

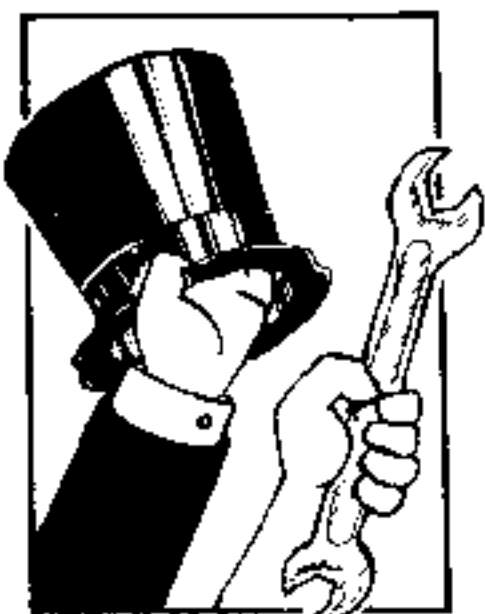
socialist
REVIEW

Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

17 October — 14 November 1961 9 35p
Startling
In this issue
Books are weapons
new series on revolutionary ideas

NATO
can it be
tamed?





Introducing the new slim-line pay packet.

The government and the CBI have begun a hard propaganda offensive aimed at producing very low pay settlements over the next year. **Stuart Axe** argues that they are trying to do something much more savage than anything we have seen so far, and that we are not faced simply with the normal employers' rhetoric.

The CBI the central co-ordinating body for the private sector bosses in the manufacturing and service industries is calling for pay settlements to be kept within a limit of five per cent. Simultaneously, the Tory government, after some major successes with its six per cent public sector limit last year, is seeking to lower expectations further. The chancellor of the exchequer, Geoffrey Howe, has announced a new public sector cash limit policy of four per cent aiming to hold the weak sectors back severely, while letting a few stronger groups, like the miners, through at a slightly higher level.

Three major factors lie behind the new offensive. The first reason is nothing new—they want to reduce workers' living standards in order to restore profitability. Under the last Labour government's social contract incomes policy, workers' living standards were reduced further than anything the Thatcher government has so far achieved for employed workers—and they now want to turn the screw.

Secondly, they want to use the clear advantages they have won in the last year to reduce shop-floor bargaining strength.

Thirdly, they are worried that despite all their attempts to deflate the economy and bring the rate of inflation down to single figures by the end of 1981, their policies are not working. Given that the price inflation is not likely to drop below ten per cent, they are even more desperate than usual to reduce labour costs and consequentially increase their competitiveness in the international market place.

The bosses' new offensive on pay bargaining is therefore motivated part by bravado, part by confidence and part by fear. They are frightened that when the recession unwinds—as they hope it will in the second half of next year the rate of inflation will be at least ten per cent rather than the five

per cent that Thatcher's whole economic 'experiment' was supposed to bring about. Then the inflationary drive for profits will soon push the figure up to 15 per cent and more, forcing the government to very quickly apply the brakes to the economy again.

Productivity offensive

A central reason for the new offensive is to reduce labour costs and raise productivity. During the last eighteen months there has been little organised resistance to productivity deals, and the employers want to see the screws tightened further. In 1979 and 1980 productivity deals most frequently gave bonuses on top of basic pay increases. However, for the last two years the employers have usually got productivity concessions without conceding bonuses, as the justification for any pay rise at all, however small. If workers accept five per cent increases to be paid for by concessions on productivity, then employers will be reaping part of the harvest that Thatcher promised them.

But the fight for pay increases need not run exactly as the employers and Tories want it to. While British Airways has announced that it wants to sack 9000 workers and freeze pay for a year, in contrast the government is very cautious about the level at which they will have to let the miners through in November. And while Hoover is threatening to impose pay cuts of ten per cent from January 1982, in contrast, Smiths Industries in Cheltenham have just agreed increases worth 14 per cent from August for 3000 workers. The picture is very uneven, reflecting the degree to which the impact of the recession has been very uneven across and between industries.

Pay policy or pay norm?

To date, the CBI has been very careful not to name a figure for pay increases to keep inside, as this would set a target that many would want to breach. But the government has now come out with its figure of four per cent for central and local government workers. It would be interesting to know why it has made this announcement two months before it usually does. We can only speculate that it has been forced to do so in order to back up the CBI, especially as some very major private sector pay negotiations have just started or are about to start.

There is, of course, absolutely no

connection to be drawn by the fact that Vauxhall's opening offer is four per cent (due from September) and that Leyland Vehicles have opened talks with an offer of four per cent. The Ford pay review comes in November the same month as the miners—and no bets are being taken that they could well offer four per cent. The first offer from the Engineering Employers Federation is a miserable 3.16 per cent increase at minimum rates.

One group of companies that are unlikely to get away with low settlements are the big boys in the oil industry. Last winter they all gave increases at the rate of inflation, then about fourteen per cent. This winter they look set to pay about ten or eleven per cent—the current rate of inflation. The Shell oil refineries and its chemical plant at Carrington are due to settle on 1st October and the oil tanker drivers for BP, Shell, Esso, Petrofina and Texaco have their annual pay review in November. But the TGWU may sign some nasty productivity deals to get the increases they are looking for.

Following on from the tanker drivers come the tens of thousands of lorry drivers in the road haulage industry. They have been lodging claims for an increase of £20 a week plus a 35 hour week. Last winter they got very low settlements of between three and seven per cent and the drivers do not want to accept such levels for a second year running. But the industry is still one of the worst hit by the recession if production is well down, no one needs transport and many drivers have been sacked or are working short-time.

Fear of unemployment

The three million unemployment figure means a very tough context for pay bargaining. In the past year there's been little enough fight over jobs and hardly any hard fight back over pay. For all the rhetoric at the Blackpool TUC, the trade union leaders have shown little sign of organising to challenge the new public and private sector pay offensives. In many workplaces that have suffered redundancies, people might well accept pay offers of five per cent and be glad they have still got a job.

One of Thatcher's successes has been an immense fragmentation of pay bargaining. Rising unemployment has not simply forced workers to retreat, it has also meant that *local* rather than national factors have come to the fore. Three years ago, when Ford workers broke through Healey's five per cent pay policy, they gave a lead to workers everywhere. Now we are in a tougher world. Breakthroughs of that kind do not necessarily lead to generalisation. Employers' arguments about further redundancies, short-time working and lack of orders have all had an effect. And with a miserably pathetic lead from the trade union bosses, any possible generalisation is going to have to be built from below.

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Rolling back the bandwagon

On the Sunday night of the Labour Party conference, the left were ecstatic. Benn had come within a hairs-breadth of beating Healey. But on the Tuesday it was the right's turn to be jubilant. They had swept to power in the national executive elections. How did this occur? What does it mean for the future of the Labour Party? What can the left be expected to do? We look at some of the options.

'Scarborough 1960 went down in history as both a high point and a low point in the history of the Labour left. It won a vital vote at the party conference — only to see the leadership ignore the vote and the position effectively reversed within months as the controlling block vote switched sides. Wembley already looks like being the Scarborough of the 1980s. The left greeted the conference decision with pure ecstasy. Yet already the great victory looks like turning into the great defeat.'

(*Socialist Review*, February 1981)

It is beginning to look as if we were right. The smug smiles on the faces of Healey and

Hattersley show that they at least think the tide is turning in their favour. Healey may have had a pyrrhic victory in the deputy leadership contest but the seizure of the National Executive Committee by the right will more than compensate for that. For the first time in a decade the right's domination of the parliamentary Labour Party is going to be matched by command over the party machine.

Of course, not everything is yet going the right's way. They were annoyed at the vote on unilateralism — just as they were annoyed by the rejection of wage controls by last month's TUC. They — and the media — will make a lot of noise about such things. But much of it will be smoke without fire.

They know that past Labour governments have been committed by conferences over such issues — and have very easily slipped out of the commitments. Politics is about power — and they believe that they are the masters now.

Saying these things gives us no pleasure. Healey and Hattersley are the enemies of us all. The defeat at Brighton was a defeat for the whole left. But it does no good at all to pretend, as some sections of the Labour left seem to be doing, that the defeat did not take place, that the right's control over the party machine can be forgotten because of the closeness of the Benn-Healey vote.

So how did it all happen?

Let's go back to what we said in February. We argued that the loss of confidence by workers in their ability to fight back over redundancies, cuts and wages had allowed the right to strengthen their hold over the trade union bureaucracies — especially, but not only, the engineering union. So far, the right leadership had been prepared to do trade offs that gave left wingers seats on the Labour Party executive. But that would not survive any hotting up of the struggle between left and right in the party.

The left would be helpless, we argued, when it came to resisting such manoeuvres. Although its forces in the constituencies and among union activists can be measured in terms of tens, or even hundreds of thousands, the *millions* who make up the trade union movement are retreating before an employers' offensive, producing the lowest level of struggle for more than a generation. Under such circumstances, the media and the union bureaucracies could all too easily play on the real weakness of the Bennite left.

We were wrong on important details. We underestimated the way in which the ferment among activists in certain unions would throw the full time leaderships off balance in the early summer, producing a bandwagon in the Benn campaign that at one stage seemed nearly unstoppable and

just missed knocking Healey assunder. We said that the most optimistic prediction for Benn's vote would be 43 per cent — in fact he got more than 49 per cent.

But, as Harold Wilson once said, in electoral politics a majority of one is enough. And Bennite politics remains *electoral* politics. On that terrain, Healey has got control of the deputy leadership, Varley has got control of the treasurership, and the right wing have got control of the national executive, with its power to determine who will run the party machine. The sudden display of the strength of Healeyite forces within the supposedly 'left' TGWU bureaucracy — so that Benn nearly didn't get the union delegation's vote — shows how powerful are those who would begin pushing the bandwagon backwards.

And the success of the right in winning secret ballots and branch ballots for Healey in a number of unions (see below) show that they have a weapon they can use with a degree of confidence of getting their way.

All this leads us to believe that the forward march of the left within the Labour Party has been halted. Labour politics over the next year will be a different matter from Labour politics over the past year.

Not dead

This does not mean, however, that those who have looked to the Labour Party for a solution to their problems will now look elsewhere.

The rise of the Labour left over the last year — the fact that for the first time in three decades people are *joining* rather than leaving the Labour Party — has not been because left Labour policies have been able, on the basis of any rational calculation, to offer people more than in the past. Bennism — with its economic nationalism, its belief that deflation can pull an 80 per cent private capitalist economy out of crisis, its promotion of class collaboration through 'participation' and 'planning agreements', its willingness to stay in NATO, its desire to protect parliamentary forms of rule — is offering nothing that has not been tried previously by capitalist governments. Activists have become intoxicated by this mixture as they did not in the years 1969-74, because they do not see an alternative in terms of their own struggles. They do not believe they can win their fellow workers to resist redundancies or throw out the 4 per cent. And so they look instead to saviours from on high, to those who offer salvation by Labour in two or three years time as compensation for the inability to do anything in the here and now. Labour politics has one thing in common with Christianity. The fact that the second coming never takes place does not destroy the willingness of the faithful to believe in it.

That can only happen when people begin once again to discover that their own activity is able to resist the attacks on jobs, social services, wages and working conditions.

While the *real* fight back against the Tories and the employers remains at its present low level, only a limited number of the Labour left are going to see present struggle now as an alternative to illusions in electoral

methods. The number can be increased in so far as the effort is put in to ensure the effectiveness of the small scale struggles that are taking place. But there is no magical path to a mass destruction of illusions in Labour.

Compromise

So what is going to happen to the Labour left?

We fear that the result of Brighton will be that, in its majority, it will demand even less in terms of real socialist policies than in the past. The right's control of the machine as well as the parliamentary party, the trade union leadership's desperate desire for a Labour government of virtually any hue, the fear that driving right wing councillors and MPs from the party will strengthen the Social Democrats, the knowledge that the general election cannot be much more than two years away — all these factors will exert pressure on the left to compromise their politics.

The willingness of many of the constituency left to compromise was shown at Brighton itself. The majority of them continued to vote for Kinnock and Lestor in the national executive elections, despite the scandalous part they played in preventing Benn from winning the deputy leadership. And the constituency left was just as willing to join in the standing ovations for Foot, ignoring his promotion of the right.

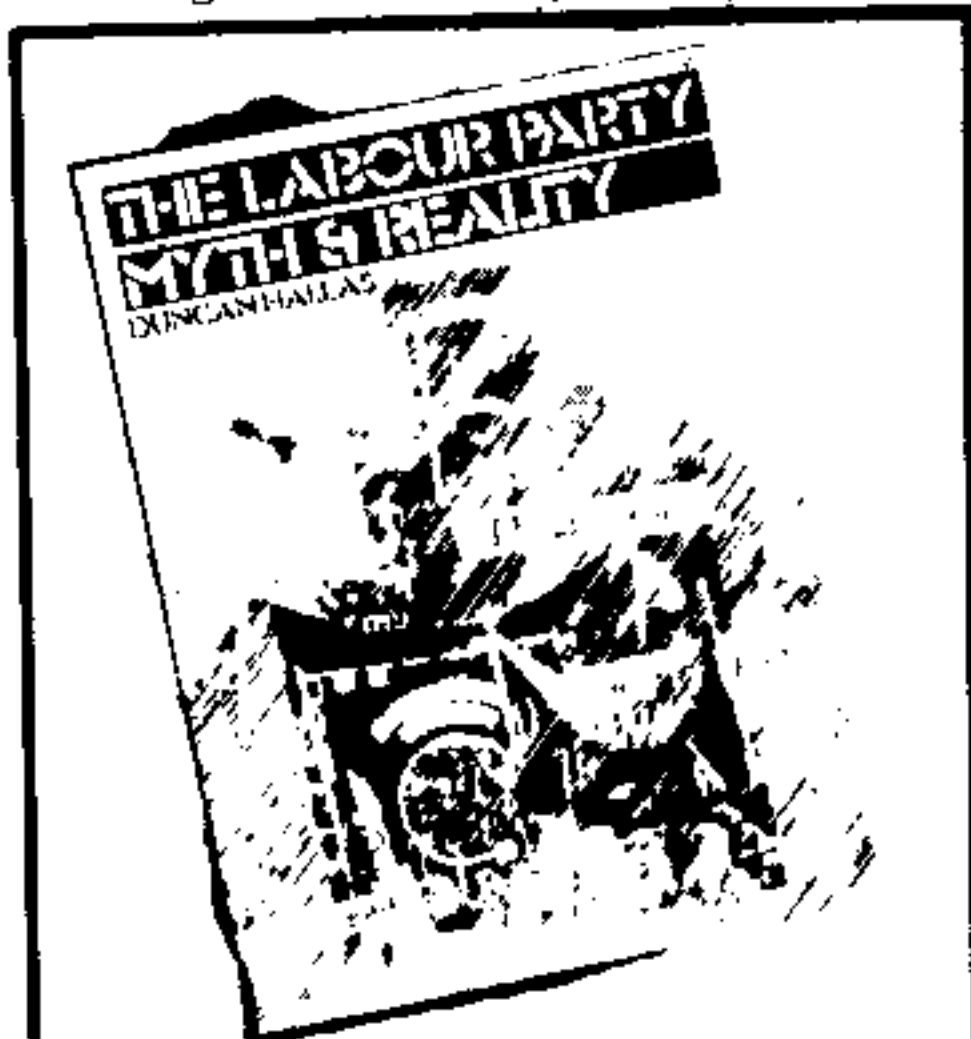
This will confront the harder left, including those most prominent in the Benn camp, with a great dilemma. They can join in the compromises, hoping that Benn's vote in the deputy leadership election will enable them to influence the composition and policies of the leadership. Or they can continue to campaign openly, knowing this contains the risk of greater isolation than before.

Touchstone

The touchstone will be whether Benn himself decides to contest the deputy leadership again next year. He will know that to do so will be a gamble. He could well end up in a weaker position if he does so — particularly given the closeness of the decision of the TGWU to vote for him this year. On the other hand, if he does not campaign against Healey, there is little he can do to challenge the right's control over all the leading positions in the party.

We suspect that the hard left will react to the danger of isolation by alternating between craven compromises with the centre and lurches to the left. They will both sacrifice principles in return for the possibility of office, and will try to improve their power base by half-hearted attempts at organising inside the unions.

That will make it more important than ever for revolutionaries to draw them into united action over things on which we both agree. In so far as we can offer consistency rather than vacillation and action rather than resolution-mongering, we can begin to break some of the Labour left's following from its electoralist orientation and increase the effectiveness of those small struggles that are taking place against the government and employers.



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Consulting the members

The closeness of the Labour Party deputy leadership result and the success of Benn in getting 80 per cent of the Constituency party votes, should not conceal from the left one crucial fact. When the feelings of the mass of union members—as opposed to political activists—was tested, Healey walked home. In NUPE, the POEU, COHSE, the FBU, Natsopa, votes of one sort or another went for Healey. Only in the miners' case was opinion—as expressed at branch meetings—clearly for Benn.

Partly this was a result of the way in which any referendum-type secret ballot helps the powers-that-be as opposed to those who would challenge them. Unless voting is preceded by open discussion, with all points of view equally represented, then voters all too easily respond to the voice of authority, as expressed through the TV and the press. Hence the way in which the biggest votes for Healey—roughly three to one in each case—were in the POEU and Natsopa. Here the union members had to fill in individual ballot papers, distributed by union representatives but counted by the electoral reform society.

The union journals printed statements from the candidates but also contained main editorial pieces—urging the POEU members to vote for Healey as the man most likely to enable Labour to win the next election. Natsopa suggesting that 'people are alarmed by a too rapid shift of the Labour Party to the left'.

In the case of Natsopa, the London clerical branch later passed a resolution, complaining both that there had not been adequate discussion among the members before the ballot papers were distributed, and of the biased nature of the material from the union.

However, this alone cannot be an adequate explanation for everything that happened. For in unions where the vote was taken at branch meetings—permitting discussion among members who tend to be more active than the average—the vote also was for Healey. This was even true in two traditionally left wing unions with Broad Left type leaderships—FBU and NUPE. The FBU vote was about two to one for Healey on a very low poll, despite a low key, one paragraph call by the executive for a Benn vote. One SWP member describes what happened at a branch meeting attended by about half his fire station:

'At my branch we used the argument that it was Healey and Callaghan who kept us out for nine weeks in 1977-78, and that Healey is not even trying to change. Peo-

ple remember that very well. Yet 11 hands still went up for Healey as against 12 for Benn and five abstentions'

What was remarkable was that the vote in the traditionally left wing FBU was not all that different to the vote in the traditionally right wing and non-militant health service union, COHSE where, also on a very low vote, Healey carried the day by just under two to one. Yet while the FBU executive recommended Benn, who had received a standing ovation when he appeared on the visitors' balcony at the union conference, the COHSE leadership made no recommendation and had banned delegates from mentioning Benn's name at their conference.

The more militant union in the health service is NUPE. Yet its branch-based vote went three to two for Healey—this from a membership that turned out in vast numbers against the Healey imposed cuts of 1975-7.

Some NUPF activists explain this in terms of branch secretaries in backward areas sending off the branch's vote without consulting the members. But reports indicate that even at well attended meetings of traditionally left wing branches, there were substantial majorities for Healey. Thus one SWP member in Scotland tell how when the issue came up at her branch, the right wing were ready and spoke up for Healey, the left were unprepared, making no effective intervention and the members voted against Benn.

Substitutionism

What are we to conclude from all this?

First, it rams home one of the points we have been making in this *Review* all year. The huge groundswell of support for Benn—the 'political upturn'—is at the moment of quite a small *minority* of workers. This minority can be big enough to swing union conference votes, to ensure that some of the right sort of people get delegated to reselection meetings, to shout down Healey when he has the nerve to address unemployment rallies. But it can be all too easily outflanked by the forces of the right when it comes to the struggle for real political power. For then there is no substitute for a powerful, organised base within a majority of at least the strong sections of the class. Those who fall into the substitutionist trap of claiming to speak for workers they have not brought into active agreement with themselves, are open to a hammering from forces organised by the media and the right wing.

Second, the winning of workers for left

politics cannot be a question *just* of argument. The longer the time lag since the Callaghan-Healey government, the more the horrors of that government fade from the memories of all but the most politically active. To those who attend union meetings in NUPE, the FBU or the TGWU, the million and half unemployed under Healey is already seeming like a pleasant alternative to the three million unemployed under Thatcher. The only way the left can counter this trend is if we can involve the majority of the workforce in any workplace in struggle in the here and now, so that they begin to develop an active identification with an alternative to Thatcher *and* Healey. Only then will the argument of the isolated left winger in a workplace or union branch swing the majority behind him or her.

Unfortunately the Labour left (and what remains of the CP) tend all the time to play into the Labour right's hands by talking of the wonders of what will happen in two or three years time, instead of addressing themselves to the question of how to begin now rebuilding working class strength and confidence.

Paradoxically, the obsession with conference delegations and resolutions, with reselection and alternative economic strategies, tends to play into the hands of the right in the unions. For, it leaves untouched the growing gap between many activists and the rank and file around them. After all, if packing a conference delegation is your aim, then arguing first with workers who probably won't attend a branch meeting is a diversion.

This shows itself most vividly when it comes to resisting direct employers' attacks in the workplace. Those who have claimed to speak for thousands suddenly find that even the dozen or so people in their own section will not stop work in solidarity with them.

But this time it has also shown itself in the electoral sphere. In the unions with 'left' leaderships, the Labour left and the CP hardly bothered to campaign for Benn, despite the issue being so close to their hearts. They assumed that because the leadership represented the members, there was no need to convince the members themselves. This, of course, has been the rationale for not building Broad Lefts in the 'left' unions—it would antagonise full time officials who would in any case deliver their members to left wing causes.

There is an alternative, as was shown in at least one case. This was in Natsopa, where the deputy leadership election was accompanied by another ballot over the question of support for unilateralism. Socialists and CND members in Fleet Street used the occasion to carry out an intense propaganda exercise. Leaflets arguing the case over the bomb were handed out in as many workplaces as possible at the same time as the ballot forms. And so the same people who gave Healey a 6000 majority over Benn, gave a 500 majority to unilateralism.

But to carry such activity you have to believe in moving workers to act for themselves and not in substituting for this the behaviour of GMCs, local councils, union executives, annual conferences and parliaments.

All things to all Greeks

On 18th October the Greek general elections look likely to end 45 years of right wing rule. What will it really mean? Members of the Greek group Revolutionary Challenge explain.

One word is seen on walls everywhere in Greece today, in the towns and in the countryside. The word is 'change'. Everyone who has suffered the effects of the economic crisis, whether manual or white collar worker or petty bourgeois and everyone who has become tired of the 40 years domination by the right in Greek politics, hungers for 'the change'. If we look more closely, we can see that all those who want this change mean very different things by that word.

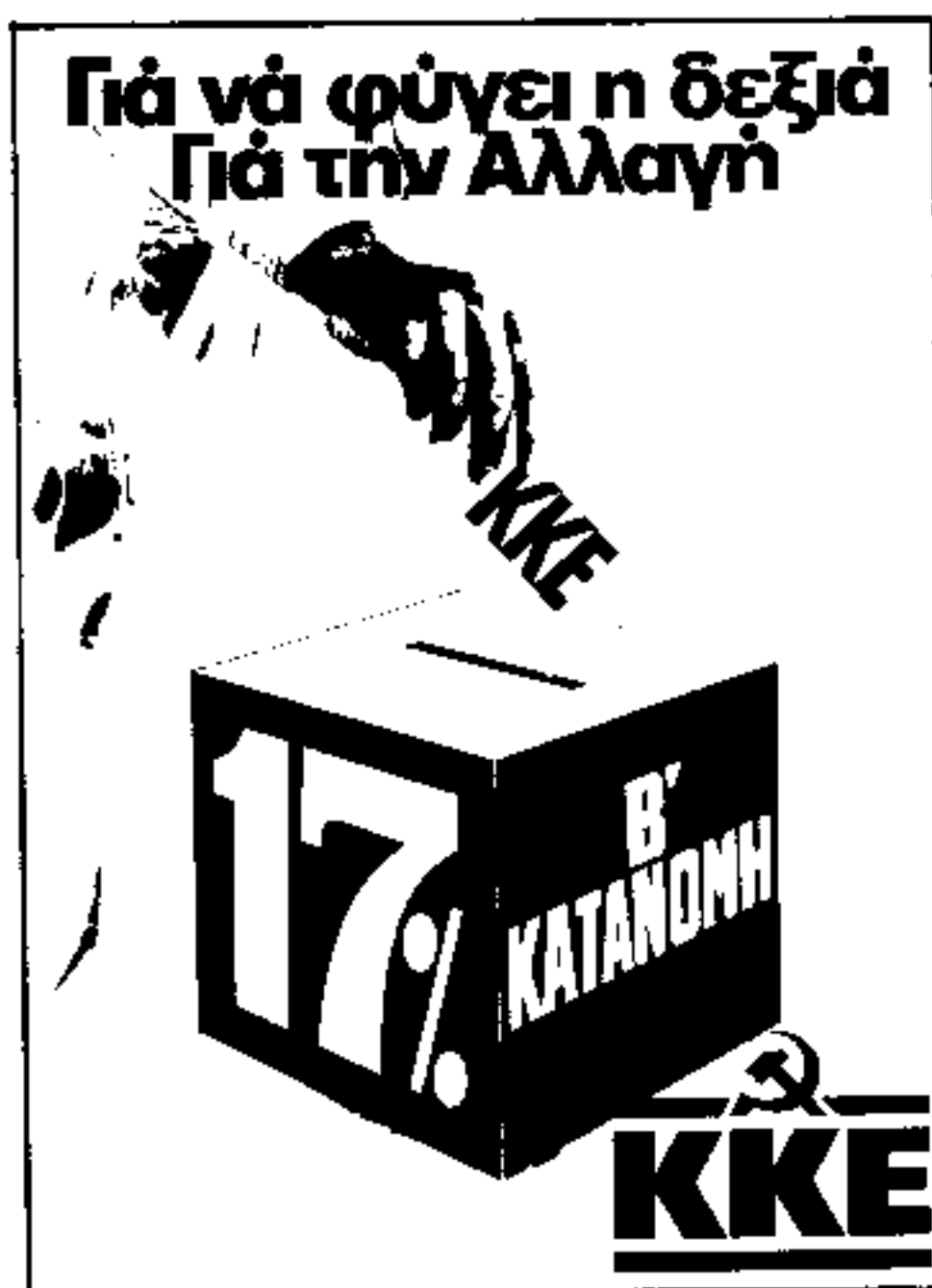
Since 1974 the right wing government which replaced the Junta has been trying to modernise the Greek economy and social institutions (education, public services, the banking system). This modernisation was essential for Greek capitalism in order to allow entry into the Common Market at the beginning of the year.

For industry, this has meant building up big units, an intensification of work and a wiping out of small and medium businesses. This has led to increasing unemployment (according to the OECD, now 16%). Investment has been capital intensive while the small firms that have been driven out of business have lost thousands of jobs.

As a result, no-one, whether worker or peasant or small businessman or traditional petty bourgeois, is happy with the results of the right wing 'New Democracy' government. Everyone wants the 'the change' but each for their own reasons and in their own ways. Of course, the bad situation is not the exclusive responsibility of the government. The world economic crisis has hit Greek capitalism particularly badly, precisely because it hasn't been fully modernised.

'Change' has been the basic election slogan of PASOK (Greek Socialist Movement) throughout the election campaign. This slogan has attracted massive support and everyone now expects the new government to be 'socialist'. PASOK has promised everything to everybody.

PASOK was formed in September 1974 from old centre party, left wing politicians and oppositionists from during the dictatorship. Its growth has been meteoric. It gained 15% of the vote in 1974 and 26% in 1977. At the beginning it was a very strange party—a



Greek CP poster reads: 'For the Right to go. For the Change.'

mixture of third worldism (with strong links with the Ba'ath party and with Gaddafi) and European social democracy. Its basic aim was 'national liberation' which found its expression in an intense anti-Americanism.

Now it has changed to more closely resemble the social democratic parties of the West. PASOK has promised everything, but more recently the statements of Andreas Papandreou, its president, have qualified this, saying 'of course we won't be able to do everything straight away'.

PASOK has promised index-linked wage rises, help to middle and small businesses, an attack on unemployment and inflation, help to the peasants, expulsion of the American military bases ('of course, not immediately') withdrawal from NATO, a referendum on EEC membership, but an increase in defence spending because of the 'danger from Turkey'.

At the same time it has adopted the modernising programme of the old government in education, public services, church/state relations etc. PASOK blames it for not modernising the Greek economy quickly enough, not saying that the real problem is the world economic crisis which PASOK itself will also have to face. PASOK's programme is full of contradictions (for instance the modernisation of the economy and help to the traditional small businesses). However, we can be sure that its policy in government would be to push forward the modernisation of Greek capitalism at all levels.

The Greek CP

PASOK is now a traditional social democratic party with a small 'problem': it does not have a base in the industrial working class, though it does have some support among white collar workers. It seems unlikely that it will ever get such a base as the road is blocked by the KKE (Greek Communist Party).

The Greek CP is, with the Portuguese, the most Stalinist and pro-Moscow of Western

Europe. It is different from other European CPs. For instance it has often taken actions of a 'military' character against opponents.

Last year's university occupations, which the CP did not support, were attacked by CP youth members armed with clubs, helmets and shields. Anyone who attempts to issue leaflets inside trade union meetings controlled by the party is likely to end up in hospital.

At the same time it must be said that the CP is the party of the organised industrial working class. Of course, the party bureaucrats who now control many of the union bodies are selling out one struggle after another. There has been a noticeable fall in industrial militancy since the strike wave of 1975, at which time the party had not yet consolidated its control of the trade unions.

The CP is competing with PASOK for the petty bourgeois vote, without a great deal of success because of the traditional anti-communism of the petty bourgeoisie. In attempting to win this, like the French CP, it has campaigned against 'rock music' (it reminds them of America), 'drug abuse' (in an extremely puritanical way), in support of the nuclear family and in support of obedience by students to teachers.

This isolates the party from the generation of urban youth, who are developing in other directions. A few weeks ago, a Rory Gallacher concert was attended by 25,000 predominantly working class kids in a football stadium in Athens. The concert ended with running battles between MAT (the Greek SPG), who used tear gas, and the kids who were building barricades and throwing petrol bombs. The young working class kids were shouting 'Cops, Pigs, Murderers'. The same scenes were repeated at a concert in Salonika.

Prospects

The failure of the CP to understand the changes in the last years in Greek urban society is turning young people to vote for PASOK, to apathy, or to some kind of anarchism.

The actual policies of the CP are more or less the same as PASOK, with more emphasis on increasing relations with Eastern Europe.

The CP's main electoral aim (and main electoral slogan) is to get 17% of the vote, as this would give it a greatly increased number of MPs and a far better chance of forcing a coalition with PASOK. But it is unlikely to get more than 12-13%.

The remaining parties are unlikely together to take more than 10% of the vote. The Eurocommunist CP of the Interior, which got 2% despite its 180 degree turn to attract the women's movement and urban youth, is not expected to increase its vote substantially.

Initially a PASOK government would introduce some radical measures, such as civil marriage, educational reforms and tax cuts. In the long term the contradictions would appear. What happens then? A lot depends on how much the CP is prepared to co-operate with the PASOK government and keep the working class quiet. This in turn will depend on the willingness of PASOK to concede the demands of the

CP—for example, the free return of and amnesty to political refugees from the 1946-49 civil war (many of whom are still in Eastern Europe), and the opening of contacts with Eastern European countries.

Regardless of the CP's attitude, PASOK will have difficulty avoiding a reaction from its supporters as it fails to keep its promises. Disappointment will be unavoidable. It will

be difficult for the disappointed to turn again towards the modern right, though it's not impossible, and the extreme right has little influence. We believe that if anyone will gain it will be the CP which will absorb the left elements that are currently in PASOK, and this will only happen to a limited extent.

We will reach a situation where everyone

will be disappointed and won't know where to turn. A lot will depend on the condition of the revolutionary left at that time. The revolutionary left's prospects are not at all good since much of it is in a state of collapse. The vital necessity for the revolutionary left is to turn towards the working class if it wants to have any role, albeit a small one, in the future developments.

Mitterrand's mediocre millenium

The enormous but superficial enthusiasm which greeted Mitterrand's victory is already beginning to fade; between the end of June and the end of August confidence in Mitterrand, according to one opinion poll, had fallen from 71% to 62% of the population. The ousted right is still in utter disarray, but will regroup quickly enough if the government loses momentum.

The new regime has begun with a number of gestures which, while of limited significance, cannot fail to be pleasing to the left. The Plogoff nuclear power station will not be built and the Larzac military camp will not be extended—both had been symbolic focuses for leftist activists in recent years. Gaston Defferre, the minister of the interior, has not only refused to extradite ETA militants to Spain, but invoked his own past as a Resistance fighter to justify his decision. The satirical paper *Hara-Kiri*, banned under Pompidou, has reappeared; the ban on roulette within a hundred kilometres of Paris has been lifted, and—to the indignation of the paper *Le Figaro*—first-class compartments on the Paris metro are to be abolished.

Likewise, socialists cannot fail to welcome the news that France—later than almost every other country in Europe—is to abolish the death penalty, and that the repressive Gaullist state security court is to be abolished. Welcome too is the amnesty for many categories of prisoners, a cheap way of alleviating the chronic overcrowding in French jails. There are, however, some strange gaps in the amnesty, such as conscientious objectors and doctors charged with abortion offences.

But there is to be no real change in the machinery of the French state. France's corrupt racist police force will remain unpurged, even if it is momentarily subdued. Defferre has refused demands from the police unions for a purge of top police officials, saying there will be no 'witchhunt'. The much-hated CRS riot police are no longer to be used to 'maintain order' but a section of the army has been assigned to do the job.

The Mitterrand government has broken with some of the more openly racist aspects of the Giscard era. Illegal immigrants are to be given the opportunity to 'regularise' their situation; but in practice only those in full-time legal employment will get permission to stay. And controls to prevent further illegal

immigration are being tightened up. The government is now rapidly reneging on a promise to give immigrants the vote; apparently this will not be practicable before the municipal elections in 1983.

All these reforms are, however, in the last resort marginal to the real problem facing the Mitterrand regime—how to deal with the economic crisis. Like every other government in the world, the French administration faces the twin problems of unemployment and inflation. Mitterrand's attempts at a solution may be more humane and even marginally more intelligent than Thatcher's, but since he cannot opt out of the world system he will find it hard to discover a remedy to the one problem which does not aggravate the other.

Unemployment

Mitterrand's accession has not halted inflation. On the contrary, his first months in power have seen rises in the costs of basic necessities—petrol, transport, gas, electricity—which will produce further increases throughout the whole economy. And unemployment too is still rising. The official figures—which as in Britain understate the true situation—reached 1,680,000 for July and are expected to reach two million by the end of the year. Prime minister Mauroy admits that at best it will be twelve or eighteen months before the rise can be halted.

The government has taken a number of well-publicised measures against unemployment. The creation of 55,000

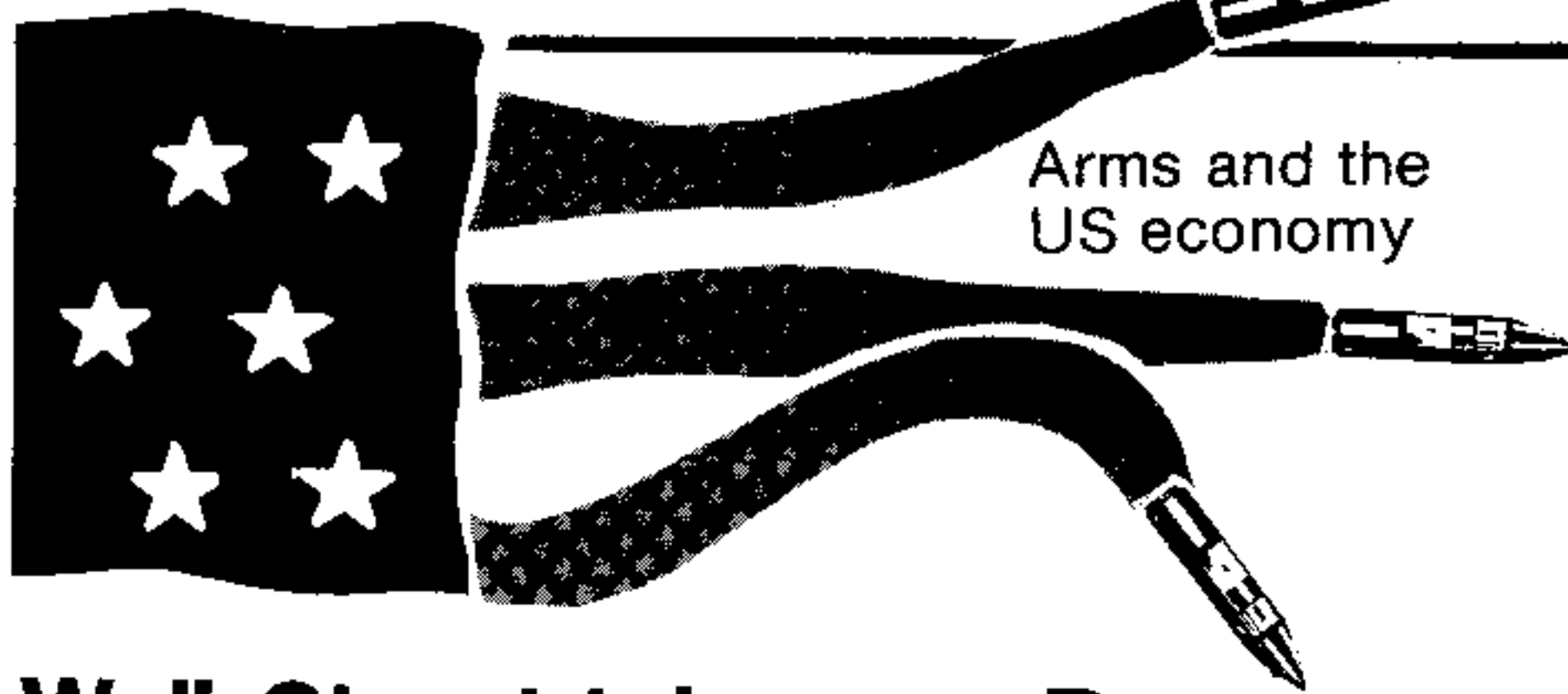


new jobs in the public sector (post office, education, etc) may be welcome, but it is only a drop in the ocean. Beyond this the government has increased bonuses, loans and subsidies to private employers in the—probably vain—hope that this will encourage the creation of new jobs. In many ways this is little more than a continuation of Giscard's unsuccessful policy.

The minimum wage has been raised by ten per cent (twice as much as was legally required to keep up with inflation) but this has been accompanied by a measure which cuts employers' social security contributions on wages which are less than twenty per cent above the legal minimum; in effect this is an incentive to employers to pay low wages. The government is postponing a full-scale plan to increase employment to the fateful year of 1984, by when it is hoped inflation will be under control.



Cartoon from Lutte Ouvriere



Arms and the US economy

Wall Street takes on Reagan

Last November Wall Street, the centre of American finance, greeted the election triumph of Reagan and the Republicans with obvious glee. Only ten months later the Dow Jones index of stock values was down 20% from its April peak of 1024.05 to a low of 836.19.

Interest rates are still around the 20% level (which allowing for inflation makes the real rate about 10% — easily a post-1945 high). This is inflicting severe damage on key sectors of the economy which are heavily dependent upon credit, such as housing and motor vehicles.

Wall Street spokesmen are now among Reagan's fiercest critics as a remarkable controversy rages within the American ruling class. As the *Financial Times* put it (19th September):

'But Wall Street seems to have concluded that things will get steadily worse, mainly because of the impact of high interest rates on demand. The outlook for profits is at best mixed, at worst dreadful. This week's news that housing starts, industrial production and capacity utilisation are all sharply down did nothing to lighten Wall Street's mood.'

All this follows a period in which the economy seemed to be growing rapidly after the 1979-80 slump—at an annual rate of 8.4% in the first quarter of 1981—and Reagan's massive tax cuts benefiting big business and the rich (750 billion dollars over the next five years) sailed through Congress. Reagan, clearly most upset by Wall Street's ingratitude, is bleating that his programme hasn't been given a chance. The truth is that the programme cannot work.

Ruling class offensive

In the first months after his victory Reagan seemed to carry all before him. Although elected by only 27% of the electorate (over a third, especially the blacks and the unemployed, abstained) his 'new right' coalition marked a clear break with the consensus of postwar American politics — a coalition founded on a frenzy of jingoism, Christian fundamentalism, and a strong undercurrent of racism.

The trade union movement, while able to mobilise 250,000 for a Labour Day demonstration on 19 September has been helpless in the face of the sacking of the 12,000 striking air controllers. The Democrats have been in total disarray, with their Southern

members voting with Reagan on the budget, and few of the rest capable of mounting much opposition.

The American ruling class is still the most powerful in the world. Its command of material, economic and military resources, at home and abroad, far exceeds that of its main rival, the USSR. Yet in its own eyes the last decade has been one of unprecedented failure — from Vietnam to the Iranian hostages fiasco, with the decline of the dollar's supremacy as a world currency, and the growing commercial competition from Europe and Japan.

Reagan's victory seemed to offer, as with the Tories in Britain, a marvellous opportunity to hit back — at rivals abroad and the enemy within, at the Russians and at the American working class (its weakest sections, blacks, women and the unemployed, in particular).

But no government, not even that of the US can control the crisis. Every move made by the Reagan regime has unleashed unforeseen repercussions — from the wave of opposition to more arms spending in Europe to the precarious state of the US economy.

The budget row

In particular, the three main economic objectives of the regime — 'defence' spending up by 51% in real terms by 1986, the tax cuts, and inflation down to five per cent through balancing the budget — are proving impossible to reconcile. Even a massive 38 billion dollars worth of cuts in other spending this year alone, largely on welfare, social security, health etc is not enough to bridge the gap.

Open conflict has now broken out between three different agencies of the state, each overwhelmingly committed to one of the three objectives — the Defence Department under Caspar Weinberger, the Budget Office under David Stockman, and the Federal Reserve under Paul Volcker (the *Fed* is the US equivalent of the Bank of England).

Weinberger, backed by the generals and the whole military-industrial complex, has just successfully resisted pressure to reduce the proposed increases in arms spending. He accepted a cut of only two billion off his projected 222 billion budget for 1982.

Stockman is a committed supply-sider — the economists who believe tax cuts alone will lead to economic growth of over 4% a year and thereby raise overall tax revenues

to compensate. Having got his tax cuts through Congress, he now wants *additional* cuts in spending of 74 billion dollars over the next two years.

But if the economy does not grow, neither will tax revenues. At the same time as in Britain expenditure on social security for the unemployed, bailing out companies in trouble, and interest payments on existing government debts to the money lenders will all rise.

The budget deficit (the gap between taxes and spending which has to be met by further borrowing on the financial markets) will soar well above its target. Even some Republicans are horrified at the political implications of further cuts in welfare and social security (especially in the black ghettos of declining industrial cities like Detroit). Reagan's ambition, the supply-side miracle of tax cuts and a balanced budget by 1984, is already looking absurd.

Paul Volcker, a former private banker, has the closest ties with Wall Street of the three. An ardent monetarist, he is obsessed with the view that any sort of budget deficit will lead to inflation as extra money gets pumped into the economy.

Deadlock

Where he is right is that if tax cuts and arms spending do raise demand, the large corporations will seize the chance to raise prices after two years of slump and squeezed profit margins. They will not, however, risk investment in new capacity adding to output, if interest rates are high or demand uncertain.

Volcker's response to this problem is to impose a tight squeeze on the money supply at a time when the demand for money is rising — both from the government to meet the deficit and from many companies, especially those in trouble like Chrysler or those engaged in the current merger and takeover scramble, like Du Pont's takeover of the oil company Conoco. When increased demand for money meets limited supply, interest rates rise high and stay high. As noted above, that is putting the squeeze on the economy and offsetting any benefit from the increased arms spending. It is also forcing up interest rates and prolonging the slump throughout the rest of the world.

What it all adds up to is deadlock, and a rerun of what's happened to the Tories in Britain (although the American economy is much stronger than the British and more capable of surviving the treatment). The strain of course will be born by the American working class.

Some commentators are arguing that Reagan should raise taxes (*Financial Times* 15 September, Lombard column). Others are blaming the perversity of Wall Street. One incensed Republican congressman has initiated a Bill of Impeachment (as with Nixon after Watergate) against Paul Volcker for messing it all up. Some 'supply-siders' have gone completely dotty and are suggesting that the way to deal with the inflation problem is to turn the clock back 50 years and restore the Gold Standard — ignoring the fact that the Gold Standard did not prevent the 1929 Wall Street Crash!

The *Economist* in a lengthy defence of the arms programme (12 September) has a more sober analysis. It argues that the increase in defence spending in real terms will at worst take it back to the level of the Vietnam War in the late 1960s (when it amounted to 9% of GNP) — still less than the proportion spent on the Korean War (13.3% of GNP). The budget deficit of two per cent of GNP is not as serious as is suggested, and is less than in non-inflationary 1959.

This raises the whole question of the economic impact of military spending in the crisis-ridden 80s compared with the booming 50s and 60s.

Whatever it says in public, the American ruling class is well aware that it is setting the pace in the arms race. It knows that for the Russians to keep up will impose an intole-

rable strain on their creaking economy. Russian arms spending is already absorbing 13% of a GNP only half that of the US's.

The whole of the Russian economy has been subordinated to the demands of the military, with working class consumption severely held down as a result. The distortions of devoting the best scientific and technological resources to arms have undermined the rate of growth of the Russian economy over the long-term. But the US economy is also subject to such strains, particularly at a time of world crisis.

There is a paradox here which it is important to understand. It lay at the heart of the Permanent Arms Economy thesis taken up by the International Socialists (now the SWP) in the 1960s, but was grasped by few of its critics.

High levels of arms spending did not as such *cause* the postwar boom but they did *sustain* it. But those countries which bore the greatest burden of that spending did not necessarily benefit the most. On the contrary, the capitalists of West Germany and Japan which had low levels of arms spending could devote more resources to 'productive' investment and take more advantage of the expansion of the system as a whole. In effect, the US, Russia and to a lesser extent Britain propped up the whole economy at the expense of lower rates of productivity and competitiveness on world markets.

'Those countries which bore the greatest burden of arms spending did not necessarily benefit the most from the boom that it sustained.'

Arms spending helped to stabilise the system in two ways. On the one hand it absorbed (wasted) resources which might otherwise have been devoted to investment in new factories and machinery, which would have raised the capital/labour ratio (or more strictly the organic composition of capital in Marx's terminology) and put pressure on the rate of profit. On the other hand, if the money spent on arms had not been spent at all, levels of demand in the world economy would have stagnated with even worse consequences.

By the end of the 60s, however, the contradictions of the Permanent Arms Economy were becoming serious.

1. The effect of the arms spending was to slow down the forces undermining the boom — but it could not stop them altogether. Eventually the pressures leading to crisis began to predominate over those sustaining the boom.

2. In a period of crisis the competition between capitals intensifies. That applies to whole national capitals as much as to individual companies or multinationals. One response to that is to increase military spending to carve out a bigger share of markets and access to raw materials (as with

Germany and Japan in the 1930s) or just to hang on to what they already possess (as with the US and Russia today). But the crisis of the 70s also exposed the weakness of the US economy in terms of its competitiveness on world markets. Those sections of US capital which did not benefit directly from arms spending became more resistant in the 1970s to the diversion of resources to military goals. Arms spending after the Vietnam War fell as a proportion of GNP by almost half.

3. One solution to this problem for American capital would be to have the costs of arms spending shared out more evenly among the Western powers. Hence the demand for a 3% annual increase in real 'defence' spending for all NATO powers. But that is unlikely to be met even in Tory Britain. West Germany's government has just cut its defence budget. Japan's share is rising but is still very small. The Reagan regime is out on its own.

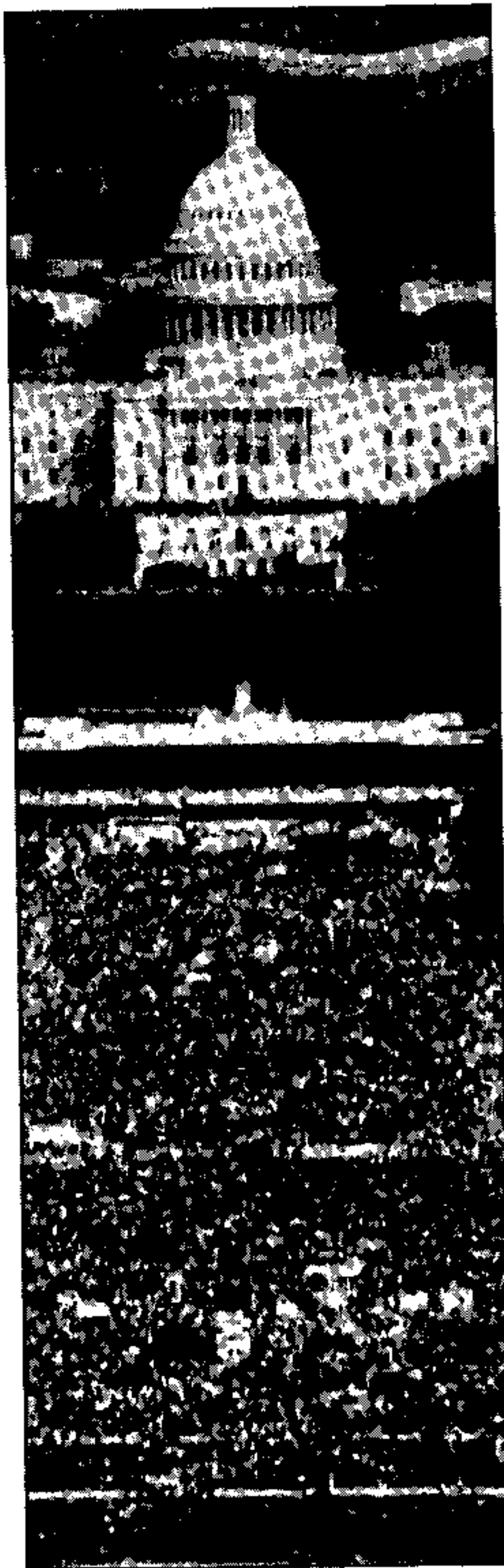
4. In a period of crisis the question of how arms spending is to be financed becomes extremely serious. Even during the Vietnam War the resistance of both US private capitalists and workers to extra taxation was extremely high. The response of both the Johnson and Nixon administrations was to run a massive budget deficit — and in effect to finance the war by printing extra dollars. So arms spending fuelled rapidly mounting inflation both in the USA and the rest of the world. It is the memory of that period that has got the Volckers and Wall Street so worried today. If tax increases are out, the only alternative is a massive cut in other public spending.

5. Arms spending has become extremely capital-intensive. If it is paid for by cutting other public spending the net effect will be to raise unemployment, as well as a drastic lowering of working class living standards.

The US Bureau of Statistics figures show that one million dollars invested in various areas creates the following jobs: education 187, health 138, construction 100, transport 92, military 76. But education and health do not provide the profits which arms spending does for some very powerful corporations — General Dynamics, McDonnell, Boeing, Lockheed, General Electric, and a host of electronics and construction companies mostly in the South and West (the sunbelt) where Reagan has his base.

An increase in arms spending will limit the *depth* of the current slump. It will keep some sectors of US capitalism afloat. But it cannot help to *resolve* the underlying crisis which has been with us since the early 70s, except through destroying us all. To the extent that it goes hand in hand with cuts in other spending, high interest-rates and a worsening of the US economy, it will actually help to *prolong* the current slump.

One final point. The lunacy of the arms race is itself an expression of the brutal competition between different ruling classes which has been central to capitalism since its origins. It is the expression of the crisis at a military level, not something separate and not something accidental. The crisis will continue, and so, though varying in pace, will the arms race, until we consign capitalism itself to the dustbin of history.



250,000 strong Labour Day demonstration in Washington.

Can they bully SWAPO?

What was the significance of the South African invasion of southern Angola in August? Who is fighting who for what in the war on the Namibia-Angola border? What does it mean for SWAPO guerrillas in the short-term and for Namibian workers in the long-term? John Rogers looks at the issue.

An Angolan driver was carrying the first Western journalists into the war zone during the recent South African invasion. Immediately after his passengers had been strafed by South African jets he made the stoical comment: 'South Africa is surrounded. There is Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Angola. She is like a dog: she bites.' That is the conventional view of black Namibian freedom fighters. South Africa is seen as a dog playing 'fetch me a Russian prisoner' for its master Ronald Reagan.

The absence of a restraining US hand was clear enough as South African troops killed thousands of Namibian refugees and Angolan peasants and workers hundred miles inside the Angolan border.

The South Africans are reaping their return on enormous amounts of money that they have lavished on Reagan's entourage. The hand-outs have been geared to promoting the anti-communist credentials of South Africa's client groups—Jonas Savimbi's UNITA in Angola and the Democratic Turnhalle Alliance (DTA) in Namibia.

In the US the main conduit for DTA

propaganda is the Namibia Trade and Cultural Council Inc., who will finance 400 visitors to Namibia this year. Recent visitors have included Robert Billings, the executive director of the Moral Majority (a right-wing American pressure group); members of the US Veterans Organisation and the American Legion; author and former Green Beret, Robin Moore; and many right-wing journalists, businessmen and politicians. The Council's chairman, Gunther Kashchik, claims that 'in the hundreds of articles that have reached us as feedback, not one of the guests found it necessary to paint a negative picture'.

Yet Chester Crocker, Reagan's assistant secretary of state responsible for Africa, is not on South Africa's payroll. He is much more typical of the hard-nosed men of the multinationals who usually occupy the middle ground of presidential appointments once the elections are over. He accepts that the partnership between the US Gulf oil corporation and the MPLA government of Angola is lucrative evidence that the MPLA is no Soviet puppet. But he goes along with South African maintenance of Savimbi as a means of pressuring the MPLA to deliver SWAPO to the negotiating table.

After South Africa eventually withdrew from its three week long August invasion of Angola he was quick to press a crippling package for Namibian 'independence', threatening to back the DTA unless the MPLA bully SWAPO into accepting. In this he was following the example of Carrington who used a Rhodesian invasion during the Lancaster House talks to get Mozambique to put pressure on ZANU.

One item in the latest 'independence' formula symbolises Crocker's approach. He claims to have persuaded the Angolans to hold the Cubans in Angola north of a 'red line' while Namibian independence elections are supervised by soldiers from exclusively the Western powers. It is alleged that the Angolans have agreed that Western soldiers (wearing even their own uniforms rather than going through the pretence of being UN soldiers) will be allowed into southern Angola to supervise the SWAPO camps. These measures would stack the cards against the SWAPO guerrillas' ability to translate their military gains within Namibia into electoral victory. And the regime's police would be left free to intimidate voters.

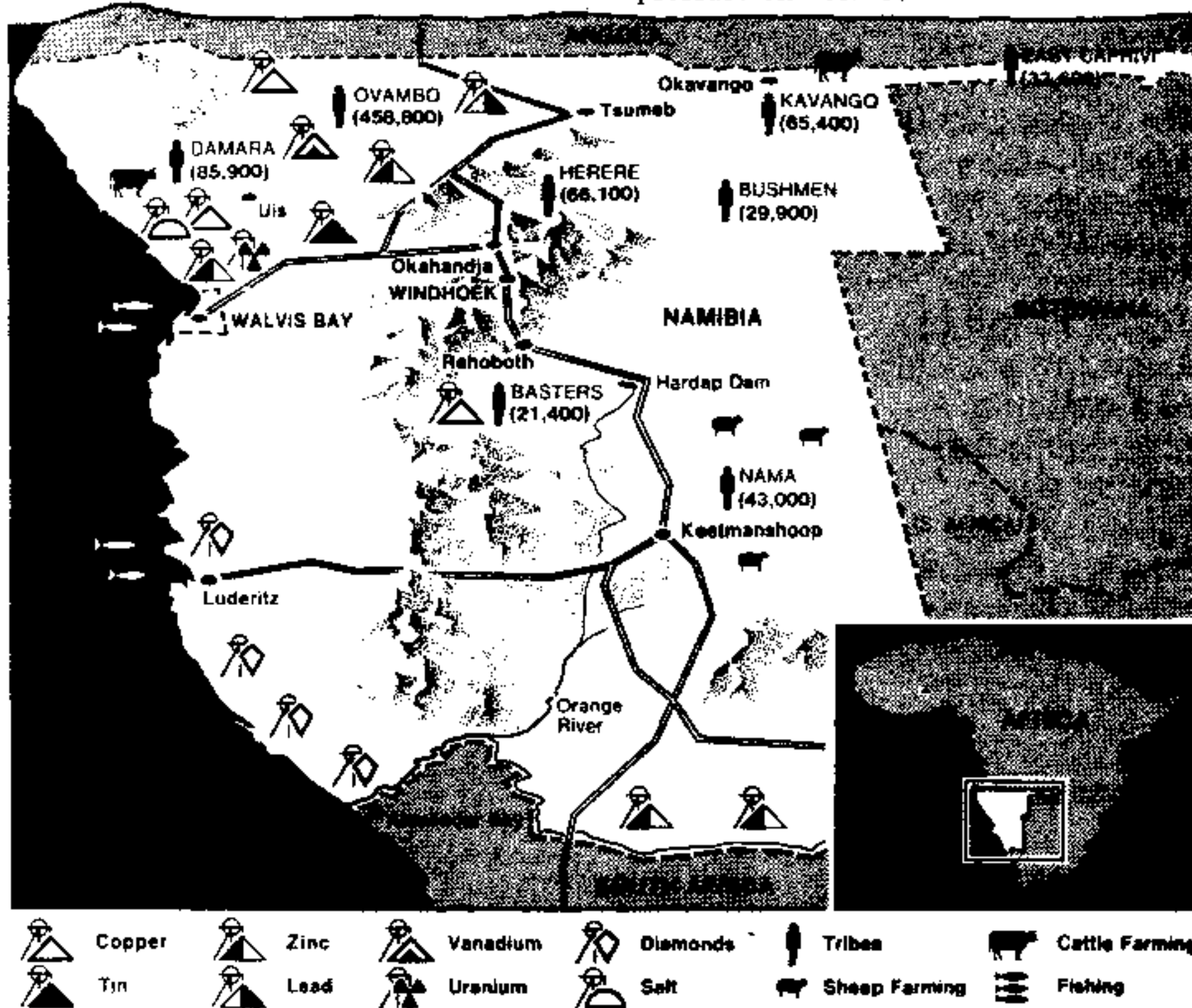
So the invasion and the subsequent diplomatic toings and froings. They are a classical imperialist exercise aimed at regional management of the radical black nationalist movement against South African domination. The 'optimum goal' of joint West German, French, Canadian, British and American supervision of Namibian elections would be a SWAPO government cowed by the international pressure into battoning down Namibian worker militancy—in much the same way as the ZANU government has with Zimbabwean workers.

The Reagan administration has, for instance, increased its contribution to the UN budget which helps finance the training of a new SWAPO Namibian administration at the Namibia Institute in Zambia. The Americans rightly reason that SWAPO is much more of an armed workers' movement, as opposed to an armed peasants' movement, than ZANU was. Through the Namibian Institute they hope to sponsor the kind of middle class black elite which has now taken over Zimbabwe, but which apartheid education has prevented developing to the same extent in Namibia.

Just how difficult it will be to stage manage a compliant SWAPO government can be shown by outlining the last strike wave in Namibia. In January 1979 a strike by 2000 migrant labourers at RTZ's Rossing Uranium mine over pay and conditions was followed by stoppages at three other mines.

In one dispute, where more than 200 black mineworkers refused to work at the American-owned Krantzberg Tungsten mine the workers were sent 'home' to the rural labour reserve of Ovanboland on the northern border with Angola and replacements recruited.

At the South African-owned UIS tin mine, however, four company officials preferred to travel from Pretoria to negotiate with representatives of some 300 striking workers. Likewise, the American company Newmont and Amax preferred to negotiate new pay rates with their black employees. Then, in April 1979, the South African-based Consolidated Diamond Mines' 5000 black workers successfully struck over food and the conditions of their single-quarter barracks.



STATE OF SIEGE

The tourist brochures for British Caledonian's Bintumani Hotel translate Sierra Leone colourfully as meaning 'The Big Lion Mountain'. They add lustre to the image of winged game hunting within reach of the beaches by alluding to the country's diamond economy. Towards the end of August and throughout September, however, travel agents were decidedly jittery.

The diamond state has seen its hotel cooks, waiters and cleaners join in a general strike action along with taxi drivers, bus drivers, teachers, civil servants, canning factory workers and diamond miners.

The most remarkable feature of the nearly two months of rolling strikes has been the shaking off by urban workers of 200 years of division deliberately created among them by the British colonial system.

In the late 18th century British industrialists realised that they could more efficiently compete with their French and Spanish imperial rivals by hiring and firing 'free labour' in their American and West Indian colonies rather than continuing with the inefficient expense of slaving. The British navy thereafter played the uncharacteristic role of freeing slaves being transported from Nigeria in French and Spanish ships. The most convenient places to land the 're-captives' were Sierra Leone and Liberia.

A 'creole society' of privileged British citizens was created from the free slaves to rule over the inhabitants of these two rural territories. The propaganda image of liberating Britain was sustained by an influx of missionaries who by the 1850s boasted 42 primary schools.

Yet today Sierra Leone creole and non creole workers are jointly involved in strike action against the inherited order. This crucially distinguishes the current Sierra Leonean upsurge from that in the southern neighbour, Liberia, in April last year. There the popular movement against a corrupt government was hijacked by political chameleons in the lower army officer ranks, led by Sergeant Samuel Doe. Apart from providing the Western media with Amin-like public executions of former leaders and then desperately currying favour by offering the US

fleet facilities, Doe has tried to turn Liberian non-creoles against creoles. In Sierra Leone creoles are only 2% of the total population of three million, but they are almost exclusively in the urban areas and therefore of significance when it comes to worker unity.

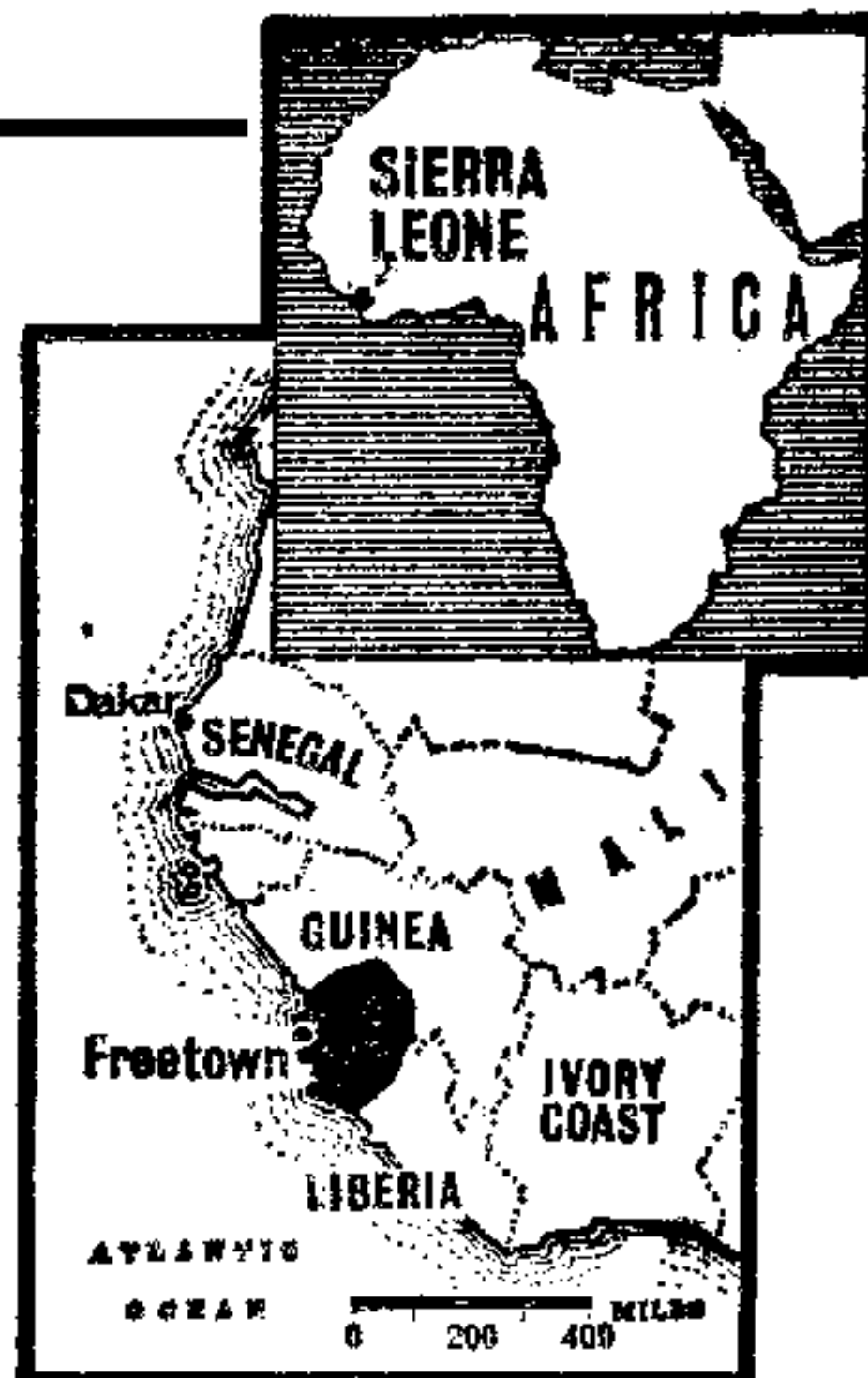
The creole way of asking Lenin's famous question 'What is to be done?'—'How for do?'—is on the lips of many Sierra Leonean workers. They have not yet formulated an alternative to the sort of government run by president Shiaka Stevens. In a country where 75% of the population subsist in a shifting agriculture system which uses 10% of the land at any one time, some urban workers had, until recently, regarded Stevens as one of their own.

Like Doe of Liberia, Stevens started his career as a sergeant—a sergeant of police in the colonial system. He moved on first to more lucrative employment as a supervisor in the iron ore mines at Marampa where he became a 'union man' and then, in 1947, to Ruskin College, Oxford. Because of these credentials workers supported him for a period after they voted him into office at the head of the All People's Congress in 1967.

Furious Protest

Ten years later worker disillusionment had set in. In 1977 students from the Fourah Bay College demonstrating against corruption were beaten up by the thugs of the Cuban- and Chinese-trained Internal Security Unit (ISU). Outrage over this led to Soweto-style school student protests in Freetown, the capital, spreading to Kemema in the south-east of the country. Less well publicised strikes over pay rises followed in cement-works, breweries, flour-mills and shoe factories. Stevens' response was to declare a one-party state and strengthen the ISU. Strikers, in turn, burnt down the police headquarters.

Last year Stevens was apprehensive about a clash between the ISU and the twenty two unions of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress—which represents 250,000 workers. There were furious protests from James Kabia of the Congress at the construction of



60 lavish villas for the African heads of state attending the summit meeting of the Organisation for African Unity. To impress the other leaders, Stevens had spent vast sums on airport expansion, new luxury hotels for journalists, motorways and a French designed digital telephone system—this at a time when 70-80% of children in the rural hinterland are suffering malnutrition.

The final straw came this year when the construction of the new presidential palace overlooking Freetown was associated with the passing of fraudulent government cheques between state departments. This scandal was dubbed 'vouchergate' by Sierra Leone workers because of the parallels with the 'Muldergate' scandal in South Africa—Stevens had been the first West African leader to favour a 'detente' with South Africa, the base of the giant mining corporation, Anglo-American, which dominates Sierra Leone's diamond industry.

In July Stevens tried to introduce food price rises at the behest of the IMF. James Kabia threatened a general strike unless the rice price was reduced by 67% rather than increased. Stevens sent the ISU to blow up the opposition newspaper offices. The Labour Congress went ahead with the strike on August 14 and thousands of strikers were massed outside its headquarters, in defiance of a ban imposed on demonstrations.

By the fourth day the mass defence of Congress headquarters forced Stevens to offer 'to control rice prices'. By the fifth day he was offering to reduce prices by 40%. Congress held out, but Stevens was able to put the boot in since the strike had not spread outside of the capital. The Congress headquarters were stormed with the aid of troops from neighbouring Guinea, and the leaders detained, including Kabia.

Yet by mid September Congress militants had recovered from the arrest of their leaders, and the second strike wave began with the closure of the diamond mines and coal mines as well as those places that struck in July. This time every urban area in the country was paralysed. Now the government elite is in a state of siege, with any attempt to reassert authority immediately being answered with strike action.

John Rogers

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LUMPEN PROLETARIAT

The 'lumpen-proletariat' forces itself upon the attention of Marxists these days, from Port-of-Spain to Bristol, from Berlin to Amsterdam. All over the world there are communities of the chronically unemployed, the young, squatters, 'brothers on the block', street people. It has been possible for British socialists to pretend they do not exist. No such ignorance has been possible in Cairo or Calcutta.

But now it is time for us to develop an understanding of the politics of the lumpen-proletariat. We can start from Marx, who first pointed out the existence of a class drawn from all classes, living on the margins of society by hustling or peddling, but not in regular work.

Marx was downright hostile to this class, and regarded them as potential agents of reaction. This they certainly were. But mixed up in Marx's hostility was a Victorian morality: he disapproved of them for what they did and the way they lived. They were thieves, pick-pockets, prostitutes, gypsies, escaped galley slaves. In short, Marx said, what the French called *la bohème*. And Marx wanted nothing to do with them (see his pamphlet *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*).

We can discard Marx's morality, while hanging onto his insight of a separate marginal class. But while recognising his reasons for distrust, we cannot simply ignore the street people. One of the strengths of the Leninist tradition is that we base the party in the working class but also work in other sectors. So we work among students, in the women's movement, in Irish solidarity work. We even work with some very dubious people: social workers and social security clerks, for instance. So it behoves us to look at the possibilities and limits of lumpen politics.

This is what I will do in the rest of this article. Most of my experience comes from the squatting movement in London. While all sorts of people were involved in squatter politics, the core of the communities involved was certainly lumpen. It was in the majority a lumpen-proletariat drawn from the working class, and this made it a good

deal grimmer than superficially similar movements in America, say.

I also have some experience of American street politics in the early seventies, both black and white, and what I have to say about lumpen politics is pretty much true of them as well.

'They do not have to be told that they have a problem with the system.'

But I do not want to draw my boundaries too tightly. The edges of the lumpen-proletariat are vague, and there is little politics that is *exclusively* lumpen. Still, I am talking about a style of politics and a way of life which is markedly different from organised working class politics. What I want to do is to highlight these differences. I am well aware that street people include a lot of workers, and that a lot of their dads are bus conductors. But there is a difference, and it is the difference I want to concentrate on.

Economically marginal

I will start with the economic position of street people. The key here is that they are not in regular employment. They may well be casual labourers, or largely self-taught self-employed craftsmen, or peddler or dope-dealers. A large proportion of them live on one form or another of state aid, interspersed with irregular or unofficial unemployment.

This marginal position means that they are particularly poor, and that they come up against the state regularly. This makes them angry and bitter, and it means they are not very open to reformism. The single mother in a squat sees the council officials and the social security people who humiliate her as the enemy. The unemployed kid constantly hassled by the police knows

who his enemy is. They do not have to be told they have a problem with the system.


But at the same time, they can be tempted to individual solutions. A steady job can offer an individual way out, a decent marriage can get that mum out of that squat. There is little in lumpen economic life that leads people to collective solutions, even though they clearly have collective problems.

So while street people are angry, they are also very disorganised. The whole nature of their lives militates against organisation. There is none of the tradition of organisation produced by people who go to the same job together day after day, year after year. And there is none of the tradition of the shop stewards committees, none of the collective discipline of people who work together.

There is also usually little or no community discipline. I have lived in streets which were communities in the sense that most people were unusually friendly and open, but which were unable to deal with heroin peddling or violent gangs. For economic reasons street people often change jobs or homes, and this makes it difficult to build a community. But many street people are also hostile to community discipline for political reasons.

Street people also have very little economic power. While they can squat a house or occupy an office, they cannot withdraw their labour. And so their actions are more difficult to maintain over time and have less effect on their rulers.

Their economic position makes street people militant, angry and *disorganised*. So the common form of street politics is also militant, angry, and disorganised. It may be a demonstration: it is often a riot. But it is always undisciplined: knots of people hanging around on street-corners, milling back and forth, waiting to see what happens next. The protests can be very angry indeed—they can burn down whole cities. But in the end they die away, because there is no organisation and nothing to hold onto. The bitterness remains, but the activity fades.



'In extreme cases the state may even kill off the leaders, as the Americans did with the Black Panthers.'

All this creates tremendous problems with the leadership of street politics. It is very hard to hold together any organisation. One month people flock into meetings. By the next month they have gone. They have moved, they have got a job, or they are just more interested in struggle than they are in meetings. This can make such politics a nightmare for the average socialist committeeman. It also means that such political work sometimes looks meaningless to people accustomed to measuring things by the extent of stable membership lists.

But it's not mainly committee people who lead street politics. Because things are so discontinuous and disorganised, it is relatively easy for anybody to set themselves up as a leader. There is a premium on demagogy and militant words, and often 'leaders' have no real base they are responsible to. So all sorts of folks become leaders without being elected by anybody: dedicated party activists, careerists after a job in community relations, and out-and-out lunatics.

Leaders without organisation

Street people are very vulnerable through their leaders. Because there is so little organisation the leader can become the movement in many people's eyes. There is an enormous temptation for him to strut like a hero, to threaten authority with hordes of angry kids as if he commanded them. (And the lumpen leader is always a *he*.) Because such leaders are not responsible and may well be crazy, they can often mislead people. Because life in the lumpen-proletariat is hard and because of the tradition of rip-off politics, it is relatively easy for the state to buy off the leadership. In extreme cases, they may simply kill the leadership, as the Americans did with the Panthers. And because the leader is the only organisation the movement has, the movement can easily be broken by breaking its leader.

Leadership is often dictatorial, as well, and this tends to corrode the movement from within. Since there is no fixed base, just a shifting mass, this is natural.

For instance, Ernie Allen (in *They should have served that cup of coffee*, edited by Dick Custer) describes how the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit relied for its cadre largely on lumpen elements. The unelected leadership tended to simply assume its right to run things and deal heavily with any internal unrest. This made it difficult for the lower ranks of the organisation to grow or for the organisation to change.

But the problem is not restricted to Detroit. Organisations into armed self-defence suffer from it particularly badly, but libertarian lumpen organisations have their own troubles with intellectual bullying and informal caucuses.

Behind the weakness of street politics lies the weakness and isolation of street people. This weakness is not just an external economic and political thing:

it's an internal thing. The lumpen-proletariat is drawn from all classes, and the process of joining it is not pleasant. You may feel you chose it as a life-style, but in your heart you may know that you are unemployable. And unemployment can sap your feelings of work.

On top of this, poverty and instability rot away intimate relationships. So it's no wonder you hate the system, but it's also no wonder part of you hates yourself. And that makes it very difficult to organise with those in a similar position.

Street people try to assert their own worth, of course. Usually they do this in cultural terms, as the 'counter-culture', as Rastafarians, or whatever. They develop a separate life-style, a separate sense of community, a separate neighbourhood, a hostility to the whole of the 'straight world'. This has emotional and social benefits. But it also cuts the street people off from political support from the working class.

Not that working class communities are naturally friendly to street people. Most working class people waste their lives, minds and bodies in jobs they hate, and most just about hang on to a little security. But the line between an honest worker and a 'scrounger' is often as thin as the paper your redundancy notice is written on. And the street people serve as a constant reminder of just what could happen to you. So it is natural for many workers to try to pretend to themselves that they are utterly different, that there is no way they could be like those animals.

Yet paradoxically, both workers and street people may envy each other. The street people want the security, the workers often develop fantasies about the idle, work-free, pleasure filled sex crazed life of the street people. These fantasies bear no relationship to the reality, but they increase the hostility.

Weakness and counter-culture

So the two communities eye each other warily. They are not necessarily enemies, and each will often have relatives and friends in the other group. But politically they are isolated from each other. This weakens both groups. Obviously, the street people are cut off from and therefore wide open to the heaviest forces of the state.

Perhaps less obviously, the street people are the vulnerable underbelly of the working class. The SPG cops who practise on black kids in Brixton graduate to picket lines. If squatting becomes impossible there is no alternative to paying whatever rent they demand. If a single mum on SS can be deprived and abused, that weakens the position of every working class mum stuck in a rotten marriage.

How should we as revolutionary socialists relate to lumpen politics? There are three common attitudes.

The first is dismissal. Many Marxists feel they can dismiss anything by saying

'Behind the weakness of street politics lies the weakness of street people. This weakness is not just an external economic and political thing: it's an internal thing.'



that it is lumpen, rather like saying that is the work of the devil. Such dismissal is usually saturated with reactionary morality, like Marx being hostile to gypsies and escaped galley slaves. It plays up to many reactionary elements in working class, for the lumpens are the soft underbelly of the working class.

This dismissal may take the somewhat more political form of insisting that socialists should base themselves on the working class and that there are difficulties in lumpen politics. True enough. But this is an argument for concentrating on working class politics. It is not an argument for dismissing lumpen politics, any more than we dismiss work among students or around nuclear power.

The second common attitude is to romanticise the lumpen-proletariat as the vanguard of the struggle. This is particularly common when the working class seems apathetic or gripped by reformism. The lumpens, in contrast, are clearly militant and often willing to take on the state itself.

Also, of course, it is easier for ex-student revolutionaries to get into lumpen politics because the lumpen proletariat are drawn from all classes. And it is easier for them to become leaders for the same reasons it is easier for lunatics to become leaders. Moreover, many middle class revolutionaries draw their politics more from anger than from solidarity, and this fits in with lumpen politics.

This explains the vogue for lumpen politics among the American New Left, the Naxalites, and sections of the Italian left. But such romanticising is bound to fail, because after all the lumpen-proletariat have serious political weaknesses.

And, any group on the left which bases its politics on the lumpens is going to fall victim to these weaknesses itself.

The third attitude toward lumpen politics is to work with it while pretending it is something else. For instance, we often work with squatters or support 'unemployed black youth' and pretend that they are workers just like anybody else. This attitude is understandable. But there are real differences in street politics, and it is necessary in our political work to be clear about this.

We need to be clear, for instance, about the dangers of isolation and of bad leaders. We need to be clear that it is going to be a great deal easier to build a movement and an unstable periphery organisation than a disciplined membership organisation with a stable cadre. We also need to be quite clear that lumpen politics has more than its share of theft, lunacy and instability. That means we need to be disciplined ourselves.

That's where a party comes in. A revolutionary party can also build links between the lumpens and the working class in a way that is otherwise impossible. For you can only get people to build these links by convincing them it is politically important, and by having them in a common organisation so you develop the habit of working together.

There are dangers in lumpen politics. But lumpen revolutionaries also have something to contribute to their more staid brethren hopelessly stuck into the trades council minutes. There is creativity in street politics, energy, daring and the knowledge that the state is your enemy. The British left stands in need of these qualities.

Jonathan Neale

Snobbery with violence

We've often talked *about* the forces of the state. But what is it like for socialists inside them? **Socialist Review** recently received the following letter from an acting sub-lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

We tell each other how hard it is to get up at 6.30 every morning as we dress, wash and race for breakfast, forgetting that thousands of workers are already at work or coming off nightshift for half our pay.

We wear the uniform of the only British armed force with an inter-continental nuclear capability, and we are responsible to the Lord High Admiral (the Queen). We have a distinguished tradition of plundering the wealth of third world countries, being the bully boys of the high seas, cornering markets all over the world and holding onto them.

Now, keeping open the trade routes for underpriced goods, paying courtesy calls to fascist dictators and racialist South Africa, we are the defenders of 'democracy'. This means democracy which gives power to the same ruling class that makes up the officer elite in the armed forces. The armed forces are a microcosm of this hypocrisy, with their own legal code, their system of absolute unquestioned authority, and all the elitism and splendid isolation of the colonial days.

The day's so-called work begins with drill instruction (first rifles, then swords at £2000 each) to teach us the essential discipline of a fighting service where instant obedience may save a life or (what they never tell you) take another's. Blind discipline and hierarchy are the biggest myths which have survived the centuries of organised warfare. Tribal fighting organisations were efficient and more democratic than ours, guerrilla movements fighting against tremendous odds have staggering successes on the basis of collective action. The Russian Red Army during the revolution of 1917 was in a state of complete 'anarchy' in bourgeois terms, but highly successful politically. A democratic armed force cannot exist under capitalism where force is organised to defend or advance specific interests (mainly economic, but ultimately political in the event of revolution). To do this successfully they need workers who will be as reliable as machines, if necessary against their own class. Recruit training is therefore a psychological process as much as a physical or mental teaching of skills.

Drill and physical fitness also has the role of giving the individual a feeling of superiority over 'civilians' and adds to service morale which is vital in keeping people in the forces.

Since we are officers, the training is more 'intellectual', so we can rely on a few hours in the class room (at £10.50 a day income). Here we realise that it is the senior NCO's who really run the organisation.

Our job is to 'maintain an overview', keep discipline, make executive decisions and pretend to know the job. A ship at sea (merchant or military) is a dangerous place, and ignorance among the 'management' could make the working conditions for seamen much worse.

We are taught how to be officers first, and how to be seamen is picked up along the way. Instilled in us are a diplomatic sense for cocktail parties, good leadership for keeping the men in place and, above all, the bluff not to lose face or authority when approached on a matter of justice by a too-articulate stoker. Behaviour at meals, courtesy at all times, are apparently more important than knowing your job. It is only when at sea that you find out about the tremendous hostility between 'officers and men' (or 'the lower deck' as the ratings' quarters are known).

'The navy is a society of its own where violence, male domination and racism are rampant.'

Homosexuality is illegal at sea, but in the military, especially, it is despised as 'the worst of all human failings', a 'corrupting influence' and undermining discipline. Even in shore establishments it is against naval regulations and if an officer 'discovers' the offence taking place he must have a witness and then proceed to treat the men with the utmost degradation. They must be separated, not allowed to speak or get dressed. They must be wrapped in blankets not allowed to use the toilet their clothing wrapped and sealed in polythene bags and then be medically examined.

Discipline, even in peacetime, violates all the principles of the rule of law. The accused is represented by his divisional officer, he has no access to outside legal help and may not appeal against an investigation against him. Fines, restrictions on leave and even imprisonment can be dealt out by a senior officer sometimes on very scanty evidence, merely taking the 'word of an officer' against that of a rating.

Double standards pervade naval discipline and custom. An officer arriving back on board drunk is 'high spirited', while a rating is often accused of disorderly behaviour or bringing the service into disrepute. Privileges of leave, access to alcohol and accommodation are

given to officers on the basis of social position or class.

This is the organisation that controls Britain's nuclear weapons. It is also a powerful instrument in international policy and economic strength. For workers, like all armed services, it provides an apparently exciting means of learning a trade, travelling and going up in the world (some 40% of today's officers started out as ratings). It is a society of its own where violence, male domination and racism are rampant. It appears quaintly outdated while being dangerously technocratic and modern. It could almost be the forerunner of the new Tory dream society - it swallows impressionable youth and moulds them in its own image, creating a machine hostile to the struggle for liberation in the developing countries and to a conscious self-activated working class at home.

People who say that anyone who enlists is a volunteer and therefore deserves the treatment forget that for workers in Glasgow, Newcastle, Liverpool or even Plymouth and Portsmouth the army or navy are the only escape from home and dole. For this reason hatred of officers is understandable, and from a revolutionary point of view it would be welcome, except for the tight and unrelenting ideological motivation of the officer class which filters through the whole organisation. The individuals in today's Navy are the cheapest element of the defence equation, but is also the most important because they know the horror of modern warfare, the reality of cold war mongering, and are the weakest link in the chain of command which might order the release of Polaris missiles against Russian workers.

After a full lunch, we see some horror movies - the Russian Red Fleet, 'threat' to peace and 'Western civilisation' etc. It has little effect, but slowly an unease develops in the most liberal of minds about our ability to match Soviet war technology. Then onto the most chilling of our subjects - nuclear, biological and chemical defence. Usually the last lesson of the day means sleep for most of us, but in this case the nerve agents, blister and psycho-chemical agents which could be used against us or civilians are like a waking nightmare. We aren't told whether Britain has these, but the riot control agents seem very familiar, like the defoliants of Vietnam, later used by the Rhodesians against the liberation movements.

After an afternoon messing about in boats (for which anyone else would pay £1.50 to £6.00 an hour) the evening takes on a cultured civilised air with dinner, mess games and duty free cigarettes. The murderous profession seems so far away, as the real world does. Somewhere in the cigar smoke and pink gins there is a faint awareness that the holocaust we are preparing for may become a reality, but for now we are content to soak up valuable scientific and natural resources, so as one day to stand against rather than for the working people who pay our wages.

NATO

The untameable beast



'I think that being a non-nuclear member of NATO is a logical position.' Thus Tony Benn expressed his view a few months ago that NATO could be turned by a Labour government into a purely defensive alliance, not based on the bomb. It is an opinion which is likely to be shared by a good number of those who demonstrate with CND on 24 October. But, Sue Cockerill shows, it is not a valid one.

'One of the greatest moments of my life' was how Ernest Bevin, former TGWU general secretary and then Labour foreign secretary, described the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty on 4 April 1949. He had been one of the prime movers behind NATO and its predecessor the Brussels Treaty. He went on to say, 'Today is not only the day of the signature of this pact; it is also a day of solemn thought—and, may I say, of consecration for peace and resistance to aggression.'

More than 30 years later, his sentiments find an echo on the right-wing of the Labour Party. And there are even many on the left, in CND and elsewhere, who, while they are sincerely opposed to British nuclear weapons, hesitate about adding to this the demand that Britain should leave NATO. Lying behind this is the belief that, however evil nuclear weapons are, and whatever shortcomings NATO may have, it is still in some sort of way a defence against the Russians and some sort of bastion of freedom.

However, when you look at the origins and history of NATO—at what it actually does rather than what its paid publicists say on the TV and in the press—this view cannot be sustained. The truth is that if the rulers of the USA, Britain, France, or any of the other states that are signatories to the Treaty, behave like gangsters when left to their own devices, they behave ten times worse when banded together.

The great carve up

The origins and shape of NATO are not the result of some sort of accident: they are very much a product of the Second World War. Towards the end of that conflict, when it became clear that the Nazis were going to be beaten, the leaders of the Allies met and drew up plans to carve up the world. They agreed, more or less, which bits would be subjected to which victor. The British were mostly interested in trying to hang on to their empire, the Russians wanted accep-

ance of their exclusive control over the areas of Eastern Europe they were conquering from the Germans, the Americans wanted as much of the world as possible to be 'free' from these other empires so that US corporations could flourish there.

For a time, these agreements worked out. The USA was quite happy to allow the USSR to have its way in Eastern Europe, setting up puppet regimes and looting whole industries. Stalin, for his part, was quite happy to accept Western control of Greece and Italy, despite the fact that in both of these places the Communist Parties had led mass popular resistance to the Nazis and were overwhelmingly the strongest political forces. Indeed, he was quite happy to allow the anti-Communist Chiang Kai Shek to keep control of China, but events proved that the Chinese Communists had too much popular support to be ordered around from Moscow.

But the agreement soon started to break down. The USA emerged from the Second World War as overwhelmingly the world's most powerful economic, and thus military, state. In the late forties, the USA accounted for roughly 75 per cent of the world's invested capital and two-thirds of its industrial capital. US troops were stationed in 56 countries and, by 1949, the USA had the use of some 400 naval and air bases worldwide.

The US government was not at all reluctant to use this economic and military power. The Truman doctrine, announced in 1947, gave notice that the USA intended to police the world and make sure that American interests remained intact. It was quickly followed by the Marshall Plan, which made economic aid dependent upon political good behaviour. Thus, just before the Italian general election of 1948, General Marshall declared that, 'Benefits under the European Recovery Programme will come to an abrupt end in any country that votes Communism to power.'

Militarily the USA provided aid, and often direct intervention, to numerous of its

satellite-governments—from the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Guatemala in 1954 because it threatened the interests of the United Fruit Company, through to support for the Junta in El Salvador today.

NATO was part of this strategy. It bound Western Europe and the USA together very closely and, because of the overwhelming economic and military preponderance of the USA, was from its inception an arm of US foreign policy. It also, of course, suited the ruling classes of Western Europe. While they might fall out sometimes—as when the USA refused to support Britain and France over the Suez adventure in 1956—they were in general quite happy to go along with the USA and pick up what profits they could on the side.

A record of aggression

Thus NATO was not set up in response to some sort of Russian 'aggression'. Whatever crimes the Russians might have committed in Eastern Europe—and they have been as many and as bloody as those of the USA—NATO was never a gathering of threatened innocents banding together against a ruthless foe. Indeed, the Warsaw Pact itself was only set up years later, in 1955, as a response to NATO's decision to re-arm West Germany and admit it to NATO.

If we look a bit closer at the actual history of NATO, its claims to be the sole defender of freedom and democracy look very thin indeed. While NATO itself has never actually been caught intervening anywhere, it has gone on record as supporting interventions by its members.

Thus in December 1952, the NATO Council declared its support for the French colonial war in Vietnam. It expressed:

'Profound admiration for the courageous struggle being waged indefatigably

by French forces and the armies of allied states against Communist aggression. The campaign being led by the French Union in Indo-China deserves the unrestricted support of the Atlantic governments.'

And when the 'indefatigable' French were finally routed, it was the USA, that other pillar of freedom, which stepped in to take their place.

Whatever fine phrases about 'freedom and democracy' NATO hacks might spout, these have never been conditions for membership of the club. Portugal under the fascist dictatorship of Salazar and Caetano was a valued member of this club and could wage its bloody African wars armed to the teeth with NATO-made weapons.

Many Greeks believe that NATO was one of the prime movers behind the military coup which brought the Colonels to power in 1967; whatever the truth of this might be, the fact that a democratic government had been overthrown and replaced by a brutal military dictatorship was never the slightest obstacle to Greek membership of NATO.

More recently, NATO could hardly contain its delight at the military take-over in that other member of the freedom club—Turkey. One NATO officer in Turkey said, 'The prospect of worsening strife had us worried. Something had to be done.' Major-General Philip Kaplan, NATO Deputy Land Commander in Turkey, commented, 'There is a lot of land here, and I want a lot of soldiers who can kill.'

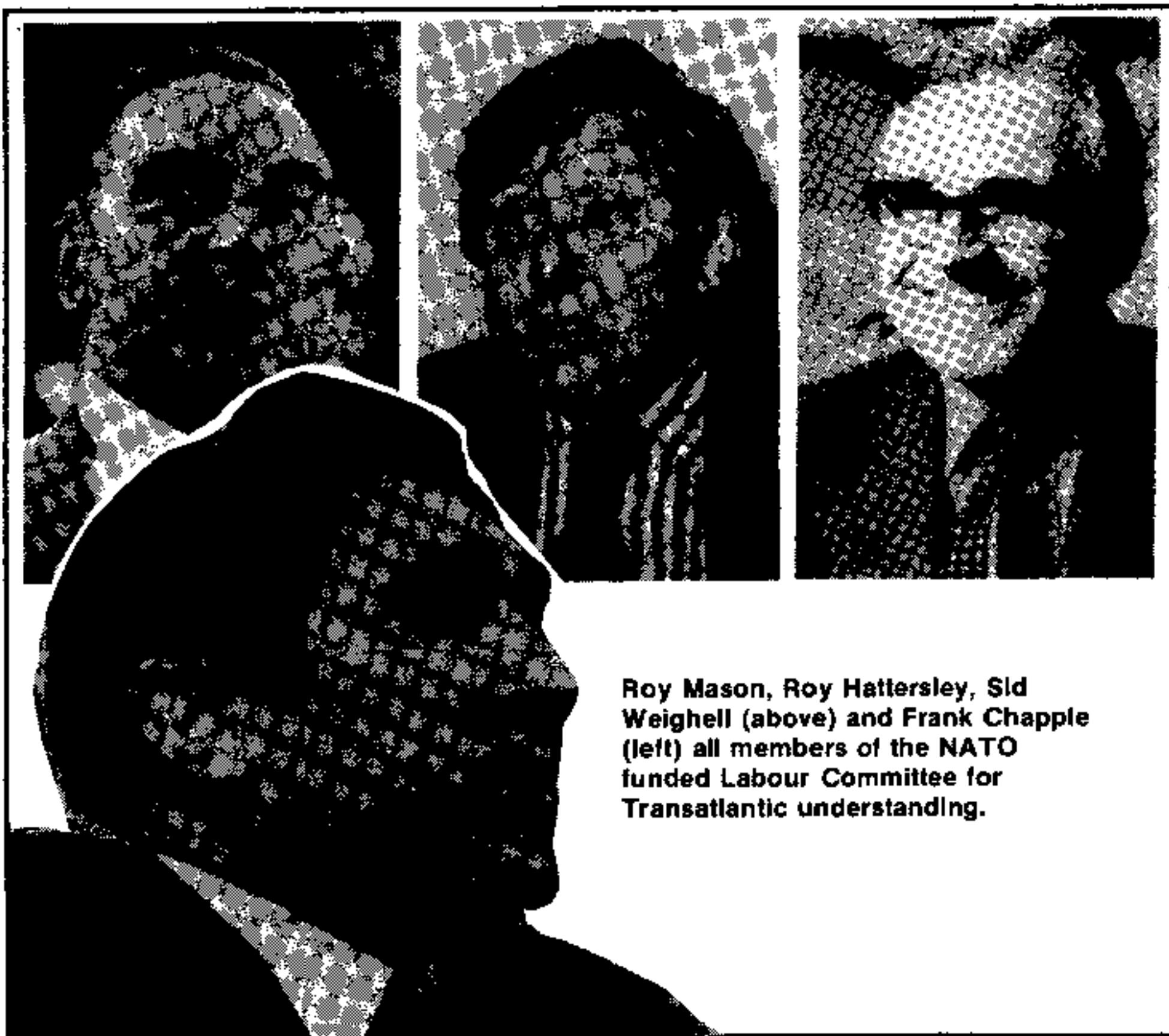
The case of Turkey illustrates the way NATO sees the world. It is the home of many US military installations and shares a land border with the USSR. Between 1975 and 1978, differences with the USA over the Turkish invasion of Cyprus led to the closure of the US bases by the Turkish government. At a stroke, the USA lost a naval station, an important air base, and monitoring facilities providing roughly one quarter of all hard US military intelligence on Russian missile launches.

In the judgement of NATO leaders, such facilities are much more important than minor little matters like the overthrow of an elected government by the army, the total suppression of political and trade union activity, mass arrests, torture and large scale killings of left-wingers.

Manipulating opinion

The supposed existence of a 'Russian menace' is very convenient for NATO leaders in their own home countries as well as abroad. NATO and its supporters have always been quick to label any left-wing movements as Russian-inspired, and today they argue that even as moderate an organisation as CND is, wittingly or unwittingly, a tool of Russian propaganda, a weapon of Russian subversion, and probably riddled with fully-paid-up KGB agents.

But when it comes to manipulating public opinion for dubious political ends, it turns out that NATO is a past master at the art. For instance, last year it was revealed that NATO funded a group of 'moderates' inside the Labour Party, giving them between £6,000 and £7,000 a year to run a body called



Roy Mason, Roy Hattersley, Sid Weighell (above) and Frank Chapple (left) all members of the NATO funded Labour Committee for Transatlantic understanding.

the 'Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding'. Through its off-shoot the 'Labour and Trade Union Press Service' this little front organisation distributes a monthly collection of articles for free use by newspapers and trade union journals.

Among those on the Committee who are only too willing to lend their names as fig-leaves for the military hard-men are Roy Mason, Roy Hattersley, Frank Chapple, Terry Duffy, Bill Sirs, and Sidney Weighell. These political heirs of Ernest Bevin are the true fellow-travellers: the money they spend comes from an organisation which revels in the fact that Turkish workers can expect to be shot down if they go on strike.

The joint director of this press service is an interesting man called Alan Lee Williams. He is also involved in the proposed Council for Arms Control. In the *New Statesman* of 28 August this year, Duncan Campbell argued that the aim of this body was:

'To win moral support for NATO's so-called Arms Control Proposals which were launched at the same time as the decision to install new Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe in December 1979.'

Alan Lee Williams has a history. He is a recent recruit to the Social Democrats but was a Labour MP from 1966 to 1979. He was parliamentary private secretary to Denis Healey and Roy Mason. He has been national organiser for the European Movement, director of the British Atlantic Committee and became director general of the English Speaking Union in 1979. He also strongly supported American policy in Vietnam, and was secretary of the Anglo-Vietnamese Friendship Committee in the late 1960's.

One country which has always claimed to support the sort of freedom and democracy

which NATO has always admired is South Africa. Of course, it would give the game away if NATO were to publicly admit as much, and they have always denied having any links with that barbarous regime. But NATO member Britain has a long-standing agreement with South Africa—the Simonstown Agreement—for joint naval co-operation and British use of all South African naval bases in time of war. And NATO members France and Germany have joined Britain in supplying arms to South Africa. NATO explains all of this away by saying that it has no control over what its members do on a bi-lateral basis with South Africa.

Even this miserable logic-chopping has been exposed. In June 1975, documents were produced at the UN showing that construction of the *Advokaat* military communications system by South Africa depended on co-operation with firms in West Germany, Britain, France, Denmark and Holland.

The NATO system of coding equipment and spares had been made available to the South Africans. NATO confirmed that this was the case but continue to deny any involvement, claiming that the codes were an 'open system' available to various 'neutral' states—namely South Africa, Argentina, Australia and New Zealand. No explanation was given as to why, in previous investigations, South African access to these coding forms had not been revealed, nor as to who had authorised their disclosure.

The *Advokaat* system itself, based at Silvermine near Simonstown, has the ability to maintain surveillance from South Africa's coastline across the South Atlantic to South America and across the Indian Ocean to Australia and New Zealand. Its northernmost point of operation in the Atlantic is the Tropic of Cancer. By a curious co-incidence, this is also the southern-most border of NATO's statutory area.

The system was constructed at the same time as NATO was developing an increasing interest in the South Atlantic. In June 1973, the Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic, was asked by NATO's Defence Planning Committee to prepare plans for the defence of the Cape Sea routes, and a resolution was adopted at the May 1973 Council of the Atlantic Treaty Association which showed the same concern about naval co-operation in the area.

So far, attempts to set up a formal South Atlantic Treaty Organisation, which would perforce depend heavily on such havens of freedom and democracy as South Africa and Argentina, have not been successful. NATO, however, is only too eager to play midwife at the birth of this new monster.

A nuclear alliance

Last November, a planned reception for South African MPs and 'homeland leaders' at the NATO HQ in Brussels was cancelled at the last minute, apparently because of the bad publicity given the week before a meeting between NATO secretary general Luns and the South African foreign minister. According to Anti-Apartheid, this was the third such meeting that has taken place recently.

According to this same Joseph Luns, the current NATO contingency plans for the defence of the Cape oil routes have been made 'without having any contact with the countries of Southern Africa, or indeed of Africa'. Just how this incredible feat of military planning might have been achieved he did not say, and this has led some to speculate that he might not have been telling the truth. The *Cape Times*, for instance, quoted his statement on 17 December 1980, and added that:

'The acknowledgement that the Cape route is included in NATO's preparedness plans appears as the first official admission that something like a military umbrella will cover parts of South Africa. An informal understanding appears to have been achieved between NATO and South Africa.'

Margaret Thatcher, too, has been pushing for the same sort of thing. She argued for expanding NATO's sphere of operations outside of Europe:

'I do think that it is time to see whether NATO should extend its sphere of influence. There are times when your front line may be way beyond NATO. I do think that's something we need to look at, because raw material lines are absolutely vital to the capability to defend yourself.'

All that she is doing is putting onto public record what has always been the reality of NATO: it has nothing to do with countering some Russian threat and everything to do with holding on to the profits which flow along trade routes.

Any examination of the birth and history of NATO show only too clearly that it is neither a defensive security pact nor any organisation wedded to freedom and demo-

cracy. Those who argue, like Tony Benn, that it is possible to tinker around with NATO, for Britain to unilaterally renounce nuclear weapons and remain a member of NATO, are ignoring reality.

NATO's military thinking has always been based on the idea that at some point the use of nuclear weapons would occur in a war in Europe, irrespective of whether particular members of NATO themselves possess their own devices. Since the decision to introduce Cruise missiles, this strategy has been refined to the point where one member of NATO, the USA, hopes to fight a nuclear war in Europe, and itself emerge unscathed. Membership of NATO, with or without a nuclear bomb of one's own means acquiescence in this strategy.

Norway is a case in point.

That country is a member of NATO, but claims to refuse to have nuclear weapons on its soil. But just because it is a member of NATO, US F-111 fighter bombers regularly fly in and out of Bodoe air base, just north of the Arctic Circle and perhaps twenty minutes flying time from the Russian military installations around Murmansk. The F-111 is capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

Does anyone seriously believe that those F-111's, doubtless conventionally armed in

their practices today, will not be carrying nuclear weapons if they do it for real? And nobody can possibly believe that this thought has not occurred to Russian strategists, and that therefore Bodoe is not on some Russian target list for a nuclear strike.

This is the reality behind 'non-nuclear' Norway's membership of NATO. It would be no different in Britain.

Military alliances between the various groups of robbers who run different national states cannot lead to peace. The most effective force for peace in Europe today is Solidarity in Poland, and that is based on the working class. Only that power, developing internationally, can hope to end the threat of nuclear war.

Both NATO and the Warsaw Pact are there to defend the existing order against the working class in all countries. The military power of the Warsaw Pact has been used to smash opposition in Eastern Europe, not to march to the Channel. The military power of NATO countries has been used to smash anyone who dares challenge Western capitalism, not to fight Russians. NATO and the Warsaw Pact are mirror images of each other. It is only by resolute opposition to both of these juggernauts that we can hope for peace.

CND: PLAYING TO WIN

CND has merged as a mass movement in the last year. Membership now stands at 25,000 but more than ten times that number have been involved in anti-bomb activities. The 24 October demonstration looks like being highly successful. But what happens then? Jane Ure Smith looks at some of the options.

Inevitably there will be a lull after the 24 October demonstration. It is unlikely that the phenomenal growth will continue of its own accord. And at the national conference some three weeks later clear policy decisions will have to be taken as how best to drive the campaign forward and how best to continue to build support.

More importantly the conference—and the organisation as a whole—will have to confront the question up to now largely ignored by CND, namely the question of *how to win*. The activists' conference which took place last May revealed that the leadership have no coherent strategy to advance. They are wary of being 'political' and want to preside over a broad-based organisation, but the means by which they think we can stop Cruise, stop Trident and disarm Britain unilaterally are far from clear.

For a large number of people in CND, the solution lies with the Labour Party. If only a Labour government elected on a unilateralist platform could be prevented from back-tracking ...



Admittedly many of the people who hold with this solution, do so with a degree of cynicism. They are willing to acknowledge Labour's pathetic record of sell-outs on the question of the bomb, amply documented in *Socialist Review* 81:4.

Foot's dithering and evasiveness must do little to reassure them. The Labour Party conference may have voted for unilateralism, but clearly membership of NATO is seen as quite a different question. Even Benn is explicitly in favour of Britain remaining a member of the Alliance.

Then there is the small matter of the Labour right. For them it is not even a question of saying one thing and doing another. Unilateral disarmament is a complete anathema to them, and they proclaim the fact openly. Whether or not unilateralism is party policy is irrelevant, and it will become even more irrelevant for the likes of Denis Healey if Labour form the next government.

Then there's Brynmor John in the key position of shadow defence secretary,

appointed one might add, by Michael Foot. Along with his four defence underlings he called, before the TUC, for union leaders to oppose the NEC proposal that a future Labour government should cut Britain's defence spending back to the average amount spent by other NATO countries. The idea that a disarmed Britain would be safe from nuclear attack was 'nonsense' he said. And to close down American bases in Britain would ruin the NATO Alliance! No wonder he walked out of the defence debate at Brighton.

I suppose it is just conceivable that Brynmor John might experience some kind of dramatic 'road to Damascus' conversion, but in the absence of such an event we are left with a defence spokesman whose only function must be to sabotage Labour conference policy and the struggle for nuclear disarmament in general.

Clearly the Labour Party does not provide a very convincing solution to the how to win problem. Too much faith was placed in the Labour Party by CND last time round.

Preparing to win

I suspect the leadership of CND would agree with me on this point, but for quite different reasons. (it does not stop them, incidentally, from being totally uncritical of Foot's indecisiveness.) While we in the SWP argue that the Labour Party in government can only be kept on the straight and narrow by a mass movement firmly rooted in the workplace, CND objects to focusing the campaign on one political party.

Their alternative is to woo supposedly anti-bomb individuals in all the parliamentary parties, including even Social Democrats and Tories. Surely if we agree that the Labour Party is unlikely to deliver the goods, how much stronger when it comes to the crunch are the class allegiances of Tories

and SDPers propelling them back into the arms of the bomb-lovers?

Preparing to win is now an urgent matter. The establishment—the bosses of big business, the civil service and the media—are all fully committed to the bomb. They are ready to usher in the first of 160 Cruise missiles in 1983. They are eager—albeit with divisions within their ranks—to substitute Trident for Polaris. In addition it is unlikely that US defence secretary Weinberger has yet given up hope of winning Thatcher and the British defence establishment over to the idea of including the odd neutron bomb in their Rhineland arsenal.

These people are the enemy of CND, a powerful enemy indeed, and an enemy

'The establishment – the bosses of big business, the civil service and the media are all firmly committed to the bomb.'

which we cannot do other than confront if we are to win.

Massive demonstrations will not be enough to stop Cruise missiles being trundled through leafy Berkshire. Direct action will not be enough, though it has its place. The only way we have a hope in hell of stopping the missiles is if thousands of workers are prepared to take industrial action.

That means that building in the workplace and in the trade unions must become the major priority for CND. This was a major omission last time round. A good many union conferences voted for unilateralism this year—the ISTC, USDAW, CPSA, and NALGO amongst them—as did the TUC. But that is simply a question of resolutions at the top. The work still has to be done amongst the rank and file.

The small number of workplace groups that have been set up show the way forward. Active campaigning on the part of Fleet Street CND, for example, produced a vote for unilateralism when Natsopa balloted its membership. Since a ballot at the same time on the question of the deputy leadership of the Labour Party went against Benn, we can assume the unilateralist result was by no means a foregone conclusion. It shows the effectiveness of leafletting and argument.

As well as building in the workplace we must also try to draw in those fighting back against unemployment, the other major problem facing us. The link must constantly be made between the billions of pounds squandered on nuclear weapons and the millions of people who have been forced on to the dole. Unemployment and the disarmament issue are simply two sides of the same coin: we must bring them together under the slogan 'Jobs not Bombs', actively supporting the struggle of the unemployed as well as trying to involve them in the fight against the bomb.

Finally our how-to-win strategy must involve far sharper political argument. We are for *unilateral* disarmament. It has been CND policy for years. But you might be forgiven for thinking otherwise, since CND constantly advertises literature and activities, and includes on its platforms, speakers from the multilateralist *World Disarmament Campaign*.

We have lived with 'multilateralism' practically ever since Hiroshima: one set of high-level talks after another on 'limiting' the arms race. Yet more and more deadly weapons are produced. These kinds of negotiations are a meaningless facade. If we are going to start campaigning for multilateralism we might as well invite Ronald Reagan to join CND.

Secondly there is the question of NATO. It is not really taken very seriously by CND.

Virtually no literature dealing substantially with NATO in pamphlet form is published by CND. There is one leaflet which refers to a pamphlet which is no longer available. In *Sanity* and on placards NATO rarely gets a mention. All year Labour CND have carefully avoided pushing an anti-NATO line in the Labour Party. They reaped the rewards of their tentative approach at Brighton in the overwhelmingly pro-NATO vote.

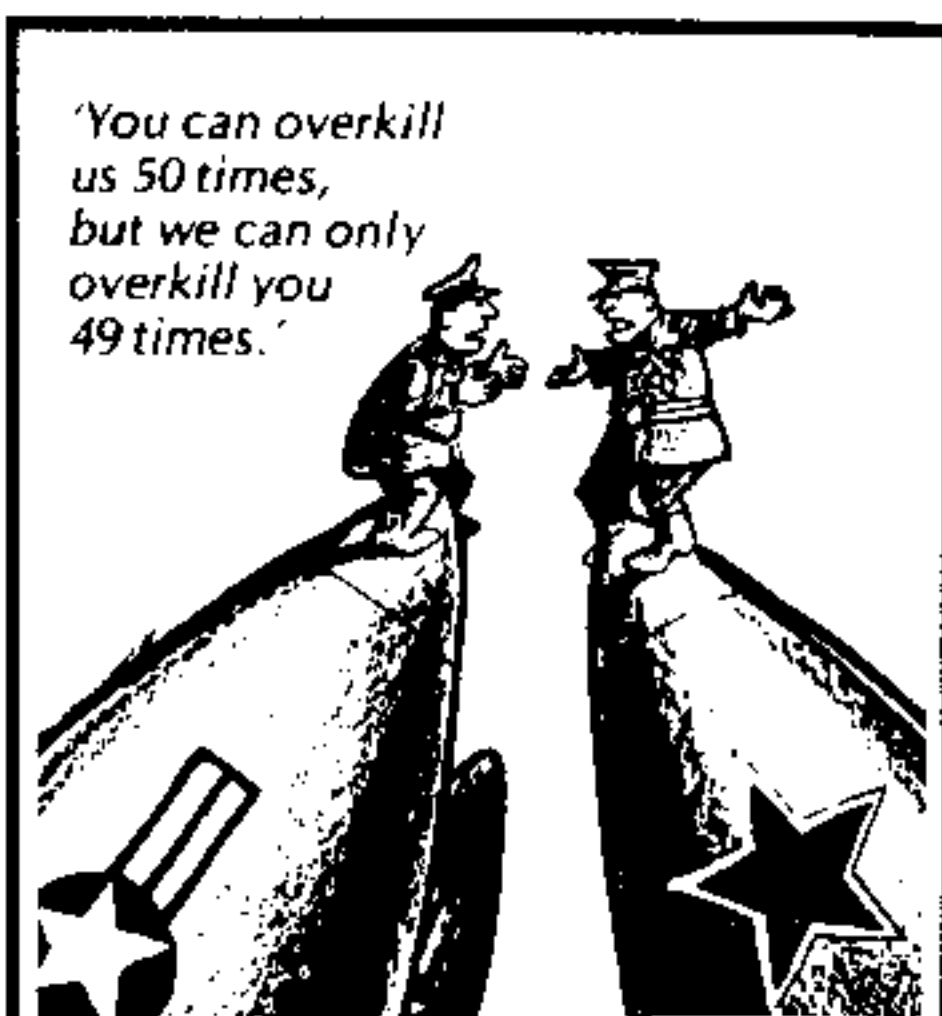
Unilateralism

It is high time we campaigned loudly and clearly for British withdrawal. We must argue that getting out of NATO is an *essential* component of unilateral disarmament.

Many people point to countries like Norway and Canada—as did Joan Lester in her summation at the Labour Party Conference—countries which do not have nuclear weapons but which retain membership of NATO. They assume that these countries would be out of the firing line in the event of a nuclear war.

This is nonsense. If you belong to NATO one way or another you must play the game. NATO is a *nuclear* alliance, and if you don't have missiles you must still do your bit by providing early warning systems and the like. This is exactly the case with Canada and Norway. What's more NATO is a nuclear alliance whose function is to defend the interests of the ruling class in the West, a function usually referred to as 'defence of the free world'. Similarly the Warsaw Pact exists to defend the interests of the Russian establishment. We must argue that an alliance which serves the interests of the bosses can never serve the interests of ordinary working people. There are no half measures—we must get out of NATO altogether.

The campaign against the bomb in the early sixties was, for a time, a magnificent struggle, but in the end it failed. We must learn the lessons of that failure since we cannot afford to let CND fail a second time. That means taking stock of where we are going, publicly thrashing out the arguments, and adopting a coherent strategy geared above all to winning. That strategy must entail building in the workplace, linking up with the fight against unemployment, political clarity and above all non-reliance on Labour.



MISSILE MADNESS

SWP pamphlet by Peter Binns on the new weapons system and how they threaten your life. 40p (plus 10p postage). Bulk orders £3.25 for 10 post free from Socialists Unlimited, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London, N4.

Isherwood: the sensitive Englishman

The British Empire was run by a small group of administrators and public servants. The number of universities was small and they were linked to public schools. The Eton-Oxbridge connection still rules us. But in the pre-World War Two days this connection was more blatant and the recruiting ground more restricted than today. Oxbridge in the 20s provided the rulers of the Empire, and a particularly boorish and uncivilised crowd they were. Brutalised by the public school system, they sowed their wild oats while at university—a world of rugby and booze, cruelty and pranks.

However in this school of yobos there had always been a small counter current. This was made up of the sensitive 'artists' and 'aesthetes', who reacted against the philistines that ran society and 'ran' the arts. They were sensitive, fashionable and often homosexual or bisexual. Oscar Wilde in the 1880s and the Bloomsbury group around the First World War can be seen as products of this alternative scene.

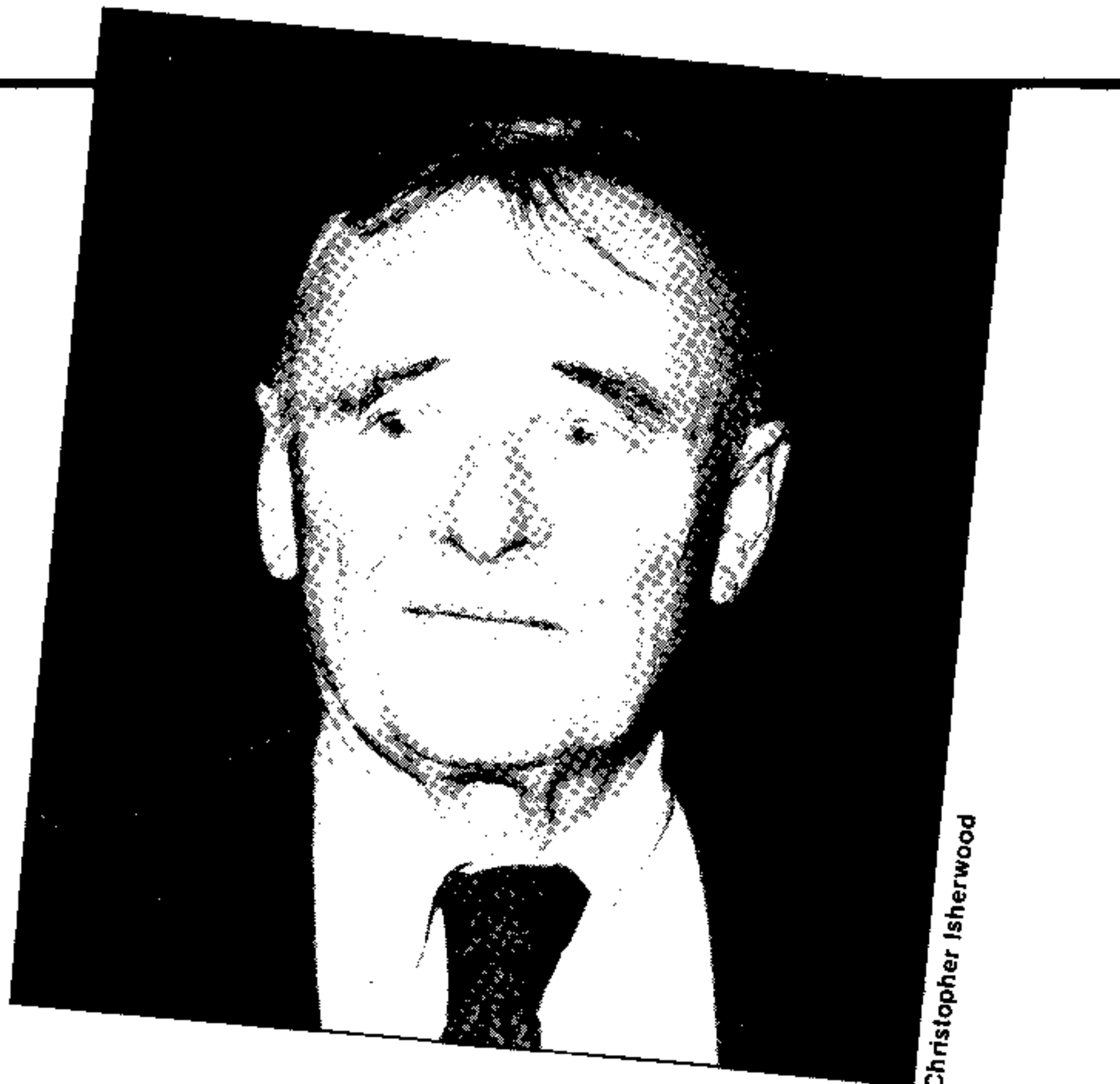
It was also from this scene in the 20s that Isherwood and the fellow travellers of the 30s sprang. Reacting against the upper-class yobos, Isherwood, Auden, Spender, Upward and others formed a cultural clique that dominated the English scene for a decade. They 'ran' English culture.

It was such a small elite group that it is difficult to understand the importance that they were able to have. Isherwood in particular became a cult figure (like say, Stephen Strange today). Not only his novels were important, but his languid dress style of casual Oxford bags, and his left-wing politics. He was the sensitive Englishman of the 30s.

Isherwood hated the English upper middle-class of which he was part. In particular he hated its hypocrisy and fear of sex. He was gay and proud of it. Sex was important to him. He was always boastfully promiscuous, and as soon as he could, he left oppressive England to live in Berlin in 1930, the then gay capital of the world.

Germany was in the midst of political and social upheaval that ended with the rise of Hitler in 1933. From 1930 to 1933 Isherwood commuted between Britain and Berlin, witnessing the rise of the Nazi party, going to the gay bars, involved in the gay movement (he actually stayed at the Magnus Hirschfeld Institute in Berlin, the centre of the gay sex-pol scene), and increasingly became associated with the Communist Party.

It is from this experience that Isherwood's two most famous novels come—*Mr Norris changes Trains* (published 1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939)—which form the basis of the film *Cabaret*. The film is very much a watering down of the books, themselves coy



Christopher Isherwood

versions of reality. For example, the character Sally Bowles (played by Lisa Minelli) was in real life a CP member who later went to Spain.

In 1978 *Christopher and his kind* was published, which is a rewrite of the period with Isherwood's gayness as the subject.

As a writer Isherwood developed the 'I am a camera' method. This excludes the writer from the story, so that the world is viewed as if the writer were a camera merely recording the events, excluding as much subjectivity as possible. Though Isherwood's politics later changed, his detachment has remained in his books, and you never get to know the writer. In *Christopher and his kind* Isherwood speaks of himself as if he were another person—*Christopher did this, or Christopher did that*.

The technique makes for straight and easy to read novels, but they are a bit shallow. It also allowed Isherwood to cop out on his gayness—though in his private life he was open and boasted of his gayness, he never publicly made a stand. In excluding his feelings from the novels he excluded his sexuality. He was critical of the CP's Stalinist switch in 1934 to anti-gay propaganda, but he never voiced these criticisms publicly (as opposed to Gide for example). Guilt of being upper middle class mingled with guilt of being gay.

In Berlin Isherwood met a German called Heinz who he lived with until 1938. After the rise of Hitler he and Heinz spent the next five years flitting across Europe trying to find a haven for Heinz who was wanted by the Nazis for avoiding national service. Britain refused to allow Heinz into the country after searching Heinz's bag at immigration control and discovering love letters from Isherwood. In the end the search for a haven ended in failure: Heinz was deported to Germany and into the army. Isherwood never forgave Britain for this, and he also became disillusioned with the CP's attitude to

homosexuality. He writes of himself in *Christopher and his kind* that:

'He (he is referring to himself) now realised he must dissociate himself from the Communists, even as a fellow-traveller ... He must never again give way to embarrassment (of being gay), never deny the rights of his tribe, never apologise for its existence, never think of sacrificing himself masochistically on the altar of the false god. Of this change of attitude (to the CP) he was embarrassed by its basic cause, his homosexuality. As a homosexual, he had been wavering between embarrassment and defiance.'

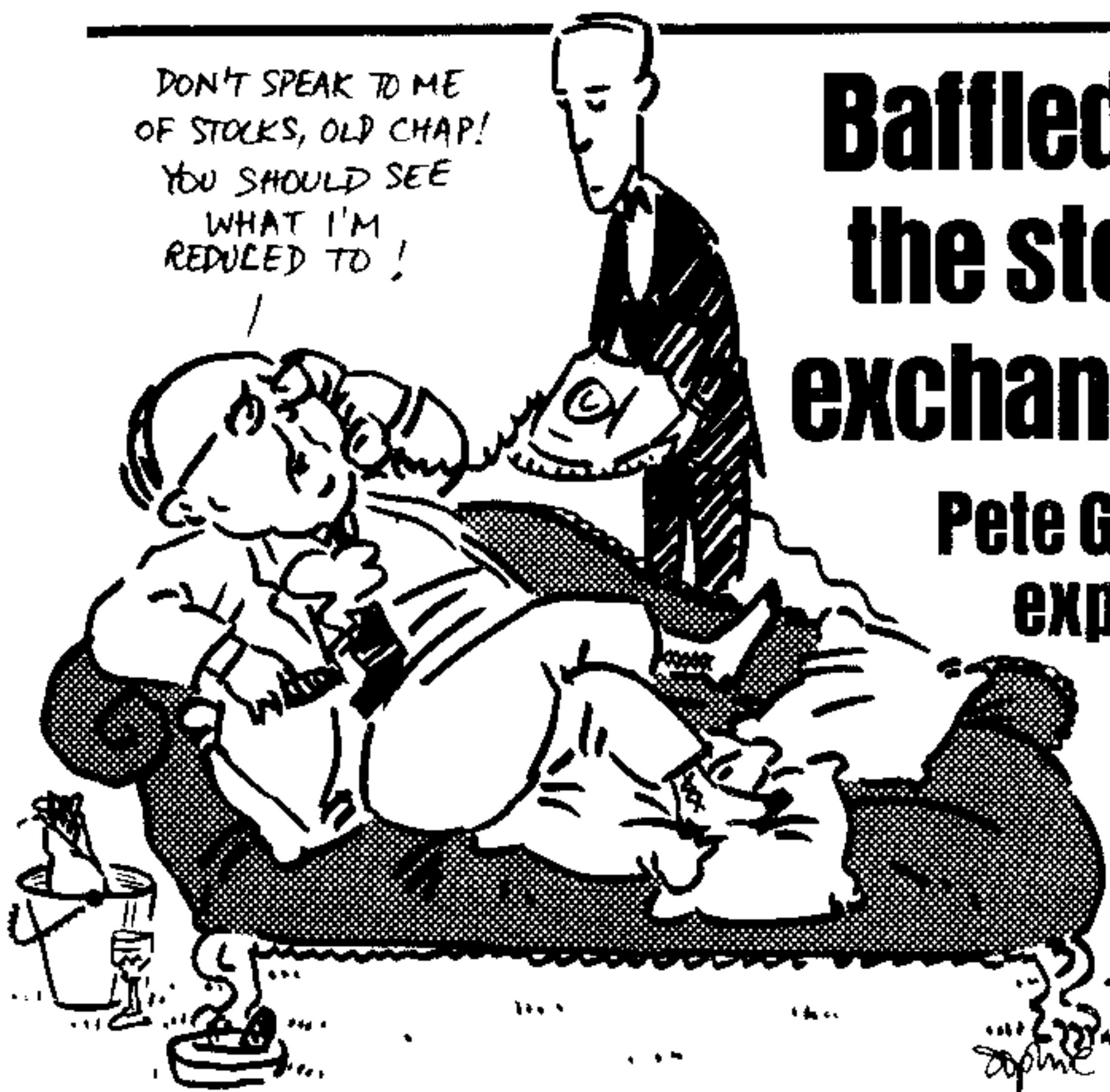
In 1939 Isherwood, with W H Auden, left Europe for America to become a pacifist and a mystic.

Isherwood is still alive today in California living the life of a literary academic. He has written over 20 books, yet his Berlin writings remain the most famous. This I think is not because of their brilliance but because of their subject matter. He lived and knew the sex-pol movement, the gay bars, the social and political upheaval that was Berlin in the 20s and 30s. Few, if any, records of that remain, and Isherwood catches the mood.

Isherwood and Auden's defection to America on the eve of the war, renouncing their last decade of activity, discredited the 30s movement. From being the height of fashion in England they were slandered and attacked as shallow and traitors (Orwell particularly hated them). It has only been since the success of *Cabaret* and the re-birth of the gay-movement that Isherwood has become reestablished. His books are now nearly all available again. And they are certainly worth a read. I don't think he can be called a great writer but he is an easy to read and good one, and the period is fascinating.

Noel Halifax

DON'T SPEAK TO ME
OF STOCKS, OLD CHAP!
YOU SHOULD SEE
WHAT I'M
REDUCED TO!



Baffled by the stock exchange?

Pete Green
explains

Comparisons of the Stock Market with a casino are not far off the mark. Millions of pounds can be won or lost in the course of a few hours. Unscrupulous operators like Jim Slater (now back in the game despite being caught fiddling in 1975) and Peter Walker (now in the Tory cabinet) can make fortunes just by buying up old companies, sacking the workers and flogging off the real estate.

Yet the health of the casino is not immune to the diseases of the outside world—and as those diseases have proved to be more contagious and resistant to cure than expected, the gamblers have become a very nervous bunch indeed.

In the year up to August 1981, stock markets around the world rose almost regardless of the state of the real economy. Investors were confident that right-wing 'austerity' or 'monetarist' policies would do the trick. Wages were falling, unions were in retreat, and all seemed ready for a profitable 'investment-led' recovery. Now the illusions that monetarism could work (even for the ruling class) have been dramatically exposed.

In the two weeks after 14 September stock markets around the world collapsed (Graph 1). In London the fall of 14.2% was a record for such a short time. Even the Tokyo market had its biggest fall on record.

Once such a collapse starts it spreads rapidly. Everyone wants to sell and no one wants to buy. One tipster, like the now infamous Joe Granville, can cause a panic. Eventually (and it had started to happen as this was being written) the more sober punters, especially the big institutional investors, step in and buy up shares on the cheap.

But not all of the fall this time has been speculative. Much of it indicates that the slump, and with it low levels of profitability, is going to persist.

What is the stock market? How important

is it to the rest of the economy? Is the collapse like that of 1929? Does it herald an even deeper slump, or is it just a symptom of what's already occurred?

The stock exchange is a collection of financial markets. It involves the buying and selling of claims to ownership of the means of production and to a share of the total surplus in the economy (or what Marx termed surplus value produced by the workers). Profits can be made quickly (by speculating on the rise or fall of share values) or slowly (by sitting back and waiting for the dividends or interest payments to flow in). In the end it all comes down to a lot of parasites doing very nicely at the expense of the rest of us.

Three main sorts of transaction take place:

1. *The issue of new shares by companies to raise extra cash.* But this has been declining in importance since the mid-1960s (see table 2). In years when the value of shares falls rapidly, as in 1974, companies find it impossible to raise money by this means, and are forced to rely on the banks. Whereas shares are titles of

ownership, and get a return or dividend only when the company is in profit, bank loans have to be paid back over a shortish time and regardless of the health of the firm.

2. *The sale of 'gilt-edged' stock by the government to raise cash.* These sales help the state to bridge the gap between taxes and spending. In recent years they have been enormous at around £7 million annually. Gilt-edged stock carries a fixed yield or return. If the financial investors refuse to buy this stock they can force down its price on the market, and force up the rate of return or interest they get on such stocks. That's been happening all over the world, pushing up interest rates generally. Finance capitalists gain — we eventually pay through higher taxation.

3. *The second-hand market in stocks and shares.* It is this market which hits the headlines. The FT share index, the Dow-Jones Average (for New York) etc all summarise the rise and fall in the second-hand value of existing shares. Shares in a company can fluctuate wildly regardless of the company's actual performance. But the price of its shares does matter to a company. If prices are high so is the company's credit-rating and its ability to obtain new money from all sources. If prices are low the company becomes vulnerable to takeover.

Table 1 shows the power of the financial institutions on the stock market. The individual investor is a declining breed (although there are still some very wealthy share-owners about). Putting money into the building society or the bank earns a smaller return in times of boom, but is a lot safer in times of slump.

There is a myth that the rise of the pension funds and insurance companies means that we are all capitalists now. In practice workers have no real say over these funds which are often controlled by merchant banks in the City. Indeed workers are losing out as the value of pensions in particular fails to keep up with inflation. In effect the funds have become a device for channelling a portion of wages into propping up British capitalism.

Once inflation is taken into account, it becomes clear that stock markets have been in a bad way since the early 1970s. As Graph 2 shows clearly, in Britain share prices have never really recovered since the collapse of 1974 (after the miners brought down the Tory government). Or as the *Economist* commented on the US situation:

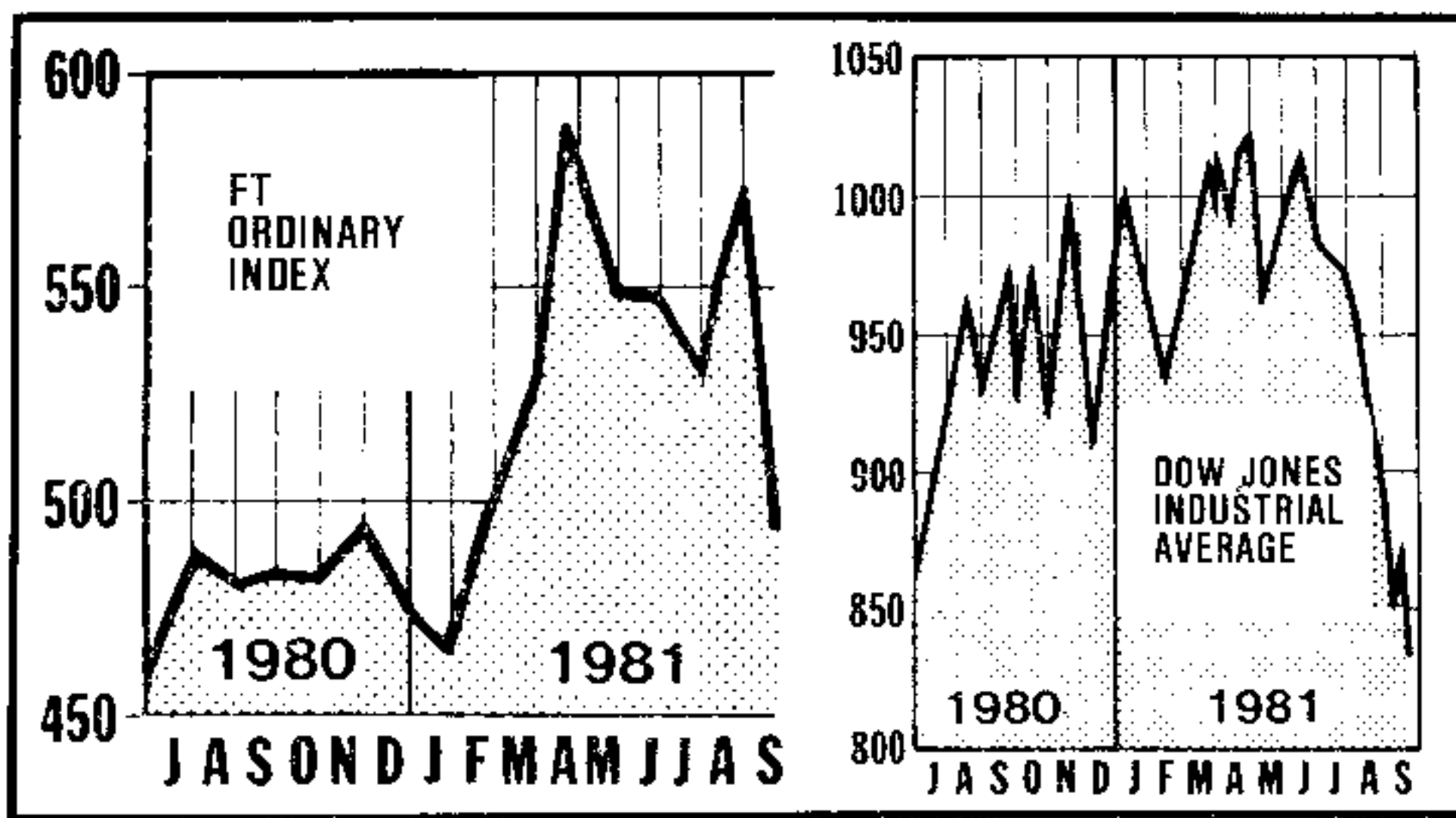
Table 1
Who Owns the Shares

	Ownership of Shares %	Net Purchases (+) or Sales (-) by Sector 1976-80
Insurance Companies	18%	+ £3,092.9 million
Investment and Unit Trusts	13%	- £ 179.2 million
Pension Funds	18%	+ £6,365.0 million
Other Institutions (including Overseas)	15%	Not Available
Individuals	36%	- £8,320.0 million

(Total Value of Shares £86,000 million)

NOTE — 1% of the population owns 80% of individually owned shares.

Source: Financial Times 24th September 1981



Graph 1

‘People are right to say that a Wall Street crash will not now bring world slump because the Wall Street crash has occurred already. The Dow at around 850 is only 2¼ times 1929’s peak of 381 for an economy with a money GNP now 28 times larger, so the Dow could already be called more than nine-tenths undervalued compared with then’ (26 September).

That probably underestimates the impact of the current collapse, but the essential point is correct. The long-term decline in the profitability of industrial capital in particular, has meant low dividends and a high degree of risk from buying shares. When interest rates are high a lot more money can be made by investing in gilt-edged or building societies, or property.

In Britain share prices were weakening well before the September collapse for an additional reason. Since the lifting of exchange controls in October 1979, and with the scale of the slump since the summer of 1980, money has poured out of the country (Graph 4) The share of pension fund money going overseas has risen from 7% to 25% in the first half of 1981. For insurance companies it has gone from 4% to 17%. Investment and unit trusts have actually reduced their holdings in British capitalism.

The main factor behind the worldwide fall in share values in September was the state of

the US economy. High interest rates in the United States have forced up interest rates around the world.

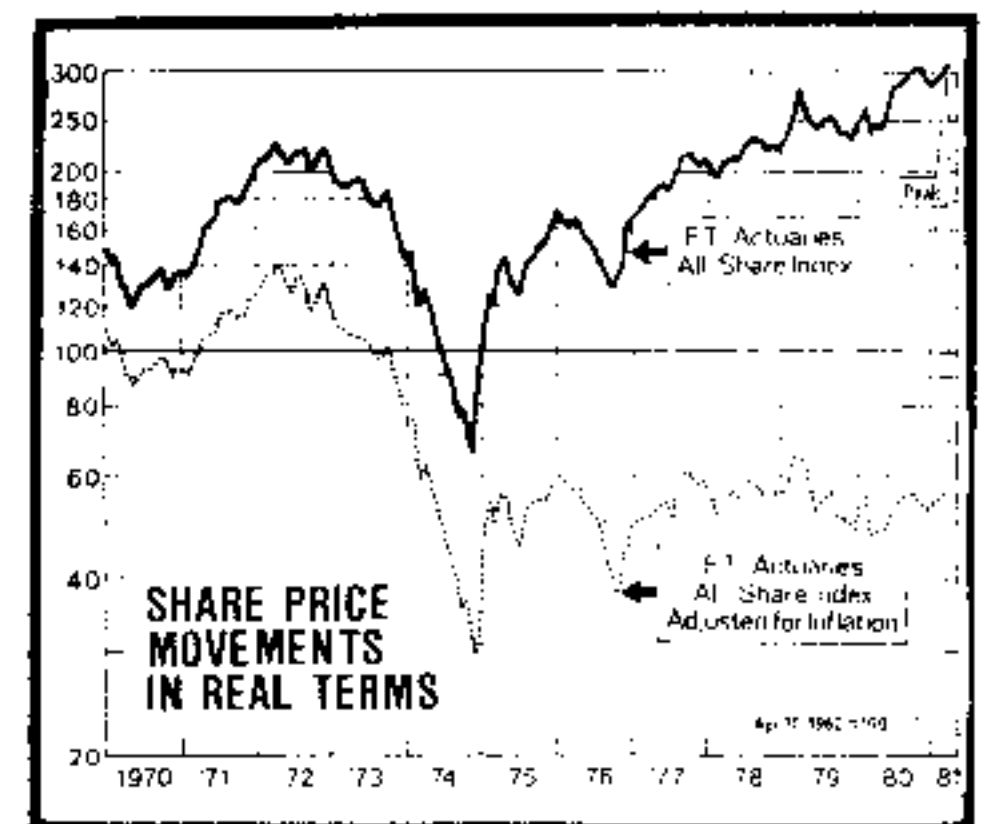
High interest rates affect the value of shares in two ways:

1. They make the return on government stock, bank deposits etc higher as well as safer than the return on shares in industrial companies.
2. They increase the cost of borrowing from the banks for both individuals and companies. When rates of interest are higher than the rate of profit on investment in new factories and machinery, investment rates will naturally plummet.

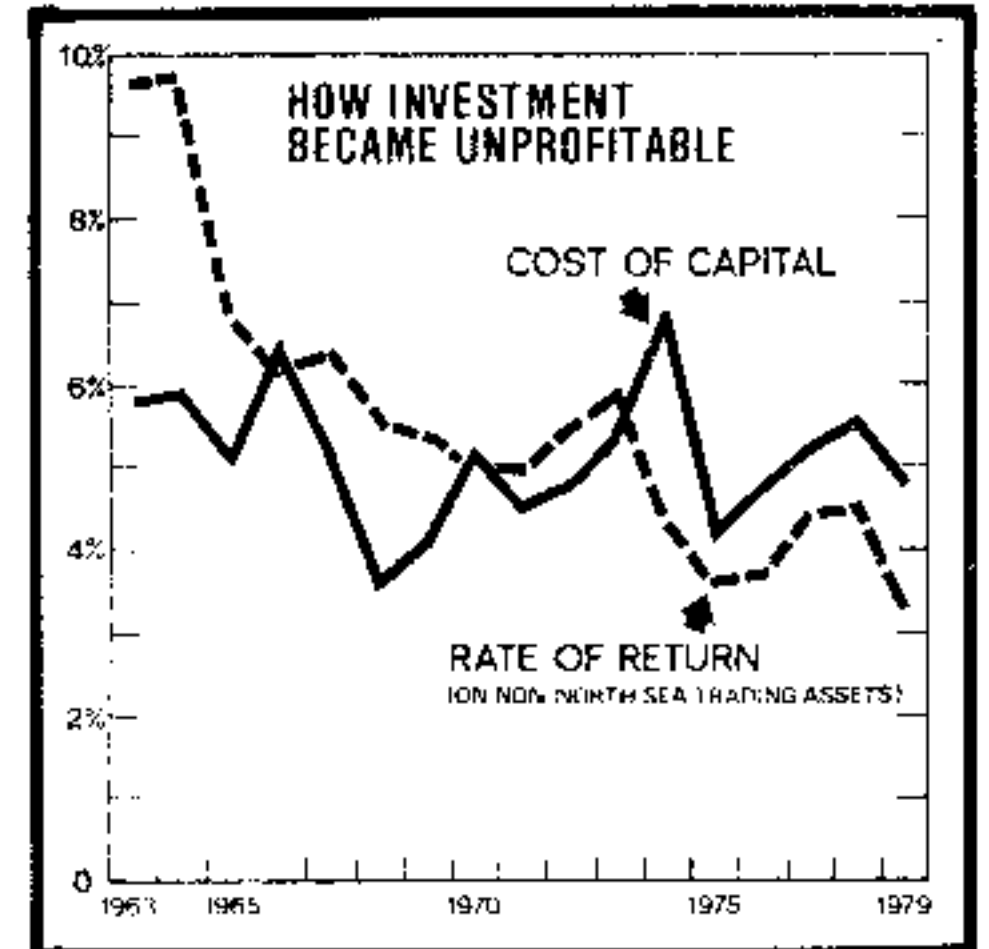
In Britain the more far-sighted capitalists have put their money into the financial markets rather than invest it in new physical assets. Arnold Weinstock’s GEC, the firm Thatcher always likes to quote, did just that with its £600 million cash surplus last year, and did very well as a result.

The fall on the London stock exchange followed that on Wall Street. But it also followed three connected events in Britain. There was Thatcher’s cabinet reshuffle, a clear statement that there would be no U-turn. Then came the forcing up of interest rates by two points to try and stop the outflow of funds which was causing the value of the pound to fall. High interest rates hit industrial capital which is in severe trouble anyway.

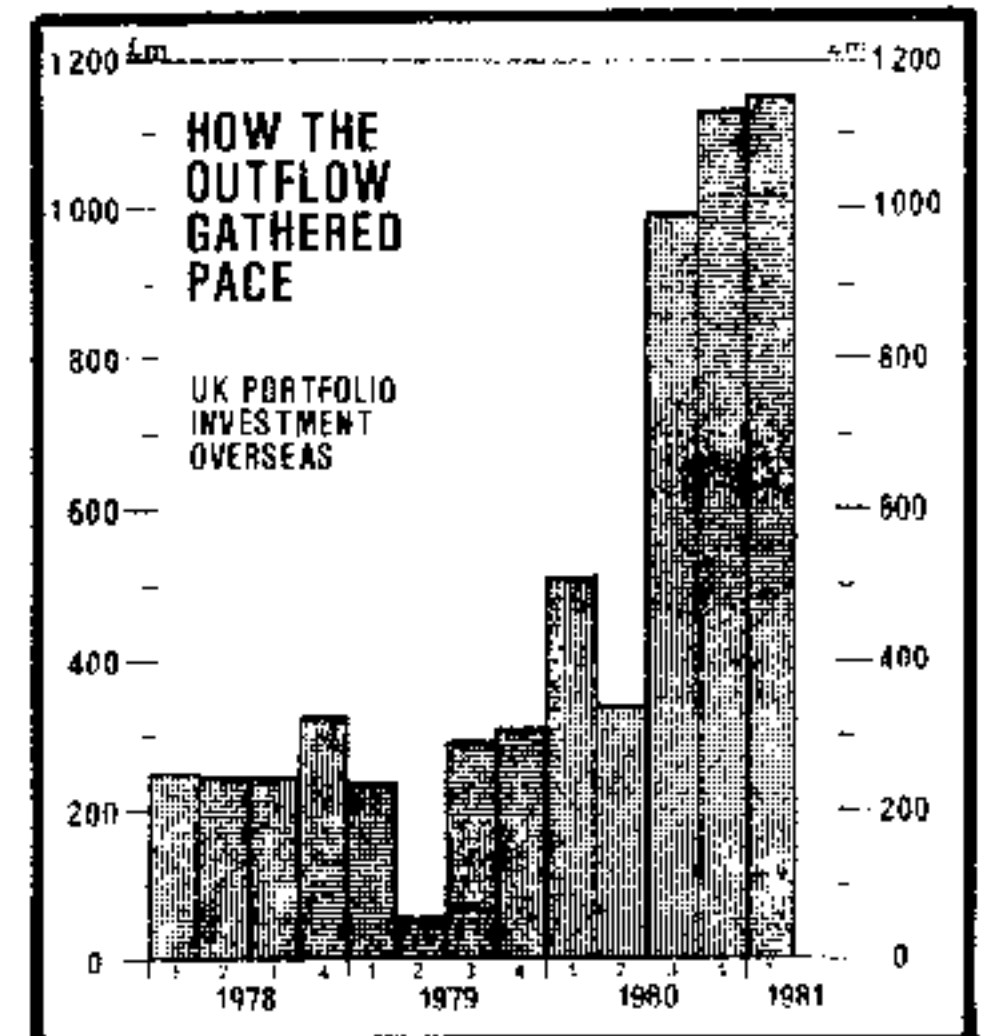
Thirdly, a series of forecasts and surveys



Graph 2



Graph 3



Graph 4

showed that no recovery was in sight, that profits (apart from North Sea oil) had fallen by 15-20% in the last year, and that the real rate of return on industrial capital was at its lowest level ever.

The fall in the stock markets is much more a symptom of the crisis than its cause. It is not comparable to the 1929 crash when stock markets were vastly over-inflated anyway. But it does show that all talk of an early recovery is so much hot air. It will add to the pressures forcing down investment levels (investment in manufacturing fell by 8% in 1980 and by another 13% in the first half of 1981) Unemployment will go on rising towards the four million mark in Britain.

The only answer the Thatchers and Reagans have is to hit the working class even harder with 4% wage limits (ie real wage cuts of 8% at the current inflation rate) and even nastier cuts in the welfare state. But as the last few months have shown even the bankers and stockbrokers are losing confidence that that will save them.

Table 2
Main Sources of Working Capital—Industrial & Commercial Companies

(% of total)	Retained Profits	Sale of Shares	The Banks
1966	77.7%	16.8%	5.5%
1968	73.8%	12.0%	14.2%
1970	68.1%	4.7%	27.2%
1972	57.5%	7.3%	35.2%
1974	52.1%	0.0%	34.6%
1976	59.1%	5.4%	15.6%
1978	60.5%	4.0%	15.1%
1979	76.2%	3.6%	20.2%
1980	65.1%	5.8%	29.1%

Source: Financial Statistics May 1981 Table 9.2
(Note — excludes Nationalised Industries and State subsidies to Industry)

Alternative paper— or paper alternative?

It seems that there is hardly a dispute anywhere these days which doesn't produce some discussion about the possibility of 'setting up a co-operative'.

Journalists, more than almost any other group of workers, are attracted by the prospect of going alone, liberated from the bosses and free to produce the sort of publications we've always wanted to work for. In the last few years there have been several attempts at alternative/co-operative papers and with many more redundancies threatened in the industry, there are likely to be more.

Most ventures have started because of disputes which either ended in defeat or looked too difficult to win.

The *Nottingham News* was started in 1978 during the national pay strike by provincial journalists. A group of 28 NUJ members at the *Nottingham Evening Post* were sacked when they joined the strike—having warned the union leadership that once outside the doors they'd almost certainly not get back without a fight. *Evening Post* proprietor Christopher Pole-Carew had already succeeded in smashing the much more powerful printers' union NGA by bringing in new technology. The NUJ was the last openly organised trade union in his company. It would have taken a massive campaign of picketing, solidarity action and blacking to get the 28 reinstated. But after eight weeks strike, the rest of the membership nationally settled and went back to work—on the advice and instruction of the NUJ leadership—leaving Nottingham on their own.

The Nottingham strikers began producing a weekly paper as a strike weapon and a means of keeping the members together. But the *Nottingham News* came to be seen as a way of hitting back at Pole-Carew by building an alternative to his scab produced paper. It has kept going—but only just, with

the union still paying the wages of the journalists. It has been a hard battle to keep it alive, despite the enthusiasm and dedication.

The *East End News* was launched after a long battle for trade union rights at the Stratford Express Group. A series of strikes over a number of years eventually wore down a once-strong NUJ chapel. The *East Ender*, a relatively new but popular weekly was closed down, leaving the *East London Advertiser*—staffed by all non union labour—with a monopoly in Tower Hamlets.

Uncertain future

Not long after a promising start for the *News*, the ELA management—who had taken over the Stratford Express Group—started undercutting on advertising in a vicious attempt to kill its rival. The *News* survives, but money is hard to come by and the future uncertain.

The latest alternative paper—about to be launched onto the scene—is *City Limits*, produced by the former staff of *Time Out*, the London listings magazine.

Journalists—and print union members—went on strike in May when *Time Out* owner Tony Elliot tried to end their unique pay parity agreement. Joint action between the NUJ, NGA and SOGAT meant that blacking was immediate, and *Time Out* was stopped straight away.

But 15 weeks into the strike, the chapel voted to abandon the fight and set up their own rival magazine.

At the *Camden Journal* we too were presented with the choice between fighting closure and launching our own paper—by the management. If we would go quietly, they were prepared to let us have the title for £1, they said.

Was this an act of goodwill by a forward-

looking management reluctantly forced to make nine redundancies at Christmas? No! It was an attempt to divide us and make it more difficult to win solidarity support—without a doubt!

For a start, the redundancy terms they offered—the bare minimum of £240 for the majority—would hardly have turned us into press barons overnight! We knew from of old that our management had no particular concern for our welfare. The letters telling us that we were sacked expressed no regret but had the ring of a military communiqué. And if we were cynical then, the confusion their 'offer' caused in the following weeks more than bore it out.

'Why don't you go and run it yourselves?'

Let's look at the realities of running a paper of your own.

On your side you have the commitment, the dedication, expertise and a desire to provide people with an honest, progressive publication. A bit like going into a darts tournament with a perfect aim and no arrows.

What they've got is the capital—the money and the resources. Most newspaper proprietors own vast amounts of expensive machinery and plant—paid for with the profits from our labour over the years. When the going gets a bit tough in a recession are we going to walk away and let them have all that for themselves, while we struggle to maintain our alternatives?

Many of them have other interests and are prepared to maintain loss-making newspapers as valuable propaganda weapons. Co-operatives have to make enough money to be self-financing. So how long is it going to be before the need to attract advertisers begins to affect editorial content? What about costly distribution, and all the expensive promotions needed to establish a steady circulation? How do you stop principles being sacrificed because of absolute necessity of making money to stay in business?

Setting a trend

But aside from the viability, there are other factors to consider. Our management would have welcomed our taking over the *Camden Journal* to remove a number of union activists from the arena (seven of those sacked held chapel, branch or council positions).

Setting up co-operatives doesn't just weaken our strength and ability to challenge managements, it sets a trend. Every time one group of workers decides to go it alone, it makes it that much more difficult for the next group to argue for jobs and win support in their fight.

And in newspapers, there is the question of press freedom. Who is going to challenge biased reporting, racism, and fight for the right to reply if our organisation is weakened? Some years ago, the *Camden/Hornsey Journal* chapel was among the first to take industrial action over a National Front advertisement. A ban followed the action and it has been taken up in other places. Are poorly financed, struggling co-operatives—however good the finished product—an effective challenge to the right wing mass-media?



Tony Elliot: Back in business

The small number of people who own the wealth in this country are, by and large, those who control the press. Tony Benn told the North London Branch NUJ meeting last year that it would be a good idea if trade unionists had a page in each newspaper to express the views of working people. Wouldn't it be a better balance if most newspapers reflected the interests of working people with the privileged being given just a few columns at the back to express their minority opinions?

Is there a chance that we'll achieve this balance by outnumbering them with viable alternatives?

The *Camden Journal* chapel chose to fight instead of setting up a co-operative, although two people who finally accepted redundancy as part of an ACAS deal are exploring the possibilities of an alternative paper.

It may be that after nine months on strike, most of us won't get our jobs back, neither will we have the pleasure of seeing our own

paper published. But we believe that our battle—even if we lose—has been worth it. There is no telling how many managements have been deterred from taking similar action because of the solidarity action we were eventually able to get. And we hope that as a result of our efforts to get support from other unions, those who fight next will be starting from a stronger position.

Camden/Hornsey Journal Chapel
SWP members.

Labour: the easy alternative

One consequence of the rise of Bennism is that affiliation to the Labour Party is now being more strongly canvassed in a number of white collar, public sector unions than ever before.

In the CPSA it has made a fairly regular appearance and was last discussed one and a half years ago at conference when it was defeated. But NALGO, the fourth largest union in Britain, has actually got as far as a decision at its most recent conference to halve its membership. In the teaching unions, the NUT and NATFHE (the college lecturers' union), the question of affiliation has broken fresh ground: fringe meetings, organised by elements of the Broad Left at both conferences this year, for the first time devoted themselves exclusively to the 'advantages' of affiliation.

It is worth noting that all these public sector unions have never had a tradition of affiliation: they were also late in coming to affiliation to the TUC. NALGO, for example, affiliated to the TUC only in 1964, though the question had been raised since 1947. The teaching unions also affiliated in the 60s. The CPSA was for long prevented as a result of Tory legislation following the 1926 General Strike. This forbade state employees' unions joining the TUC and was only repealed by the post-war Labour government.

So, in all these unions the tradition had been one of 'professionalism' rather than of 'politics'. That was only broken down by developments in the 60s when semi-proletarianisation forced these unions to take industrial action to secure advances in pay and conditions. Affiliation to the TUC was part of that process, though the arguments given in favour were not always very progressive.

Affiliation to the Labour Party, however, is obviously much more political, much more associated with the left of the union (though some of the opposition to TUC affiliation at the time was over the TUC's links with the Labour Party). The right are consequently much more firmly opposed on the grounds that whatever their own personal connections, Labour Party membership cannot be imposed on many thousands of members who are apolitical and/or Conservatives.

However, as with affiliation to the TUC, the right could live with affilia-

tion to the Labour Party. Geoffrey Drain, Kate Losinska and Fred Jarvis wouldn't exactly be isolated if they had a presence at Labour Party conferences alongside John Boyd, Terry Duffy, Bill Sirs and Frank Chapple. Indeed, one of the ironies that revolutionaries in the CPSA pointed out was that if the affiliation motion has succeeded a year and a half ago the Wembley Labour Party conference changes over reselection of MPs, and the election of the leader would have almost certainly never occurred. Affiliation of the CPSA would have secured victory for the right, not the left!

Flawed arguments

But, whatever the practical consequences, the theoretical argument in favour of affiliation is quite simple: by affiliating we link the industrial side of the labour movement to the political side, help secure progressive policies in the Labour Party and at the same time ensure that the next Labour government will restore the cuts imposed by the Tories.

The argument is full of flaws. When the union leadership itself is quite incapable of fighting cuts and redundancies, or actively sabotages any rank and file resistance, it is absurd to expect that affiliation to some other body will make a difference.

The supporters of affiliation claim that the next Labour government will not have the appalling record of its predecessors because the Labour Party is becoming democratised. Next time, it is hoped, the leaders will be held to conference policy—so it is worthwhile affiliating so that we can determine that policy.

This assumption about rank and file control over the Labour Party conveniently forgets one thing, that we would have to have complete control over whoever was sent by the union to Labour Party conference. And that comes back to how we fight for control of the union—through rank and file struggle or through election of the right kind of 'progressive leaders'?

But in the present downturn in activity, with left leaders, as much as the right, being incapable of delivering the goods, the prospect of heaven tomorrow is an easy alternative to fighting the hell

today that is Thatcher's demolition job on the public sector. The pie-in-the-sky of backing Labour to restore the cuts in 1984 (!), when (and if) it returns to power, allows 'left' leaders plenty of scope for verbal struggle but no commitment to actual struggle in the workplace.

So, various sections of the Broad Left can all be found in the forefront of the various affiliation campaigns, although these divert energy away from the actual problems confronting the membership. The campaigns are not exactly spontaneous expressions of the average trade unionist, in fact, experience would suggest the opposite, though possibly if the campaigners get under way they may well find a responsive echo among activists who despair of mounting an effective resistance to the Tories.

The thrust in the CPSA comes from the *Militant* tendency, which is well established and numerically influential. Its attitude to rank and file struggle can be gauged from the attitude it adopted during the strike last summer, always trying to damp down on extending the scope of the action because it is unwilling to antagonise the CPSA full-timers and make things uncomfortable for its well-placed supporters in the hierarchy of the union.

In NALGO, the *Militant* tendency, numerically insignificant, are the driving force in CNALP (Campaign for NALGO Affiliation to the Labour Party). CNALP has already had one national meeting and is pulling top Labour people behind it. Eric Hoffer, on behalf of the NEC and as chairman of the Labour Party's Organisation Committee, has expressed his support in CNALP's first national



INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION.

bulletin; and Michael Foot and Tony Benn will be sending messages of support.

CNALP is aiming for a big campaign, quite explicitly linking the fight against cuts to the fight for affiliation. But *actual* struggles barely get a mention (the Liverpool typists' struggle is referred to in passing in precisely *one* of the 13 recommendations for a campaign strategy). And whether CNALP will have much to say about actual Labour-led opposition to the cuts (such as the fiasco of Lothian council's collapse in the face of the Tory attack) remains to be seen.

The irony is that this 'big campaign' (and it will have to be big to convince NALGO members of the wisdom of affiliation) is in the nature of the operation going to be a very bureaucratic affair. CNALP is concentrating on the official machinery of the union and bending over backwards to involve the pro-affiliation section of the NEC (called FLAG For Labour Affiliation Group). Necessarily that means playing down anything that emphasises conflict between the leadership and the rank and file of the union.

In the NUI the push for affiliation is coming from the STA (Socialist Teachers Alliance), a grouping that vacillates between rank and file politics and broad-leftism. At this year's NUT conference the newly revived Socialist Education Association called a fringe meeting to discuss why the NUT should be in the Labour Party.

Present as principal speaker (alongside a leading STA activist) was a former president, and executive member from Birmingham; that is to say, a member of the very same executive that has witch-hunted militants and association officers willing to lead fights against the cuts.

In fact the NUT executive has not discussed the issue and is in general hostile to *any* political issues being raised in the union (such as affiliation to CND or the Right to Work Campaign). As far as motions to conference are concerned, despite STA efforts, affiliation did not figure among the first fifty, which scarcely indicates a high priority among the membership.

Our attitude

What should the attitude of revolutionaries be towards affiliating? The most tempting answer might be to oppose. The Labour Party, whatever its pretensions, is a party of capitalist government which invariably finishes by seeking to impose lower wages and worse conditions on working class people when in office. Even supposedly 'red' Labour-run councils, such as Lambeth or Lothian, have caved in and implemented cuts.

Whenever the issue comes up we should be pointing this out and insisting that the only politics that the trade union movement should be affiliated to is rank and file struggle for control over production and services, socialism from below by workers' self-activity, rather

than socialism from above, bureaucratically dispensed by well-intentioned representatives.

However, opposition when it comes to the vote would almost certainly mean blocking with the right, who are opposed to *all* politics in the union and who want to keep the union from participating in general political movements that unite and strengthen many partial struggles (the examples that spring to mind are the ANL, CND and the Right to Work Campaign). We could always abstain, but in practice that is likely to mean the same thing as opposing (because of the number of votes required in favour for affiliation to take place).

So in the end we shall have to grit our teeth and vote for affiliation (in the same way that we vote for Labour in general elections). The danger is that by voting for we shall be helping spread illusions about the Labour Party. That can only be avoided by a merciless attack on what the Labour Party stands for and by refusing to be dragged into campaigning for or prioritising affiliation.

We have to insist that the only way forward politically is not by diversion-

ary campaigns on affiliation (a long haul for little result) but spreading support for each and every struggle. In NALGO that means the typists' struggle in Liverpool; in the NUT, the right of associations not to be victimised for taking unofficial action to fight the cuts in the CPSA rebuilding confidence after this summer's defeat.

There is one other reason why if it comes to a vote for affiliation we have to vote for. Despite the unholy alliance leading the campaigns (some of whom should know better than to peddle illusions about the Labour Party) there will inevitably be involved some genuine Labour Party activists, with rank and file leanings, who will take voting against as sectarian and siding with the right. They will have to learn for themselves what we know to be the case with the Labour Party (and have experienced at Lambeth and Lothian). To them we have to say: all right, we're not going to oppose affiliation, but what really matters are the struggles going on right now, so let us unite to spread support for them. That is where we begin to build a fight back against the Tories.

Gareth Jenkins

Typists jolt NALGO

The strike by 350 typists at Liverpool city council over low wages has brought about some remarkable changes of attitude within their union, NALGO, at both local and national levels.

The typists came out on strike on 6 July over a regrading claim, which was lodged last October. It is NALGO policy that typists should negotiate their claims locally, although Liverpool city council will not recognise this.

The council made one offer to the typists early on in the dispute which was a maximum of two increments—a few quid—for a tiny number of the women involved. NALGO and the local authority employers, both at a national level, recommended arbitration, which the Liverpool branch reluctantly accepted. But the city council refused to co-operate. Sir Trevor Jones, the Liberal leader of the council, described the typists' claim as 'outrageous'—the average weekly take-home pay is just £48.

After 11 weeks of strike action the outcome looked grim for the typists. Many were demoralised by the lack of real support from NALGO members locally and NALGO's national committees. They were getting £20 a week strike pay, and all of them, especially the sole wage-earners in a family, were feeling the pinch. The city council seemed prepared to sit out the strike until, demoralised and weakened, the typists drifted back to work. But then, things began to change.

Two NALGO members at the city council were suspended for refusing to scab on the typists' strike. This came just a few days



Picture: Laurie Spangher/Photovision

before the third request for real support—escalation—put to a special meeting of the NALGO branch. Most of the typists felt that if the request was turned down, the strike would be over.

At that meeting every speaker emphasised that the issue was not just more money for the typists, but that, following the suspensions, it was about the right to belong to a trade union and to act as a trade union member. Many speakers warned about the implications of refusing to unite around the typists for future fights—against redundancies, against the four per cent wage limit for the public sector. If the branch was not united around the typists, they said, then the union would be smashed and that was exactly what the city council wanted.

The meeting voted to escalate the typists' action by other NALGO members refusing to collect rents, rates, service charges and fines. Taking action on behalf of another group of workers—even those of the same union—is almost unprecedented in NALGO. The most elementary concept in trade union consciousness, solidarity, showed itself at that meeting.

Local authority workers are suffering the most brutal attacks of this government. Until now, among the white collar workers the resistance has been minimal. With the decision over the typists, that may now

begin to change.

In accordance with NALGO rules a ballot of members involved in supportive action had to take place. That ballot gave a clear majority in favour.

The second major victory in the course of the dispute was over the typists' strike pay. Representatives from the Liverpool branch went to NALGO's national emergency committee to ask for an increase in strike pay to 55 per cent of the typists gross wages. The emergency committee turned them down over and over again, on the grounds that it would encourage typists in other local authorities to strike for more money, that the union could not afford it, that members should not be paid to strike.

But on 1 October NALGO's emergency committee reversed its previous decisions and agreed to increase the strike pay as the typists requested. The meeting was lobbied by more than 50 typists from Liverpool and by NALGO members from five London councils. Three of the typists argued for more than two hours in the committee, and won.

NALGO, at a national level, supported

the strike from the beginning by making the action official. But for 13 weeks the union refused to give the typists what they needed in order to win: money. Why did the national executive members on the emergency committee change their minds?

When the strike started, no-one envisaged such a long, bitter struggle. Few people thought that the typists would be so determined, least of all the NALGO officials and executive members. But the real significance of the struggle is that it has grown from a regrading claim for a small group of workers to a fight over trade union principles, primarily solidarity amongst workers.

The NALGO bureaucracy has suffered a severe jolt. The fact that a group of low paid, badly organised women workers are now showing the rest of the union that it is possible to fight, that they have won secondary action within their branch, that they have defied the six-picket law, and that they have taken on both their employers and the backward elements in their union, has forced NALGO nationally to give the typists more than just verbal support.

Mollie Simpson

I know about regard these as central). But all these have to be fought *within* the trade union movement. There is no way of getting round this, appealing to a higher authority (such as a left Labour government), or whispering in the boss's ear that he could do a better deal with you instead.

To see the answer to *any* workers' problems in a redistribution of incomes within the working class, rather than a redistribution from profits to wages, is to abandon socialism and accept the Tory argument that 'greedy, overpaid' workers are at fault.

No incomes policy can succeed in transferring wage increases refused by one employer to the low-paid workers of another. Ford are not going to make over the money they refuse at Dagenham to East End clothing sweatshop workers. When high wages are at a standstill, all wages are at a standstill.

The hard fact of life under capitalism is that nothing is won unless it is fought for, however just or reasonable the cause. The Wilson government's incomes policy of the 1960s did not raise the wages of the low paid but the 1969-70 wave of strikes by dustmen, teachers and lower-paid car workers broke the policy and raised wages.

Often the fight is led by relatively high-paid workers being organised is how they got to be high-paid, after all. But the miners' victory in 1972, for example, was followed by successful strike action by hospital nurses and ancillaries, who were never organised or militant before.

Fiddling around with taxation policy—even if it begins only by reversing Tory fiddles that benefit the managerial sector—very soon becomes a matter of transferring resources from one set of workers to another, and one proposal of Anna Coote's (abolishing the married man's tax allowance, raising child benefit by £3 and still saving enough to raise tax thresholds generally) seems to me to be transferring resources away from one set of women (the non-employed, who *do* depend on their husbands' incomes) to another!

It is perfectly possible to say that we want *both* a family wage and economic independence for women, because women's needs vary, especially at a time when many find it impossible to get work. Our logic is *not* the logic of employers or governments—we want a bigger slice, to have our cake and eat it too, because, as someone said, what we really want is the whole bloody bakery!

No Marxist ever suggested that wages militancy alone would overthrow capitalism, but it is the starting point of all real struggle. If you can tell 400 Liverpool typists, on strike for higher wages (challenging the grading system, the union leadership, and the sexist local press) that wages militancy is a patriarchal institution, it's beginning to look as though you are on the opposite side of the fence from your working class sisters.

Norah Carlin

Robbing Peta to pay Pauline

Times are hard for women, both as workers and in the family. Unemployment soars, the wages gap grows, social services are cut and Tory taxation policy penalises families with children. At such a time, what are socialist feminists discussing? Strikes, occupations, price riots? Hardly. For many of them, the answer now seems to lie in a new Labour programme for a 'feminist incomes policy', 'socialist family strategy', or 'alternative social strategy'.

The 'feminist incomes policy' version has now been advocated for over two years by Beatrix Campbell and others in *Red Rag*. It involves a wholesale attack on 'patriarchal pay bargaining', in which male trade unionists are accused of having used the concept of the family wage to increase their privileges at the expense of women. Wages militancy is sneeringly denounced as giving socialism a bad name, and free collective bargaining is blamed for the increase in male/female wage differentials since 1978 even when figures are given to show that the effect largely came from government intervention in the form of Clegg. (*Red Rag*, August 1980)

The conclusion of this argument is that a redistribution of incomes between men and women workers and within families is necessary, and that this can only be achieved at the national political level.

Anna Coote in the *New Statesman* has been milder, but has tended unmistakably in the same direction. Explaining the devastating effects of Tory taxation policy on family incomes, she suggests a socialist family policy for Labour which includes a redistribution of incomes between men and women 'within the share of total income which accrues to working people'.

(*New Statesman*, 20 March 1981) Michele Barrett, discussing the need for Labour strategy to take women's needs into account in *New Socialist* (No 1) does not explicitly advocate incomes policy but clearly thinks there is little to be gained by struggles in the workplace.

This headlong rush into Labour reformism by a significant section of feminists is partly the product of pessimism, which is hardly surprising at this time of 'downturn' in workplace militancy. But is there more to it than that? Alongside the first 'feminist incomes policy' article in *Red Rag* was another by a feminist who had worked in a factory with other women, bemoaning the fact that they were not much interested in having their consciousness raised. She concluded:

'Maybe the WLM as it is can only hope to be a servicing organisation for working class women, agitating for facilities which will benefit them but without their active participation.' (Reprinted in *No Turning Back*, Feminist Anthology Collective, 1981.)

A movement without workers that does things *for* workers has moved very far from both socialism and the initial militancy of the feminist movement in Britain, which after all began with the Ford machinists' strike.

We should be quite clear that these women are absolutely right to attack the sexist bias of the trade union movement. It is true that skilled male workers dominate most unions, that the pursuit of traditional pay differentials penalises women, that flat rate increases and union democracy are important demands (all the Rank and File organisations

THE CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE

PETE DOODWIN'S POLITICAL

MARX'S THE CIVIL WAR IN FRANCE

There is still a widespread view that Karl Marx developed his theories by solitary reflection on the dusty volumes in the British Museum library. Nothing could be further from the truth. And there is no better proof of it than his little book *The Civil War in France*.

From 1864 onwards Marx was a leading and active member of the International Working Men's Association, a loose collection of socialists and trade unionists based in London but with supporters throughout Europe. When France went to war with the German kingdom of Prussia, in July 1870, Marx immediately dropped whatever else he was doing to rush out a manifesto on the war for the General Council of the Association. It was written, agreed upon and issued as leaflets in English, French and German within a few days of the declaration of war.

The manifesto made two basic points. First of all it stressed the need for international unity of the working class. Marx reported with particular joy the messages of solidarity exchanged between groups of workers in France and Germany.

'The very fact that while official France and official Germany are rushing into a fratricidal feud, the workmen of France and Germany send each other messages of peace and goodwill; this great fact, unparalleled in the history of the past, opens the vista of a brighter future. It proves that in contrast to old society, with its economical miseries and its political delirium, a new society is springing up, whose international rule will be peace, because its national ruler will be everywhere the same—Labour!

But the manifesto also took sides on the war.

The France which went to war in July 1870 was ruled by a shabby tyrant called Louis Bonaparte. Nephew of Napoleon, he had seized power in a coup d'état nineteen years before, proclaimed himself Emperor Napoleon III, calling his repressive and corrupt regime the Second Empire. To maintain his rule Louis Bonaparte engaged in periodic foreign adventures and his war on Germany was the last and biggest of these.

Marx therefore described the war on the German side as a 'war of defence' and predicted that whatever its outcome it would bring the fall of Louis Bonaparte.

But, unlike many subsequent socialists who have tactically taken sides in a war, Marx carefully spelt out his qualifications. He pilloried the Prussian regime, and warned:

'If the German working class allow the present war to lose its strictly defensive character and to degenerate into a war against the French people, victory or defeat will prove disastrous.'

By September Marx's predictions had come about, and so had his fears.

Louis Bonaparte's armies had been defeated and with them his Second Empire had fallen. A republic was declared in France. But the German working class had not prevented the war of defence being transformed by the Prussian regime into a war of conquest which now demanded the annexation of Alsace and Lorraine.

With this turn in events Marx rushed out a second manifesto for the General Council of the International Working Men's Association.

Marx's savaging of the Prussian regime's new war aims in this second manifesto is still well worth reading, because the Prussian

arguments he systematically demolishes are just the same arguments used by countless other governments in the hundred years since to justify their 'territorial claims.' But it was the other aspect of this second manifesto, what it said about the new French republic, that was to prove more important as events unfolded.

Marx welcomed the formation of the republic, and he felt that French workers now had no alternative but to 'perform their duties as citizens' in defending the French people against a Prussian war of conquest. But he pointed out that the republic had been formed 'not as a social conquest but as a measure of national defence' and that at its head were notorious conservative politicians, led by Louis-Adolphe Thiers, who feared and hated the working class. So French workers must not be fooled by glib phrases looking back to past French republics.

'They have not to recapitulate the past, but build up the future. Let them calmly and resolutely improve the opportunities for republican liberty, for the work of their own class organisation. It will give them with fresh Herculean powers for the regeneration of France, and our common task—the emancipation of labour. Upon their energies and wisdom hinges the fate of the republic.'

It was a sober warning and wise counsel, confirmed by events only six months later. But no-one, not even Marx, can have imagined then, in September 1870, just how earth shaking those events would be.

For four months after September the French republic's 'Government of National Defence' continued a half hearted war against the Prussians. The Prussians besieged Paris, the largest, most working class

and most radical city in France. And increasingly the defence of Paris came to be in the hands of the National Guard, which largely consisted of armed workers. When the conservative politicians who headed the republic surrendered to the Prussians at the end of January 1871, it was not simply because of military exhaustion, it was also because they preferred the Prussians to radical Parisian workers with guns in their hands.

So one of the first priorities of the Thiers government was to disarm Paris. Early in the morning of 18 March they sent a column of troops into Paris to seize the national Guard artillery. It was a peculiarly provocative move because the guns they were trying to seize had been paid for by subscriptions from the guards and were legally their own property.

But the plan miscarried. Working class Paris rushed to defend the guns, fraternised with the troops, most of whom refused to obey orders. Those that remained under control of their officers beat a hasty retreat.

Later on that morning the Central Committee of the National Guard took power in Paris. 'The proletarians of Paris' went their proclamation, 'amidst the failures and treasons of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs.'

The Paris Commune had been born. It lasted for two months, until Thiers' troops crushed it with a ferocity that left 30,000 dead.

Immediately the Commune was formed, Marx set to work to write a third, much longer manifesto on it. It was completed just two days after the last Communards were shot down in the cemetery of Père Lachaise, and issued under the title *Address of the General Council of the International Workingmen's Association on the Civil War in France*.

It is a passionate defence of the Parisian workers against the slanders and bloodlust of bourgeois Europe. Marx pillories the 'defenders of civilisation' who drowned the Commune in blood. He supports absolutely the violence the Commune used to defend itself. But amidst this he spells out what it was the Commune had achieved.

It is this that turns a brilliant and moving polemic into one of the basic classics of Marxism.

Marx had already recognised that, 'the state power assumes more and more the character of the national power of capital over labour, of a public force organised for social enslavement, of an engine of class despotism.' So, 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes.'

So how was it to take power? This Marx discovered from the Commune.

'The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors chosen by universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms. The majority of its members were naturally working men, or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was to be a working, not

a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time. The police was at once stripped of its political attributes and turned into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration. From the members of the Commune downwards, the public service had to be done at *workmen's wages*. The vested interests and representation allowances of the high dignitaries of state disappeared along with the high dignitaries themselves.'

This breaking down of hierarchy and assertion of self activity extended into all fields. 'Like the rest of public servants, magistrates and judges were to be elective, responsible, and revocable.' And the first decree of the Commune had been 'the suppression of the standing army, and the substitution for it of the armed people.'

This was the mass democracy that the Commune substituted for 'deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in parliament.'

Such a massive revolution in political institutions was quite unprecedented and was inevitably subject to many different interpretations. But for Marx

'Its true secret was this, it was essentially a working class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class, the political form at last discovered under which to work out the economic emancipation of labour.'

'Except on this last condition, the Communal constitution would have been an impossibility and a delusion. The political rule of the producer cannot persist with the perpetuation of his social slavery. The Commune was therefore to

serve as a lever for uprooting the economic foundations upon which rests the existence of classes, and therefore of class rule.'

Of course, in two months and with a rather confused political leadership, the Parisian workers only *began* this task of using their political power for their economic emancipation.

'The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence, its special measures could but betoken the tendency of a government of the people by the people.'

But they were impressive enough and are recorded by Marx with evident joy at the common sense creativity of workers for the first time controlling their own destiny. That is what makes *The Civil War in France* such exciting reading.

'Workingmen's Paris, with its Commune, will be forever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators' history has already been nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them.'

That is how *The Civil War in France* concludes.

They were defiant words written just two days after the Commune had been crushed. But what Marx learned from the Commune makes them far more than defiance. Forty six years later Lenin was eagerly re-reading the book as an essential prelude to the Russian workers seizing power. A hundred and ten years later it is just as vital reading for us. *Marx's 'The Civil War in France' can be obtained for 40p (plus 24p post) from Bookmarks, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London N4.*

WOMEN'S VOICE

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INSIDE: How we fight for the right to work
... and running, the bomb, visiting workplaces
... and more

The worm that was turned

The SDP is indeed fortunate in its ability to attract persons of vision and integrity. It now numbers in its ranks not only Michael O'Halloran but one Roger Rosewell.

Rosewell, who describes himself as an 'industrial relations consultant', was recently elected as an SDP district councillor for Aston, Bampton and Standlake in West Oxford. But his wisdom is not being confined to his rustic constituents. On September 25th he addressed a conference, organised by the right-wing Aims group, on 'Managers and Marxism', about the role of extremists in industry.

'I have seen extremists at work from the inside and they are worse than anyone else', he told the *New Standard* (23.9.81)

Some of the older extremists who read *Socialist Review* may remember Rosewell, for he was at one time the industrial organiser of the International Socialists (the predecessor organisation of the SWP).

However, people should not worry too much that Rosewell will betray the innermost secrets of the party to the class enemy. For it is clear that Rosewell is suffering from a severe attack of amnesia.

When asked how long he had been an IS member, Rosewell told *Labour Weekly* (14.4.81):

'I can't really remember. It's difficult to be sure because it only really started in 1968, so I would say about five years.'

In fact Rosewell was a member for eleven years, from 1963 to 1974. Throughout that period he wrote regularly for the publications of the organisation, and for a good part of it he served on various leading committees. As for the claim that IS began in 1968, Rosewell wrote, in 1973, a pamphlet called *The Struggle for Workers Power*, in which he gave a perfectly accurate account

of the founding of the organisation in 1950. It is tragic that a decade of activity and writing can be so blotted out of a man's mind.

If Rosewell intends to carry on with his career as a lecturer on the role of Marxists in the unions, he may find some of his own early writings useful. He might well benefit from a rereading of the pamphlet *On Industrial Work* which he wrote in 1969 under the bizarre pseudonym of R Warszawski.

In this he discussed the necessity of building revolutionary fractions and rank and file groups in the trade unions. He also stressed (page 6) the necessity for IS members to be open and clear about their political ideas in dealing with any contacts they make.

He might follow this with a reading of his article 'The Seamen's Struggle' (*International Socialism* 54 & 55, 1973). Here he showed clearly that the right-wing grip in the NUS was based on the passivity and inactivity of the rank and file, and that the Broad Left in the union failed to win leadership because:

'Instead of leading a fight against the policies of the right wing and attempting to mobilise the rank and file behind them, they remained silent, hardly ever producing any propaganda and accepting productivity deals. Instead of fighting for more union democracy and exposing the methods of the right wing they accepted full-time appointments.'

Rosewell would clearly be most helpful to his new friends if he told them the truth he once clearly understood, that revolutionary activity in the unions is about political honesty and mass involvement, rather than regaling them with stories of conspiracy.

Rosewell might also tell the assembled managers something of his first hand experi-



Roger Rosewell

ence of 'infiltrating' the trade union movement. In 1974 Rosewell, still being paid as an IS full-timer, applied for a position as an appointed official of the National Union of Journalists, without consulting his comrades in IS, and told the interviewing panel he had left IS. Since IS policy had always been opposed to the appointment of union officials, the IS National Committee suspended him for two months. Shortly afterwards he slipped out of the organisation.

This account (which can be documented) is somewhat at variance with Rosewell's statement to the *New Standard* (23.9.81) that:

'I quit the SWP 10 years ago when I realised that, come the revolution it would not just be bloated plutocrats who were put up against the wall—there would be lots of other people as well.'

After leaving IS Rosewell retired to academic seclusion to write a history of the Electricians Union. Somewhere along the line he seems to have been struck by the fact that if so many ex-Stalinists could get to the top of the EETPU, then maybe there was a future for an ex-Trotskyist. In the SDP Rosewell has indeed found the colleagues he deserves.

Ian Birchall

LETTERS

From the editor

This is the twentieth issue of *Socialist Review* produced by the present editorial team. We like to think we haven't done a bad job of it. SWP members in particular seem to like the *Review* and sales have risen about 20 per cent in 18 months.

However, we feel that there remains one weakness in the *Review*. We have done very well in analysing the news and, in recent months, developing the Industrial Discussion section. We have not been nearly as successful in dealing with ideas, particularly with Marxist ideas. Yet this is especially important at a time when the low level of working class struggle is leading all sorts of people to move away from these.

So we are starting in this issue three new occasional series—'Books Are Weapons', 'What's in a

Word' and 'Inside View'. The first attempts to explain the significance of and the background to Marxist classics. Those relatively new to socialism often do not come across such works, and when they do are often put off by some of the historical detail they contain (How many people, for instance, know what the 18th Brumaire was?)

The second series attempts a similar job with some of the words which are used in political circles, much to the bewilderment of new comers. We start with 'lumpenproletariat', but for the future hope to deal with other words such as 'Keynesianism' and 'dialectics'.

'Inside View' aims to present the experiences of people who have worked inside some of the institutions of capitalist society. We start with the Navy—but the series could

just as easily deal with the police, the BBC, a sex shop or a mental hospital.

One final point. The limited success we have enjoyed so far would not have been possible without the many unsolicited articles we get sent from readers. Some of the best things we have printed—like the article on Lothian in the last issue or on the Lumpenproletariat in this—have simply turned up, unexpected, in the post. The new series will not

Gay omissions

I was interested to read John Lindsay's article on the gay movement today (SR 1981: 7) but was surprised to find several major omissions in his analysis.

Firstly, it is quite remarkable that he fails to mention the differences in the movement between lesbians and gay men. These differences have of course been there as long as the gay movement itself, but they have become increasingly pronounced

work unless our readers write.

Send articles for possible inclusion to *Socialist Review* Editorial, PO Box 82, London E2. The deadline for any issue is the third Thursday of the month before. Please type articles if you can (although we realise this is not always possible), *treble* spaced—and try to keep a copy for yourself, since occasionally items get lost in the post.

Chris Harman

over the years. Many lesbians now find it as difficult to work with gay men as they do with straight men and have opted for separatist solutions. As a gay man, I find this sad but understandable. In the short term, the most that we can probably hope for is co-operation on single issue campaigns with structures which are acceptable to the lesbians.

Secondly, I felt that John's analy-

sis of the gay male scene as 'gay capitalism' was inadequate not because the scene is not capitalist but because it contains a number of other important features. The very fact that the scene exists at all means that a large number of young gay men are able to work out their identities and to establish friendships in situations which are exclusively gay. We are being exploited in the pubs and clubs but the very fact that the scene exists, along with the gay switchboards and self-help groups which John mentioned, is helping to bring a new gay male community into existence. There have been gay networks in Britain for the last century, but this new gay community is open and self-confident in a way that they never were and never could be.

An example of this self-confidence can be seen in the gay community in Huddersfield. The gay movement, as such had made very little impact there but there was (and still is) a large club the Gemini, which was patronised by gay men from all over Yorkshire and much of the North of England. When the club was raided by the police and the owners and customers harrassed not only there, but also at work, the response was clear and strong. Gemini's was not just a capitalist institution, it was a focus for the gay community and they defended it.

John is wrong to give the impression that the gay people who frequent the gay scene are merely dupes and pawns of capitalism. The gay scene enables them to develop their identity on something approaching their own terms. They value that identity enough to defend it.

That degree of collective consciousness is an important feature of any political movement.

Thirdly, there is the question of gay politics at the workplace. John quite rightly talks about the advances made by unions such as CPSA, NALGO and NUT, but he omits to mention that the fact that there are well-organised gay groups working within each of these unions.

The support of rank and file groups has been invaluable in all these unions, and several others, in the campaign for gay rights but the initiatives have always come from the gay groups.

Gay and lesbian trade unionists have met together, shared experiences, drawn up their demands and led the campaigns themselves. Without this important element of self-organisation there would be no gay rights policies or campaigns in any unions at all.

It seems that where some degree of self-organisation is taking place — whether it is by lesbian separatists, or by the gay male scene or by trade union gay groups — John has not mentioned it. His article would have been much more valuable had he analysed the gay-lesbian movements as they are, not, as he thinks they ought to be.

Bob Cant

North London

The drama of history

Don Taylor is a freelance drama director, currently working for the BBC, who has written at least ten television plays and nine stage plays, including several about the English Civil War; for example: *A Last Visitor for Mr Hugh Peter* about Cromwell's chaplain, *Paradise Restored* about Milton, and *The Agreement of the People*, on the Levellers. Don Nugent interviewed him regarding his special interest and attitudes towards television.

Don Taylor began by explaining why he sees history as so important.

'It's important to understand all the things that have made the world what it is now. With one exception, all my historical stuff has been about the English Revolution. It was the first modern revolution, it happened in England, and it seems to me that the guidelines of political thought since were laid down at that time.

'What the Levellers then wanted was basically a liberal democracy, which for that time was immensely radical and far seeing, a society in the sixteenth century in which everybody voted, in which women played a part, because the women were very important in the Leveller movement, that wanted to give religious toleration to Jews and atheists, and even in some extremes, to Catholics. This happened in England, and it's not known by the English people as a whole, and it's part of a playwright's job, I think, to make our heritage known.

'The Revolution created the essential groundwork for bourgeois capitalism to survive. But in terms of the men themselves, they were the losers and were never mentioned, until this century. The nineteenth century saw history in terms of great men and they wrote about Cromwell and his motives. In the 30s and since, we've discovered that

Cromwell did this and that because he had 30,000 men pushing him to it, that there was an enormous grass roots movement among the English soldiers.

'At one stage it became a revolution from below, it became a revolution in which the ordinary guy stood up and said I want to be listened to. They only lasted for about two years because the ruling classes said you're bloody not going to be listened to. If you make a fuss about it we'll shoot you. The grass roots movement was totally destroyed. The soldiers, the mass of ordinary people, got absolutely nothing.

'You've got to try to create the reality of how people actually live'

It annoys me when some simplifying Marxists say that the Levellers were ahead of their time, and there was no way they could possibly have succeeded because the objective conditions of history weren't right. Well, I don't think that strict determinism applies. I can envisage a situation in which there could have been a kind of success if certain things had happened differently.

We are, I think, in a pre-revolutionary phase in this country, and by looking at this period we can learn something about our own society, and, despite the economic and political differences, people reacting to revolutionary conditions, the turmoil which occurs in those times. To present this is part of what a playwright ought to do.'

Don was then asked if he was trying to put over a coherent viewpoint of his own, or just to raise questions.

'I think a particular political concern always comes over, but I don't think playwriting is a good medium for convincing people about partisan points of view. If you put over a very strongly propagandist viewpoint through a character, I don't think you'll convince anybody to change their view. I think what you've got to do is try to create the reality of how people actually live. Opinions will emerge from that inevitably, but if you start saying 'this is what I want to put over', you lose, because you won't get that sense of reality and the audience won't accept the game, they'll be resentful and detached.

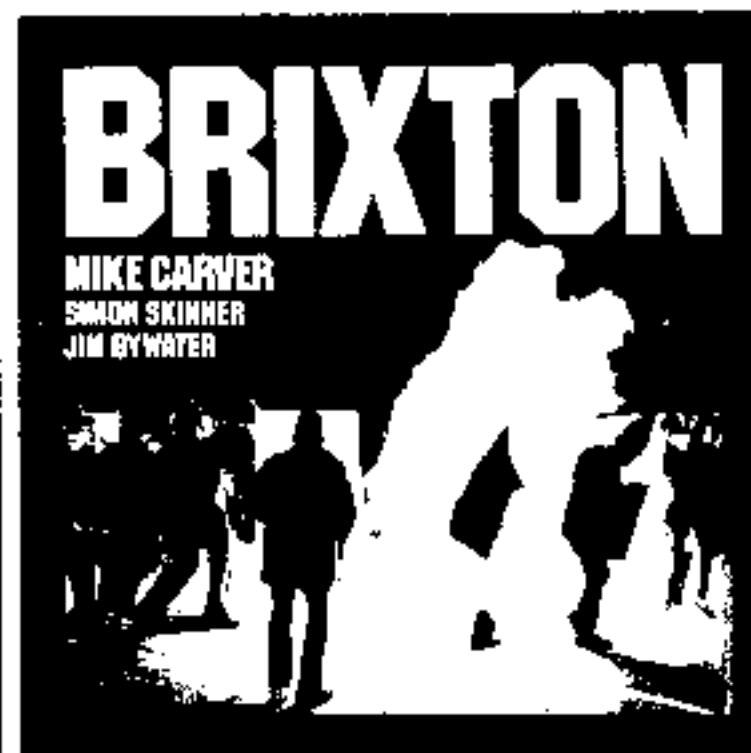
What worked very well was *Law and Order*. Its political position was very clear but it was a complex and many-sided work, it didn't simplify. It convinced you that it was true.

'I'm aiming for everybody, from the most highly educated to the least educated, from the most interested to the least interested. But I'm not a fool, I know that's not achieved.

'The English cultural scene is built on the apartheid of highbrow and lowbrow, that there's one kind of work suitable for the working class, and there's one kind for the intelligent middle class. It's a heresy that's through the left as well, for example, the idea that subsidies should be withdrawn from opera and given to rock concerts.

'Television assumes that the mass of the people want time-consuming, mind-destroying rubbish, and that's what's provided for them, and they're encouraged to want that. True art, from whatever period, and I part company with some Marxist critics here, is a libe-

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rating and mind-expanding business.

'Haydn, for example, was a lackey of the *ancien regime* at its worst. He was a paid servant of a Hungarian prince who kept thousands of people in servitude, but the music that Haydn produced has nothing to do with that. The art is liberating and belongs to all of us. I think certain works of art are major because they transcend the limitations of their time, they have something in them beyond class and social organisation. That's why we can still relate to the Greek plays; there's a level of experience beyond class definition alone.'

Don turned to television as a medium and commented on its limitations.

'I entered television with a burning idealism twenty years ago about what it could do, which I haven't wholly lost, but I'm dismayed at what's happened to it because of the commercialisation and the fact that it's become a toy in the hands of people who have a contemptuous attitude to the mass of the viewing audience. In the early 60s, we really thought of it as the great liberator, here is the one medium that actually does reach everybody, and now it is the one medium that nobody takes seriously.'

'I suppose I've done more non-naturalistic television than almost anybody. I think it liberates the word. I'm very much against the dominance of film, it says a lot less than it pretends to. I'm still devoted to the written word. I think you can say more in a shorter time. What we want is someone to speak to us about the world, to try hard to understand things. And for that you need a sophisticated language that can express concepts and shades of meaning.'

Don was then asked how far he thought television, through its organisation, general content, and effect on our views, neutralises dissenting voices and controversy, so that rather than using TV, such voices are used by it.

'There's a lot of that. All I can say is that television would be a lot worse off without us. The thing that keeps me going is that every time I do something good, I get letters from members of the public, very often isolated people at odds with society, who say 'Thank God

somebody thinks like me', and who are delighted, when in the middle of all the *pap*, something by eight or ten directors who supply their kind of thing comes through.

'My position within the BBC' is precarious. I still don't know when I'll get another play on. Maybe

never. This is all to do with personal relationships and finding people who are prepared to work with you. I've got a good list of credits over the last twenty years, but every one of those years has been a battle. Playwrights and directors have no power.'

BOOKS

Pale shades of Lucas

Popular Planning for Social Need
A Declaration sponsored by Coventry, Liverpool, Newcastle, N Tyneside and Burnley trades councils and by Dunlop, Metal Box, Scotch Whisky and Lucas Aerospace combine committees.

In this *Review* we have often been critical of the Lucas Plan for alternative production. But at least it was linked to strong, rank and file organisation and needed to be defended against the hostility both of the employer and union leaderships. The same cannot be said about this most recent planning venture.

Popular Planning for Social Need brings out and magnifies all the weaknesses of Alternative Plans. Despite sharp criticisms of the last Labour government, it avoids the problem of whether *any* Labour government, however well-intentioned, can avoid having to operate on terms dictated by capital.

Despite criticising the TUC Alternative Economic Strategy for conceding too much to capitalist notions of competitive success, it avoids the problem of whether any plans this side of socialism will not make concessions to capitalist economic priorities.

Despite the assertion that the plan will only be meaningful if based on workplace campaigning rather than waiting for the next Labour government, it gives detailed attention only to the legislation

to be passed by a future Labour administration.

The document is full of slippery terms ('popular' is the most obvious one) and bears all the hallmarks of using ambiguous language in order to avoid offence. For example, the section that asserts the need to put social requirements first and to avoid national narrowness contains this sentence: 'We reject the idea of putting up trade controls only on the basis of national needs — especially when they serve to protect the profits of private companies.' That allows support from those totally opposed to import controls — but doesn't disallow support from those who support them.

No doubt, the document will get enormous support, especially from those on the non-revolutionary left whose natural home is left reformism but who dislike the narrow nationalism and parliamentary orientation of Bennism (and, incidentally, the CP). Its analysis is not positively wrong (in the way the AFS glaringly is) and it promises activity in the here and now, at grass-roots level.

But it is an enormously misleading diversion. A thousand plans may bloom on a thousand subcommittees—but they will not take us one whit nearer to how we build an organisation capable of winning even the most minimum concessions (over wages and conditions) from the employers or the state. Working on plans will consume an incredible amount of energy for lit-

tle result: genuine militants who want to have a go will be wasting time alongside those who would rather talk anyway.

For the real problem with alternative planning (quite apart from any errors of analysis) is that it gives a quite false estimate of *real* support. Even the best of such plans, like the Lucas plan, show that for all the support gained from national and international trade union bodies it is possible to give support without any commitment to action, either because the commitment is not there or because it is not possible to translate commitment into action. The 2.7 million strong West German metal workers' union offered solidarity when Mike Cooley was victimised — but that offer did not materialise *despite* support for the Plan, because rank and file organisation was lacking that could bypass bureaucratic inertia.

With this latest document, which doesn't even have the merit of having come out of ongoing struggle, the problem will be even worse. It will attract support from all and sundry but will be useless and diversionary when it comes to the test. It will be hijacked and incorporated into bureaucratic negotiations, leaving rank and file organisation in a quite amorphous and passive state — a sure recipe for disaster.

We have to be critical of such initiatives despite the fact that the impetus comes from sincere and hardworking socialists, whose vision of the world is often close to ours and hostile to much of the reformist currents now dominant in the labour movement. Their analysis goes far, but not far enough, since it fails to identify what forces and what conditions are needed for alternative, socialist planning. It fudges the question of working-class self-activity; it fudges the question of what kind of socialist party is needed; it fudges the question of whether the capitalist state has to be destroyed. It will therefore only sow illusions and produce demoralisation.

Trotsky once described centrism as capable at times of going a long way in its analysis but as incapable of grasping the means which could cut through the obstacles preventing socialist transformation. It was, he wrote, 'a knife without a blade.' Much the same could be said of this sort of Alternative Planning.

Gareth Jenkins.

Copies of the Declaration are available from Colin Lindsay (Coventry Trades Council), 31 Stepney Road, Coventry, Warwick, or from Jim Fleming (Lucas Aerospace Combine), 28 Llanismore Street, Burnley, Lancs. Price 20p per copy, cheques/postal orders payable to: Joint Trades Councils (Declaration).

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The Cheka, Lenin's Political Police
G Legget
OUP £22

With a resurgence in the Cold War, the academic apologists for Western imperialism are once again crawling from the cover they adopted in the late sixties and seventies. Like those they denounce in the Eastern block these apologists push their line in the guise of historical 'objectivity' and constantly praise each others' impeccable scholarship.

Edward Crankshaw, Trevor Roper, Michael Glenny, Leonard Shapiro, all have made for themselves a good living as 'experts' on the Russian scene, while a genuine Marxist historian like Isaac Deutscher who could write rings around them all found himself blacklisted from academic jobs. But as time passes, however, even the most abject apologists must succumb to the ageing process. And so they are constantly on the look out for new recruits. They've turned up a beauty in George Legget—hence the adulation heaped on this volume in the quality press over the past couple of months.

On the face of it Legget's book is an impressive piece of historical research, containing as it does a wealth of factual information on the formation of the first Soviet political police force, the Cheka and its relationships with the other instruments of Soviet power in the initial period of the revolution. It is as massive a volume of historical research as they would have us read, and if Mr Legget has slipped in a few of his own personal opinions here and there, well that couldn't really harm such meticulous research ... or could it?

It depends of course on the nature of the opinions and prejudices being slipped in. Legget is a straightforward unreconstructed apologist for the White forces and his use of sources is to say the least dubious.

On page 53, for instance, he quotes as an example of revolutionary terror, an incident in the Don country where Soviet forces allegedly threw White prisoners into the blast furnaces of a local factory. He quotes as his source for this incident the 'Denikin Commission Report on Events at Evpatoria'. An 'objective' historian would perhaps make mention of the fact that Denikin was at the time of the writing of this report engaged in a pitiless war against the Soviets. Coming so soon after all the horror propaganda stories of the First World War—with plucky little Belgium being 'raped by the Germans'—and the subsequent horror stories aimed at isolating the Bolshevik government, it really is a bit much to quote such sources as gospel truth.

On Page 55 we are then told that in setting up the Cheka, Lenin 'summoned the cruel atavistic terror of

the Russias, harnessing it to his purpose'. The book is laced with such statements—there are references to 'elemental discharges of hatred and vengeance by the dark multitudes'; we are told of Lenin's 'cold political cruelty,' of his 'idiosyncratic Marxism'.

Even poor old Victor Serge is pulled out of Legget's quotation hat to prove that 'the formation of the Cheka was one of the gravest and most impermissible errors that the Bolsheviks committed'. But wait a minute—wasn't it Serge who wrote that wonderful novel *Conquered City*, where the main characters are Chekists? Aren't these main characters shown to be so precisely human, to be full of the failings and feelings of the human race?

To be sure there were brutes in the Cheka and there were honest revolutionaries who became brutalised by the tasks they had to perform. But the brutes in Lenin's Cheka were the exceptions. To make the comparison between the Chekists and the Czarist Okhrana and to find the Cheka wanting in comparison is the most disgusting sleight of hand.

Those killed, we are told, by the Okhrana were in the main 'revolutionaries for specific acts of revolt or subversion against the state'. The Cheka, on the other hand executed 'innocent hostages and class enemies'. There we have the nub of Legget's argument—the Czarist state was legitimate, the Cheka was the terror organisation of a political party.

That some innocent hostages were executed is a fact which we could not deny, but given the circumstances of prolonged civil war, of starvation in the cities, it is a tribute to the Bolsheviks that more weren't. Legget quotes figures of 140,000 killed during the period 1918-21, that is during the time of the 21 armies of intervention, of the massacres of red prisoners, of the disemboweling of commissars by the White peasants, of anti-Jewish pogroms in the Ukraine which alone killed 150,000 people. If correct, the figure of 140,000 killed by the Cheka is horrific. But when you remember the millions murdered by Czarism in the course of the First World War or when you notice that Legget fails to compare it with any figure of those executed by the White forces, then it does acquire a sort of perspective. Of course, the Cheka were not British country coppers on bicycles. During a period of extreme revolutionary upheaval it was necessary to create a hard and ruthless para-military force capable of defending the revolution behind the lines.

After their first period of post-revolutionary naivety, the Bolsheviks were driven by the very actions of their enemies to adopt a programme of systematic terror against



Felix Dzerzhinsky: head of the Cheka

them. What Legget does not even mention is the fact that after the successful uprising of October all sorts of officers, functionaries etc were allowed their freedom on their promise that they would not take up arms against the Soviet State. It was only when they reneged on their promises and led armies against the revolution that the Cheka was established.

But Legget does succeed in showing, despite himself, that the Cheka did not come ready formed from Lenin's brain. It was set up in a very piece-meal fashion in response to counter-revolutionary activity, first by the Whites and then by the semi-anarchist Left Social Revolutionary Party. What the Cheka became later as a tool of the Stalinist state bears no more relation to the organisation set up by the successful workers government than does the government of Brezhnev to that of Lenin and Trotsky.

When Legget asks his final question: 'was the Cheka necessary?' he answers it by saying it was inevitable as a by-product of Lenin's 'terrorist politics'. The tragedy is that the Cheka was made necessary not by Lenin's politics but by the politics of Legget's predecessors—those who would have maintained by any means the dictatorship of capital.

One final point.

In his potted biographies of leading Chekists Legget makes a point of stressing the nationality of the individuals. In the case of those of Jewish background this is mentioned along with their nationality. Now what possible reason could be given for including the religious background of some of the leading Chekists while ignoring that of the others? Surely this 'objective historian' is not using methods usually associated with anti-semitism?

Jim Scott

Socialism through the Press Council

Power without responsibility
J Curran and J Seaton
Fontana £2.95

Curran and Seaton have done an enormous amount of research and worked hard to produce a book which can be read both by students of the mass media and the more general reader. Yet the end product is disappointing.

The authors are both genuine Labour Party intellectuals, as opposed to Marxoid pigs in sheep's clothing. Indeed, James Curran is the editor of the Labour Party's new theoretical journal. They are both non-Marxist, and in the case of Curran, avowedly anti-Marxist. Yet since both teach in areas which have been dominated by Marxoid discus-

sion in the last ten years, they have a very uneasy relationship with it.

One consequence is that the book falls into a number of quite different parts. Trotsky once remarked that British labour leaders get more radical the further away an issue is from home. In the case of Labour Party theorists, they get more radical the further away events get from the present. Thus the book opens with James Curran's very radical account of the historical development of the press, cataloguing the struggles of workers against press laws, the rise of a capitalist-dominated commercial press, etc, etc. But it ends with a very tame set of entirely legislative proposals for change which including such blood-curdling proposals as:

'The (BBC) licence fee should be

replaced ... with a rolling quinquennial grant awarded by parliament. This would give the BBC more real independence and a fair and predictable outcome.'

and:

'The Press Council should be more representative of employees in the press industry and of the general public.'

and:

'The British Film Institute should become a film copyright library.'

To be fair, some of their proposals are a little more impressive than this, but they are all, without exception, within this pettifogging reformist tinkering with a system which, on their own analysis, is dominated by capitalism through and through.

All of Curran's splendid detailing of capitalist domination of the press and Seaton's very much less splendid detailing of capitalist control of the broadcasting media, are thrown out of the window in favour of what the authors think they might persuade the left of the Labour Party to do about convincing the rest of the Labour Party to do about tilting the scales a little less heavily against the working class should they ever manage to get elected. Despite their impeccable Bennite credentials, the little word 'socialism' does not appear on their agenda for the future.

In this, of course, the authors are absolutely typical of the current of political thinking to which they belong. As soon as we look behind the high-sounding phrases of the Bennites at their detailed proposals, we find that they amount to a recipe for a little more state intervention in a basically capitalist economy.

Having said that, however, the book does have considerable strengths. These are mostly in Curran's historical section on the press, a subject upon which he is an acknowledged expert. But even here his curious relationship to Marxism leads him to difficulties. As he has developed the analysis over the years, it has become much more uncompromising and much more materialist. It is, in fact, a very mechanical account of how economic forces have shaped the basic structure of one of the major forces of contemporary cultural life.

What is missing is that active conception of consciousness which distinguishes Marxism from mere mechanical materialism. Thus, while Curran is forced to concede that militant workers use newspapers for rather different purposes than do capitalist newspaper proprietors, he is not really interested in developing this perspective. For him, the evolution of the capitalist press is more interesting than the patient unravelling of the relation-

ship between militant workers and their own independent newspapers.

This, of course, ties directly back to his politics. Instead of concentrating attention on how the labour movement can develop its own

ways of organising in opposition to the capitalist press, he is much more concerned with how its leaders can scoop out a little niche for themselves within the existing set-up.

Colin Sparks

THEATRE

Putting bounce into bolshevism

It might seem bizarre, but it's a great opportunity for socialists. Two hilarious farces by the Italian revolutionary Dario Fo are now showing to packed houses in London West End. Glynnis Cousins looks at the background to them.

Can't Pay? Won't Pay?

by Dario Fo, directed by Robert Walker with Maggie Steed, Alfred Molina, Sylveste McCoy. Criterion, Piccadilly Circus.

Accidental Death of an Anarchist

by Dario Fo, with Gavin Richards. Wyndhams, Charing Cross Road.

Dario Fo and his companion, Franca Rame, have worked long and hard to promote communist cultural activity throughout Italy. If you buy Pluto Press's edition of Fo's play *We Can't Pay, We Won't Pay* and read Rame's introduction you will see how they operate. They recruit workers into the production process and where possible site their plays in and around workplaces.

One of their plays has been showing in the West End for two years, and now it has been joined by another.

Admittedly the centre of London is not the ideal location but I strongly recommend you organise a branch/workplace group outing if possible. You won't be disappointed.

Fo threads his plays with a critique of the Italian Communist Party; he aims for an audience which is essentially reformist and his polemic is sensitive and winning.

Fo inflates that farcical edge ever present in capitalist society, channels it into punch-lines and characters that hurt the belly and whams in the socialist message in ways that left propagandists can learn from. It's a technique which works better than the weary sarcasm or moral outrage frequent in socialist literature (*Socialist Worker* not excluded). In peddling the ideas, we often fall on tedious 'the rich are sinners' rhetoric and then wonder why we are confused with religious sects.

Dario Fo points to a system which is stupid, uncaring and brutal without looking lunatic or dreary. He is very witty.

Of course, it isn't funny that an Italian railworker is murdered by police interrogators who then claim that he simply fell out of a fourth floor window. It takes intelligent and committed talent to translate the experience into a respectful farce that leaves you never forgetting a murdered comrade or police violence. *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, set in 1969, was immensely successful in publicising a police cover-up on the death of Luigi Pinelli. It leaves you wishing for more plays of similar kinds on so many of the cover-ups we have witnessed in Britain (Blair Peach, Richard Campbell, The Deptford 13, etc).

Fo's other play *Can't Pay? Won't Pay?* agitates on something different. It's about the wave of 'autoriduzione' struggles initiated some six years back in Turin.

Workers refused to pay a rise in bus fares; the idea caught on very fast. Soon, gas, telephone, and electricity bills were paid at old prices. The press waged a furious campaign against what became a nationwide tactic to beat inflation.

The Communist Party didn't like it very much at all and denounced some of its own members for such 'unlawful' activity. Its criminal membership grew overnight. Some infantile militants even asked why goods had to be paid for at all. This lumpen logic led to an epidemic of proletarian expropriations which got the CPI truly frothing at the mouth.

Fo uses this context for his play. He sets the scene with two men, two women and a curious policeman, divided and fighting over the price of Daz. The *Daily Telegraph*, a right paper getting it right — accidentally — declared that the play 'makes you feel good to be alive'. It does. It puts bounce into struggle (of course the *Telegraph* did not quite understand the play's agitational dynamic), you leave feeling cheerful about the prospect of change.

Fo gives the story a socialist Waltons ending: Luigi sees the light, promises never to be duped by CP timidity again, kisses his better-sighted companion and makes up. It's not all commie schmulz however. If you can't see it, at least buy the book — but do both if you can.

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Will there be gold?

Undoubtedly the most significant film showing in London at the moment is *Man of Iron* directed by Poland's best known film maker, Andrzej Wajda, and set against the background of the occupation of the Gdansk shipyards last year. **Brian Morgan** and **Jules Sorel** gave us two different assessments of it.

Rarely has there been a closer connection between the theme of a film and the future of the film itself. Wajda's last film, *Man of Marble* was released after the defeat of the Polish workers in 1976 and was only allowed to be shown in Poland in two cities for two weeks. *Man of Iron* — which continues the story of *Man of Marble* — has been able to go on general release because of the very workers' victory it depicts.

The earlier film showed the efforts of a film student to discover the truth about the Stalinist Poland of the 1950s. Through old censored films she traces the creation of a Polish version of Stakhanov — the archetypical, norm-busting model worker. She discovers how he moved from the innocence of a country worker to national glory as a hero of labour, whose photos and statues urge on Polish workers to ever greater sacrifices and ever higher productivity, but ended up disgraced after struggling against the corruption and deceit of the regime, dying mysteriously in Gdansk. Her film equipment is confiscated and her grant cut off when she tries to find out how he died. So ends *Man of Marble*.

The 'Man of Iron' in the new film is the former Stakhanovite's son.

The film begins with him leading the occupation of one of the Gdansk shipyards in August last year.

A highly successful TV reporter, Winkel, is ordered by his superiors to prepare material for a programme showing that the son has been guilty of anti-state activities, hooliganism and currency speculation. The aim is to prepare the ground for his arrest, so as to 'prevent him becoming a martyr'.

Winkel discovers that in 1968 the son was active in the student demonstrations. He pleaded in vain with his father to call out the shipyard workers and support the students. The students' movement was smashed. In 1970 the workers rose up against price increases and in vain called on student support. The old Stakhanovite, along with hundreds of other workers, was shot down by the police and army. Authentic film from December 1970 shows the tanks, the shootings, the beatings and the arrests.

The son abandons his studies, starts work in the Gdansk shipyard and is arrested for supporting the imprisoned workers after the struggles of 1976. The film ends with the signing of the Gdansk agreement by Walesa on behalf of Solidarity and Jagielski for the state.

There are problems with the film.

Wajda described his aim in an interview in the second issue of *Solidarnosc*. Solidarity's publication:

'The occupation of the shipyards in Gdansk opened all chapters of our history, but we were not able to show the essence of that turning point; we were too close to the event and could only judge a part. We don't know what it will bring. I want to show how someone's life results in the August events in the Gdansk shipyards. There will be many works on the theme of the events in Gdansk. My ambition was to be first — so as to be first to finish the film "Man of Marble".'

By concentrating on the biography of one individual, Wajda avoids and distorts the central problem of the development of

working class movements. Great events are seen as the results of an individual's action. The relationship between leaders and rank and file becomes mystical — the mass of workers are blindly following the accidental passions of the leader.

The experience of any one involved in the struggles of the working class would show that workers possess vast heroic potentialities which would never be realised unless they can become conscious of the need to create and belong to a revolutionary group or party. Through the infinite variety of every day struggles against capital, through the most varied arguments on all subjects the working class can become conscious of their class aims and move as one.

Nothing to lose

It is not often that a socialist sees a film which really moves you with its depiction of the class struggle — especially at an art cinema like the Academy in London. *Man of Iron* is one of the few films which will do so.

It falls in the same class of genuinely popular (as opposed to arty) political films as *Z*, *State of Siege*, *Battle of Algiers*.

Like many of these other films, it is subject to criticism — because of its attempts to be popular — there are faults in characterisation, at points there is a slipping into sentimentality, big issues are over-personalised. Like them the political line is by no means perfect. But also like them, the impact on any audience will be to make them think about — real politics, class politics, in a new way, thus providing an opening for those who might go further in the argument than the film's makers.

At the core of *Man of Iron* is one of the greatest workers' struggles in history — that which reached its first climax in the victory of the Polish workers over bureaucratic state capitalism in Gdansk last year. And what comes most powerfully through the film is that it was *only* the workers who could achieve such a victory. At one point a character whose father was killed when police fired on strikers in 1970 asks why, when journalists continually crawl before authority, the workers

To really understand the class struggles in Gdansk and now nationally, its strengths and weaknesses, Wajda would have to deal with the significance of nationalist sentiments which could be progressive or reactionary depending on their aims — progressive in those sections of the working class whose struggle for an independent Poland from Russian imperialism is also a struggle to create a workers' socialist state, reactionary in those sections who support Moczulski's aims for the restoration of capitalism (KNP).

However, the film is well worth seeing — especially if you are able to get to see *Man of Marble* (which is getting some reshowings) as well.

Brian Morgan

always end up fighting back: 'It's because they have nothing to lose.'

'Yes,' he comments, 'That's what my father always said.'

The film is put together in a quite original way. There is a lot of previously banned footage of police beating up students in 1968 and shooting down workers in 1970. And many of the scenes about last year take place against the background of the actual shipyard occupations. It's rather as if Eisenstein had been able to make *October* in 1917 rather than 10 years later. I came out wishing I spoke Polish and was in Warsaw, rather than being stuck in the middle of an industrial downturn in London.

Of course there are political faults with the film. It does not touch all the questions which have emerged in Poland over the last year — the questions about whether the workers should erect their own alternative to the system or merely content themselves with trying to block its excesses. It is almost adulatory about Walesa. It does not challenge those like the Church who jumped on the Solidarity bandwagon once the regime began to crack. But all these things will be easier to talk to people about once they've seen the film. Go to see it. Try to make sure it is shown in your locality. They don't come a lot better.

Jules Sorel



OCTOBER 1934

In October 1934 the miners of Asturias in Northern Spain rose in armed insurrection. Although poorly armed and heavily outnumbered they held off the Spanish army for nearly two weeks and began to organise society on a revolutionary basis.

A new reactionary government had launched an all-out assault on the gains workers had made after the fall of the Monarchy in 1931. It was backed by the semi-fascist CEDA, now poised to join the government.

In the face of these attacks the Socialist Party underwent a sweeping radicalisation. Its traditional reformist gradualism was increasingly replaced by openly revolutionary language. In order to meet the fascist threat revolutionary groups had inspired the formation of the Workers Alliance, a united front of most workers' organisations. The Socialist leaders joined it—if only to frighten the bourgeoisie from working with CEDA. However, the Alliance had one great weakness—the absence of the giant anarcho-sindicalist union, the CNT.

Only in Asturias were the workers truly united. The harsh reality of this mining community produced a tradition of co-operation and unity rarely seen elsewhere in the peninsula. In March 1934 the socialist and anarchist unions in this region signed a revolutionary pact. The Workers Alliance was aimed to mobilise the working class against fascism but not just to defend the democratic republic, but to make the revolution: *this was the only way to defeat fascism.*

On October 4th the CEDA entered the government. The socialist leaders' bluff had been called and reluctantly they called a general strike.

In Asturias this immediately took on insurrectionary proportions. The miners had waited months for this day, and hastily formed militias quickly lay

seige to most of the provinces' 90 Civil Guard posts. The local Workers Alliance committees rapidly took over the villages. In the key mining town of Mieres the Provincial Revolutionary Committee proclaimed the founding of the socialist republic to a wildly enthusiastic crowd.

The revolutionary committees organised every aspect of local life from food and hospitals through to transport and communications. A makeshift war industry was rapidly set up, and factories were converted to turn out armoured vehicles, weapons and ammunition. In the socialist stronghold of Sama the workers even produced a benzol substitute for petrol, made from coal. The communists set up their own radio station in Trubia which kept the masses informed of the revolution's progress. Red Guards were organised: to ensure revolutionary order, looters were strictly dealt with and well known right-wingers arrested. Women were heavily involved at all levels, many joining the men in the militias.

However, it was in the military field that the workers showed most initiative and courage. The miners had few arms and relied on those captured from government forces or arms factories. Above all they suffered from a chronic shortage of ammunition and the principle weapon throughout the insurrection was to be dynamite. The adept use of the explosive brought the miners 40% of their military successes. In the mountain passes giant catapults were used to hurl the dynamite at the enemy. In the cities the dynamiters crept forward smoking cigars with which they lit the lethal sticks stuffed in their hands. Numerous miners hit by enemy fire were blown to bits.

A thousand armed men were immediately dispatched to take the provincial capital of Oviedo. Here, where the local party and union bureaucracy was more dominant, the workers were slow to rise

and it needed the arrival of the miners to spark off the struggle. Revolutionary power was soon established in the city's streets. Prostitutes joined the workers on the barricades in the often bitter hand-to-hand fighting with the 2000 odd government forces, who were quickly driven into a few isolated strongholds.

The forces sent by Madrid to deal with the rebels met stiff resistance. In the southern mountain passes several hundred miners armed mainly with dynamite held up one such force for twelve days. When their dynamite ran out they fought with rocks before being overrun.

Tragically, the Asturian Commune remained isolated. Unfortunately much of the socialist leaders' new found militancy was only hot air; they had thought they could frighten the ruling class with talk of revolution at not going further along the road to fascism.

However, such was the optimism of the Asturias that news of the failure of the movement elsewhere in Spain was dismissed as government lies. Leaders who suggested this was true were nearly shot by followers. When most of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee abandoned its post on October 11th, the workers arrested them and a new committee was established.

But inevitably, desperately short of ammunition, the 20,000 strong Red Army were gradually pushed back by the enemy forces. As with the Paris Commune of 1871, the bourgeoisie were determined to drown this outrageous assault on the sacredness of private property in a sea of blood. The government's intentions were soon clear when advancing troops used prisoners to form a human shield, and aircraft bombed food queues.

On October 18th, after protracted negotiations the revolutionaries surrendered. But many workers refused to hand over their arms, either hiding them or fleeing to the mountains to begin a guerilla struggle.

The bulk of the troops sent to crush the insurrection, under the command of General Franco, were Moorish mercenaries or Foreign Legionaires. Despite part of the surrender agreement being that these thugs would not enter the mining villages, they had soon left a trail of murder, rape and torture through the valleys. Over 2000 workers died during the revolution, nearly half as result of the systematic terror unleashed by the government. The terrible sufferings of those taken prisoner contrasted starkly with the model treatment of rightist prisoners during the insurrection.

Nevertheless, the miners' heroism was not in vain. They effectively undermined any 'legal' attempts to install a fascist regime. The October uprising inspired the whole Spanish working class. And when in July 1936 the military attempted to rise, the workers did not hesitate to pour onto the streets and take over the factories.

Andy Durgan