Central America – from repression to revolution
Bread and Terraces

Nothing is immune from the world economic crisis. Colin Sparks explores the havoc it is wreaking in the world of sport.

The Football League is in deep crisis. Hull City have called in a receiver, Halifax are up for sale, Oxford United have just been saved from bankruptcy by Robert Maxwell. Bristol City are selling players, dozens of other clubs are in deep financial trouble, and gates are likely to go under this year. The immediate cause of this crisis is obvious: fewer and fewer people find it worth watching. This year total attendances are likely to fall below 20 million, compared with the post-war high of 41 million in the 1948/9 season.

But that long-term loss of interest itself requires explanation. The audience for football has always been to a considerable extent, a working-class, largely under 40 and overwhelmingly male. It is not a sport-playing activity like darts, or billiards and snooker, and it is nowhere near as exclusively a youthful activity as modern cinema-going. It is also, incidentally, quite a marginal leisure activity. On a weekday, an equal or longer-term decline in cinema audiences, more people will opt to go to the cinema in ten weeks than will go to League soccer in a whole year.

It is difficult to work out exactly what is going on, since the picture put forward by the press is full of rotten myths. For example, while footballism is often said to be driving away the crowds, the evidence suggests that there is no relationship between reported incidents of football hooliganism and falling gates.

It is much more likely that the cause of the long-term decline is that the development of modern capitalism has driven leisure more and more back into private consumption in the home—accounting for both the decline in football and cinema and the massive predominance of TV in leisure activity.

But that long-term change in the way that people spend their leisure does not explain everything. In the short term, the economic crisis hits the game very hard; attendances plummeted in the slump of the early 1970s, recovered a little in the mirror boom under the Labour government, and have fallen through the floor in the current recession. Mass unemployment and falling living standards hit hard at some sections of the working class, among them youth who can simply no longer afford to pay to get in.

The decline in audience is not the whole picture. The average cost of going to match, allowing for inflation, has risen three times since those record crowds of 1949. During the same period, attendances have halved. It therefore follows that the money coming into the game has risen in real terms. However, this income is not evenly spread.

Business logic

The English League is enormous, with 92 professional clubs, and it suffers from a simple crisis of overproduction. With the spread of car ownership, people can now travel considerable distances to watch a half-decent side rather than stay at home and watch the local plodders. So-some clubs have managed to keep relatively large gates while others have dwindled to almost nothing.

This does not mean that the bigger clubs have it easy—costs have risen sharply too. Ground expenses have shot up, players' wages are now quite high and transfers fees phenomenally. The accumulated debts of the Football League clubs run to £4.5 million, but the bigger clubs can also attract bigger backers.

For many years football has been subsidised by local capitalists as a hobby and a good ideological gesture to their workers, but as the gap between income and expenditure rises, and the subsidy needed to maintain even a tiny club like Halifax gets bigger, there comes a point when business logic takes over from sentimentalities and public relations. That is the point at which most and more clubs have reached in the last few months.

The response to this has been in terms of a new business logic. First, cutting costs. Maxwell is already looking for redundancies at Oxford United and we can expect a much tougher line on wages in the future. Secondly, looking for new forms of income.

The most obvious route is towards commercial sponsorship—a path already trodden by many other sports. For a price of £2.5 million, the National Dairy Council will get all the publicity it can muddle out of the next four years of the Football League Cup. This advertising subsidy, which already keeps lots of leisure activities like press commercial television and the legitimate arts alive, will undoubtedly increase in the next few years.

It ties in with a number of other developments. Advertisers, one obvious reason, like a relatively large and relatively affluent audience so the push towards television will be intensified and the attempt to move the game 'up-market' by attracting the American-style family audience through all-seater stadiums and better ground facilities will increase.

But this move involves a substantial capital investment, implying not only fewer and fewer clubs but also the same in the way they are run. As the amounts of cash at stake get larger, so the 'hobby' approach will have to give way to much more serious attitudes towards investment.

Even a half-owned capitalist can see that it is economic nonsense to have a substantial fixed investment in a ground with a highly-paid workforce, but to produce revenue for only six or eight times a week. Therefore there is a pressure to diversify the facilities and make football only one small part of a general leisure centre, making money out of a variety of activities from sport to restaurants.

There seems to be a way that the football League can escape the logic of capitalism. It must leave behind the petty local capitalists who have dominated it from birth to pass into the hands of banks and the big capitalists who run the more substantial sections of the leisure industry.

All of this will change the game, accelerating the process begun by television. Who cares?

One answer might be hardly anyone, since if they did the game would be able to finance itself in its existing form. A more balanced view would be to ask that whilst the old-style game has been the bearer of open, democratic, racist and backward attitudes, it has also been some sort of expression of collective identity. Capitalism will destroy this last aspect. But the new, professionalised leisure pattern will not change the barbarous attitudes that have gone with the game in the past. The cracks in the Football League are not an occasion for Marxists to murmur, but they do not mean the end of bread and circuses either.
From repression to revolution

'It is extremely difficult to prove the existence of torture in Guatemala, for very few witnesses survive. It is mainly the condition of the corpses that allows one to trace it.

'The daily press talks about real charnel halls that were discovered in the countryside or in towns, or isolated corpses of men, women, children and old people. Most of these bodies bear horrible signs of torture or mutilations: amputated limbs, decapitated or burnt corpses, traces of blows, of electricity burns, of rapes, machete gashes etc. The wombs of pregnant women are ripped open and the foetus removed.

'Torture is sometimes gruesomely staged: for instance, the head of a woman is placed in the entrails of her hacked companion.' (Pax Christi International, Report of Human Rights Mission to Guatemala, January 1982)

This kind of savagery is part of everyday life for the people of Guatemala and El Salvador. It is not arbitrary violence. It is the deliberate and systematic violence of a ruling class determined to preserve its wealth and power.

In El Salvador it has cost the lives of 30,000 people in two years. In Guatemala, where class war has yet to hit the headlines, over 25,000 people have been slaughtered in the last 10 to 12 years. Both countries are situated in the United State's 'backyard' and Washington is directly involved in the bloodbath now taking place.

The United States has helped preserve the ruthless oligarchies of Central America in the belief that they would maintain stability in the region and keep it open to US economic penetration. But the polarisation of class forces is now such that the United States is facing one of the most serious challenges to its control anywhere in the Third World.

The guerrillas in El Salvador have now
consolidated their hold over one third of the country, while the four guerilla organisations in Guatemala have just announced the formation of a National Revolutionary Unity. It is only a matter of time before they launch a major offensive. The civil war in El Salvador may well become a regional Central American war, and if the United States remains determined to prevent guerilla victories, it may have no option but to send in troops.

The roots of repression

The conflict in both Guatemala and El Salvador has its origins in the nineteenth century when the best lands became consolidated in the hands of a tiny oligarchy anxious to reap the profits from increasing world demand for coffee. The indigenous populations lost their communal lands to make way for large coffee plantations. Many were forced into infernal highland areas, where their small plots were insufficient to maintain a family, and they had to migrate every year to supplement their income through seasonal work on the plantations. Others were given small plots of land on the plantation itself in return for their labour.

The semi-feudal relations of production which persisted for many years in both countries and which still persist in certain areas, should not lead people to believe that the Central American oligarchies are feudal in character. On the contrary, they are very much integrated into the capitalist world economy and, though essentially a dependent class, subordinate to the interests of foreign capital, they accumulate on the basis of the super-exploitation of the repressed peasants and workers.

In these circumstances no independent national bourgeoisie has emerged in either country, able or willing to challenge the oligarchy or imperialism. The diversification of the economies into new export crops and industries which took place particularly in the 1960s and 1970s did so under the auspices of the oligarchy itself, frequently through joint ventures with US capital.

There was an attempt in Guatemala in the post-war years, 1944-54, to promote industrial development through the creation of an internal market and the expropriation of the unused or inefficiently farmed land (owned by the oligarchy and the United Fruit Company of the United States). The experiment failed when the US organised a coup which overthrew President Arbenz in 1954.

The coup could succeed because Arbenz believed that Guatemala's problems lay in the feudal nature of the oligarchy, and he confidently expected that the middle class whose interests he promised would challenge the oligarchy and carry out a capitalist revolution. Instead, the middle class saw a greater threat to its interests in the increasingly organised and radicalised workers and peasants. It rallied to the side of the oligarchy and US imperialism when the decisive moment came to defend the 'revolution'.

Industrialisation and class struggle

The modernisation of the dependent capitalist economies of Central America during the 1960s and 1970s had a decisive impact on the class struggle.

In the first place, the expansion of export agriculture through the introduction of cotton, sugar cane and cattle raising with the help of loans from the World Bank and the US government, meant the further expulsion of peasants from their land.

This process was most acute in El Salvador, where there is little surplus land available (the population density of El Salvador is 195 per square mile compared to an average of 93.7 for Central America as a whole). The number of landless peasants rose from 11.8 per cent of the rural population in 1961 to 40.9 per cent in 1975, and in 1980 was estimated to be staggering 65 per cent.

Some peasants emigrated to Honduras in search of a living, but in 1969 a war between the two countries closed this avenue of escape. Most entered the ranks of the semi-proletariat, working on the plantations for starvation wages during the harvest season from October to February. Unemployment outside these months has been estimated at between 50 and 80 per cent of the rural population.

In Guatemala the process of proletarianisation of the peasantry has also accelerated in recent years. By 1977 it was estimated that at least 50 per cent of Guatemala's subsistence farmers undertake seasonal labour at one time or another during the year. In that country the amount of land dedicated to the production of corn, the staple food of the peasantry, diminished by ten per cent while the population doubled. Nutritionists have estimated that in 1968 42 per cent of the population of Guatemala consumed fewer than the necessary calories, by 1980 the estimate was 80 per cent.

The process of industrialisation in the two countries is the most advanced in the region. But in no way has it kept up with the population growth and displacement of the rural population. An estimated 14 per cent of the economically active population of El Salvador are employed in manufacturing industry and 13.5 per cent in Guatemala. But most of the peasants who have gone to the urban centres in search of work have ended up ekking out a living in the swollen service sector and living in the shanty towns which surround the main centres.

These economic changes have lead to the emergence of new classes and new political forces.

In El Salvador parties of the centre representing middle class professionals and some urban workers sought reforms through elections throughout the 1960s. In 1972 an alliance of the Social Democrat, Christian Democrat and Communist Parties was deprived of victory by a fraud. It became evident to the oppressed of both countries that the parliamentary road to change just does not exist. Violence and fraud have characterised all elections. The army dominates political life. In Guatemala it not
only carried out repression on behalf of the oligarchy, but has institutional and economic interests of its own, having enriched itself through control of the state apparatus. Many officers own large tracts of land and have received lucrative kickbacks by selling the country's mineral resources to foreign capital.

In both Guatemala and El Salvador the army and the oligarchy have collaborated closely in the creation of paramilitary death squads. These were aimed initially at eliminating peasant, worker and student leaders, but more recently have been indiscernibly massing anyone suspected of sympathy for the guerrilla movement.

The growth in state terror has gone alongside the emergence of a more broadly based and militant opposition movement than ever before.

The new revolutionary movements

In El Salvador there emerged three main guerrilla organisations in the early 1970s. This was followed in the mid 1970s by the formation of mass popular organisations which linked up with the guerrilla organisations thus combining political mobilisation—land seizures, factory occupations, mass demonstrations—with military action.

In 1980 the guerrilla organisations formed the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the mass popular organisations formed into the FDR programme. Within this alliance there are a number of contradictions, particularly between the reformist and revolutionary organisations.

The FDR programme represents the interests of the reformists and is anti-oligarchic, anti-imperialist and anti-monopolistic rather than socialist. The reformist parties are more committed to a negotiated settlement of the present conflict.

Amongst the revolutionary organisations the FPL-BRP is the largest with a strong peasant base and according to many reports is growing in strength. It is also the most clearly Marxist-Leninist. Its programme in the 1970s was for a revolutionary socialist government under the hegemony of the working class in alliance with the peasantry.

A military solution would clearly favour the FPL. It is also the only way forward for a socialist transformation in El Salvador. No solution which left the army intact, if purged, or allowed for a half-hearted agrarian reform (impossible in any case in view of the land to people ratio in El Salvador) could possibly lay the basis for a socialist society.

In Guatemala the trajectory of guerrilla struggle has been longer and more complex. Guerilla movements seeking to imitate the Cuban experience emerged in the early 1960s. But they were defeated by the end of the decade by US strategies of counter-insurgency developed in Vietnam. The guerilla movement in these early years had few roots within the peasantry, over 50 per cent of which is Indian.

In the early 1970s the guerillas changed their strategy. Some went into the urban centres, particularly Guatemala City and began to work with the trade union movement which grew in strength in the years 1975-78 when repression was brief, though never entirely, relaxed.

Others devoted themselves to building a base within the Indian population of the Western-Central highlands (the movement of the early 1960s had been based on the poor peasants of the Eastern part of the country). By the late 1970s four guerrilla organisations had emerged.

The intense wave of repression which began in 1978 has elevated the guerrilla struggle to the main focus of political activity, as open political work has become impossible. A key factor in the growth of the guerrilla movement has been the incorporation of the Indian peasantry into it for the first time. The appalling massacres of Indians in the last two years show that the oligarchy recognises their key role in the struggle.

In addition to the guerilla organisations there are two organisations which seek to unite the various trade unions, peasant and student bodies. The Frente Popular 31 de Enero has the largest base within the country and counts amongst its affiliates the main peasant union, CUC. The Frente Democrático Contra la Represión now mostly works outside the country and has concentrated much of its efforts on building up international support for the struggle.

Towards a civil war?

The growth of the popular movement in both Guatemala and El Salvador could pave the way for radical change throughout Central America. Indeed, a regional social-democratic revolution in Central America is the best hope for the Nicaraguan revolution and could have enormous implications for the Caribbean as well as South America.

But it is clear that the United States is intent on preventing such an outcome. When Reagan took over the presidency and announced his intention of making El Salvador an example in his commitment to halt 'Soviet expansionism' in the US back yard, he clearly believed that a few more arms, helicopters and US advisors would smash the popular movements in a few months.

He was mistaken. The guerrillas have proven that they will not be easily defeated.

The Administration has announced massive increases in US military assistance to El Salvador (at present $81 million) as well as economic aid (one third of the recently announced Caribbean aid package of $350 million is earmarked for El Salvador). But this is unlikely to lead to a guerrilla defeat.

The election on 25 March will solve
The United States began to intervene in Central America at the beginning of this century. The United Fruit Company bought up vast areas of land in Guatemala and El Salvador, with the intention of converting them to coffee plantations. The US government also supported these interventions, providing financial and military aid to the regimes in power. This helped to cement the US's influence in the region.

The US's intervention took many forms, including the use of military force and the support of military juntas. In Guatemala, the US supported the regime of General Romeo Lucas, who was nicknamed "The Butcher" for his brutal suppression of opposition forces. In El Salvador, the US supported the military junta led by General Luis Herrera, who was known for his brutal crackdown on political dissidents.

The US's intervention had a devastating impact on the people of Central America. It led to the displacement of millions of people, the destruction of their homes and livelihoods, and the creation of refugee camps. The US's support for military juntas also contributed to the rise of corruption and human rights abuses.

The US's intervention in Central America was not limited to the use of military force. It also included the use of economic sanctions and the support of right-wing politicians and policies. This helped to further entrench the US's influence in the region.

The US's intervention in Central America was a clear example of the US's use of military force and economic sanctions to achieve its political goals. It is a lesson that has been repeated in other parts of the world, and it is a reminder of the importance of defending human rights and promoting peace and stability.
The power to stop the city

London fares double on 21 March as a result of the Law Lords’ decision that it is illegal for the Labour GLC to implement last year’s election manifesto. Martin Roiser looks at the prospects for the campaign of opposition that has grown up in recent weeks.

Who would have thought a year ago that cheap fares would become a revolutionary demand? At the time many socialists even saw the policy as a climb-down from the left’s proper demand for free public transport. The Labour Party promise seemed a simple, sensible reform. It would be beneficial to passengers and the London environment. And it was much needed by London Transport whose services were crumbling in a spiral of rising fares and disappearing customers.

The GLC Labour Group played it by the book. They made an election commitment to cut fares by 25 per cent and to fund the deficit from a supplementary rate. It was one of the most publicised election promises ever made. Indeed the previous Tory administration had tried to head it off by introducing their own fare-cutting scheme just before the election. They introduced a flat 25p fare in the suburbs at a cost of £3 million to the ratepayers.

At the time, there was no hint of any possible legal complications. After all, introducing the 1969 Transport Bill, Richard Marsh, then a Labour minister, had made it clear that the GLC was intended to have the power to determine the level of subsidy paid to London Transport. A democratically elected council, he said, should be able to use ratepayers’ money in the way it saw fit. For the opposition a certain Margaret Thatcher, backed up by one Michael Heseltine, welcomed the Bill and didn’t even force a vote on the matter.

In May 1981, 900,000 Londoners voted Labour and the new left-wing GLC set out to implement its election promise.

The Fares Fair policy was an immediate success. After 30 years of steady decline passenger traffic increased by 11 per cent on the buses and seven per cent on the underground. More buses were put on the roads, more trains on the track and London Transport took on 600 extra staff. Municipal socialism was back in business.

But the Tory machine soon set to work. Heseltine imposed a massive penalty of £1 million on the GLC block grant, thus ensuring that the supplementary rate to pay for the fares’ subsidy would be substantial. And, ominously, when the GLC offered £20 million to British Rail to reduce its London fares, Heseltine threatened to cut his subsidy to British Rail by the same amount. The rail commuters of South London were not to be allowed to benefit.

Then the Tory council of Bromley (in the South London commuter belt) took legal action against the GLC which resulted, eventually, in the Law Lords declaring that the Fares Fair policy was illegal and that the supplementary rate could not be collected.

Now it hardly needs to be argued in these pages that the Law Lords’ decision was a political one. But their ruling was so spurious that the detail merits attention.

The crucial section of the Transport Act 1969 says that the authority shall provide a transport service that is efficient, integrated and economic. The Fares Fair policy was intended to bring the operation of London Transport closely in line with the Act by meeting all these criteria.

The Lords’ interpretation of the Act, however, was quite different and entirely original. By a majority ruling they interpreted the Act to mean that London Transport should be planned to operate without subsidy. Small matter that it had run on subsidy for years and small matter that the certain result of their ruling would be that services would become inefficient, disintegrated and expensive! The Lords’ judgement clearly owed nothing to the letter or the spirit of the law. But, surprise, surprise, it was entirely in line with current government thinking on the restrictions that should be placed on local government finance.

Very soon after the judgement, Norman Fowler, then Minister of Transport, announced that despite the Lords’ ruling, subsidies could continue to be paid, but not at the level of 46 per cent which the Fares Fair policy required.

COMMUNIST PARTY OF IRELAND

The Lords’ ruling precipitated a crisis at County Hall. The Labour Group split right down the middle. 23 voting to defy the Lords and 22 to give in. At the full council meeting Tory and SDP votes swung the decision in favour of compliance, and London Transport Executive went off to prepare a new tariff of fares.

They produced a scheme which was not planned to break even as the Lords required, but would still require a subsidy of some 12 per cent as the minister had hinted. The Labour councillors calculated next year’s rate. They had to make up the money lost through the cancellation of the supplementary rate plus the £3 million the Tories had spent on pre-election fare-cutting. Their alternative was to borrow the £25 needed from the City at a cost of £50 million over five years.

The GLC Labour administration had been well and truly stiched up. They might have won the election, but the Tories were still in control of the system.

The episode to date has been a massive kick in the teeth for parliamentary socialism. The Tory establishment doesn’t give a fig for the voters of London. The ruling class won’t concede even the simplest, most rational reform. They hold all the cards and will cheat and manipulate to get what they want. The Labour Party is tied to the rotten system and cannot deliver the goods.

Unfortunately, this is not the lesson that the left-wing Labour councillors have drawn. In fact, they have redoubled their reformist efforts and attracted a very large following.

Since the ruling an impressive campaign has grown to save cheap fares. Several organisations have sprung up: ‘Face Fight!’ is the spread new socialist grouping... a peoples campaign.’ ‘Can’t Pay, Won’t Pay’ is a campaign based on the left-wing Labour GLC councillors and there is also an official GLC campaign.

The demands are ‘no fare increases’, ‘no

A woman in a bus queue shouted: You’ve never even been on a bus! But I have—my nanny took me when I was four.

OOH! NOT AN OPEN-TOPPED ONE?!
LETTING PEOPLE HAVE WHAT THEY VOTE FOR IS TAKING DEMOCRACY TOO FAR

A vital weakness of the Fares Fair policy was that it was introduced in the first place without any real involvement of the transport workers. Jobs are at the centre of the argument. There will be a reduction of 7,000 jobs, 5,000 as a direct result of the cuts and 2,000 from cancelled expansion plans. More jobs will go as outside contracts are cancelled. Working conditions will also worsen. There will be more assaults on staff. The roads will be more congested, sustain more damage and be more dangerous. A hundred extra road deaths per year have been predicted.

The lead the unions are giving at the moment is weak. More than token action is needed. The unions are still hesitating on the vital matter of the fare refusal. Without a clear lead there will be confusion after 21 March as staff and passengers argue about who is to pay what. The unions should settle a clear policy in favour of non-collection of the new fares and back any transport worker who faces disciplinary action as a result.

The campaign will get a lot tougher. London Transport has threatened to prosecute those encouraging non-collection and fare refusal, and will certainly prosecute those who actually refuse. This may scare off a number of people. But the unions can counter this threat with industrial action and must do so if their own members are taken to court. Success would then be possible. A campaign of sustained industrial action backed by 'don't pay, don't collect' could force the government to back down and concede the need for a real low-fares policy for London and other cities. Transport workers have the power to stop the city. They must be convinced of the need to use that power now.

Once again revolting

Since Christmas there has been a small but significant wave of college occupations in response to the latest round of proposed education cuts. Up to the beginning of March 20 colleges had been or were in occupation, with more being proposed.

Steve Cedar looks at these.

This new level of militancy comes after two years of little or no mass activity within the student world. What is most striking is the size of meetings. Literally thousands are turning up to union meetings (Sheffield 3,000, Leeds 2,000, Sussex 1,500, Paisley 1,000).

These struggles are throwing up a whole new layer of student activists. For example, at Leeds University a pre-general meeting activists' caucus attracted 400 people, and at Sheffield Poly, after a successful week-long occupation, activists' meetings were held every night on all sites to discuss future strategy.

The occupations and demonstrations are by no means passive. At Hull University a 400-strong picket disrupted and attempted to prevent a Senate meeting taking place. Police were brought onto campus with horses and batons, and at present several students face the prospect of jail for breaking an injunction banning students from picketing or making a noise.

A common view of student occupations is of a few people 'sitting in', eating rolls and drinking tea. The encouraging aspect of this term's occupations is a tendency for them to look outwards, sending delegations to other colleges and getting support from trade unionists, inside and outside the college. In fact, one of the main reasons why occupations have been passed at general meetings has been the presence of speakers from outside.

The old arguments about solidarity action and the right of someone else who is fighting back have been crucial. They have won over a middle ground of students who are angry and want to take action, but who feel isolated. It is quite definitely the general argument about the cuts and the Tories that are winning people to direct action.

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Their nuclear debate

The announcement of Reagan's visit in June is likely to provide a new focus for the anti-nuclear weapons' movement right across Western Europe. But a different sort of argument has broken out within the top ranks of the British ruling class—over whether to accept the latest American offer of a cut-price version of the Trident submarine missile system. Jane Ure Smith explains.

The public argument over Trident goes back at least to June 1980 when the government agreed to buy the original C4 version at an estimated cost of £5 bn. It wasn't a particularly popular decision even then, but when the Americans decided last October to phase out the C4 and replace it with the D5, which is bigger, has more warheads and a longer range, the problems facing Defence Secretary John Nott multiplied.

Since Nott began suggesting late last year that Britain should fall in line with the Americans and go for the D5 as well, significant splits have begun to form in the defence establishment and the Tory Party itself.

In desperation, it seems, Nott turned to the Americans for help. The Reagan administration is clearly willing to pay a high price for political allies in Europe at the moment, and last month it came up with the amazing cut-price offer. If the government goes for the American proposal it will argue that buying Trident means securing and creating jobs. Needless to say it doesn't mean that at all. The production of nuclear weapons is capital-intensive in the extreme; with more than three million on the dole, the number of jobs created would be no more than a drop in the ocean.

In any case it seems that the jobs argument will do little to quell the visible reminder that the membership aren't quite as dead as they would wish them to be.

The NUS leadership'smingling reluctance to organise any fightback manifested itself when vice president Andy Pearmain circulated a 'warning' about occupations, together with guidelines to people if they 'must' occupy. 'Raise demands you can achieve—don't demand that your college cutbacks imposed by local or national government.'

What are the lessons of the rise in activity? First, it shows that there are a large number of students who are prepared to fight. Second, and more importantly, it shows that where the work has been done, by consistently informing people and arguing the case for direct action, small numbers of committed socialists have been able to win large meetings to our side, despite some real manoeuvrings in many places by the local bureaucracies.

What is needed now is to win these people to more general socialist politics, arguing the need for an organisation that will carry on after a particular cuts' campaign or occupation has had its day.

If this present campaign fails to take off in a big way, it will nevertheless have ensured that next year, when the government announces another round of education cuts, there will be a whole group of students who now have the valuable experience of intervention and organisation of activity.

It would be nice to think that the students could be that petrol flying before the storm—a reminder of what's coming from the working class themselves. Let's hope so.

Noticeable by their absence has been NOLS (National Organisation of Labour Students). Invariably it has been SWSO (Socialist Worker Student Organisation) members who have been proposing occupation against the cuts. In most places this has completely split the Labour clubs, with the result that the better people in them are being drawn to SWSO. At their worst, the NOLS' members are lining up with any force which will oppose occupation and in some places have gleefully joined the 'red witchhunt' brigade against SWSO.

The fact is that, for all their left rhetoric over the last year, the Labour clubs are not about 'extra-parliamentary' activity. They are probably only too aware that they have very little to offer anyone outside of canvassing for May's local elections. Besides, at student union election time, they cannot be publicly aligned with direct action if they are going to win.

Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, the NUS Executive have actively opposed the occupations.

No one should be surprised at CP member and NUS President Dave Aaronovitch sending around a letter to all college directors concerning the grants 'Week of Action' explaining that the NUS did not want to 'disrupt your institution with pickets and suchlike'. In some cases the letter was used by directors against student unions who wanted to take more effective action.

Wallpapering

NUS made the week of action into a tokenistic publicity stunt with 'walk-outs' and alternative activities, to the extent of going out wallpapering old people's houses! All through the period SWSO members were arguing that the grants' issue was not separate from the fight against the cuts and the Tories, and that the only way to fight was by mass direct action.

This had no effect on the NUS bureaucracy. But when the more militant students have moved, the leadership have been
opposition to Trident in either D5 or C4 form. Even at the cut-price rate the D5 Trident will cost at least £7 or £8 billion, and many Tories and defence buffs are unhappy about cutting back on conventional forces to fund it.

Some Tory back-benchers are up in arms about the cutsbacks in the Navy, with the Atlantic fleet having been reduced by a quarter and the Invincible flogged to the Australians for a fraction of its worth.

Other Tory rebels favour nuclear defence, but not Trident. This group, around Alan Clark, would like to see Britain leave NATO and establish its own totally independent nuclear weapons system, probably comprising submarine-based Cruise missiles, which they claim are much cheaper than ballistic missiles like Trident.

Even people like the former Chief of Defence Staff, Lord Carver, are becoming embroiled in the debate. He wrote an explicitly anti-Trident article for the Sunday Times urging greater emphasis on conventional weaponry in the context of NATO as a nuclear alliance.

Sooner or later the arguments will have to be broached in terms of why an ‘independent’ British nuclear weapon system at all? As the days of jingoism and glorious empire become more and more a faded memory, it is a question that even Tories are finding difficult to answer satisfactorily. Perhaps realising the problem, in a recent television interview, John Nott, as if pulling a rabbit from a hat, came up with a new answer.

We need the D5 Trident system, he argued, in case the NATO Alliance falls apart and Britain is left to her devices.

‘We need a system that is under the ultimate control of the Prime Minister,’ he said. ‘The D5 missile will take us up to the year 2020, and no-one can say what will be the state of our alliance that far ahead.’

Uphill

Rather like the Mad Hatters’ tea party, this has allowed everyone to move round one place. Labour’s Shadow Defence Secretary, John Silkkin, who has kept remarkably quiet since his appointment, is able to oppose Trident and at the same time take up a sanctimonious, more-NATO-than-thou stance when confronted by the Tory arguments. Silkkin’s position is a reminder that there is still an uphill battle to be fought by CND to win the argument that unilateral disarmament means getting out of NATO as well.

Whether or not the government accepts in principle the Americans’ offer, it is clear that the debate over Trident will rumble on for quite some time. An opinion poll conducted for Weekend World suggested that 63 per cent of the electorate now disapproves of the purchase of Trident, and more than half of these people believe Polaris should be scrapped as well. However hard the Tories push the Trident scheme it is unlikely that any work on it could begin before the next election. That means it will be much easier for any incoming government to cancel the project altogether.

In short, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the Trident project will never see the light of day. If that happens, it will be the victory of one set of interests within the ruling class over another. The danger is that many members of CND will hail it as their victory and some of the steam will be taken out of the campaign. That is a problem inherent in fighting the anti-bomb campaign on a single issue basis, in separating the campaign against Trident from the campaign against Cruise, and so on. We must never lose sight of the fact that we are fighting to get rid of the whole bloody lot.

CND crosses the Wall

The suppression of Solidarity in Poland has by no means put an end to opposition movements in Eastern Europe.

In the last few weeks there have been reports of anti-militarist agitation in Hungary, East Germany and Estonia (inside the USSR itself). Marta Wohlrle looks at the East German experience.

The 6th of February saw an unprecedented event: a demonstration calling for peace on the streets of Dresden, East Germany.

Der Spiegel described the scene: Thousands of young East German citizens, most in the uniform of their generation, jeans and parkas, came from across the whole country to demonstrate in a church.

It could be a description of a peace demonstration anywhere in Europe. What is extraordinary about this one is that it took place at all. In East Germany demonstrations are illegal and there is no established peace movement.

Organised by the Evangelical Church, over 5,000 people marched through Dresden and held a peace service in a church, the Dresden Kreuzkirche. The whole scene was slightly theatrical, posters were symbolic rather than political: a flash of lightning and a clock with the hands set at 5 to 12. The date was the anniversary of the bombing of Dresden in World War II. The marchers were protesting against arms, military training in East German schools, and hostility with the West.

The East German Communist Party, the SED, are visibly shaken. The Dresden demonstration showed the contradictions in the SED’s foreign and domestic policy. In recent months the East German authorities have condemned NATO’s ‘superfluous’ or warmongering, while praising the growing resistance to missiles and the bomb in the West. Now the SED is forced to recognise the vigorous condemnation of the arms race on their own doorstep.

In East Germany using the church as a vehicle for the growing peace movement makes tactical sense. Controls over church activities are relatively light. And if the SED were to ban the peace movement, their relationship with the established church would be severely threatened.

A banner on the demonstration depicted a red circle, a man, a sword and a plough. Despite the obvious religious symbolism of the sword and plough, it carries a political meaning that the SED cannot ignore. It is no small victory for the movement that, after obstruse church protests, the banner is officially tolerated.

The increased political role of the church is giving the SED cause for deep concern. And anger and fear may lead to repression. Already church activists have been arrested.

The Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg, Reinhard Eppelmann, was arrested on Thursday 11th. He was released two days later.

The church say they organised the demonstration because they wanted to contain the growing desire for an active peace movement similar to that in West Germany.

Within the SED there is growing criticism of the party leadership’s position towards the church. Some SED members fear a breakdown in the relationship between the church and the state. Over criticism of even repression will lend power to the growing political mood of the East German people.

Marta Wohlrle
A time to eat their rulers?

The British supporters of General Jaruzelski have at last found an argument to explain the Polish economic crisis. It is all the result, they say, of making too many concessions to the peasants. Mike Haynes exposes the absurdities of this argument, and explains the real causes of food shortages throughout Eastern Europe.

"A hungry nation can eat its rulers" said one of the slogans in Poland before the military takeover. And of course it was right. It is the inability of any state to meet the most basic human needs that is the clearest sign of its bankruptcy. This was so at the time of the French Revolution; it was so in Russia in 1917 and it is so in Eastern Europe today. Everywhere one looks there is a growing food crisis.

Yet some on the left have tried to argue that Poland’s crisis has been a product of peculiarly Polish circumstances. The argument originates with the Polish military, who say that the peasants were the root of the problem.

It is easy to see why this argument is attractive to them. They want to divide the ten million workers who joined Solidarity from the 2.5 million peasants who joined its rural organisation.

What is not easy to see is how anyone on the left here can be taken in by it.

Polish agriculture is different from that of most of Eastern Europe. The state in Poland was never able to push through collectivisation on a mass scale. Today about a quarter of the Polish labour force works in agriculture, with 75 percent on private farms. The majority of these farms are small—on average about 12.5 acres—but alongside them there is a smaller commercial sector with farms about the same size as British farms—125 acres.

But to blame either of these groups for the food crisis and the general collapse is grotesque. In fact without them, there is good reason to believe things would have been in an even worse mess.

In fact it is the state sector which has over the last decade received up to 75 percent of all investment—but in spite of this it is still far less productive than the private farms.

To see how bad the food crisis is with a totally state-dominated agriculture you only have to look at Russia.

Deaths

There collectivisation was pushed through in the most brutal way causing the deaths of millions of peasants and the destruction of even greater numbers of livestock. Today Soviet agriculture is made up of collective farms and state farms, both in reality a part of the state. Yet over the last few years it has been necessary to reintroduce rationing of key foodstuffs and official meatless days.

The official figures for meat consumption in the late 1970s show that approximately 80 kilos per head were consumed in Poland and only some 60 kilos in Russia—in reality few Russians probably get more than 40 kilos of meat a year. Even if you believe the official figures this still makes Russian meat consumption one of the lowest in Eastern Europe. Moreover to supply this amount it is necessary each year to import millions of tons of grain for animal feed.

Not surprisingly Brezhnev in a recent discussion declared that "the food problem is, economically and politically, the central problem of the whole five year plan" (Pravda 17.10.81). The food crisis is now a regular item on the agenda for the Central Committee. It is a political problem of that order, not only because of the threat that shortages will lead to discontent, but also because no one has yet found any solution. To keep the lid on things the Russian state is massively subsidising food prices, but it is still forced to push them up periodically. It is not hard to see why—some estimates suggest that food subsidies are as big as the entire defence budget of the Soviet Union.

In this situation the latest attempt to solve the problem has been by a turnaround to private production. Since last year the state has been actively encouraging more production on the small private plots of the collective farmers, which already produce about a quarter of agricultural output. Some people in the West may be naive enough to believe Jaruzelski when he blames the Polish problems on the private peasant farmers. They
should puzzle why Brezhnev doesn’t share their views.

Where, then, are the real roots of the food crisis? They do not lie in the land and climate of Russia, although as a country it is not well endowed. Even where the land and climate is good the same problems occur. The real roots lie in a system which perpetuates these problems rather than solving them. There are three aspects to this.

One is the way in which the drive to expand the Soviet economy forces investment away from agriculture and its related industries. Over the past years the leadership has tried to redress it back after decades of neglect, but in spite of pouring millions into the countryside it has not been enough. Not only that but the failure to develop an efficient industry to supply agriculture’s needs in, for example, machinery still serves to hamper development.

Indeed, the squeeze is still very much on agriculture and, so long as the economy is driven forward to compete with the West, other priorities will mean that agriculture gets less than it needs. What is happening now is that the state is finding it cheaper to get its grain on the world market than to improve agriculture. It has begun to invest in new port and transport facilities so that it can export these imports around—inefficiency breeds another inefficiency as it does in the West.

Having to make do with less than is needed leads to the second problem—the attempt to squeeze out the maximum production through highly centralised state control. Every detail of agricultural life is subject to the attempted control of the centre. Of course, the state doesn’t succeed—it couldn’t do so. But what it does do is destroy any initiative from below.

And the third problem is precisely the alienation that characterises the whole of Soviet life. This is something that is felt in the whole of the countryside. It turns everyone inwards, making the chief source of concern their private lives. The Soviet peasants know at a gut level that the state that rules over them is not their state, and as the Soviet workers know it too, and that is why the iron fist of repression is never far away.

**Mad drive**

The Russian revolution was made through a dual revolution: the countryside and the town. In the 1920s there were attempts to build links between the peasants and the workers, but all of that was lost with the mad drive to industrialise and catch up with the West.

What this did was to build into the Soviet countryside the same contradictions between town and country that Marx had condemned in his analysis of the development of capitalism. It was those same contradictions that were implanted in Eastern Europe after the Second World War, and it is in the system that needs to maintain them that one finds the origins of the crisis—not in its victims whether they be peasants or workers.

**Harsh lessons for the Irish left**

Kieren Allen, of the Irish revolutionary socialist organisation, the Socialist Workers Movement, looks at the outcome of Ireland’s recent election.

Southern Ireland has entered a period of political instability. Two general elections in less than eight months have resulted in hung parliaments. Major divisions have broken out in the populist Fianna Fail Party and in the Labour Party. On the left, Sinn Fein the Workers Party have arrived by holding the balance of power with three deputies. Underlying all the instability at government level is the fear in bourgeois circles that its industrialisation programme may be halted by the growing crisis in the state’s finances and the international recession.

Since the early sixties, the regime in the South of Ireland has embarked on an ambitious industrialisation programme spear headed by exports from newly created foreign companies. The country has been transformed from a quaint Hollywood image of cheerful agricultural labourers to one whose factory areas dominate the skylines of many rural areas. It has been able partially to escape from the clutches of Britain’s decline. The Irish left used to

描述帝国主义关系之间爱尔兰和英国说，当英国的经济陷入危机，爱尔兰陷入了肺炎。这两个实体的相互竞争，导致了爱尔兰对英国的经济依赖。

**Decline**

Quite clearly such a programme involved the destruction of the mildly reformist Labour Party. That decline was not as dramatic in voting terms, but was significant since both the Party’s success to patronage helped to preserve its base in rural areas around particular personalities. Yet in Dublin, an expanding working class city, its vote has been halved over the last decade.

In many ways the decline of the Labour Party has become the pivotal point of Irish
politics. The striking fact is that in a period of deepening crisis for the Irish economy, the strictly bourgeois parties of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael still command the vote of 80 per cent of the electorate.

The recent election was fought in purely bourgeois terms. Are we for a Keynesian policy of further borrowing to stimulate more investment (Fianna Fail) or for cuts in public spending to reduce foreign borrowing (coalition)? Both alternatives involve stronger attacks on the working class movement than it has faced in the last decade, and the totally artificial debate around the election has been part of the ideological offensive. Last year wage cuts of around four to five per cent (according to official figures) were imposed when the bosses refused to sanction a continuation of indexation, (the automatic adjustment of wages to price rises). This year they are going for even higher wage cuts.

Initially it has been the right which has gained most from Labour's decline. Under Haughey, Fianna Fail has stepped up its populist rhetoric and has expanded its base amongst public sector workers. But it has gone much further. When, for example, 400 workers in Clondalkin sat-in to defend their jobs, many of them looked to Fianna Fail for political support.

By definition Fianna Fail populism cuts right across the classes. Not only is it a question of more money to save jobs, but also more police on the streets to combat vandalism, or more hand-outs to build a totally absurd international airport at Knock shrine.

Fine Gael, too, have gained from Labour's decline. As part of the process of dropping its image as the party which had a fascist wing, the 'Blue Shirts' in the 1930s, as reconstituting itself as a right social democratic party, it has called for liberalisation in laws on contraception, divorce, corporal punishment. Increasingly they project themselves as the rational managers of Irish capitalism and thus appeal to more of the liberally minded middle class who might have been under Labour's banner.

But what of the left?

The big winners are Sinn Fein the Workers Party (SFWP)—not to be confused with Sinn Fein. They increased their votes substantially, won three seats and are currently beginning to challenge the Labour Party. The SFWP or the 'Sticksies', have a long history of zig-zagging, since the days when they helped to initiate the Civil Rights Movement in the North in 1968. Today they line up with the Unionists in the North, calling for a 'devolved' government and support a 'reformed' RUC. In the South, their main concern is industrialisation in order to form a working class that is big enough to impose a state capitalist regime (their own terms).

They view Ireland's underdevelopment as the result of an historic 'laissez-faire' of its own bourgeoisie, rather than the effects of imperialism. They thus welcome the introduction of multi-nationals to assist in the present stage of industrialisation.

Sacrifice

In their publications, they make it clear that the drive to industrialisation and state capitalist Ireland, demands sacrifices from the working class. They have on occasions supported centralised National Wage Agreements (Irish social contracts) on a similar basis to the right Euro-communist strand of the British CP—sacrifice can be exchanged for political gains.

The SFWP, as should be clear, is by no means a 'classic' reformist party. It sprang from the republican traditions on the edge of the working class. It has built itself up in the unions without a rank and file base, but through capturing full-time appointed union positions. In Ireland's largest union, the ITGWU, it controls a third of all union positions, but is only now winning a base of rank and file supporters. Obviously as it consolidates and expands, it will have increasingly open contradictions within its ranks. But for the present, it has all the characteristics of a party that has been built from the top down. It might seem that the SFWP have drifted so far rightwards that their appeal is limited. Unfortunately that is too simple.

Southern capitalism has many 'hangovers' that give the SFWP ample scope to tack left. The Southern ruling class does not have a strong industrial base. It has stretched downwards to encompass mini property speculators and tax dodgers. The SFWP hits at the heart of this. It attacks these sections and also holds up the farmers as scapegoats. These policies have a wide appeal to a working class that has not yet seen itself capable of fighting a militant struggle.

The growth of the SFWP has obviously shocked republican supporters and the revolutionary left. The various anti-imperialist candidates managed to retain only half of their H Block vote. There are a number of reasons for their failure.

Even in purely anti-imperialist terms the H Block movement offered no way forward after the ending of the hunger strike. It simply fizzled out rather than mobilising for, say, a British Withdraval Campaign. More importantly, the elections in the South were fought on economic issues. Provisional Sinn Fein and IRSP candidates were obviously correct to raise the Northern struggle, but they also had to give answers to the economic...
Cold steel—

Belgian style

The class struggle in Belgium has recently reached levels not seen since the general strike of 1961. Gareth Jenkins explains.

A gigantic strike wave has swept Belgium over the past month, and, as we go to press, there is every hope that it will grow even bigger. Since 8 February, there have been two one-day general strikes, a violent demonstration of steel workers in Brussels, involving pitched battles against mounted, baton-wielding police and (2 March) the unleashing of an unlimited strike by steelworkers.

In many ways, it is a re-run (on a larger scale) of what happened last April. Then as now, the Belgian government, faced with an enormous budget deficit and an ailing state-owned steel industry, attempted to solve the crisis by proposals for an austerity package (wage freeze and reductions in social benefit) and cuts in the labour force. Then as now, Belgian workers, particularly steel workers in the southern, French-speaking part of the country (Wallonia), responded by strikes. As a result the government was forced to make some concessions.

In the meantime, the crisis has not gone away. What has changed is that Belgium has a new centre-right government (made up of Liberal and Christian parties), much more determined to push through tough measures. In response to the first one day general strike, called by the unions to oppose the introduction of the government’s austerity package, the government showed it meant business by bringing in the receivers to the country’s leading but debt-ridden shipbuilders, when the workers there refused to accept wage restraint.

The closure has wider repercussions than just the 2700 jobs immediately concerned. Indirectly tied to the shipyard are some 7000 jobs in Flemish-speaking Belgium, and a further 10,000 engineering jobs in Wallonia. The shipyard is part, too, of the giant Cockerill-Sambre steel-making complex. The fact that the government is prepared to shut down parts of the steel industry refusing wage restraint is not lost on the militant steel workers in Wallonia, where resistance to the government’s austerity programme has been strongest.

Gambling

Despite the two one-day general strikes (8 and 15 February) the government has gone ahead and using special parliamentary powers, introduced cuts in wage rises (they will no longer be automatically linked to the cost of living index), a general price-freeze and reductions in energy costs. It hopes to limit the rise in the national wage bill to three per cent below the expected 7 to 8 per cent rise in the cost of living, and to achieve energy-savings by reducing the wage bill in the electricity and gas industries. The ‘sweetener’ in all this, the across-the-board price freeze, will only last a month.

The government is gambling on the split between the more militant socialist trade union and the traditionally more moderate Christian trade union (which in any case has links with the Christian-Democratic partner...
Inside a capitalist dream

The TV and press have given us weeks of nauseous drivel about the virtues of Freddy Laker. But life inside the Laker empire was far from wonderful, as former Laker airhostess Sarah Callaby explains.

Most people think that being an air hostess means looking pretty and serving drinks. That part of it is really only the public relations icing. What we were really up there for was safety: in an accident or emergency it is the job of the cabin staff to look after the passengers.

When you first start the job you get a six-week emergency training which teaches you to cope with everything from a passenger having a heart attack in mid-flight to ditching in the Atlantic. You have to know how to find your way through a smoke-filled aircraft, how to operate life rafts and survive in them, how to survive in the desert, you name the emergency and we have been trained to cope with it.

Sick bags

Before every flight there was a briefing, and you had to know the whole emergency manual from back to front because they ask you questions about it at random. If you got any of the answers wrong you just didn’t fly until you had brushed up and were word-perfect.

The job is very hard under any circumstances. On a normal flight, say to New York, you have to check in 1½ hours before departure time and go through the briefing and test. If you pass that then you go out to the aircraft, tidy the place up a bit, put all the essential little things like sick bags in all the seat pockets, and check all of the safety equipment in great detail.

Then you have to get 345 people onto a DC10, make sure they are all in their seats, and check that they are all strapped in. Then you take off. The first thing that happens once you are in the air is a drinks round, and that is when the hard work really starts. The trolleys are great big metal things that you have to heave up and down the aisles, selling drinks in various currencies.

Once that is out of the way, you do a meal service, with the same damn great cuts. Then you have an endless list of passengers wanting drinks of water, being sick, or just needing a bit of reassurance. We really looked forward to showing them the film, because it usually kept them entertained and gave us a chance to go down to the galley for our own meals. There were four seats down there and it is the only place you were allowed to sit down during the whole flight. With several girls scrambling for four seats, you quite often didn’t get the chance even there. On top of that, you sometimes found that they had not loaded enough meals
and you were expected to give up your own. I had been on long flights when all I got to eat were a few odds and ends.

After the film there is another meal round, endless rounds of tea and coffee, and finally another drinks round before it is time to strap people in for landing at New York. And once you get there you still have to get 345 people out of the plane and tidy it up a bit before you are through.

Those are just the routine tasks. On top of that, there are always a couple of people like invalids who need special attention. If anything goes wrong, you have to do a lot more besides. On one occasion we were coming in to New York when the Captain thought an engine might be on fire; I was sent up and down the plane to see if I could smell burning.

I had expected hard work, and I was prepared to put a lot of effort into a job I enjoyed. But I had expected that there would be at least some protection, if not through a union then at least from the law. Unfortunately, with Laker, you barely got enough for that. For one thing, the proper crewing for a DC10 is 12 cabin staff, but because Laker wanted to save money we often flew with only ten. Again, because the job is so demanding, you need proper rest periods, but the Laker staff manual found a way round that. It says:

'From the flight safety point of view it is considered that longer cabin staff duty periods are justified because an emergency arise necessitating cabin staff to fulfill their major functions, the degree of arousal caused would be sufficient to suppress any reasonable degree of tiredness or fatigue which may be present.'

That all sounds fine, except that, while the legal maximum is supposed to be 15 hours, I have often worked much longer than that. Once on a flight back from Los Angeles to Gatwick we had a big delay before departure. In most airlines that sort of hold-up means that the union will force the company to change crews. With Laker, and no union, when the captain said go, you had to go, however you felt. I counted the hours I worked on that trip: I was on duty for 22 hours, with only a half-hour break in the whole time.

**Rostering**

The worst flight I was ever on was coming back from Barbados. This was always the high-point of your career with Laker, since you got a long rest period in the sun. The catch was the flight back. It had several stops and lasted for ever. I saw girls standing at their station falling asleep on their feet from exhaustion and you would have to lean on a passenger's seat to stay awake long enough to serve coffee.

The stopover rest periods were often so short that exhaustion would build up from flight to flight. It was not at all unusual to see girls faint or go off to be sick in the middle of a flight. It was not bad in the winter because the trade was slow and you would be at home on standby a lot of the time, but in summer it just went mad. You could end up doing long haul flights one after another.

A typical roster pattern would be:

Monday: Night flight to Athens
Tuesday: turn around and return to Gatwick
Wednesday: Day off
Thursday: Emergency training check (all day at Gatwick)
Friday: Gatwick to Miami (8½ hour flight)
Saturday: Day off in Miami
Sunday: Miami to Manchester
Monday: Manchester to Miami
Tuesday/Wednesday: Miami to Gatwick

As the competition got hotter, they cut down rest periods more and more. When the Skytrain first started, before my time, you could get a whole day in Los Angeles to recover from a flight. When I was working for Laker it was down to a day and a half, and that was very hard going. By the end they were only getting one night.

The wages they paid were rock bottom. When I finally left, just over a year ago, I was earning £2400 a year, which is about half of what I should have been doing the same job. If you stuck it out and worked your way up the career ladder, you could end up as an "In Flight Director", chief stewardess, earning almost £5000 a year.

There was nothing you could do about all this. The attitude towards anyone mentioning a union was that you could always go and work elsewhere. With dozens of girls queuing up at the door, they would have no trouble at all in filling your job.

I finally quit because I thought they were quite literally, taking me for a ride. I could just about put up with the patronising attitude of the management who treated us all like a lot of school girls telling us what sort of car-rings to wear. I could just about put up with the low wages because I could have gone a bit further into the red. I did not think the hard work, but I did expect just a little bit of protection from the constant exhaustion. One thing in Laker's favour was that they were not as sexist as other airlines: they weren't interested in beauty queens, they just wanted cheap slaves.

It was just as well that I got out when I did: a few months after I left they sacked half the girls while they kept the same number of routes. When the end came it was a complete surprise to the cabin staff. There are always rumours in the airline business but they had no warning that this one was true.

One girl I know was at home getting ready to fly to Miami when she heard about the collapse on the radio. The rest was just as much of a shock to the passengers. A lot of the recent publicity has focused on the passengers and on Sir Freddie. The people I feel really sorry for are the ones you haven't heard so much about: all of those girls who loved the job so much that they were willing slaves. They worked and worked only to find themselves thrown on the scrapheap.

**LETTER**

Neil Faulkner's article 'Strike Against Apartheid' (SR82:2) may lead readers to a mistaken view about the correct attitude towards sanctions.

He argues that if the government were to impose sanctions its effect would be the 'destruction of the only class with the social power to smash the apartheid state'. Now this is surely wrong. The Zimbabwean working class increased in size and confidence during the period when sanctions were imposed on Rhodesia. More importantly, his argument inevitably leads one to the conclusion that we should line ourselves behind Thatcher and Co in opposing sanctions. He is on much stronger ground when he argues that the scale of British investments in South Africa makes it extremely unlikely that any government—Labour or Tory—will impose comprehensive sanctions. He might add that sanctions were ineffective in bringing down the Smith regime, and that the whole argument is based on taking away from the South African working class the right to determine their own future.

Similarly in the hypothetical case he provides, of the TGWU linking solidarity to certain imports controls to justify blacking, his argument could take us to the wrong conclusion. If they were to make this proposal, we would not oppose action, rather we would say 'Excellent. But let's strengthen the solidarity with our brothers and sisters fighting in South Africa by "blackling" all trade'.

Peter Alexander, Southall.
Facing up to Tebbit’s bill

This summer sees the tenth anniversary of Pentonville—the event that did more than anything else to destroy the Industrial Relations Act of Edward Heath’s Tory government. Margaret Thatcher’s Tory government is marking the event by an Industrial Relations Bill of its own, Tebbit’s Bill, to harden up the measures already contained in the 1980 Employment Act of Jim Prior.

The TUC has called a conference of trade union executives for next month. No doubt there will be many rhetorical references to Pentonville at it. But what did happen ten years ago? How was the response to Prior’s law measured up to that experience? And what can we expect if Tebbit’s Bill goes on to the statute book?

Colin Sparks and David Beecham provide some of the answers.

The lessons of 1972

The 1971 Industrial Relations Act actually came into full effect on 28 February 1972. It was the most serious attempt to curtail trade union power for half a century. It attacked union powers on many fronts. It allowed individual shops to challenge the closed shop. It allowed unions to be sued for causing a ‘breach of contract.’ It gave the government the power to order the postponement of strike action (ending off periods) while secret ballots were organised. It called for agreements between unions and employers to be legally binding.

All these things were an attack on practices which full time union officials used to strengthen its hands in negotiations with employers.

But at the core of the Act was a set of measures aimed to strengthen the hand of full time officials—when it came to dealing with rank and file activists.

Two things were important here. The first was a proviso that unions could register under the Act and gain a certain protection from the law (so that, for instance, the maximum any employer could sue them for would be £100,000). But in order to register they had to alter their rule books so as to do away with the right of stewards or district committees to take action without the say so of the union nationally.

The second was that, registered or otherwise, they could be sued unless they could prove that they had done everything in their power (like taking away stewards’ credentials) to prevent “illegal” strikes.

A special court, the National Industrial Relations Court, was set up to deal with these matters. And presiding over it was a special judge—a former Tory candidate—John Donaldson.

When the law first came before parliament late in 1970, the response of the TUC’s leadership was predictable. It shied away from anything that implied direct action against the law. Instead it confined itself to putting pressure on Labour MPs to amend the sections of the law it disliked most. It printed hundreds of thousands of pamphlets and it called a one-off protest rally in the Albert Hall.

The pressure for a real fight came from elsewhere. Over the previous two decades, trade union organisation had developed real strength in thousands of individual factories, with shop steward organisation again and again forcing the employers to concede improvements in wages and conditions. But it was a strength that usually did not look beyond the individual factory or even the individual section. It was the activists who held this sectional and factory organisation together who were most threatened by the law and who spearheaded the fightback against it.

At first the focus for this opposition was provided by a body called the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions—which had come into being in the course of the struggle against the previous Labour government’s attempt to introduce an anti-union law (called in Place of Strife).

The Liaison Committee was very much under the domination of the Communist Party—then considerably stronger than it is now, although with very similar politics—and brought together, as well as a large number of shop floor militants, some full time officials. Particularly important was the broad left leadership which ran the AUEW under Hugh Tunnicliffe.

On 11 November—less than six months after the Tory government came to power—there was a first one day unofficial strike against the Bill, with a hundred thousand workers striking, mainly in Scotland. Three days later the Liaison Committee had its most successful conference ever, with more than a thousand delegates crammed into a hall to vote for a programme of militant action, including a one day strike to take place on 8 December.

On that day half a million people joined a stoppage which was unofficial except in the case of SOGAT whose leadership went into hiding for 24 hours to avoid being served with an injunction ordering them to call the strike off. Early in January similar but separate one day strikes took place in Birmingham and Coventry.

All of this action even had its effect on the TUC and they were forced to start some more serious campaigning. Their rally on 12 January was well supported, and while only a few factories struck for the day, very many more had lunchtime meetings that spilled over into worktime. And when, on Sunday 21 February, the TUC called a march in London, more than 250,000 trade unionists took part.

At that time the left in the trade union machine was led by Hugh Scanlon and the AUEW. Their response was much better than the TUC’s. They called an official strike on 1 March and 1.5 million workers downed tools for the day. On 18 March, coinciding with a special TUC conference on the Bill they called another strike; this time two million walked out.

By taking unofficial action, the best militants among the rank and file had forced the official leadership to go further than it would have otherwise. The result was that long before the Bill became law, millions of workers had learnt what it was about and had taken direct action against it.

The unofficial actions even had their impact on the TUC Special Congress. Many of the union leaders were already secretly preparing to work within the Act by registering under it. At various times leaders of the EEPTU, GMWU, NUS, ASTMS and the NGA came out in favour of following this course, while the leadership of NAISOPA secretly set up a “shadow union” that was registered.

Yet such was the feeling in the movement as a whole that many of these leaders had to vote at the special congress to “strongly...
advise' unions not to register. And by the annual TUC congress that September, the mood was hard enough for the word 'advise' to be replaced by 'instruct'. The generally recognised implication was that unions should not co-operate with the Act or the Court set up under it in any way.

The majority of unions now followed TUC policy and refused to register under the new law. In some cases it was only after a tough internal fight. In ASMET, for example, Clive Jenkins advised the conference to register but was defeated after a stormy debate by 6,750 to 6,650 votes. In other cases it was almost a walkover—the AUEW National Committee voted 68 to nil against registration.

The road to Pentonville

But it soon became clear that refusing to register was not the same as actively fighting the Act. The moment the Court began to threaten union funds, the union leaders rushed to obey its dictates.

The first court case was in April 1972. The government ordered the NUR to postpone a railway strike and to hold a secret ballot on the issue. The union obediently complied, and it was only the determination of railway workers in voting overwhelmingly for strike action that prevented a serious defeat. In the same month Jack Jones of the TGWU begged the Court to pay a fine of £50,000. The Court imposed. In both cases the TUC endorsed what the union leaders had done—effectively dropping the principle that it had voted for only six months before.

Soon it was established practice for union leaders to appear before the Court and to pay fines. It became only a matter of time before they went the whole hog and altered their rule books as the government wished in order to register. So, for example, Jack Jones of the TGWU slipped in a few amendments through his union's Rules Revision Conference which would have made this possible.

The machinations of the union leaders were made easier as the unofficial action which first greeted the introduction of the Bill died away. The problem was that the Liaison Committee was no longer prepared to do anything without getting the go-ahead from the official movement. And so, for instance, its conference on 10 June 1971 was a miserable affair, providing no guidance on how to stop direct action against the Bill. And when real struggles were to develop a year later, nothing had to say about them.

The prospect seemed very pessimistic indeed by the early summer of 1972. It looked as if the Tories had got away with changing completely the framework within which working-class organisations operated.

What decisively altered this dismal prospect was the activity of rank and file dockers. They were engaged in a long and bitter struggle to prevent their employers diverting their work away from the well organised docks into container depots and cold stores employing badly paid and weakly unionised workers. Their principle tactic was to black firms whose lorries went across picket lines into these places. It was such blacking that caused the Industrial Relations Court to impose the first £80,000 fine on the TGWU.

The centre of the struggle became the Midland Cold Store in London, owned by the giant Vestey company. London dockers established an effective picket of the place and resisted every attempt by the Industrial Relations Court to force them to pull out. In desperation, the Court decided to summons the stewards leading the picket, who simply ignored the court orders. On Friday 21 July, five leading stewards were arrested by the police for 'contempt of court'. They were taken to Pentonville prison. Within hours, every port in the country was closed as dockers walked off the job.

The dockers were not content with merely stopping work themselves; they went all out for solidarity action from other workers. The first task was to stop Fleet Street and it took a lot of hard argument from dockers and militant printers, but by Sunday the printworkers were out and there were no more national papers. Other workers followed suit and despite the fact that it was in the middle of the holiday period the number of workers out on strike grew hour by hour.

By the Wednesday even the TUC had woken up and called a one day general strike for the following Monday. That same Wednesday saw another dramatic development; the Law Lords let the five shop stewards go. Rank and file action had proved that the law was not worth the paper it was written on when faced with a serious challenge.

For a strong group of workers, capable of mounting a major campaign, to defeat the workings of the law is something to get used to the law as a whole is quite another. That inevitably means a major and generalised challenge to the government, and that in turn requires a national leadership willing to fight. In 1972 there was no such leadership; the TUC were scared stiff by what they had seen in the past few days and were scuttling off for private talks with Heath.

The LCC's, which had done not a thing during Pentonville—had no intention of challenging the official leadership. So the Tories were able to regroup and recover before taking the initiative again.

They could, and did, use other, less discredited, laws to attack the labour movement. Thus the Labour councillors of Clay Cross were heavily fined and debarred under the 'Housing Finance Act' for refusing to raise council rents when ordered, and three building workers were tried at Shrewsbury under the conspiracy laws for leading and organising militant pickets during the national building workers' strike.

The Goodaffair

Neither did the NLRB just crawl away and die. At the end of 1972 it fined the AUEW for refusing to admit a seafar called James Good to membership, provoking a very muted response. Again, in late 1973, the AUEW was fined £75,000 for its handling of a small dispute with a company called ComMech, and while 350,000 workers struck in protest this was organised by the
district committee of the AUEW rather than the national leadership.

Hugh Scanlon the then president of the union went to great efforts to stop the union being stumped into recognition of the Court. But that was not the same as leading an active struggle to smash it.

But this time, however, the government was on its last legs, and it finally collapsed under another attack from the miners in February, 1921. The subsequent general election brought a Labour government to power, explicitly committed to repealing the Industrial Relations Act.

That explicit commitment did not stop them trying to see just how much they could get away with, and they took their time about getting rid of the Act. The Industrial Relations Court tried another case on the AUEW, and at long last this most ‘left-wing’ of official leaderships found the courage to do something. They issued an instruction that: ‘All members will stop work forthwith.’ This the membership did and, within hours, an anonymous capitalist had paid off the fine. The Act, the Court and Sir John Donaldson tottered into oblivion.

There is one very obvious lesson which stands out from this brief record: whatever noises the official leadership might make, they are totally unreliable when it comes to action against government legislation. They simply have too many fingers in too many pies, in this or that set of talks, on this or that committee to take the risk of a serious confrontation with the government. The best that can be hoped for is that they will be pushed into taking some sort of action by the pressure from below. But even here there is danger that they will manage to blunt the protest and lead it off into safe and passive channels.

On the other hand, the experience also proves that a rank and file leadership, if it works seriously, can organise a substantial fightback without, and even despite, the official leadership. The record shows that, every time there was any serious organisation at the base, then it was possible to win substantial action but that when that was missing, then, at best, isolated groups of workers made brave stands against the state before going down to defeat.

Prior: ducking the issue

The Duke of Plazotaro, fans of Gilbert and Sullivan will recall, was the man who ‘led his army from behind, he found it less exciting.’ Perhaps it has become a cliché, but union leaders left and right have made the Duke seem like a mindless militant since the Employment Act became law in the autumn of 1980.

Fighting words followed by inaction over Prior’s law make the fierce statements of opposition to the new Industrial Relations Bill look rather sick.

Bill Keys of SOGAT, chair of the TUC Employment Committee, declared in the Morning Star on 26 February:

‘My union, SOGAT, will be inviting the TUC to adopt a policy of using its collective financial, organisational and industrial strength to defeat this legislation.’

This was the same man who called off the blacking of newspapers during the Camden Journal dispute in January 1981, when threatened with a writ by the Newspaper Society. The very day the TUC Printing Industry Committee (chairman—W Keys Esq) announced they would go to jail rather than abide by the Employment Act.

Although this was certainly the most grotesque example of capitulation to the Prior Law, it was not the most serious aspect of the way the unions have ducked the issues. The covert acceptance of the TUC’s changes has been far more insidious.

In the two most important disputes to involve legal threats since the Act was passed—Ansell’s and Laurence Scott—the role of union legal officials in blocking solidarity has been crucial.

The Ansell’s workers were bound to lose if they confined the dispute to the firm’s Burton-in-Bradstock brewery. A little belatedly, the stewards agreed to tackle its Romford and Burton breweries. The issue of blacking and support went before the TGWU’s general executive council which was, to a degree, sympathetic to their case, despite the backsliding by the fulltime officials. But the advice given by the TUC’s lawyers was that any extension of the dispute would infringe the Prior Law’s rules about secondary action. That settled the matter, and the Ansell workers were effectively sentenced to the dole.

A similar line-up took place early on during the Laurence Scott dispute, even when it was still official. The AUEW executive considered the blacking of Mining Supplies illegal. The AUEW’s legal advice was categoric—blackening of Mining Supplies was illegal under the Prior Law and the owner, Arthur Snipe, could drag the union into the courts.

Both these examples are merely the extremes of what happened. Almost every union in the country has had the same counsel—ranging from the advice that the head office should be informed of who was picketing so that it could ‘control’ (i.e. avoid) mass picketing, right up to the specific ‘hands off’ over Ansell and Scotts.

And this was the fundamental idea behind Prior’s law—to make the union officials act as a break on militancy, to avoid the situations where the law would come directly into play. A typical example was the move on the ASLEF executive to disown the Kings Cross branch’s blacking of the Sun, because Murdoch might have taken legal action against the union itself rather than just individual militants.

It is therefore hardly surprising that the Employment Act has hardly been used. ‘The important thing about the dog,’ as Sherlock Holmes once remarked, ‘was that it didn’t bark.’ The reason is, it didn’t have to.

All the same the rare occasions when the new rules were used also saw a hurried back-tracking by the officials. The first, and thus far only, injunctions against secondary picketing actually served against pickets

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were taken out by Chloride against women T&G members at the small Gnedor distribution in Romford on 8 May 1981. The union's response was to tell the strikers to stop the picket while the union 'thought it over'.

A fortnight later, Chloride (former chairman—M Edwards Esq) shut eight distribution depots including Romford, confident in the belief that the last thing the T&G would do would be to mount effective opposition.

The T&G also figures in the strike by Bestobell luggers at the same time—in this case largely by its absence. The luggers eventually occupied the company's Glasgow office; the company got an injunction; the police moved in and arrested the luggers, who were fined £5,000 for contempt of court. Not a peep from 'Britain's Biggest Union', once again right behind its members.

As against these tales of disaster, there is very little to say on the good side. But there were just a couple of indications—from weak and relatively insignificant unions—that taking on the law was neither impossible nor fruitless. The protest stoppages by the Inland Revenue Staffs Federation (and other civil service workers) when an IRSF official came up in court on charges arising from the national dispute did not stop him being found guilty. But he was neither fined nor imprisoned, and let off with a warning for an offence which could have carried a jail sentence.

A second example comes from the Camden Journal dispute mentioned earlier. The police at the Nine Elms works owned by the same company decided initially to enforce the six pickets law. This was already being defied by unofficial mass picketing, but the NUJ executive then decided to sanction an official 'mass' picket—after which the police clearly decided to turn a blind eye.

A question of control

The six pickets rule (in fact a matter for police discretion) has turned out to be the one aspect of the Prior Law which hasn't had a really serious effect. This was in part because it was successfully defied early on in a very public way by the civil servants at the Brixton dole office who were fighting against victimisation. The publicity given to the wholesale arrests and to the presence of local MPs on the picket line was probably designed to show that the new rules were being enforced, but subsequently the police have in most cases chosen not to exercise their discretion over the 'sixth picket'. In fact Prior's own 'employees' organised mass pickets during the civil service dispute.

There is an obvious lesson in this—but perhaps not so obvious as not to need repeating. Picketing is by and large under the control of those involved in the dispute or rank and file militants. It was the one area of Prior's Law which involved a direct conflict with militant activity, rather than an emphasis on the union leadership policing the members. The efforts of officials to get control of picketing largely fail because it requires so much time and effort to organise.

For example, the Prior picketing code (not law, but it can be quoted in court) says: 'It is unwise to designate an official representative of the union.' But it says 'authorised pickets' should always wear armbands.

It says the picket organiser should 'ensure that employees from other places of work do not join the picket line and that any offers of support on the picket line from outsiders are refused.'

There may be cases where some of this has happened, but in general the proportion of disputes made official has been so small (about 4 per cent) that these guidelines have been virtually irrelevant. Even in the few large, official strikes there has been no official control of picketing and, in general, scabs have been dealt with as scabs. The one notable exception to all this of course, is the T&G's erudite behaviour at Chloride.

Apart from the major issues of solidarity in disputes and picketing, the Employment Act has been little directly used. There are, however, enough examples to show what can happen. Last December, for example, the Court of Appeal upheld a High Court injunction which had been made in Hull docks on the 'Antama'. The 'international Transport Workers Federation for support in a pay dispute. NUR members blacked the ship by refusing to operate the lock gates. The courts ruled it illegal because there wasn't a contract between the employers in dispute and the employers whose workers were taking action. This was the first ruling on the secondary action provisions of the Employment Act.

Needless to say it did not limit the headlines. In fact, as far as can be discovered, there has not even been a union statement on it, let alone a protest, let alone a campaign.

Again at the back end of last year, there was a case involving the T&G at Laporre Industries. An individual named Baldwin refused to abide by a branch decision to reduce overtime to avoid redundancies. He was arrested. He then told the company to stop paying his union dues by check-off. The union told him to pay his excess overtime (£23) to a charity and he was fined £30 for defacing union notices. He refused to pay and the shopfloor threatened to walk out. So the company had to sack Baldwin, and true to his principles, Baldwin the scab then claimed he had a conscientious objection to rejoicing the union and took his case to a tribunal under the Employment Act.

The case was decided, he was rejected. But the T&G, far from using the case to show exactly who might benefit under the Act, used to undermine the closed shop, was absolutely silent.

Official silence

Baldwin was just another in a line of scabs which stretches all the way back to a certain James Goad who was a 'conscientious objector' in the days of the Industrial Relations Act. If ever there was an example of the sort of rat who might drag the union to court for compensation under the new Tribunals, it is Mr Baldwin. Not a peep from the T&G, except to leave a sense of relief. Under the Tribunals law, he would not be so lucky.

A third incident, involving the quiet operation of the 1980 Act, involved TV technicians blacking a company because of the threat to jobs. Originally, the High Court refused an injunction to the company, Hadimor Productions. Then the Appeal Court (with Lord Denning in the fore) ruled against the union ACTT. Finally, the House of Lords reversed the Denning ruling.
and said that workers blocking a company because of job fears amounted to a ‘trade dispute’ and were therefore immune from prosecution.

Again, you would have thought the case was worth a bit of publicity. In fact, the Lords’ judgement was only finally delivered on 11 February this year. it may be that ACIL will announce it to its members. But the fact is that for nearly a year—April 1981 to February 1982—it was supposedly illegal to block in defence of jobs. Where was the protest? Where was the campaign? Where, indeed, was Bill Keys (chairman, TUC Employment Committee)? The mind boggles at what would have happened had the five Law Lords, led by ‘no-jury’ Diplock, had a bad night and decided against the union again all? Perhaps a TUC press release.

The deafening silence from union officials over the implementation of the Employment Act is a real warning.

The Employment Act 1980 was applied subtly, by stealth, and was primarily aimed at union leaders to police the rank and file. It has largely succeeded in its objectives.

Dave Beecham

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**Stage army or picket power**

On 5 April, union executives meet at Wembley at a TUC special conference on Tebbit’s new Employment Bill. It is hardly the Cup Final, more the first round, and despite the huffing and puffing in the Morning Star, Tribune etc we should not expect very much from it.

It will almost certainly only have one resolution before it— from the Employment Policy Committee of the TUC—and amendments are unlikely to be allowed. The ‘rank and file’ EC member will probably not even get to speak. The policy before the conference will be for a million pound propaganda fund, unions to refuse to accept government money for ballots, no ballots on closed shops etc.

**A different response**

Even if it is all passed this is pretty mild stuff. And we should also take note of two of the planks in the TUC strategy. One is for unions ‘to observe TUC disputes procedures’: the other is for the TUC to be empowered to coordinate action in support of a member union ‘in difficulty’ (how charming) under the new laws. In other words, if there is any militant opposition to the law, the TUC wants to be able to control it. Even if strikes against the new law seem a long way off at the moment, the TUC remembers the words of Jack Jones during the Pentonville struggle in 1972—we’ve got to call a strike to control the movement.

The bureaucracy has had to make a different response to Tebbit than to Prior. To a limited extent this is because Prior took the trouble to talk to the TUC, and they saw

him, however foolish foolishly as their man in the cabinet. But the union leaderships do see Tebbit as a threat to them, especially financially, with the possibilities of massive damages, or at least a steady bleeding of union funds.

They therefore feel compelled to try to mobilise a stage army—not to fight the Bill in earnest, but in order to exert pressure on the Tories to amend out the worst features and on the Labour Party to repeal it if it wins the next election. To this end they are having to carry some of the arguments over the Bill to rank and file trade unionists, in a way that they did not in 1972.

Their campaign, however limited, raises the possibility of socialists generalising arguments over the law in the branches and workplaces in the coming months.

All the same, the TUC’s posture and the special conference itself, have got a fairly hollow ring about them. There is an air of unreality about some of the comments already being made. ‘The present day unions, under an increasingly determined TUC, are in no mood for waiting. They have the will, the policy and the means to stop Tebbit in his tracks,’ wrote Tribune on 26 February.

The struggles of the 1970s were not built

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**What Tebbit does**

The new law of the Bill is to prevent even a local union from acting in the interests of its members. Tebbit and his colleagues remove the immunity to civil damage given them in 1966. It allows them to be forced to pay up to £250,000 damages for unlawful items of industrial action.

Tebbit actions that union leaders would fight to maintain, others have fought to lose, and many have feared would be lost. Provisions have been strengthened the law on ‘industrial action’ not part of a dispute between workers and their employers, and on the prevention and locking in of workers who have been dismissed. The ‘lock in’ is prevented from becoming a trade union rate. Action in support of strikes, taking place elsewhere to do with the industrial action.

A ‘political strike’ by the TUC of two years ago, strikes against hiring off, etc. The important point is the Bill is the first time a trade union has been forced to appeal to the courts for a decision on the union’s policy.

As far as the TUC’s day of action of two years ago, it is against hiring off etc. The ‘lock in’ is prevented from becoming a trade union rate. Action in support of strikes, taking place elsewhere to do with the industrial action.

A ‘political strike’ by the TUC of two years ago, strikes against hiring off, etc. The important point is the Bill is the first time a trade union has been forced to appeal to the courts for a decision on the union’s policy.

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Reagan's gang fall out

The direction of US foreign policy since Reagan's election has alarmed hundreds of thousands of people in Britain and Western Europe. It is a policy which appears at once aggressive and incoherent, governed by simple Cold War motives, but inconsistent even in that.

It is not only the anti-Bomb movement in Europe which is alarmed by it: the Western European ruling classes, fellow members of the NATO alliance, are increasingly divided from the Americans over Poland, El Salvador and a whole range of other issues. Sue Cockerill looks at the arguments that have been taking place.

The inconsistency of American foreign policy and the clear presence of different camps within the Reagan administration has been evident from the beginning. On numerous occasions, officials have made contradictory statements on arms control, on talks with the Russians, on the basic strategic thinking underlying the deployment of 'theatre' nuclear weapons, and on US involvement in Central America.

Two basic camps have been identified—those around Alexander Haig, Secretary of State, and those around Caspar Weinberger, Defence Secretary.

The Haig camp is seen as essentially 'Atlanticist'—wishing to preserve the NATO Alliance at the cost of compromising with the Europeans over relations with the Eastern bloc.

The Weinberger camp is sometimes, confusingly, called 'unilateralist' (no relation to CND), meaning that it wants to use American power on its own if the Europeans will not go along with American objectives. For the Weinberger camp, and for a section of Reagan's backers, those objectives are no less than the reversal of the post-war domination of Russia over Eastern Europe. They see the crisis within the Russian bloc as an opportunity to increase US influence over Poland (and possibly other East European countries). If the Europeans won't go along with that objective because they are tied into the preservation of the Eastern bloc by economic links with the USSR, then the Americans should do it alone.

It is a policy of 'roll-back', which was talked about a great deal in the early years of the first Cold War, but was soon replaced by
the concept of 'containment'. It is being raised again at a time when America's power is much less than it was then economically. It has been successfully challenged by West Germany and Japan, particularly: militarily it has been through the defeat in Vietnam.

But as the Weinberger camp see it, Russia is also much weaker, particularly in terms of its hold over its satellites. They also see America's role in much more global terms—some see America's future in the Pacific and as basically a sea power—and so they believe the European Alliance can be dispensed with if necessary.

The division between Haig and Weinberger is not simply due versus hawk. Both are in favour of increased arms spending and Haig is more 'hawkish' on the question of direct American intervention in Central America.

The real source of the division seems to be this. Haig and the state department have to think in terms of what the US can realistically achieve internationally, and this means weighing up carefully the resources at the country's disposal—which would be rather limited if it broke with its European allies. By contrast, Weinberger's only concern is the term military calculations. Since the US is overwhelming more powerful militarily than the Europeans, he feels it is possible to ignore them. But when it comes to El Salvador, it would be the US army that would be in the firing line in any Vietnam style intervention, and he sees rather better rather than Haig what would mean for its morale.

At the moment several events are seen to clearly indicate that, overall, Haig and the 'Atlanticists' are in control: the replacement of Richard Allen as National Security Adviser by William Clark, Haig's deputy (a man who gained notoriety at his Senate confirmation hearing last year by his inability to name the prime ministers of Zimbabwe or South Africa, and his ignorance of the name of Michael Foot), and, more importantly, the decision that the US government would pay the US banks $71 million of Polish debt rather than declaring Poland in default. Weinberger's camp had been pushing a plan to call such a default, to demonstrate the bankruptcy of the Eastern bloc as a system, and also in retaliation against the Western European refusal to follow the American lead on sanctions.

**Poland, Afghanistan, Libya**

The Administration defended its decision not to declare Poland in default on the grounds that this way there was still a chance that Poland would eventually pay the money back, whereas a default would end the obligation to pay and reduce the West's leverage over events in Poland. In reality, the big factor in the decision was fear of the effect of the default on the international monetary system, and, in particular, on the West German banks—much more heavily involved in loans to Poland.

Henry Wallach, a governor of the US Federal Reserve (the equivalent of the Bank of England) publicly warned against the dangers of a default:

"Banks would have to be concerned, especially after having lived through the Iran precedent, that international credit had become a pawn of political purpose."

The splits in the NATO Alliance have been apparent for some time, though they have become more acute over Poland. There was considerable reluctance by West Germany, in particular, to follow the sanctions imposed by Carter on the Russians over the invasion of Afghanistan. Nor was Carter's Iranian policy enthusiastically supported. Then there was the fiasco over the boycott of the Moscow Olympics. Even the British Tory government has had its differences with the Americans, especially over Namibia (where the Europeans have succeeded in pulling the US away from the overt support for South Africa which Reagan pursued at first), and over the middle East. Lord Carrington was one of the prime movers behind the EEC peace plan involving recognition of an independent Palestinian state, which was seen by the Americans as undermining their Camp David agreement between Israel and Egypt.

The American pressure on Europe to impose sanctions on Libya has now been overshadowed by the Polish crisis (as has the whole American paranoia about Gaddafi assassins), but it is worth remembering that the Europeans would have no truck with that US plan either.

The disagreements on numerous issues have as their background deep economic divisions between America and the EEC. The Americans have long felt that they have borne the unfair share of the burden of Western Europe's slower growth of the growth rates of the US economy relative to Japan and West Germany. Hence the pressure in 1979 which resulted in agreement to increase NATO arms budgets by three per cent per year in real terms. Only Britain, Italy and France (not a member of the unified military command of NATO) have achieved larger cuts far.

The differences over sanctions against Poland have pointed up the varying and contradictory interests of US and European capital. The West Germans, in particular, have very important trading interests with the Eastern bloc, especially in high technology goods (which the Americans want stopped by sanctions) whereas trade with the East is really only significant in one area—the sale of licences for the small but very lucrative car assembly industry.
area to the Americans—the export of grain to Russia. The failure of Reagan to embargo grain sales to Russia is undoubtedly due to the importance of the US farming lobby. American agriculture is having problems, and can’t afford to lose the Russian market.

The French government of Mitterrand has appeared much more pro-American on Poland than the Germans (probably to embarrass the French Communist Party) but in reality its economic interests lie in preserving East-West trade, and it hasn’t called off its participation in the Egyptian gas pipeline project to which Americans are extremely hostile. The French have also recognised the guerrillas in El Salvador and have recently sold arms to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

A series of rows have blown up between the EEC and the US over trade. There is an atmosphere of growing protectionism as each country fights to keep hold of its internal market while trying to get a bigger share of the others. The US steel companies have complained to the International Trade Commission about EEC steel imports doing material damage to the American steel industry, alleging that EEC steel is unfairly subsidised.

Talks to try to resolve the steel row in February got nowhere, and the bulk of the complaints are now being pursued through the US legal system. Apparently in retaliation, the EEC’s synthetic fibre industry’s organisation, CEFIC, has complained to the EEC commission about dumping (ie selling goods below the cost of production) by US textile manufacturers, particularly in the Italian market.

One of the most serious trade battles going on concerns EEC exports of food to Latin America and the Middle East, where US markets are substantial and growing. The Americans maintain that the Common Agricultural Policy has become a ‘Common Export Policy’—that the EEC subsidises its farmers too much.

Symmetrical crises

The problems facing Reagan are in some ways similar to those facing his arch-rival, Brezhnev. Both super powers increasingly lack the economic muscle to get their way. Both face growing revolt within their empires. Both have reached for military solutions, particularly in Poland, in the deployment of MX, Cruise, the SS20—in an attempt to restore their waning influence. Hence repression, East and West, and the new Cold War.

The new Cold War threatens to be infinitely more dangerous than that of the 1940s and 1950s. But it could also be infinitely more damaging to the internal cohesion of both blocs. For it takes place as the two super powers grow weaker and their ability to exercise international influence declines. The West is not just NATO all the time. The first Cold War, by contrast, developed out of the growing strength of the US on the one side and the USSR on the other. That is why resistance this time round could be much more successful, in both camps.

The drum
that lost
its beat

I get so involved with some books that everything else becomes an irritation stopping me from reading. Gunter Grass’s three Danzig books (*Tin Drum, Cat and Mouse, Dog Years*) are in that class.

The novels are about a series of characters who live through the Nazi Germany of the 30s to the economic miracle of post-war West Germany. The books are separate in style, but overlap, with the characters appearing in each from different viewpoints. Together they make up a complex whole.

The most famous and, probably the best of the novels is the first, *The Tin Drum* (now also a film). It is centred on the reactions to life inside Nazi Germany of Oscar — a character based on aspects of Grass’s own experience.

Like Oscar, Gunter Grass was born in Danzig (the present Gdansk) in 1927, when it was a ‘free’ city between Germany and Poland, administered jointly by them. Like Oscar, Grass fought as part of the German army and was captured by the Americans.

The book tells what happens to the lives of Oscar’s family and friends during and after the rise of the Nazis, mixing reality and fantasy. Oscar, for example, stops growing at the age of six when he decides to fall down stairs in order to be reunited with his drum. He remains a child/dwarf till near the end of the book, and only starts to grow again when the Nazis are defeated. Such symbolism is meshed throughout in such a powerful way that it all becomes a world of its own, with sub-conscious fears and hopes blended into reality.

The *Tin Drum* was published in 1959, selling 300,000 copies in Germany and after translation into English over 500,000 in America. Grass’s second novel *Cat and Mouse* appeared in 1961 and the last of the trilogy, *Dog Years* is a much more ‘normal’ book, covering in part the same events in Danzig as the *Tin Drum*, with Oscar now a secondary character. It is a much smaller, tighter and concise novel, and acts as a comment on the first book. *Dog Years* continues the story in the style of *Tin Drum* into the post-war years, a Germany of bombs and dust.

Grass is a socialist, though increasingly of a moderate variety. The trilogy works because it is so much part of Grass’s own history and describes him coming to terms with it. They are books of contradiction and implicit revolt with great insight and power.

Also of this period was his play *The Plebeians Rehearse the Uprising*, set in Berlin of 1919 where Brecht (the old Marxist playwright) and poet is nicely settled into his new theatre provided by the East German government. Brecht’s company are rehearsing the play *Coriolanus* by Shakespeare. During the rehearsal the theatre is invaded by workers taking part in the 1953 uprising against the East German government. Brecht is caught between his general support of workers on the one hand and his own experience of East Germany as socialist and his vested interest in keeping his nice new theatre on the other. It is an excellent play that again brilliantly blends dreams (the play) and reality (the uprisings) into other other questions and questions the role of theatre as a guide to action.

His later works have all been less successful, while his politics have moved to moderate reformism and support of the German SDP.

Local Anaesthetic and From the Diary of a Snail were published in the 70s and are attempts to fuse the earlier style with the arguments for gradual reform against revolution. The Snail represents the gradual approach gradually improving society.

Not only are the politics awful, but the books are boring, less complex less emotionally committed, and more directly propaganda for the wrong politics. You never feel as if Grass is revealing deep psychological insights. The old method is there but it never seems to work; it just becomes a boring story about boring people with a few tricks thrown in.

His latest work is *The Flounder* published in 1977 and subtitled ‘a celebration of life, food and sex’. I can’t help feeling that a better title would have been *Floundering rather than The Flounder*. Grass abandons the real world of his other works for a mythical past, a time of matrix/arch, a pre-history of pure pleasure (history begins with the rise of man, war and the Oedipus complex). What appeared as psychological insights into events now becomes a rather silly attempt on human essences and history. It’s a real mess of a book, where the style of Grass, cut off from his personal history and any real world, disintegrates into sometimes amusing but mostly silly ramblings.

But these later failures shouldn’t put people off from his earlier and brilliant work.

Noel Halifax
Biologists for the new right

The New Racism
by Martin Barker
Junction Books £4.95

It is not often that those on the far left can
greet, with enthusiasm, the publication of a
book by a professional philosopher. The
author is a prominent African American
in the United States, and his book is
appealingly written in a popular and
lively fashion, with the relation between
racism, Darwinian theory and something
called 'sociobiology'. Since Marx was one
of Darwin's most ardent admirers, and
while Richard Rrrall, of NF fame, has
claimed that sociology has 'buried
Marxism', it is clearly important that socialists
know something of that relation.

This book is about the causes of racism
as such: nor does it provide a blueprint for
fighting racism in the workplace or on the
streets. The author restricts himself, rather,
to spelling out what he means by the 'new
racism', and how it finds expression in the
carriers of the major political parties (especially the
Tories), and the supposed scientific support
for such views, provided by certain recent
developments in biology.

Central to the whole book is an attack on
the view that separates the overtly racist
position of the NF and BM from the policies
of the major political parties on immigration.

Also attacked is the view that racism
consists inevitably in regarding other races
as inferior.

The link between the two views is obvious
enough. It is precisely because Tory policy
on immigration need not involve assertions
as to the inferiority of the incoming im-
migrants, that Tory racists are able to
distance themselves from the outbursts of
the extreme right.

Barker then spells out, in some consi-
derable detail, what the new racism, which
gives the book its title, involves. Referring
particularly to Thatcher's infamous speech
in which she said that Britain was being
swamped by immigrants with an alien culture,
he argues that the heart of the new racism
depends on claims that 'ordinary' people
are beset by 'deeply held' fears which can
be dispelled by a 'reasonable' policy on
immigration. (We all know what 'reasonable'.
in this context, means.)

Why, you might ask, is this the only
possible solution? The answer, according to
Thatcher and co., is that the immigrant
threatens our culture, our very way of life.

Creeper in here is a theory of human
nature: it is very natural for people to form
groups, bound together by a common culture
and attached to a particular territorial area
— hence all the talk of the British nation, the
British way of life, what makes Britain great,
and so on. The theory is nicely summed up
by Enoch Powell:

'an instinct to preserve an identity and
defend a territory is one of the deepest
and strongest implanted in mankind. I
happen to believe that the instinct is good.'

But why a new racism? Ideas such as
these have been around for a very long
time. Indeed Barker devotes a whole chapter
to showing that they are all present, in a
sophisticated way, in the writings of the
philosopher, David Hume. What Barker
does think is new, however, is an almost
unconscious adoption of such views by the
Tory Party, which he traces back to Powell's
'theres a blood' speech in 1968.

The important point is this: the new racism
does not need to appeal to the inferiority of
other races — they are just different. As
Barker says:

'It can refuse insults, it need never talk of
"niggers", "wogs" or "coons"; does not
need to see Jews as degenerate or blacks
as "jungle bunnies".'

As a result, its advocates can easily deny
that they are racist. At the same time, it
authorises the emotions which lead to such
insults and the hostility which results in
physical attacks.

Leading with the right

In fact, the logical conclusion of the new
racism is repatriation. If it is reasonable
to halt the flow of immigrants because they
represent a threat to the way of life of the
indigenous population, then it is equally
reasonable, and only an expression of a
natural instinct, to drive out those invaders
who are already here. By espousing the
theory of the new racism but failing to apply
its logic consistently, the Tory party is simply
paving the way for those who are more
consistent in such matters.

Most readers of Socialist Review will
probably take no convincing that the Tory
Party is racist. Nonetheless, Barker has
performed an invaluable service in docu-
menting the rise of the new racism and
showing its theoretical implications. But it
is the rest of the book, which investigates
the links between sociobiology and the new
racism, which deserves more attention from
socialists than many on the left are likely to
give it.

Sociobiology is presently the dominant
school of thought within evolutionary theory.
Darwin's great achievement was to identify
the mechanism of evolution, he was not, as
many people think, the first scientist to
explore the theory of evolution itself. This
mechanism consists of two processes: random
variation within species and natural selection
of those organisms best adapted for survival.

What sociobiologists (and others like
Desmond Morris) have done is to argue
that certain kinds of human behaviour can
be fully explained in this fashion. Such
behaviour is therefore, instinctive and
invariable because genetically determined.

A well-known difficulty for evolutionary
theory is that, if natural selection promotes
individuals best suited to their own survival,
there seems to be no mechanism whereby
organisms could ever develop altruistic
tendencies which lead to behaviour contrary
to their own interests.

The solution is a bit technical, but basically,
it is possible to demonstrate mathematically
that sacrificing oneself for one's close
relations can actually increase the probability
of shared genes surviving. So a mechanism
for non-selfish behaviour might develop but
limited strictly to closely related organisms.

How does an organism recognise its own
kin? Primarily because its kin will look, or
perhaps smell, similar.

Sociobiologists have latched onto the other
side of the coin, altruism towards those
who look like oneself corresponds with
hostility towards those who look different.
Generalised to the human species, this is
nothing short of a genetic justification of
racism. Wanting to protect one's culture
from outsiders is simply natural. No amount
of education, persuasion or work by
Community Relations Councils can alter
our basic nature.

Notice that this is exactly parallel to the
arguments of Thatcher and Powell, but
stressed up in scientific rhetoric. Other races
are not inferior; just different. Moreover,
unlike those usually heard from the extreme
right, these arguments are based on 'facts',
scientific 'facts' at that. As Barker points
out, the Front and the BM have not been
slow to see the advantage of adopting such
arguments as their own.

So the new racism gains support from
contemporary biology and for that reason,
Barker argues, it is much more dangerous, because 'it appears to be neutral, it appears to be pure science.'

But it is not just in the sphere of race that sociobiology has been influential. First, violence and aggression are seen as natural. Second, differentiation of sex roles is said to be genetically determined (it is no accident that one of the classic texts within sociobiology is entitled ‘The Inevitability of Patriarchy’). Third, the capitalist mode of production is likewise justified. So we have Peter Greig writing in the Daily Mail:

Sociobiology disposes once and for all of the dream of the perfect society which has grabbed the attention of the philosophers from Plato to Karl Marx. We are what we are, greedy, rapacious and self-serving individuals out to get what we can for ourselves.

What is so striking here, is the remarkable degree of overlap with the 'commonsense' views which you hear every time you mention socialism, feminism or a multi-racial society. That of course, is what makes it so dangerous. Popular biology is now giving a scientific justification to these reactionary ideas already held by many. The ideas are, in this way, reinforced and much harder to challenge.

Indeed, although Barker offers a number of forceful criticisms, it is this marked convergence between everyday prejudice and sociobiology that stands at the heart of his main objection.

There is clearly no plausibility in the suggestion that all human behaviour is directly determined by genetic factors. It would be ludicrous, for example, to attempt to explain the fact that Teds and punks style their hair differently in terms of genetic differences between members of the two groups. Not even the most committed sociobiologist would go so far. Some allowance has to be made for social and cultural influence.

Once this much is admitted, the question arises: where does one draw the line? How does one decide which pieces of human behaviour are instinctive and which are not? The answer, in short, is that there is no evidence to suggest that sociobiology is right to draw the line where it does.

Far from being neutral, sociobiology is ideological: it both accepts and justifies the prevailing political ideas (the ideas of the ruling class).

To illustrate how this cultural bias works, Barker points to the earlier instinctivists who believed that the tendency to run away to sea was a genetically determined characteristic. It was even given a scientific sounding name: 'thalassomania'.

Having successfully demolished sociobiology, Barker proceeds to outline a framework within which a non-racist, non-sexist, anti-capitalist biology could be developed.

Whatever our short term strategy for fighting the racism of the extreme right or for opposing Tory policy on immigration, we need a longer term means of combating racist ideas, deeply engrained in ‘commonsense’ attitudes. It is not enough, as is often claimed to present people with a realistic alternative, ie socialism, for that alternative will not be seen as realistic by many. Racist ideas fit neatly into a world outlook which also regards capitalism as natural. Attitudes of the kind discussed by Barker play a part in preventing the workers from taking action which might alter consciousness.

A long term strategy will need to undercut such attitudes but this task will be supremely difficult while sociobiology maintains a dominant position within evolutionary biology. So socialists must become increasingly aware of the non-neutral nature of much of natural science, its ideological content and the enormous impact that popular science can have on public opinion.

Tim Bateman

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Rape: another view

We began a discussion on rape in the last issue of SR with an article by Sue Cockrell, Jane Ure Smith and Marte Wohle. Julie Watson agrees with most of what they said, but believes they were slightly wrong in some respects and omitted some important points.

Capitalism distorts everything—from where we live and what we earn, to sexual relationships. Women are objectified under capitalism and seen as passive and vulnerable.

It is from that distortion that rape arises, and it is because of it that rape is for us, as it is not for the feminists, a class issue.

Sue and the others wrote a lot about the oppression of women, their fears and their misgivings, but never touched on the unhappiness of men's lives. Yet the two are inextricably linked under capitalism: we are taught at a very early age that love-romance-marriage follows a set, specific pattern. Boy meets girl, they fall in love, marry, have kids, and are relatively happy for the rest of their lives. The reality, for the majority of us, is the opposite. When the reality hits people, unhappiness arises.

It is worth looking at some studies of rape and their findings.

The most famous, and most widely referred to, inquiry into rape was conducted in the early seventies, by Menacham Amir who examined all reported rapes in Philadelphia during 1958-60.

Contradiction

Amir studied 646 cases and 1,292 offenders. Ninety per cent of the cases, he found, 'belonged to the lower part of the occupational scale, from skilled workers to the unemployed', 34.5 per cent were unskilled labourers, 18.2 per cent were unemployed. The majority of rapes—70%—were committed by men known to the woman involved.

Further, the majority of rapes were committed at the weekend—usually on a Saturday and between the hours of 6am and 2am—and the peak month for rapes was July. There was a significant association between the consumption of alcohol and forcible rapes at the weekend.

As Amir says rape is most likely to occur when offenders are of the same race and age level as their victims and meet them in the warm months, on weekends, and/or during the evening and night hours.

The truth is that it is working class kids that hang about the streets—when was the last time you passed a gang of middle, or upper, class kids on your way to the chip shop? And they are kids—the majority of rape victims are single and aged between 15 and 24, 80% of rape offenders are single and aged between 15 and 19.

As Susan Brownmiller notes in Against Our Will: 'Women who live in urban lower-class neighbourhoods of high crime and juvenile delinquency are subject to the greatest risk of any class. It follows then, and statistics bear it out, that the group of women who run the greatest risk of being assaulted ... are black, teenage, urban, lower-class girls'.

I am not arguing that only working class women are raped. They are not, but the majority of rapes are committed on working class women, by working class men.

Interestingly, Amir found that humiliation (defined as fellatio and repeated intercourse) occurred with only 27 per cent of victims. This is significant, because we often think of rape as an act against women designed to humiliate us deliberately. There is no doubt that it is a humiliating and horrific experience. But why do men rape? Is it a compensation against women? A study of rape in Denver showed that in the majority of rapes there were demands for cooperation and affection.

Rape is not completely distinctive from other crimes. It is about groups of unemployed kids hanging about street corners, getting drunk on cheap wine, or workers getting pissed up in the pub together—they see women and they want them, in the same way they would a car.

The distortions produced in people's lives by capitalism are often most pronounced in the working class. It could even be argued that, generally speaking, middle class and upper class men can afford to pay for sex—working class men can't.

Even when women outside of the working class are raped, I feel they can deal with it better. They have the education and confidence to come to terms with it more easily. The demand of Sue and the others for free NHS Rape Crisis Centres is an understandable one, but follows from the way they see rape as affecting women—through humiliation.

My experience with Rape Crisis Centres is that because of their very nature, their funding and their workers (funding usually comes from the local authority and the workers are usually middle class feminists who see their role as 'liberated' social workers) they offer no real solution to the problem. They are like ambulances—they pick up the pieces after the event.

For us as revolutionaries there are immense contradictions in our handling of rape, as of other crimes. For example, what would you do if you had seen a group of unemployed kids beating up an old aged pensioner? Knowing that the police do not, and cannot, offer any viable solution or alternative, yet wanting to prevent another incident—would you call the police? There are no easy answers.

Change

It is one thing to locate violence—which I think Sue and the others do quite well, but it is another thing to change it. And that means we have to move away from seeing rape in the abstract...

For us the only force which can bring change in society is the working class, and what is important for us is how ideas change in society. Workers do change under capitalism—their ideas change through struggle and activity. The Liverpool typists and the women at Lee Jeans did more to change male trade unionists' ideas about women than anything else.

Rape should be raised in our workplaces and trade union branches. None is saying this is easy, but it can be raised in a concrete fashion by arguing for better lighting, against sexual harassment, for transport home at night. These are the sort of demands which challenge the Tories and the bosses, which change men's ideas about women and that build women's confidence.

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INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION

Paying for the hour

There has been a connection between the series of three day a week train drivers’ strikes of January and February, last November’s Longbridge strike over rest breaks and the current baggage handlers’ dispute at Heathrow. Sammy Rankel explains what it is and its implications for the future.

British Rail’s attempt to force flexible rostering and shiftworking on the whole of its workforce is not an isolated piece of management belligerence. It is part of a wider set of moves by many different management to extract more work out of fewer workers – to use capital more intensively and to cut jobs. At Heathrow, British Airways are in dispute with around 2000 ground staff who are striking against new forms of rostered shiftworking that BA wants in order to cut more jobs. At Longbridge, where a move from a 40 hour week to a 39 hour week had earlier been agreed, management wanted to claw back the hours cut by break time cuts.

Over the last two years a huge number of industries and companies have agreed to move to a shorter working week: usually moving from 40 to 39 hours, but in some cases going further to 37½ hours or 37 hours for manual workers. Five or six million manual workers have gained a shorter working week in these two years and many of them are looking for cuts below 39 hours in the near future. And because most of the agreements have included clauses to bind both sides to make up the hours at nil cost, employers have been looking for, and often gaining, genuine changes that go further than offf the reduction in normal weekly hours.

Implementing an hour off the week for day workers has brought disputes throughout several industries, most notably in engineering where the 39 hour week came in last November. There was a rash of disputes through October to January about how the cut was to be made. Most employers wanted 12 minutes off each day, with the claw back of ending afternoon tea breaks, to offset the cost. But dayworkers generally wanted the hour off the Friday shift as a symbol that the reduction was just the start of moves to the 35 hour week and an early start to the weekend.

The biggest problems have emerged in the capital intensive industries where there is extensive continuous shiftworking, as in petrochemicals and chemical plants, or where there is 24 hour working, as in the railways. Reducing the normal working week from 40 to 39 hours is difficult if the shiftworking is complex, especially if it is on a seven day continuous cycle. Some management have simply conceded more rest days off and moved the length of shifts at eight hours, with three shifts a day. And many employers have got genuine productivity gains in return for these changes.

At British Rail productivity deals have been around for years. Since the war, manning on the railways has slumped from 600,000 to around 200,000 today. Issues like flexible rostering, open stations and single manning of trains have been on the agenda for many years, but the determination to force the pace of change came from the Tories. The government’s Peter Parker in the hope that he would do a Michael Edwards on the railways.

By 1985, the government said, they wanted 38,000 redundancies, and the way to achieve them would be by battering the unions into submission on productivity. Not being a man of violence, Sidney Weighell doesn’t need a lot of convincing. Conscious that his own members have a bit more backbone, he took to ‘ramming flexible rostering down his members’ throats’ as the Financial Times put it. In the case of the guards, among the aristocracy of NUR members, he proved wrong: many can stomach and unofficial strikes have broken out around the country.

The stubborn refusal of ASLEF to accept any changes to the guaranteed eight hour day has put the spotlight on BR’s productivity proposals. The determination of the drivers has forced an intense debate about the future of the industry; the motives of the government, British Rail and union leaders; and the prospects for jobs in the future. The possibility that streamlined units of the industry might well be floged off to friends of the government in private industry has not gone entirely unnoticed.

Although the drivers have already scored an important victory in forcing the government to pay them the three per cent, they will do even better if they can hold on to their eight hour guaranteed day agreement and force the introduction of the 39 hour week (agreed in 1980) without productivity concessions.

The drivers’ strike in 1979 which forced the introduction of the eight hour day was part of a general socialist agitation for shorter hours – eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for leisure. It was a slogan which took for granted that less hours would fundamentally benefit workers, not concentrate their exploitation into fewer hours and thus (especially in a recession) minimise employers’ overheads. We want shorter hours for our benefit, not to make capitalism more cost effective and profitable.

Trying to overturn Weighell

Jim Scott looks at the dissatisfaction that has grown up in the National Union of Railwaymen over the rostering issue that provoked the ASLEF strikes in January and February.

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INDUSTRIAL DISCUSSION SECTION

Their latest sick scheme

Keith Brown looks at the outcome of an argument between employers and the government that will have a big effect on any worker who is ever taken sick.

The constant chorus from the CBI, EEF and other employers' organisations to reduce public spending, cut the civil service and get rid of 'big government' intervention in industry has recently been muted on one issue. After a two-year campaign the employers have won a significant victory over the government's attempt to saddle them with the cost of providing employees with sick pay for the first eight weeks of sickness.

The government have been forced to beat a hasty retreat, with their new Social Security and Housing Benefits Bill in tatters. However, this savaging of the new proposals by the employers still leaves workers worse off. Not only will state sick pay be paid by employers in future, rather than the DHSS, but the amount of sickness benefit will be significantly reduced for the majority of workers and be subject to tax and National Insurance contribution deductions.

The government's original plan was to shift the cost of providing state sickness benefit onto the shoulders of employers for the first eight weeks of sickness. To compensate employers the Minister for Social Security, Patrick Jenkin, announced that they would get a once-and-for-all reduction in their National Insurance contributions.

The government's argument was that over 80 per cent of employees were already covered by company sick pay schemes and that their new scheme would leave the bad employers to also provide such benefits. But it was clear to both employers and trade unions that this was a smokescreen to cover the real intention of cutting the amount of money paid out by the state to sick employees, cutting the DHSS office clerical staff by 5000 jobs, and forcing all employers to take over the government's responsibilities. In other words, to do as the employers are constantly urging the government, cut public spending at a stroke.

But the employers were not to be hoodwinked. They realised that a once-and-for-all reduction in their National Insurance contributions would go nowhere near compensating them for the cost of providing state sickness benefit and the additional expense of setting up a whole new administration to pay out the benefit. The civil service job cuts would force them to take on new staff to run the scheme.

After attempts to come up with alternative proposals for compensating employers, the government gave up and postponed any legislation during 1981. Other suggestions by the DHSS, such as different reductions for different circumstances, also failed after hostile reaction from the bosses, but finally it was agreed that employers would agree to pay the benefit as long as they were reimbursed 100 percent. This is to be done by employers subtracting their outlay on state sick pay from their National Insurance contributions.

The government's arguments against 100 percent reimbursement—that employers would fiddle the system, that it would defeat the object of reducing absenteeism (as the employer would not be losing any money as a result) and that it would end up with the honest, efficient employer subsidising the dishonest, inefficient one—have been completely overturned.

But that's not the end of the story. Under the new scheme workers on state sickness benefit would be subject to tax and NI contributions (to stop them being better off sick than at work!). The employers then discovered that they too would be subject to paying off contributions. A Tory revolt at the committee stage of the Bill kicked out this last attempt to raise some money out of the employers. So game, set and match to the bosses.

Snoopers

The original attempt to cut public spending, get more money out of industry for the government coffers and shift the administrative burden to employers is now largely in pieces. Several thousand civil service clerical jobs will still go, but the government has had to agree to set up a new force of 1000 DHSS inspectors or 'snoopers' to stop employers defrauding the government by claiming payments never made. Savings in benefit payments will result from the ending of earnings-related supplement in January this year and the lower level of benefit under the new scheme, but the scale of savings will be significantly lower because employers will get all the payments back in full.

For workers the new scheme will be a disaster. Those workers who do not receive sick pay from a company scheme will only get the new reduced Employers' Statutory Sick Pay (ESSP). Those who do get sick pay from a company scheme will need to renegotiate their schemes in order to increase the employers' share to make up the shortfall caused by both a reduction in and the taxation of state benefit.

Many small employers will not bother to pay the new benefit, many workers who are frequently sick will be hit and, as a result, the burden on employers will be even less inclined to employ the disabled and the chronically sick. Casual workers are not covered by the new law so that employers will be encouraged to use more and more short contract labour.

Trade unionists should make sure that they do not pay for the bosses' games. Make sure you know what is going on and watch out for attempts to make sickness a disciplinary offence.

Socialist Review 29
Left wing communism

What are revolutionaries' attitudes to parliament, to the trade unions to compromise? These are crucial questions for any socialist. There are few on the left who would argue today against working in the unions or even elections or that tactical flexibility is never necessary. But what is the basis of such work? Does participation in parliamentary elections mean we believe society can be changed in any way through this hallowed institution? Does compromise with others in joint activities mean we are opportunists? Can unions be transformed into revolutionary organisations?

In July 1920 the Second Congress of the newly formed Communist International (see back page) discussed these issues. They were vital because although the expected spread of the Russian revolution had been halted, optimism still reigned. The right-wing Kapp putsch in Germany had been defeated by a massive general strike, the Red Army continued to sweep the White armies from its path, and in many countries the new Communist Parties were rapidly gaining ground.

The world revolution was not just simply proceeding to some preconceived scheme and the Communist International's sections had many serious teething problems. Obviously revolutionary strategy and tactics were of utmost importance and had to be carefully considered.

With this in mind Lenin wrote Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder on the eve of the congress. It was to be his last major work, and one of his most astute and important.

'Really has such a short work had so powerful and lasting influence on the international labour movement. Its influence could be compared to that of the Communist Manifesto' (Tony Cliff, Lenin Vol 4).

The pamphlet is based on the rich experience of the Bolsheviks' history and the lessons of their revolution. As Lenin put it,

'We now possess quite considerable international experience which shows very definitely that certain fundamental features of our revolution have a significance that is not local or peculiarly national or Russian alone, but international.'

Russia during the last 15 years had experienced:

'a varied succession of different forms of the movement in legal and illegal, peaceful and stormy, underground and open, local circles and mass movements, and parliamentary and terrorist forms.'

The Bolshevik Party had been built in the heat of these tumultuous years and its development was full of lessons.

Historically Bolshevism had fought two enemies: social democratic opportunism on the right and petty bourgeois anarchism on the left. When in opposition the main danger had been from the right, now in power, with the Second International in decline, the danger was from the left.

The incredible revolutionary fervour which gripped Europe, combined with the very recent memory of reformist treachery to encourage the growth of such 'leftism' both outside and inside the communist movement. Outside it expressed itself in syndicalism—mainly in Spain, France and the USA. Inside, by 'ultra-leftism' particularly in Germany, Italy, Holland and Britain.

This ultra-leftism involved a completely inflexible form of politics and hostility to any kind of revolutionary intervention in either parliament or the existing trade unions.

The ultra lefts were opposed to all compromises in principle. Lenin accepted that it was not always easy to distinguish between necessary and treacherous compromises. But it was hard to formulate a recipe or general rule ('no compromises') to suit all cases.

To be able to make the correct decisions and changes in line, a revolutionary party tempered in struggle was needed.

'In politics where it is sometimes a matter of extremely complex relations—nationally and internationally—between classes and parties, very many cases will arise that will be much more difficult than the question of a legitimate "compromise" in a strike or a treacherous "compromise" by a strike breaker etc... One must use one's brains and be able to find one's bearings in each particular case.'

Party leaderships had to attain the long and varied experience and the skill necessary to make such decisions.

Communists had to avoid battle when it was advantageous to the enemy. They also had to make temporary alliances even with the most unreliable and unstable of allies.

The key to any such necessary compromises or retreats was not to lose contact with the masses and yet be able, as Engels put it:

'through all the intermediate situations and all compromises (to) clearly perceive and pursue the final aim.'

So Lenin insisted:

'The task devolving to Communists is to convince the backward elements, to work among them, and not to fence themselves off from them with artificial and childish "left" slogans.'

Above all it was necessary to analyse each concrete situation.

The communists did not believe socialism was possible through parliament. This body had to be destroyed along with the rest of the capitalist state and replaced with a system of workers' democracy based on soviets. Many revolutionaries at this time, understandably, interpreted this as a total boycott of parliaments. Lenin argued they were wrong.

Some self-styled Marxists have since used this to justify their own erroneous belief in a 'parliamentary road to socialism'. Nothing could be further from the truth. Again it was a question of relating to the actual level of workers' ideas—though not capitulating to them—and trying to raise their consciousness.

Even in a revolutionary period like the early twenties, many millions of workers still had illusions in parliamentary democracy. So for Lenin both parliament itself and elections were arenas where revolutionaries could speak to more people.

'Parliamentarism is of course "historically obsolete" to the Communists; but—and that is the whole point—we must not regard what is obsolete to us as something obsolete to a class, to the masses.'

'You must not sink to the level of the backward strata of the class. That is incontestable. You must tell them the bitter truth. You are duty bound to call their bourgeois-democratic and parliamentary prejudices what they are—prejudices.

'But at the same time you must soberly follow the actual state of the class consciousness and preparedness of the entire class (not only its Communist vanguard), and of all the working people (not only of their advanced elements).'

The aim of the exercise was clear—parliament and elections were to be used to expose the fraud of bourgeois democracy, to call for its overthrow. The parliamentary system itself could never be used to advance towards socialism. The centre of gravity remained firmly outside.

The treachery of the reformist leaders had led many Communists to reject the trade unions as hopelessly reformist and bureaucratic. What were needed were workers' assemblies and soviets, genuine revolutionary bodies. But as Lenin pointed out:

'Millions of workers in England, France and Germany are for the first time passing from complete lack of organisation to the lowest, most simple, and (for...'}
those still thoroughly imbued with bourgeois-democratic prejudices) most easily accessible form of organisation, namely, the trade unions. And the revolutionary—but foolish—left Communists stand by, shouting, "The masses, the masses!"—and refuse to work within the trade unions, refuse on the pretext that they are "reactionary".

Of course the reformist leaders would be delighted if the revolutionaries separated themselves from their membership and left them in peace.

In fact these same leaders would resort to: "every trick of bourgeois diplomacy, to the aid of bourgeois governments, the priests, the police and the courts in order to prevent Communists from getting into trade unions, to force them out by every means, to make their work in the trade unions as unpleasant as possible: to insult, to hound and persecute them."

In this context Lenin wrote: "It is necessary to be able to withstand all this, to agree to every sacrifice and even— if need be—resort to all sorts of devices, manoeuvres and illegal methods, to evasion and subterfuge, in order to penetrate into the trade unions, to remain in them, and to carry on Communist work at all costs."

This quotation is a favourite of bourgeois hacks to prove the duplicity and dishonesty of Communists. Interestingly, as eye-witness Alfred Rosmer noted in his excellent Lenin's Marcus, none of the Communist international delegates were shocked by it.

"Why? Were they all invertebrate? Not at all. They all spoke and acted frankly. Their language was clear and direct. Deception was unknown to them. For they were too proud of showing themselves as they really were."

In order to understand Lenin's proposals, it is necessary to understand the context of 1920. As Rosmer described it:

"The reformist leaders had abandoned the workers in 1914. They had betrayed socialism, they had collaborated with their imperialist governments, they had endorsed all the lies—and all the crimes—of chauvinist propaganda during the war. They had opposed any possibility of "premature peace"."

"It must be understood that such a state of affairs is, after all, an exceptional situation in a crisis. Treason requires trickery, above all when one is fighting against an enemy who has available to him the whole repressive machinery of the state."

For a revolutionary party to be able to really lead the working class it needs more than just a formerly correct programme. Its ideals, its slogans must fit the mood and feelings of the masses and be able to lead them forward. Lenin insists:

"History as a whole, and the history of revolution in particular, is always richer in content, more varied, more multiform, more lively and ingenious than is imagined by even the best parties, the most class-conscious vanguards of the most advanced classes."

Every revolutionary has to be trained in strategy and tactics.

"Politics is a science and an art that does not fall from the skies or come gratis, and ... if it wants to overcome the bourgeoisie the proletariat must train its own proletarian "class politicians" of a kind in no way inferior to bourgeois politicians." There is no easy road to revolution. We can't always choose the terrain we fight on or the weapons we use. The Bolsheviks managed to develop their strategy and tactics in the long, arduous years before the revolution without losing sight of their ultimate anti-socialism. Lenin's pamphlet is as full of relevant lessons for today as it was in 1920 and remains vital reading for all serious revolutionaries. Andy Durgan
The road to Jaruzelski

The Summer before the Frost
Jean Yves Postel
Pfau £3.50
The Lost August
Neal Ascherson
Penguin £2.50
Solidarity, Poland's Independent Trade Union
Dennis MacShane
Spokesman £3.50
Five months with Solidarity
John Taylor
Wildwood £2.65
The Book of Lech Walesa
Penguin £2.50
Solidarnosc: From Gdansk to Military Repression
Colin Barker and Karen Weber
International Socialism 15 £1.95
Poland, Solidarity, Walesa
Michael Dobbs, K S Karol and Dessa Trevorson
Pergamon Press £4.95 (pbk)

The publishing industry at last seems to have realised that something very big has been happening in Poland over the last two years. Unfortunately, the intervention of General Jaruzelski on 13 December last has almost deprived us of much of what is in the first five of these books a little dated.

Postel, Ascherson, MacShane and Taylor all provide more or less journalistic accounts of the first few months of Solidarity. So by fitting together pieces of their differing accounts, you can begin to get some idea of the total development.

Each has its own angle—Dennis MacShane writes as a trade union bureaucrat who praises Walesa as the skilful negotiator; Neal Ascherson in the left leaning Scots Nat who emphasises the progressive role of Polish nationalism; John Taylor as a clear writing but not highly theoretical Western socialist; Jean Yves Postel as the anti-Leninist revolutionary (increasingly Pluto’s general stance) who can be very clear and informative when looking at the Polish church, but deeply obscure when he praises Karon and Modzelewski for abandoning the revolutionary views they held in the 1960s.

Without theory there can be no foresight. None of them shows any premonition of the defeat that Solidarity eventually suffered. Ascherson comes closest with his chapter ‘Towards a national tragedy’ that sees the possibility that Solidarity and the regime will not be able to reach the compromise that he himself seems to want.

Postel has the advantage over the others of having been able to write an introduction to the English translation of his book after the imposition of martial law. In it he criticises the Solidarity leadership for lack of strategic preparedness. Unfortunately, the main body of the book, which appeared in French before the coup, contains not a hint of such criticism—instead it defends the ‘spontaneity’ of the Polish process against those who would argue that the regime was too well prepared.
The unpopular war

You, You & You
Pete Grafton
Pluto Press £2.95

Pete Grafton claims to have 'prodded an enormous iceberg' - a cold and, I would have thought, not a particularly useful exercise. Having interviewed a mere 49 people, he rightly concludes that not all British enthusiastically supported the Second World War. The only surprising thing is that Grafton himself should find it surprising. For even the flimsiest research would have disclosed that, beneath all the war propaganda, profound tensions existed.

Let me prick the official myth of the British people, harmoniously and unitedly backing Churchill throughout, with three facts selected at random:

(1) A Gallup Poll, published on 28 March 1942, revealed only 35 per cent were satisfied with Churchill's government while 50 per cent of the people were critical of it.

(2) The centrist (L.P.) fighting on an anti-war socialist platform, contested ten parliamentary by-elections during the war, averaging 25 per cent of the total votes cast. Remarkably, on one occasion it came within 349 votes of winning a Tory seat.

(3) Despite hoots from politicians and the press about 'stabbing our troops in the back', workers still continued to go on strike - more days were lost in 1944 through industrial disputes than in any year since the General Strike.

Unfortunately, Pete Grafton's book hardly helps at all to explain these facts. His interviewees give personal rather than significant accounts of how they did or did not deal with their own particular grumbles, not with the powerful protest movements that were emerging. As a result, many of the most interesting experiences are missing.

We never hear what it was like to put forward the case for international socialism from a public platform. Nor do we know exactly what problems confronted strike leaders because of the state's vast array of repressive legislation. Likewise, that soldiers in the Eighth Army, far from condemning the strikers, actually came out in support is never mentioned. Yet the inclusion of these would have made it a much more valuable and interesting book.

Pard he quoted the soldiers in the Western desert declaring that 'the right to withdraw one's labour is one of the essential freedoms we are fighting for'; then we might even have sent a copy to Mr Norman Tebbit!

Ray Challinor

BROWSHORTS

Recently published for the first time in paperback is the highly recommended Yashar Kemal Memed my Hawk (Writers and Readers £2.95) - a stirring novel about a peasant struggle in Turkey.

Inge Deutscher The Jewish Worker and other Essays (Merlin £2.70) is an interesting, though uneven, collection of Deutscher's writings on Zionism and twentieth-century revolutionary movements.

Welcome reprint include Ralph Miliband The State in Capitalist Society (Quartet £2.50) and Louise Bryant Six Red Months in Russia (Journeyman £2.50), which is being brought out to coincide with the release of the film Reds. Also, Reg Groves Shamen the Sikhle (Merlin £2.60) about farm workers' struggles in the last century.

The Abuse of Power Civil Liberties in the U.K. (Martin Robertson £4.95) by the NCLC's Patricia Hewitt is aimed at lawyers, MPs and historians rather than activists. Although full of interesting information it tends over backwards to be 'reasonable' and offers no idea about changing anything.

Two new books about women workers, Jackie West Work Women and the Labour Market (RKP £4.95) is a collection of wryly but unapprised essays. Women on the Line (RKP £5.95) is much better, written by a socialist feminist, Ruth Cavendish, who gave up a university teaching post to work in a factory. It contains excellent descriptions of the women she worked with. She concludes by examining why the contemporary women's movement has failed to involve working class women.

Peter Fuller Seeing Berger (Writers and Readers £1.50) criticises Berger for non-materialist elements in his Ways of Seeing - but it has been claimed the criticism depends on introducing an ahistorical notion of the 'human condition' into the heart of great art. Worth reading to disagree with.

Of a more theoretical nature there is Bernard Semel (ed) Marxism and the Science of War (OUP £12.50) is a very mixed and arbitrary collection of Marxist writings on war. Another offering from the extremely eclectic and baffling 'Marxist' series is Theory and Reality (Allison and Busby £5.95) by former Polish communist leader Wladislaw Rajchman, it is mostly sociological trumperies. It comes close to describing the Polish and Russian economics as capitalism, but nowhere does the working class feature in his analysis.
Tommy Talker to UB 40

Playing music takes time. Being on the dole means you have time on your hands. You can do what you want but you have no money to do it with, and you can end up blaming your 'failure' on yourself. But you can also develop your own cheap music.

The last time there was anything like the present level of unemployment was in the 1930s. The main concentration of old industrial areas like the North, in some places reaching 30% of the working population. Like today this had its social effects—low strikes to organise, poverty splits etc. It also had its music.

These were the Tommy Talker bands—also called 'Wiffum', 'Waffum', 'Waffum' bands or 'Muddledadered' bands. The names varied according to area.

In the West Riding of Yorkshire alone there were over 50 bands in 1929, centred round local galas and carnivals that blossomed as a reaction to the depression.

Bands varied in number from half a dozen to twenty or over, plus their supporters. They were now a lost tradition in the Americanised marching Kazoo bands that are having a revival in the North East.

The main instrument was the kazoo or 'Tommy Talker' as it was known in Britain. The other, instruments, all handmade, would be an old bathtub for a drum, box of pipe cleaners, and whatever else came to hand.

Like 'New Romantics', the band dressed up, faces blacked or whitened, some in dresses, all being outrageous and comic in the pantomime tradition. They were nearly all-male bands with just the old female group.

Historically they seem to have descended from the strike bands of before the First World War who would tour the streets spreading the word of a strike and amusing support as they went. With the use of marching kazoo and other instruments, beating cans and whatever came to hand, they'd sing or chant, often ending up in a fight with the police. During the 1926 General Strike these types of bands had a short revival.

The noise that they made must have been quite something, probably like the striking miners in Britain till the creation of Punk. It was said that they were mostly marching bands because of audience reaction.

The kazoo and the bands that livened up workers' lives during the depression ended with the Second World War, the spread of radio to working-class homes and the expansion of the economy. The working-class no longer had the time or the need for home-made entertainment.

The return of high unemployment has been reflected in music with Punk, 'Two-Tone' even Oy, and Bands such as UB 40. The Specials, the Beat sing about life on the dole. Last year's hit 'Ghost Town' was about life in Coventry, UB 40 is named after the dole.

In a similar way Reggae has for years created a world based on being on the dole with its blues parties and clubs.

One question of what is or can happen is the Sandley music co-op in Birmingham, based on SPAM (Sandley Print and Media), a community arts project. From the end of 1980 SPAM promoted a music workshop, providing free teaching and cheap rehearsal facilities. One of the products of the co-op is 'Medical Youth', a reggae band that includes school-kids. The co-op hopes to arrange recording facilities and give local working-class kids on the dole or at school a chance to play music.

In 1981 they organised a tour of six towns in the Midlands and exchanged visits to Corby and Coventry where similar co-ops may be set up. Together with 021 records they approached West Midlands County Council for funds to set up recording and pressing facilities, possibly to launch an independent record label.

Of course as things stand, any budding musician is just as likely to be ripped off by the music business as he or she is by working for Fords. There is a vast amount of varied music in the world, most of which is ignored by the media. It is still an incredible task to reach a large audience, but in spite of all the problems some do manage to get through.

Of the art forms popular music is the least appropriated by the middle or ruling classes. Being on the dole can give you the time to express yourself and your class. It can also provide the income to become a social climber and leave the class that you sing about. But if this much is possible inspite of the world, just imagine what it could be like.

Noel Halifax

Bad apple, good play

Any play about the police by G F Newman, author of the Law and Order series of TV plays, is likely to be worth seeing. His Operation Bad Apple is showing at the Royal Court in London until 27 March and at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield from 30 March to 24 April.

John Gillet advises you to see it if you have the chance.

Operation Countryman was a probe into corruption in London's Metropolitan Police. A long, arduous, and very expensive investigation by an out-of-town police force resulted in nothing more than the prosecution of four officers.

Operation Bad Apple is about a fictional investigation into Met corruption, not a million miles away from Countryman.

There was a possibility of the production being called off on grounds that it would prejudice current court proceedings; conflicting legal advice was given to the theatre, there were divisions between the Royal Court management and the staff over whether it should open; and the previews were checked out by lawyers, representatives from the Attorney General, investigators, and police. However, the production made the first night and it is still running. This gave well-known critics an opportunity to attack it as fast-fetched, outrageous, foul-mouthed, and 'anti-police rhetoric verging on hysteria'.

The controversy and critical vitriol derive from the central thesis of the play—that the London police force is riddled from top to bottom with a corruption that extends as far as Cabinet level.

Newman has authentic sources and intimate knowledge of the police. He ridicules the notion (put forward at the beginning of the play by the Assistant Commissioner in overall charge of the Operation) that it is all a question of 'the odd bad apple in an otherwise sound basket.'

The play covers a wide range of police attitudes, including an entrenched contempt for women, and there is also a lot of humour in it.

While acknowledging pervasive corruption and raising political issues in an incisive and audacious way, the play, however, does not dig into where the corruption comes from and whose class interests the police serve.

We are left, by default, with the superficial question which tortures the liberal conscience: are police merely acting in a logical and necessary way given the type of society they operate in, and shouldn't we, therefore, sympathise with them to some degree? Do we get the police we deserve?

The real power in society is let off the hook.

This particular detached, constrained quality is evident also in the production, especially in the first act which, in its physical movement, is often staged like a television play. Its verbal content is sometimes projected too self-consciously, and its simplicity of design occasionally becomes contrived. I thought the writing in this act does not get from the production the help it needs. But the second act develops a compelling tension, momentum, and political impact.

Operation Bad Apple is an excellent political entertainment, and everyone should get to see it.
The Financial Times reviewer had no doubt about his class's reaction to Reds, the Warren Beatty film currently showing at three locations in London and soon likely to be on general release.

Despite this, some people on the left have reservations on the film. Jim Scott argues that they are quite wrong, and that it is probably the best thing we are going to get from Hollywood.

John Reed is known to most socialists simply as the author of Ten Days That Shook The World, but was in fact a prolific writer and brilliant socialist journalist for nearly ten years before the publication of his masterpiece.

He organised the pageant at Madison Square Garden in support of the Patterson silk workers in 1913. He joined with Pancho Villa in 1914 to report the Mexican revolution. He reported the Ludlow massacre of 1913 where the Rockefellers and the Colorado and owners shot down striking miners, and set fire to their camp, burning alive many women and children as they slept. John Reed, a left-wing journalist from a comfortable middle class background, became through the experiences of his life a committed revolutionary socialist. Now, sixty years after his death, he has become the subject of what would normally be described as a Hollywood epic.

Reds, Reds, Reds, overlooking Hollywood, a sensation. Remember all those old war John Wayne movies - we’re gonna get those mustardy Reds? You’d still see them on Monday afternoon on TV.

One thing is certain: Warren Beatty’s Reds will be a long time showing before it appears among the TV remotes.

As far as I am concerned, it is the best political film to come out of Hollywood ever. The three movies of the Hollywood Ten were films which rarely if ever went beyond revolutionary literature of the Communist were only hinted at and never appeared as real in sympathetic characters.

The rise of independent cinema productions of a left-wing hue has posed a problem for many socialists. The attempts by a handful of directors - Wajda, Pontecorvo, Costa-Gavras - to popularise socialist ideas have left most left critics gasping on the beach like stranded whales.

Reds is already facing the same problem. Those critics of working class opinion in the metropolis, City Limits and Time Out have already judged it inadequate. Radical chic, proclaims Time Out - well, it should be noted, though the split it has been more than radical. City Limits hedges its bets, but this week, for a hopeful review of Chris Argy, which will whose ideal run and run, and which again fails to see the potential of the film to change ordinary people’s ideas about communism.

You’ll probably have realised by now how many of us are in favour of Reds. Warren Beatty’s character in the film, John Reed, often rather cruelly, but always with integrity. The D. I. concerns the first part of the love story - the battle to the hock of the politics.

New woman

The attempt to portray Louise Bryant’s escape from the strict provincialism of pre-war Portland, Oregon, isn’t completely successful. Her efforts to define herself as a new woman, which appear shocking in Portland, are not so shocking.

The small points of detail show a genuine attempt to show the events that led to the Bolshevik Revolution and in the creation of the American Communist Party.

The scenes of the Zimmerwald Conference and of the anti-war movement in the US are extremely moving (tuke your tissues with you).

The small points of detail show a genuine attempt to show the events that led to the Bolshevik Revolution (in the Winter Palace Red Guards stop looters and guard the paintings). At a meeting with Reed the film shows his struggle to organise with an American Socialist Party meeting on the train, earlier, in which he is refused speaking rights since he is only a

journalist, not a delegate for a Russian worker. You need the credentials here, comrades! There is no understanding, just a feeling of irresistible power. The Petrograd masses march on the Winter Palace.

Part Two finds Reed and Bryant back in America, with her lecturing on Red Russia and defying a Congressional Committee, and him writing Ten Days and attempting to organise the Communist Party.

Reed then returns to Russia to get Communist recognition for his faction of the American Communist Party.

When he tries to return home he is captured by Finnish White Guards and held in jail. This provides the hook for Bryant’s rather melodramatically, to fight her way across the world to be with him, only to find when she gets there he’s been exchanged for some Finnish prisoners held in Russia (as Lenin said, ‘I’d give fifty Finnish prisoners for one Jack Reed’).

Viewable

As the film moves towards its climax, we are made more and more aware of Reed’s commitment to the Revolution. Critical though he was of the attempts of Zinoviev and Radek to manipulate autonomously the Communist delegates, he withdraws his resignation from the executive committee and is sent on a trip to Bukhara for a Congress of Uzbek Deputies. It is there that he contracts the typhus which will kill him. Before he dies, he is, of course, re-united with Bryant - although in contrast to the normal Hollywood myth, this was the true situation.

I don’t know Warren Beatty’s reason for making the film. But whatever the reasons he has given us a film of John Reed which is as viewable as John Reed’s writings were readable.

PS Ten Days That Shook The World is now heading the best seller lists in the US.
MARCH 1919

On 2 March 1919 about fifty delegates assembled in an old imperial court of justice in the walls of the Moscow Kremlin. Lenin opened the proceedings with a speech that could last no more than five minutes. He began by asking all present to stand in memory of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, murdered only six weeks before. He went on:

"On 2 March, 1919, has great historical significance. The bourgeois跗 strikes against the growing workers' revolutionary movement. The people are aware of the greatness and significance of the struggle now going on. All that is needed is to find a practical form to enable the proletariat to establish its rule."

This form was now discovered - soviet democracy.

After giving a few examples of how the soviet idea was spreading, Lenin moved that the congress get straight down to business. The business over the next six days was to be no less than the foundation of the Third (Communist) International - the International of open mass struggle, of the international realization, the international will, as its program declared.

The size and composition of the congress was remarkable. It was rather representative in that the 50 delegates were from 20 different organizations, from 17 different nationalities. But many of these organizations were not enthusiastic.

Delegates were not even very enthusiastic about their own organizations, and many deplore what was happening in their homes in Russia at the time. A few of the delegates were prisoners in one case as attachés to the French legation.

The last of the delegates had actually come to Moscow from abroad specifically for the congress. Only two of these represented any organizations. One Stange, was from the Norwegian Labour Party, a third-generation revolutionary. Another was Ebert, who was from the revolutionary, but now and row, German Worker's Party. But still with only a few small members.

And he was determined to oppose the immediate formation of the International. Not out of principle, but from the very beginning he was convinced that such an international gathering could only do great harm.

A good part of the discussion was applied to the question of the reformist tendency within.

We were told that the proletariat revolution was a year away, said Zinoviev. We have a powerful revolution moving towards victory in our country. Are we still to delay? Nobody would understand it.

Lenin and Trotsky spoke in the same tone. They arrived, they said, with a little help from abroad but were already arrived. The revolution was on its way.

Propaganda in aims right to throw caution to the winds. Europe in 1919 was full of consumable material. Great empires had collapsed. Armed workers and revolutionary soldiers were a factor of the first political importance in half a dozen capital cities. Strikes swept the victorious powers as well as the vanquished.

Even in Britain the cabinet seriously questioned the reliability of its soldiers in the event of a class war at home. The generation which had marched off to a great adventure in 1914, was exploding after the four years' slaughter.

The Russian revolution now seemed to millions an immediate practical example to follow. And what fired their imagination above all was the idea of soviets.

The main battle against aspirations was the leadership of the old socialist parties who preached respect for 'democracy' against 'dictatorship'.

The argument was pilloried in the main declaration of the congress. The 'Bourgeois Democracy and Proletarian Dictatorship' was rejected by Lenin and in the magnificent manifesto of the Communist International drafted by Trotsky:

'The demand of the proletariat that it be allowed to govern in the spirit of the revolution, political democracy, the final outcome of the struggle, is the beginning, not the end, of the struggle with capitalism. That is why the struggle with capitalism must be fought with the means and the methods of the proletarian revolution.'

The apparatus of state power has been created by the working class and to assure the possibility of its revolutionary intervention in the future development of mankind. This apparatus is represented by the workers' soviets.

'The irreplaceable role of the apparatus of working class self-rule, this organization of struggle for state power, has been tested in the experience of various countries and constitutes the highest document of the development of the proletariat in our epoch.'

The message must hold.

Indeed, by the year 1921.

1920 the worry was