Mandel type of analysis is that it reduces a critique of Eurocommunism to a critique of the strategies and tactics of particular parties, and especially their leaderships. For the millions of workers and the tens of thousands of intellectuals who are bound to the mass CPs of Italy, Spain and France, Eurocommunism is more than just this speech of Berlinguer, or that book by Carrillo. It is a conceptual framework for debate and discussion about the key problems of the day for the workers' movement and its progressive allies. These problems include such issues as the ways in which the precarious democracies of Spain and Italy can be maintained while still pushing forward with a working class programme; of the consequences of the liberation and anti-imperialist struggles of the developing nations for the crisis-ridden economies of the metropolitan countries; of the prospects for the integration of newer radical political movements, concerned with the struggle of women, the ethnic minorities, subordinate nationalities within supra-national states, the environment, the energy question, of education and health care, housing and community concerns, how the positive and progressive elements of all

these movements can be brought into the mainstream of radical working class politics.

It is around issues such as these that much of the impetus for the development of the Eurocommunist current has come. Yet by and large the far left remains entrenched in the view that the only impetus to the development of Eurocommunist ideas was that which came from old Karl Kautsky when he first set the ball rolling some seventy years ago!

AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF EUROCOMMUNISM

A second view of the Eurocommunist phenomenon has avoided the crude identification of the broad political current with the narrow views and opinions of the leaderships of the three main Eurocommunist parties. The alternative view has started its assessment by placing greatest emphasis on the impact of the various forms of capitalist crisis, at distinct political and economic levels, on the political traditions and the organisations of the Latin European workers' movements.

One of the most readily accessible (for socialists in Britain) writers from this standpoint is the Spanish Marxist Fernando Claudin. Claudin is prominent amongst a diverse group of communist and socialist intellectuals including, until his tragic death by suicide last year, Nicos Poulantzas, the French communist Christine Buci-Glucksmann and Ingrao of the PCI. While they are not part of any formal grouping as such, their general position of critical sympathy with many of the positions of Eurocommunism has earned them the title of 'Left' Eurocommunists.

In his book *Eurocommunism and Socialism*⁷, Claudin presents Eurocommunism as being first and foremost a political strategy that has evolved within the conditions of capitalist crisis in the concrete circumstances of French, Italian and Spanish societies, and the consequences each particular form of this crisis has had for the mass communist parties in those countries. As Claudin states:-

“Eurocommunism has attracted so much attention not just because of its theoretical and practical problematic, but above all because the present crisis of capitalism has put on the agenda a democratic socialist alternative. This, at least, is the case in the three biggest countries of Southern Europe, where a deep economic and social crisis has combined with a crisis of the dominant political system – of Christian Democracy, Gaullism and Francoism – and where the Left is close to acquiring a hegemonic majority.”

In explaining the emergence of Eurocommunism Claudin concedes that it can be traced back to an earlier date (particularly through the PCI leader Togliatti from 1934 onwards). However, the tendency within Western European communism only properly revealed itself with the decisive events of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the traumatic upheavals in France and Italy in 1968-9. The former brought to the attention of socialist workers in Western Europe the complete moral turpitude and lack of socialist vision on the part of the leaders of the erstwhile 'socialist family', and the latter demonstrated the depths of discontent, frustration and anger with all aspects of bourgeois capitalist society in the advanced Western countries.

These social explosions in the late sixties were not caused by some mechanical economic law of capitalist decline. Claudin discusses the new conflicts of the last decade as being “not economic alone, but social and political, moral and ideological”. The structures of the post-war world order had entered into a new period of stress and strain which in turn produced a heightened consciousness amongst broad layers of the population. Wage earners confronted the illusion that capitalism could guarantee full employment and an ever-advancing standard of life. Public scandals such as Watergate and Lockheed challenged the moral authority of the right of the governors to govern. The belief that capitalism had an unlimited capacity to develop the forces of production was being replaced by an 'ecological consciousness' – an awareness

of the destructive impact which the modern mode of production had on the planet's resources, moving towards a point "where the balance between development and destruction tips to the side of destruction, leaving mankind [sic] in an impasse."

Alongside these challenges to bourgeois society came advanced thought on science and technology, the organisation of labour and productive forces, schools and university, family and sexual morality, culture in general . . . Claudin concludes that,

"If the system is to be defeated the struggle to revolutionise these areas is as essential as the revolutionary transformation of the state and cannot be kept separate from that central task."

Developing these positions the Left Eurocommunists argue that the realm of cultural and social struggle (as distinct from the purely political and economic) must be placed at the forefront of a socialist political programme. Utilising and extending Gramsci's concept of hegemony, they propose the extension of the working class challenge for power, not only in the traditional arenas of the conflict between working class parties and bourgeois governments and the broad labour movement versus the state, but in the less tangible realm of ideology and the cultural conflict which revolves around the assertion of bourgeois morality, racism and sexism, individualism and consumerism, against the proletarian morality which can be derived from collectivism and solidarity.

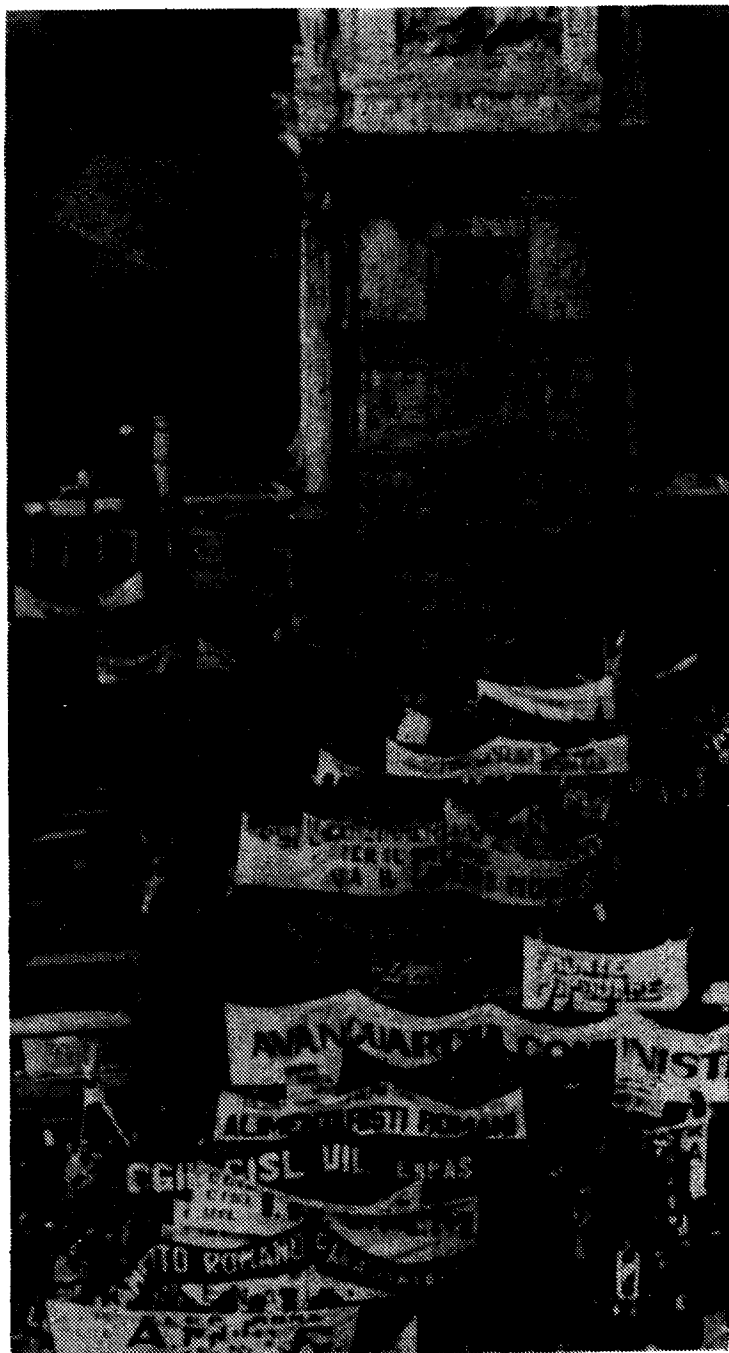
The emphasis placed on such cultural and ideological issues obliges Eurocommunism to be more concrete in its analysis of the social structures of capitalist societies. Questions of culture and morality are always raised in a much more specifically national context than the more general issue of the economic underpinnings of the crisis. It is no longer enough to say, for example, that the British economy is going downhill fast: it becomes essential to examine and analyse the responses of a multitude of different classes and sub-classes; how these responses are mediated through the prevailing climates of public opinion, and so on and so forth.

It is through this perceived necessity to focus attention on such points that Eurocommunism has proved more productive in a short period of time than the older, orthodox 'Marxist-Leninism' of Moscow, or the true-blue bolshevism of the Trotskyists. Claudin's own discussion of the political crisis in Italy, France and Spain stresses such factors as the impact of austerity on different sections of Italian society (an austerity imposed chiefly through increased oil prices), the internecine conflict between the Atlanticist and the nationalist-populist fractions of the French bourgeoisie, and the difficulties experienced in Spain during the post-Franco transition to democracy.

Claudin's discussion of these points is certainly not exhaustive (indeed the whole essay is less than 180 pages long), but it reveals a tendency towards concrete analysis rather than an abstract repetition of timeless 'truths' more common in the orthodox Marxist literature. What is most clearly revealed is the fact that the central dynamic of Eurocommunist development lies very much in the real conditions of the class struggle of three major European countries (plus the work done by their sympathisers in other smaller European CPs). On this point alone, for providing a framework for a creative, critical and independent current within the broad Marxist framework, then we must concede that Eurocommunism has served an invaluable and stimulating purpose.

OTHER AREAS OF CONTROVERSY: GRADUALISM AND THE STATE

Eurocommunism comes in for the sharpest criticism for its 'gradualist' approach to social transformation, its view that the state is not simply a monolithic obstacle to workers' power, and finally the fundamental principle that Eurocommunism will guarantee the inviolability of democratic procedures throughout the period of the struggle for socialism.



What kind of leadership for Italian workers from the PCI?

Both the far left critics of Eurocommunism and the orthodox Moscow-orientated wings of the CPs see evidence of the social democratisation of the Euro-CPs in these three areas. Both these critics are united in their view that there can be no 'gradual' confrontation with the forces of the capitalist state power: that the state must be faced squarely by the workers' movement and 'smashed', and that the democratic norms of existing society must not be allowed to compromise the construction of a new socialist order.

The problem with these criticisms is that they assume that communists and socialists are in a position to choose which path the mass working class movement will take towards socialism. On one hand there is the revolutionary road which leads through an insurrection to the conquest of state power; on the other hand there is the gradualist road which strikes compromise after compromise with the class enemy and eventually loses sight of the goal it was fighting for.

In reality no such simple choice exists for the leaders of the workers' parties for the reason that they do not function as 'leaders' in the sense that would require the rank and file workers to function as the 'led'.

The working class movement is not a structural hierarchy with commands issued from above to be carried out by those waiting below. On the contrary, it is a

complex organism consisting of millions of individuals, most of whom have a fairly rigorous and worked-out view of their own position in society. Tens of thousands of these individuals are involved in various representative functions, from shop stewards through to local authority councillors, who are on a daily basis involved in a process of decision-making and information exchange. Power exists throughout this complex organism and not just amongst its highest echelons.

The task of giving a socialist lead to these millions of individuals is not simply a matter of snapping one's fingers. Even organising a strike involves the expenditure of huge amounts of energy to explain and publicise the trade union case, to coordinate the activities of shop stewards and branch officials, and to enter into effective negotiations with management.

Furthermore, we are only talking about workplace organisation. Traditions of organisation, discipline and solidarity are strongest in the factories and workplaces, but even here groups of workers will feel resentful and mistrustful of a trade union leadership which fails to respect their position in the organisational structure.

But revolutionary change in the direction of socialism cannot be based on the organisation of employed workers alone. The power of whole working class communities will have to be mobilised for effective socialist change. This means coordinating action between tenants and residents' groups, unemployed workers and houseworkers, and people involved in single-issue campaigns around such things as education, nursery schools, or welfare service provision.

Amongst the vast array of distinct and even conflicting interests which makes up a working class community there is more often than not very little consensus in favour of radical socialist change. This has to be constructed by socialist activists who are intervening in the various arenas of trade union and community struggles. To make socialism a viable prospect rather than an abstract demand they require a strategy which is capable of mobilising people for effective reforms at all levels and then consolidating this ground as the basis for organising and uniting diverse groups

with the mainstream current of working class organisation.

In advocating a strategy such as this, revolution can be seen as a process, a chain linking a whole series of struggles, campaigns and effective reforms, rather than a single, once and for all event. This type of strategy is denounced as gradualism by its critics. But every revolutionary strategy has to be fought for within a definite, concrete context of actual struggles and the existing consciousness of workers. In this sense the term gradualism is unjust. To see revolution as a process rather than an event does not make one an advocate of gradualism; rather it is simply to recognise gradualism as a consequence of the complexity of the structures of working class organisation and consciousness in advanced capitalist societies.

THE STATE

The question of the state provides a dividing line between the right and left wings of Eurocommunism. The right wing hold out the hope of the capture and transformation of the existing organs of capitalist state power and turning them to the use of the workers' movement.

The left Eurocommunists contest this possibility. While remaining apart from the orthodox Leninist contention that the state has to be 'smashed' and rebuilt from scratch, they are alert to the near certainty that the bourgeoisie as a class will not relinquish its power without resistance.

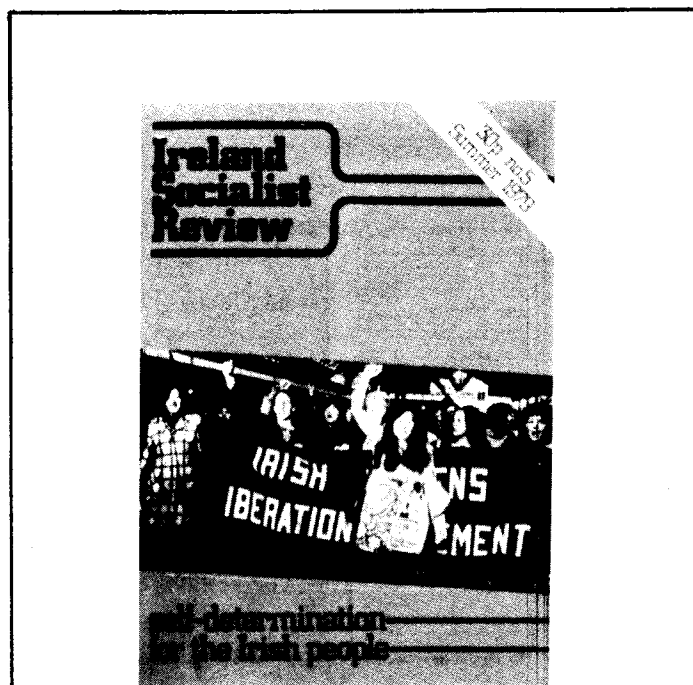
The left Eurocommunists share in common with the right the view that the state is not a 'thing', an instrument which is wielded by capitalism against the workers in an unproblematic way. Nicos Poulantzas has characterised the orthodox Leninist view of the state as the "executive committee of the ruling class" as being crudely instrumentalist, i.e. the state is seen as being a monolithic thing; a whip or a club to administer ruling class interests and no more.

Poulantzas' alternative is to view the state as a series of social relations of a specific type which reflect the tension between the interests of the capitalist and the working classes. Under present circumstances the interests of the ruling class undoubtedly remain the predominant interest. But the very fact that the structures of state power operate in this way holds out the prospect of the working class movement being able to utilise elements of the state power for its own advantage. In order to achieve this the organs of the state would have to be made receptive to democratic pressure from the mass working-class movement, and this implies a struggle for democracy on terrain which has not been previously considered by orthodox Leninists.

In short Eurocommunism recommends a strategy which will heighten tension within the state apparatus and encourage the emergence of a progressive democratic element within the executive power. A detailed knowledge of the ways in which the state works, the operations of the civil service, the tensions between different parts of the administration is required for this. Once again, the opening up of this field of struggle for the democratic reform of the state as a central part of socialist strategy marks a departure from the old orthodoxies.

Left Eurocommunism disagrees with the right when they claim that this process of democratisation can take place through normal channels and will prove to be a process of lineal development. The left argue that the process of democratic reform has to be supplemented with direct, workers' council democracy. Secondly, the process of reform will involve a moment of decisive rupture during which the balance of forces between working class and bourgeois interests within the state firstly moves towards equilibrium, and then swings decisively in favour of the working class. At this stage all the dangers of a capitalist backlash will be present. In order to meet these dangers the working-class movement clearly needs to have retained an independent base for itself which can supplement the power it has won in the state apparatus, thereby maximising its chances of defeating the counter-revolutionary backlash.

In the various discussions on the nature of state power one can see most clearly that Eurocommunism is not



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simply an electoral strategy designed to achieve short-term success at the polls. It is a theory based on winning and consolidating working class power at all levels of society. For this reason alone it would be foolish to expect it to wither away simply because of the electoral reverses of the last few years.

THE BROADER LESSONS

Eurocommunism cannot be dismissed as a mere regression in the ideological positions of the West European workers' movement. On the contrary, it is a substantial contribution to the debate about socialist strategy in the late 20th century. The alternative roads to socialism offered by the adherents of the Moscow, Peking, Havana, or Fourth International varieties of revolution have been shown to be at best restricted in their applicability to nations outside of a narrow orbit.

In each of these countries the underdevelopment of the pre-revolutionary state and the democratic structures of these societies tended to reduce the need for a detailed analysis of bourgeois state power on the part of the revolutionary forces. It is only in Western Europe and Japan, together with a number of underdeveloped states which for a variety of reasons have utilised forms of bourgeois democracy, such as Chile or India, that the questions of the state and the processes of democracy continued to occupy a central place in socialist considerations over the last half century.

Similarly, the complex development of classes in the advanced nations has forced to the forefront of radical politics issues which have not been of the first importance to the traditional working-class parties. These issues include sexual oppression, civil libertarian concerns, the environment, racism, and the politics of welfare issues such as health, education and housing. Orthodox Marxism has not been able to integrate these currents into its own mainstream in a very satisfactory manner. All too often the proponents of radical measures in these areas have been told that they can only be seriously considered 'after the revolution' and until then they have only a peripheral interest.

A serious account of Eurocommunism will show that an attempt has been made to provide a framework in which these various radical currents can be fused within the older tradition of working class radical socialism. To date the most imaginative attempt to perform this task has come from the East German Eurocommunist theoretician, Rudolf Bahro. Bahro's challenging work, *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*, obliges all Marxists who think of socialist revolution in the exclusive terms of the economic interests of the working class to think again. At a recent conference of the West German environmental party, Bahro explained the ways in which socialist politics had to be articulated into the ecological movement and vice versa:-

"All concrete measures that the ecological concept proposes count in fact on a transformation effected via the state, from the municipal level through the provincial level, up to the national and international levels. We must develop a policy for transforming the state machine, in the long run, into an instrument of social control over all the separate monopoly interests. This requires a mass movement, but a movement which will encompass the whole range of forces which can be made sensitive to these problems, and which will drive a wedge between the state apparatus, which itself consists of human beings, and the monopoly lobbies of all kinds. Then the state apparatus can function in a new direction, one prescribed to it by the interests of the majority."

Having made these points we should note however the reluctance of the mass Euro-CPs to become too closely connected with radical movements from outside their own ranks. The awkward history of the PCI with regard to the Italian women's movement, its slowness in taking up the campaign on the divorce referendum and its distance from campaigns involved with contraception and abortion rights in order not to alienate potential allies in the Catholic movement are important counterweights to any assumption that Eurocommunism equals an automatic opening of minds on these issues. Similarly, the PCF's rank hostility (though in recent months this seems to have been relaxed) to the workers' control movement amongst French socialist workers and trade unionists is another important qualification.

But once again we should bear in mind that the conservative, cautious reaction of labour movement leaders is not the same as the potential within those movements for a more positive response to new developments.

Located at the heart of the Eurocommunist strategy is a keen understanding of the importance of cultural struggle to the communist movement. This gives the movement the potential to expand beyond the limited horizons and ambitions of the leaders of today.

So where is Eurocommunism going? No doubt the set-backs described at the beginning of this article, coming as they do at the start of a sharp swing to the right throughout Europe which might last many years, have been a blow to the high hopes that Eurocommunism raised in the early seventies. The prospect must be for a degree of disillusionment and even major reversals with the progress of Eurocommunism in the short-term future.

But when the tide of working-class political advance begins to flow in Europe once again, then the experience of the debates around such issues as the state and the role of democracy in socialist strategy will have proved invaluable to a new, mature generation of workers and socialist intellectuals. Then perhaps we will be able to make a true assessment of the contribution of the Eurocommunist current.

FOOTNOTES

1. On the 12th July 1975 the Italian (PCI) and the Spanish (PCE) Communist Parties issued a Joint Declaration from Leghorn, Italy. This was followed on the 15th November 1975 by a Joint Declaration issued in the names of the French (PCF) and the Italian Parties. These two declarations are generally regarded as the 'founding principles' of the Eurocommunist tendency.
2. Maurice Thorez was the General Secretary of the PCF from 1930 until his death in 1964. During the 1930s he was a prominent adherent of Stalinism. He coined the formula 'Proletarian internationalism is solidarity with the Soviet Union.' This view faithfully reproduced Stalin's own feelings on the subject when the dictator defined a communist as 'one who unequivocally, unconditionally,

openly, and honestly regards the cause of the world revolution as synonymous with the interests and defence of the USSR.'

3. Mandel's views on the subject of Eurocommunism have become part of the wisdom of the far Left in Britain. For example, writing in an earlier edition of *Chartist* (No.75 May/June 1979), Ros Tyrrell states, after Mandel, that 'Eurocommunist strategy was first formulated in a coherent form by Karl Kautsky in 1910. . .'. Similarly, the supporters of the newspaper *Workers' Action* have sought to repudiate the influence of Eurocommunist ideas in the modern workers' movement by reprinting, in several issues of their paper, the writings of Rosa Luxemburg from the 1910 debate. Not only have Eurocommunists got nothing to tell the

world, but also opponents of the tendency have nothing new to say in defence of their own views!

4. *From Stalinism to Eurocommunism*: "The bitter fruits of 'socialism in one country'", Ernest Mandel NLB London 1978.
5. Naturally Mandel's use of the term 'stalinism' implies more than the cult of the individual itself. Stalinism refers to a system of ideas and a political practice which extends beyond support of the historical figure of Stalin himself.
6. In Britain these parallel currents include the Socialist Workers' Party, the Workers' Revolutionary Party, the International Communist League, plus several smaller groups.
7. 'Eurocommunism and Socialism' Fernando Claudin NLB London 1978.

REVIEWS

The Critical Spirit

The Aesthetic Dimension
by Herbert Marcuse,
(Macmillan £1.95)

The death of the German Marxist philosopher, **Herbert Marcuse** in July last year passed with little more than a whisper from the socialist movement in Britain.

An appraisal here by **MARK DOUGLAS** argues that the modern Left owes far more of a debt to Marcuse than has been given to date.

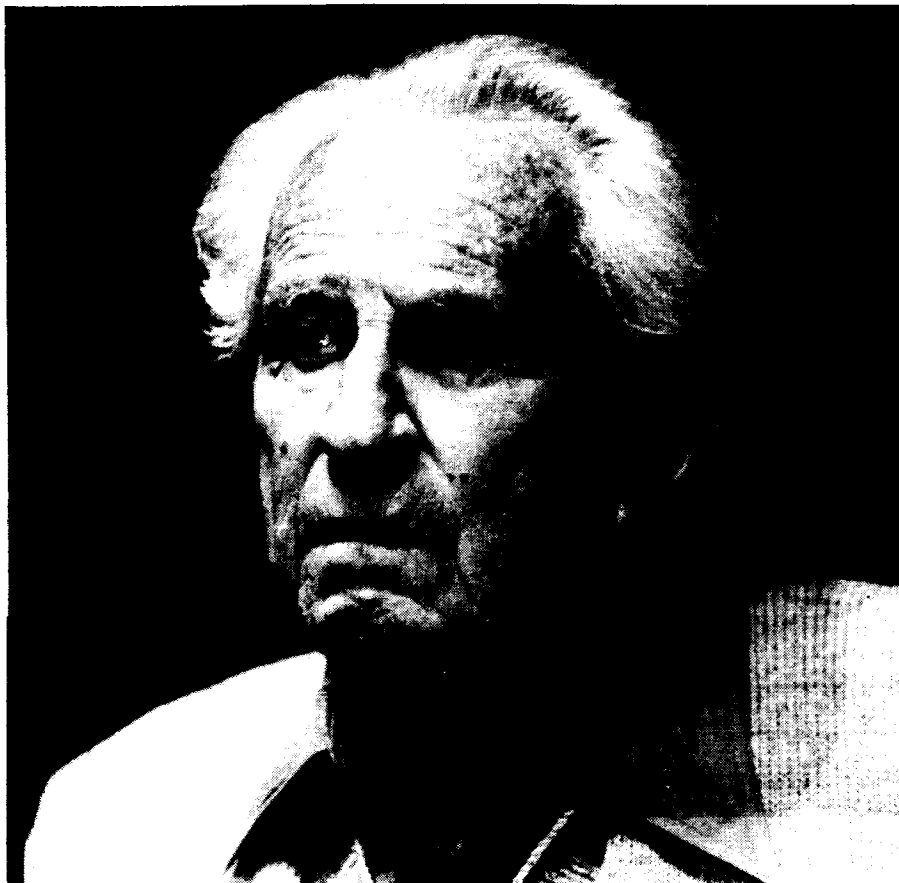
"Knowledge begins when philosophy destroys the experience of daily life. Analysis of this experience is the starting point of the search for truth." *Reason and Revolution* p.103).

'The Critical Spirit' as a term neatly sums up the guiding intellectual force of Marcuse's writings over a span of fifty years.

The term also suggests the paradoxical reception that many of the revolutionary Left internationally have shown to what Marcuse said during his life. His writing style of somewhat dense prose—almost poetic at times, translated from a German philosophical vocabulary demanded, and still demands, an effort from most English readers.

The generation of 1968, of student revolt and anti-war demonstrations, is now approaching middle age (over 30's!) and has forgotten that *One-Dimensional Man* was the Bible of that movement and generation. If you had not read it you had heard of it. Before long most militants were dismissing it as utopian heresy—did it not reject the revolutionary potential of the working class and its historical 'role' of overthrowing capitalism? Yes it did! Twelve years on, and twelve years older, the 'international proletariat' is still somehow from prosecuting its ordained task. We could admit that there may be more room for argument in such 'un-orthodoxy' a good ten years before it's time.

Almost forty years ago, the work which remains today the greatest intellectual introduction to dialectical thought was published, *Reason and*



Herbert Marcuse

Revolution. Marcuse laid the basis in the post-war western world for the revival of Marxism with this book. Whilst debates and interminable arguments continue in heavy texts from the so called 'New Left' over method and analysis, *Reason and Revolution* has not been surpassed as the introduction to modern social analysis and the primacy of dialectical motion as the motor of social progress.

Marcuse was a philosopher. He was nothing more. His personal and political critique of capitalism, notwithstanding his early involvement with the Spartacists and the German mini-revolution of 1918, was purely intellectual. As the leading thinker of what became known as the Frankfurt School, he could be called the direct, if heretical, successor of the Hegelian-Marxist tradition. It remains, and rightly so, the 'estate manager' of Marxism. Earlier than Marcuse as part of this tradition were Lukacs, Korsch, Benjamin, Brecht, Horkheimer and Adorno.

MARX AND FREUD

The product of the Frankfurt School was called 'Critical Theory'. The German intellectuals of the 1930's intended this heading to incorporate the authentic continuity of the Marxist critique of capitalist society and bourgeois culture. In 1955 Marcuse

published *Eros and Civilisation*. This work attempted to combine the Marxist critique of capital with the writings of Sigmund Freud: the psychic 'warp' of modern culture and its effects on the human personality. Marcuse stated Freud's analysis of human sexuality represented as cultural production which in turn distorts the latent instincts of the individual.

Marcuse coined the term: *repressive de-sublimation* to express the effect of bourgeois culture and its ability to negate and incorporate the critical instincts (sexuality) and critical capacities (labour) of humankind. Many of these ideas can be found in the writings of Wilhelm Reich back in the 1920's and '30's. But Marcuse was still 'early' as far as the 'orthodox' revolutionary movement was concerned.

Today, any serious Marxist will easily accept the intellectual power of Freud and Reich; and the phenomenal rise of Feminism as a movement opposed to sexual oppression and repression is the political expression of these earlier ideas.

The critique of Stalinism then followed in 1958—*Soviet Marxism*. Whilst lacking the political and historical critique of Trotsky, after all he could hardly emulate it. *Soviet Marxism* established the bastard nature of Soviet claims to any rightful link with Marxism on an intellectual plain.

One Dimensional Man marked the

leading edge of Marcuse's pessimism about the prospects of socialist revolution in the West. Written before the first wave of capitalist crisis and yet contributing to the popular revolt which flowed at the end of the 1960s — it was his attempt at a manifesto of 'negative criticism'. It had few words of hope for anybody! Its effect on the reader was to stir up an image of a gigantic zoo, with the greater part of humanity locked inside its various cages — even those responsible; the managers of technological rationality, spent their entire time servicing the cages and ensuring that all the inmates were comfortable! According to Marcuse the very possibilities of critical thought were being laid waste by the 'triumph of positive thinking':

"The larger context of experience, this real empirical world, today is still that of the gas chambers and concentration camps, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, of American Cadillacs and German Mercedes, of the Pentagon and the Kremlin, of the nuclear cities and Chinese communes, of Cuba and brainwashing and massacres. But the real empirical world is also that in which all these things are taken for granted or forgotten or repressed or unknown, in which people are free". (my emphasis ODM, p.146)

'Negative criticism' attempted to incorporate an analysis of repression and of the incorporation of humanity on a global scale. The collapse of individuality was as serious as the incorporation of the revolutionary capacity of the workers. Privacy had been blown into the 'public sphere', libidinous energy suffered 'contraction', nature was becoming subsumed into the social technocracy, the very functions of social life became routines invested with greater drama than could possibly be given credit.

The entire critique recalls the later writings of the Situationists in Paris and some of the many concerns of radical Surrealists up to the present day. *One Dimension Man* will remain a vital document in the history of Marxism by breaking the artificial and traditional concerns of Marxist politics, the false boundaries which have restricted the appeal of revolutionary action. Marxism is no longer simply about 'class politics'.

CRITICS

It is ironic that the main critics of Marcuse, at least on paper, are from the 'New Left'.

Yet they all criticise Marcuse from entirely orthodox Marxist positions. Both Alasdair MacIntyre *Marcuse: (Modern Masters series)* and Goran Therborn *The Frankfurt School in Western Marxism: A Critical Reader*. (NLB) written in 1970 accuse Marcuse of pessimism' and 'abstract utopianism', neither charge, being considered today, a capital offence. Both

of them with Paul Mattick's *One Dimensional Man in Class Society* (Merlin, 1972) simply re-affirm standard Marxist orthodoxies whilst acknowledging Marcuse's originality and relevance for Marxist theory.

Therborn charges: "This attempt by (the) theory to pull itself up by the hair does not make it more revolutionary, but rather more philosophical. The same attitude can be detected in the denial that the economic class struggle can play a revolutionary role in the advanced capitalist countries." (p114). This argument is now so well worn as to be tiresome. Surely Marcuse never claimed to be drafting new manifestoes for working class action. His style was deliberately philosophical in attempting to extend the frontiers of critical thought.

FINAL DIMENSION

"We have known for a long time that pure humanity does not redeem all human afflictions and crimes; rather it becomes their victim. Thus it remains ideal; the degree of its realisation depends on the political struggle." (p59)

Marcuse's method has remained consistent through all his writings. In his final essay — *The Aesthetic Dimension — Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (MacMillan, 1979) published in London less than three months after his death, the same themes re-emerged; the last authentic experience of life has become the 'aesthetic-erotic dimension'. In this essay Marcuse raises the possibility that "art has its own language and illuminates reality only through this other language. Moreover art has its own dimension of affirmation and negation which cannot be co-ordinated with the social process of production" (p22).

In this essay we have the philosophers final assault on vulgar Marxism. Rejecting in prosaic optimism the banality of 'realism' and of any compromise with the 'principle of domination'. Great literature escapes the constraints of time and social

derivation. "Art is a productive force qualitatively different from labour; its essentially subjective qualities assert themselves against the hard objectivity of the class struggle." (p37)

The quality of artistic production is its subjective capacity, "an abstract, illusory autonomy: private, arbitrary invention of something new, a technique without content, form without matter."

Marcuse's vision of socialism demands a 'new system of needs' for which the role of the autonomous artist will play a central part.

Marxism has the imperative of re-establishing the goal of Renaissance Enlightenment though forsaken by the bourgeoisie, social democracy and Stalinism: the reconstruction, by reason and instinct, of social humanity in a new relationship with nature.

It is a measure of just how far we have progressed and how far we still have to go that so many on the modern Left would still dispute this.

If this is a final word it is a fitting dedication to Marcuse's heritage:

"The horizon of history is still open. If the remembrance of things past would become a motive power in the struggle for changing the world, the struggle would be waged for a revolution hitherto suppressed in the previous historical revolutions."

The Writings of HERBERT

MARCUSE 1898-1979

- Reason and Revolution* 1941 Routledge
Kegan and Paul
Eros and Civilisation 1955 Allen Lane
Soviet Marxism 1958 R.K.P.
One-Dimension Man 1968 Sphere
Five Lectures on Politics, Psychoanalysis and Utopia 1971 Allen Lane
Negations (Essays) 1968 Beacon
Counter-Revolution and Revolt 1972 N.L.B.
(Essays)
Studies in Critical Philosophy 1972 N.L.B.
(Essays)
Essays on Liberation 1969 Penguin
The Aesthetic Dimension 1978/9 MacMillan

Book listings

Books received. (A listing here does not exclude the possibility of review in a future issue of *Chartist*.)

Duncan Hallas *Trotsky's Marxism* (Pluto).

Patricia Stubbs *Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel, 1880-1920* (Harvester).

Dave Laing *The Marxist Theory of Art* (Harvester)

Frank and Larisa Silnitsky and Karl Reyman (eds.) *Communism and Eastern Europe* (Harvester).

Gillian Rose *The Melancholy Science. An introduction to the thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (Macmillan)

Lesley Doyal and Imogen Pennell

The Political Economy of Health (Pluto).

Kathy Henderson with Frankie Armstrong and Sandra Kerr *My Song Is My Own: 100 Women's Songs* (Pluto).

Jon Clark, Margot Heinemann, David Margolies and Carole Snee (eds.) *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the Thirties* (Lawrence and Wishart).

Palmiro Togliatti *On Gramsci and Other Writings* (Lawrence and Wishart).

Lewis Minkin *The Labour Party Conference* (Allen Lane).

Paul Hoch *White Hero Black Beast* (Pluto).

