Inside: The miners  The state
Socialist Worker the revolutionary paper today
POPULATION

Concerned racism

Family planning is something socialists normally support, but here Colin Sparks looks at a more sinister side to population control.

Socialists tend to think of the Family Planning Association as a vaguely worthy organisation. After all, whatever its limitations it is one of the organisations that advertise the fact that women both can and should control their own fertility.

However, it has a subsidiary organisation called Population Concern, which is not at all worthy, vaguely or otherwise. True it sounds worthy enough, being concerned to:

'Raise funds in the United Kingdom for population and development programmes around the world, in order to provide the knowledge and means of planned parenthood as a basic human right, and to establish a balance between the population of the world and its natural resources by means which also promote human welfare, personal freedom and the quality of life.'

The reality is much nastier. For example, a glance at their recent publication Population Misconceptions will reveal nine photographs of human beings. Just by chance, eight of them feature what we might term 'non-Caucasians.' Behind the noble rhetoric is a simpler and nastier message: there are just too many damned blacks and they are breeding too damned fast.

Control

Behind the glossy window dressing of the UK operation there is hidden a number of rather more dubious set-ups. Socialists are of course in favour of all women, wherever they happen to live, having the right to control their own fertility, but we also recognise that the reality of some of the 'population control' programmes adopted by various regimes have nothing to do with women's rights and everything to do with the profits of the drug companies and the goals of particularly nasty ruling classes.

So we find the publications of Population Concern proclaiming the noble humanitarian goals of their programmes while boasting of operating in such havens of women's rights as Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and India.

Just to take the last example: one of the best known aspects of 'population control' in India in the last decade was Sanjay Gandhi's programme of compulsory and involuntary sterilisation for the urban poor.

None of this reality is allowed to creep into the sanitised argumentation and publicity of Population Concern. You and I are invited to help keep down the number of blacks in a very civilised manner with none of the ugly bits on display.

What there is instead is a version of a very old argument which runs that the world's resources are finite and any increase of population is bound to lead to greater starvation and misery.

This is often called 'Malthusianism' after the British clergyman and economist Dr Thomas Malthus, who published an Essay on the Principle of Population in 1798.

Malthus, who wrote his book as a counter to the arguments of an early anarchist called Godwin, argued that:

1. Population is necessarily limited by the means of subsistence.
2. Population invariably increases where the means of subsistence increase, unless prevented by some very powerful and obvious checks.
3. These checks, repress the superior power of the population, and keep its effects on a level with the means of subsistence, are all resolvable into moral restraint, vice and misery.

What Population Concern and similar operations are up to today, is propagandising for a new form of 'moral restraint' while popularising all of the most reactionary of Malthus' arguments.

The obvious overall objection to Malthus is that he detected the limit of food capacity as having been reached in his own day because people starved from lack of food, yet the world today supports a much greater population.

People still starve, not because of some objective limit to food production. They starve today for the same reason as, with a far smaller population, they starved in Malthus' day: because of social relations, not the fixed limits of food production.

The reactionary effect of Malthusian arguments can be seen when we look at how Population Concern tackle the possible objection that 'Hunger arises from an unequal distribution of food.' They say:

'If the world's total available food supply could be meticulously divided by the population of the world and each ounce of food available could be handed to each man, woman and child every day for 365 days, every year, would the daily allocation be adequate?'

They go on to answer their own question: 'Although the answer is probably yes, it might well be argued that food distribution on a world-wide basis is totally unrealistic.

'Surplus cereal stocks on the continents of North America and Oceania usually have to be paid for, and many less developed countries are unable to afford the necessary level of food imports ...'

This is quite openly and simply reactionary. They are saying that although there is no food shortage, and there is not likely to be any food shortage, people starve because of the way the world is organised. This, they argue, cannot and should not be changed. What should be changed is the number of people. Population Control is a substitute for social change.

Racist

The idea of there only being limited resources available is quite a widespread one. It rests on the belief that the level of technology is fixed and that therefore no new resources can be mobilised.

Agriculture has always been one of the key areas where this has been argued. For Malthus there was an objective limit to the amount of food which could be raised from a given area of land.

What the subsequent development of agricultural technique showed was that the idea of a fixed limit was and is false. The application of scientific techniques to agriculture has resulted in sharp rises in the productivity of the soil.

There is not one single instance today in which there is an absolute shortage of the necessities of life. There are plenty of actual shortages, for particular classes of people in particular parts of the world. Those shortages have everything to do with property relations and nothing to do with some 'population problem'.

The reactionary and racist arguments of Population Concern are a particularly insidious example of the ways in which good intentions get twisted to evil ends by the realities of world capitalism.
Politics the key

The miners' strike has developed into a war of attrition. Miners talk quite openly about lasting out to the winter or new year in order to have an impact, and government ministers put a brave face on things and claim that they will be able to survive even the winter. Hardly anyone still says that the battle will be won or lost in the next few days.

The long and bitter slog of the miners' strike is not natural or inevitable. Every week throws up chances of transforming the dispute from a long slog in which the determination of each side is tested to breaking point, into a battle that could be lost or won in one decisive morning of struggle.

The first week of the strike showed how things could be. The strength and initiative of the rank and file miners from a small number of Yorkshire pits surprised everybody by walking out, and by pulling behind them the rest of the Yorkshire coalfield. They also pulled out the other major coal producing areas with the exception of Nottinghamshire. But it is worth remembering that in the first week they did manage to stop the Notts pits, even if only pending the result of the area ballot.

But it was very much a sign of the shape of things to come that by the end of the first week the officials were back in control, and that the Yorkshire miners who had fought independently even of the local leadership, and against the wishes of the area executive on a number of key issues in the first few days, were willing, if not happy, to accept that control.

The ruling class, which had been as surprised as anyone else at the explosion, was also able to regroup and organise the massive police intervention in week two.
which has been a contributory factor in making the struggle so difficult.

The first grand fact of the strike was that a large number of miners were prepared to take action against closures. The second grand fact was that not all miners were prepared to go along with that, and that the strikers were not able to picket them out.

Those two realities combined to shape the early course of the dispute, and still provide the cutting edge of many arguments in the labour movement about the question of support.

One of the reasons for the very widespread support for the miners is that they are seen to be doing what every activist in the movement has wanted to do for a long time: fight back against the Tories and fight back hard. The Notts seats, of course, have also provided a magic excuse for every potential scab up and down the country to deny solidarity or support.

The next decisive turning point was the battle to stop the steel plants. This began in Scotland, with a brief flurry around Ravenscraig, moved to the battle around Orgreave in Yorkshire, and then concentrated on the Llanwern steelworks in South Wales.

An important and obvious lesson follows immediately from just that chronicle: at no time was the fight to stop steel conducted as an organised national campaign coordinated across all of the steelworks. That had two conclusions. Most obviously, it allowed the ruling class to concentrate its forces, in particular its police forces, on whichever area it happened to be fighting in at a particular time.

Although miners, too, travelled, particularly to Orgreave for the major confrontation, the ability to concentrate on one place helped the state and the bosses much more than it did the miners.

**Military**

But that purely tactical question is secondary. Throughout the left there has been a tendency to overplay such purely military matters. They were not and are not decisive. Much the most important consequence of the 'staggers' was political.

The key argument that has been used by Bill Sirs and every local union official in the country to justify their members working with coal and iron ore that has been driven through miners' picket lines has been the need to keep this or that steelworks open.

There is no doubt that this argument has been enough to make workers who might have hitherto in solidarity forget any prospect of class consciousness and to carry out the most open scabbing we have seen for a long time.

The argument in Scotland runs that if we refuse to handle scrap material then the people in South Wales will and it will be us who suffer from the threatened closure. Of course, the argument in South Wales has been just the reverse.

Now, there is no doubt whatsoever that the BSC want to close down some capacity. Obviously, what is needed is a united and organised fightback. That is not likely to come from Sirs and the ISTC executive. The only way that those divisions could be overcome would be if a group of workers who were already fighting back were to generalise to a national struggle. But the NUM decision to fight each works on its own has played right into the hands of the local leaderships who have been looking for a way to avoid a fight.

There is nothing to be gained, however, from simply bewailing the fact that large scale scabbing is going on. For socialists the important thing to do is to understand why this is happening and to use that understanding to map out a strategy that can win.

That strategy must start off from recognising that, while the ruling class is determined to win, and has acted fairly shrewdly, it is not unbeatable. It is true that the ruling class wishes to inflict a major defeat on the miners, and through them on all of the working class; they retain the desire to drive down real wages. That, one of the objectives of their policy since the end of the boom, is one of the things that Thatcher has so far not delivered.

The insurrection which follows from this desire is what led to a breakdown of the attempted compromise in mid-June. Everybody, even Scargill, on the union side seemed to be convinced that a deal was on, but then MacGregor upped the stakes in an interview with The Times and the bureaucrats were left without the possibility of the compromise they so desperately wanted.

But even though the ruling class are determined to win, they have still been forced to tread relatively cautiously. They have nor, for instance, so far made any attempt to use the formidable battery of anti-union legislation they have at their disposal against either the NUM or other trade unionists.

That is not to say that they will not use the law, or that they may not get away with it. On their part it is a matter of calculation. Sometimes, like with the NGA at Warrington, the calculations of the most hawkish of the ruling class proved correct and they have got away with it. Sometimes, as with GCHQ, the ruling class made a minor miscalculation and, although they won their immediate objective, the did so at the price of giving their opponent, who managed to pull a surprising amount of strike action against them, a powerful fillip.

**Battle**

With the miners' strike, it is clear that initially they made a fairly major miscalculation: they did not expect a battle in the pits, and they did not expect that to coincide with a hardening of the mood amongst public sector employees over pay. If they made a fairly serious mistake that time, they may do so again and alter the whole terms in which the strike is being fought.

But if they miscalculated over the strike itself, and found themselves faced not only with the miners but also with large numbers of other groups of public sector workers pursuing pay claims with unexpected vigour, it is also the case that they have, so far, not
paid any substantial price for that mistake.

The reason for their immunity brings us to the second major element in the socialist analysis of the strike so far. The decisive factor in preventing the generalisation of the strike has been sectionalism.

Both divisions inside the NUM and the divisions between different groups of workers have been classic examples of the ways in which the downturn in the class struggle has led to the development of ideas of local particularism. The struggle for the NUM, the NUM, Llanwern against Ravencreag in BSC, steelworker against miner in general—these have been the decisive limitations of the strike.

**Officials**

It is important to repeat yet again that this is a political and organisational failure in the heart of our movement, and that it is this which is decisive. The activities of the police, which occupy the attention of many trade union officials and Labour Party members, are important but they are a secondary and contributing factor. They only work because we are weak and divided.

A minority fighting can stretch their resources but not defeat them. And if, once they manage to force scab material through, they will then blacked, then their military prowess would be wasted. The key weaknesses lie within our movement.

Overcoming these weaknesses is the problem. It is the answer to the question of what to do that is decisive.

The strike has illustrated quite decisively that the bureaucracy, no matter how long its rhetoric, is quite unable to overcome sectionalism. The whole of the bureaucracy, from Sirs on the extreme right to Scargill on the extreme left, have proved unable to overcome the difficulties.

No doubt there are many in the movement who will agree with us about this, but will start to hesitate when we include Jimmy Knapp, and be few in dissent once the sacred name of Arthur Scargill is taken in vain.

The temptation on the left is to try to draw a line of demarcation inside the bureaucracy between left and right. It is a distinction which then permits a concentration on winning positions inside the bureaucracy for the left.

It is important to recognise that there are big differences within the bureaucracy. Bill Sirs is very far to the right of Arthur Scargill and this has a real effect on the class struggle. Arthur Scargill is very much to the left of Jack Taylor and this has an important effect on the class struggle. But they all remain bound by the fundamental reliance on the official apparatus which is both the expertise and the weakness of the bureaucracy.

Take Orgreave as an example. Sirs of course, has been encouraging scabbing.

Scargill has been trying with substantial determination to stop the delivery of coke from Greaton to Scunthorpe. That is certainly an important difference. Scargill also saw from very early on the importance of stopping steel and saw the need to concentrate his forces on that. Taylor and Co were much more reluctant and tried almost every trick in the book to avoid confrontation. That also is an important difference.

But the events leading up to the 'Bloody Monday' at Orgreave, for some weeks Scargill had been trying, against the indifference or sabotage of the local executives and the local mounted police, to stop the delivery of coke. He had also, along with the rest of the bureaucracy, been closeted in secret talks with the NUM which he stated were going very well indeed. By the Friday before the big battle it looked as though the deal was on. On the Saturday there was the Yorkshire Miners' Gala. Orgreave was not mentioned.

At the same time the talks broke down. The Taylors were denied an opportunity to sell out by the transgression of the ruling class. The events of the Monday were organised by the Yorkshire bureaucracy, and more generally by the bureaucracy as a whole, on the Sunday itself.

**Symbolic**

Now the size and the determinate aspect of the picket on that Monday was, in itself, a tribute to the organisational ability of the bureaucracy and to the spirit of the rank and file. But it was also very much the work of a bureaucracy mobilising a stage army. The very next day there was no picketing, and once the coke started to move after a brief break there was no resurgence of mass picketing. Instead, the battle shifted to South Wales and took a radically different form. Instead of mass picketing, the miners were now relying on symbolic pickets to stop train drivers.

To their credit, the train drivers have mostly respected the token pickets and refused to deliver one. They have taken the suspension in a very principled way. But they have not used the suspensions as a reason for a more general walk-out—after all Knapp and the rest of their leadership have been arguing that a levy can provide the money needed to pay the suspended men full wages for the duration.

No doubt, financially, this is possible. Politically it is disastrous. Not only does it ensure the isolation of those workers sent home, but it fails to take the opportunity to broaden the dispute and to take advantage of management blunders. It fits with the low key post-Orgreave approach.

There is an important and obvious conclusion to draw from all of this. Bloody Monday at Orgreave represented a shift to the left by Taylor and Co.—after all they had been prevented from staging a sell-out by the class enemy. But that shift to the left was a bureaucratic one. Just as Scargill was unable to bypass the Taylors and the like, so he has gone along with the new strategy and has become part of it.

The obvious missing factor, the force that could overcome all these weaknesses and sectionalism, is the rank and file. It has certainly been visible during the strike—it
was they who fought the police with great courage and determination in a host of battles as well as the big confrontation. But they have not been able to act as an independent force.

Go back to Orgreave again, and you can see that very clearly. The procedure for picketing in Yorkshire is that you turn up at the Welfare and get an envelope with instructions of where to picket, plus your expenses for the day. That form of organisation, in itself, makes sure that only a minority, those who take the initiative of coming to the welfare area, actually get involved in the action. And it also means that the bureaucracy decides who gets to go. The initiative that had resulted with the rank and file in the first few days of the strike is now firmly back in the hands of the officials.

There are no meetings at which rank and file miners can thrash out what are the most important targets that day or week, where they can organise to go round and motivate some of the strikers who are not digging their allotments.

Failed

What that meant at Orgreave was that miners who could see the need to be there turned up but got instructions, and the money, to go to Nottinghamshire. They went with simple loyalty, plus the consciousness that they had been within their rights to do a job, ensured that they tried to go to Nottinghamshire. They were either turned back by the cops or failed to stop at the Welfare. Then, and only then, the most determined headed for Orgreave. It was a system designed to make sure the pickets at Orgreave were small.

In order to break up with such stupidity it would require a very high level of political awareness and an organisation independent of the bureaucracy. Although many miners could see the need to go to Orgreave, they went under the prodding of Scargill. Even the most determined miners had no organisational independence, and for the majority, to go was not to break with the bureaucracy, only to respond to the call of one section.

The sad fact is that there are only a tiny number of miners who can see the need to organise independently of the bureaucracy. They are far too few to achieve any actual organisational impact. The reason why there are so few is that it needs a fairly high degree of political awareness to see the need for such organisation, irrespective of the politics of the bureaucracy. Particularly when Scargill is showing no sign of taking any very productive action. It takes a high level of political understanding of the role of the bureaucracy to see the need for independent organisation. The first task for socialists is to increase that number of miners who see the need for independent organisation.

That is not a simple task at those inside the mining industry. The miners are quite rightly afraid of any organised action, seeking support and backing from other groups of workers. There is also very substantial sympathy for the miners among quite wide layers of workers, and a commitment to organise is a test of the organisation, the bulk of union activity.

It is, however, true that many of the people who are to be the main support of the miners are those who have never heard of the bureaucracy.

Indeed, it is often worse than that. If the view that affects many miners is the belief that Scargill walks on water, then the view that affects many who genuinely want to help the miners is the belief that miners walk on water.

That sort of attitude is of little use. The only link in the strike is political clarity, and the least acceptable, any socialist can give to any miner is a recognition of the need for independent action and the organisation.

That makes argument, often very hard arguments, very real arguments. It also means arguments, sometimes hard arguments, with many of the people who support the miners. It particularly means arguments with those committed to one or another version of the Labour Party left.

They act as if the EEC elections ended without a chance to call their own and are putting their energies into supporting the miners. There is a thing, and it is a concern, but they are not putting their energies into supporting the miners. From Labour to the Labour they are all committed. They act as if they are committed to the idea that it is left but act as if they are not. They are probably more committed to this than the miners who look to Scargill. So any attempt to make the purpose of the strike will be met by the organised hostility of the section left as well as by the suspicion of less compromised miners and their supporters.

Winning these arguments will not be easy under the best of circumstances. Political clarity no runs parallel is one of the first requirements for winning them. The other primary criterion is that we, the socialists, are seen to be the people who are the most active fighters for the miners' case.

And it means, beginning with the little things like making sure that collections are taken for the miners whenever we have any influence. It also means that it is necessary to try to step up the level of solidarity.

If the current mood among the most conscious layer of the labour movement is one of sympathy for the miners, then we need to try to firm up that sympathy and turn it into real solidarity. So the collection needs to become the regular collection. The collection needs to become the levy, the levy needs to become the organisation, the organisation.

And that action needs to become the basis for real solidarity, for blacking the buses, for the miners, for the miners.

Headway

The determination to lead the struggle forward is as strong as being very clear about the overall politics of the strike that can begin to make some sort of headway. Not only in the industry but also amongst those people who support the miners.

There is no point in mourning about general strikes in the abstract if Scargill were locked up and were not in contact with the mood in the class. As it stands today, it does not.

But the sympathy that is there can be hardened and developed into solidarity with careful work.

And the political generalisation is that implicit both in the strike and in the support for it. It can only be beginning as a discourse political understanding not only of the strike but also of the need for overthrow capitalism.

Socialists face a difficult task; the temptations of mindless and mechanical activism in support of the miners are great. And the dangers of sitting on the sidelines, pointing out the correct strategy are equally great. We have to combine both the activism and the analysis.
Understanding the state

The battles on the Orgreave picket lines and a recent spate of small attacks on socialists by the remnants of the National Front, have provoked a number of claims that Britain is sliding into a police state or some sort of fascism. Colin Sparks looks at these claims.

The level of police violence, and the licence they have been given to arrest miners, during the current strike has been very high. If it is the big set-piece confrontations that make the TV news, there is also a constant stream of lesser well-publicised events that go to giving the impression of Britain becoming a police state.

As the popular image of the police changes from the 'British bobby' towards the occupying army image that French workers have towards the CRS, so the argument that Britain is changing from a democracy into a police state is heard more and more often. Sometimes, it is argued that there is a slide towards fascism going on at the same time, with either Margaret Thatcher or some of the traditional fascist organisations spearheading the drive.

There is no such thing as an unbridgeable chasm between 'democracy' a 'police state' and 'fascism'. It is important to remember that all of these are abstract terms used to disguise the social realities of who actually rules.

Take the case of the idea of 'democracy': the general abstract term can be used to cover a variety of different types of rule.

Sixth century Athens was, for example, a democracy, in some ways much more democratic that modern Britain, magistrates for example were elected. Yet only citizens could vote. Women, slaves and foreigners couldn't.

Democracy meant the rule of a particular class: in this case the small and medium slave-owners.

The same is true today. When people talk of the 'democratic nature' of the British state, they are not pointing to who rules the state, but the way in which it is ruled. In modern Britain, the country is ruled by the owners of capital, they rule by and through democratic methods.

If Britain became a police state overnight, this same class would still rule. They would continue to control the decisive instruments of power in society — they would have a monopoly of the productive property, the capital, and we the working class would still be forced to sell our labour to these same capitalists.

The same applies if Britain were to become a fascist state: the same people would continue to own the capital and would continue to rule.

So what matters fundamentally is not the way in which a society is ruled but the class content of that rule. Thus we should argue that Britain has never been a 'democratic', pure and simple, it has been, for the last century or so, a bourgeois democracy. Similarly, if it became a 'police state' it would be a capitalist police state.

Having said that, there are real and important differences between bourgeois democracy and a capitalist police state that make any idea that one can grow out quite simply into the other really very dangerous.

Any ruling class has a problem: they are, by definition, few in number since they live off the labour of the vast mass of the population. How are they going to keep
sure that the vast mass continue to work to keep them in the manner to which they wish to remain accustomed?

This general problem is particularly acute for the capitalist class, since they are constantly fighting each other as well, in the name of competition and accumulation, and so need to work even to maintain their own units in the face of their class enemies.

There are two methods they can use: force and fraud.

Force means getting the working class to believe that the rule of the capitalists is normal, natural, inevitable and desirable. In order to sell this set of ideas the ruling class have all sorts of weapons, schools, the BBC, the Daily Mail, and so on.

Fraud

The Labour Party is one of the most important agencies of fraud attempting as it does to convince us that change can come through parliament.

Force means that the ruling class have at their disposal soldiers and cops who can baton, imprison or kill anyone who does not accept that the rule of the capitalist class is inevitable.

The capitalist always rules through a combination of both of these tactics. What shifts is the balance between the two.

Bourgeois democracy is a means of ruling which relies very heavily on the use of fraud. The ruling class allows the working class a certain number of freedoms, and claims that any attempt to change things will lead to a loss of these very freedoms.

It is important to be very clear that these freedoms are real freedoms. The right to organise trade unions, to have socialist newspapers openly distributed and to be able to argue publicly for socialism are all important rights.

The fraud lies in pretending that these freedoms are all that anyone could possibly wish for, and that the desire to have, say, the freedom to live a decent life without the misery of unemployment is something which endangers the freedoms that already exist.

Because these freedoms are real ones, and make it very much easier to organise for socialism, we are always on the frontline of the struggle to defend and extend democratic rights. For us they have a class content too; they make it that much easier for us to prepare the overthrow of bourgeois democracy and to replace it with proletarian democracy.

The most important democratic right the working class have is the ability to form their own independent organisations.

The most important of these organisations are trade unions and political parties. They are important not simply because they are a means towards preparing for the overthrow of capitalism but because they allow workers to defend themselves within capitalism.

Trade unions, for example, are not weapons for overthrowing capitalism. They are organisations by means of which workers defend themselves against the capitalists while at the same time accepting that the capitalist class owns the workplaces in which they work.

The existence of these rights is double edged. On the one hand, they allow workers to form their own organisations, on the other hand some of those organisations are important in helping to prop up the status quo.

So bourgeois democracy is a method of class rule by which the ruling class allow the existence of organisations which might endanger their rule in order to allow at the same time the development of organisations which provide it with some sort of consent.

A police state is very different in organisation. There are all these rights to independent organisations are banned, or only allowed what limited form the police may decide is appropriate at any particular time. This, of course, is a much more unfavourable set of circumstances for workers even to defend their own living standards, let alone organise for the overthrow of a system.

A police state depends on a complete denial of those rights to organise. So while at the same time the police look up those people who wish to organise independently in order to overthrow capitalism they also have to smash those people and organisations which only want to do deals with them and who are opposed to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism as is the most backwards employer.

The police state, then, relies much more on force than on fraud. That does not mean they abandon fraud. Even in the most ruthless police state, the TV, the press and the education system churn out the story that everything is perfect and that the only people who object to continual police rule are a bunch of deviants probably in the pay of a foreign power.

A police state rests on the coercion of the working class. In some circumstances, for example in societies where there is a very large petty bourgeoisie, or peasant class that is only too willing to see workers smashed, a police state can be fairly stable because the capitalists can rule with the support of other social classes.

In an advanced capitalist country like Britain, however, there is no numerically large and socially powerful class which can provide the social support for the bourgeoisie if it chooses to rule by the smashing of trade unions and working class political parties. So a police state in Britain, resting almost entirely on the coercion of the working class, works much more constantly and vulnerable form of capitalist rule.

Because these forms of class rule are so different, it is obvious that there cannot be a simple shift from one to another. To shift from bourgeois democracy to a police state or to fascism requires a major social upheaval. There has been no such change in Britain in the last decade. Britain is and remains a bourgeois democracy. A couple of parliamentary Bills and the issuing of riot shields won’t change that.

Deviants

The fascist state is different again. Although all organisations independent of the state machine are banned, the state itself sets up its own mass organisations which it tries to persuade the masses is capable of representing their interests. Thus fascist states ban trade unions, but set up state run shock unions to which membership is compulsory.

It is here that fascism proves itself a system of state capitalism. It is much more stable because it provides all of the organisations that the capitalist class needs to stabilise its rule, but provides them in a form designed to eliminate any opposition and make sure that they are completely loyal to the state.

Fascism can do this because, unlike a police state, it depends on the existence of a mass civilian movement — the fascist party. It is this mass movement that provides the shock troops to smash the independent organisations of the working class.

Fascism, then, is a mechanism of class rule which also depends upon consent, but this time it is the consent of those people or...
organised into the fascist mass movement. In
advanced capitalist countries this mass
movement is usually led and staffed by the
small capitalist and farmer and the upper
white collar employee, but if it is to succeed
in becoming a mass organisation it has also
to gain the backing and at least a proportion
of the most backward workers.
This means that it is not a simple and
direct tool of the capitalist class proper. The
fascist mass movement has to be built out of
people who have suffered at the hands of
capitalism and have been driven to despair
by its contradictions. It is a movement that
extracts a price from the capitalists —
usually in lower wages and for the workers the
working class has been smashed.
What, then, has happened? It is obvious
that something has been going on. There are
new and more vicious anti-union laws. The
police are being used much more openly and
directly to smash strikes. There is an ugly
echo from the Tory Strike demanding more
police and more power for the police in the
maintenance of class rule.
What is really going on is a relatively small
shift in the balance between force and fraud
within bourgeois democracy. Such alter-
ations happen all the time, but they have a
common driving force. The new police force
represent responses to the balance of class
forces and the level of the class struggle, rather than some deeplaid plot to win total power on the part of
various police officers.

Superior

In periods of capitalist boom the police
force has a relatively small direct role in the
class struggle. They are much more energetic
in social terror against marginal groups. As
the capitalist crisis develops, they are used
more and more openly to try to shift the
balance of class forces.
The increased use of the police, and per-
haps the army, in direct attacks on workers
in Britain, is the result of the fact that the
movement is on the retreat while the
capitalist class faces a major problem of
restoring the conditions in which it can
generate profits.

A victory by the miners, or a more general
shift in the balance of class forces, would
lead to a swift withdrawal of the police from
the picket line.
The claim that Britain is becoming a police
state is used by trade union leaders and
Labour Party politicians for two bad
reasons. For the trade union leaders the
police provide an alibi. If it is the case that
the miners are defeated at Orgreave or else-
where because of the police tactics, then who
could possibly blame those trade union
leaders who covered their feet about
organising solidarity action? The trade
union leaders, after all, are not responsible
for what chief constables do.
The other argument is heard much more
often from Labour Party politicians. They
say that the development of the police state
in Britain, can be checked if only they are
allowed more control over the police by
being elected to police committees and
parliament.
All of the evidence of the last Labour
government proves that this is false: they
were just as ready as the Tories to use police
and soldiers to break strikes, and even today
the Labour leadership 'condemns violence'
rather than supporting the miners.

The police however have to pay for such a deal
that at the very least, you keep quiet about
the miners, and at the worst, you have to
condemn their violence just as much as you
condemn that of the police.
The idea that Britain is sliding into a
fascist state is ridiculous. To believe that
the hundred or so active fascists in Britain today
are the major political problem confronting
socialists is a grotesque distortion of political
reality.
But it is not just a mistake. Because such a
perspective does not see fascism as a mass
movement but just as a bunch of thugs, it
leads to a distorted concept of how to fight
back. If all you are doing is opposing a
bunch of thugs, then why not organise a
bigger bunch of your own thugs to go around
and fight the fascists? The miners’ strike and
mass-working class action do not come into
the picture.
We do not ignore the problems that these
false solutions stem from. Police violence is
obviously a major obstacle to winning the
miners’ strike. Deleting the police, how-
ever, is not really a technical question. In
the end the strength of the police is a reflection
of the weakness on our side. That in turn is in
large part the result of the failures of the very
trade union leaders who are loudest in
denouncing the cops.
The key to defeating the police is the
mobilisation of mass action by workers.
Getting the coke from Orgreave blacked by
steelworkers would be a massive defeat not
just for the NCB and the government but
also for the whole idea that counter-power
will break strikes successfully.
We believe that the way to defend and ex-
tend democratic rights is to win victories in
the class war.
Again, it is certainly true that fascism
needs to be opposed. But we have to be quite
clear that, at the moment, the National
Front or whoever do not represent the major
problem facing the working class.
Even the physical defence of meetings and
street sales is a political question. Squads of
left wing toughs sighting squads of right wing
toughs provide no answer at all. What is
more likely to happen is that the cops will
move and seize a heaven-sent opportunity to
arrest a few lefties.

Blacked

Our ability to defeat the fascists lies in
the fact that our policies have a greater poten-
tial for mass mobilisation than do theirs.
We can, for example, isolate them by the fact
that we have something to say about the
miners’ strike and they have not.

Even at the strategic level this is the case.
There is no doubt that if the miners are
defeated the mood of despair and disappoin-
tment against the fascists, is not only failing
to solve the immediate practical problems of
the movement, they are also proposing
strategies that will lead to a strengthening of
the very people they want to fight.

Women’s liberation
—two traditions

Class struggle and women’s liberation—1640 to the present
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Tony Cliff

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Socialist Review July/August 1984
Voice of the party

A key part of SWP members’ activity is selling Socialist Worker. Sue Cockrill explains why, and how this is best done.

The constant thread which runs through all our activities as members of the SWP is the weekly paper, Socialist Worker. Whether the activity is selling the paper on a street or workplace, or going to a picket line, or a mass lobby or demonstration, the common element is Socialist Worker.

Why does the party lay such stress on selling the paper? First, it is the main tool for conveying the ideas of the SWP, the ideas of the working class. When we sell the paper to someone, we are putting forward our ideas about the present situation, about how the struggle of the working class can best be advanced.

These arguments are carried as part of our total politics, so the paper will be arguing about how the miners’ strike can be won, linking it with other struggles against the Tories, and so on. It is also the means by which we reach people who, for various reasons, do not come into contact with us in other ways. The paper is a means of reaching out to people’s minds by the success of the fascists in France, the slaughter in India, and so on. No member could hope to take up all these issues without the paper.

Because the paper is taking up the arguments, it means that the members are able to deal with them when they come up at work, in the pub, or wherever. It also means that it is difficult for members to dodge issues. If you sell the paper regularly, people will argue with you about the party’s position, for example, Labour councils, or Ireland.

Organiser

The second main reason for the paper is that it carries political propaganda. It also acts as an organiser. At the moment that means principally that it organises the party itself, being the main channel through which the local branches are connected to the central activity, in focusing on certain issues as being the major ones to orientate around.

For example, without the paper, it would be much easier for a branch to decide that this or that activity was more important than the miners’ strike, or Warrington, or GCHQ. The party as a whole had to orientate more around these issues because the paper acted as a directing, organising force.

If you look at revolutionary organisations which don’t have a paper, or one that comes out irregularly, like some of the left groups in Europe, you can see that this lack of an organising mechanism results in a tendency for each local branch to do their own thing, and effectively the organisation ceases to act as a united party. It literally lacks a single voice to speak to the working class.

The last reason is that reformist organisations like the Labour Party, the fact that they don’t have a single paper which all the members are expected to sell is a good measure of the difference between revolutionary and reformist politics. If you only want votes, not activity, then you don’t need to organise either members or non-members (except when there’s an election). And the last thing you want in a party united only by electoralism is serious discussion of theory and practice.

A revolutionary paper also acts as a forum in which militants can share the experience of workers involved in struggles in workplaces and areas.

That means carrying strike reports and analysis of developments in different unions and industries. In periods of downturn these reports are written mainly by party members on the inside, on the basis of having picked up lines, talking to the workers and so on. In periods of upturn the paper should be in a position where more and more of these reports could be written directly by the workers involved, who would see the paper as their paper, as an organiser: for the most advanced sections of the class.

Lemina’s writings on the subject of the Bolshevik paper Pravda in the years of working-class upsurge just before the first world war give us a very good picture of such a workers’ paper, a paper written by workers, not for them, and a paper supported by the workers’ keepers, the small amounts of money donated each week from thousands of workers’ paypackets to keep the paper going.

The fact that Pravda received contributions from 504 groups of workers in the first six months of 1912 was a very telling indication of the extent to which it was seen as the workers’ own newspaper. Pravda didn’t come out of nowhere, however. If we look back to Lenin’s writings around the turn of the century, we find him arguing about the need for a central party paper, and about the way in which it could be used to build the party.

Although there is no argument about the need for Socialist Worker today, his arguments remain very useful. As people join the party, they have to be convinced of the need to go out and sell the paper — and some of the older comrades need to be reconvincing.

In an article titled Where to Begin? written in May 1901, and less than a year later in What is to be Done?, Lenin argues that a newspaper can be a collective organiser, and that in fact, only a newspaper can ‘train up a strong political organisation’. In a famous analogy about party building, he wrote:

‘The role of a newspaper is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser.

After a year or two, this last respect may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates communica-

10 Socialist Review July/August 1984

10 Socialist Review July/August 1984 nisation between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour. With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape, that will engage, not only in local activities but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effect and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence those events.

The whole business of standing for hours trying to sell SW’s one that seems perhaps the oddest aspect of being in the party, both to new members and people who sympathise with our ideas, but haven’t joined. And the greatest puzzle of all is why we spend ages outside workplaces selling perhaps one or two papers an hour. Even the oldest member often wonders what the point of it all is, especially at seven o’clock on a February morning.

The reason for selling at workplaces goes to the heart of our politics: it is because it is at work that the working class has the power to change society. It is there that we want to build the SWP. That doesn’t mean we don’t do street sales, but we recognise that selling regularly to someone going into a factory or office is potentially much more important than selling to a passerby in the street.

In other words, we don’t sell papers for the sake of it, but to establish political relationships with those who buy the paper. That is a completely different thing from the notion of selling papers through news agents, where what counts is sales and advertising.

Intervention

To see how Socialist Worker is being used now to build the SWP, the Review talked to three comrades who are centrally involved in organising sales and other activity in their branches: Neville, from Gorton SWP; Kath Connell in Liverpool, and Kate Rankin in Bradford.

They talked about selling the paper at workplaces and in the street, using it to develop contacts and bring people to meetings, and about the best way to organise sales and collections of money within the branches.

Some workplace sales are started cold, others result from party intervention around a particular dispute. For example, a sale at a factory in east Manchester was started cold by Gorton SWP. They sold two or three papers a week for two months — a fairly typical workplace sale — and then someone bought a paper who wanted to know where the branch met.

He began coming regularly to meetings. He had left the AUEW in disgust over the Laurence Scott sell-out, which was something the comrades had to argue with him about. He joined the SWP, and began taking papers into the factory. The gate sale was kept up to provide a back-up.

Some time later, someone picked up a paper lying around the factory and asked where it came from.

After being pointed in the direction of the
member inside, this person joined the party about two months later. He had been very frustrated trying to organise in the factory and found it a tremendous boost to be able to come to party meetings and no longer feel so isolated. Both comrades sell inside the factory and are active in the union.

A regular sale of 15 papers was developed at an engineering factory in Broughouse by Bradford SWP after they intervened in a week-long dispute there. They found out that there was to be a mass meeting at lunchtime and went to sell the paper. The dispute was sold out, but the branch kept up the paper sale.

Bradford have recently started a sale at Grattan Warehouses, where they sold 11 papers.

Liverpool also report that whereas in the past workplace sales have taken a long time to build up, the experience seems to be that since the miners’ strike it is possible to sell quite a few papers in the first week. They have sold six papers on sales at a factory in Skelmersdale and at a factory in the Wirral at the first attempt.

Gorton branch stresses the importance of sales at workplaces actually meaning something. They have been selling a paper to the convener of an engineering factory for a long time. The branch first came in contact with him through taking delegations of strikers to the factory.

Real commitment

Although he is not likely to join the party in the near future, it is important to continue selling SW to him every week to maintain a relationship with him, so that the party can find out what’s happening in the factory, and we have someone to contact when it comes to issues like the NGA, GCHQ, the miners and so on.

At one time, this convener was taking six papers, which seemed a lot more impressive, but then the branch realised the papers were being paid for by the stewards’ committee. The WRG managed to persuade them to buy Newsline instead, but the convener continued to buy SW for himself. As a sale he is much more valuable than the six nominal sales to the stewards were, because it represents a real commitment to our politics.

Pete from Gorton SWP also saw it as being very important to get reports on disputes into Socialist Worker. He mentioned a factory where the branch has been selling for two years, following intervention in a dispute there. There have been three disputes since and every time the branch has ensured a weekly report from the strike has gone into SW.

But this time there was no final report on the victory for a couple of weeks after the end of the strike as the branch was late getting the story in, and the workers asked where the story had got to! Liverpool also said that they found it very useful to be able to show workers in dispute that SW was reporting and supporting their case.

The importance of intervening in disputes using the paper can be overlooked in two ways: first of all, not intervening because the dispute seems to be a no-hoper, involving a tiny number of workers; secondly, intervening at a supportive level, but failing to sell the paper.

The Gorton branch intervened in the Stockport Messenger dispute for three months before it blew up into a major national confrontation. They went down several times a week to sell the paper and argue the politics. They didn’t get very far, and were tempted to give it up. The fact that they persisted didn’t change the course of the dispute, but it was very important as far as the comrades were concerned, because they knew the arguments.

Nearly every branch can probably think of disputes that they didn’t follow up because it didn’t seem worth it. Just think how silly you’d feel if it turned into another Warrington. Of course, the vast majority don’t, but even so, arguing on picket lines is valuable in itself. What isn’t valuable is going to picket lines and not “coming out” as an SWP member. Most people are nervous about selling the paper to total strangers, but it usually turns out to be a lot easier than expected.

The Liverpool SW organiser stressed the need to use the content of SW on picket lines, opening up the paper, drawing attention to the arguments in it, to the contrast between SW telling the truth about workers’ struggles and the lies of the bourgeois press.

Regularity and consistency are seen as key

Guide to paper sellers No 5: Bingo queues are a waste of time

Socialist Review July/August 1984
to building up sales and contacts. If people see the same seller every week, they are more likely to buy the paper, get into conversation, and come to meetings. The conversations mean that we gain knowledge about what is happening in a particular workplace, and therefore find it easier to begin talking to other workers as well, and to go on to discuss more general political ideas.

That doesn't only apply to workplaces. Gorton branch sell every week at the university before the lunchtime SWSS meeting. The sale includes unemployed comrades as well as students. They can build up a relationship with students who buy the paper because of the regularity of the sale.

It is also easier to have conversations there than at workplaces because the students don't have to rush into work.

The street sales too are more likely to yield results if they are done consistently. A railway worker joined Gorton branch after he had bought papers at a sale the branch had done consistently.

The importance of doing workplace sales from both outside and inside came out in all the branches.

The difficulty of selling in such a large workplace as Fords Halewood has been got over to some extent by selling on the gate as well as inside and by getting buyers of the paper to become sellers as well, so that now 80 papers go in a week.

The regularity and the enthusiasm needed for successful sales of SW don't come from nowhere. They require careful preparation and organisation by the branch. The sales should be discussed regularly in the context of the overall political perspective, rather than as merely a technical, organisational question.

Kate from Liverpool emphasised that better sales don't come from hectoring or moralising. Nor can they be built by just passing round a clipboard at the meeting and expecting that the sales will be regularly and successfully done. She tried to discuss the sales with each member of the branch individually, every couple of weeks. She can do this by delegating the job of collecting SW money to another comrade and using the time to go round and talk to people, about their problems and their experiences doing the sales, trying to increase involvement.

Payment slips mean that the paper sales are recorded in detail so that the SW organiser can have a record of exactly where the sales are happening.

Kate, from Bradford, says that accountability of members also means that members are responsible for getting someone else to cover their sale if they can't. It means that she isn't called up at all hours and then has to get someone to replace a comrade who can't sell. She organises 'key' sellers for the sales, who are notified if a different member is doing the sale. Delegation means that the SW organiser can spend more time talking about members' problems and planning sales.

Gorton branch organises newer members to go with more experienced members to see regular buyers of the paper, after the branch meetings. However these members are also paired with more experienced ones on the public sales.

As Socialist Worker has been quite rightly concentrating on the miners' strike since it began three months ago, the branches have been trying to try the paper to miners as the main way of carrying our arguments about the strike, the need for more picketing, the role of the officials, how to win solidarity action, and so on.

The results have been mixed; strikes don't instantly turn workers into revolutionary socialists, even strikes as large and bitter as this one. Some miners have been hostile to what we had to say about the officials, others don't think they should have to pay for the paper. Others have been drawn towards the paper because its arguments fit with their experience of the strike and tell the truth about the police and the Tories.

Arguments

They may not accept all our politics, but Socialist Worker provides them with information about what is happening in other areas of the strike, and arguments about how to win the strike.

A small minority are attracted to, and join, the SWP. Kate from Liverpool described how the branch had intervened on the picket lines, mainly at Bold Colliery, and how two miners had joined the branch.

'We have tried to cover the picket lines on most days, and we have had miners down to the branch meetings nearly every week. We tell them what the subject of the meeting is, ask them to come along and discuss what is happening on the lines. We make sure transport is available. We have had very good, very open discussions in the branch with the miners about how the strike can be won.'

Not every branch is going to recruit miners from the strike, but every branch can use the arguments in the paper to bring people closer to the party. The miners' strike is seen as central by many militants outside the NUM, and many people who want to see Thatcher defeated.

It has been, and still is, an opportunity to get our ideas across to a wider layer of people. The only way we can do that is by using Socialist Worker.'
CONFERENCES

Lots of noise—little action

NALGO and CPSA, two key white collar unions, had their national conferences recently. Both on paper moved left, but the reality was somewhat different. In the first of two reports John Carney examines the NALGO conference.

To a casual observer attending this year’s conference of NALGO at Brighton it might have looked as though the union had made a welcome move leftwards. A deeper look at the conference however reveals that this was not, unfortunately, the case.

Despite the national executive, the leading body of the union, being forced onto the defensive on a number of occasions, very little of the discussion or decisions taken will be of much use to militants wanting to mount a fightback. For this sorry state of affairs the “broad lefts”, especially those of the NEC, must bear a heavy responsibility.

There was evidence of a growing confidence and preparedness to fight present amongst a significant minority of the conference. Indeed, while the delegates were assembled in Brighton NALGO members in Tower Hamlets were starting to take all-out strike action and nursery nurses were taking action in Islington and Bolton. The role the Broad Left seems to set themselves was restricted to providing left cover for an embattled NEC.

Ballot

During the conference itself the NEC often found itself in a beleaguered position, having to rely on leading left wing NEC members such as Ivan Beavis and Graham Burgess to save the day. Two examples most clearly illustrate this.

The first came during the debate on the defence of the Metropolitan Counties. An amendment calling for members to be instructed without prior recourse to a secret ballot not to co-operate with those authorities implementing the abolition proposals was opposed by the NEC, but had significant support among many delegates. The NEC felt that they might be overreached should a secret ballot be used to speak against the amendment. And to add insult to injury Beavis spoke, especially on the question of secret ballots, in terms not too dissimilar to those used recently by right wingers in the NUM. Victory was secured by the NEC after a close card vote.

A motion tabled by black activists in NALGO, forcing the NEC to take up seriously the question of racism among employers and in NALGO, was opposed by the NEC in favour of recommendations contained in its own rather thin white paper. Again it was the intervention of left NEC member Graham Burgess that helped secure a victory for the NEC on a card vote.

More damaging still was the failure of the broad lefts on the NEC to condemn the NEC’s disgraceful motion on YTS. This motion called for people on such schemes to be paid £32.49 — the optimum amount before income tax and national insurance stoppages became incurred. The rationale given was that last year’s position — people on YTS to be paid the rate for the job — had not been successfully implemented.

This is hardly surprising given the NEC’s total failure to give any effective lead. On pay, only SWP members pointed out that this year provided NALGO with its best opportunity to claw back lost ground by opening up a second front against the Tories.

On fighting privatisation it was again only SWP members who pointed out the damage done to the fight against privatisation by NALGO members crossing NUM picket lines at Barking Hospital.

Further evidence of a shift leftwards among some delegates and one of the most doubts of the conference was the motion of censure passed on the newly-appointed General Secretary, John Daly. This was for his betrayal of the NGA during the Stockport Messenger dispute. As one of NALGO’s representatives on the TUC General Council he went against NALGO official policy when he failed to give full support to the NGA.

Not only was the motion of censure pleasing in itself, but the extremely lame attempt that Daly made to defend himself actually persuaded many delegates who might otherwise have wanted to support him to change their stands.

The only occasion that a left wing NEC member came down from the platform to address the conference was during the miners’ debate. This was to speak on an amendment donating £52,000 to the miners (equivalent to approximately 3p per member). Fortunately, although the amendment was lost, it later turned out that this donation resulted in a larger donation being made.

This was because many branches had brought along individual donations to give to the collection at conference knowing that the NEC had promised to match it. This raised something like £64,000 in total.

There was a sizeable number of delegates at the conference, especially from the power group, who were mandated not to vote for any motion that supported the miners. Threats were made of large membership resignations if any further money was donated to the miners. These were not idle threats either as an estimated 2,500 members have resigned from NALGO in protest at a previous donation of £10,000.

This undoubtedly underlay the attempt by the NEC and many in the broad left, to get the debate over as quickly as possible. It was a tragedy that the debate was shortened, because it would have provided an excellent opportunity to discuss the dispute itself, and how the present miners’ dispute can provide trade unionists with an excellent opportunity to more common cause with the miners against the Tories, by launching a fight over pay etc.

Needless to say, no mention was made of NALGO members crossing NUM picket lines or how it is vitally important to raise money at work through collections and levies etc. Instead a typically vague motion of support was passed which did not tackle in any way how NALGO members can help the miners win.

The debate over Liverpool City Council’s fightback was treated in virtually identical fashion, with very little discussion on how Liverpool can win. Again the motion put forward by the Broad Left and passed expressed little more than approval for the stand taken.

The conference delegates by and large reflect the union activists who operate at remote branch executive level, often with considerable facility time rather than the more accountable shop stewards. Indeed, one of the most striking features of the conference delegates is how little they reflect the membership in terms of age, sex, colour or take-home pay, tending to be a lot older and overwhelmingly male.

Reformists

This also applies to the NEC who are elected by a ballot of the membership as a whole. Real power rests not with the conference itself but with the NEC who are empowered to carry out its decisions. This is something the Broad Left understands very well. It was very clear from the conference that they saw the advancement of the union largely in terms of winning places on the NEC, the classic perspective of all reformists.

Although the NEC is not elected by the conference it can nevertheless be used as a platform to build a reputation for itself. Therefore, unpopular motions like how to stop NALGO members crossing NUM or Barking Hospital picket lines tend to get dropped and replaced by vague left rhetoric.

There was little understanding of the need for workplace organisation as the best defence of workers’ interests displayed at the conference. Nevertheless the SWP, unhampered by electoral considerations, were able to mount the most prominent intervention of any section of the left at conference.

The SWP was the only political organisation whose members made the principled point of always identifying themselves as such during their contributions, which was not an easy thing to do in a sizeable section...
Playing on Graham's ground

Here John McGloughlin looks at the second conference; that of the CPSA.

1984 is proving an eventful year for civil service trade unions. The GCHQ union ban prompted the most widespread industrial action for years. As Graham's attempted 'no disruption' clause fuelled rock and file anger with his 'new realism' to such an extent that over a third of all the resolutions to CPSA conference were censures of him and the right-wing executive. The annual elections saw the Broad Left swept back into office with a heavy majority on the executive.

The forces have now raised their pay offer to well beyond 3 percent but even so it seems likely that the current round of workplace meetings will reject the deal. Action over pay is on the cards for the first time since 1981. Ironically it is Graham who is calling the shots over pay. It was his strategy that the predominantly left wing conference voted to follow, in pursuit of a comparability claim of over 7 percent. There is still no firm plan of action to win the claim.

Graham hopes that a rejection vote will itself be enough to win a small increase in the offer which he could then claim as a victory without having to actually lead any struggle. If the government will not budge, then token action along the same lines as the teachers seems likely, despite the fact that this sort of strategy proved a complete disaster in 1981.

Open contempt

Despite their huge majority, the Broad Left executive have done nothing to argue for the sort of action that could win on pay. This total disarray will come as no surprise to those who saw them in action at the conference.

At the conference Graham displayed an open contempt for the Broad Left. He virtually challenged them to debate and pass a motion of no confidence in him.

With the challenge came the threat that if it was carried he would immediately resign and stand for re-election. He claimed that in these circumstances he would win overwhelmingly and confirm his self-proclaimed position as the representative of the ordinary member and expose the Broad Left lack of support among the membership.

The threat proved enough to split the Broad Left. The Communist Party and the non-aligned Labour left left for the bluff and argued against both moving the no-confidence motion and against voting for it if it was moved.

Jonathan Baume, leading non-aligned Labour left, even achieved the remarkable feat of moving to the right of Graham over pay. He argued that all talk of any action, from all-out strikes to Graham's limited industrial action in pursuit of arbitration, was dangerous dreaming.

The result of the left, led by the supporters of Militant argued correctly that the aftermath of GCHQ was just the right moment to challenge Graham. Even so, Graham's staunch about their lack of base gets a nerve with them too. He feels confident in having himself on the passivity of the mass of the membership.

Most of the time most of the members do not want to fight. The problem for the Broad Left is that their electoralism forces them to compete on the same ground as Graham and not to do anything that might upset the most backward of the membership. They have no strategy for leading the mass of the membership into more militant solutions.

That explains their timidity over the pay claim. They are nervous about calling for the sort of action that they are not absolutely confident they can pull off. It also explains why, at the executive meeting that kicked Graham off the TUC General Council, they were again split, this time over a donation to the miners. Ex-president Kevin Roddy, a prominent Militant supporter, proposed a £10,000 donation to add to the £25,000 already given. He was voted down by the solid wing of the Broad Left, who feared a wave of resignations from the union.

While they are quite prepared to vote sums from the union coffers to the miners, the Militant supporters are, however, rather more reluctant to take the argument into the offices. They have done little or nothing to organise weekly leaves, for example, and the best that the whole executive could manage over the days of action in support of the miners was a weak circular offering official support to any workplace that decided to strike. There was not one word to encourage strike action.

The dilemma of the Broad Left is summed up in the problem they have with the strike by 240 DHSS computer operators at Newcastle Central Office. DHSS is one of the most militant sections and a stronghold of the left in the union.

Newcastle Central, with over 5,500 CPSA members has been dominated by Militant supporters for many years. The strike is over shift pattern changes and consequent pay cuts. The issue concerns every civil servant faced with the introduction of new technology in the future.

The strike could easily be won. The Newcastle computer deals with pensions and DHSS pay, and management are willing to ride out a strike there alone. The key to winning is spreading the strike to the other computers at Reading and Livingston. If they stop, all computer-printed Giro stops. In the climate of the miners' strike the Tories can hardly resist the prospect.

From the start the local union leadership, the DHSS section leadership and the union national executive have all argued for keeping the strike confined to Newcastle. Reading and Livingston have been encouraged to sign separate deals on shift pattern changes and that can only make it harder to win solidarity action.

In local offices the DHSS are asking for a £1 per week levy from staff who are also expected to operate emergency procedures by doing manually the work that is normally done by the computers.

At the conference SWP members found themselves virtually alone in arguing for spreading the strike action and for blacking the emergency procedures. Six weeks into the strike many of the strikers can see the need to escalate the action, but the local leadership are making it very difficult. They have failed to learn the basic lesson of the miners' strike: it is better to start from the minority who are prepared to fight and to generalise from there.

Escalation

Their failure is the result of their whole strategy of building the union from the top down. Lacking a base of militants tested in local struggles and capable of leading their fellow workers with them, the Broad Left executive fears calling for escalation that they are not sure they can deliver.

Whatever they wait to do they find that their position forces them to relating the passive majority of the membership rather than the minority that is prepared to fight. It was just such a logic that led them to leave the strikers in Oxford and Birmingham isolated when they were lost in power.

That dilemma can only be overcome with a different sort of politics and an organisation based on building from the base.

The task of building such an organisation is difficult. It means that every meeting addressed by Newcastle strikers needs to understand that it is not just a question of supporting the levy but also of winning support for action.

And it means that discussion of the pay offer must focus not just on rejection but also on the sort of action needed to win. It means, too, workplace collections in every office for the miners in order to drive home the need for organisation and solidarity.
The arbitration trap

The decision of the teachers' leaders to go to arbitration is a severe blow for teachers argues Shaun Doherty as he looks at the campaign.

A lot of huffing and puffing from both sides the teachers' salary claim has been referred to arbitration and the industrial action has been called off. It is a sad reflection of the state of the teachers' unions that they are able to claim this development as a victory. It was not, however, the objective at the start of negotiations.

Since April 1975 teachers' salaries have declined by 31 percent and well documented evidence was brought forward to illustrate this decline. But there was never any intention to base a campaign of action around such a substantial figure and it was not long before the unions arrived at the figure of 12½ percent in response to the employers' decision to open the salary guide at 0 percent. If 12½ percent had been divided on a flat-rate basis it would have given all teachers an increase of £20 a week, clearly a unifying figure for a campaign of industrial action.

It was, however, only when the employers, dictated to by the government, refused arbitration that the action began. The teachers' unions focussed the campaign on this intransigence on the part of the employers and on the blatant interference of the government — not on the demand for the realisation of the full claim.

Trap

Their motives for this approach reflect the dilemma of all trade union bureaucracies: they have to respond to the feelings of their members by giving the impression of putting up a fight without leading the kind of effective action necessary to win. They have been able to claim a victory because there is no doubt that the industrial action, the first concerted action of its kind for 15 years, has been responsible for the employers' partial retreat.

But arbitration is not a victory. It is a trap from which the unions will find it hard to escape. From the outset the procedure is loaded against the teachers and is unlikely to produce a figure much higher than the 4½ percent offer. Even if it does come up with something more substantial its findings are not binding on the government, even though they are binding on the unions.

The Tories could simply refuse to pay up and Keith Joseph has already tried to preempt the outcome by insisting that no more money will be forthcoming from the government. The most likely outcome is that the local authorities will be left to find the money from elsewhere, most probably from cuts in other public expenditure, and the government will use the bludgeon of rate-capping to prevent any employer from breaching the cash limits.

Given the failure of the teachers' unions to engage in effective action against locally implemented cuts, it is likely that the Tories will be successful in using this alternative weapon.

If this happens it will be too late for the unions to retrieve the situation. Once action has been called off it cannot be turned back on like tap water. Yet the leadership of the biggest teachers' union has not been able to get away with this strategy for defeat for two reasons: the inability of the opposition inside the union to organise independently of the national executive and the relatively adverse way that the national officers, in particular the acting general secretary, Doug McAvoy, have managed to take the vast majority of the membership along with them.

In the early 1970s the left inside the NUT, organised inside the Rank and File group, were able to initiate sustained unofficial action that forced the executive to back up its salaries campaigns. In 1984 the left is seriously divided, with the Socialist Teachers Alliance performing the function of a traditional Broad Left grouping.

Its calls for selective strikes of an extended nature have met with the executive and they lacked both the political will and organisation on the ground to call them independently. In fact they have frequently argued against any unofficial action, hiding behind the union rules.

SWP members argued for the only strategy that might have won the dispute — an all-out national strike, but this call only found an echo in the most militant schools and for any of them to attempt to go it alone would clearly have been suicidal.

It is not surprising that teachers are lacking in the confidence to act independently. They have been prevented from taking part in any real fight on salaries for years and many have sought the individual solution of promotion to improve wages. Independent rank and file action cannot be built overnight after years of the demoralising effects of the downturn in industrial struggle and in these circumstances it is much easier for the executive to keep the members in line.

The McAvoy factor should not be underestimated. He managed to draw in the rival NAS/UWT behind the arbitration strategy in order to prevent it from recruiting members from the NUT by parading its traditional phoney militancy. He also managed to sound like a trade unionist on occasions. On the Newnash programme he argued that if the government could afford to send police to the miners' picket lines then it could afford to pay the teachers. Not the kind of arguments usually deployed by teachers' leaders.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude the balance sheet without itemising some important credits. Some aspects of the industrial action, particularly the refusal to cover, have been very popular in schools and the solidarity demonstrated under austerity has been consistently tightened. Many schools have been able to extend the official one-day no-cover sanction into an absolute refusal to cover. It is important that this policy is retained after the salary campaign has been concluded.

Goodwill

Refusal to attend meetings after school hours had led to many meetings being timetabled as part of the normal school day, another practice that may be able to be sustained more permanently and which draws attention to the considerable amount of their own time that teachers have traditionally been expected to donate to their employers. Even the withdrawal of lunchtime supervision, which has not been universally popular with either teachers or school students, has drawn attention to the amount of goodwill from teachers that is necessary for schools to operate.

For revolutionaries, perhaps the most important development is the opportunity our struggle has given us to raise wider political issues and in particular to build effective solidarity action with the miners. A significant number of schools are taking weekly collections for their strike and many of our meetings have been addressed by striking miners. Teachers have been made to feel a part of a struggle that extends beyond their own isolated sectional interest.

It would be a mistake to conclude this assessment without attention to the fact that, for all its limitations, the dispute has involved thousands of teachers in strike action and in the operation of sanctions in their schools. If this involvement has helped to shift teachers away from the middle class notion of professionalism that has hampered trade union organisation in schools for decades and if it increases their awareness that they are workers like everyone else, it will not have been completely in vain.
You can’t win ’em all...

The new mood amongst workers is both encouraging and uneven. British Leyland provides an excellent example of this. Here we look at the experience of two Leyland plants. In the first article Dave Sherry looks at Bathgate where the workforce voted to fight redundancies but quickly backed down.

Even before the coal strike blew up back in March, we were witnessing a shift in the mood of organised workers. The widespread stoppages throughout the engineering industry on the GCHQ day of action were clear evidence of this.

In the months since then the miners’ strike has helped nurture and sustain this new mood — providing other groups of workers with the inspiration and confidence to take on their own bosses.

Yet to conclude from this — as some on the left have done — that the downturn has ended, or that workers in general are moving onto the offensive, would be wildly over-optimistic.

First of all this change of mood is by no means general, for although it encompasses an increased number of workers, it remains a very small minority of the whole class. Secondly, it is a very fragile development — one that would evaporate overnight if the miners were beaten. Thirdly it is a development that is constrained by the weakness of shopfloor and section organisation, and the reliance on trade union officials that has developed in the last ten years.

The recent example of the short-lived and unsuccessful factory occupation at British Leyland’s truck plant in Bathgate serves to illustrate this point.

Bathgate once employed over 5,000 workers, but in the last five years the workforce have accepted wave upon wave of redundancies. The only attempt at resistance in that period — a week-long sit-in against sackings in 1982 — collapsed when the shop stewards led the workforce out of the factory under the threat of a court injunction from British Leyland management.

Of course that defeat was the partial responsibility of the AUEW officials and Labour MPs who counselled against breaking the law — but it also reflected a deep-seated lack of confidence among the rank and file.

That lack of confidence persists in Bathgate’s sister plant in Glasgow, where earlier this year the workforce voted to accept compulsory redundancies, and overturned a shop stewards’ recommendation to oppose them.

It came as no surprise when in May of this year, the Cabinet finally announced that with the collapse of the commercial truck market, Bathgate was no longer viable. Part of the operation would be privatised and the remainder transferred to the plants in Lancashire. As a result all 1,800 jobs would go by 1986.

What did surprise many people was the response of the Bathgate workforce. At a mass meeting at the end of May they overwhelmingly backed the shop stewards’ recommendation to lock out the management, seize the plant and machinery and occupy against closure.

BL management never expected such a move, and were clearly caught off balance by the spirit of resistance and the decision to occupy. All the evidence shows that they confidently expected the workforce to take the redundancy money and go quietly. So why did a workforce that seemed to be down and out respond as it did?

There are three main reasons why the sweep was such a move, and were clearly caught off balance by the spirit of resistance and the decision to occupy. All the evidence shows that they confidently expected the workforce to take the redundancy money and go quietly. So why did a workforce that seemed to be down and out respond as it did?

First of all, the feeling of isolation was being broken down.

Thirdly the workforce had muscle of their own. The Bathgate plant held the vital engine components for BL’s new range of trucks, and with this source of supply cut off, the rest of the truck division was now vulnerable to the Bathgate occupation.

Sadly the opportunity to build on this new-found confidence was missed because the shop stewards and the minority who took part in the occupation were unable to involve the passive majority in spreading the dispute.

During the occupation Socialist Worker argued:

‘The leaders of the STUC are out to capitalise on the widespread public sympathy that the occupation enjoys throughout Scotland. Yet they are in danger of losing the fight up a blind alley. They plan to mount yet another “Ravenscraig style campaign” aimed at
You can win some

The other Leyland experience comes from Longbridge. John Rees reports.

There has been a sixfold increase in the number of disputes at BL's Longbridge plant in the first quarter of this year, compared with the same period in 1983. The management's response is clear:

'We have asserted the right of management to manage. While we are always prepared to discuss we will never again say “yes we!” Those days are gone forever.'

There is no doubt that the management at Longbridge are serious and belligerent in their determination to hang on to the fruits of the long march and a series of bloody battles since the early 70s. Sticking tight back in the days of ‘worker participation’ the strategy was one of first incorporating workers' representatives, at all levels, into joint committees with management.

Secondly the strategy depended on simultaneously divorcing those individuals from the people they were supposed to represent and using them as a force to police disputes.

As incorporation gathered momentum in the mid-seventies a whole layer of the works committee (the convenor and senior stewards — the plant leadership) and the ordinary stewards became less and less the people who articulated workers' grievances to management and more and more the people who presented management's views to workers.

Michael Edwards' particular genius was that he realised when this phase had gone far enough — when it had weakened union organisation so much that it was possible to move directly to the offensive. Edwards looked over Derek Robinson's shoulder and in effect said: 'There is no one standing behind you anymore' and pushed him unceremoniously out of the plant.

The period of incorporation of which Robinson had been an enthusiastic supporter, had laid the basis for the period of offensive of which Robinson's sacking has become a totem. Edwards was organising the downturn just as we gave it a name.

The background to the current wave of disputes at Longbridge is the long climb out of that defeat and the defeat over the Rest Allowance (ten-bettings' strike). The latter was as damaging as the Robinson affair since the sell-out was not organised by Duffy and Moss Evans but by the Works Committee at the plant.

Deserted by both local and national leaderships, the workforce cut in half and the intensity of the work rocketing under Edwards' 'slaves charter' the Longbridge workforce would not be in a mood for a major fight for a long time. They have experienced what the miners would face if they were beaten.

Under these pressures there is only one way shop stewards' organisation could have become an alternative leadership — it revolutionary politics and organisation had commanded a much larger membership than it did. The politics of not relying on either the officials or the works committee, of fighting against class collaboration either at national level with a Labour Government or locally with 'participation', of being against sectional organisation and of insisting on a high profile for revolutionary politics etc. That tradition, even if we had recognised the downturn earlier, was not strong enough and a forced retreat was unavoidable.

The denationalisation and defeats inevitably lead to a divorce between stewards and ordinary workers. A plant joke calls the stewards 'the pancake men' because they so often get turned over at mass meetings. It is not that the stewards aren't formally the left of their members — they often are. It is that after being turned over so regularly, and without a political analysis to explain it, the effect on the stewards is that they become conservative.

And the one time that things do move they lag behind. Hence the Joint Shop Stewards Committee on the GCHQ day of action only...
recommended an hour's strike — yet on the day huge sections of the plant voted to take the whole afternoon off.

The cost of the Edwards offensive was high. Everyone you talk to in Longbridge talks about the pressure, especially on the tracks. These guys really earn their money, one Longbridge worker told me...

A nice thing that everyone agrees on. Alan Beddoes, NUPE officer: 'Everyone is fed up with the pressure.'

A steward who left his job on the track: 'My pay is down but I am a happier man — those guys deserve every penny they earn and more. You wouldn't believe the stick they have to put up with.'

It's rumoured that half the new labour taken on to produce the new Honda-Rover had left within a week.

Jack Adams, the CP convenor of Longbridge is right when he says: 'We've been through a period when everything has been thrown at us — it's been pretty well impossible...but you can't motivate people with impositions and force forever...they will not accept this...and the company are now reappraising the results of those years.'

One piece of graffiti in the plant sums up the pressure. It reads:

'This Longbridge or Long Live Kishi?'

This phrase has vented itself in all sorts of short- and mostly successful (so far) two years. Those small successes have increased confidence because the commercial success of the Metro and the Maestro has fuelled an increased level of confidence — a release for the pressure.

The key dispute was a few weeks back. An attempt to increase the line speed with some new labour was met with a 700- strong strike — the management caved in within a few days. Not only was the strike popular and very well supported but also picketing was organised — unusual at Longbridge.

The shop floor is picking up after a run of defeats

The deal was supposed to be for 100 new workers although the final total was nearer 500. In the local press this was put down to good sales but it is also a product of the strike which hit the management plans for increased productivity.

The dispute that followed was less successful although the fact that the strike took place at all was a sign of increased confidence. A black forklift truck driver hit a foreman who called him a 'black bastard'. The worker was sacked and the transport drivers walked out in support — demanding reinstatement.

The management took a hard line. They recognised two things. 1) that the transport drivers are a strong well organised section who can bring Longbridge and eventually Cowley to a standstill, and 2) this wasn't just a victimisation dispute in the same mould as half a dozen disputes over the past 18 months. Especially following the manning dispute, this was a much more combative strike over an issue which intertwined resistance to racism with a challenge to management's right to hire and fire as they liked.

Under such circumstances the action needed the active support of other Longbridge workers and a strategy designed to spread the dispute to other BL plants. The leadership of the strike either from the works committee or the transport stewards, never sought to overcome the passivity of the strikers and thereby the isolation of the section — which no matter how strong, did not feel powerful enough to take on a determined management in isolation.

The experience of Longbridge is in many ways a microcosm of events in the class as a whole. The history of problems faced include the incorporation followed by the offensive against the shop floor, the failure of the predominantly reformist policy of the majority of the stewards to provide an alternative leadership, the painstakingly slow resurgence of confidence through a series of small victories. The difficulty which, even within the new mood, the old traditions of sectionalism and reliance on the lower levels of the bureaucracy, cause millions who are trying to capitalise on the outbreaks of struggle, are recurring elements in the disputes.

The new mood born out of bitterness against the years of tightening labour discipline vented through small victories gives revolutionaries a few inches more elbow room. The price of making use of those few inches is absolute clarity in our criticisms of shop floor reformism plus an ability to connect general revolutionary politics with a practical day-to-day strategy which makes sense to the best people involved in the struggle.

It is a strategy in which general politics must be argued out around the day-to-day tasks of levy sheets, resolutions and petitions to the stewards' committee, strikes, constant arguments and organisation on the sections and paper sales which seek to draw the best individuals to the party branch.
You can’t beat the bank

As US interest rates rise Latin America threatens to default on its international debt, and Western banks get the jitters at the prospect of a financial collapse to rival that of the 30s. Pete Green explains what lies behind the crisis.

The world banking system is very unlikely to collapse over the next few months - despite some extravagant talk, and a lot of gambling in banking circles in recent weeks. But the international debt crisis has reached another critical stage.

Demands for payment by Western banks, or by their financial policemen, the International Monetary Fund (the IMF), are crippling the economies of debtor countries throughout the Third World. After two years of uncertainty, negative growth, wage cuts and mass unemployment, starvation and misery, these countries are still no nearer to paying off their debts. These now total over $800 billion (half owed to the banks).

In the last six months the pressures of the crisis have led behind a military coup in Nigeria, riots against food price increases in Morocco and Tunisia, and political turmoil in the Philippines. But it is in Latin America, with a total debt of $550 billion (thousand million) dollars that political tension and the specter of a general default (failure or refusal to pay up) have the bankers sweating.

Cuts in wages

The banks have long since given up expecting Brazil (total debt $93 billion), Mexico ($89 billion), or Argentina ($43 billion) to pay what they owe on time, if at all. But since the crisis exploded in their faces in August 1982, when Mexico declared itself bankrupt and had to be bailed out with new loans of $11 billion, the banks have insisted on two conditions for any deal:

Firstly they have demanded that the interest on the debt be paid. If that happens they can continue to rake in large profits even if the loan itself (the principal) has to be extended indefinitely. Secondly, they have in some cases been willing to lend more money, but only on condition that the governments concerned submit to the dictates of the IMF and push through the cuts in wages, public spending and any other measures deemed necessary.

Now those demands are facing their most serious challenge yet from a number of Latin American countries. There are two reasons for this.

One is that interest rates have been rising again in the United States, and in world financial markets generally. Since January the main interest rate in the US has risen by three points. Sustained across the year that increase could cost Brazil alone another $600 million dollars in interest payments.

The increases have provoked screams of pain from the countries concerned. In an unprecedented display of unity, the Presidents of Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Colombia issued a statement of protest on the 21 May and called for a debtor’s summit to be held in June. Demands for special measures to cut back on the interest-rate burden have proliferated. There is much talk of a debtors’ cartel, an OPEC-style agreement by the countries concerned to demand better terms from the banks, wielding the threat of a continent-wide default or unilateral refusal to pay.

Of more immediate concern to the bankers, however, is the growing resistance to the demands of the IMF. That resistance has come not from the local ruling class or the politicians, so much as from below in mass upheavals which time and again have forced even the most authoritarian regimes to retreat.

In the tiny Caribbean country, the Dominican Republic, debts of around 12 billion dollars and falling exports of sugar on which the whole economy depends, forced the Government to turn to the IMF to exchange for a new loan it agreed to more than double the price of basic foods and medicines. In April that led to three days of rioting, leaving at least 80 people dead on the streets. In May, the Government announced its rejection of the IMF’s proposals and broke off negotiations.

Bolivia has had a “left wing” civilian government under Hernán Siles since the last military dictatorship collapsed in 1982 faced with bankruptcy and a massive strike wave. An economy dependent upon exports of tin, with a low price on world markets, Bolivia has been called the fastest “developing” country in Latin America. Income per head had fallen by a quarter since 1980 before the latest series of IMF demands as a condition of new ‘assistance’. Attempts by Siles to push through the IMF’s proposals (including tripling the price of tin and basic foodstuffs) in three months caused a general strike which was only ended.

It is workers like this Bolivian miner who have put up the resistance to the IMF and frightened the world’s bankers.

Socialist Review July/August 1984
paralysed the country’s financial system.

On the 30 May Siles finally reached an agreement with the COB (Bolivian Confederation of Labour) whose power had been shown in a couple of three-day general strikes which had brought the whole country to a halt. The IMF plan was abandoned and the Government announced a 'partial' suspension of all payments (principal and interest) on its foreign debt. This plus talk of another military takeover was enough to persuade the union leaders to back down.

Bolivia’s actual debt of $4.2 billion only $1 billion of which is owed to the banks, is considered by the standards of Brazil, and would not in itself give any banker a sleepless night. But the symbolism of Bolivia’s openness to negotiation (which is a long way from being a final decision) is too much for the Credit Suisse, which has come to realize that, unlike the Mexican peso crisis, the instability of the Bolivian peso is a consequence of the economic policies of the government, and that it can be controlled.

The IMF plans to lend Bolivia $550 million, which is to be paid over a period of six months, with no collateral. The IMF claims that the country has the money to pay its debts in full. However, it has not been able to convince the non-Bolivian banks that this is the case.

The run on bank

Alfonsin on the other hand cannot, at the moment, afford to give in to the IMF’s demands. The interest payments due to the IMF on 30 June will not be paid. That will mean default, and some of the largest American banks and investors are awake to the risk that they may be caught with a写下 26.5 billion dollars in loans to energy companies and property developers which would be halved in value. Continental Illinois, one of the largest banks, has agreed to lend Bolivia $265 million, which is a significant amount compared to the $4.2 billion debt.

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The run on Continental Illinois was sparked off by a journalist’s casual rumour. It took place in the early stages of the debt crisis, and it caused a run on Bankers Trust, which is a large American bank. The run on Continental Illinois was sparked off by a journalist’s casual rumour.
The victims of the debt crisis

Once the rumours spread that money began to flow out at the rate of $2 billion a day. An announcement that all was well and that other American banks had stepped in to help merely accelerated the pace of withdrawals.

Only the intervention of the American state, in the form of the Federal Reserve Bank (the equivalent of the Bank of England), with a $7½ billion rescue package and a guarantee to all depositors, prevented what would have been the biggest banking disaster since the early 1930s — perhaps the biggest of all time. As it was, bank shares plummeted on the stock exchange and rumours spread about the health of Manufacturers' Hanover (the fourth largest bank in the USA). Calm was restored with the declaration by a spokesman for the Fed that they were willing to:

'tend, lend boldly and keep on lending'.

The example of the Continental Illinois rescue shows once again that size is a guarantee of security in the banking world.

and that the American state will bail out any major bank rather than risk an international banking collapse.

It is precisely because of their confidence in the backing of the American government that the large American banks were willing to make such risky but highly profitable loans in the first place. What worries most of them now is less the prospect of a withdrawal of deposits than the disappearance of their major source of profit in recent years. Citicorp, the largest of them all, gets around two thirds of its profits from overseas lending, and a fifth from Brazil alone.

A refusal to pay by most of the major debtors could still wipe out those profits and damage banks such as Chase Manhattan irreparably. For the moment that is unlikely to happen. The debtors' summit in Columbia on the 21-23 June was long on rhetoric and demands, but short on substance. Bolivia and Ecuador argued for limiting debt payments in any year to no more than a quarter of export earnings, but that was firmly rejected by Mexico and Brazil.

Trade surplus

The banks have so far been able to play off the debtors against each other. Mexico was rewarded with a 1½% cut in interest payments on its latest loan — having fulfilled its IMF demands, avoided political upheaval and run a large trade surplus last year. The prospects for the Brazilian economy are far worse. But the Brazilian generals, still basking in the glory of power and riding out successive waves of protest, are not likely to do anything which will upset their backers, the US government.

The consequences of default are uncertain. In the 1970s most of Latin America did default and got away with it. But the countries concerned were then much less integrated into the world economy and the consequences for debtors and bankers alike were much less serious. Today a default could mean that a country would be cut off from all types of loan subject to trade blockades and the seizure of any overseas assets, and forced back into barter and a nationalist policy of go-it-alone economies.

The Economist has argued that the consequences of default would be far worse than the austerity programmes prescribed by the IMF. But in countries facing a decade or more of suffering to pay off western bankers the mass of the population may find either prospect intolerable. The alternatives are not simply those of compliance with the IMF or the nationalism of the bourgeois opposition throughout much of Latin America.

The conflict between western capital and the Argentinean ruling class over their respective shares of the surplus produced by Argentinean workers is not for us the decisive issue. What Argentinean workers need to do is to reject the demands of both sets of exploiters.

The pressures will persist. The trade surpluses on which Mexico and Brazil depend to obtain the precious foreign currency needed to avoid bankruptcy have increased over the last year. That’s mainly due to the recovery in the American economy.

Yet that recovery is dependent upon the massive arms spending of the Reagan government and the soaring budget deficit which has forced it to suck in borrowed money from around the world. That money can only be obtained by the American government paying higher interest rates. These rates impose an increased burden on anyone borrowing money on world financial markets, including the Latin American countries. The situation is highly contradictory and very unstable.

The perspective remains one of protracted agony, not a dramatic collapse of the system. As world capitalism continues to stumble from deep slump to weak recovery and then (sometime in the next two or three years) back again into slump, that agony will be especially acute in the debtor countries of Latin America.
Death of a compromiser

When the Pope, a fascist and Eric Heffer all sing the praises of a dead communist something must be wrong. Ian Birchall looks at the life of Enrico Berlinguer.

Socialist Review is not in the habit of mourning the passing of Stalinist bureaucrats, and Enrico Berlinguer, the recently departed Secretary General of the Italian Communist Party, is no exception.

Berlinguer, after all, had friends enough without us. He has been described as a ‘great man, a good socialist’ by Eric Heffer, and as ‘a good Communist’ by the Economist. Among the million and a half people who attended his funeral was the Chinese Prime Minister, and tributes came from Mario Soares, Willy Brandt, the Vatican and Almérico, head of the fascist MSI. With活動s like that, he must have been somebody’s enemy.

But despite the warmth of a group of priests and nuns dedicated to the ‘new Saint Francis’, Enrico Berlinguer was no feeble-minded preacher; he was a tough, unscrupulous bureaucrat who had a major influence on the recent history of the Italian Communist Party, now virtually the only CP in Western Europe not showing obvious symptoms of terminal decline.

Born in 1922, Berlinguer became a Communist at the age of 21, towards the end of the Mussolini period. As one of his rivals in the petty leadership, Giancarlo Pajetta put it: ‘As a very young man Berlinguer joined the party...leadership.’ For Berlinguer was immediately groomed for stardom. As soon as the war ended, he became Secretary General of the Communist Youth, and in 1948 entered the party leadership.

1948 was a tough year for Italian Communists. In the general election held in March the Communist-Socialist joint list appeared to have a good hope of winning. The US State Department announced that no Italian who had voted Communist would be allowed to emigrate to America, and the Vatican cut off all escape routes by announcing that CP voters would be denied absolution. British and American warships anchored off Italian ports during the campaign.

The CP lost the election, but it faced up to its opponents by remaining resolutely Stalinist. No breath of criticism of Stalin or of Stalinism was permitted. In 1951 two CP deputies were expelled from the party for declaring that Communists had an overriding duty to defend the national territory against aggression from any source (a position that Berlinguer himself, who supported Italy’s continuing membership of NATO, might well have put forward by the seventies).

And in 1956, despite some internal opposition, the CP line was that the Russians had been right to invade Hungary to prevent ‘the restoration of a new fascist regime’. Despite his much vaunted honesty and integrity, there is no indication that Berlinguer had any reservations about these positions.

But by the 1960s the Italian CP was entering into a deep crisis. Desolation, the end of the first Cold War, the split between Russia and China and the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia all cast the traditional certainties into question. The CP’s former allies in the Socialist Party had done a deal with the ruling Christian Democrats, leaving the CP more isolated than ever, despite its massive electoral support.

Traditions

More and more it became clear that the party was to improve its parliamentary situation, it would have to break, at least in part, with its Stalinist traditions. The problem was exactly how to do this, and several different currents emerged.

It was in this context that Berlinguer became deputy to the ailing leader Luigi Longo in 1969, and in 1972 assumed the position of Secretary General. In a party which was increasingly bitterly divided, Berlinguer led from the centre. On the one hand was a right wing which wanted to make the party more and more openly reformist (some even wanted to liquidate the CP altogether and join up with the Socialists); on the other hand was a ‘left’ current which clung to the old dogmas and friendship with Mother Russia. Berlinguer won his popularity—and his power—by shying skilfully between the two.

A year later came Berlinguer’s main contribution to political strategy. He was deeply impressed by the catastrophic defeat of the Chilean working class in the coup of September 1973. While some people drew the lesson that the Chilean workers should have moved forward faster and more resolutely, Berlinguer came to exactly the opposite conclusion. From the inadequacy of the parliamentary road, he deduced not the necessity for armed insurrection, but the need to cut back on one’s aims.

‘It’s not by obtaining 51 percent of the votes that the left wing parties can be sure of governing and achieving their work of renewal because a vertical split down the middle of our country would not be in the interest of the country and would ruin the experiment of renewing our society. That is what happened in Chile.’

This was the theory of the ‘Historic Compromise’. The Communists not only could not, but should not, govern on their own, or in alliance with the Socialists only. On the contrary, they should seek to rule in coalition with the Christian Democrats, the corrupt bourgeois clique who have dominated every Italian government since the Second World War, and who bear the main responsibility for Italy’s political and economic crisis.

The theory is as yet. In essence it is a return of the Popular Front of the Thirties—with this difference: the Popular Front at least had the minimal plausibility of being offered as an alternative to fascism. The Historic Compromise wasn’t an alternative to anything—for the only alternative was precisely those Christian Democrats that Berlinguer was so anxious to ally with.

The practicality was equally absurd. After the 1976 elections, the Christian Democrats accepted the CP’s support, but offered them no places in government. The CP loyally delivered their part of the bargain—a restraining hand on working class militancy. Precisely because they were so loyal, the Christian Democrats used their assistance to tide themselves over a bad patch, and then calmly ditched their erstwhile allies. This was not even a ‘sell-out’—the CP gave its services free of charge.

Incidentally, Berlinguer had his own little domino effect ‘historic compromise’—his wife is a devout Catholic, and he used to take her to church every Sunday, though he didn’t stay for mass. If a self-professed Marxist can’t convince the person he or she lives with, who can they convince?

But Berlinguer’s defence of a reactionary Christian Democratic government was not merely tactical, he erected it into a theory. In January 1977 Berlinguer gave two speeches...
that were subsequently published as a booklet with the bizarre title Austerity. An Opportunity to Transform Italy.

Bertilnguer begins with the spurious analytical assumption that it is the growing strength of the Third World that has produced the world crisis. Profits, for him, is part of the system to be defended, not part of the problem. "We affirm that the market, private enterprise, and profit can and must remain a function even in the framework of an economy that develops under the democratic public will and is oriented by this will."

Austerity, in this context, offers the possibility of improving Italian society: "Austerity, depending on its content and on the forces which govern its application, can be used either as an instrument of economic depression, political repression, and perpetuation of social injustice or as an opportunity for new economic and social development. Rigid pruning of the state, profound transformation of the basis of society, and defense of society and expansion of society."

Such a defence of austerity, not as a necessary evil, but as a positive virtue, must be unprecedented from any self-styled Marxist. In practice it came to mean what Bertlinguer calls 'a new model of production and consumption' (that is, a reduction of the consumption of the less well-off) and a recognition that public spending is 'excessive' and should be reduced.

One of the aspects of Bertlinguer's career which has been most commended inside and outside the Communist movement has been his open criticism of Russia and the Russian model of 'socialism'. After the coup in Poland, Bertlinguer declared on Italian television that 'the dynamic created by the October Revolution is now exhausted'.

Yet his criticism was often rather vague. In his report to the Central Committee on the Polish coup he talked about 'the difficulties and the sclerosis'—scarcely rigorous Marxist categories. He did criticise the regime of the Eastern bloc for the 'identification of the party with the state'; but he also blamed the Polish regime for the 'inability to isolate...politically...the extremist demands'.

**Pathetic**

But what is most striking about such criticism is their pathetic ineffectiveness. Pravda may accuse the Italian CP of 'sacrilege', but the Russian leaders are scarcely worried by the likes of Bertlinguer. In 1968 Brezhnev told the Czech leaders after the Russian invasion that the Western CPs were going to 'sound off—but what'. For 50 years now they have not mattered one way or the other.

In 1976 the Polish oppositionist Jacek Kuron appealed to Bertlinguer to intervene on behalf of arrested Polish workers. The Italian CP sent a strongly-worded message—which the Polish regime treated with contempt.

In fact, Bertlinguer's criticisms of the East were nothing to do with a love of 'democracy', and everything to do with his own opportunist political strategy. The 'Historic Compromise' meant that the CP must accept Italian membership of NATO. In 1976 Bertlinguer told a reporter that he felt that NATO safeguarded 'the Italian road to socialism', so Russia could not intervene as it had done in Czechoslovakia. 'I feel safer being on this side of the fence.'

Secondly, Bertlinguer's claim that the present period has shown the limitations of both revisionism and Leninism, and therefore opens a 'third phase' allowed him to accommodate to a range of swampish 'movements'.

'There exist, and are developing, movements, associations, organisations, groups, particularly of women, youth and intellectual workers, that are expressing in hundreds of ways outside working class parties also and beyond the traditional forms of politics, demands that are being pressed, aspirations, which powerless that collides and enters into conflict with economic mechanisms, with the social set up, and with contemporary capitalism's cultural output'.

In particular, Bertlinguer was anxious to set himself up as middleman between the Eastern bloc and Western social democracy.

'We today are in a position to help communications between social democratic and other movements on the one side and parties and states whose beginnings related directly and indirectly to the October Revolution of 1917, on the other.'

Thus shortly after the Union of the Left in France broke up in 1977, Bertlinguer had a formal meeting with François Mitterrand—to the great annoyance of the French Communist Party.

Certainly Bertlinguer's policy has not been devoid of success in the short term. While the Spanish CP crumbles and the French party faces irreversible decline, the Italian CP has increased its representation in the European parliament, while both Socialists and Christian Democrats have lost out.

But while Communists troop off in triumph to the toothless assembly at Strasbourg, Prime Minister Craxi has got parliamentary support for his plan to cut guaranteed cost-of-living increases in wages. The CP cannot protest too vigorously without upsetting all its reformist ambitions, yet if it fails to protest the initiative stays with Craxi.

All around the world former Stalinist parties are trying to turn themselves into openly reformist parties. For most the attempt has led to disaster; the Italian party has gone far further down the road than any other. But it still has a long way to go, and the death of Bertlinguer, its most skilful opportunist, will not help it. Time is still on Signor Craxi's side.
Roots of communalism

The recent clash between the Indian Government and the Sikhs has been portrayed by some as a national liberation struggle. Barry Pavier argues that it is nothing of the sort.

Since Indira Gandhi sent the Indian army into the Golden Temple at Amritsar to kill Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his supporters some people have attempted to portray this as the suppression of a national liberation movement. Occasionally it has been compared to Northern Ireland. Actually, this comparison has some relevance, but only once you understand that the politician to whom Bhindranwale corresponded was Ian Paisley.

Sikhism began in the fifteenth century AD as part of the Bhakti movement, which sought to fuse and harmonize Hinduism and Islam. The Sikhs were driven to a sharper communal identity and eventually to militari sation by persecution from the Mughal Empire. This eventually produced the 'Khalsa' (hence Khulistan), the military expression of the Sikh community. By 1800 the Khalsa had carved out a large state in Punjab. Ironically, 90 per cent of that state is now within Pakistan.

Until the 1880s the Sikhs regarded themselves and were regarded by everyone else, as being no more than a branch of Hinduism. In the 1880s a movement was started by a small group of landowners, urban petit bourgeoisie, and theologians to reverse this process of assimilation and create a distinct and exclusive Sikh identity. This paralleled movements inside the Hindu and Moslem communities and for much the same reasons brought about the first tentative growth of bourgeois nationalism, which threatened the leadership of those sections of the old ruling class which survived under the British and those elements of the bourgeoisie who collaborated with them.

Quite crucially, this process combined perfectly with the dominant theory of post-1857 British imperialism. This stated that India was a collection of distinct and unique ethnic groups, castes, and religious communities, each with their own specific interests and requirements. India was no more than a geographical expression, there was no Indian nation, and in fact the only real 'India' was the imperial regime. Therefore, since there could be no Indian nationalism, the nationalists in the Congress were only middle class Hindus in disguise.

The Sikhs fitted perfectly into this theory as a 'martial race', the real reason for the tradition of military service being quite lost on the British. The theory itself was developed to quite a high level of sophistication and penetrated bourgeois academic theory to a considerable extent.

A perverse and twisted demonstration of just how successful a theory it has been can be gauged from the fact that a great deal of multi-cultural education and race relations policy sponsored by left wing councils appears to be based on this concept of ethnicity developed by British imperial bureaucrats.

The worst thing ever done by British imperialism was to foster and promote this idea of ethnicity, which produced the political result of communalism. They used the census as a means to fix the entire Indian population into a particular community. What then happened was that petty bourgeoisie groups which had developed inside untouchable and low caste groups tried to get themselves upgraded.

They formed caste associations, into which they recruited all caste members, and bombarded the census commissioners with petitions. High caste groups formed caste associations and campaigned against them.

Workers and farmers

Caste associations soon developed roles beyond census campaigning, encouraged by the total lack of welfare provision. Their role as social welfare organisations continues to this day, and in many areas they play a major role in binding workers and farmers to bourgeois leaderships of the same caste, and in promoting communalism as the most important part of people's lives. Ironically, the colonial situation is now reversed. The positive discrimination introduced since independence in education, and government jobs, makes itnecessary to be as backward as possible to get on to the gravy train.

So British rule did indeed transform Indian society, but largely by producing caste and religious rigidities quite unprecedented in Indian history by the combination of imperial policies and those of sections of the local ruling class.

The development of Sikhism as a distinct community sits within this general situation. A national question in India because there is no oppressing nationality since the 1880s a considerable number of linguistic, regional and communal groups with bourgeois leaderships have built themselves on this principle of ethnicity which is as much a foundation of the Indian state as it was of the empire.

The Akali Dal, the Sikh communist party, was an integral part of the growth of Sikh separatism. From its foundation in the 1920s until 1962 it was a party of the urban petty bourgeoisie. They were in a minority compared to Punjabi Hindus, and were subjected to continual economic and social pressure. Economic because trade was dominated by Hindu caste groups, and social because they had close social connections with these Hindu castes and were under continual threat of assimilation. Religious sectarianism was the political means by which the Sikh petty bourgeoisie sought to protect their separate existence.

In the rural areas, Sikhs were in an overwhelming majority, and the dominant social force was a caste of farmers called Jats. In a reversal of the normal stereotype, the rural areas were much more religiously and socially liberal than the towns, because there was no possible threat to Sikh identity or the supremacy of the Jats. A large number of Jats supported the Congress before and after independence. The Congress built itself after 1919 in rural India as a party of rich peasants, and so was able to get the support of large numbers of Jat farmers.

In 1962 the Akali Dal was captured by a new leadership which represented Jat capitalist farmer interests. It dropped the demand for an independent state, and after the establishment of a smaller Punjab state with a large Sikh majority in 1966 appeared to transform itself into a regional rich farmers' party. This change of line enabled it to reap considerable electoral rewards, and between 1967 and 1980 the Akali Dal led three coalition governments in Punjab, as well as having two ministers in the 1977-79 Janata government at the centre. All this was undone by the very capitalist agriculture which had propelled them to power.

The Green Revolution — the combination...
of capitalist agriculture with high yielding varieties of wheat and other crops, massive amounts of credit, fertilisers, machinery etc gave massive gains to the Punjabi capitalist farmers. It also impoverished the small farmers and drove large numbers of them down into the working class. Between 1960 and 1980 the numbers of landless agricultural workers rose from 17 percent to 40 percent of the rural workforce. This does not count all those with small plots of land who have to live by working for the capitalist farmers.

Labour shortage

Many of the newly disposessed Sikhs turned to religious alternatives, especially an unorthodox sect, Nirankaris. This happened at the same time as a decisive shift of population in Punjab.

The Green Revolution created a labour shortage which pulled large numbers of workers from the rest of India. From being 60 percent of the population in 1971 by 1981 the Sikhs were only 52 percent. This meant the collapse of the political perspectives of the Akali Dal and Sikh separatism.

This is where the comparison with Northern Ireland is relevant. Imagine an economic miracle in the North pulling in large numbers of workers from the South, and at the same time there was a serious weakening of religious sentiment inside the Protestant working class. What would then be the response of Paisley, the Orange Order, and the UDA?

It was at this point that Bhindranwale arrived on the scene, leading a small fundamentalist group which led anti-Nirankari riots in 1978, and which later organised the murder of the Nirankari leader. In 1979, however, the Akali Dal smashed his group in the crucial temple committee elections which are the normal route to power inside the Sikh community.

When the Congress(I) returned to power nationally in 1980 they saw Bhindranwale as the perfect tool for splitting the Akali Dal. Zail Singh, former Chief Minister of Punjab, then central Home Minister and now President, pulled strings to build up Bhindranwale’s support inside the temple committees.

As everyone knows this cynical manoeuvre has literally blown up in their faces. This happened for two crucial reasons.

Firstly they did not realise that Bhindranwale had a mass base inside the urban petty bourgeoisie, especially the students.

They never benefited from the Green Revolution to any considerable extent and are now under exceptional pressure from competing Hindu petty bourgeoisie groups. These are themselves riddled with religious communalism and in that respect urban politics have been increasingly dominated by competing neo-fascist organisations.

Secondly, and disastrously for the Congress(I), the Jat capitalist farmers have been badly hit by the recession. The picture is the rather familiar one of decreased prices for crucial inputs — machinery, power, fertiliser combined with classic capitalist overproduction forcing down the prices of their crops. This is combined with the prospect of becoming a minority in the countryside, as large numbers of non-Punjabi Hindu workers settle permanently in the rural areas.

At this point it becomes possible to understand how the Akali Dal has been shifted into campaigning for greater autonomy for the Punjab state, and how Bhindranwale was able to set the pace. The demand for autonomy is the demand for the preservation of the economic and political supremacy of Jat capitalist farmers. At this moment it has coincided with the interests of the Sikh urban petit bourgeoisie, and that is why Bhindranwale was able to seize the leadership of the campaign.

Working class

What the campaign is quite obviously not is a struggle for national liberation. It is a class struggle for local supremacy by two connected regional ruling class factions, using religious fundamentalism as the means to mobilise support. As such all socialists must utterly oppose it, along with the cynical communalism of the Congress(I).

The only way out of the shambles that the ruling class have erected is the working class which is present in large numbers. The Communist Party of India (CPI) has built an agricultural workers’ union of 125,000 members and there are other unions organised by the Communist party (Marxist) (CPM) and the Maoists.

What none of these parties has done is to challenge the ties of the workers to Sikhism. They too have absorbed the imperialist explanation of Indian regionalism and have combined this with Stalinist theory to produce an Indian ‘nationality question’ — a country of oppressed nationalities but no oppressor!

Since, therefore, there must be legitimate national demand parties expressing these must be supported, even if critically. So both the CPI and CPM have supported the faction of the Akali Dal led by Parkash Singh Badal, the Akali leader least sympathetic to Bhindranwale.

This criterious attitude has meant that all their trade union activity has been unable to break significant numbers of workers from their ties and so they have been utterly impotent in the crisis. In a class society riddled with communalism it is only possible to build working class unity by being rigorously anti-religious. The communist parties are hopelessly sunk in reformism and have always shirked this essential task, and so bear a heavy responsibility for the disaster which has befallen the Punjabi working class.
Leading workers to defeat

West Germany has ended. Dave Paeson pinpointed the strike's weaknesses in an article written before the sell-out.

At the time of writing 60,000 West German metalworkers are on strike and a further 400,000 have been locked out. Some have been hit by so-called 'hot' lockouts planned deliberately by the bosses to weaken the metalworkers' union (IGM), others by the so-called 'cold' lockouts because of lack of spare parts or because of delayed orders from other firms. Also over the past week all national and large regional newspapers have been hit by an indefinite strike.

In factory after factory workers have made clear their readiness to step up action by occupying locked-out plants or at least blocking the gates completely so as to effectively stop all production including modernisation and repair work. Shop stewards committees in factories which are still working have written in to the central leadership demanding to be called out on strike too and also that ballots be held outside of the two regions of Nordhessen and Nord-Baden/Baden-Württemberg, which up to now have alone been called out. These demands have consistently fallen on deaf ears.

Instead the union leaderships of both the print workers and the metal workers agreed to arbitration procedures. Biedenkopf, a leading member of the Conservative Party, CDU, was accepted by both sides to head the arbitration committee for the print industry. His proposal was to stick to the 40-hour week and the eight hour day and instead introduce more holidays.

Wages

According to his model five days extra holiday corresponds to a shortening of the working week by one hour. These extra holidays were not to be decided upon in one fell swoop for the coming year but rather made into a subject of contention for future yearly negotiations between the union and the bosses, who would then have to arrive at a different agreement as to what part of the yearly increase in real wages would be granted in the form of cash and what part in the form of extra holidays.

The arbitration procedure broke down on 22 June because the bosses said this model was even more expensive than a shortening of the working week.

Still heading the arbitration committee to end the metal workers' strike is Georg Leber of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), an ex-leader of the Building workers' union and ex-minister for culture until he was forced to resign from his post in the mid-seventies because he hadn't been able to effectively hide from the public eye the incompetent and illegal spying practices of the German military screening service.

Gesamtmetall, the organisation of German metal bosses, has insisted that any agreement reached by this arbitration committee must be carried unanimously. This means that the bosses can simply boycott any decision that doesn't suit them without having to openly break any of the rules.

This also means that the union hasn't got any back door option open to them any more. For it has been usual practice in the past for the union leadership to vote against decisions of arbitration committees arguing that 'the neutral arbitrator wasn't being neutral enough', but to accept the decision as binding nevertheless because it had been arrived at 'democratically'. This time round the bosses obviously want to make the defeat of the unions public by forcing them to actively support a dirty deal.

Certainly the bosses have not given way one inch on the principle of the 40-hour week. They are prepared to concede 38 hours only to shift workers, who make up less than a third of a workforce totalling almost three million metal workers.

For its part the union has over the past few weeks twice and time again reduced its demands and is now only asking for a 38-hour week as from 1 February 1985, 37 hours as from 1 January 1986 and 'perhaps' a further two hours reduction spread over 1987 and 1988 'which would have to be negotiated between both parties if unemployment levels have not dropped below the million mark by then'.

On the list of union demands is also a miserable 3.3 percent wage increase as from 1 July 1984 (instead of the usual 1 February) and a further 2.7 percent from 1 February 1985. This wouldn't even quite cover official inflation, let alone the automatic tax increases and extra national insurance burdens which eat away something like half of any wage increase.

According to Lambsdorf (who apart from being a Duke and a member of the Liberal Party is also hanging on to his post as minister for industry: some time in the near future he too will have to resign because of his favourite practice of accepting money from his political party in return for tax cuts and other benefits to important industrialists) the strike has already cost the German economy three quarter billion pounds in lost production.

As for the metal workers' union it is now fouling out 28 million pounds a week in strike and lay-off pay, which has already created quite a hole in their funds since the beginning of the strike six weeks ago.

Protest

However, in spite of strikes and lock-outs the bosses are doing their best to take advantage of the fact that production is standing still in order to reorganise production lines and introduce new machinery.

This kind of reorganisation work is often carried out by white collar workers, but the union has refused to call white collar workers out on strike. True, union organisation among them is much lower than among blue collar workers, so it would have been much more difficult to get them out, but this shouldn't have been an insurmountable obstacle.

In the engineering firm of Wegmann in Kassel for instance, white collar workers actually staged a protest on the first day of the strike for not being called out. The answer they got from the local IGM strike committee was that the leadership knew best who to call out on strike and who not.

In several cases court injunctions have been taken out against individual strike committee threatening injunctions with payments of up to £125,000 a day if they don't make sure that a corridor of at least two meters width is kept open for white collar workers and other scabs to come in freely.

You then had the situation at factories like Opel-Rüsselsheim, one of the largest car plants in Germany employing over 30,000 workers, where 2,700 scabs could simply march in — a very discouraging experience for the pickets. The strike committee of Opel demanded time and again permission from their union leadership to go in and lock the gates from the inside — which from the juridical point of view would have created a new situation and got round the problem of the court injunction. But the leadership blandly refused arguing that it was their right to take any such steps when and where they see fit.

Thus a factory occupation at Knecht in Lorch was ended after only three days and any 'factory visitations' which have taken place since have all been ended within hours. The German union bureaucracy has got a
very firm grip on its membership and is taking great care to make sure 'nothing gets out of hand'. The few scattered remains of the once very strong German revolutionary left are utterly incapable of starting any independent action, both those operating inside the factories and those operating from the outside.

Recently for instance a picket organised to stop a miserably thin six-page edition of the Frankfurter Allgemeine coming out and quite prepared for a fight soon gave in when the strike committee personally escorted the two vans out.

A model example for the difficulties of the left operating inside the factories is VDO in Frankfurt, a firm producing instrument panels for cars and employing 1,800 workers. VDO has a long tradition of left wing shop steward work dating back to the mid-seventies. One of their greater achievements was to get foreign women workers onto the shop stewards committee, thus challenging the endemic racism and sexism of trade union structures.

VDU has been locked out for the past three weeks, but here again the white collar workers were kept on to finish off urgent orders for export and continue with planning work for new models to come out in the autumn.

So it was decided on Tuesday this week to get as many pickets along as possible to seal the plant off completely. The whole thing was planned to be just a 'symbolic action' without any illusions that we could damage the firm economically but with the aim of showing the bosses our strength'. However to the great surprise of the union bureaucracy 400 pickets turned up and by six o'clock in the morning all the gates were effectively blocked.

Factory guards and senior employees had also got everything planned well in advance. They organised to have the white collar workers come early that day and made them walk round and round the whole plant in groups waiting for an opportunity to rush in as soon as the gates were opened.

Two women pickets got hurt badly when they were pushed to the ground by a couple of particularly loyal scabs. Other scabs preferred to climb in through a private housing block round the back or tried rather unsuccessfully to use ladders handed down to them through the factory windows.

Scab walks through

The main left winger on the shop stewards committee and also the driving force behind the strike committee then phoned the person in charge of the local Frankfurt strike committee, the fulltime official Günther Otto, who had up until then given his tacit blessing to the blockade.

Günther Otto immediately rushed to the scene of the action, held secret talks with the police and the boss and then told the strike committee to call the whole thing off because the boss had threatened to get a court injunction out and had also sent his personnel manager out threatening Turkish women with the sack for illegal picketing.

Police

Otto said that the action did not have the backing of the union any longer and that any member who continued obstructing the gates was acting on his or her own responsibility.

He then disappeared leaving the left winger on the shop stewards committee with the job of making a speech telling everybody to move away. This was no easy task because all the pickets wanted to stay put and kept on waiting until the police came to do the job themselves.

When it came to discussing the matter in the strikers' coffee bar the whole thing was adjourned by the left winger until the early afternoon, by which time most people had left. Criticisms voiced were taken up by the union secretaries who argued that if union members were not satisfied with this or that union leader they could vote for another one at the next election. Nor was it the time for backing, they said, now was the time to discuss the next step to be taken.

When it was then suggested that the best thing would be to try and get a thousand pickets along next time, the union secretaries said it was necessary first of all to discuss things in a general way and not get down to the specifics right from the start.

The meeting was then adjourned without any decision being taken. The next day an even larger meeting of all locked-out VDO workers was brought to a very quick end 'because the room had been booked by somebody else'. The VDO workers were told not to go to the factory the following Monday but to come directly to the union offices to collect their lock-out money.

Similar events happened at other workplaces. Each time the left limited itself to trying to put pressure on the union bureaucracy by avoiding putting the decision process directly into the hands of the workforce. This is not simply a reflection of the numerical and organisational weakness of the left but also a direct consequence of their strategy of trying to take over the union machine rather than build an independent, politically motivated rank and file organisation.

The strike will undoubtedly be sold out, because there is no rank and file organisation to prevent this happening and the union leadership is not prepared to go in for the kind of all-out action which would be needed to win the strike, or even win some sort of reasonable compromise.

Nevertheless the strike has shown that the German working class, in spite of its reputation for being so conservative, is prepared to fight. Revolutionaries arguing that there is such a thing as the working class and that any perspective for changing society has got to base itself on workers in struggle should have a slightly easier time because of this strike.

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Death squads and compromise

The death squads continue to operate in El Salvador, Reagan continues to back the regime. Pete Binns and Carla Lopez look at the weaknesses of the liberation forces.

Pete Binns and Carla Lopez look at the weaknesses of the liberation forces.

'The angels of death have had their wings clipped,' crowed The Economist, as five of El Salvador's national guardsmen were convicted at the end of May for the murder of four American nuns in 1980. 'The trial has had an even better follow-up,' it went on, referring to the hanging out of two senior military figures from the army. All of which added up to a good send-off for Mr José Napoleón Duarte, elected to take over as El Salvador's first freely elected president on 1 June.

Portraying El Salvador's leaders as fearless democrats who courageously take on the death squads has been very important. It has ensured a smooth run through congress of the appropriations of millions of dollars earmarked for the military. The overall plan, as envisaged in the bipartisan commission on Central America, headed by Henry Kissinger, is for $400 million in 1984-85, which in turn, is part of an incredible $6 billion earmarked for the region for economic and military aid. Quite simply the whole package would have been put at risk if the party of a dealing with military aid to El Salvador had been turned down in congress.

Sacrifice

But for all the crowing and the posturing, the reality underneath remains markedly different. As we pointed out in Socialist Review last month, constitutional rights remain suspended and the three year-old state of siege remains in force. The latter puts all power into the hands of the military, and while Duarte is officially in charge of the army, New York recently reported that the 'officer corps warned him that he could be Commander in Chief only in name'.

For their part the officer corps were probably quite happy to sacrifice two of their number. In return they will be getting, after all, large quantities of modern military hardware plus the massive economic and military backing of the USA. Because an important part of the death squads are integrated into the military hierarchy, they are the ones who will benefit most from the influx of American arms.

Ironically then, had Roberto D'Aubuisson — the 'pathological killer' most directly associated with the death squads — won the presidential election the death squads might have benefitted much less.

Both Duarte and his American backers would certainly like to be able to ditch the death squads and institute a liberal democratic regime, but there is just no way they can do it. The reality is one in which there are, at the moment, only two significant sources of power and influence in the country.

On the one hand there is the oligarchy, the men of the very rich families whose money and power still come, in the main, from the ownership of huge landed estates. Their main instruments of power are, as they always have been, the army and the death squads. A massive level of corruption has kept the top 500 or so personnel in the armed forces 100 percent loyal to their landowning paymasters, and, in the past, has led to them slaughtering tens of thousands of peasants and the destruction of even the weakest land reforms when they have been attempted.

Few to suggest the possibility of reform to these people is to invite one's own physical elimination. Most of those who have done so in the past are now either dead or have fled the country.

On the other hand there are the forces of those driven into opposition to oligarchy. Grouped around the FMLN/FDR they have been responsible for putting into practice the protracted guerrilla war that has dominated El Salvadoran politics for more than five years. They now control a substantial portion of the country from the Honduran border to its heartland around the Guazapa volcano.

Within it they have set up 'Local Organs of Popular Power' (PPLs), which aim for self-sufficiency both in the production of food and in maintenance of war production, and which have also taken on 'social' issues—elementary health care, the fight against illiteracy and so on.

For Duarte's strategy to succeed, a middle ground or a dialogue between these positions would have to exist. But that is just what is missing. The oligarchy has never budged an inch, and although forces within the FMLN/FDR have attempted various compromises in the past they have always failed miserably, sometimes confusing and setting back the guerrilla struggle in the process.

Furthermore the continuing flight of capital from the country has more or less arrested the development of 'liberal' industrial or commercial capital unconnected with the oligarchy; without it however there remains no real basis for Duarte's reforms.

If the election of Duarte will not change this status quo it is important to realise that in the medium term nothing else can either. The army is too weak to both cover all the principle areas of the country and at the same time concentrate in sufficient numbers to destroy the guerrillas. For their part, the FMLN, while growing in strength, is still too weak, both in numbers and in heavy weaponry, to defeat the army in the immediate future. And the United States, while carefully building up the infrastructure for a possible military invasion next year, has obviously ruled out such a move until Ronald Reagan is safely re-elected next winter.

Cuba

In the meantime the El Salvadoran ruling class is also keeping its options open. So long as Duarte keeps the grumpy train from Washington running and does not make things awkward, no doubt he can be tolerated. If not he will be easy enough to remove with a coup when the time comes. In the short term time might be on their side.

Reagan's strategy of neutralising American assistance from Cuba and Nicaragua to the FMLN/FDR seems to be working well for them, isolating the guerrillas still further. On the other hand the FMLN/FDR are very well entrenched in a number of areas and the costs of the war continue to mount. Even the most die-in-the-wool reactionaries cannot accept that forever.

In all probability they assume they will not have to. They face an enemy whose policies are confused in the extreme and which may, as a result, lead the FMLN/FDR opposition to disaster.

One crucial problem is over the very strategy for gaining power itself. The FMLN/FDR is a coalition which has come together because its various parts felt that what they have in common — opposition to the oligarchy and the army — is more important than anything else, and that their differences should be subordinated to it. For revolutionaries however such a strategy is
only permissible—i.e., all—it is plausible to suppose that the “state” that results is the unity of the non-revolutionary sections following the lead of the revolutionary.

In the case of FMLN/NDR, on the other hand, it is exactly the other way about. The condition has been increasingly dominated by the polices of reform, in which accommodation and compromise can only lead to delivering up the FMLN/NDR into the hands of the army. By returning with such people the left has been at best compromised and at worst has actually participated in such moves itself.

**Compromise**

Thus the FMLN/NDR is committed to a “dialogue” with the new Duarte regime. What exactly does this mean? Guillermo Urrutia, Socialist Democratic leader of the FMLN, is very clear about this. For him it is an essentially *diplomatie* strategy in which the FMLN/NDR approached President Mage of Costa Rica to approach President Duarte with a view to starting discussions with the FMLN/NDR. The point of the discussions is to secure *minimale* representation of the FMLN/NDR in a government of national reconciliation including Duarte’s Christian Democrats.

From what we have said already about the impossibility of compromise at this time it should be clear by now that the strategy is nonsensical. But what does the left have to say on this matter?

They too are committed to “dialogue”, Thus Francisco Herrera, European representative of the FMLN, said last year:

“We took a more rounded view of the question. We expected that if discussions started, certain contradictions would come to the surface. We are not sure about accommodation...”

The FMLN/NDR themselves have long understood the contradiction between any accommodation and the needs of the working class and the peasantry. By agreeing with the FMLN-NDR’s proposal of a “government of broad participation” in February of this year, the FMLN-NDR made it clear that it has now abandoned the aim of transition to socialism as something to be deferred indefinitely. It now, unfortunately, adheres more closely to the traditional Communist Party program of alliances with “progressive” sections of the bourgeoisie—a section missing more obviously in El Salvador even than most other places.

One of the factors contributing to this shift to the right within the FMLN is its neglect of the working class in the capital, San Salvador, following the failure of the general strike in October 1980 and the general offensive of January 1981. This has helped persuade the FMLN to base itself instead on “self-sufficient” liberated zones in the rural areas.

Yet in recent months and weeks, there has been a real upturn in strikes in the city, were tens of thousands of workers in social security offices, banking, waterworks, and government offices have been involved.

It is precisely this resurgence in the workers’ movement in San Salvador—brought about by a massive fall in living standards—which provides the real opportunities both for a return to class politics in El Salvador and for a successful struggle against the ruling class. But to gain from this a decisive break with the rightward-moving policies of all sections of the FMLN is needed.
Poison gift

The European elections in France proved to be very successful for the extreme right. Gareth Jenkins looks at the fascist growth and how best to fight it.

With a vote of just over 11 percent the fascist Front National came within spitting distance of beating the Communist Party into third place in the French European elections. This breakthrough into electoral responsibility gives it ten seats in the European parliament and is the culmination of a rapid process of growth starting with the municipal elections in spring 1983.

Where the Front did particularly well was in the capital and the large industrial centres. In the Parisian area and suburbs it got votes as high as 15 percent, while in Marseille in the south it hit a record 20 percent. In all these areas, this has been an equally spectacular decline in the CP's fortunes. In Marseille, for example, its vote dropped by nearly half in comparison with 1979. A similar, if less catastrophic, withering away of the CP vote has also marked the rise of the Front. The Socialists Party fared less badly, though it lost ground, and the right-wing parliamentary opposition emerged as the largest block.

The abstention rate was high by continental standards, with overall only 52 percent of the electorate voting. It is this that explains the collapse of the CP vote, rather than desertion in droves to the right and extreme right.

Marketing

Who and what is the Front National? The figure of Jean-Marie Le Pen, around whom the Front was created in 1972, dominated the hangings throughout the campaign. A former parachutist, he fought in the anti-independence war France fought in Indochina and Algeria. Currently he is the director of a company marketing such items as voices and songs of the German Revolution (Marx, who once...)

Until recently, he, along with the other warring groupings of the extreme right, could be dismissed as a bad joke. His desire was to avoid another, more long-term, and the shopkeeper movement led by Poinard, mostly attempting to reverse the modernisation of the working class economic in the mid-50s, and the deliberate white settler opposition to Algerian independence.

What has transformed the party into a threat, however, is the failure of the left to deal with the threat. This has given him the opportunity to exploit fears, tensions and resentment that have come to the surface. The demonology of fascism has begun to make sense. Communitarians and socialists really are the enemy. Is not their government presiding over growing unemployment, wage freezes, cuts in benefits? Aliens are in our midst. Do they not compete with us for jobs, live off our resources, threaten law and order by their criminality? These issues are the raw nerve Le Pen has played on time and time again.

Demoralised by their government's treachery, many of these militants also fought to get the left into power in 1981. Look to the South for an example of how the right are fighting back in their own terms. The Front National has gained a foothold in the government's traditional bastions of power. It has already made an effective intervention in the legislative elections, calling the traditional right to account for its policies and its support for laissez-faire capitalism.

We can expect more of the same, plus greater confidence in organized activity against the left and against immigrants.

Initiative

The real tragedy is the absence of any prospect of a French equivalent to the Anti-Nazi League. The conditions are not different, but some kind of initiative needs to be considered before either the Front's organisation or its wider support is crystallised.

Unfortunately, neither major organisation of the revolutionary left seems capable of taking such an initiative. Although it has backed local and last, the activists, the League Communiste Révolutionnaire (French section of the Fourth International) appears to rest content with a general exhortation of the workers' parties to change their catastrophic policies.

Le Pen, on the other hand, takes a different line. He has been accused of a disaffection from the working class, and they point out that the result of making workers pay for the crisis is deep disillusionment with the class, and the fact that the workers' parties' promises to change their catastrophic policies.

France's base? Opinion polls, for what they are worth, suggest the following.

First, between 20 and 25 percent of the support comes from small businessmen - the same figures apply to the liberal professions (doctors, lawyers, etc...)

Secondly, the Front has had little impact with the youth; only 15 percent of the 18 to 30 age range seem to have voted for Le Pen (as against 36 percent for the traditional right and 21 percent for the Socialist Party). However, that is still 3 percent more than for the CP.

Thirdly, in terms of political preferences, a third of Le Pen's voters identify clearly with the extreme right. Another third back to the traditional right-wing parties. However, as many as 11 percent of Le Pen's voters see themselves as on the left or as ecologically-minded.

The evidence suggests, therefore, that as yet Le Pen's base is neither hardline fascist nor youthful. That may appear to make his success (equal to Pompidou's 30 years ago) less worrying. But it should not.

First, unlike Pompidou, Le Pen has no organisation. Secondly, the economic boom of the 80s provided no objective base for fascism. That is clearly not the case today. If neither political parties failed to resolve the crisis, in the way the bourgeoisie wanted, the fascist option could become tempting.

It is clear that Le Pen will lose no time in exploiting his electoral success to make an impact on the streets, control of which is crucial for every fascist movement. He has already made an effective intervention in the mass-demonstration called by the traditional right in protest at the government's similar plans to bring private (Catholic) education under greater state supervision.

We can expect more of the same, plus greater confidence in organized activity against the left and against immigrants.
The torch of reaction

A lot of rubbish is about to start pouring from our televisions about the Olympic Games. Here Colin Sparks attacks the games for their nationalism, racism, sexism, and class bias. He goes on to dream of the future ‘Workers Olympics’ where sport will lose these characteristics.

Even if you are hooked on sport, you will probably find this year’s Olympic Games a bit too much. The corruption is too near the surface. The US is using the games to publicise capitalism. The USSR is boycotting in revenge for 1980.

On top of all that, the British are, predictably, providing Zola Budd and her apartheid backers with the passports and papers they need to sneak in by the back door.

One of the lines of criticism that has been voiced even in quite respectable liberal circles is that the modern day Olympics represent a sad decline from the good old days. The whole shebang is, it is argued, has got out of hand, but if purged of its excesses it could still provide the focus of a really good sporting event just like it used to be.

This comforting position is unfortunately quite untenable. The Olympic Games, even in their ancient version, were always bound up with nationalism, war, personal skulduggery and every other undesirable feature of class society. Organised sport, as a sort of pseudo-religion, has provided the focus for everything that is wrong about humanity.

Consider the current question of commercialism. The 1984 Olympics are being run by a private company that aims to make a profit. To this end every last inch of sponsorship has been sold. Starting with things which might have some connections with the Olympic Games, like official watches, through more questionable things like official typewriters, the list goes on to become absurd. There is, I am told, even an official Olympic prison fund.

The mind-boggling connection between the Olympics and San Quentin and Dartmoor is quickly resolved when you realise that the ‘official Olympic Games’ means only that the manufacturers of ‘things’ have paid the Olympic organisations a certain sum of money in order to use the title ‘official Olympic’. There is no other connection necessary.

It is not at all the case that line and innocent old Olympic traditions are being put to foul new purposes. It is true that the US organisations have made the commerce and ideological function of things very clear by flooding off every mile of the famous relay of the Olympic torch.

But this is no ceremony shrouded in the mists of obscure antiquity. It was in fact dreamt up as a typical piece of fascist propaganda by the Nazi organisers of the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where the official Olympic salute, of course, was more familiar in other contexts.

The scale of marketing might be new, but the principle is not. The Rome Olympics had 80 sponsors, Montreal 168. Moscow just to prove that state capitalism could catch up and outstrip the west, had 200 such official Olympic products.

Exotic

In fact, Los Angeles, or rather the private corporation running the games (the Los Angeles Olympic Organising Committee or LAOOC), have only let out 30 official sponsorships, costing between 4 and 15 million dollars each. The names of these will not surprise you: AT&T, General Motors, Atlantic Richfield, McDonalds, Coors, Coca-Cola, IBM, Levi Strauss. The more exotic official goods are part of the prestigious operation organised by a further 43 concessionaires.

The need for this large-scale marketing operation arises from the staggering cost of the games. They are so bound up with the prestige of competing national states that the cost of staging each one has risen.

The 1976 Montreal Olympics nearly bankrupted the city, leaving it in the task of paying off a billion-dollar deficit. Moscow was even worse. There is a Russian joke which runs something like this: ‘There are three stages to the Olympics. First, prepare for the Games. Second, hold the Games. Third, reconstruct the economy.’
The Greek Olympics certainly existed — from 776 BC to at least 260 AD. They were an ideological event in the narrowest sense — forming part of a religious ritual which included a sacrifice of 100 oxen to Zeus.

The origins of the athletic events were in preparation for war. They included a foot race in full armour, boxing, wrestling, chariot racing and no-holds-barred unarmed combat. Although they were not the horrid bloodbath of the Roman games, they were pretty rough: killing your opponent was not legally recognised as murder.

Slaves, the people who did the bulk of the work, could not compete of course. Nor could women, except by proxy in the chariot race, where the prize went to the owner rather than the competitor. Even then they could not collect since women were banned from the entire games.

The military origins of the games were confirmed by the fact that Sparta, the most militarised of the Greek states and the model for many modern fascist dreams, was the most successful early breeding ground of warriors. Later, the games became more narrowly specialised, being dominated by athletics, obliged by the rules to train for ten months of the year and who won big cash prizes.

It is one of the signs of the weaknesses of the modern workers’ movement that the Olympics, despite the murmurings about Moscow and Los Angeles, are still the unchallenged centre of world athletics. This has not always been so. The period of mass working-class activity after the first world war saw strong attempts to set up working class sporting events as an alternative.

The organisers banned German and Austrian athletes from both the 1920 and 1934 Olympics. The largely social democratic workers’ sports association responded by organising international working class sporting events like the 1926 Workers’ Olympics held in Frankfurt under the slogan “No more war”. The British delegate claimed: “If wars are won on the playing fields of Elton, peace can be won on the democratic sporting fields of the Workers’ International Olympiads.”

The fine phrases were, however, not quite honest: all members and supporters of Communist-affiliated workers’ sports organisations were banned from participating. In response a Workers’ International Spartakiad was held in Moscow in 1928.

Although the programmes of these efforts contained the same sort of competitive events as the bourgeois Olympics, they also had mass-participation sporting and cultural activities built in to try and avoid the sort of elitism that already characterised the bourgeois games.

The Spartakiad, for example, ended with a mass ‘sports theatre’ event on the theme of the battle between the world proletariat and the world bourgeoisie. We can sympathise with these comrades who found their revolutionary duty lay in creating the role of the bourgeoisie.

All wings of the workers’ movement in the 1920s and 1930s recognised the danger of allowing the bourgeoisie free reign in the organisation of one of the most popular of leisure activities. There will be absolutely no challenge to the orgy of competitive nationalism in Los Angeles.

Along with Coca Cola and Levi’s, we are going to be sold the idea that competition is the highest human virtue. We are going to be asked to identify some upper class idiot or a horse as ‘our’ representative in some obscure horse trial and to cheer them against the upper class idiots of other states. We are going to be asked to believe that ‘our’ boys and girls are an honourable lot and that ‘there’ are full of low cunning and dangerous drugs.

And the amazing thing is that it will work. Many of the socialists who howled at the nationalism that was stirred up over the Falklands will cheer along with the super-patriots when the same Union Jack and the same National Anthem come up on the telly to celebrate some sporting triumph.

Nice stuff, and dangerous.

Most of the facts, if not the opinions, in this article are taken from an excellent new book of essays edited by Alan Thornhill and Garry Whannel, Five Ring Circus. It is published by Pluto Press for £2.95 and, despite being soft on sport, is well worth a read. It will provide something to pass the time when the only thing on the box is all that damned sport...

THE UGLY: Officials give the 'official' Olympic salute

THE BAD: Zola Budd, getting around the apartheid ban
Selling yourself

Pop goes the Culture
Craig McGregor
Pluto Press £3.95
1 Hate Rock and Roll
Tony Tyler
Vernation paper £4.95

I can think of no other subject which comes so much plain unsullied rubbish to be written about as popular music. But what other area of journalism could a Julie Burchill have seen to have a column in the Sunday Times or be widely published. Incoherence, pretentious, gibberish and facile are the hallmarks of most writings on the subject.

When it comes to serious writing and attempts at linking it to politics then the best on offer in the press is Simon Frith. If Simon Frith is the best, just think what the worst is like. Music journalism as a whole is both the worst and most pretentious form of writing around, it makes football reportage read like Jane Austen.

The reasons for this state of affairs are many and varied. They include: the effects of having to hype a new dynamic sound every six months. The claustrophobic and unreal world of rock journalism — the record companies and the music papers. The pretentiousness of the whole process etc. Also the style of writing that has developed, a style which has degenerated from what was called in the 60's 'new journalism'.

New journalism was created in America in the 60's as part of those turbulent times. It included the then new papers such as Rolling Stone, Village Voice and writers such as Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer and Hunter S Thompson. It was an attempt to describe the excitement of the times in a modern idiom, to put across what it felt like to be a part of rebellion, of sex and drugs and rock and roll etc. And some of it was and is good writing.

Ego

At its best it was fast, funny and dynamic, making you empathise with what it felt like to be involved in the events. At its worst, it was self-obsessed, bogged down in the detail of the ego trip of the journalist to the point of obliterating the event that the writer was involved in. It could be one long ego trip. But in both good and bad the writer became the subject of the writing. The journalist was transformed from a faceless reporter of events to a star in his or her own right.

This tradition of the journalist as star is one that has not dominated music journalism for many years. As a process that breaks the liberal myth of the objective reporter there is nothing to criticise it for. Indeed, some of the best writing of the left in the 20th century has been in this style. John Reed's Ten Days That Shook the World or Orwell's Homage to Catalonia are brilliant examples of the writer being a central character in the writing.

But in these socialist works it was used to politicise the 'objective' reporting. It was used to widen the writing, to put politics into the descriptions or to illustrate an idea. It was used to comment on the events witnessed and to put forward a political view.

But in new journalism the writer became the subject not to put the politics of the writer but to put forward the writer as a star. As the title of one of Mailer's books put it in an Advertisement to Myself.

Birth

In the hands of a good writer and in a period of great excitement the new journalism produced some good writing. But since then the style and the social movements which gave birth to it have moved on. And it is a degenerated form that now dominates the NME, The Face and all the rest. Both Pop goes the Culture and I Hate Rock and Roll can be seen as different ends of the spectrum in the degenerated new journalism style.

1 Hate Rock and Roll is the style brought to its self-obsessed limits. It is pure crap. In passing Tony Tyler supports US imperialism in Vietnam, kites punk and the ANL for what they stood for (left-wing policies mixing with music) and seems to believe that all has been lost since 1984.

His musical taste resembles a younger Jimmy Young and he could slip into the Jimmy Young show on Radio 2 with ease. Dominating the book though is Tony Tyler himself presented in an unpleasant right-wing rant. So much for the 'one time assistant editor of the NME'.

Craig McGregor's Pop goes the Culture is a far more serious work and with an introduction by Simon Frith giving at the thumbs up is a good example of one of the new schools of new journalism. Again it is a diary, the writer is never out of sight, a collection of thoughts, ideas and observations. But it includes a biographical description of Gramsci's concept of hegemony.

In fact a good explanation spoilt by a typical misuse of the idea to justify the validity of 'ideological struggle' as a form of struggle itself or in the words of Simon Frith 'pop practice'. The central core of the book is still the writer but now it is the writer as abstract theoriser. I know nothing about what the writer eats in the kitchen to the tune at Woodstock while listening to Joni Mitchell we now have the latest book and theory on the cultural hegemony.

Movements

The book is really a collection of different articles written in the earlier 70's through to 1983, though put in historical order. But its clear how the writing has changed and is an example of how one left offshoot of rock journalism has evolved.

From impressionistic descriptions of America in the 70's — the street life — full of insight and zappy prose to the 80's, ponderous and grappling with sociological terms.

McGregor's great love is jazz, his chapter on America in the 70's is the best in spite of its naivety and lack of any theory. He likes ordinary people, rare for an intellectual, and he can, when he doesn't get carried away, write well.

In the 80's and back in Australia the subject is no longer street life and the joys of it all, but trying to come to terms with the new grim... and on sleeve NOTES MR MILES O'RIORDAN!
Well-intentioned drivel

This description of some of the injustices of how much intellectual activity is based on a dislike of ordinary people is good. The author states how the benefit of Barrie Humphries is based on the most reactionary of ideas. He shows, or at least attempts to, how town planning and the media boardwalk and crush people.

What is missing is a sense of proportion, a general framework to put the processes that he describes into perspective. Pop or prickles are not central to undermining the state gap. The creation of ruling class hegemony is not a series of equal processes of thought manipulation. This is not to say that all we ever should have to remember in this context, but that they are important to us because of some strange obsession with getting up at 6.30 in the morning to visit picket lines but because social scientists have manipulated levels of oppression and exploitation has a logic to it. The logic and determining factor operating throughout society, one which reappears and 'emerges' all art, is profit. Behind the façade of society lies the class struggle based on the point of production. Art and artists' work is of greater importance than the effects of 50 Benny Hill shows or getting (on number one hits by Paul Weller). Popular culture reflects all the contradictions in society, which can give voice to the oppressed, point a way to the socialist or existential capitalist, help or hinder the class struggle. But it is not a prime way by which power relationships are created.

In a certain way the transformation of the writer into a star in his or her own right has fed this notion of them as cultural warriors in the struggle for our opposition in structures... To be specific, this means developing and working through political parties such as the Labour Party, and through such mass movements as the trade unions, co-operatives, the women's movement, and the liberation movements (sexual, black, uncomploded; breaking down racist and sexist barriers in the making a profound overhaul of the education system... It also means pushing through radical reforms in the law, the conscription of the electoral system, parliament itself, financial system, tax...

This is a straightforward reformist package of modernizing the present society by using the existing state structure and using Gramsci to justify it. After all the insights on the working of pernicious ideas comes the most naive concept of a national culture and a programme of reform that would lock fine in a conference of the Young Liberals.

As much of the new cultural warfare, such as the Newcastle show, is needed to be resisted as much as it is resisted. This is not to say that the 'New Order' did not gig for the miners, its great that the NME gave two pages to Marxism 89 (circulation over 500,000, readership much more), that's good music that socialists should be involved in.
The culture can serve many exciting and useful functions for the revolution and ones that the left perhaps does not use as much as it could. It was for example very good that the 'New Order' did a gig for the miners, its great that the NME gave two pages to Marxism 89 (circulation over 500,000, readership much more), that's good music that socialists should be involved in. Writing is a tool for the other class that could be unleashed if capitalism was smashed.

But the system is not going to be destroyed by a song like a modern day song. The real unity, who do see hegemony and ideology as the central area of struggle (Serres Politi et all) the ideas of a gated Gramsci has been used to argue for a reformist strategy and with a left cover... Need Halifax

Here for good
Stephen Castles
Plate Press £7.50
This is an analysis of immigration into Western Europe since the second world war and includes chapters on the effects of the growth of labour provided by the inflow of immigrants. In other words, immigration counteracted the tendency of the profit level to fall, caused by the unions and high wages. When after 1973 immigration was stopped the crisis was brought on. In Britain where immigration was stopped much earlier the boom was less pronounced and the recession deeper and earlier, etc., etc.

Against all the writings of Marx the declining rate of profit is not the result of more machinery, per worker; but the result of high wage settlements. Immigration in this analysis then allowed Western Europe to grow by countering this. The result happening in Eastern Europe is not made clear.

It would be difficult to list all the objections to this analysis as it would take too much space. But this is not a high-energy conspiracy theory with the male head as unchallenged leader etc. Confused? You would be if you tried to act on the analysis offered by this book.
BOOK REVIEWS

Revolutionary spark

Revolution in Seattle
Harry G. O'Connor
Left book $7.50

It courage was enough then America's early socialists would have achieved socialism by 1919. By then they had led bitter struggles against the bosses and the state. Many of them went to prison for opposing the war. But it was not true that any of the socialist organizations took a clear stand on the war. And though the Wobblies (Industrial Workers of the World) left it up to individual conscience whether to fight the war, this wasn't true of the Wobblies. For instance, the Seattle Wobbly member was lynched by rednecks while still in uniform. Though Eugene Debs, the Socialist Party candidate for president, went to prison for his anti-war views, his party did not oppose the war either. From his prison cell he organized an election campaign that won him more than a million votes.

The Communist Party was not born and was known as the Party of Labor. It May Day, and other socialist events took place during the war years. The book is full of such episodes, of the struggles of the workers and the struggles of the state. Unfortunately the book is less dramatic. There was a general strike in Seattle, but there was also a robbery of a bank.

The strike was started in February 1919 in support of shipyard workers fighting for a living wage. It had been called by 500 delegates from all trade unions in the city. The strike was successful, but passive, no demonstrations or arrests.

Exemptions

The strike committee used itself in giving exemptions for emergencies, and providing food for the needy. The bosses made no move to negotiate. The Wobblies had heard of the government's attack on the strike, but they didn't know what to do. They went to look for ways to end the strike.

Though they found no excuse for ending it, they refused to hear it and their attempt to end the strike was met with violence that after five days they decided to go back. No guarantees of assistance had been won, so the shipyard workers were left to fight on alone.

Some months later, the strike in Cardiff, Britain, had stated:

A general strike is the sharpest form of class struggle. It is only one step from the technical revolution. It is precisely why the general strike is more than any other form of class struggle; requires clear, distinct, and therefore revolutionary leadership. No doubt some of the participants were influenced by socialism, but that only part of a confused mixture of ideas that can only be described as syndicalism.

The ideas behind the strike could best be summed up by quoting from a Union Record editorial (a mass circulation rank and file socialist paper):

"But the closing down of Capitalist-controlled industries in Seattle, while the workers organize to feed the people, to care for babies and the sick, to preserve order—this will move them, for this looks too much like the taking over of power by the workers—and that is why we say that we are starting on a road that leads—NO ONE KNOWS WHERE."

That precisely sums up the tragic errors made by the syndicalists. A utopian concept of workers' control, but without concrete plans to achieve it, is not a socialist revolutionary leadership, but not enough to make a program of the rest of the workers' souls.

Confusion

In conclusion it is useful to recall Georg Lukacs on the failure to understand socialism and seeing them as:

"permanent class organization and seek to replace party and trade organizations by them, in turn reveal their lack of understanding of the difference between revolutionary and non-revolutionary situations, and their confusion as to the actual role of the workers' souls."

That confusion was widespread and dangerous for America's socialists, as seen in this book. Properly, it was wrong. In spite of their personal courage they were unable to keep their organizations intact in the face of class struggle against them. In Russia the years of reaction from 1907 to 1912 forged a party of steel. In America the years 1919 to 1929 saw the creation of a desert.

Andy Strouthos

Detailed rant

There who made a Revolution
Bertrand Russell
Penguin 14.95

This book was first published in 1918, the year that saw the start of the class war, and it shows it. The title of the book is Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin. In fact the book concentrates on Lenin from his first political action to the first world war. With some 700 odd pages it is a detailed and almost yearly year, at some points day by day, account of the various spots and events inside the socialist movement that formed the Bolsheviks. Lenin is shown to be a man of hard work, Trotsky brilliant, and Stalin an intriguer and a creature of the party machine.

So far so good you may think. But the book is thorough and through with its contradictions and obsessions. It is both fascinating and irritating, fascinating because of the details and facts, irritating because of its analysis.

Woolf's judgement on Lenin is that he was a person intellectually split between the 'western' Russian ideal of democracy and freedom and the 'asian' tradition of elitism and in the crucial points of struggle the asics were wont to work through. So in the midst of a good account of Stalin's rewriting of history there is paragraph after paragraph about the

Simon Crane

Stalin: narrow-minded thug
'Russian soul' and Asiatic totalitarianism and other such

All through the book it is clear which side Woolf is on and it is not the Bolsheviks. In parts it is straight forward class war rhetoric. Yet in spite of the negativity and the attack on the Bolsheviks and the critics of the revolution the author maintains a wealth of details and descriptions of the revolution and its many figures. If you want to buy just one history of Lenin and the Bolsheviks buy Chali's history of Lenin. If you've already got them and want to read about the early Trotsky as a hippy-like drop out in a commune, and in between right wing fantasies, descriptions of the splits and rows of the Russian revolutionaries in some detail, then this book is worth a glance.
Morning sickness

I spent one sunny Sunday afternoon last
month cooped up in the Wembley Confer-
ence Centre reporting the London Annual
General Meeting of the People's Press Print-
ing Society. The PPBS is the co-op which
owns the Morning Star.

On my way out a woman handed me a
small yellow leaflet with a couple of biblical
quotations on it plus the explanation that she
had at a Communist Party 15 years ago to
serve the Lord Jesus. This service she per-
formed by handing out such leaflets outside
Communist Party meetings!

It was a bizarre ending to the afternoon.
But was it really much more bizarre than
what had been going on in the meeting?

The first bizarre thing was the number of
people actually at the meeting. Counting in
the six regional AGMs 100 there were well

over 3,000 people there to fight over the
future of the Morning Star. That must be
several times the number who actually sell
the paper.

Presumably the vast majority of the 3,000
plus were members of the Communist Party.
I would be very doubtful whether more than
that number regularly turn up to Communist
Party branch meetings.

The second bizarre thing was the nature of
the row. The meeting was split down the
middle. There were very few waverers. The
atmosphere was vitriolic at the extremes.
There wasn't a speech that wasn't bored or
heckled. There were all sorts of petty tricks
of manipulation and demagogy.

The platform, controlled by supporters of
Morning Star editor Tony Chater, were care-
ful to ensure that floor speakers had to speak
from microphones at the back.

On the other side CP general secretary
Gerard McLennan talked his supporters to
a standing ovation after his own speech with
a waved clench fist as if he had just scored a
goal in a football match.

And yet both sides in this vicious row
claimed to be supporters of the CP's pro-
gramme, the British Road to Socialism.
Neither side criticised the other's behaviour
or, say, the miners' strike, the NGA dis-
pute, CND or — going back a bit — the
People's Marches.

I don't think most people were being
insincere in their claims to stand for the same
general politics, not even when hiding
important differences over this issue. I have
mentioned. For example, you couldn't tell
from their behaviour in the current strike
that the CP leaders of the Scottish miners
were for the CP executive in the Morning Star
fight, while the CP leaders of the Kent miners
were for Chater.

The same goes in general. You may
happily draw that the CPers in your own
union take one side or other in the Morning
Star dispute, but you wouldn't be able to
guess it from their behaviour on union
issues.

The third bizarre thing about the meeting
was the attitude of both sides to the future of
paper over which they are fighting so
crazily. The circulation of the Morning
Star has been relentlessly declining for years.
In the second half of last year (before
another hefty price increase in January) its
British circulation was down to 14,820. (In
addition another 14,415 copies went abroad,
almost all to Eastern Europe.)

Russians

It doesn't take much imagination to see
that with a total staff of over 150 to support
sooner or later the operation is going to go
bust. I find it fairly amazing that it hasn't
done so already. Perhaps I under-estimated
the willingness of the Russians to help out —
they now pay for their copies a year in
advance. At any rate it is now over three
years since the management of the paper
have been seriously sounding the financial
alarm bells. Now they are talking about the
paper having six months unless something is
done.

Chater and most of the present manage-
ment committee do at least have a plan to
stop the Morning Star going bust. (Indeed it
is this plan that sparked off the current row
with the CP executive, because they didn't
tell the EC about it.) The plan is to get the
Morning Star presses to do commercial
printing.

The plan looks pretty dodgy on straight
commercial grounds. A new press has to be
installed, costing 1,800,000, the supposed
promises of work look suspiciously vague,
and so on.

But the really staggering thing about the
plan is that it starts from effectively admit-
ting that the sales of the Morning Star are not
going to be significantly raised in the foresee-
able future. In my view of course that is
absolute nonsense. I think circulation will
continue to sink. But remember these people
think they are producing a

really wonderful paper at the very centre of
the working class movement.

Equally staggering is the attitude of
McLennan and the party executive. They
have no alternative plan for avoiding going
down. In pointing out the holes in Chater's
plan they have probably alienated some non-
CP friends in the union bureaucracy and

deadly keen to keep them.

But they also have only the slightest
realisations of the present style and content
of the paper, and virtually no realisations of
their own totally unsuccessful efforts to raise
the circulation. In other words they are relying
on blind faith to avoid the ballet.

There is no explanation for all this bizarre
behaviour. With the exception of a few
rather ingenious or downright opportunist
non-CP members who have been brought in
on either side, the row about the Morning
Star is a row about the future of the
Communist Party.

And the plain fact is that the Communist
Party does not have a future, because it has
no reason for a separate existence. That has

been so for a long time. The effects have
however taken a long time to work them-

selves out.

But a sober look at the Communist Party
today reveals an organisation which is no
more left wing than much of the Labour left,
no more theoretically minded, no more dis-

diplined, not even any better able to inter-

vene in the unions. Both Eurocommunists

and Socialists could find a quite comfortable
home in the Labour Party, and not

necessarily on the left of it.

In these circumstances differences among
those who remain in the party inevitably

have an increasingly unreal and desperate

quality.

Viewed from the outside that can make

good political gossip. But its actual con-
dsequences in the real political world are

getting smaller and smaller.

Pete Goodwin