WOMEN IN UNIONS
WORKERS UNITE

INSIDE: Hallas on Hobsbawm, Elections in Spain, Resistance in Iran
What's behind the 3.5%?

Faced with falling inflation, the Tories' pay strategy is having only limited effect. Stuart Ash looks at how they are likely to deal with this problem over the winter.

When the Cabinet announced the new 3.5 per cent cash limit for the next round of public sector pay increases they were trying to make their two year offer to the health workers appear more palatable. Having offered second stage increases of 4 or 5.5 per cent in January 1983 to the health unions they were then saying: 'look, you'll get more than other public service workers'. Norman Tebbit also added that this was the upper limit for public sector workers because workers in the private sector were accepting pay freezes and very small percentage increases. So council workers, civil servants and teachers should not look for more than 3 to 4 per cent for their next increase, says the Government, because any more would make you better off than workers in the private sector.

The truth is that the picture presented by the government is well out of line with reality. Pay settlements and offers in private sector manufacturing companies this autumn are continuing to average around seven per cent, much as they have done over the whole of 1982. There are very few settlements below five per cent and plenty of deals at 6.7, and 8 per cent. Vauxhall's eight per cent offer has had a lot of publicity and put pressure on Ford. Tate and Lyle has offered 7.5 per cent and Shell has opened talks at five per cent.

The fact that the police got 10.3 per cent from September and the miners have been offered 8.2 per cent from November has added to the gnawing of the NHS ancillary workers, who've only been offered six per cent and last had a rise in December 1980.

Wages offensive

Until recently, the Tories were not too unhappy that pay settlements were averaging around seven per cent while inflation was running between ten and twelve per cent. They expected that when inflation dropped into single figures then pay expectations and settlements would drop in a corresponding way towards four and five per cent. What is new in the current period is that for the first time in two years or so, pay deals are matching the rate of inflation — which was 7.3 per cent in September. And if the rate of inflation falls to six per cent by the end of the year we shall be seeing pay increases above the rate of inflation. Both the Coal Board and Vauxhall are offering more than the rate of inflation, which by November, could be 6.5 per cent.

There will be strong pressures in the private sector among individual employers to continue paying increases around six and seven per cent well into 1983 even with the rate of inflation reaching a temporary floor of around five per cent in the early spring, after which it will rise again. Companies with much reduced workforces can increase pay without the total pay bill rising much and can get more productivity concessions in return. But if too many headline making pay agreements go above the 7 per cent mark then it can fuel higher expectations and become the kind of problem — during limited economic recovery — that the CBI and government fear.

The government's own contribution to keeping expectations low is to announce the 3.5 per cent cash limit. But the government has still to settle the health unions further and any further movement on the percentage on offer will inevitably undermine its hard-faced stance to the other public services.

Moving towards 1983, the Tories face four key issues on pay bargaining.

- Productivity in manufacturing companies has risen, but not yet enough for the competitiveness that the CBI wants.
- A new round of redundancies from the private sector is pushing up the unemployment total, and this means even more public spending. This means more cuts and also limits what Geoffrey Howe can do in the next Budget.
- If basic pay settlements rise faster than the rate of inflation we shall see the average earnings figures sticking at around nine or ten per cent. This will mean that labour costs are rising much faster than the CBI wants, just when the economy is supposed to be turning.
- Increases in UK wages would be rising much faster than in other parts of the EEC, where pay freezes are on the agenda, particularly in France and Germany. Thatcher wouldn't contemplate a freeze, but then she thought that pay settlements would all fall below the rate of inflation.

All these pressures tend to suggest that the government will build up a huge offensive on the public services through the winter and into next year. The Tory argument that health service pay increases must be funded substantially by the Area Health Authorities means inevitable cuts. Local authorities will go for more savings and pressurisation on a wider scale. And even if private sector pay deals match inflation, the government will go to extraordinary lengths to force the very low settlements in the civil service and the local authorities.

[Image: Chart showing Unemployment and Vacancies]

More redundancies, higher unemployment means more public spending. This limits Howe's budget options.
Armalite and ballot

The election results for the Northern Ireland Assembly are a blow to the Tories. But Kieran Allen of our sister organisation, the Socialist Workers’ Movement, in Ireland, argues that they have much deeper implications.

"Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad" might well be written as the epitaph of Jim Prior's political career. As the election results came in showing that over 30 percent of the anti-unionist population of Northern Ireland were backing Sinn Fein, Prior's dream of an Assembly of moderates fell to pieces. But there is more at stake than the puny career of a British Tory politician.

Northern Ireland is an economic wasteland. One of its leading economists, John Simpson, has advocated mass emigration for those seeking work. Roy Mason has described areas like West Belfast as 'a piece of the Third World in mainland Britain'. Its distinctive industrial base is collapsing. The man-made fibre industry that expanded in the sixties has shrunk. The traditional engineering industries are set for a long term decline. The world recession has been amplified in a dramatic way as the Thatcher axe has swathed through a weak and already declining artificial economy.

It was Prior's belief that the spectre of mass unemployment could lay the basis for political moderation just as it had helped...
dampen trade union militancy in Britain itself. The message that has been hammered home by the Northern Ireland Office and their local mouthpieces in the Alliance party was that "the troubles are putting off investors — political stability is a pre-condition for the economic upturn". Political stability means the moderate Catholic party the SDLP taking, and being given, the opportunity to integrate itself into the running of the Northern state.

There was an urgent additional reason for seeking a 'solution'. The movement around the H Block prisoners last year was massive and militant. It drove thousands of anti-unionists into a new-found active opposition to the Northern state. It was essential for the British ruling class to defeat the H Block movement but it was also clear that they had also to move nearer a political solution.

Prior recognised correctly the weakness of the direct rule strategy that had been pursued since the fall of Stormont in 1972. By removing any forum in which bourgeois politics could breathe, it was underestimating the base of such parties as the SDLP. In the long run it meant that no effective buffer would exist between the British war machine and the IRA. At particular high points of the struggles, such as on H Block, it was already clear that the SDLP was losing its moderating influence.

But it was a measure of the British ruling class's total inability to impose any solution to the Northern crisis, that Prior's Assembly was so at variance with reality. When confronted with any problems before the election, Prior paraded the absurd message that once the parties get around the table there will be movement'. The truth is that the bitterness engendered by the H Block hunger strike amongst anti-unionists and the increasingly desperate economic conditions were pulling in the direction of support for the armed struggle on one hand and a renewed drive to get back Stormont on the other.

The prospect of an assembly wettled the appetite of many loyalist workers for a returned Stormont. The divisions in the ranks of the Loyalist parties to date prevented the realisation of any coherent strategy for its return. But the assembly was handing down a focus that could help unite all strands of loyalism. The scenario is easy to imagine: the refusal of Prior to implement a particularly obnoxious security measure that the majority in the assembly had agreed to could provide the necessary issue for mobilisation on the streets.

Loyalists move right

It is not difficult to see why Loyalist workers are moving more steadily to the right politically. True, there have been demonstrations against unemployment and militant support for the nurses. But there has also been no socialist organisation there that could capitalise on those struggles and point to different political answers that could expose the contradictions of loyalism for even a minority of Protestant workers. And the depth of a recession where there are 25 percent unemployed means that political answers are desperately required.

Instead Protestant workers have been offered the Paisleyite explanations. It runs very simply; the economic decline of Northern Ireland is part of a conscious and planned British economic withdrawal that is the first step towards them getting out fully and handing us over to a united Ireland. A very simple and effective message for adapting loyalist ideas to the realities of mass unemployment. And Paisley has carried through the message by stomping around the North wherever Protestant workers find themselves faced with redundancies.

The answers are equally simple: get back Stormont, tie the Brits down and use discrimination as a lever against Protestant unemployment. Throughout the Assembly election Paisley was both the most vociferous in support of the Assembly and ran his campaign under the slogan of 'Back to the Stormont way'. For their part the Official Unionists poured more scorn on the idea of the Assembly as a stepping stone to Stormont but argued for integration with Britain with full powers restored to local government where the mechanisms for discrimination exist. But both of them advocate a return to discrimination as the shelter against unemployment for Protestants.

The 'Stormont Way' is already in practice in miniatures in the local governments — even though their powers have diminished since the Stormont days. Twenty three of the twenty six district councils are under loyalist control. In Armagh where 45 percent of the population is Catholic, 80 percent of the council employees are Protestants. In Cookstown Protestants were 70 percent successful in job applications while Catholics had only a 30 percent success rate. (Irish Times, 11/10/82). Loyalist councillors are still known to offer such gems of excuses as: 'Just because he (the Catholic) is more qualified, doesn't mean that he can fix a bicycle puncture.'

The most worrying feature for the British ruling class is the extent of open support for Sinn Fein. 30 percent of the total anti-unionist vote went to them. Yet that is only part of the picture. Sinn Fein did not contest all the constituencies — the SDLP did. Of the seven constituencies where the SDLP and the Provos faced each other the Provos were either neck and neck with the SDLP or ahead of them. Only in Derry, where the SDLP control the council, in South Armagh and South Down did the SDLP clearly project themselves as the majority party of anti-unionists. The votes for Sinn Fein came predominantly from the working class and youth.

What does the vote for Sinn Fein mean? It is simply an open expression of support for the armed struggle. There was no ambiguity on the issue. The SDLP campaigned both against Prior's Assembly and the violence of the republicans. The Provos campaigned openly in support of the armed struggle. For one third of anti-unionists to date nationalistic nationalism has reached a dead end.

That vote is a clear signal of the whistling down of the influence of the SDLP. But the cracks in the SDLP go deeper. They entered the election split between those who favoured a boycott and those for participating in the Assembly. The problem for the
SLDP is that they cannot offer a clear strategy for reform. The depth of loyalist reaction and the rejection of the Northern state from thousands of anti-unionists cuts the ground of compromise from under them.

However, there is a problem. The decline of the SDLP takes place after the mobilisation on the streets after the H Block hunger strike was defeated. The aftermath of the hunger strike led to tremendous passivity amongst the mass of anti-unionists. For many the impasse can now be broken by simply passing support the Provos. Now not only can you give silent support to the armed struggle but you can also openly vote for them. The Provos and particularly their 'left' current in Belfast encourage such belief. For the last year the slogan which has guided their actions has been 'the Armalite in one hand and the bullet paper in the other'.

**War of attrition**

Implied in the message is that the Republican movement can substitute for mass action simply by a new flexibility of tactics. It is that we will drive out the British army as long as you support us politically and militarily. Despite the new slogans of the 'Democratic Socialist Ireland' there is not the slightest notion in republican politics that what is required is the mobilisation of the working class.

Unfortunately, the road of relying on the Republican movement is long and hard. Increasingly the IRA talk of a 20 year war of attrition until some British government pulls the plug. Although as the renowned British intelligence admitted, the British army cannot crush the Provos it is true, and admitted, the Provos cannot decisively defeat the British army. The impasse will continue as long as the results of the Assembly elections are looked on as nothing more than a 'mandate' for stepping up the armed struggle.

The Assembly results can be taken differently. They show the willingness of anti-unionists to fight to break with constitutional nationalists and go to the extreme of supporting an armed campaign. These results can give confidence to those who are arguing for the rebuilding of the mass campaign on the streets and the factories. Because if the threat of Stormont is to be removed and indeed the British presence that underpins such a threat, it won't be done by five Sinn Fein Assembly reps and their armed wing, the IRA. It will be done by a movement of workers throughout the Island who show the British ruling class that they have more to lose than win by staying.

The Assembly results pose a problem for the ruling class on both sides of the border. The decline of the SDLP is particularly worrying for the Southern government. For the last decade they have pointed to the SDLP as the voice of Northern nationalists and used their opposition to 'violence' as an excuse for co-operation with the British army and the RUC. Quite clearly any advances for a movement that has the working class character and militancy of the anti-unionist movement is a threat to its stability.

The British ruling class, the direct custodian of the North, has therefore one of two choices. They can either view the decline of the SDLP as ruling out compromise with anti-unionists and in such a situation turn towards military repression and backing for a returned Stormont. Such a course is fraught with difficulties given the continued willingness of anti-unionists to fight and the likely support they might get from the South in that situation.

**The Southern State**

Or they can recognise the Southern regime as having a more active role to play in sharing their custodianship of the North. Despite recent minor differences they share the same interests in smashing the militant organisation. The involvement of the Southern government could also help revive the SDLP. Prior may offer the SDLP an Anglo-Irish Council for which he will be re-lying on the co-operation of the South. But how he will handle the Assembly, whose only participants at the moment are Protestant, will indicate which direction the British ruling class will turn.

It is most likely that Prior will turn towards the Southern regime. If the gains of the anti-imperialist movement are not to be rolled back it is therefore essential that it has an understanding of that regime's class character - which was absent during the hunger strike. For the continuation of the Northern state and its battery of repression and discrimination is tied to its supposed nationalist opponents who run the Southern state. Whether or not the ruling class on both sides of the border can restructure their institutions to cope with the new realities, depends very much on the activities of Southern workers.
The Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE) has won the election in Spain. But just as Mitterand has failed to bring socialism to France, Doug Andrews argues the PSOE will not bring socialism to Spain.

The election of Spain's first left-wing government since 1936 on 28 October, following similar victories in Greece and France, will undoubtedly lead to expectations of some fundamental change in Spanish society. Unforeseen by capitalists, in Spain elsewhere, have little to fear from the PSOE. And those who support similar parties elsewhere in Europe have nothing to get excited about.

In case anyone did have any illusions, leading PSOE member Joaquín Almunia pointed out that given 'current conditions any real change will take at least 25 years'. The party's economic expert Carlos Solchaga assured voters that the PSOE hadn't 'renounced its medium term aims' but given the very severe economic crisis the very future of the country was at stake', this means 'a change in strategy'. To be honest, he continued 'this could make the final socialist message very similar to that of the right.'

From the elections of June 1977, the first for forty years, the PSOE has supported several social contracts and 'employment agreements'. All detrimental to working-class interests. Since the first social contract, the Pact of Moncloa, was signed by all the major parties in October 1977 the cost of living has risen by 15.5 per cent while real wages by only 8.78 percent. Unemployment has doubled to 2,100,000, around 17 per cent of the active population. Throughout the whole period the socialist trade union federation, the UGT, has opposed any serious resistance by workers and has counseled moderation and collaboration instead.

Despite this record there has been a mini panic in ruling class circles, an estimated 60,000 million pesetas (approximately $600m) has left the country since September. This has only given further impetus for the PSOE to insist on its intentions not to do anything that might harm Spanish capitalism. The main aim of the socialists, according to Joaquín Almunia, will be 'to create conditions so that employers can invest, that means lowering interest rates' and engendering the belief that 'there are medium term gains to be gained from higher investment in the next few years.' To encourage this the employer's contribution to the state's Social Security scheme will be cut by 20 per cent and paid by the government instead.

As party leader and new prime minister, Felipe González, put it 'we need to win employer's confidence'. There is not even the slightest mention of nationalisations, agrarian reform or strengthening the public sector. All of which one would expect even the most timid of social democrats to at least talk about.

In economic matters the PSOE have no scruples about expounding their profoundly unsocialist programme, when it comes to the thorny problem of the state machine things are worse. The continued domination of both the army and police by Francoist--clearly illustrated by the revelation of the latest coup plot--remains the central stumbling block to any serious reforms. But what is the PSOE's response to this problem?'

A bigger army

In their electoral programme there was no mention of purging the Armed Forces. Instead the whole national defence programme has to have as its point of reference article 8 of the constitution. This article refers to maintaining 'national integrity' and was actually quoted by some of last year's military plotters to justify their coup attempts because of the limited moves towards regional autonomy.

González himself after the latest and much more serious plot has insisted on blaming civilian politicians for encouraging 'golpismo' (pro-coup feeling) in the army. The army itself is basically loyal to the constitution in his view.

What is more, during the last eight years there has been the most massive rearmament ever of the Spanish army. This expenditure, around 790 million pesetas ($7,900,000) a day, has been continually supported by the PSOE in parliament. The socialists, only proposals for change are for a more 'professional' army to guarantee 'national defence'. No doubt this is a reference to Spain's two tiny colonial possessions in Morocco, Melilla and Ceuta which the PSOE promise to defend 'with arms if necessary'. A far cry from their position in the mid-seventies when in the obscurity of illegality they described these enclaves as colonies on Moroccan soil.

The main enemy, as everyone knows, to Spain's fragile democracy is, of course, 'terrorism', in the form of the Basque separatist guerrillas of ETA. Throughout the whole of the campaign González equated 'golpismo' with terrorism as equally repugnant. The comparison between the activities of ETA, directed solely against a repressive state, and those of fascist army officers who aim to destroy every vestige of democratic rights needs little comment. In practical terms this has meant the PSOE has supported a series of highly repressive measures designed to 'eliminate terrorism'.

The irony is that such measures have only strengthened the very state that would obstruct even the most mild reforms that the PSOE might wish to implement.

The PSOE supported for example the notorious Anti-Terrorist Law which allows for suspects to be held for ten days incommunicado without being charged. Ten days in the hands of a police force and civil guard well known (as proved by Amnesty's report in 1980) to torture and beat those unlucky enough to be under their 'care'. Not surprisingly such treatment has led to several deaths. Side by side with this has been increasing restriction on free speech and a whole series of court cases against radical journalists and publications. A recent minor example being the trial and conviction to a year's imprisonment (the prosecution wanted six years) of three leaders of the Basque section of the revolutionary organisation Movimiento Comunista (MC) for a fairly innocuous article against the monarchy.

Rather than the employers or the army it will be the revolutionary movement in the Basque Country that have most to fear from the new government.

The most controversial point (if not the only one) of the PSOE's programme is their promise to hold a referendum over Spain's entrance into NATO. The referendum would be expected to go against entry. Again the party's record doesn't encourage confidence. González has repeatedly said the PSOE wouldn't take the anti-NATO
campaign onto the streets. He was certainly true to his word during the height of the campaign last year when the party made no serious attempt to mobilise its supporters. As Luis Yanez stated when he resigned as the party’s foreign affairs spokesman a year ago, ‘I’m sure that if the PSOE had opposed it in a vigorous way we wouldn’t be entering NATO ... the government have no need to worry about our campaign against the alliance.’

Moreover the socialists support the continued presence on Spanish soil of US bases. Already the PSOE is talking about NATO membership as a ‘secondary question’ which is how the Greek socialists have avoided fulfilling their promise to pull out.

As Gonzalez put it on 3 October ‘I am not anti-NATO as such but Spain will gain nothing from joining. In my opinion they have negotiated without taking into account Spain’s interests... without any serious foresight.’ More explicitly Socialist senator and international expert Fernando Moran recently said that ‘parties that get into power must assume the international obligations of previous governments to avoid instability.’

Spanish society discriminates against women probably more than any other in Western Europe. This was well illustrated by a throwaway remark by former UCD Interior Minister Juan Jose Roso who speculated in a recent interview that rape must be a ‘fascinating experience’ (sic). However, the PSOE has little or nothing to say about women’s rights. In particular they have never considered promoting a change in the stringent anti-abortion laws during the last five years. In their electoral programme, ever conscious of the power of the Catholic Church, they spoke only vaguely about ‘the terminating of pregnancies in those cases where the life of the mother is in danger.’ Under such conditions the eleven women tried in Bilbao last year for having abortions would be in prison.

As it happens these women received such extensive support during their trial that they were acquitted. But no thanks to the PSOE who didn’t lift a finger to help them. In fact when feminists occupied the Madrid Town Hall in solidarity they were beaten up and thrown out by municipal police on the express orders of a PSOE councillor from Barrio Nuevo. No doubt bearing this in mind he was promoted to deputy mayor.

On the question of regional and national autonomy the PSOE supported the UCD’s government’s legislation aimed to cut short the already limited autonomy process so as not to undermine ‘national unity’. The socialists have also supported the continuation of the Catholic Church’s power.

On education the likely education minister Jose Maria Maravall stated during the campaign that ‘the PSOE is not thinking of attacking private education (very extensive because of the weakness of state education) and this, I repeat, is necessary to make very clear in the specific case of the Spanish Religious Education Federation’.

**Collapse of right**

Like their French counterparts, the PSOE and the CP are in favour of nuclear power and supported the National Energy Plan of July 1979 which laid the basis for a further expansion of nuclear power stations. However the Spanish people will be relieved to know that if the PSOE remain in government nuclear capacity will not exceed seven and a half million kilowatts in 1990!

If the PSOE are so appealing why do they enjoy such extensive support? (Though it must be added that the enthusiasm for the PSOE is not comparable with that which greeted the Greek and French socialist victories). The main reason for the socialists’ victory aye, to a certain extent, their support is the collapse of the right. The Centre Democratic Union (UCD) who have governed for the last five years have disintegrated into feuding factions. Its inability to cope with increasing economic and social pressures has undermined its image as the dynamic party of the new democracy.

Electorally the only alternative on the right to the UCD was the Popular Alliance (AP). In the last few years the AP has overtaken the UCD as the main force on the right. They are led by Manuel Fraga the former Minister of Information and Tourism under Franco, responsible for, among other things, the murder of five workers by the riot police during the Vitoria general strike of 1976.

The AP is an obnoxious mixture of Thatcher-style conservatism and Francois and enjoys the support of much of the church and the employers’ federation. As yet they have been unable to consolidate their electoral position by uniting with what is left of the UCD.

Meanwhile the details of the latest coup plot are coming to light. Unlike the somewhat comic attempt of February last year this latest plot was extensively prepared down to the last details. Yet although at least 100 officers are widely believed to have been involved in the coup only four have been arrested so far.

The plotters themselves in previous months had liaised with General Milans de Bosch, ‘imprisoned’ for his role in last year’s coup attempt. While the military hierarchy were prepared to step on this latest ‘colonels coup’ the extent of the plot, the completely liberal treatment of past plotters and the extent of ‘golpismo’ throughout the officer corps still leaves the real possibility of another attempt wide open.

One of the most bizarre of these of the whole business is the appointment of a special ‘anti-coup’ police unit. This is made up of the same people who before were the anti-GRAP (ultra left wing armed group) unit and are renowned for their ultra-right connections and brutal methods. When the Minister of the Interior was questioned about this somewhat strange appointment by an incredible MP he was told that the group’s ‘political connections’ would make...
it easier for them to infiltrate pro-coup circles. The fact that Lt Colonel Tejero, who led last year's assault on the Spanish parliament, was allowed to stand in the elections demonstrates the near impunity the military ultra-right enjoys.

During the election campaign the impartiality of the state was clear to see. Throughout the media the campaigns of both the radical nationalists and the revolutionary left were completely ignored. Members of the powerful pro-ETA coalition Herri Batasuna were harassed by the police, members of the Basque MC shot at while flyposting. The latter's electoral poster was actually confiscated. It depicted the leaders of the main parties saluting an unpleasant looking army officer—it was deemed to be 'insulting to the army'.

The demise of the Spanish Communist Party predictably reached a new stage with the elections. The drop in their vote isn't surprising given the crisis that has shaken the party recently.

A large pro-soviet split in Catalonia, the Euro-Communist majority of the Basque party fusing with left nationalists, splits to the left and right in Madrid and so on. Faced with a stampede towards 'the only real electoral alternative', the PSOE, all the CP could do was call for a 'democratic front' to 'assure the progress of democracy'. Such a front would include not only the PSOE and CP but also the discredited UCD. Only the small split around former UCD leader Adolfo Suarez favour such an idea. The irony of the CP's dilemma is that they have continually undermined their organised working class base by opposing struggles in order to gain electoral respectability and have now ended up with neither.

The struggle for Basque freedom still remains the most pressing problem for the government. In the weeks before elections there were a series of bombs exploded and armed attacks (some fatal) against the police and civil guards. In one night alone the police shot dead three innocent people at road blocks in the Basque Country.

The turnout in the election was massive with 80 percent of the electorate voting. The PSOE vote of 10 million was 46 percent of the total. It went up from 2 million in the last election. They got 201 seats compared with 121 last time.

The other main beneficiary was the right-wing AP whose seats went up from 9 to 106. The UCD went from 138 down to 12 seats. The CP won five seats as compared with 23 last time and their vote fell from 2 million to 800,000.

The main feature of the result was that Herri Batasuna, the radical nationalist Basque party raised its vote by 30,000 to 207,000, winning two seats. This was despite three years of intense campaigning by every official party against them and the heavy attacks of the state machine on the Basques.

The PSOE clearly emerged as the only credible government party in Spain. But this has not caused any major upset for the Spanish ruling class. The Stock Exchange reacted calmly and the Spanish Employers Federation is already saying that the new government will help to create a climate of industrial peace.

The revolutionary left organised a much more modest level of intervention than in previous elections. In the Basque Country and Galicia they called for a vote for the radical nationalists who were a real left alternative to the PSOE. Elsewhere in the revolutionary organisations, MC and the Revolutionary Communist League (Fourth International), stood on a policy of abstention, often with other local groups and independents. In most places they actually withdrew before polling day to make it clear they had no electoral pretensions. The type and intensity of their electoral campaigns differed from area to area given the complexity of Spanish politics. Essentially they emphasised such questions as purging the armed forces, active defence of jobs and work conditions, opposition to NATO, for women's rights and solidarity with the Basques. The MC opposed calling for a vote for the PSOE as the only alternative to the right. They argued that given the undemocratic nature of the state and the experiences of the PSOE in opposition to support them in any way would only increase illusions. Moreover as the PSOE would win regardless, it was more important to stand firm against the belief that a PSOE government would be any different from a UCD one. Also to have called for a PSOE vote in the Basque Country would have been politically absurd.

The election of a PSOE government will mean very little to the lives of most workers in Spain. A reformist strategy here is more of a pipe dream than in most bourgeois democracies given the fascist nature of the state.

For revolutionaries there are still opportunities, though far less than five or six years ago. There is considerable opposition to the military fascists and to joining NATO, while there is potentially a lot of support for a campaign in favour of abortion rights.

In the workers' movement the present nationally organised shop stewards' elections, although with an inevitable swing towards the socialist UGT, also show a certain regroupment of some militants. For example, the increasing re-organisation of activists expelled from the Communist Workers Commissions has led to some good results, one of the most significant being in Fords Valencia where the last left slate won 23 percent of the vote.

The quote the Basque MC's electoral slogan, paraphrasing the PSOE, 'Only this can change things—the struggle.'
Murder, Corruption, Crisis

The régime in Iran continues to fight a bitter war both against Iraq and against its opponents at home. Maryam Poya writes on the internal struggles.

In Khomeini's prisons today there are 50,000 political prisoners facing the most brutal torture and awaiting almost certain execution.

Until recently, the régime was burying the communists in a remote area outside Tehran called ‘Laamat Abad’ (the “cursed land”) because they are atheists and should not be buried with the “mobs.” They buried the Mujahedin in a special section in the main Tehran cemetery, Beheshte Zahra, because they believe in God, but they are hypocrites. Yet even the dead can be allowed no peace, for the régime found that the two burial places became gathering places for the gathering of the families of the executed. They have now abandoned the special area and bury everyone in Beheshte Zahra.

But since the number of executions is high, the head of the Tehran cemetery complained that “he can cope with this problem, and sometimes they have to bury the dead bodies without religious ceremonies.”

The régime is now planning to build a new cemetery near Evin prison in the north of Tehran in order to solve the problems of the chief cemetery.

Although the régime unashamedly announces some of its executions, they also try to justify their medieval behaviour in the prisoners by showing on television men and women who have been savagely tortured. They force them to say that they are a Mujahed or a communist and that they have done this to themselves in order to become strong and able to survive in jail.

In the régime’s jails, women are raped by ‘Islamic law’. One family recently received the news of their daughter’s execution. The Pasdars (Revolutionary Guards) returned her belongings and gave the parents $3, explaining that “she was a virgin, and since they do not execute virgins in Islam, one of the pasdars married her temporarily the night before her execution and the money is the price for the temporary marriage.” Many young women have been raped in jail under the name of such temporary marriages.

Life for those women is in jail is little better. The slogans on the walls are intimidating: ‘Death to women without hijab’ (Islamic clothing), ‘women without hijab are prostitutes’. Many women have been attacked in the streets by the barbaric agents of the régime and left with broken bones or their faces burned by acid. No women dare appear in public without Islamic clothing.

Arranged marriages are organised by the agents of the state between young women and the disabled from the war. And they have now begun to prepare the way for the introduction of clitoridectomy for girls. In a wide range of books entitled “Answers to your ideological tests”, they say that “in Islam clitoridectomy is moslahab (recommended).” This custom was unknown in Iran, but now that the Shia sect is in power, all these barbaric laws are being introduced. The main purpose of these “answer books” is to serve the needs of those employed or applying for jobs as it is now compulsory to pass Islamic ideoligical tests.

‘Statist’

But within the régime intense differences exist. Today there are three main factions: the ‘Imam’s line’, the technocrats and the traditionalists led by the Hojjatiyeh.

Distrust of the remnants of the leading sections of the bourgeoisie associated with the Shah’s régime led early on to the emergence of a ‘statist’ faction within the régime. These are the ‘progressives’, tailed by the Tudeh Party and the Fedayan majority (pro-Moscow).

This ‘statist’ tendency is best known by the name of the ‘Imam’s line’ and is divided into various groups, depending on the degree of statification of the economy each supports. The majority of the parliament deputies and members of the government have followed one or several of the different groups within the ‘Imam’s line’. They control the repressive and anti-working class institutions like the Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards), Komiteh, Islamic societies, ‘revolutionary’ foundations, and militias.

But this statist faction which became leaderless after Ayatollah Beheshti’s death has faced increasingly intense opposition from sections of Iranian capital with strong links with the clergy—most of whom are rentiers, living on rent derived from family-owned land or religious institutions.

This tendency, of whom the Hojjatiyeh are the most open element, is now fighting the ‘Imam’s line’ for power. Its first leader was Hojatolislam Falsafi, who smashed the main Baha’i centre in Tehran in 1955. Photographs of this ‘noble’ action were prominently deployed in the régime’s press. Falsafi was allowed on the state radio to preach hatred against the Baha’i as a sap to the clergy.

Today Falsafi has become a regular visitor to Khomeini and a frequent preacher at rallies on behalf of the régime. His twenty-five years of cooperation with SAVAK in anti-sectist and anti-Baha’i activities are never mentioned.

After the revolution the Hojjatiyeh joined
the Islamic Republic Party (IRP), putting their extensive network of reactions at its disposal. They concentrated in particular on security and intelligence matters, with key supporters in SAVAMA, running prisons and 'revolutionary' courts.

Until recently, the statist tendency seemed to hold decisive power. But today it is quite clear that the Hojatiyeh tendency is gradually taking over control. They now hold a number of important ministerial positions (Foreign, Labour and Defence), and control the whole media, most mosques and Friday prayer gatherings. They are removing the Islamic councils and societies and replacing them with a institute called Edarkeh Herat (Guarding Department). Under the Shah's regime a very similar organisation called Edarkeh Hefasat (Protection Department) existed and was part of SAVAK.

There have been serious splits through the Hojatiyeh's infiltration of the padars, komitehs and militia, resulting in murders of the 'Imam's line' elements by the Hojatiyeh.

In early August of this year, three padars—followers of the 'Imam's line'—were brutally killed by them. The regime blamed it on Mojahedeen and communists and executed 500 prisoners in one week. This same faction has also begun to purge the Tudeh Party members from workplaces.

The most important victory of the Hojatiyeh over the 'Imam's line' has arisen from the fact that the bankruptcy and failure of the regime has led many members of the central bureaucracy to abandon their state capitalist views and move towards the private capitalist tendency.

The battleground between the two main factions has widened considerably over the year of struggle between them. With the exception of repression, everything is now a matter for argument, and even for fighting over.

For instance, the government recently announced that some of the nationalised productive units are operating at loss and government cannot sustain such loss for longer.
Western capitalism is also beginning to gain confidence in the capitalist faction in Iran and is looking forward to stabilisation. Western governments who were unhappy at the overthrow of the Shah at the hands of a mass movement, and have been waiting three and a half year to see how Khomeini's regime develops, are beginning to feel that Khomeini's regime is capable of smashing the working class and its opposition. They also detect a section of the regime willing and trying hard to prove it can contain capitalist relations.

When the Ba'thists began their military attack on Iran in order to defeat the revolution, the mullahs refused to arm the people. They left the fate of the war in the hands of the paratroops and pro-Khomeini officers.

The regime's attempt to brainwash young people is now falling. They can no longer murder the youth in the cities and the villages in the North of Iran. Only by relying on people in the most backward and remote areas can they still recruit. They use people's religious beliefs to raise enthusiasm, offering money and distributing extra food and fuel coupons to their families through the 'Benjadeh Shahid' (Martyrs' Foundation).

The failure of the left to be consistent in its opposition to the war has been one of its greatest weaknesses. This war did not start being 'patriotic' (itself a term the left should never have used) when Khomeini attacked Iraq, nor when he began killing off the Mojahdeen and the left a year ago. It was always a reactionary war, and will be as long as the defence of the revolution is under the control of the regime.

The Iranian ruling class and its covert imperialist allies have a shared fear that the mass revolutionary movement which overthrew the Shah might arise again and overthrow Khomeini. For, despite the fact that a savagely reactionary religious power has control over all aspects of social life, it is not the case that all hope has gone. The opposition exists and is active. The Kurds, the Mojahdeen and the left are continuing their fight. Although it has hurt the regime, the armed struggle led by the Mojahdeen has not destroyed it.

Today people hate the regime and feel joyful when its agents are assassinated by the armed groups; they support the guerillas by helping them escape, by collecting money and medicine, and by hiding them in their homes.

When a bomb goes off killing the regime's agents or the mullahs, people consider it a good deed and presume that the bomb was placed by the Mojahdeen. If innocent people are killed, the assumption is that the bomb was placed by the regime itself.

Yet people clearly do not consider the Mojahdeen as the alternative. For socialists, the Mojahdeen and other guerrilla organisations are all in varying degrees responsible for the present situation. They failed Khomeini after the revolution, ignored the class struggle, and substituted themselves for a mass movement. Instead of fighting against the regime's attacks on every aspect of life, they looked for compromise solutions.

Assassination

Today the Mojahdeen's strategy for overthrowing Khomeini's regime is to continue the assassination of the regime's local agents, such as the paratroopers, the komitehs and the shopkeepers who play the role of the regime's secret police in each area. They believe it will eventually be impossible for the regime to hire anyone as its agents. They argue that, until then, strikes or any other political class struggle will be impossible and ineffective. They see the 'National Resistance Council' as the future government of Iran and are planning another Islamic Republic, but this time a 'democratic' one, 'where everyone, men and women, nationalities, ... will be equal'.

A 'Democratic Islamic Republic' is a fraud. The National Resistance Council, an alliance of the Mojahdeen and a section of the Iranian bourgeoisie, is doomed either to destruction or to become another dictatorship. The honest and militant members of the Mojahdeen who are heroically fighting the regime today will be the victims of such an alliance in the future.

Despite all that has happened, the Mojahdeen and the National Resistance Council still reject the separation of religion from the state and argue that Islam is progressive and that they are the true Muslims.

On the question of the nationalities, the Mojahdeen argue that their unity with the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran will ensure the integrity of Iran. They are against the secession of the nationalities, yet, for precisely the same reason, Khomeini has been massacring the Kurds for the last three years.

The Mojahdeen and the left are consistent only in disregarding the fact that the only power of the working class and the poor peasants can overthrow the regime and replace it with a socialist state.

The victory of the revolution in February 1979 owed much to the mass struggle. Although it was formed through mass street demonstrations, the movement would not have succeeded without the general strike. The workers organised strike committees in factories which were independent of the mosques and it was these committees that organised the general strike and paralysed the regime. It was this that prevented any possibility of compromise between the mullahs and the old regime.

Today we are witnessing the fact that, even under a terrorist regime, the working class is still fighting. In many workplaces workers are isolating the agents of the regime, writing their names and addresses on the walls of the toilets for the guerillas to read and act upon.

In July of this year, the Esfahan steel mill, one of Iran's biggest factories which employs 40,000 workers, went on strike. More than half of these workers are employed on a temporary basis and liable to be sacked at any time by the management. They earn only the minimum wage of 20,000 rials (£120) a month. After the dismissal of a number of workers, the whole workforce went on strike and forced the Government to employ all of the temporary workers permanently as well as securing a wage increase.

This and other strikes show where the power lies and that this power could shake the regime. Workers have a great deal of experience from the last few years. Many know that in order to overthrow this regime, they have to build their own organisations and work for a political general strike. Their only allies in this important task are those who have learnt from the past mistakes and are ready to start from scratch.
Brazil goes to vote

November's elections in Brazil are the most important since the military coup in 1964 and the installation of a dictatorship which was the most savage in Latin America. David Beecham assesses the balance of forces.

Brazil's rulers hope the elections will set the seal on their policy of 'abertura'—of deliberate, semi-controlled liberalisation in order to complete modernisation and keep order in the most advanced of the newly-industrialised countries.

The elections follow four years of upheaval as the new Brazilian working class proved its strength and forced an 'opening' much wider than was intended.

Sao Paulo is the Petrodrag of Brazil, both in terms of the importance of its industry, the size of its factories, the weight of the working class and because of its politics.

At the time of the 1964 coup in Brazil there were 3.6 million industrial workers: today there are around 12 million. The population of Sao Paulo more or less doubled over the same period—from around six million in the mid-1960s to over 13 million in 1982. Around two-thirds of Brazil's industrial industry is in the Sao Paulo state—mostly in Sao Paulo itself and in the various industrial satellite towns which surround it. It is a little as though London, the West Midlands and Manchester were all thrown together into and around one vast city.

Shanty towns

This colossal growth has produced incredibly hard conditions for large numbers of workers and for the unemployed and underemployed (of whom there are about 14 million in the whole of the country). There are several hundred thousand people (no one knows how many) living in shanty-towns—the favelas—difficult to count, and certainly most Brazilian politicians see these people as 'marginal'. They are not: some of the favelas have been in existence ten or fifteen years. The shack owners have paid large amounts for their accommodation, yet the land still belongs to the coffee companies or the railway firms who are in a position to demand the land back at a moment's notice. Perhaps a million more people live in the favelas—in conditions worse than the favelas.

State limits

In May 1978, the spark of revolt occurred. The first strike of any size for ten years—the first successful battle against a wage policy imposed by the military 14 years before. About 1,000 workers at the Saab-Scania factory in Sao Bernardo do Campo came out. They were joined by 50,000 more—Ford, Mercedes, Volkswagen, Philips, General Electric, Mannesman. Finally 200,000 carworkers and engineers won pay increases above the state limit, the right to organise and the right to strike.

It was this movement that marked the first real break with the state-sponsored unions imposed in the 1960s. The subsequent strikes in 1979 and 1980 sealed it. The movements in the two subsequent years were far larger and far more threatening. The Government came in with police and tear gas, declaring strikes illegal, arresting the leaders, and taking over the unions established since the coup. It did not prevent the creation of the free unions run by the workers themselves, nor the creation of rank and file opposition in the other unions (the majority run by government stooges, often in a collaboration with reformists of a social democratic and 'communist' hue).

Despite repression, large-scale redundancies, victimisation of militants and all the different forms of repression employed by the government and employers, the unions were able to consolidate. They showed their strength again in May this year when in a repeat of the tactics used in 1978 workers in the major plants—Volkswagen, Ford, Mercedes, Saab etc—clocked in and refused to work, blockading management in the factories in the process. The big car and bus manufacturers chose to do a deal on their own—forcing the other national and international firms to improve pay offers. Once again the strongest plants paved the way for victories elsewhere.

The aftermath of the 1980 strike movement saw the birth of the Workers' Party (PT)—a party of a dramatically new type, with a genuine class approach to politics.

The PT is special in Brazil, and indeed in Latin America, because of the emphasis on the industrial working class. While this should not blind us to the fact that it remains ambiguous about its role and above all its relationship to the industrial struggle as a party, the fact that it is a class party makes it a special phenomenon.

Complex line-up

The political line-up in Brazil for the elections is as might be expected extremely complex. The 'main' opposition organisation, the PMDB, is an umbrella organisation containing numerous groupings, including the communists and the ex-MRB guerrilla movement. The PDS is the only main government
party—others have been created to give the appearance of pluralism—but even this clearly bourgeois organisation carries a populist banner.

The Brazilian ruling class has taken out a number of insurance policies other than PDS. The PTB for example, which is expected to win in Rio de Janeiro, was once a respected part of the social democratic opposition but had its own 'coup' after the military took power. Former leader, a man called Brizola, was pushed out and a new right-wing populist group took control—described by some on the left as 'fascists.' Its figurehead in Rio—Sandria de Cavalcanti—ran a traditional TV show for many years, acting as a 'cross between Mary Whitehouse, Jimmy Young and Esther Rantzen. The ruling class has also conjured up another 'opposition' party (just in case) called the PF—again a right-wing populist formation.

The opposition may be dominated by the PMDB at national level—but in Sao Paulo the PT has considerable credibility. The PT is essentially like a much more rank and file-based Labour Party. The main candidate, Lula, has the reputation of Arthur Scargill, only more so. But the PT is much more than its leader. It is riddled with 'Trotkist' groups (all the varieties of the Fourth International) none of which has any working class base. Its main leadership remains in the mould of the radical church politics which dominate much of the genuine left in Brazil. The PT has an estimated 20,000 members and about 200,000 sympathisers (mainly those who support the tax for education)....

It is obviously the main pole of attraction for the young militants, for the supporters of the Christian left, and, critically, for those oppositionists from the middle class who represent social democracy.

Several PMDB deputies and local politicians have joined the PT: one key figure in Sao Paulo's state legislature decided to tour the United States with Lula in the wake of the 1980 strikes. Those visited were Ted Kennedy, AFL-CIO leaders and students at Berkeley University...

To a degree the PT is simply a leftist-reformist party with a genuine workers' leader as its figurehead. But the PT's emphasis is firmly on class interests. It is not misled by populism: it is not nationalist; it is not pro-Russian. Uniquely in Latin America the PT came out wholeheartedly for Solidarnosc and the victory of the Polish working class. What makes the PT different is the fact that it was born out of massive struggles and still has to relate to them.

Poised for change

It remains the case, however, that the PT is not a revolutionary organisation. Some very good working class militants are not in the PT at all and indeed regard it with an element of suspicion. An unemployed engineering worker, secretary of the Association of Workers of Mooca (a district of Sao Paulo) commented: 'I'm not in the PT because I want a revolutionary Marxist party based in the factories which will lead an insurrection.'

There is also a great deal of emphasis by rank and file militants in, for example, the other (right wing) Sao Paulo metalworkers' unions on the need for opposition movements rather than union takeovers. There are union oppositions now in several of the Sao Paulo unions. There the reality is a tremendously hard struggle to get workers interested in joining an organisation which they see as hostile.

Brazil seems poised for more changes. The ruling class is coming under international pressure to put its house in order, while at the same time having to cope with a working class conscious of its power. There is a danger that the elections will result in paralysis and that the (completely unpurged) military will try to reassure control. It is more likely that the existing government party will win—but only a partial victory. The need will be to hit the working class even harder, and to control these new movements which are emerging.

The key question

Perhaps the key question is whether the rank and file leaders can be co-opted as has happened so often in the past. The Brazilian left remains fragile. The PT seems bound to split and there is no conscious revolutionary tendency to take the best elements forward. But there is a tremendous reservoir of revolutionary talent; a cadre in Brazil's working class.

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Lula for governor

Earlier this year, Lula spoke to Socialist Review about the November elections, the state of the workers' movement and the role of the PT.

Luís Inácio da Silva, known universally as "Lula" is probably the most important and best-known leader of rank and file workers in any Latin American country. He came to prominence in 1978 as spokesman for the carworkers and engineers of São Bernardo do Campo, the major industrial satellite town of São Paulo. As President of the Union of Metalworkers of São Bernardo do Campo and Diadema (another huge industrial area) he led the massive strikes of 1979 and 1980. He was one of 15 union leaders arrested under the National Security Law on 20 April 1980, a move which led to the defeat of the strike but not of the free union movement.

Lula is now the President of the Partido do Trabalhadores (PT), the Workers' Party, which was born in the wake of the government's intervention against the free union movement, and has stood down as President of the union, though he is still seen as its leader.

Lula is thus free to stand as the PT's candidate for the single most important position at stake in this year's elections - governor of São Paulo state, the most populous part of Brazil, where two-thirds of industry is concentrated.

Lawful party

What is the PT aiming to achieve in the elections this November?

The elections are significant for a number of reasons. The most important is that it should legalise our party. The law says that a party must gain at least five percent of the national vote - or 13 percent in nine states - in order to be legally recognised. The second reason is that the elections are part of the process of self-organisation of the working class... so the working class discovers itself as a class.

And the third reason is so that the PT gets a good result in the elections for the national assembly, makes a good showing in the state elections and in the municipalities. There are states where we stand a good chance of getting deputies elected to the state assemblies on equal terms with the other parties.

But do you think the elections signify any great change in Brazil?

I think there is the possibility of change in a country like Brazil because there is the possibility of the opposition getting a majority in the national assembly, in the state assemblies; so there is a hope for things getting better, I'd say.

I think that foreign economic and political policy, above all concerning the foreign debt, has got to change. Particularly, there ought to be discussions with foreign creditors about the refinancing of the foreign debt. From the constitutional point of view there has to be reform at least of the role of the state and national assemblies; abolition of the National Security Law; the abolition of the special laws which give exceptional powers to the government.

On the trade union front we could get some substantial changes through Parliament allowing freedom to organise.

You personally are standing in the election for Governor of São Paulo, and some people are talking of an outside possibility of you winning - wouldn't this create enormous problems for the Party and for the working class - trying to run the most important city in the country?

Well first of all we're conscious enough of what São Paulo is like to know that if we were elected there would be some things we
could do to improve the administration of the state. Secondly, we're well aware that in a capitalist state with the big monopolies and the big international conglomerates in collaboration with the military it's impossible to have a workers' government. All the same we're also well aware of what the resources of a huge state like São Paulo could do to improve conditions of the vast majority of the population.

We know the difficulties, but we also know that the working class wouldn't get anywhere if it didn't have the audacity to take political power: at the level of a single state, or the whole nation, or just at the level of a single municipality.

Grass roots

I think we have a real chance here. But we're not simply obsessed with winning—that won't solve our problems. We think the most important thing is to be active at the grass roots; in the sense that this is where our strength is: this is where workers can organise.

Taking the recent example of the Coferraz factory—where the workers occupied the plant when they hadn't been paid for a month and the police broke it up—do you think it would make a difference if the State Governor was different?

Well I think the minimum a governor ought to be able to do is sort out the problems of the community. The first thing would be to ensure that the police didn't intervene against the workers; secondly, the state should not allow workers to be put in the position of not getting paid; the state should overcome the firms' failings, take over responsibility and see the workers get their rights. But much more important than this: the governor of a state like São Paulo has got to pursue policies which mean the labour market is not at the mercy of the employers but functions for the good of the city and its inhabitants. And this could be achieved by investment—not the kind of speculative investment pursued today but investment in land, in agriculture, education, public transport: that's the way to improve employment and the standard of living of the people of São Paulo.

So how do you see things? Is it an electoral struggle based on the factories or is it an industrial struggle involving elections?

The class struggle doesn't begin with elections and it doesn't end with elections either: these elections are merely a stage in the workers' struggle in the factories, other workplaces, in the country, in the city. We have that perspective and the perspective that the elections are not an end in themselves, but a means we will try to use to resolve at least part of the problems facing working people.

I'd like to turn to the state of the class struggle today. Things have got much harder. What's happening?

The working class in Brazil is going through a period where government policy is directed at absorbing and institutionalising opposition. We have a completely un-

democratic union structure, inherited from military dictatorship. At the moment any sort of mobilisation is much harder than in 1978 or 1979/80. The trade union movement has to find new ways of organising, new forms of organisation and above all new perspectives for the working class. What is now needed is a new type of workers' organisation.

Alright—what kind of party are you trying to build? A sort of front with various tendencies or a unified party with a single policy—or what?

Well I think different tendencies of opinion are healthy—they show a party is democratic. And the party is homogeneous in the sense that we have a programme, we abide by one set of rules, we have a single internal organisation and our policy is determined by our conferences.

Now we have our own party paper. We don't agree with people selling their own particular papers—but we don't forbid it. We are a party with socialist aims: but we need to discuss what type of socialism it is that we want.
CND to the sidelines

At the weekend of 26-28 November CND is holding its annual conference. Pete Blain measures the gains and losses it has made in the past twelve months, its prospects for the coming year, and how socialists should relate to it.

The successes are fairly easy to specify. They include CND’s mobilisation of 200,000 people at the June demonstration (right at the height of the Falklands hysteria), the overwhelming 70 per cent vote for unilateralism at the Labour Party Conference and the Church of England’s cautious and provisional espousal of the unilateralist cause in the autumn. (When one thinks that only recently it was possible to think of the Church as ‘The Tory Party at prayer’ the latter certainly marks a major change.)

But anyone who has been involved in CND at the grass roots level can also tell a completely different story. Meetings in the localities are no longer attracting large audiences, few new activists are being drawn into the movement, the local committees are—with a few notable exceptions—reduced to a rump of functionaries from the professions who have been unable or unwilling to involve fresh layers into the campaign. This has affected working class involvement in the localities particularly badly. Without activity into which they can be drawn, most are repelled by the alternative of participating in the largely administrative affairs of the increasingly middle-class committees.

The question concerning the only party that claims to believe in it—the Labour Party—and increased support for its arch enemies in the Conservative Party.

One important reason has been the generalised nature of the Tory offensive. Mass unemployment, created and encouraged by government policies, has weakened workers’ resistance to the onslaught. But this weakness has been exploited at the level of ideas as well as action; and in the aftermath the Tories have not been slow to win over an important part of the working class to a more generalised ruling class outlook—high wages ‘cause unemployment’, public spending cuts ‘increase efficiency’, the ‘national interest’ must be pursued by increasing ‘our’ exports, and defending ‘our’ sovereignty in the Falklands, and so on.

Narrow based campaign

Against this highly sophisticated and successful offensive, CND has mounted a very narrowly based campaign. Although it certainly has managed to convince many millions of the need to get rid of nuclear weapons (indeed a majority of the population if the opinion polls are to be believed) it has also isolated this question from the mainstream of political debate. During the recent hospitals’ dispute, for instance, CND excluded itself from consideration by refusing to support the dispute around the slogan ‘Hospitals not Bombs’. In effect it was saying that cuts in hospital revenue have nothing to do with the £14 billion that the Tories are squandering on armaments.

The same is true for every other attack on workers’ living standards and conditions that the Tories ‘couldn’t afford’ to pay. Every time they should have been hit on the head with the same argument, pointing out the utter hypocrisy involved, and explaining the direct connections with nuclear weapons. But the fact is that they were not; the result has been an increasing marginalisation of CND, and fewer obstacles to the Tory attempt to construct a right-wing national ‘consensus’.

It is a mistake to believe that campaigns are won when they achieve majority support. In the late 1970s, for instance, there were (according to opinion polls) up to 80 per cent of the population opposed to British membership of the EEC. But this opposition was too often rooted in a national chauvinism and an acceptance of class collaboration that ultimately rebounded to the benefit of the Tories. The same thing could happen over the question of nuclear weapons. Here too the problem is that there is a majority that wants to keep them; rather that there are millions who want to get rid of them, but who do not as yet see what that means over the thousand-and-one other questions that concern them or that they are invited to have opinions about.

The are similar parallels with respect to the prospects of CND within the Labour Party. There too the growth in unilateralist feeling has accompanied a quite decisive move to the right on the NEC and a falling apart of last year’s Bennite coalition seeking power for the left within the structures of the party. The weakness of the basis of this unilateralism was demonstrated by the subsequent vote on the question of British membership of NATO—which was overwhelmingly endorsed by the delegates. Yet this made complete nonsense of the party’s unilateralism.

For a start the bulk of the nuclear targets in this country are not bases but communication, command and control centres. They would remain so long as Britain remains in NATO.

As things stand at present, the great bulk of NATO’s nuclear weapons (20,000-30,000 of them) are tactical or battlefield weapons that are completely integrated into the existing land forces in Europe. Both the warheads themselves and Britain’s NATO troops are under the direct command of the US military; they have been built into a single, integrated, nuclear-armed force and this will remain even if Britain gives up its own nuclear weapons machine. Furthermore while NATO says it will not be the first to use strategic nuclear weapons, its plans for a land war in Europe explicitly envisage NATO’s first use of tactical nuclear weapons in such an engagement. A use which Russia has threatened would subsequently bring about all-out nuclear retaliation on their part. In other words remaining in NATO would be to consent to be part of by far the most dangerous and threatening nuclear nexus today.

Finally membership of NATO implies

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that threatening the Russians with a non-nuclear death is somehow preferable to threatening a nuclear death; that Thatcher and her crew would have our support in killing Russian workers so long as they do it with napalm and fragmentation bombs rather than nuclear weapons. The Economist, along with quite a few NATO generals, has quite enthusiastically seized upon this point, arguing for significant increases in military expenditure to pay for the possibility of countering a Russian attack in Europe without recourse to nuclear weapons. Yet a huge part of our case against the war-mongers is based on the fact that they are prepared to squander vast sums of money on better ways of killing us while at the same time taking away our jobs, health service, homes and wages to pay for it. If a unilateralist Britain that is still a part of NATO will mean still further cuts in jobs, hospitals, homes and wages, it will make a nonsense of the whole unilateralist case.

The position of the Labour Party is, therefore, riddled with contradictions: a fact that the dominant right-wing in the PLP, the NEC and the shadow cabinet will exploit to the full should a Labour Government be returned at the next election.

Wrong priorities

What should CND itself be doing in this situation? Last year its annual conference resolved, after a long battle by SWP delegates, to actually campaign against NATO. This seems to have made little impact on CND's General Council which has more or less ignored the whole issue, preferring to direct its energies elsewhere—to sending delegations to the United Nations in New York, to encouraging the setting up of SDP CND and so on. Unless these priorities are sharply changed CND's case can rapidly be eroded. An immediate campaign against NATO is now urgently needed to stop this happening.

On several fronts therefore, the ideas and arguments that CND has traded on in the past two years or so, will become increasingly inadequate. Unless the consequences of 'defence' on the daily attacks on workers' living standards are made into the centrepiece of CND propaganda and activity, then the campaign will increasingly find itself relegated to an irrelevant backwater of British politics, whatever degree of passive support it gets there. Unless it takes up the campaign against NATO, its supporters in the Labour Party will find themselves confused and demoralised. And, finally, unless CND stops pretending that multilateralism (which is what Thatcher, Reagan, Brezhnev and Co. use to strengthen their own positions) is just the same kind of thing as, and is perfectly compatible with, unilateralism (which is, after all, our weapon against these same rulers), then CND could quite easily be derailed by any one of a number of false Eastern or Western 'peace' initiatives.

What are the chances of CND, or at least a substantial portion of it, making this kind of transformation in its approach in the coming period? On the basis of the last annual conference, which was distinctly more anti-working class than the previous one, and the falling away in local activities in the last year, the prospects certainly do not look good. However, the potential of the campaign is still enormous; so too is its appeal to the aspirations of millions of people. Any sudden upturn in activity could dramatically alter the situation overnight. CND is by far and away the biggest and best mobiliser of working people against Thatcher and her policies that we currently possess.

Middle class guilt

With the approach of the date for the installation of Cruise and Pershing 2 missiles, there is the promise of involving many more people in the struggle against them—and perhaps at a much higher level (involving direct action and civil disobedience) than hitherto. This certainly would qualitatively change the situation within CND.

But the trouble is that none of these missiles are likely to be installed before Spring 1984. We have no guarantee that CND will still be in a viable state to lead a campaign against them then. And it would be a complete mistake to be lulled into inactivity in the interim. In the short run every attempt must be made to encourage both mass demonstrations and direct action, this side of the introduction of the missiles.

For socialists the headlong rush of our rulers along the road to the Third World War is, as it was in the run up to 1914 and 1939, the result of the return of crisis to the world capitalist economy. The tendency to produce such crises and the propensity of the ruling class to contemplate solving them by threatening world war is something that will persist so long as that class remains in power. Today that tendency can be seen at work at many different levels—the moves towards protectionism, the Siberian pipeline embargo and above all the growth of the military juggernauts. CND is a natural response to this crisis. But that does not mean that it is bound to go on growing as the crisis itself deepens; only through a continual involvement in activity and an appeal to the right ideas and arguments can it prevent itself getting shunted into irrelevant sidings. Just such dangers exist at the present time. Activists within it will have to argue hard to get it back on the right track again.
Part of the union

Recent arguments among feminists are more than just a question of tactics for fighting male chauvinism. Norah Carlin argues that the basic principle of class struggle is at stake.

Trade unions today are riddled with male chauvinism and practices that discriminate against women. Even unions with a majority of women members are led by men and do not reflect the interests of their mostly low-paid female membership. Women are two-fifths of the workforce and over a third of all trade union members. Their average earnings are only 60 percent of men's.

The way the unions are run often makes it difficult for women to attend meetings, make their views known or take on responsibilities. The attitudes of many male trade unionists to their own wives and daughters make it even more difficult.

All this is true, important, and should be the starting point for many struggles to change the trade unions from within so that they become an effective weapon for women workers—and for male workers too.

It is a different matter altogether when these criticisms, these problems and necessary struggles are made the excuse for public union-bashing along the lines of an article Beatrice Campbell wrote for Guardian Women in August. It has now become notorious. Ms Campbell, a well-known feminist and a member of the Communist Party for many years, went much further than meaning about male chauvinism in the unions.

Lords of labour

She described trade unions in general as 'not only irrelevant to most women but sometimes inimical to their interests.' She attacked 'the lords of labour' for leading women hospital workers into 'a life and death sort of struggle' involving political risks they don't face themselves. And she said that the strike weapon may have been all right in the nineteenth century but is 'hardly fitting for a labour market characterised by service workers.'

The consequences of this outstandingly nasty article, which has rightly been seen as giving comfort to the anti-trade union camp of Thatcher and Tebbit, are still echoing through the Morning Star (which invited left Labour Party member and AUEW-TASS National Officer Barbara Switzer to reply) and the letters column of Tribune.

There is much more involved here than a dispute about tactics. It is not just a question of whether criticisms are raised in a fraternal manner, or within the labour movement itself rather than in the bourgeois press. The fundamental argument of Campbell's article is not just about the position of women, but about the nature of the struggle for socialism and women's liberation. Campbell's position—which she has argued out over the last ten years—is that male domination in the trade unions is part of the patriarchal structure by which men oppress women.

This is not just a matter of terminology, or even of priorities. Behind it lie two arguments which are fundamentally destructive of working class struggle, and therefore inimical to the overthrow of the capitalist system, the achievement of socialism, and women's liberation itself.

The first is the view that there is a 'power structure' within the working class which is of the same nature as the power structure in capitalist society at large. This is dangerous nonsense: the 'power' of trade unions is not the same as the power of the State, the Church, the Army or the judges, though they all involve male domination to a greater or lesser degree. You only have to think of the consequences of taking over or destroying each one in turn to realise that they are different. But the whole point of the 'power structure' analysis is that taking them over becomes an end in itself. Thatcher, Tebbit and Co pale into insignificance as each power structure becomes a separate obsession.
The second argument is even more pernicious, for it is a denial of the validity of class struggle altogether. This fashionable view draws from the present decline of working class combativity the conclusion that the working class as such can no longer play the leading part in the struggle for socialism. The lead must be taken instead by 'broad-based' political parties composed of 'popular' movements such as feminism, ecology, etc. These arguments are, and will continue to be, dealt with elsewhere in *Socialist Review*, but it is important to realise that this is where Campbell's feminism fits. She has no qualms about union bashing in public because she has rejected class struggle as an outdated and patriarchal idea.

The other terrifying thing about Campbell-style feminism is just how incapable it is of relating to the real, present-day working class world.

Take the family wage, for instance. We are told that this is still a central preoccupation of male trade unionism, basically unchanged since the mid-nineteenth century when craft-based unionism helped to drive women out of the workforce and into the home. No doubt it was easy to find a 'group of prominent boilermakers' who all believe that women shouldn't go out to work—but both they and Mr. Campbell are totally out of touch with reality.

Paid work

The fact is that half of all married women are now in paid employment, compared with only one in ten in 1931. And of the other half, a large proportion of *working class* wives are not at work either because they have very young children and no alternative to staying at home to look after them, or because they cannot get jobs in the current recession—*not* because their husbands are earning an adequate family wage.

In effect, the family wage has all but disappeared in the last twenty years, and the fact that some skilled male workers haven't noticed, or if they have noticed wish it hadn't, shows their capacity for self-deception, not their power to oppress women. True, we must fight any attempt to re-establish the family wage as the ideal, while at the same time recognizing that many very badly-off working class families are still dependent on one income, whether a man's or a woman's. Right now, many unemployed workers' wives need a family wage more than many boilermakers and they aren't getting it.

The fight for equal pay and economic independence for women must take place on real ground, not on a cardboard model of fifty or a hundred years ago, and it must be sensitive to real needs.

The image of the powerful, skilled, male trade unionist carefully constructed by Beatrice Campbell and her friends is equally hollow. Blustering male chauvinists and shameless block voters their leaders may often be, but who can believe that in the real world of capitalist crisis, massive unemployment and Thatcherism—the traditional 'leading sections' of the trade union movement possess real power?

Large-scale redundancies and closures have cut much of the ground from under the feet of traditionally strong sections such as steel and car workers. If they still cling to high wages for a reduced workforce, they are snatching small victories out of massive defeats on the job front.

Politically, some of the skilled workers' unions have suffered heavy defeats, from the steel strike and the sacking of Derek Robinson to ASLFE's capitulation to flexible rostering. Only the miners have managed to preserve an image of themselves as politically defeated despite the long-term loss of jobs in the mines—and whether this image will be preserved in the current struggle over pit closures remains to be seen. It is extraordinary how strongly Beatrice Campbell resents the self-confidence of the miners—she almost feels that political defeat would be welcomed as bringing them down a peg or two.

It is perfectly true that the trade union movement is tainted with male domination, just as it is tainted with craftism, elitism, the twin evils of authoritarianism and passivity, and various other nasty features of capitalist society. It is above all bureaucratic—trade union leaders pursue their own goals of 'power' politics and accommodation to capitalism; officials frequently sell out strikes and wreck local negotiations from above, or dissuade members from action in the interests of 'good relations' with employers.

Bureaucracy

And under this bureaucratic leadership, women workers tend to suffer more visibly than rank and file male workers, because their low wages, lack of participation and absence from decision-making can be measured. But they are not the only ones who are losing out.

The trade unions are nevertheless an
essential weapon of class struggle. Ever since Marx's own day, there have been middle class intellectual socialists who refuse to recognize this, denouncing trade union struggles as primitive, narrow, economic and selfish. Political weapons are also necessary, and ideological weapons too. But unless the working class can feel and use its own economic strength through trade union struggle, it will never even reach out for power, hegemony, revolution and the rest.

Women workers must be a vital part of the struggle to rebuild an effective, fighting trade union movement. The political weakness of the traditional skilled male sections should be an opportunity, not to borrow Tobbis' boots and kick them when they're down, but to demand a new equality, a new solidarity between men and women workers.

Lee Jeans

For the fact is that at the moment no section of workers can win on their own. Not the Lee Jeans women, who helped the solidarity of shipyard workers and dockers in their fight for jobs, Not the hospital workers (women and men), who need a big and rapid extension of the solidarity shown on the Days of Action. Not even the miners—they too depend on blacking, and on the support of 'public opinion' which is largely other workers' opinions.

We need to attack bureaucracy in the unions, and fight for a leadership that leads struggles instead of negotiating disasters. 'Feminising' the unions means nothing if it does not mean democratising them; demanding more women officials and executive members means precisely nothing if they continue to behave as their male counterparts do at present.

'Redistributing wealth between men and women' means nothing if it simply aims to duplicate the inequalities that exist among men. Scratch this feminist demand and that is often what you will find underneath—a belief not in equality, but in parity for women within the existing hierarchy of divisions of class, skill and pay. More top jobs for women is a strategy that will benefit the few at the expense of the many.

The slogan 'redistribute wealth between men and women' needs looking at more closely for other reasons. It should be obvious that we do fundamentally support this aim, because within particular unions or industries the levelling of grades and differentials, the demand for flat-rate increases and opposition to divide and rule productivity deals are essential to any rank and file programme. They are crucial demands for women workers.

It is rather different when this slogan is made the excuse for attacking particular sections of higher-paid workers when they are confronting employers and governments in politically significant strikes. This is a perennial problem in the trade union movement, sharpened but not created by the rightward drift of feminism. I remember a male hospital worker assuring me in 1972 that 'We would be all right if it wasn't for the bloody Ford workers'.

Worker rivalry

Nothing suits employers and governments more than disunity among the working class: the whole system, including much of the structure of the trade union movement, is designed to maximise sectionalism and rivalry.

The truth is, that we cannot eliminate these differences without destroying capitalism itself; we can only seek to reduce them while capitalism survives. Equal pay for all workers would be the perfect condition for class struggle, because the nature of exploitation would then be transparent. Just for that reason, it can never be a precondition.

Wage freezes

If we really do want to get rid of the capitalism system—if we want real equality in the end—then working class unity is the priority. It is also a very practical proposition: all the wage freezes and blanket pay restrictions in recent times have been broken by better-paid workers first. The miners' victory in 1972 was the foot in the door which opened the way to a whole series of lower-paid workers' battles, including the first significant hospital workers' action.

But what if we could get an incomes policy which would really benefit low-paid women workers? This has now become an important argument among women in the labour movement, especially those who have turned in the last couple of years towards the Labour Party. Closely linked to the Feminist Incomes Policy is the Feminist Social Contract. This would mean a Labour Government committed to redistributing resources through the welfare state—for example by increased Child Benefits—or by giving higher wages to women in the public sector.

The experience of Past Incomes Policies, Social Contracts and Concordats with the Labour Party should perhaps be enough to destroy such illusions. No matter how reasonable the intentions of benefitting low-paid workers may sound, Labour governments have ended up with the same old blanket restrictions and freezes, the same
degrading confrontations with low-paid workers in the public sector. (Remember the Winter of Discontent?)

No matter how firm the commitment to expanding the welfare state, large enough increases in public spending have not materialised because of the same old need to maintain profitability in the private sector. (Remember Squeezing the Rich till the Pips Squeak?)

But this time, say feminists in the Labour Party, it will be different, because this time we will change the leadership of the Labour Party—by 'feminising' it and getting the left into positions of power—so that the next Labour government really will carry out those equalising policies.

**Labour Party**

The immediate, practical problem about this is that it is far more easily said than done. Changing the leadership of the Labour Party is many times more difficult than getting the party conference committed to suitable policies. The defeats that really hurt feminists at this year's Blackpool conference were organisational—the rejection of proposals to have women NEC members elected by the women's sections and to get at least one woman included in every Parliamentary short list. They were crucial defeats because this strategy depends on changing the leadership.

It is not primarily male chauvinism and patriarchal power that prevent the Labour Party leadership from being 'feminised', but the whole nature of the party, as an electoral machine and its relations with British capitalism, past, present and prospective future. Feminist fury is wasted on Chairperson Judith Hart for obstructing the women's debate—a traitor to her sex she may be, but she is absolutely true to type as a member of the Labour Party leadership.

Real progress for women workers does not depend on changing the leadership of the Labour Party or the unions from the top, but on the progress of the class struggle and women's place within it. We must be totally committed to this—women must not get left behind in the trade union struggle this time round.

**Child care**

There are plenty of practical things that must be done about this. Union meetings in workplaces and branches must be genuinely open to women—that may mean changing the times of meetings, making arrangements for child care, or altering procedures so that the rank and file are heard more than the office holders. Husbands, sons and boyfriends must recognise that women trade unionists have to go to meetings and take on responsibilities that will mean they have to cook dinner or wash socks for themselves.

Women and men must be together on picket lines. No more 'Thanks for the strike vote, girls—you'll be catching up on the housework while we're out.' Though it must be said that the problem can be the other way round, too—this morning I was on a 100 percent female picket line at our local hos-

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The Labour Party conference—can it be 'feminised' from within?

If some supporters of that movement have moved sharply to the right, denying what many women felt to be the automatically revolutionary implications of feminism ten years ago, and relying instead on a perspective of change from above, we should not be shamefaced or coy about arguing with them.

**Short cuts**

It is not 'anti-feminist' to argue that there are no short cuts to liberation for working class women; that their advance depends on the advance of the working class as a whole, and not on winning positions in reformist parties or bureaucratised trade unions; and that without the liberation of working class women feminism is meaningless. On the contrary, it is when publicly attacking the unions and denouncing workers on strike become the test of 'feminism' that the cause of women's liberation is in danger.

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Angels on picket lines

The traditional approach to nursing as a profession has been a major factor in alienating nurses from the rest of the hospital workforce, and limiting their union membership and militancy. Ann Rogers looks at some of the problems of organising nurses.

Over 80 percent of nursing and ancillary staff working in the NHS are women. They are pushed towards health care because these jobs are seen as ones in which women can use their 'natural' feminine skills, caring for others without demanding large rewards.

The training and work practices imposed on these workers try to ensure that they do not deviate from traditional women's roles, and so continue to provide a cheap and malleable source of labour for the NHS. The use of myths about women's natural role is a common means of control used by all managers of female workforces, but in nursing, which epitomises the 'ideal' of woman as carer-giver, it is most strongly felt.

The experience of being on strike breaks down the traditional passivity of nurses, as many women find out for themselves that the idea of a hospital as one big happy family, all working to care for the patient, is a fiction.

There is a tremendous tension between the ideology which nurses are fed, and the reality of their working lives. Many militant nurses feel that their lack of industrial muscle makes it difficult to turn more than a few nurses into good trade unionists.

Most workers involved in industrial action soon find themselves vilified by the press and even the more backward sections of the working class. They quickly become hardened to this and the most advanced can draw political lessons. But nurses are everyone's favourites, so militants inside hospitals have a much tougher time arguing for all-out action rather than gentle persuasion. Only support from stronger sections of the class as well as regular meetings within each hospital can overcome this, creating the confidence that the dispute can be won, demonstrating that nurses are part of a wider working class movement.

The 'professionals'

Winning the argument that nurses are workers, whose interests are similar to those of porters, domestics, ancillaries is an uphill task as hospital management have always fed nurses the myth that they are 'professionals' whose only duty is to their patients.

Nursing as a 'respectable' profession developed as a result of capitalism forcing certain services out of the home and into the public sphere. Before the mid-nineteenth century hospitals were little more than dustbins for sick paupers. The women who cleaned them, if they were cleaned at all, also came from the pauper classes. Anyone who could afford it would be cared for at home, by domestic servants.

The need for better health care, together with technical developments in medicine, led to the widespread building of public hospitals, and it was the need for people to care for the sick in these new institutions. The women who undertook the work were, almost wholly young, unmarried and middle class. They did their job in the spirit with which, as dutiful daughters, they would have nursed their families a generation earlier. Hospitals were modelled on the politics of the Victorian home, with doctors playing the omnipotent father, senior nurses the strict, but interior mother, and junior nurses the completely subservient daughter. Nurses were overworked, grossly underpaid and subjected to the strictest moral standards.

This whole atmosphere, together with the class background of the majority of nurses, strongly influenced their reluctance to see themselves as workers, who could fight for decent wages and conditions.

The founding of the NHS led to a rapid increase in demand for nurses. Increased recruitment led to working class women, and married women entering nursing. Women were still pushed into nursing because it was an extension of their 'natural' role. But the women now nursing were not just doing it because they found it rewarding, but because they needed the money. A tension was bound to develop between nurses' experiences as workers selling their labour and the ideology of nurses as endlessly self-sacrificing caregivers.

Many nurses have begun to see that all their goodwill and 'responsibility' has not prevented cuts in the NHS hurting patients. The hypocrisy of the management has become clearer as they stumped on any attempts to organise against the cuts. In a situation where political decisions are leading to a rundown in the health service the most responsible thing health workers can do is fight for a decent service. Fighting the government is seen as the only way to protect patients. In the best organised hospitals the ideology of responsibility to patients has backfired on the management.

Nurses have traditionally been the people who would do any job in the wards. This has led to friction between nurses and more militant health workers, such as porters. But with sharp reductions in staffing there are now simply too many gaps appearing for nurses to keep things ticking over. When the present industrial action began the idea that the health service was crumbling because of political decisions rather than lazy porters was already widespread. Joint action by all hospital workers has further undermined the traditional divisions in the workforce.

Ten percent of nurses now belong to a proper union, rather than the right wing RCN...
Soviet Power—Live

Fifty years ago Trotsky wrote his History of the Russian Revolution. John Lindsay introduces this classic account of the birth of workers’ power.

There are three questions on the order of the day: organisation of a government; war and peace; conversation of the Constituent Assembly.” An unusual, dull, alarming rumble breaks into the noise of the meeting from outside. This is Peter and Paul Fortress satisfying the order of the day with artillery fire.

With Kamenev’s opening remarks Trotsky describes the beginning of the Congress of the Soviets. The Congress started only eight months before but the eight months of February to October 1917 were the laboratory of the revolution.

In February 1917, Russia had been at war for three years. The Tsarist state was beginning to crumble under the impact of military defeat. Starvation afflicted millions of soldiers, workers and peasants, and speculation was rife.

International Women’s Day was celebrated by meetings, speeches, leaflets. Even the Volzh Bolsheviks borough committee opposed strikes. ‘The time is ripe for militant action—the party is not strong enough and the workers have too few contacts with the soldiers.’

But the next morning, in spite of all directives, women textile workers in several factories went on strike and sent delegations to the metal workers for support. 90,000 were on strike that day. The question now was what would the soldiers do? To everyone’s surprise they didn’t shoot on the demonstrations. Some stood by, some stayed in their barracks, some joined the demonstrations, some attacked the demonstrators with cudgels, but they didn’t shoot.

The next day the demonstrations and the strikes grew; by the next week power was in the hands of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies.

The story of the revolution is told out of the mouths of the participants, moving from a factory worker to a soldier to a report of the Bolshevik meeting or a quotation from a bulletin. Interspersed are references to past revolutions, in England, France, Germany. The whole is woven into a fabric of theory and practice where the general point is elaborated by the direct experience and the experience develops the theory.

This is the real richness of Trotsky’s history. It is not simply a story—it is a story excitedly told. It is not just a theoretical text on the mounting of a revolution, it argues every theoretical question the workers’ movement must consider.

No sooner had the masses disposed of the Tsar than the bourgeoisie, petty intellectuals, state bureaucrats and officers moved into the palace to begin the running of things. The Soviet was a different being from that of 1905. In 1905 the Soviets had arisen out of a general strike. In 1917, because the soldiers moved so quickly, the revolution was successful before the workers had created a soviet. ‘The executive committee was self-constituted, in advance of the Soviet and independently of the factories and regiments.’

The new executive’s concern was the running of the war. It was also concerned to maintain profits. ‘Soldiers to the barracks, workers to the shops.’

‘Does that mean that everything is going to remain the same?’ asked a worker.

‘For the time being,’ answered a Menshevik.

But the Bolshevik leadership was in no better condition.

‘They behaved not like the representatives of a proletarian party preparing an independent struggle for power, but like the left wing of a democracy, which, having announced its principles, intended for an indefinite time to play the part of loyal opposition.’

In brief pen sketches Trotsky shades each of the leading Bolsheviks in this period of confusion, but also shows the base of the party in the factories, deeply unhappy, demanding a clear leadership.

The story is told of the Finland Station, of the April Conference of the Bolsheviks, of Lenin arguing the party round, away from the position he himself had held for years into the position Trotsky had argued. But Lenin did so with complete honesty. He drew the political lesson, and carried the militants of the party with him, leaving the leadership puzzled and running to catch up. He split the Bolsheviks fundamentally from the reformists and re armed the party.

April, May and June were months when the reformists strengthened their control of the state in the interests of the owners of property and pursued the war in the interests of patriotism. But it was also the period when the Bolsheviks strengthened their hold on the workers and soldiers. The slogan of Bread, Peace and Land drew out the split in the classes supposedly together fighting a national revolution.

In July the split widened into a chasm. The masses took to the streets once more, demanding an end to the war. But the power of the reformists over the army meant that an attempt to push forward the revolution would be doomed. The Bolsheviks argued against the insurrection, despite the fact that it was they who were being banned, arrested, and driven underground.

It was only then that Trotsky joined the Bolsheviks:

‘The balance was there struck to years of disagreement and factional struggle.’
Trotsky came to Lenin as to a teacher whose power and significance he understood later than many others, but perhaps more fully than they.

The masses on the streets raised the question of who would hold power. The argument of the Bolsheviks against seizing power in July, was not an argument against seizing power, but about who would seize power and when.

Trotsky's view is: 'All power to the Soviets!' raised two questions. Was the leadership of the Soviets capable of taking power? And if it did take power, would it not just hand it straight back? For the Soviets were in the hands of the compromisers:

'The calculations of the Bolsheviks on a peaceful development of the revolution rested, not on the hope that the bourgeoisie would voluntarily turn over the power to the workers and soldiers, but that the workers and soldiers would in good season prevent the compromisers from surrendering to the bourgeoisie.'

But in politics a vacuum of power is impossible. Because the masses did not push through to a seizure of power, the officer class began to exert its power, using the retreat from the factories and the factories to attack the Provisional Government.

At the same time the Germans were still advancing. The Bolsheviks' argument for proletarian revolution had to be turned against the 'protection of Russia.' argument. 'Neither the capture of Riga nor the capture of Petersburg will make us defenseless,' said Lenin. 'The fall of Petersburg would be a misfortune. But the fall of the international policy of the Russian proletariat would be ruinous.' said Trotsky.

At the time Lenin was in hiding, Trotsky was in prison. The right had the ascendency in the Provisional Government, the compromisers controlled the soviets, and the Germans were nearing Petersburg. But in the factories and the soldiers' committees the Bolsheviks argued patiently, not now for all power to the soviets but for an insurrection.

Then the right struck. General Kornilov marched on Petersburg and the Provisional Government resigned, with Kerensky, its chairman, left alone. The stock exchange boomed, and the British offered to help the revolt. But the Tsarist officers of the right were incompetent, and the Bolsheviks had now won the trust of the masses. The railways did not move. Workers talked to the soldiers. The 'protection of the government' came to be seen as the defeat of the revolution.

In the confusion men began to arrest their officers, and a soviet of officer deputies came into being. Kerensky, in Petersburg, failed to realize that Kornilov's troops were turning away, and tried to deal. The bourgeoisie had measured strength with the power of the revolution and found themselves short.

The revolt of the generals opened the eyes of the masses to the dangers of the compromisers. Everywhere support turned to the Bolsheviks as the ones who had been patiently explaining what was happening and what it meant. When the Provisional Government turned to the right to protect themselves from the people, the forces of the right used the chance to try to smash the revolution.

When its fear of the right became greater than the fear of the people, the Provisional Government turned to the left for protection. But in smashing Kornilov the workers discovered once more their own power, reestablished their organizations, and turned away from the compromisers who had led them into such dangers.

But again the leadership of the Bolsheviks was not ready. In hiding Lenin tried time and again to force the leadership in Petersburg that the time was ripe to move. Formalism takes a grip when there is the need to move into a new situation: Wait for the assembly, wait for the congress of soviets, wait to give the Kornilovs a chance to move again.

That was Kautsky's argument. 'The data for an insurrection are lacking. We have no machine of insurrection. The enemy's machine is far stronger. Two tactics are in conflict here: the tactic of conspiracy and the tactic of faith in the motive forces of the Russian revolution.'

Lenin replied: 'If you consider that an insurrection is right, it is not necessary to argue about conspiracy. If an insurrection is politically inevitable then we must relate ourselves to insurrection as to an art.'

Bridge

Trotsky argued: 'How on the basis of the ripened political situation are we to approach the insurrection? How find a bridge from the politics to the technique of revolution? And how lead the masses along that bridge?'

Lenin won the argument on the Central Committee by 20 votes to two with three abstentions. But behind the vote was an intense inner struggle for the determination necessary to overthrow the Provisional Government. 'The will to struggle is not stored up in advance, and is not dictated from above—it has on every occasion to be independently renewed and tempered.'

The organisation we which the proletariat could both overthrow the old power and replace it was the Soviets. However they did not themselves settle the question. The revolutionary party represented the 'brain' of the class. Conquering power could only be solved by a combination of party with soviets.

As a result of their manifest incapacity to get the country out of the mess, the ruling class lost faith in themselves. There arose a bitter hostility to the existing order. The more decisively and confidently the proletariat acted the better it succeeded in winning over intermediate layers. The proletariat became imbued with confidence after it tested out in action the correlation of forces.

The fundamental force of the October revolution was the proletariat, its first rank, the workers of Petrograd, its vanguard, the workers of the Vyborg district. But it was impossible to summon the masses to battle in the name of the Soviet without raising the question formally in the Soviet—which would have made the problem of insurrection the subject of public debate. The Military Revolutionary Committee had been set up by the Congress of Soviets during the Kornilov scare. But even it consisted of a wide cross section of workers and soldiers.

Why, then, not organise the insurrection directly in the name of the party? It would not have been a question of substituting for the class, but turning the insurrection into a patch. The Soviets represented the workers, soldiers, and to some extent, the peasants in motion. And the party was the leading force in the Soviets.

The danger was quite the opposite—letting slip a favourable moment because of frictions in the Soviets. Should they wait for the Congress of Soviets in October, or present it with the transfer of power? 'Who is to seize the power?' wrote Lenin on the evening of 24 October. 'That is now of no importance.'

Contrast February and October. On the eve of the overthrow of the monarchy, the garrison represented a great unknown. Only a general strike could create the necessary arena for mass encounters of workers with soldiers. On the eve of the overthrow of the Provisional Government the overwhelming majority of the garrison was standing openly on the side of the workers. In February the workers had not thought of seizing the banks and the palace, but of winning the soldiers. In October the banks, telephones, the commanding heights, were taken over without conflict.

The Congress of the Soviets assembled with 650 voting delegates—390 Bolsheviks. 505 voted for the transfer of all power to the Soviets. The Winter Palace falls, the guns of the Peter and Paul Fortress fall silent. 'We shall now proceed to construct the socialist order.'
Is the class contracting?

Both The Guardian and Marxism Today have recently carried an article by well-known CP historian Eric Hobsbawm, arguing that to see the working class as the agency of socialism is no longer ‘plausible’. Duncan Hallas examines his arguments.

'We may begin with the obvious fact that world capitalism is in its deepest crisis since the 1930s. Whatever the short or long term future of capitalism, the age of economic miracles of the 1950s and 1960s is past. Mass unemployment is here again on a scale unimagined for more than a generation.

'Meanwhile hard times are returning to the peoples of countries which had forgotten about them, and harder times to those which never had a chance to. Economically the international monetary and credit system is walking along the precipice of a major collapse.

'Ought we not therefore to expect a major shift towards the Left, and especially towards the Socialists, whose claim that capitalism cannot manage its contradictions, now sounds much more convincing than it has done for along time?... But there has been no major shift.

'Thus Eric Hobsbawm in Marxism Today. The only 'victoies' of the left in Europe in the recent period are those of the 'peace and ecology movements' which 'do not reflect, except very indirectly indeed, any mass response to the economic failures and social problems of capitalism in its time of crisis.'

'It is, at first sight, rather surprising given his general political position, that Hobsbawm does not claim the electoral victories of Mitterrand and Papandreu as 'left advances'. Indeed his attitude towards them is cool to the point of realism! However, this is no quirk or aberration. It is necessary to his central thesis - the passing of the working class as the agency for the socialist reconstruction of society.

'Hobsbawm is a skillful writer. His case cannot be better put than in his own words, and since it is important to confront the argument in its strongest form, I quote the core of it in full.

'This disappointing situation of the Left in the midst of a great opportunity must be seen against the background of difficulties which have developed over a much longer period. The core of the Left, since the decline of nineteenth century Liberalism, consisted, and still largely consists of the working class parties and labour movements which developed on a massive scale in most of Europe before the First World War, splitting into Social Democratic and Communist parties after the October Revolution.

'They grew up essentially as proletarian parties, a tendency intensified in the Communist Parties after 1917. That is to say, while also attracting - and seeking to attract - support from other strata and groups (for instance intellectuals), they were primarily based on manual wage earners, heavily preoccupied with the specific demands of this class, and they expected to achieve their triumph over capitalism essentially through the action of the working class.

'They saw this class as inevitably growing in numbers and socialist class consciousness, as inevitably destined by history to rise and triumph, carrying with it the rest of the people, except for a steadily diminishing number of capitalist exploiters.

'And, in fact, such parties grew and became mass forces, and attracted support from non-workers, inasmuch as they were seen as representing all that was progressive, and no other major parties existed around whom the alliance of workers and other progressive forces could rally. To this extent their historical confidence did not seem misplaced.

'This is no longer such a plausible prospect. The late R. Butler records in his memoirs that Aneurin Bevan told him in the 1930s "You represent a declining class; I represent a rising class". It is not easy to imagine many young working class militants accepting such opinions with genuine conviction today.

Class of 1939

'The manual working class, core of the traditional socialist labour parties, is today contracting and not expanding. It has been transformed, and to some extent divided by the decades when its standard of living reached levels undreamed of even by the well-paid in 1939.

'It can no longer be assumed that all workers are on the way to recognizing that their class situation must align them behind a socialist workers' party, though there are still many millions who believe this. In Britain today a large sector of the 'affluent' or skilled workers, once the strongest supporters of Labour, are today politically unstable, as public opinion polls and electoral analyses demonstrate.'

'There are two propositions here: there is the thesis of the inevitable growth of the working class in numbers and consequently in socialist class consciousness (inevitably destined by history etc) which has conveniently vanished they and 'and by implication the rest of us are supposed to have depended upon, and there is the proposition that the manual working class is today contracting.'

Now these are quite distinct questions. The thesis of inevitable, inexorable proletarian advance as a function of the growth of capitalism itself is, of course, a species of economic reductionism, of what Trotsky called in 1922 'the mechanical, fatalistic and non-Marxist conception of revolutionary development.'

'There were indeed people who held to it in the past. They were, most importantly, the leaders of those Social-Democratic Parties which still claimed to be Marxists at that time and their theoreticians: most conspicuous of whom was Karl Kautsky!

'For what Hobsbawm presents here is pure, undiluted Kautskyism. It is ironic, after all it has done to publicise Gramsci and to promote a cult of (castigated) Gramscianism, that the Right wing of the British CP, in the persons of its most able publicists, should now descend to naked economic reductionism.

'All social theories serve a purpose. They are functional, irrespective of their scientific content. What was the function of Kautskyism, of Second International Marxism? It was to conceal a reformist political practice behind a screen of marxist phrases, to promote political passivity, to postpone the struggle for power to the indefinite future, and, in practice, to support the status quo.'

'Lenin described it thus: 'By means of patent sophistry, Marxism is stripped of its living revolutionary spirit; everything is recognised in Marxism, except the revolutionary methods of struggle, the propaganda and preparation of those methods and the education of the masses in this direction.'

'There was, and is, another tradition, Hobsbawm's they are not 'us'. That other...
tradition emphasises politics, the formation (or decline) of class consciousness as the product of struggles (or the lack of them), the heterogeneity of the working class and the indispensability of the revolutionary party in the formation of socialist class consciousness.

It is the tradition of Bolshevism, the Communist International (including the British CP) before it succumbed to Stalinism, of Trotskyism at its best. It is not a voluntaristic tradition but it rejects entirely the simple-minded economic determinism of Kautsky-Hobsbawn. It recognises that there is no mechanical connection between movements in the economy and the class struggle but rather a complex dialectical interdependence which is always changing. But for that very reason Hobsbawn's second proposition, the decline of the working class, must be carefully and objectively considered.

**Smaller, weaker**

To say that the industrial working class is shrinking is, for Britain, a statement of fact. Thus, before the impact of the present slump, the percentage of the workforce employed in industry (manual and non-manual alike) fell from 47.5 in 1961 to 42.3 in 1974 to 39.7 in 1978. Since then the slump has caused a further sharp contraction in industrial employment.

Leave aside for the moment and look at the pre-slump trend. Between 1961 and 1978 the proportion of the workforce in industry fell by 7.8 per cent, but the total workforce grew by 24,436,000 in 1961 to 25,487,000 in 1977. This still represents an absolute fall in the industrial workforce, but combined with a small growth in the total of workers.

At any rate, the pre-slump trend is an international one, although there are important exceptions to it. Thus, the EEC countries as a whole lost 2.5 million jobs in industry and gained 5.5 million in services between 1974 and 1978 (N. Harris De-industrialisation 1974 1978 p. 2.3). The same source gives data from the United States showing a relative decline but absolute increase in industrial jobs between 1961 (22 million, 32.5%) and 1973 (26.7 million, 31.6%) followed by both absolute and relative decline. In Japan, on the other hand, the industrial workforce increased both relatively and absolutely throughout the period to 1978.

The same is true of the Asian boom economies, which Harris regards as offshore extensions of Japan, and to a lesser extent, the United States. In South Korea the industrial workforce grew from 8.7% of the total in 1963 to 22.8% in 1976, in Taiwan from 9.3% in 1952 to 38.0% in 1977. Similarly there was uneven but considerable growth of the industrial working class in some important Latin American countries and some East European ones (notably) between 1961 and 1978.

To summarise: the fifties and sixties saw a massive growth in the industrial workforce on the world scale and, at the same time, escalating productivity of labour in industry.

In the seventies the latter trend began to prevail over the former, but the overall level of economic activity was still high enough to increase the total number of jobs, while the percentage of industrial workers tended to decline in the older industrialised areas.

The absolute numbers of both industrial workers proper and of all workers on the eve of the present world slump was, however, massive – far, far, bigger than in the thirties. Even in Britain, with one of the worst records of economic growth, the workforce grew from nineteen and three-quarters million in 1939 to twenty-five and a half million in 1977. If we can regard the workforce as a whole as largely proletarian, then, far from a decline the whole period from the end of the Second World War until the present slump saw an explosive growth of the working class worldwide.

But can we so regard it? There are respectable precedents for the view that the only 'real' proletarians are manual workers in industry. For example, Lenin:

'The Proletariat is the class which is engaged in the production of material values in large-scale capitalist industry.

This is from a speech on the New Economic Policy in 1921, and it continues:

'Since large-scale capitalist industry has been destroyed, since the factories are at a standstill, the proletariat has disappeared. It has sometimes figured in statistics, but it has not been held together economically.'

The emphasis was entirely justified in the given context – the ruin of industry in an overwhelmingly petty-bourgeois (peasant) country, but it is excessively restrictive, indeed mis-leading, in a developed economy. It would, for example, exclude the proletarian such groups as dockers and railwaymen, amongst many others.

Marx's definition of the proletariat was that class which lacks ownership of the means of production and is dependent on the sale of its labour power (to those who control the means of production) for wages in order to live. In Marx's own time the factory worker was indeed the typical proletarian (although there were important groups of non-factory proletarians, some of declining importance, some destined to grow in numbers).

Any definition is an approximation, a compromising of complicated and untidy reality into a conceptual box, and therefore to be used with caution. That said, Marx's definition remains the best guide. The great mass of 'service' workers clearly fall within it. Equally, the upper echelons of the administrative hierarchies (public and 'private', civil service and ICI) must be excluded – whether or not they have means independent of the sale of their labour power – because their social function is that of agents of capital, controllers of the workforce.

**Scholasticism**

But where is the line to be drawn? It cannot be drawn in terms of formal definition. That is largely a scholastic exercise. It is drawn in terms of struggle and so is continually shifting. Are the mass of hospital workers proletarians? Yes in terms of the broad definition, certainly not in terms of the narrow one. Are they capable acquiring class consciousness in struggle? Yes, in principle: sometimes yes in practice, sometimes not.

However, this is also true of 'narrow definition' proletarians. Hobsbawn tells us 'a large sector of the "affluent" or skilled workers, once the strongest supporters of Labour, are today politically unstable'. Is that because they have ceased to be proletarians?

Actually the reason is in large part connected with politics, with the recent ex-
perience of Labour government, with the repulsive face of Stalinism in Poland shown on TV screens.

To a limited extent Hobson admits this: ‘For, unlike the 1930s, the Left today can neither point to an alternative society immune to the crisis (as the USSR seemed to be) nor to any concrete policies which hold much promise for overcoming it in the short-term (as Keynesian or similar policies seemed to promise then).’

**Thirties myth**

Yet he twists the truth. The myth of the thirties is especially pernicious. It was a time of catastrophic defeat for the workers, especially in Europe, thanks to the politics of the Stalinist and Social-Democratic parties. Even in Britain, which escaped the worst of both the slump and fascism, the Tories won easily both general elections held in the decade with bigger majorities than Thatcher’s — and the unions were vastly weaker even than today. There were no national strikes.

The myth of the ‘golden past’ is conjured up to ‘prove’ that the present situation is hopeless — unless we adopt policies which turn out, on examination, to be even more bankrupt and right-wing than those that led to disaster in the 1930s. The method, as well as the history, is false to the core.

None of what has been said here is meant to downplay the importance of the industrial working class. It remains the heart of the working class, although a minority of the whole class. Changing techniques of production and a decline in recent years of the average size of units of production (in terms of workers employed) do present problems for revolutionary socialists. They make the development of the party, as the unifying factor amongst advanced workers, more not less important and they impose the need to learn how best to struggle in changing circumstances.

The impact of the slump has been to shift the balance of class forces in favour of the capitalist class — for the time being. That is what we mean by the downturn. Although in Britain the downturn preceded the slump by several years, it has been greatly intensified by the slump.

This is an entirely different matter from the longer term trends we have been discussing. The onset of mass unemployment over the last three years is not explainable in terms of long-term trends in technology and the changing structure of the workforce but by the slump in the world economy (and in part, very much the smaller part, by British government policy).

Previous experience indicates that, after a shorter or longer period, the downturn in the class struggle created by, or intensified by, a slump, gives way to sharp struggles. These are commonly associated with the first signs of economic upturn, even if slight, when the accumulated bitterness bursts forth. What happens next depends on many things, but first of all on the political forces inside the working class movement. The reformists, the labour bureaucracies and their friends will try to damp down the struggles, or, if that is too difficult, to put themselves at the head of them in order to abort them.

**Hard intervention**

Whether they succeed or not depends on both the scale and bitterness of the struggle and on the ability of revolutionaries to intervene effectively. That, in turn, depends on how successfully the revolutionary party has been developed in the previous period and now.

There is of course a rich literature on this subject, starting with discussions at the Third and Fourth Congresses of the Communist International, through to the experiences of the French, Polish and American mass strikes of the late thirties, the rise of the American CIO and so on.

Hobsbowm will have none of this.

For him the key question is not the consciousness and confidence of the working class, however defined, but unity with ‘other strata and groups’. Even verbal liberalism, if he may repel these (undefined but in reality middle class) forces and must be avoided. Thus ‘the Labour Party is so disrupted and demoralised and on the defensive that most of its members act as though they have written off the chance of defeating the government.’

As noted earlier, Hobsbowm is less than enthusiastic about the neo-socialist parties in France, Greece etc — it is sometimes by
No honourable men

John Le Carre's novels are being pushed hard in bookshops following BBC2's screening of Smiley's People. Colin Sparks looks at the work of this popular writer.

John Le Carre's books are set at the sharp end of the Cold War. Spies from Britain and Russia plot against each other, working out elaborate plans of deception and quite often kill.

That sounds like unpromising material. The struggles of nation states and their ruling class thugs are not exactly the sort of thing that we like to focus on. Our war is fought out between classes and everyone from Smiley to Karla are on the other side of the barricades. Anyone who is looking for the revolutionary proletariat should steer well clear of Le Carre.

If you have slightly more catholic taste then you will find here something almost as interesting: a powerful and often moving account of how the modern capitalist state twists, distorts and kills even its most loyal servants. Le Carre's books are not socialist but they are critical.

The spy story is one of the best vehicles for that sort of writing. Of course, in the hands of the likes of John Buchan or Ian Fleming it was and is an excuse for 'novel' with violence' but it has a much greater potential.

Such writing is convenient for authors because it allows them to tell a good story. It is popular with readers because it can have exotic locations, desperate perils, exciting action and all of the other things that we like to read about.

In the hands of writers like Le Carre it can also do something much more than that. It can tell us about the world. It stops being interesting and becomes fascinating.

Web of fragments

Capitalist Society is a writing pit of lies, deception and violence. The world of the spy is just a concentrated version of the world we inhabit everyday. Smiley's 'Circus' and Karla's 'Moscow Centre' are simply miniatures of every great bureaucracy.

In these books they have added fascination. Another word for spy is secret agent: they are supposed to be people who see through the dross of propaganda and know the secrets that we are ignorant of. Le Carre's spies do not have that privilege. His books are not written around the battling between a web of fragments and half-truths to arrive at half-understood conclusions.

His spies are just like the rest of us.

George Smiley, the hero of the books, is the decent man set up for us to identify with. Like us he hankers after the simpler days of his youth - for him the struggle against the Nazis. Like us he is much more interested in his hobbies than his job. Like us he is surrounded by incompetents, careerists and treacherous friends. Like us, he is worried if personal vendettas are getting in the way of doing his job.

Le Carre's trap for the reader is that Smiley is not immune from the pressures of his world. Very early in the cycle, in Ring for the Dead, he is forced to destroy the life of a woman who like him, fought the Nazis, and who's motives are every bit as honourable as his. We follow him through a trail of such destructions. Each one is a compromise, a little betrayal of integrity.

'Lurking behind the gloomy exposure of collapse of present day society is a nostalgia for the days when Britain really did rule the waves.'

By the time of Smiley's People there is nothing left. Smiley reaches a summit of his career: he finally outwits and traps his major Russian opponent Karla. He forces him to defect. It is a great victory for the West. Smiley waits in the dark at the border for his final victory. His thoughts on his triumph are:

'He looked across the river into the darkness again, and an unshod vertigo seized him as the very evil he had fought against seemed to reach out and possess him and claim him despite his striving, calling him a traitor also; mocking him, yet at the same time applauding his betrayal. On Karla has descended the curse of Smiley's compassion; on Smiley the curse of Karla's fanaticism. I have destroyed him with the weapons I abhorred, and they are his. We have crossed each other's frontiers, we are the no-men of this no-man's-land.'

This betrayal of self is simply the end of a world of treachery. And for Le Carre it is a price paid for nothing. The elaborate schemes and sacrifices of his spies change nothing. The Honourable Schoolboy concerns one of the great triumphs of Smiley, and the Circus. But it is set against the background of the total collapse of US power in South East Asia.

The cunning of the spies does not effect that mammoth defeat of imperialism one single jot. Winning or losing will not alter by a minute the final scuffle of US power into the Chinduks on the Embassy lawn.

There are very definite limits to Le Carre's critique of modern society. Women are not very central a part of the world he portrays. One of the things which we are offered as bait to attract us to Smiley is his failed marriage. What this actually seems to amount to is that Smiley's wife Anne finds him a boring old fart and much prefers to go her own way.

Part of the reason for this is sheer misogyny of Le Carre's part but there is something else going on as well. Bill Hayden, the arch-villain in the books, is bisexual, and part of his unworthiness seems to be that he has a sexual life. That is a disturbing factor for Le Carre's world.

It could be argued in Le Carre's defence that he is simply representing the reality of capitalist life, particularly as experienced by the British upper classes. Even if this is true, the fact that he chose to do it by completely marginalising the personal and sexual life of his main subjects means a big limitation on the power of his criticisms of life in modern capitalism.

Dominant myths

The best of Le Carre's books is The Honourable Schoolboy. This is because it is the only one of his books which really has a picture of the world outside of the spies built into it. Without that, it is too easy to read the books within the conventions of spy novels in which the dungs of secret agents are terribly significant. In The Honourable Schoolboy the petty futility of the whole secret world is spelt out clearly. That gives the book a sweep and a substance lacking in others.

It would also make it very expensive to film, which is probably why the BBC chose to miss it out. Their filming jumps from Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy straight to Smiley's People.

Le Carre is ultimately a reactionary critic of British society. Lurking behind the gloomy exposure of collapse of present day society is a nostalgia for the days when Britain really did rule the waves. But that distance from the dominant myths of today gives him a cutting edge which, combined with great literary skills, make his novels valuable reading for anyone.
Their finest hour?

The first biography of Clement Attlee, Labour Prime Minister between 1945 and 1951, has just been published. Geoff Ellen argues that it is high in price but low in value. He looks at the record of Attlee's years in power.

No Labour government evokes more nostalgia within the Party than Attlee's. Between 1945 and 1951 major industries were nationalised and a Welfare State was established; it was what one writer called 'the climax of Labourism'. It was also, a Tory MP reflected soon after, a time when it was 'easier to make higher profits without being really efficient than probably at any period in my lifetime'.

In the country, its troops lit bonfires and dreamed aloud: in the Commons, its lieutenants, to Tory consternation, struck up the Red Flag and in the Cabinet, its generals pinched each other. Labour had - massively, euphorically and, for some, astonishingly - won its first majority government, and in that 'blissful dawn of July 1945' its 393 MPs tingled, as one of them put it, with 'joy and hope, determination and confidence'. Ahead lay 'a new society to be built, and we had power to build it'.

What sort of society? For those to whom the result of the General Election meant 'the revolution without a single cracked skull', there now seemed 'nothing to stand in the way of laying the socialist foundation of the new social order'. It was not an entirely unrealistic hope.

The electoral beneficiary of an outburst of popular radicalism unknown since the days of the Chartists, Labour had been swept into office by a landslide: and awaiting it there, intact from the Second World War, lay an unprecedented range of State controls over the economy. In short, the new Cabinet had both the mandate and the means to carry through major change.

It also had leaders aware of the implications. The Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, and the President of the Board of Trade and future Chancellor, Sir Stafford Cripps, had warned a decade earlier that 'the ruling class will go almost any length to defeat Parliamentary action if the issue is... the continuance of their financial and political control'. Therefore 'the moment to strike at capitalism' was when the government was 'freshly elected and assured of its support. The blow struck must be a fatal one'. In other words, wrote Cripps, an Emergency Powers Bill limiting the movement of capital and abolishing the House of Lords would have to be passed on the first day of the new Parliament. Nothing less than a constitutional revolution was required:

'Continuity of policy, even in fundamentals, can find no place in a socialist programme. It is this complete severance with all traditional theories of Government, this determination to seize power from the ruling class and transfer it to the people as a whole, that differentiates the present political struggle from all those that have gone before.'

In the summer of 1945, with Labour 'fresh elected and assured of its support', with Cripps and all the other 'brilliant prophets of the inevitability of violence' - Aneurin Bevan, Ellen Wilkinson, Emanuel Shinwell and John Strachey - in office, with the Tories reeling from their biggest electoral defeat in half a century and with the armed forces radical enough to discourage any would-be British Franco, Attlee was uniquely placed to strike his 'fatal blow' at capitalism.

By then, however, he and his colleagues were talking the language not of class but of 'nation'. Attlee's socialist rhetoric had already become muted when, in May 1949, he led Labour into a Coalition Government dominated by Tories and headed by a man seen by many with memories of the General Strike and Tony O'Malley as the Labour Movement's most bitter enemy - Winston Churchill. Having briefly shaken his fist at the ruling class, Attlee now offered his hand: five years of governing with Tories would provide him with 'very pleasant' memories. The Labour leaders not only learned, said one of them, 'a great deal from the Conservatives in how to govern': they invariably found themselves in agreement with them. Party conflict arose only 'very seldom', Attlee recalled.

Consensus reigned. Capitalism was to be preserved, but with the 'socialism' of State supervision. A Tory, Butler, reshaped education and a Liberal, Beveridge, outlined what became the Welfare State: there were even Tories, Churchill among them, willing to countenance a degree of nationalisation. When the bluster of the General Election finally disturbed this harmony, it was still difficult, said one observer, to find in the parties' official literature 'any basic conflicts separating the left from the right'.

Behind the consensus lurked a fear. After two decades of mass unemployment, means testing and sacrifice, millions were insisting 'Never Again'; to ignore them was to risk a resurgence of the class conflict which had...
unnerved Lloyd George’s Cabinet at the end of the First World War. ‘If you don’t give the people social reform’, Quintin Hogg, then a young Tory MP, warned in 1934, ‘they will give you social revolution’. The pressure from below could not be evaded; could it, then, be diverted? The answer was that it could—and Labour did.

It was to prove a sobering experience for those of its supporters intoxicated by the promise of a new society. A Gallup Poll discovered that for all those who wanted to see Labour govern ‘along existing lines only more efficiently’, there were twice as many who were demanding ‘sweeping changes such as nationalisation’. Such expectations could be seen on Election Night in crowded Labour halls and celebration bonfires up and down the country, and they could be heard in the cheers of his supporters when Attlee told a victory rally that ‘the principles of our policy are based on the brotherhood of man’.

Five days later, troops were sent into London’s Surrey Docks to break industrial action by dockers seeking a basic 25 shillings a day.

It was a curious beginning for Ministers who had devoted much of their electioneering to exposing the scandal of working-class living standards, and a curious beginning, too, for the new era of the ‘brotherhood of man’ when, within a fortnight, and with Attlee’s support, a different sort of bonfire lit in the streets of Hiroshima. For Labour, the ‘responsibilities of office’ came easy.

**Conventionally bourgeois**

In retrospect, of course, there had to be something faintly ludicrous in the iconography of Attlee—a man so conventionally bourgeois that it was said, he shuddered if the port was passed round the wrong way—storming the citadels of capitalist power. At best, notably with the creation of the National Health Service, his Government merely humanised inequality; at worst, it promulgated it. In education, largely under the guidance of ‘Red Ellen’ Wilkinson, Party policy on comprehensive schooling was shunned in favour of Butler’s inegalitarian system of selection, with the result that—in the words of one of the Party’s present educationists—‘possibly the greatest opportunity in the century to implement radical educational and social change’ was lost. In foreign policy, such was Labour’s disregard for all traditional socialist values that one backbench MP was prompted to joke at Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin: ‘Hasn’t Anthony Eden grown fat’.

This was ‘continuity’ with a vengeance, and nowhere more so than in industry. Twenty years earlier, George Bernard Shaw had disdainfully remarked that nationalisation need not affect the workers in the slightest: to them it would ‘only be a change of masters’. And so it proved. By 1951, it had been reckoned, only nine of the 47 full-time members and seven of the 40 part-time members of the Boards of the nationalised industries were trade unionists, and, of the Boards, no trade unionists among their full-time members at all. Most directors were drawn from the ‘existing managerial hierarchies’. Nor was it any different outside the board rooms: in the mines, for example, ‘the same old faces’ remained in charge at every level.

Workers’ control for Attlee in the Thirties ‘an essential part of the new order’, was now dismissed by Herbert Morrison as failing to ‘demonstrate good socialisation in its methods of industrial administration’. The scale of this shift became apparent when, in 1946, a leading Minister let slip his belief that there was: ‘not as yet a very large number of workers in Britain capable of taking over large enterprises … whilst, of course, experience is a necessary condition, I think we must now think about having to take over these large enterprises’.

The speaker was Sir Stafford Cripps. Nationalisation may have given little to the workers, but it was far from a disappointment for their former bosses. Expropriation on a grand scale was paid to the owners of what were, for the most part, crippled industries. As a result, Attlee wrote later, ‘there was not much real opposition to our nationalisation proposals, only iron and steel roused much feeling’—and, he might have added that was left to last, before being carried through in such a way as to make nationalisation easy when the Tories attempted it in 1951.

From all of this, the ruling class had little to fear. ‘Leading businessmen’, Harold Wilson, President of the Board of Trade, boasted in 1949, ‘admit that it not been for the improved output since nationalisation there would have been no basis for private enterprise to work on’. For those who committed to the nationalised industries, however, there was a sense of desolation. Many miners, for example, had long treasured the hope of nationalisation and if now they felt a certain disenchantment it was less easy to express it through the traditional method of industrial action. This did not prevent such action but the movement—plausible to many and repeated ad nauseam from on high—that they were striking against their Government and their industry was bound to weaken it, especially when voiced by a miners’ union leadership opposed to any stoppages. One of the union’s area organisations, Durham, even suggested that miners’ lodges should reimburse the Coal Board for losses resulting from unofficial strikes, surprising that astute Tories such as Ian Macleod should come to see in nationalisation a means of strengthening the power of the trade union bureaucracy against the rank and file.

The claims to working-class loyalty of the Labour Government were crucial in creating industrial peace in years. It was a fair payment gave workers formidable bargaining potential. Strike days between 1945 and 1951 totalled 14,260,000, compared with 192,230,000 in the seven years after the First World War. Nevertheless, Labour often acted ferociously against the few strikes they were.

**One MP**

noticed year by year in the House of Commons, with interested horror, that all the innumerable answers to questions...
in Parliament relating to strikes made by the late George Isaacs as Minister of Labour were based on the standpoint that the strikers and not the employers were to blame for the strikes.

Not only were almost all strikes unofficial, so solid was the union leaders' support for the Government, most were also technically illegal, since Labour took care to maintain in peace time the draconian laws which Bevin had introduced during the war. Not was this all. Troops were sent in by Labour to break strikes of dockers in September 1945, July 1946, June 1948, May to July 1949 and March 1950, of lorry drivers and meat porters in April 1946, January 1947 and June 1950, of power workers in September and December 1949, of gas workers in September 1950 and, in a touching act of concern for the Royal Family's comfort, of Buckingham Palace boiler stokers in March 1948. By 1948, it has been said, strike-breaking had become almost second nature to the Cabinet.

Behind the scenes, as the recently released Cabinet Papers reveal, there were other interesting developments. Within a month of taking power, Attlee and Home Secretary James Chuter Ede discussed the possibility of reviving the Supply and Transport Organisation which a Tory Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, had used in 1926 to help defeat the General Strike. In March 1946, Ede presented the Cabinet with his proposals, which had been drafted in great secrecy lest they were leaked at a time when the Government was repealing the Trade Disputes Act, the Tories' legislative reprisal for the General Strike. The plans were put into effect during a strike of London lorry drivers in 1947.

By 1950 the Cabinet was considering secret proposals to outlaw 'subversive propaganda', to ban strikes in essential industries and to enforce secret ballots on strikes. Much of this was aimed against the Communist Party, whose 'disruptive' activities in industry became the target for mounting Cold War propaganda which Labour, conveniently overlooking the fact that until 1948 the CP had opposed strikes, was only too willing to orchestrate.

Twice in its six years in office, Labour declared states of emergency to deal with dock strikes, using in the process the Emergency Powers Act which a Tory-dominated Parliament had passed in 1920 to crack down on working-class dissent. It also, in the autumn of 1950, had ten striking gas workers sentenced to imprisonment through fines were substituted on appeal and dragged seven dockers before an Old Bailey judge in February 1951 for daring to lead another strike.

No orderly revolution

And so the indictment could go on and on. Labour took Britain into NATO, secretly funded an atomic energy programme, helped to put down revolution in Greece, exiled an African chief but prevaricating to marry a white woman, toyed with the idea of racial immigration controls (at a time when immigration was negligible) and pushed through a wage freeze.

Yet in 1951 with the comfort of a working class vote the size of which it had never bettered. It helped to see British capitalism through a sticky patch, but it also, uniquely for a Labour government, carried out its manifesto promises. By the end of the Fifties, workers were immeasurably better off than they had been at the end of the Thirties. Full employment and an expanding, resurgent capitalism gave moderate reformism its chance.

It was done in the name of socialism, when really it was at the expense of socialism. And it is here that the impotence of the Labour Left is most starkly revealed. In theory, this should have been their finest hour. In practice, they were irrelevant. Their figurehead, Aneurin Bevan—so much more of a fighter than today's Messiah, Tony Benn—proved, nonetheless, willing enough to maintain Cabinet secrecy on plans to break strikes or prop up reaction in Greece or even, when the Government ignored Party Conference demands on censures, to defend the leadership against the rank and file.

If 1945 showed anything, it was that 'socialism' from above—the prescription of the Labour Left, then as now—is a contradiction in terms. As one bewitched MP said at the time: 'What is the use of having an orderly revolution if it turns out not to be a revolution at all?'

Attlee Kenneth Harris
(Weindorfer, £14.95)

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Skilled Workers

Work, Society and Politics
Patrick Joyce
Melbourne £3.95

This is a book about an important question, or set of questions, in working class history: questions which are central to our understanding of class consciousness and political modern capitalism. Unfortunately I can't pretend that most readers of this journal will find it a very accessible book. It has a peculiarly contorted style and is overburdened with jargon which will make it unnecessarily obscure for many non-academic readers.

Which is a pity, because in spite of the fact that Joyce sees much too sweeping climate for his argument or his material, the book does contain some interesting arguments and is worth slogging through.

Joyce is concerned with the transformation of Britain's working class life in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Britain, which seemed on the verge of revolution at several points in the 1840s and 48, suddenly became the most politically and socially stable country in Europe. Chartism, with its radical critique of capitalism and alternative view of a cooperative society, was replaced by a narrower trade union view of the world and by an overall acceptance of capitalism as permanent.

Patrick Joyce argues that if we want to understand why workers have certain ideas and not others, create certain institutions, take certain kinds of action and not others, then we have to start with the most fundamental to working class experience - work.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part traces the evolution of the coalminers' union between 1830 and 1850. Joyce puts forward an alternative to the Labour Aristocracy thesis by which he calls the 'mechanization thesis'. What it means is this: when British capitalism overcame its major crises, in the late 1840s and expanded on a much broader basis in the 1850s and 60s, workers were forced to accept that the capitalistic class was permanent and that workers who were forced to face this most sharply were the factory workers, most importantly the cotton factory workers.

The problem with the 'mechanization of production' thesis is that it can justify why the factory was the heart of the industrial revolution and the rise of the capitalist class. Joyce argues that the defeat at work - mechanisation, loss of control, loss of control - resulted in dependence, deference, not proletarian consciousness. This acceptance of the right of the capitalist class to rule is made easier by the form control took in most Victorian factories - family ownership - and by the idea of paternalism - the idea that the factory is a patriarchal family - which fits in with the worker experience. Joyce argues that the working class was not united and that Marx's family of the working class is not the same as the working family of the factory, with the male head of family using his authority to support and underpin the owners. Outside the factory, life is very much dominated by the work relations and the owners' control over all aspects of public life in the neighbourhood of the factory. Workers who accept the owners' authority as natural in the factory also accept his authority in politics, religious etc.

Joyce's usefulness lies in his insistence that the roots of capitalist power lie in control of the work process and the production of the naturalness of the class relations. His emphasis on the interdependence of all aspects of life, and the primacy of work within that, is important too.

The problem with his approach is that he simply overestimates the ability of the capitalist class to eliminate the conflict that has roots in the work process. Even in textile factories where workers experienced the naturalness of any previous class experience to measure it against, conflict was far more prevalent than Joyce allows. However, he is right to say that, in other industries and in politics, there was far greater friction between workers and capitalists than is the case today. He is right to say that the example of Spain is exceptional. It is clear by the end of the book that it was the cotton industry that was the exception.

Fred Lindop

Revolt in Spain

The Comuneros of Castile: The forging of a revolution, 1475-1521
University of Wisconsin, £16.95

Forgotten revolutions are always worth recovering, and perhaps no revolution has been forgotten so thoroughly as the revolt of the Comuneros, the Spanish bourgeois revolution of 1520.

This was a revolution that failed, and the defeat was so traumatic that the memory of it was reduced to nothing and that it has been able to be recovered. In English, there were no more than a few tantalising paragraphs until this book was published.

The history of early modern Spain has always been written in terms of the absolute monarchy of Isabella and Ferdinand and of Philip II, and their success in reducing the bourgeoisie to complete subordination, building a state based firmly on the most reactionary nobility and persecuting the rise of capitalism into the twentieth century. But between Isabella and Ferdinand and the grim, autocratic Philip II lay the bourgeois revolution and its defeat. In May, 1520, a Junta of Spanish towns overview the work process, the money government and threatened the royal council at Valladolid. They formed their own army and issued a constitutional programme for parliamentary government, no taxation without representation, property rights and civil liberties. Lawyers, liberal clergy and university students supported the revolutionary initiatives. The Junta was able to take over the brutal sack of Medina del Campo by royal troops drove more towns into the Junta.

Not only that, but in this bourgeois revolution as in others the working people were out on the streets. The crisis began when the weavers of Segovia hanged the town's parliamentary deputy for voting against his mandate, for the latest royal tax demands. A democratic popular faction took over Valladolid, and a mob storm the jail in Medina del Campo to rescue the nobleman imprisoned there at the start of the revolution. Peasant revolts spread rapidly while the nobility, split into factions, hesitated to fight back.
But by the spring of 1521 the nobility had rallied round the more popular Emperor Charles V, and their military power proved overwhelming. They were helped by the swing of many of the urban elite back towards the monarchy because their fear of workers and peasants was greater than their desire for power. The battle of Pavia in April sealed the fate of the revolution.

Furthermore, Hauser explains very fully the relationship between the absolute monarchy and the bourgeoisie. Isabella and Ferdinand had encouraged the growth of trade and manufacture and the towns' desire for self-government up to a point, but whenever it came to the crunch they fell back on the nobility, the real and absolute revolutionaries. He also shows that the economic regression of Spain in the sixteenth century was by no means inevitable, but was the result of the defeat of the economic reforms and their decline since the efforts of Charles V and Philip II to channel bourgeois enterprise and capital into acquiring titles, land and office in the 30 years after the defeat of the Comuneros.

This book helps to restore the early modern history of Spain to the mainstream, the history of class struggle. Unfortunately, the treatment is academic and the conclusions are not Marxist, but Talcott Parsons' no longer even trendy sociology. The conclusions relate so little to the rest of the book that they can be ignored, however the tale it has to tell can stand by itself. Too expensive for many individuals to buy, this book should still find its place on every library's shelf.

Norah Carlin

Children's books

Now Read On: Recommended Fiction for Young People; Bob Dixon. Platon £3.95.

This book follows the author's Catching Them Young which discusses in which children's fiction too often reflects and by implication, accepts, white, middle-class, sexist attitudes. It is a list of books published in or before 1980 that Bob Dixon considers to be, to quote the cover, 'good books with positive attitudes to sex, race, class and other issues.' The book is divided into three sections - up to 8, 8-12, and over 12.

The first section contains books like Thomas Bakes a Cake by Gunilla Wokle in which Thomas's father is a black baker and his mother is white and is therefore taken as a novel for children that nun comes back to take him home - the text leaves him at the nursery. In other books in this section, race, sex and class are irrelevant. The characters in these books are determined for instance both for the very Hungry Caterpillar (Eric Carle) and Benjamin The Hamster who has a series of beautifully drawn, hair-raising adventures trying to open a box. So what? Both are excellent books and fabulous with children.

The choice in the other two sections concentrates on books which contain the themes, with issues of race, class and sex stereotyping with the final section very heavily weighted towards historical books. It includes no science fiction, not even Ursula Le Guin.

Any list of recommended books is bound to be subjective. We will all find that this one omits books we love and includes some we find objectionable. Of the two hundred books Bob Dixon chooses, only ten were published before 1980. This reflects the enormous increase in children's writing for children, especially for eight to fourteen years-olds, but it also reflects an ambivalent attitude to the classics.

Alice is included with a warning to adults that they may not see the middle-class background into context, but Jane Eyre is omitted although it is one of the most telling stories in existence about upper class hypocrisy and the position of women in early Victorian England. The fact that the Bronte sisters found it necessary to assume male names in order to get their books published is surely relevant. E. Nesbit (who was a member of the SDF) is also omitted. While her characters are middle-class, many of the assumptions of Edwardian society are challenged, and girls insinuate a far more daring society than Little Women, too, describes challenges to the expectations placed on girls and women in the States at the time it was written. After twelve, young people often read books written for adults.

Bob Dixon includes a few of these like Hemingway's The Old Man and the Sea but the line is difficult to draw and an exhaustive list would run into many volumes. Some books could usefully be included in more than one age group, with a cross reference to the description, and it would have been very useful for teachers wanting to order books if the ISBN had been included wherever possible.

The tone of Bob Dixon's summaries is deliberately chatty. He seldom attempts to describe the quality or style of writing or illustrations, and manages to make mention of the books and their author's fair and worthy. Where I know the books, I seldom found their flavour conveyed by his descriptions, where I don't I was hardly motivated to rush out and buy them. One description had me rolling - Anthony Browne's A Walk in the Park is a beautiful book of surreal drawings with a minimal text about Mr Smythe, his son Charles and their dog Victoria in the park. The details of language and pictures brilliantly contrast the class, and I have found children as young as three and four responding to it, while the subtlety and wit of the pictures means that there is no upper age limit for enjoyment of this book but Bob Dixon's asserts that it is about the sad waste of a class divided society? Get hold of it and judge for yourself.

A greater variety of opinion, some of them children's, would have made this book more lively. It will be useful to librarians and teachers as long as it is not regarded as exclusive, but to parents I would suggest if you have £3.95 to spare, it would be better spent on three or four paperbacks for your children, and if they're not included in Now Read On, but if you and your children like them, don't worry too much.

Sarah Cox

Romantic Poseur

Black List, Section H

Frances Stuart

King Penguin £2.95.

This novel is about the character 'H' and it seemed to be based on the life of Frances Stuart herself. Like Stuart, 'H' fights for the IRA in the Irish civil war of the 20s, is a poet and a novel, marries Maud Gonne's daughter and spends the second World War in Germany lecturing on literature and broad-casting anti-British propaganda in Ireland.

From this brief description of the novel, life of Stuart you would probably think that this was a political novel, and H a person deeply involved in politics. In fact it is a tremendously political and anti-political, in one is not political in the sense of wanting to change the whole system, it is a political novel, but one which is not interested in politics, in the sense of wanting to change the world and in the sense of wanting to support any movement that upsets normality.

Because of this it supports the IRA, the Republicans, the anarchists, the Trotskyist, Stalin and even Hitler. The hero's favourite is Keats and it is a mash of Catholic mysticism and existentialism that is the subject of the novel.

To what is important is not the politics of the outer world but the motives and their effects on the inner world of the people involved.

Like other nihilists-antinihilans of the time such as Celine, Stuart has a healthy cynical scorn for the Allies' claim of moral superiority, but is strangely blind to Stalin's or even Hitler's crimes.

And so H drifts through Ireland and Europe and ends with the inner truth, be it in the consciousness of street fighting or the extremes of Catholic meditation. H really is a ridiculous and even ludicrous figure, not that there's much doubt about the inner world of the people involved. Like other nihilists-antinihilans of the time such as Celine, Stuart has a healthy cynical scorn for the Allies' claim of moral superiority, but is strangely blind to Stalin's or even Hitler's crimes.

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More of the same?

Channel 4 promises to be innovative and experimental in the form and content of programmes while catering for the interests of special groups, women, ethnic minorities and young people. It has been hailed as a 'breakthrough in television—a forerunner of a new, democratic media to which everyone has access.'

What differentiates the new channel from the television we have seen or heard about? It is the commissioning all its programmes. It does not make them. For many small videos and film workshops making low-budget programmes, Channel 4 seemed like an unique opportunity.

The video revolution during the last couple of years has opened up a whole communication medium to a substantial number of people. Video is a relatively cheap and easy to use and edit. The rudiments take only a few hours to grasp. Anyone can learn. Women's groups, community groups and special interest groups could make programmes about their perception of the world and it would get national exposure on Channel 4. Needless to say, almost everyone, including the left, embraced Channel 4 without ever thinking of the structure of British television within capitalism.

The BBC is required by law to provide 'service' to the whole nation. It is funded by the television licence system. At the same time it must conform to a set of guidelines laid down by parliament.

The two commercial channels are governed by the same restrictions but they are funded by advertising. Channel 4 is totally dependent on advertising revenue. In order to survive it can rely on its promises, it can deny access to special interest groups, but, it must keep the confidence of its advertisers.

Channel 4 is funded by a subscription paid by the ITV companies amounting to £104 million a year. The idea is that profit returns will eventually outstrip the money the companies are spending on Channel 4. So Jeremy Isaacs, boss of Channel 4, must persuade the backers that he will attract advertisers, and in order to attract the advertisers he has to guarantee an audience—an audience that is going to spend.

Before Isaacs can offer a real service to the nation he has to play the ratings game. Channel 4 needs to get 16% share of the audience—which would give a total net advertising revenue of £90 million in 1983. The advertisers are sceptical about anything like that figure can be achieved. It took BBC to decade to reach around 12%. ITV takes a substantial chunk of the audience—around 48% to 50% every week. That is almost 20% more than BBC. Programmes that do well receive an indication of the sort of programmes Isaacs will have to put on in order to be competitive.

Coronation Street always takes a clear lead with an audience of 12.9 million almost every week. All ITV's top programmes maintain an audience level of 10 million upwards. BBC's top ten programmes get around 8 million to 9 million viewers—usually for shows like Fame or Blankety Blank. BBC's most successful programme is The Two Ronnies which gets an audience of 10 million. Almost every other programme broadcast on BBC 2 attracts a tiny 2 or 3 million.

It is not surprising that Channel 4 cannot afford to devote very much airtime to minority programmes. It all points to the fact that the channel will be serious and with the money it has towards ethnic minorities and women. And middle class women at that. One of the most successful pressure groups during the day is what the channel's managers are calling the WBFIL (Women in Broadcasting and Film Lobby). This is made up of middle aged, middle class women, already in the industry and hell bent on securing top media jobs for themselves.

Already the channel has been described as a 'TV Guardian' or a TV Sunday Supplement. But it is neither fulfilling its promises nor attracting advertisers. 'Channel Four will portray Britain as the multi-racial society tailoring it services to every ethnic and cultural group in British society.'

As Isaacs said: 'We can't afford to be a channel that puts people off.' Therefore I would like to be a more populist working class channel in part of what I do than the BBC. Programs will, however, be undoubtedly more upmarket than ITV normally is.'

The channel's target audience is young people between the ages of 15 and 30. That is the group with the biggest disposable income. A recent advertisement in Campaign, the advertisers' journal, served to show how the real Channel 4 audience will be. It was a picture of a young family, clearly in the AB income bracket, standing outside a large house. Underneath we are told that Channel 4 will be reaching consumers in the Thames region. It is an area where 16.2% of the homes are AB, where the Thames adult spends more on clothes, 41% more on eating out and 21% more on holidays, than the national average.

This is the big spend group that needs to be reached if a new commercial channel is to survive. But like it or not, Channel 4 has to meet the needs of less profitable groups. Around £5 million has been allocated to 'multi-cultural programming' in the first year from news and current affairs to comedy. The leaders from black and Asian newspapers and groups are critical of the 11.00pm Tuesday night slot for these programmes. They are underfunded and few have the amount of time and money allocated. There will be no programming in Asian languages. There may be black cinema, but it will be allowed to air feelings about harassment and discrimination, about racist laws or police brutality. The black and Asian community has lost its chance.

Behind the scenes of Brookside a rift between the programme makers and the ACTT remains unresolved. Because all Channel 4's work is commissioned there are few full-time producers as such. The ACTT feels that the company which makes Brookside should give women, particularly those with full-time union membership as they have only one-year contracts.

Short-term contracts are the norm for women in independent companies. salary increases for programmes for Channel 4. Many of them are not in the ACTT of ABCs or, if they are, there are rarely more than two or three in a shop. This means that bargaining power on the new channel will be seriously undermined and national coordination almost impossible. The ACTT's position on Channel 4 is community much weaker than it is on the other stations.

We are getting wider choice on television, different perspectives, better programmes and unheard voices. But we are not watching a radical, democratic or innovative station. Channel 4 may pay lip service to ethnic minorities, women and gay youth, but it will never ask questions or challenge answers that the government and the advertisers will disapprove of. It will never challenge the structures of British television.

Marta Wahrle
Socialist Review November 1982
Money makes the Ring

More torrid than Dallas. More violent than The Sweeney. FUNNIER than Morecombe and Wise. More historically informative than Upstairs Downstairs. All this and music too! Perhaps the most compulsively watchable TV series ever hits the nation. Wagner's Ring Cycle has arrived. Jennifer Batchelor argues you must not miss it.

The BBC, of course, has been plugging it hard. And it is a major event. The Ring is the work for which Wagner is best known. His operas tend to be long. Der Ring des Nibelungen is the longest. The Cycle is in four parts. Das Rheingold, Die Walküre, Siegfried and Götterdämmerung - fourteen hours of non-stop music and drama usually performed over four evenings. For television it has been chopped up into manageable lengths and will be put out on successive Sundays between now and Christmas, on BBC2 and Radio 3, and again in February.

The event should not be dismissed as nothing more than an operatic bonanza, pandering to the tastes of an elitist minority while the rest of us switch over or switch off. Nor is it a pointless tale of gods and heroes set to music and a total irrelevance as we struggle with the realities of life in Thatcherite Britain. Both Wagner's Ring itself and this particular production of it are of considerable interest.

Richard Wagner was more a rebel than a professional revolutionary. But he was genuinely attracted to the ideas of early socialists and anarchists like Proudhon (whose battle-cry 'Property is theft'). Wagner used - at least until he acquired some himself and Bakunin (whom he met). He protested at what he found wrong with music and theatre in his day and believed that it reflected what was wrong with society, and that society should therefore be reformed. He was less certain of how to go about it.

Wagner never joined any organised group or party for fear that his individual genius would be swamped by the mediocrity around him. He did, though, involve himself in political activities, particularly in Germany in the 1840s. He was forced into exile and left Germany for eleven years after taking part in a popular uprising in Dresden in 1849. This political background was a strong influence on the making of The Ring. He began work on The Ring shortly after the Revolution of 1848, in which he had taken part. It took him 25 years to finish it.

He wanted to present, through the legend of the Nibelungs, the setting up by the gods of an utopian society through the agency of man. The two people through whom this was to happen were father and son. Siegmund and Siegfried. Siegfried is presented as a great hero inspired by the ideals of the 1848 Revolution. The race of the Nibelungs represents the proletariat. The giants represent the property exploiting class. Siegfried is the prototype of the new man, who breaks through class conventions towards a new and better life. For that he is destroyed by the forces of evil who cannot allow so much goodness and greatness to exist. Brunnhilde, through her love for Sieg- fried, is made to understand the nature of these forces. She overcomes them by choosing to die also.

The ring itself - from which the Cycle takes its name - is forged by the Nibelung Alberich, the father of Hagen. Siegfried's murderer. It symbolises the supremacy of money, the subjection of human life to the pursuit of spending it, and the final destruction of that life.

By setting the drama as myth. Wagner presents characters and situations in which later generations can recognise their own condition. They have a meaning that carries beyond the particular legendary circumstances within which they are placed toward subjective and universal truths. Myth, it is said, stands for more than it is and means more than it says. The anti-capitalist spirit of 1848 is at the core of the work and its social revolutionary meaning is inescapable. It is couched in a mythological framework, but not hidden.

Over the 25 years following Wagner's 1840s work, his music and ideas matured. Gradually his operas lose their myth of purity and simplification. The Ring was the last of his work to consist of music only. In later operas he added dialogue. Wagner's Ring Cycle was daringly innovative. It was experimental. Wagon is said to have said, 'Music is life, what life is music.' Wagner was a radical thinker and was influenced by many other thinkers of his time, including Marx and Nietzsche.

Money makes the Ring a significant work of art. It is a masterpiece of modernist and avant-garde theatre. It is a work of art that challenges the viewer to think about the relationship between music and society. It is a work of art that celebrates the power of music to transcend the limitations of language and to communicate universal truths.

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On November 12th, 1918, the Austrian Republic was proclaimed, putting an end to the rule of the Hapsburg dynasty. The vast empire, which had stretched over central, east and south-eastern Europe, disintegrated.

1918 opened with a wave of strikes in Austria. On January 14th, workers in the armaments factories in the industrial town of Wiener Neustadt struck. The next day the strike spread to Vienna, and within four days the munition works in Budapest. In the three weeks after the strikes began, a million workers had struck in Austria and tens of thousands in Hungary. The strikes were followed by mutinies among Slovenian, Serb, Czech and Hungarian troops, and in the fleet.

The workers demanded an end to martial law and censorship, the eight-hour day and the release of Friedrich Adler, the socialist who had assassinated the Prime Minister in October 1916 in protest against the war.

Out of the shop stewards’ meetings in the big arms factories came the rudiments of workers’ councils. The ruling class was terrified.

But the strikes petered out as the leaders of the Social Democratic Party (OSP) and the trade unions moved in to call a halt, and to incorporate the workers councils into the old party and union structures.

But this was only the beginning of the party’s successful attempt to channel the movement into the creation of a parliamentary democracy rather than a state based on soviet power.

When the Republic was proclaimed by the National Assembly, which had been elected in 1911, the truth was that effective power lay in the factories and the barracks. It was the existence of that power which led to the downfall of the Empire not the actions of politicians.

In the period of the final collapse, there was widespread arming by the workers, some organised - like the crucial takeover of the Vienna Arsenal. By revolutionary shop stewards and soldiers - much the spontaneous forming of armed workers groups.

Even the ceremony of the declaration of the Republic was marked by an attack on the members of the Government and National Assembly by soldiers of the ‘Red Guard’ - the 41st Battalion of the new Volkswehr (People’s Army), formed of socialist soldiers. These soldiers seized the new flag of the Republic, which was red-white-red, tore the white part out and hoisted the red parts. They then charged the politicians, who withdrew through the gates of the Parliament building.

Julius Braungarth, an OSP member who was an official at the War Ministry in the crucial period November 1918 to April 1919, wrote:

"Now actual power lay with the industrial workers in the factories, and above all, with the soldiers in the barracks. And even in the barracks the bulk of the troops was made up of industrial workers. The peasant soldiers had not waited for the demobilisation order... eager to return to their villages. Those who remained in the barracks were the instruments of power: an abundance of rifles, machine guns and other implements of war. The whole edifice of the ancient regime was repulsive to them... they would have liked to smash it to smithereens; and they actually had the power to do so."

In the turmoil of those months, revolutionary trends were present in the People’s Guard, in workers councils which sprung up, in the tiny newly-formed Communist Party. But these forces were fragments and many were unclear about what should be done. Otto Bauer, leader of the Social Democratic Party, wrote later:

"At that time, workers and soldiers could any day have proclaimed the dictatorship of the proletariat - no power was in sight to stop them."

He also supplied the answer to why that didn’t happen.

"In those days when all authority collapsed, there was but one authority to emerge not diminished but strengthened: the Social Democratic Party."

One of their first actions was to attempt to control the workers and soldiers councils to reduce them to bodies of representation rather than power. Although the first National Conference of Workers’ Councils in March 1919, was supposed to represent all tendencies in the workers’ movement, the electoral rules were weighted in favour of workers from small workshops, home industries and domestic help, and against the vanguard of workers from the big factories.

The rules also enabled party and trade union officials to become ex officio executives of the councils.

Of course, the OSP didn’t succeed merely by bureaucratic manoeuvring. The bulk of the workers supported the party’s ideas and arguments.

But in the conditions of starvation and economic collapse of post-war Vienna, the proclamation of the Hungarian Soviet Republic on March 21st 1919, to be followed by the Bavarian Soviet Republic on April 18th, gave a boost and a new urgency to the revolutionary forces in Austria. A Central Workers’ Council was formed in Vienna in response to the call from Hungary to join the workers’ fight.

The governments of the socialists prevailed: they would do all in their power to help the Hungarian workers, but to declare a Soviet Republic in Austria would only lead to bloody civil war and intervention, including the cutting off of all food and fuel supplies from outside.

The Bavarian experiment lasted only 23 days, and the Hungarian Republic was crushed by August. The workers’ movement suffered a terrible bloody counter-revolution. Appalling mistakes were made in Hungary, but the lack of a revolutionary insurrection in Vienna contributed to the downfall of both republics.

Austria was now surrounded by reaction, soon to be reinforced by the fascist takeover in Italy.

The new state was a thinly populated remnant of the old empire, with a capital city containing a third of the population of under seven million. Out of the Viennese population, half a million were dues-paying members of the OSP. After resigning from the government in 1920, the situation was of clerical, right-wing parties running the federated government and the capitalists running the towns. Vienna in particular was the site of remarkable social achievements in the twenties. This was the period of "Red Vienna", with its new housing and municipal services. These real gains reinforced the loyalty of the workers to the party.

These achievements were built upon in the tumultuous years through the twenties. The ruling class was determined to wipe out the power of the workers movement.

The ruling class had to wait until 1934 before they felt strong enough to strike back, but then they crushed the workers movement ruthlessly. The OSP, the mostly left-wing of all reformist parties, was down to the defeat that it had been unwittingly preparing since 1918.

Sue Cockerill