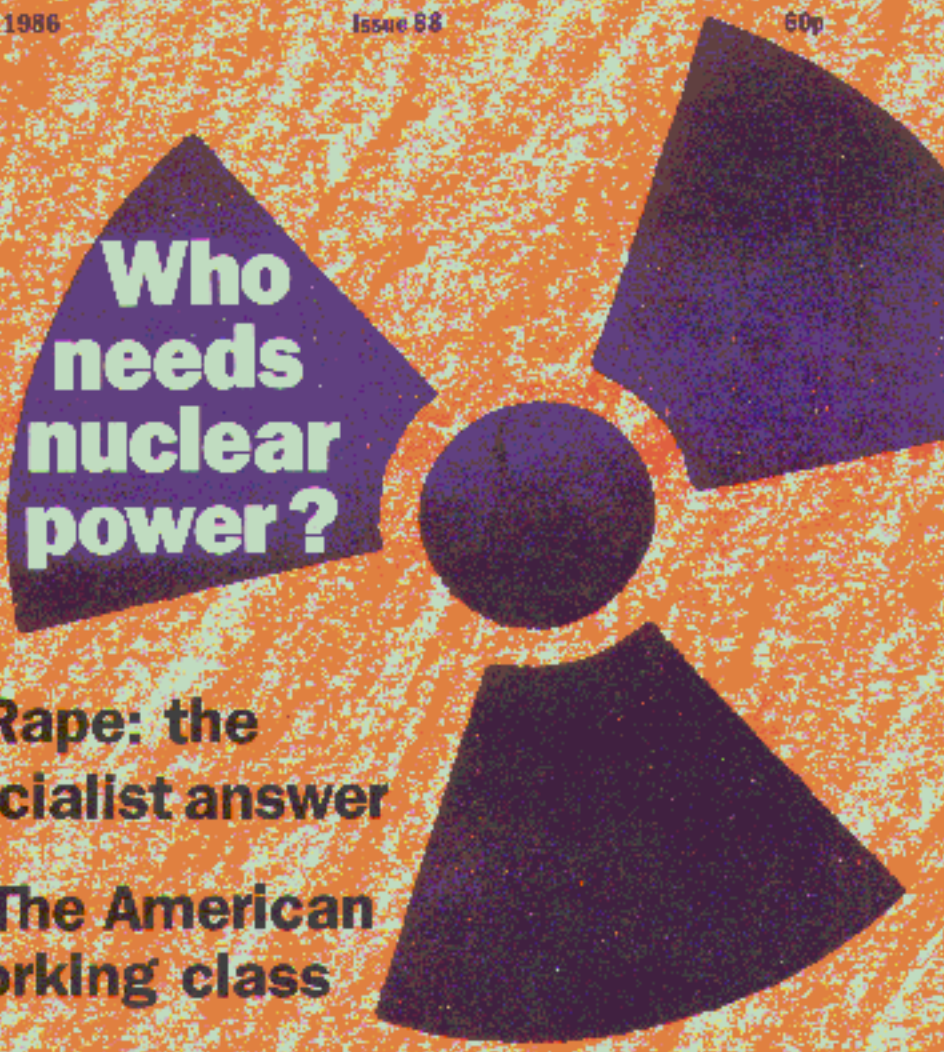


socialist worker **Review**

June 1986

Issue 88

60p



**Who
needs
nuclear
power?**

- **Rape: the socialist answer**
- **The American working class**
- **Stafford Cripps**

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Subscription rate for one year:
Britain and Ireland £8
Overseas surface £9
Europe Air £11
Elsewhere Air £14.50
(institutions add £7.50)

Cheques and postal orders payable to Socialist Review.

Socialist Worker Review is sent free to all prisoners on request.

ISSN 0141 2442

Printed by East End Offset (TU), London, E3.

BEFORE
TORY CONTROLLED DOLE QUEUE



AFTER
LABOUR CONTROLLED DOLE QUEUE



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of the month

LOCAL ELECTIONS

The road to victory?

LOCAL elections are usually treated with near total lack of interest. Not so last month's elections in many parts of the country. The results have triggered a crisis inside the Tory Party which has even called into question Margaret Thatcher's leadership. They have also set in motion a fresh round of speculation on the state of all three parties.

Neil Kinnock's response has been that Labour is on the way to Downing Street. Labour won back many seats it had lost over the past few years—especially in 1982 in the middle of the Falklands War. The Tories were decimated in a number of areas. They lost 700 local council seats. Even in the strong Tory areas, the Labour vote often recovered, despite the threat of the Alliance.

The Tories have been knocked back by the results. Despite Thatcher's bluster, they herald the continuation of the Tories' internal problems. John Biffen opened the shots in the anti-Thatcher campaign only two days after the results were known. The likelihood is that the internal dissention will continue.

Labour can afford to be jubilant both about the Tory troubles and about their own election results.

Yet a closer inspection reveals a number of weaknesses in Labour's electoral support. Firstly, the existence of the Alliance presents real problems for Labour winning an overall majority. All sorts of seats which they could have counted on winning back from the Tories at one time now don't look at all certain.

Most of the pundits' estimates still show

Labour falling short of an overall majority at a general election. So, although Labour has made a remarkable recovery from its 1983 position, an electoral victory is by no means certain.

Secondly, the results in London were good for Labour, but not spectacular. Labour won four more councils. But this was the minimum that Labour expected to win. The GLC factor was not nearly as powerful as Livingstone and his supporters had expected.

The voting pattern was not at all uniform in London. The common view that Labour only does well in inner cities and not in the suburbs was not really borne out. In outer London boroughs such as Hillingdon, Merton and Croydon which had large Tory majorities, Labour won back 24, 12 and 18 seats respectively from the Tories—a significant number of seats. These figures suggest that the Labour vote which collapsed so drastically in those areas in 1982 and 1983 is now coming back.

But Labour didn't manage to win Tory Wandsworth, despite the unpopularity of the council's privatisation policies. And the solidly working class borough of Tower Hamlets was actually lost to the Liberals. True, they won the seat because the Labour Party was split, with rightwingers standing against official Labour candidates. But the ILEA election results show that even though Labour won a majority of votes in both parliamentary constituencies, that majority was much more narrow than it should have been, given the nature of the area.

In inner-city Islington, although held by Labour, the SDP made substantial inroads into the Labour vote, winning 11 seats.

In Liverpool, the picture was even more confused. No doubt much of the Labour leadership was hoping for at least some sort of defeat in the elections for Derek Hatton and Militant. They must have been disappointed. There was no change in Labour's representation on the city council. This was an achievement for the left on the council given the scale of the witch hunt against them.

But even so the swing away from Labour was substantial, with the Liberals eroding a number of sizeable Labour majorities. The

national trend towards Labour was reversed in Liverpool, where there was a 5 percent swing against them (only matched in Tower Hamlets where the rightwing Labour council was kicked out and replaced by the Liberals).

Even more worrying, the swing towards the Alliance from Labour was larger than anywhere else in the country. And the Alliance actually received a bigger total of votes than Labour. They hope to do even better if there are by-elections in the next few months, as a result of surcharged councillors being forced to stand down.

What is the meaning of these results? Obviously for the Tories they are little short of a disaster. Relatively few seats can be considered safe for them. Everywhere there are reports that Tory policy in general, and Margaret Thatcher in particular, are electoral liabilities. The cuts in the health service and in education are particularly marked in people's minds—witness the high Labour vote in the ILEA elections.

The Alliance obviously did much better than the Tories. But they have two problems. With one or two exceptions, they are winning at the expense of the Tories, not Labour. This limits the gains they can make. And the Liberal half of the Alliance did much better in the local elections than the SDP. The SDP showing without the Liberals was not very impressive in most places. This must be annoying for David Owen, since it increases Liberal clout inside the Alliance.

For Labour the results are encouraging. But they are also sobering. Kinnock still isn't going to find it that easy getting to Number Ten.

Even so, it is Kinnock who will be the main beneficiary of the results inside the Labour Party. He can claim that they endorse the 'new realist' policies of 'freedom and fairness' that he has put forward. He can argue that Labour did less well in Liverpool than in the rest of the country because of the policies put forward by Hatton and Militant. According to Kinnock, Labour would have done better if the left had not been in control of the city council.

This is pure hypocrisy on Kinnock's

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part. But it is Kinnock's view which will dominate. He will use the elections as yet a further green light for his policies. That means the witch hunt will continue as before.

Sections of the Labour left still try to deny this. They claim that the results show left policies can win. For example, Militant claim the Liverpool results are a vindication for their policies, and that councils like Hackney now have a hard left leadership.

But the left can only really claim victories by constantly moving the goal posts. They ignore the fact that since the left's defeat over ratecapping, councils will be faced with implementing all sorts of cuts.



Jack Cunningham: disgusting nuclear policy

And the policies of the past year will continue too. What will the emphasis be on? Judging by Labour's recent election broadcasts, and by their local election manifestoes, that means as little politics as possible, and a great emphasis on issues like law and order, where Labour steals much of the right wing's clothes.

Kinnock even shies away from issues which might be electorally popular—Reagan's bombing of Libya and especially

the anti-nuclear feeling following Chernobyl. This is only comprehensible if we understand two facts about the Labour Party today.

The first is that Kinnock and his supporters will avoid taking up any issue that might provide political capital for the left inside the party. The second is that Kinnock himself, and those who have moved right to accommodate him, are very much in hock to the right inside the party. This explains the way in which Cunningham is able to argue a disgustingly right wing line over nuclear energy, despite Labour Party policy to the contrary.

The recent results are a vindication for Kinnock. They will convince enough Labour supporters that his policies are the ones for Labour to follow. So the policies will continue until the general election at least. But there are also signs that a small but sizeable minority, both in and outside Labour, are not at all happy with the way Kinnock is taking the Labour Party.

That minority is not big enough to resist the pull to the right. But over issues like Reagan's bombing of Libya, or Chernobyl, they will often be looking for answers.

The Labour Party under Kinnock is one place where those answers will not be forthcoming.■

VOTING LABOUR

Put it to the test

THE ANTICS of the Labour leadership over the past three years have disgusted many good socialists. The betrayal of the miners, the virtual total opposition to strikes, the nationalistic crawling over Reagan's bombing of Libya have all taken their toll.

Above all, the fact that Labour in opposition is the most right wing ever, means that even before Kinnock has the chance to show how right wing a Labour government can be, many who would at one time have supported him are now sceptical.

This leads a number of people to question the need to vote Labour in the next election. Kinnock has betrayed and will betray again, the argument goes, so why bother to vote him into office? And why does the Socialist Workers Party, which puts so much stress on building an alternative to Labour, call for a Labour vote at election time?

It is worth spelling out that our arguments are not the same as some of those common on the Labour left. This is true in two major respects.

Firstly, there are many people who call for a vote for Labour on the grounds that a

Labour government would somehow be preferable to the Tories in the sense that it would be the lesser evil. This is the argument put in essence by those like NUPE's Rodney Bickerstaffe: that Thatcher's days are numbered and that the low paid can put their hopes in the election of a Labour government.

We reject that argument because it is not necessarily true. The way in which governments treat workers—in terms of wages, unemployment, spending cuts etc—depends not on the attitudes of particular prime ministers, but on two other factors. First, the pressure from the capitalist class for the particular government to deliver the goods; secondly on the level of class struggle.

That is why all the features we associate with Thatcher today—unemployment, cuts in public spending, attempts at holding down wages—do not simply date from 1979, when she came to office. They all date from 1976, during the Labour government's term, when Healey, Callaghan et al were prepared to cut workers' living standards to meet the demands of the IMF.

There is little reason to suppose that Kinnock would behave much differently.

Secondly, there are those on the left who believe that a vote for Labour will in itself lead to a rise in the level of class struggle. A Labour victory, they claim, will raise expectations among many groups of workers and so lead to an increasing number of strikes. Of course this is one possible scenario following the election of a Kinnock government. But to paint it as the most likely one is very dangerous indeed.

The experience of Labour governments in recent years shows that they do not necessarily create an upsurge in struggle. In Mitterrand's France, where much of the left did believe that such a rise in struggle would be automatic, the opposite happened. Workers were in fact often demoralised by the experience of the 'socialist' government attacking their living standards.

So we do not call for a vote for Labour because we believe that by doing so anything will *necessarily* be changed.

But we recognise that a vote for Labour will be a sign that significant numbers of workers have seen through a number of the Tory arguments that they accepted at the last two elections. For them, voting for Kinnock is not a step backwards, but a step in the right direction.

Of course, a small minority of workers have seen through Kinnock too—but not nearly enough. We cannot ignore this, or pretend that millions of workers have already broken with Labour—they have not.

This means they have to go through the experience of seeing for themselves what a Labour government looks like, and how it acts to defend the interests of capital against those of the working class. Again, this is not something that can be bypassed. Labour has to be tested in practice for this to happen.

This is not a particularly new argument. Revolutionary socialists have always made

a distinction between openly ruling class parties, and those which, although slavishly tied to the ruling class, also command the allegiance of large numbers of workers. That is why Lenin referred to Labour as a 'bourgeois workers' party'. It is an openly pro-capitalist party. But a vote for Labour denotes a higher level of political understanding than one for the Tories.

That political understanding is still limited, however, if it stops at believing that Neil Kinnock will do much for the workers who put him into office. How do revolutionaries convince those they are arguing with of this? Trotsky, writing in 1939, put it like this:

'I would say to the English workers, "You refuse to accept my point of view. Well, perhaps I did not explain well enough. Perhaps you are stupid. Anyway I have failed. But now, you believe in your party. Why allow Chamberlain [the Tory leader] to hold the power? Put your party in power, I will help you all I can. I know that they will not do what you think, but as you don't agree with me and we are small, I will help you to put them in."'

Trotsky's arguments are just as relevant today. They are especially important in that we spend a lot of our time working with and arguing with Labour supporters. Some of the best of those people believe a Kinnock government is the answer to many of their problems.

We will not convince them they are wrong, or win them to the need for a revolutionary overthrow of society, by pretending that the question is irrelevant, or by creating illusions that most workers have broken from Kinnock.

Instead we have to start with the call for a vote for Labour. We can then be in a position to argue exactly why Labour won't deliver, and why we desperately need a revolutionary alternative. ■

ECONOMY

A new slump?

THE MORALE in Tory ranks, already battered by the recent election results, will be even more depressed after the latest economic figures.

These show that output in manufacturing industry has fallen by 1 percent since the beginning of the year. That is the sharpest fall in one quarter since 1980.

Combine that with the collapse in the oil price, and the huge trade deficit in March, and the prospects are extremely bleak.

The most immediate effect of this will be felt on the dole queue. Even the Department of Employment has had to admit that the underlying trend for the last six months has been upward again. Of those who left school at Easter 112,000 are out of work.

Apart from YTS schemes the future holds little for them. Another wave of redundancies is hitting British industry. British shipbuilders have sacked 3,500, and more jobs will go at the newly privatised Swan Hunter shipyard on Tyneside.

British Caledonian airlines has sacked 1,000 in the wake of the collapse of American tourist traffic, and flights to the Middle East. British Rail Engineering has announced over 5,000 redundancies.

The government will try blaming all this on special factors. They will point quite accurately to the worldwide collapse in demand for ships. They could even try blaming Gaddafi for the state of British Caledonian.

But what they cannot escape is the fact that they have found no solution at all to the basic problems facing British capitalism.

The criticism of Tory policies within big business circles has been fierce enough in the last year. It will be even fiercer once the implications of the interest figures for the bottom-line sink in.

Profits in Britain have risen substantially in the last three years. On the one hand demand is depressed. On the other hand

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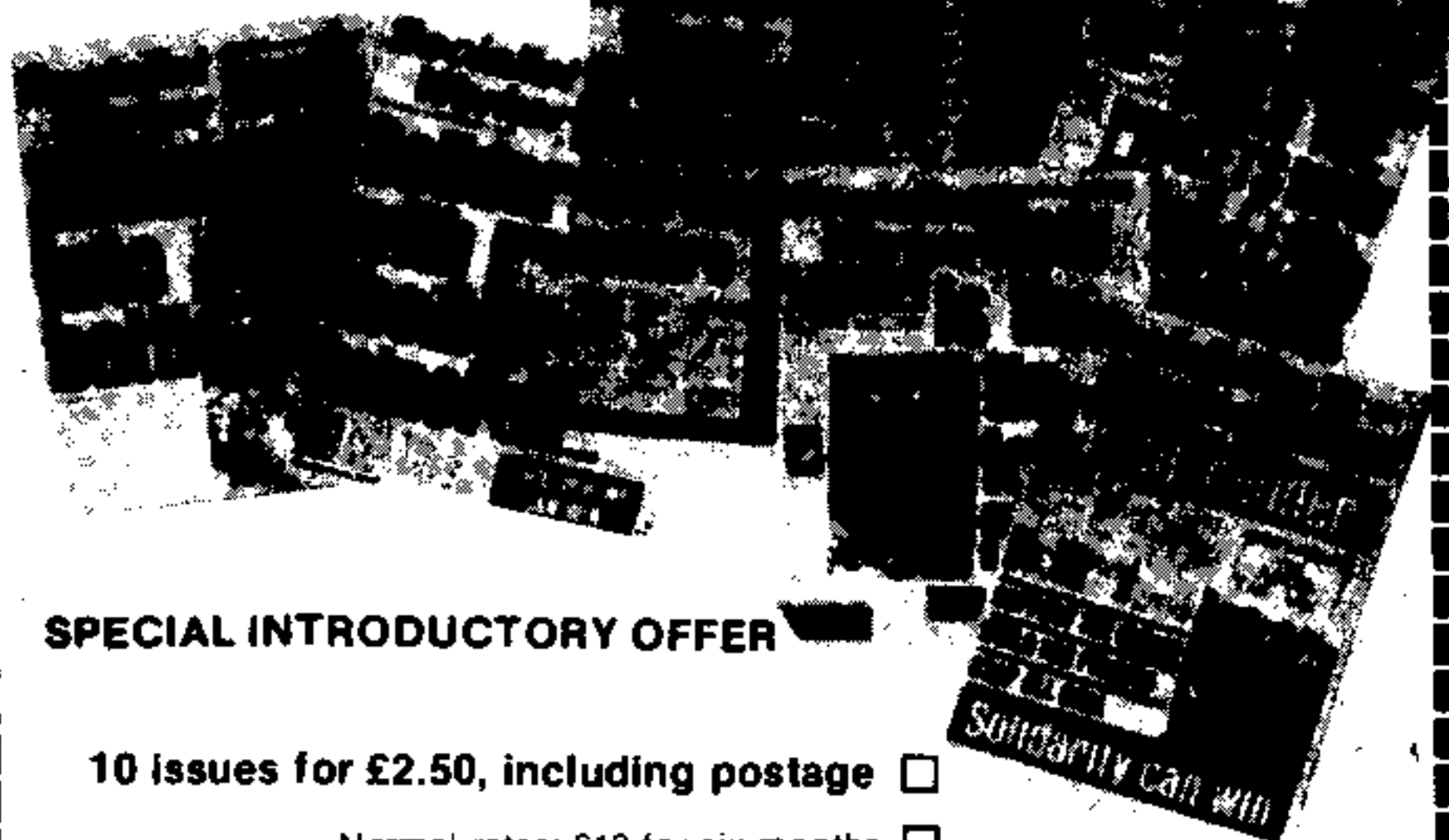
wage increases are running well ahead of inflation.

The rise in 'unit labour costs' is the critical indicator of the pressures on British capital. They are the wage costs per unit of output, and depend upon both wages and productivity.

Between 1982 and 1985 unit labour costs rose on average by about 2 percent a year. Increases in productivity were so great that exploitation and profits could rise despite rising wages.

That was a false dawn. Now productivity increases have disappeared, and wages are still rising by around 6-8 percent a year on

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average. Result: unit costs last year rose by 8.3 percent. If that continues it spells disaster for British capital.

It's still too early to tell whether British capitalism is about to enter another serious slump, on a par with those between 1974 and 1976, and again between 1980 and 1982. That will depend upon the course of the world economy.

But the US economy is clearly in deep trouble. Manufacturing production has been stagnating over a year. The trade deficit continues to sap the underlying strength of the economy.

The world economic summit in May did nothing to settle the deep splits over trade disputes and exchange-rates. The Japanese and West Germans are content to sit back and let their massive trade surpluses grow at the expense of their competitors.

The negative effects of the oil price collapse are clearly outweighing any gains for western capital. Investment in the oil industry has collapsed. Markets in the oil-producing countries have dried up.

All this is finally beginning to show up on the world financial markets. The euphoria over the oil price fall has disappeared. Share prices in New York and London are falling from their inflated peaks earlier this year. The decline in the dollar threatens to turn into a collapse.

It will be months before we know whether or not the world is seeing merely another mild cyclical downturn, or another fullblown slump.

But in either case the pressures inside Britain will be severe. The Tories have consigned monetarism to the dustbin, but have no idea what to put in its place.

The next government, whatever its complexion will inherit an economy deep in the red on its balance of payments. Manufacturing industry is incapable of filling the gap left by the loss of North Sea oil. It will have to borrow from the banks and possibly even the IMF.

The last government to do that was Callaghan's almost exactly a decade ago. That went hand in hand with the most serious cuts in public spending and in the real living standards of workers since 1945.

There is every reason to suppose that it will be exactly the same next time round. ■

AUSTRALIA

Hawke's union busters

OVER THE last couple of months, the Hawke Labor government has carried out the most savage union-busting operation in Australian history.

The Builders Labourers Federation (BLF), the most militant union in Australia, has been legally abolished by Hawke, backed up by Labor governments in the two major states, Victoria and New South Wales.

Labor's deregistration legislation states that 'any worker on a site who is a member of the BLF will be deemed not to be a worker'. Members of the BLF have been denied a 3.8 percent pay rise awarded to most Australian workers last November.

Their officials cannot legally represent them, and the tradesmen's unions in the building industry have been given legal coverage of work done by BLF members.

When the Arbitration Commission (the industrial court) gave the green light for the deregistration in April, one of the leading dailies, the Melbourne *Age*, ran a gloating headline: 'With the BLF squarely in its sights, Labor shoots to kill'.

In both Victoria and New South Wales, the state Labor governments mobilised thousands of cops to break up builders labourers' pickets and force them to join other unions. This use of brute force was backed up by the co-operation of so-called left wing officials from other building unions.

On one Melbourne site, BL's were locked in a shed by police and 'left' officials from the BWIU (the main carpenters' union). They were told they'd be let out when they signed up with the tradesmen's unions.

At a Sydney site, the pro-Moscow officials of the BWIU co-operated with the bosses and police to use the deregistration to smash a six week long strike. Once the strike was broken, the BWIU refused to sign up the leading militants on the site—which means they will not be able to work in the industry again.

Every site lost by the BLF gives the go-ahead for the bosses to go on the offensive. Labourers are being forced to work in the rain and to work under cranes as they lift a load—barbaric practices the BLF had stamped out. Site allowances won by the BLF are no longer being paid and dust money and height allowances are under threat. The BWIU have agreed to a 10 percent pay cut for many workers previously protected from miserable wages by

a BLF ban on this scale of pay.

The Labor government—backed up by significant sections of the left, in particular the Communist Party—prepared for this smashing operation with a campaign of vilification, lies and slander against the BLF and its national secretary, the one-time Maoist leader Norm Gallagher.

Gallagher was jailed in 1985 for supposedly doing deals with building bosses and accepting bribes. The bosses were let off with good-behaviour bonds. But the charges were shown for the farce they were when in the end an appeal court had to admit that Gallagher's jury was bludgeoned into bringing in a verdict of guilty. They had to set Gallagher free.

The BLF is being punished for having the nerve to defend its members' wages and conditions, for daring to be a maverick in these days of 'consensus'.

In 1984 it was the BLs who charged up the steps of Parliament House in Melbourne over health and safety legislation. In 1985 it was the BLs who called for support for small dairy farmers fighting for a decent living against the Victorian state Labor government and the rich dairies. Earlier this year, it was the BLs who greeted a march through Melbourne against a nuclear waste dump.

When it comes down to it, the attempt to smash the BLF was initiated because of its refusal to abide by the anti-working class Prices and Incomes Accord (similar to the Social Contract) between the Hawke Labor government, the bureaucrats of the ACTU (same as the TUC) and the bosses.

The Accord was the centrepiece of Labor's strategy which won the backing of significant sections of the Australian ruling class during the 1983 elections. Its aim was to restore the fortunes of Australian capitalism by freezing wages and boosting profits.

So far it has worked. The bosses have reaped all the gains of a two and a half year economic recovery—profits are the highest they've been for 15 years, and wages have fallen. Strike activity is the lowest it's been for 19 years.

But the BLF's activities had the potential to weaken the Accord generally and so threaten the whole strategy of the government.

In February, we had the bizarre situation where the Victorian Labor government forced the building bosses to lock out thousands of BLF members and threatened to cut off water and electricity supplies to directors of any companies who gave in to the BLF's demand for the 3.8 percent pay rise.

These attacks have occurred during a period of economic recovery and marked passivity of the working class. As the recovery begins to falter, we can expect things to get worse as the bosses are forced to go on the offensive. And you can bet that they'll receive every assistance from Hawke and his cronies. ■

*Sandra Bloodworth
Melbourne*

The moving right show

JUST hours after arriving to take over as president of the engineering union, Bill Jordan welcomed his very first visitors. They were none other than Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis, accompanied by representatives from various employers' organisations.

Kinnock told the assembled union officials and employers—'This is a marvellous day for the trade union and labour movement—and it's a marvellous day for Britain too.'

Just a few days after this, the AEU leadership showed its real concern for its members. As engineers at British Airways began to ballot on industrial action against a wage offer, the AEU executive began a campaign for immediate acceptance.

For ten years now the engineering union has galloped to the right. Jordan and Laird will keep up the tempo. Within the AEU they intend to hammer away at the branch structure, one of the key defences of union democracy. Jordan is obsessed with the branches as an activists' base. For him the union must be given back to 'the common man'.

This appears to mean two types of deal. The first is with employers, aimed at avoiding conflict and keeping union membership as high as possible. The second deal is with the banks, insurance companies and building societies who will offer members better financial deals. Gavin Laird's proudest possession is the new Peckham Road computer. Using this machine he hopes to flood AEU members' homes with offers on mortgages and cheap insurance.

This sort of thing has always gone on. But in the last year first the EETPU and now the AEU have made it a central plank of their efforts to hold members.

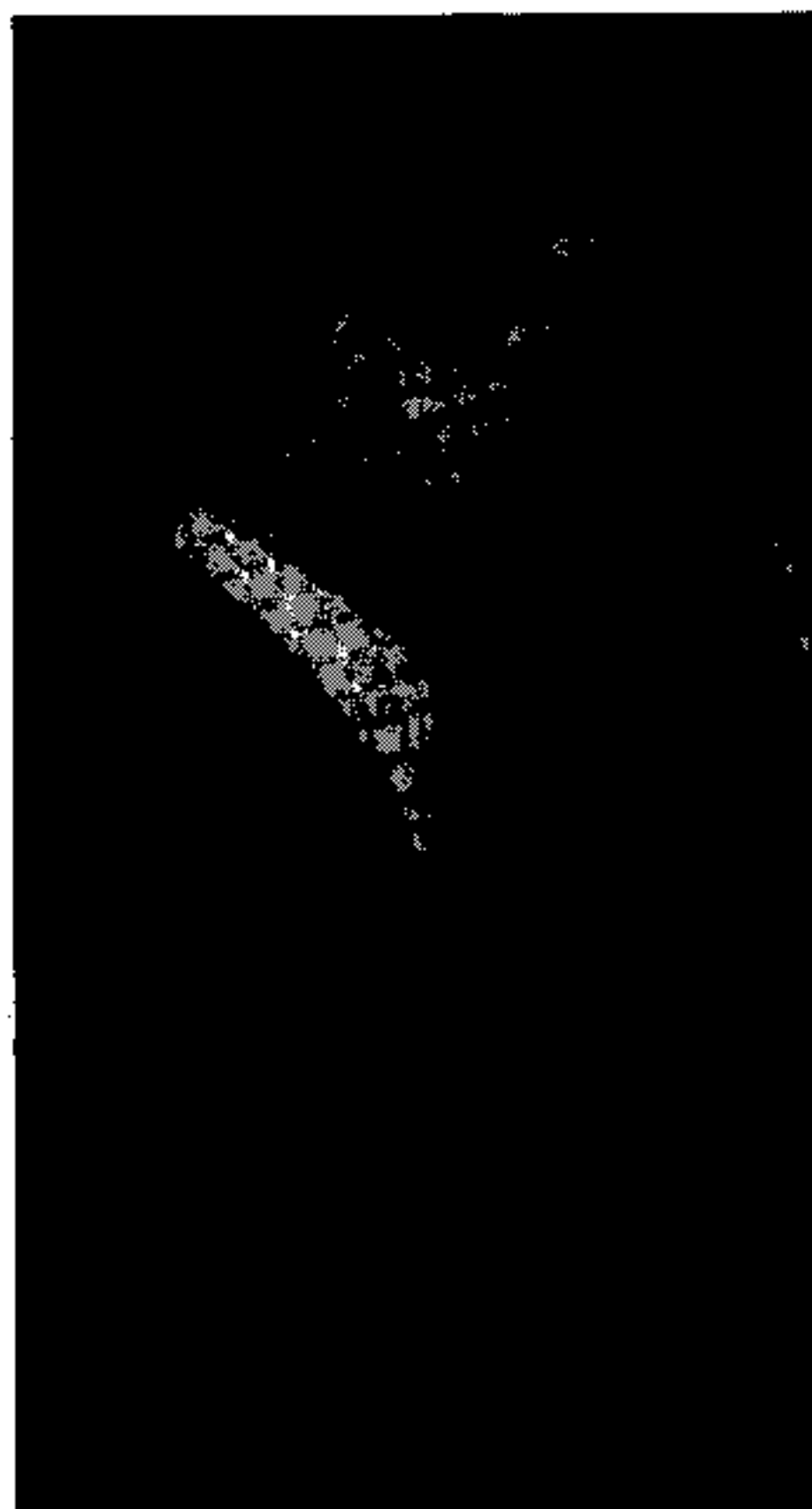
Beyond the AEU the implications of Jordan's election have a wider significance. Already this year the left has suffered serious reverses in the biggest union of all, the Transport and General Workers Union. The defeat of the TGWU's chairman, Walter Greendale, marks a real shift in the balance of forces on the union's executive away from the left. In practice this will mean increasing support for Neil Kinnock.

In the Telecom union, the NCU, the new right wing general secretary is John Golding. As a Labour MP and member of the Labour Party's NEC he masterminded the original assault on Tony Benn, and launched the attack on *Militant* in order to

ensure Benn's isolation. Golding beat Phil Holt, a *Militant* supporter, by 41,350 to 18,599.

In the civil service union, the CPSA, the Broad Left failed to make significant gains in the executive elections. The peculiar nature of the CPSA both in terms of membership and its system of annual elections, has seen very sharp turnabouts in the executive elections for years now. This year the executive elections gave the right 20 seats, the left six—three to the Broad Left, three to Broad Left 84. This is an improvement on last year when the split in the Broad Left deprived the hard left of any seats at all.

The undercurrent of opposition in the CPSA to the right wing was also reflected in the vice-presidential elections. Doreen Purvis, a *Militant* supporter who led the 1984 Newcastle computer centre strike, won one of the vice-presidential positions. Another *Militant* supporter, Kevin Roddy, came second in the presidential elections, only a few thousand votes behind the right wing victor.



Bill Jordan

Unfortunately this has little if any significance outside the kaleidoscope politics of the CPSA itself. In general Neil Kinnock can regard the TUC with considerable satisfaction.

From Ron Todd of the Transport Workers, Bill Jordan of the engineers and John Edmonds of the General, Municipal and Boilermakers, there is agreement on most of the questions that really matter. There will be no rocking of the boat on the union laws. Policy documents on union rights now circulate weekly to the members of the TUC/Labour Party Liaison Committee—agreement is just a matter of fudging up words to make everyone happy.

As the *Financial Times* said of Jordan,

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Edmonds and Todd, 'They span the political spectrum, but their allegiance to Mr Neil Kinnock and their fervent wish to see Labour back in power suggests they may be more united than divided.'

Part of that unity is on the question of incomes policy. All three are now convinced that the TUC and a future Labour government must operate some form of control over wages. Although they protest that they do not want a return of the incomes policy of the 1970s, in fact that is exactly what they are talking about.

The Labour government of Harold Wilson and then James Callaghan made an agreement with the TUC—the Social Contract—that wages would be held to a norm decided each year in joint consultations between government, TUC and industry. For three years the TUC policed the incomes policy. As a result there were no official strikes over wages for more than two years. Real wages fell. When the seamen's union threatened strike action over wages, the TUC's General Secretary Len Murray called them into Congress House and told them not to strike or, 'We'll cripple you.'

It is a return to this sort of wage restraint that Kinnock, Hattersley and the General Council are now planning.

So rapid has been the acceleration of the shift to the right in the last few months that Eric Hammond of the electricians' union has found himself back at the centre of events. The *Financial Times* informs us that, 'The talk at Congress House is of how helpful Mr Hammond and the EETPU are being, how constructive their contributions.'

In practice Hammond has won over state funding for union ballots. And he is now in the position of negotiating with Rupert Murdoch at Wapping on behalf of the TUC.

Hammond explained to the *Financial Times* that he has been following TUC directives over Wapping. 'What we have been genuinely trying to do is to reach as good a settlement as possible.' Hammond has stood still, the rest of the TUC has walked over and joined him. ■

Additional notes by Pete Green and Pete Clarke.



NIGEL HARRIS

Disturbing the whale

DANIEL THORNER was a well-known economic historian of India. He was a good man, an American who was a consistent opponent of British imperialism in India (and American imperialism in other places). So was Michael Foot. And as a result, both became defenders of Mrs Gandhi's Emergency in the mid-seventies.

It is a less dramatic but not dissimilar version of the phenomenon shown in those Western defenders of China's struggle for national independence who became devotees of Chairman Mao and the savageries of the Cultural Revolution.

The memory of how history makes fools of all who confuse symbol and content, whose consistency gets attached to people and places, not issues, crossed my mind as I passed Delhi.

A leftist (or ex-leftist) was telling me about Nepal, the small Himalayan country to the north of India. You can hear the phrases about how decent India has always been; we've put up with so much from these people; we could have easily crushed them but we didn't; we've been generous, but the kinder we are, the more they take; there's no end to their impudence; it's time they were taught a lesson; they're only poor because they're rotten and corrupt, etc.

Up here in the mountains of Nepal looking down on the vast plains of India, it seems a fearful joke. Nepal is so poor, India looks rich. The two largest embassies in Kathmandu are the Indian and the Chinese, competing hotly to get one up and control the king.

Both have massive aid programmes, much larger than that of any Western power. Both are ramming highways through the country, presumably so they could move their troops swiftly if the need arose.

Nepal? How could this tiny minnow disturb the Indian whale? Or the other minnow, Sri Lanka come to that? Or Bangladesh, crushed under such a weight of poverty and military musical chairs—even

Calcutta seems prosperous and stable. And Pakistan, cut in half in 1972 by the force of Indian arms?

Pakistan still plays the role of evil demon for the Indian press. *The Patriot*, one of India's lesser rags, recently reported with due solemnity that Chinese and Pakistani agents were infiltrating Bangladesh to build bases from which to foment disorder in Eastern India. The mixture of paranoia and fantasy passes for news.

A moment's reflection shows that, while no State eschews mischief, no country in South Asia threatens India. There is no region of the world where one power so overwhelmingly dominates all the rest.

For China, there is Japan. Even in the Americas, Brazil, Mexico and Argentina check the more absurd fantasies of Washington.

India is already a great power with its clearly defined sphere of influence. The Indian gross national product, third largest in the Third World (after China and Brazil), is already—excluding the Eastern Bloc—tenth largest in the whole world. And its armaments are not to be despised (Delhi has just saved Westland).

Delhi's imperialism is still modest by the spectacular standards of the world at large—cutting Pakistan in half in 1972; and liquidating the Himalayan State of Sikkim. They took total control of Bhutan; supported the Tamils of Sri Lanka and have made efforts to knock Colombo into line. Then there's the continual bullying of Nepal, and support for the main opposition party, Nepal Congress. All this and three decades of trying to foment trouble in Pakistan.

In economic terms, the manufacturing sector of India is a giant (by South Asian standards), overshadowing the rest. Take for example Nepal. It is landlocked and obliged to haul all imports 900 kilometres from Calcutta.

In 1982, a barrel of Russian oil cost

\$11.90, but \$17.90 on the Nepali border, and retailed for \$20 in Kathmandu. Yet India refuses to sign the international agreement on the rights to access of landlocked countries.

Article XIII of the 1972 trade agreement between Nepal and India states blandly that India reserves the right to suspend the flow of goods to Nepal if the Indian government believes Nepal is putting difficulties in the way of the harmonious implementation of the treaty. Nepal has no right to control imports from India.

Yet, just like Daniel Thorner or Michael Foot, the old traditions of anti-imperialism conceal the new world emerging. The Indian Left is quite unselfconscious in defending Delhi. Like the Victorians, the Indian bourgeoisie say India does not dominate its neighbours, it tries to help the ungrateful sods.

And then Mrs Gandhi, in the first burst of Sri Lankan Tamil activity, appoints as her chief negotiator with Colombo an Indian Tamil; wasn't that neighbourly and sensitive?

The Thirteenth Congress of the Communist Party of India (the pro-Moscow lot) has just closed. It proclaimed its support for the government's foreign policy.

In Kathmandu, Dacca, Colombo and Islamabad they watch warily as the Indian army moves to crack Sikh skulls, for they know they may be next in line.

The simple division of the world into oppressors and oppressed is a poor guide to understanding. There is no flea small enough not to be feeding off a smaller one. The domination of the world by a handful of States reproduces the same pattern of domination down the hierarchy.

Except that in the Third World, the bourgeoisie are innocent; they think, once an anti-imperialist, always so. And the Left line up dutifully with the ruling class—opposition to Washington becomes oppression of Kathmandu. ■

NEWSHOUND

By Rap



The crumpled shield

LABOUR has scored major victories in the local elections, but it seems that the heady days of municipal socialism are, for the moment, over.

The radical pledges to transform and expand local services, to provide cheap transport and for the inner city are forgotten. The 'Fortress Islington' setting out to defy Tory monetarism have crumbled and the confident calls to battle are now quiet.

And all those others who followed the more prominent advocates of red-blooded municipal socialism with their own paler versions and less ambitious projects now shrug and protest at how their hands are tied.

It is not the place here to repeat the arguments we put at the time or to say, we told you so, but to look at what the future holds in store for workers who live in, and those who work for, the Labour boroughs.

The biggest impact of the cuts is on capital expenditure, and will remain so. The massive deterioration of housing stock, schools and roads continues unabated. The Audit Commission puts it starkly:

'Local Authorities' capital expenditure has declined by over 40 percent in real terms since the first oil crisis... Local authorities will not be able to maintain, let alone improve the state of existing local authority housing stock, schools and roads.'

The government estimates the amount needed to repair and renovate council housing at £20 billion. The Audit Commission estimates the total construction and repair bill to put both public and private housing stock right at £30-£40 billion. The cuts in real terms on new council building since 1979 is 86 percent. And this is a further reduction on cuts already made by Labour.

Increasing numbers of homeless (ten percent of whom are so because of mortgage default), are being put into bed and breakfast accommodation, and more and more council tenants find themselves condemned to live in damp, deteriorating housing, with no prospect of a transfer or anything but remedial repair, if that.

There has also been an immediate and high price to pay for defeat. Rates have risen, 16 percent in Liverpool and 20 percent in South Yorkshire, where bus fares too have as much as trebled.

The Labour boroughs have not and probably won't take up the axe and make wholesale cuts to existing council services, if only because the Tories are likely to steer clear of a new round of savage and unpopular rate capping.

What will take place is an ever-increasing squeeze on resources. More vacant posts

will go unfilled, staffing levels will deteriorate, in some cases involving reorganisation, with demands for greater productivity, and with management grades getting the carrot of re-grading. Plans won't happen, dud projects are built into the budget, supplies and stationery are increasingly monitored, delayed or blocked.

The workforce will come under increasing stress and pressure of work, with growing demand on one hand, and cuts in resources on the other.

It is possible that already depleted direct labour organisation will be increasingly forced to compete at a profit. The courts have ordered Haringey DLO to accept no new orders, although the council is still pledging no redundancies.

'As the squeeze tightens its grip, the Labour boroughs are taking an increasingly hard stance against any sections that resist'

Most councillors, not prepared to take on the law, will take on their own council workforce. The best Labour lefts are against making cuts, but shrug their shoulders, moan about Kinnock, are unable to argue an alternative and generally keep their heads down. The worst argue that any action would be irresponsible. Power now lies firmly with the Kinnockites and senior management.

Inside the workforce there is a lot of anger and anti-Tory feeling. But on the other hand there is a sense of betrayal.

Ken Livingstone is blamed for breaking ranks; other boroughs are blamed for not sticking together, but it is a small and ever-decreasing minority who are prepared openly to defend Liverpool and Lambeth for having held out alone.

It is important to understand that it is Kinnock who has won the day. From the council chamber to the wards and into the workforce 'realism' now prevails. There is a belief that prolonged resistance only made matters worse. Kinnock's charge of 'posturing' has stuck.

There is a dangerously passive cynicism. There are no more alternative strategies, the 'dented shield' has won the day over militancy. There is a sense of 'everyone for themselves.'

In this atmosphere there is an increasing danger of the right making forays within

the council unions to displace the left. In various boroughs left-led Nalگو branches are being challenged by right-led NUPE or ACTSS. In some (so far isolated) instances they have been able to lead right-wing strikes.

This happened in Greenwich where ACTSS organised a boycott by their members, including women telephonists, of the Women's Unit because of complaints the Unit had made about sexist pin ups.

Positive discrimination and minority voting rights are issues the right are increasingly confident at taking on.

But when the employers put the squeeze on, the anger and resentment can spill over into action. There have been guerilla actions in a number of Housing Benefit Offices, and a number of disputes in reaction to the squeeze. Refuse collectors in Liverpool have taken action over bonus payments, home care workers in Islington and library workers in Hackney have struck.

The outcome of these disputes has been uneven so far. Some have had success and have even gained ground; for example, regradings and increased staffing levels. Others find themselves losing ground they gained in the past, and some have even been taken by the throat and left gasping for breath.

The long and bitter dispute in Hackney's libraries is one such example. After a series of attacks, the union demanded minimum staffing levels and implemented its 'no cover' policy. The council deducted pay, and eventually bust Nalگو's no cover policy and then used the minimum staffing levels to close down libraries. As the squeeze tightens its grip, the Labour boroughs are taking an increasingly hard stance against any sections that resist, and will attempt to isolate and weaken sections that have done so in the past.

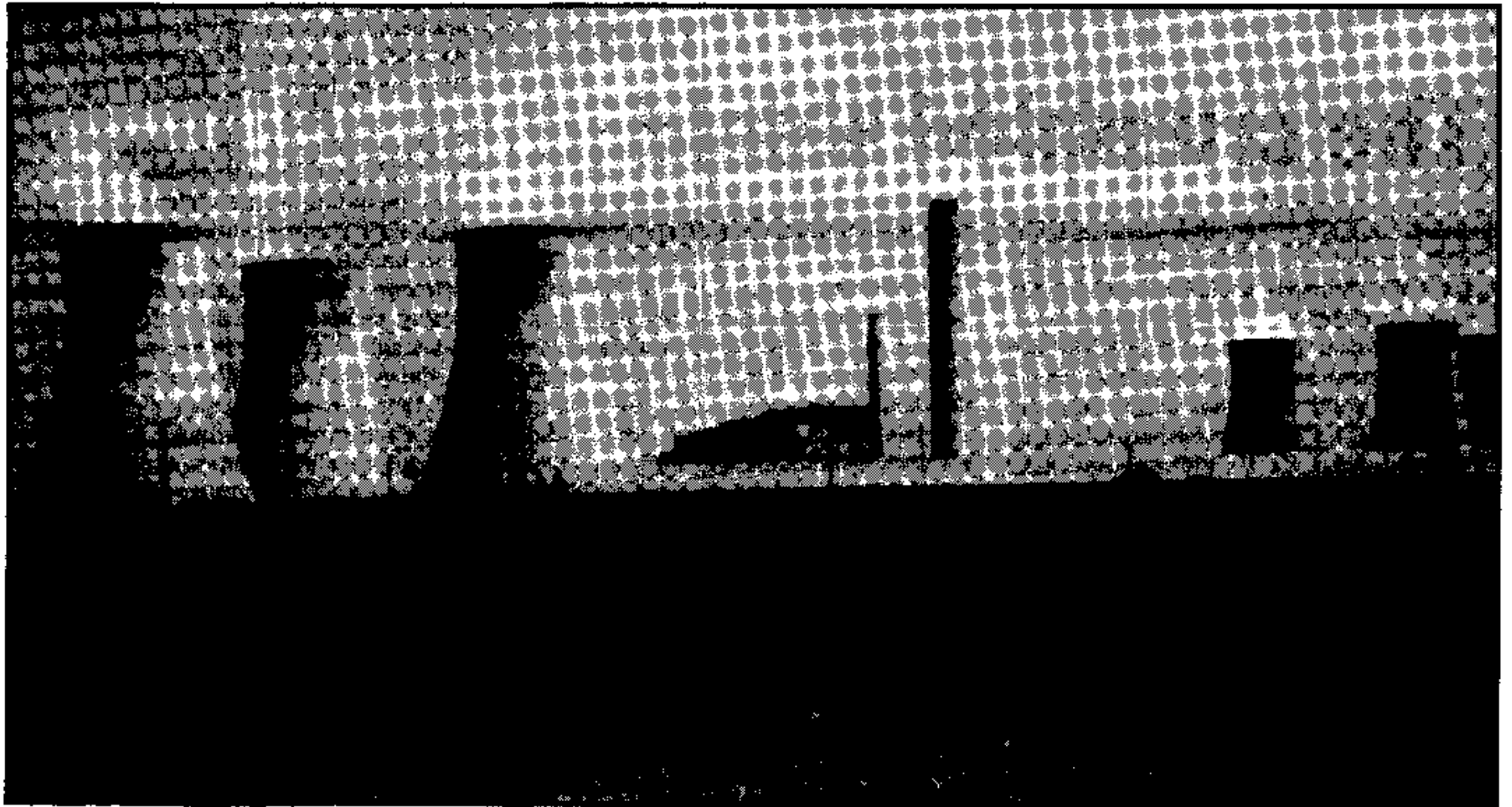
In these circumstances socialists should be clear about what is required. We will see anger and resentment turning into action from certain sections of the council workforce. The problem will be to spread that action to other sections, also angry at the impact of the cuts, if the action is not to be isolated and defeated.

That will mean taking on the new realism, whether expressed in council policy to implement cuts, or the union leaders' reluctance to fight. It is possible to resist the cuts but that means denying the logic of the dented (crumpled?) shield, which demands that we pay now for a Labour victory in two or three years time.

The lesson of the print strike needs to be hammered home. Kinnock's stand against Liverpool's 'posturing', Dean and Dubbins' refusal to mobilise Fleet Street against the print employers, the witch hunt, and the Labour boroughs' implementation of rate capping are not disconnected events. They are the reality of Kinnock's grip on the Labour Party and the union leadership.

When action does break out, socialists need to argue that the grip can be weakened. ■

Rob Ferguson



AFTER every nuclear accident the nagging doubts about whether there can ever be such a thing as safe, cheap nuclear power become greater. The latest disaster at Chernobyl increased these doubts and underlined again the links between nuclear power stations and nuclear weapons. But despite the problems, governments are still committed to nuclear power. Frances Smith looks at some of the reasons why this is so. Mike Simons looks at the Labour Party's record and Pat Stack deals with the question of nukes in a socialist society.

THE NUCLEAR industry has a history which is short but not very sweet. The discovery of nuclear fission in the winter of 1938-9 came just before the start of the Second World War. In fission, the central nucleus of an atom like uranium-235 splits into several pieces releasing the energy needed in bombs or power stations. Some of the pieces are atoms like iodine 131 or caesium 137, the radioactive material released at Chernobyl.

The timing of the discovery of fission, a few months before the outbreak of war, meant that the interest in it was almost entirely in the possibility of making bombs. Most of the work on nuclear weapons during the war was done in the United States, though scientists from Britain, France, and Canada were also involved.

The fear of many of these scientists, several of whom were Jewish refugees, was that Germany would develop the bomb first. However, that did not happen and the war came to an end in Europe even before the American bomb was ready for testing.

The end of the war against Japan came later with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the first public demonstration of the power of the new weapons. Though unnecessary in military terms since Japan was near collapse, a strong reason for using the bombs was to signal a major shift in US policy towards their wartime ally, the USSR. Before the bomb was ready the USA had been keen to have the Russians enter the war against Japan and this was planned for early August 1945. But once

the bomb had been tested in the deserts of New Mexico in July, the attitude of the USA changed fundamentally.

The American President, Truman, now wanted to end the war as quickly as possible to limit Russian influence in South East Asia. He also wanted to take a much harder line towards the USSR on developments in Europe and other issues. Dropping the bombs was a dramatic way of unveiling the new policy and demonstrating the military power the USA now had to back it up.

But the legacy of wartime was very important for other reasons. One very significant development was the harnessing of scientific resources for military ends. While the wartime bomb project was a good example of this change, it was not the only one. Wartime work on radar was on an even larger scale, so much so that at the end of the war the radar industry in the US was larger than the pre-war car industry.

This trend of a great expansion in research and development sponsored by the military has continued so that in the US well over 90 percent of government funding for solid state physics has come from military sources. Whole fields of research have been opened up with this money and devices like computers, lasers or integrated circuits have rolled off the academic production line as a result.

After the war, work continued on nuclear weapons but now Britain and the US each had their own project because the wartime collaboration had broken down.

The possibility of nuclear power came more to the fore. There were several reasons for this development. One was that the reactors that produced plutonium for bombs gave off large amounts of heat. At first this was just wasted but it was possible to use the heat for producing steam to drive turbines and generate electricity. This is what happened in Britain with the Windscale piles (reactors), one of which went on fire in 1957, being replaced by the first Magnox power stations at Calder Hall and Chapelcross. These power stations are now operated by British Nuclear Fuels Ltd (BNFL) and produce plutonium for the military and generate electricity as well.

Another boost for nuclear power came from the Suez crisis which brought home how vulnerable Western Europe was to an interruption of the oil supply from the Middle East. Nuclear power would be a useful insurance policy. But that same insurance policy could pay up during a miners' strike as we saw last year.

A further argument was about turning 'swords into ploughshares'. If electricity from nuclear sources was too cheap to meter, it would be a boon for humanity and the weapons connection might be overlooked—a factor which cynical governments might want to exploit and might even make some individual scientists feel happier about working on nuclear power.

So from the 1950s there was an interest in Britain and other countries in the com-

mercial possibilities of nuclear power. But the military connection was always present. The technology used both for civil and military applications is often the same. At Sellafield, used nuclear fuel from Magnox power stations is reprocessed to separate out the 'useful' plutonium and uranium from waste products, but civilian plutonium follows military through the works and only bookkeeping keeps them apart.

But the full story of nuclear power is very complex. Events in the US were different for a variety of factors. Firstly, they had abundant cheap coal for power stations and it seemed unlikely that nuclear power could be much cheaper. So reactor development in the US took a different direction. Here again the military had an effect. The US navy decided to develop a reactor to power submarines and so they designed a compact unit that produced a lot of power for its size. This was the Pressurized Water Reactor (PWR) which has now appeared in a new guise as a reactor for power stations such as the one the CEBG wants to build at Sizewell.

What these developments bring out is the key role of the state in creating and sustaining both nuclear weapons and nuclear power. Only an organisation like a modern state has the resources for developing this expensive technology or a need for the end products, the weapons or large quantities of electricity.

With this history it is hardly surprising that governments are wedded to nuclear policies. The development of weapons has underwritten the astronomical research and development costs of nuclear technology. Even today in Britain where there is a formal separation between the military and the civilian uses the links are still very close and it is possible for one use to subsidise the other, in terms of money, fissile material or even personnel.

But there are other reasons for interest in nuclear power. It may be an insurance policy against the day when OPEC might be able to control the price of oil or the NUM takes the offensive. Who knows how the prices of oil, coal and uranium may change in the next 50 years? Some governments, particularly in France, have taken the view that nuclear power will be cheaper in the long run and they have invested huge sums in it as a result.

What we are seeing is an everyday tale of capitalist competition but on an international scale and involving huge investments. For example, one design of reactor has now been developed, the PWR, which is likely to be adopted worldwide. This has happened not because it is the best and safest reactor but because it seems to have the best commercial potential.

But the consequence of accidents or wrong decisions are very high. The cost of Three Mile Island or Chernobyl, or indeed Dungeness B, the power station in Kent which has hardly worked, have been immense.

What the nuclear industry is worried about is the future. The slump in orders for power stations in the wake of Three Mile

Island has led to a shakeout in the industry with only a few consortia now able to design and build nuclear power stations. There are hopes that BNFL will be able to grab a large part of the trade in fuel and re-processing services but that must be doubtful since France is keen to have the business.

Recent developments have also taken their toll of another favourite project of the nuclear industry, the fast breeder reactor. From being the answer to all energy needs since they can produce more fuel than they consume—at least in theory—the fast breeder reactor is now a lame duck with some European nations squabbling amongst themselves to see who will get what bits of a project to build the next reactor.

The development of nuclear weapons

and nuclear power is a very clear illustration of what is wrong with a society where a small minority can take all the important decisions about future investment. If these decisions were taken on the basis of what people needed rather than to bolster or protect the status quo the story would have been quite different.

But changing these policies by influencing a few key technocrats or MPs as Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth try to do will not be effective. The stakes are too high for that to work. The scientists who worked on the bomb project had little influence on the decision to use the weapons against Japan even though they did their best to raise the moral issues involved. There is no doubt that the same would be true today. What is needed is to change the very basis of society. ■

Labour's atomic record

THE LABOUR Party set Britain on the atomic road.

In 1945, John Maynard Keynes, the most influential economist of his day, warned the new Labour government that 'the economic basis for the hopes of the people were non-existent'.

Nevertheless, prime minister Clement Attlee decided to set up 'my atom bomb committee' to begin the British nuclear programme. It was to cost £100 million, a staggering amount.

After the war, under the McMahon Act, Britain was excluded from nuclear research in the United States, although British scientists had played a major role in building the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

'That stupid McMahon Act,' Attlee later complained, 'they [the Americans] were apt to think that they were the big boys and we were the small boys; we'd just got to show them they didn't know everything.'

The nuclear programme was born in the utmost secrecy and was kept from most of the cabinet. The programme was a conspiracy between a few ministers, their advisers and the heads of major British companies like ICI.

Many of the plants that today are passed off as part of the civilian nuclear power industry, were commissioned by the post-war Labour government as part of their bomb building programme.

From the start Labour ministers disguised their bomb programme by talking instead of their hopes for nuclear power.

The Minister of Supply, for example, said 'Atomic energy was the most important subject of all...Britain was in a race against other countries for her economic survival.'

When Churchill was returned to office in 1951 he was amazed that a nuclear programme existed. Labour, said Churchill,

had decided to 'conceal this vast operation and its finances from the scrutiny of the House, not even obtaining a vote on the principle involved.'

A pattern was set. Over 30 years later, *The Economist* noted:

'On each occasion when a Conservative government has entered office, it has been pleasantly surprised by the good health of its nuclear inheritance.'

Throughout the 1950s the nuclear industry grew and there were fierce debates inside the Labour Party over unilateral nuclear disarmament—the renunciation of nuclear weapons. But the question of nuclear power wasn't touched.

In the run up to the 1964 general election, the new Labour leader Harold Wilson declared that Polaris nuclear submarines, ordered by the Tories, would be converted to a conventional role.

But Wilson's memoirs state, 'It was clear that the production of the submarines was well past the point of no return; there could be no question of cancelling them, except at inordinate costs.'

The cost was £40 million—half what Labour spent on Polaris every year. There was of course no question of scrapping their nuclear warheads either.

In addition Labour announced the second generation of British nuclear reactors, the Advanced Gas Cooled Reactors (AGRs). The AGR programme was, to quote a later head of the Central Electricity Generating Board, 'a disaster we must not repeat'.

Labour's commitment to the nuclear programme fitted in with the Wilson government's rhetoric of the 'white heat of the technological revolution'.

But support for nuclear power meant savaging the coal industry. The 1964 to 1970 Labour government closed more pits than the Tories ever managed.

Furthermore, Tony Benn's diary for 1969 showed that, just as Thatcher was to do 15 years later, the government increased the load on nuclear stations, despite knowing of serious faults, in the face of industrial action by miners.

The pattern was repeated by the 1974 government.

In keeping with past practice, Labour continued to nurture the nuclear power industry—only this time there was slightly more public discussion of the programme.

Labour ordered a public inquiry into the planned extension of the Windscale nuclear reprocessing works and Tony Benn, when he became Minister of Energy, held two one-day conferences where experts could thrash out the nuclear issues.

The anti-nuclear campaigners got short shrift from the public inquiry.

As Minister of Energy, Benn introduced an act which allowed the Atomic Energy Authority's special police force to carry automatic weapons.

In 1977 Benn twice visited picket lines at Windscale to ask the strikers to return. When the plant's management said lives were at risk unless vital supplies got through the picket line, he threatened to use troops against pickets.

Finally, Benn ordered two more AGRs and fought a prolonged battle with the nuclear industry to block plans to introduce US designed Pressurised Water Reactors (PWRs).

Certainly his experience at the hands of the nuclear industry turned him against nuclear power. But the way Benn behaved in office and the decisions he made, show the difficulty of reforming away the nuclear industry.

However Labour's current mouthpiece on the nuclear issue, Jack Cunningham, is much worse.

Cunningham's constituency includes Sellafield and he is fervently pro-nuclear. After a spate of leaks from the Sellafield plant earlier this year, Cunningham rose in the House of Commons to demand the government, 'discount the inevitable but unjustified calls likely to be made to close the plant'.

When local Tories recently formed the Friends of Sellafield association, Jack Cunningham quickly agreed to be president.

If Cunningham is still environment spokesman during the Labour Party conference, he'll be in for a rough ride. However, no matter how delegates vote we're unlikely to see the next Labour government shutting down the nuclear industry.

Even Benn and Heffer are only calling for the end of nuclear power station building and the gradual closure of the existing stations, starting with the oldest. Even the nuclear industry admit that many stations will have to close soon through old age.

Kinnock and Cunningham want a moratorium on new plants until the political and radioactive fallout from Chernobyl has passed, and more openness from the whole industry. This puts them to the right of the Liberal Party. ■

Red nuclear power?

'It could never happen here' is the favourite slogan of government ministers, nuclear experts and even the Labour Party leadership, following the Chernobyl disaster.

Most socialists reject such talk out of hand. But there are some socialists who say nuclear power under capitalism may be bad, but nuclear power in a socialist society could be used to the advantage of workers.

The argument goes that nuclear power can never be safe in a society which subordinates the needs and safety of people to the requirements of profits. Corners will always be cut, scientific research pointed in the wrong direction, lies will be told, and ultimately the power produced will be used to make further profits.

In addition, the link between nuclear power and nuclear weapons, which we detail elsewhere in this magazine, puts the final nail in the nuclear industry's coffin as far as most socialists are concerned.

But what of a socialist society, where people's needs are the determining factor in the way decisions are implemented? Scientific research would be used to benefit humanity rather than destroy it. All sorts of new horizons would be opened up. Society would march forward.

Why then, it is argued, couldn't a socialist society produce an entirely safe system of nuclear energy? With the profit motive removed, and with the advances in scientific research, why shouldn't such a project be successful?

For those who argue that Russia is a socialist society, or some form of workers' state, the question is no longer an academic one. They have a concrete answer in the Chernobyl tragedy.

But for those of us who believe that Russia is a capitalist country where such cost-cutting is bound to occur, the events neither surprise us nor answer the question about nukes and socialism.

So where do we begin? First of all, socialists are not utopians, blind to the realities of life.

In a socialist society the chances of all sorts of tragic occurrences happening will greatly diminish, because the profit motive will be removed.

The number of planes that crash merely because safety precautions are too costly and time consuming in present society is frightening.

The number of people who unnecessarily die in 'natural disasters' like earthquakes merely because of the terrible housing in which they live is criminal.

Most of these lives would be saved in a socialist society, but it would take an

idealistic idiot to predict that no plane will ever crash or that earthquakes will completely disappear, or fail to claim any victims when they do occur.

In the case of nuclear power even with the best of precautionary measures there must always be the chance that something could go wrong.

And if Chernobyl teaches us anything it is that the scale of such accidents is so great, and can cause such devastation that no socialist society could possibly contemplate them.

But perhaps the real question is: why the hell would we need nuclear power?

The main driving force behind all nuclear research has from the beginning been the development of nuclear weapons. As a spin-off capitalism has invested fantastic amounts of money in nuclear energy.

A socialist society would clearly have no place for nuclear weapons and no commitment to uphold capitalist investment.

What's more, there are forms of energy available which for different reasons capitalism either ignores or seeks to restrict.

Oil, gas and coal are available in abundance. The potential supply of these can make Britain totally capable of a nuclear-free energy strategy. Britain's coal supplies alone could meet energy needs for the next 300 years.

Then there are natural resources like the sun, waves, and wind, each of which can be harnessed to serve as forms of energy, and each of which capitalism consistently rejects.

Such forms of energy are not used because they are not seen as profitable or because rival spheres of influence hold the bulk of natural resources, or because they give too much power to traditionally militant groups of workers. Indeed, during the period the Tories have been in office, what little research that did take place has been stopped.

Nuclear power is therefore a shadow under which we all have to live. And we do so not because cheaper, cleaner and safer alternatives are unavailable, but because it serves capitalism's interests to continue with a nuclear strategy.

For those of us who look forward to and fight for the advent of socialism, not least among the reasons we do so is to live in a society where events like Windscale, Three Mile Island and Chernobyl cannot happen.

They will not happen because the sort of society that spawns them and the source of the disasters themselves will be eradicated. ■

Rape: the socialist answer

FROM NEWSPAPER headlines, the TV and radio to the corridors of Whitehall we have all heard various theories and themes concerning rape in the past few months.

The release of controversial crime statistics on rape shows a 29 percent increase, 50 percent in London, of reported rapes to the police. This has led to many demands, ranging from castration, hanging and higher sentences, to more sympathetic police units.

It has even compelled *Woman's Own*, with a readership of over five million, to do 'our most important survey ever'. The male author of their article is surprised with his conclusion, that 'every one of us (men) has the guilt and blood of woman's suffering on our hands'.

His conclusions—that men cannot be changed, that the answer lies in higher sentencing—dovetail with feminist arguments.

Those who argue against higher sentences, like Melissa Benn in April's *Marxism Today*, demand the 'protection' of women through government expenditure on street lighting, public transport and on housing estates, but even more for a changing of men's attitudes towards women.

We are a long way from the days when rape victims were weighed down with stones and birch branches and drowned in peat bogs, or where rape victims and their attackers were bound and thrown into the river, awaiting rescue by husband or king.

But we still live in a society which treats women who have been raped with hypocrisy, disdain and distrust. This is true from the newspapers to the church and the courts.

We live in a society where rape is still legally impossible in marriage, where (although not required legally) over 60 percent of rape victims have their past sexual history brought up in court. Where in 82 percent of all rape cases which reach the courts it is a question of consent—did she really say no?

It is a society where women are taught to blame themselves for rape, 'was it something I said/did', 'maybe I shouldn't have taken that drink' and where this attitude is embodied into every institution surrounding rape.

This is true from the judge in the Old Bailey case in 1976 who said, 'It is well known that women in particular and small boys are liable to be untruthful and invent stories', to the Ipswich judge in 1982 who found a woman who had been raped guilty of 'contributory negligence' because she had been hitch-hiking at the time.

The recent statistics have frightened many people because they expose the reality of rape. For the first time for many



SOHO: laws were used against prostitutes not kerb crawlers

they have broken the myths surrounding rape.

The press coverage of the Yorkshire Ripper case in the early 1980s—which painted rapists as manic strangers ready to pounce on women late at night in deserted dark alleyways—is no longer seen as the norm.

From the tabloids to the 'respectable' press we witness a recognition of rape as widespread and common—something done by ordinary men to ordinary women.

The released figures may be frightening but even more so is the fact that an estimated four out every five rapes are not reported to the police at all.

This has been recognised by feminists for a long time. The Women's Movement since its inception has fought to dispel the myths and lies fed about rape and violence against women.

But it has been in the framework of pointing the finger at the wrong enemy—of laying the blame for rape firmly at the feet of individual men, in the specific, and overall male control in general.

There is hardly a feminist writer who disagrees with this analysis.

We always hear the echo of the famous, and widely used, statement of Susan Brownmiller from her book *Against Our Will*: 'Rape is a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear'.

But is this really the case? Does the blame lie with male control inside society?

There can be no disputing the fact that blame lies with *individual* men, in as far as

they are the ones who rape and sexually assault women. But do men rape women as part of an overall conspiracy to subjugate women, as a reflection of their overall control inside society?

The answer has to be no.

The London Rape Crisis Centre stated in its first report in 1977, two years after its foundation, that,

'In a society where woman and man are seen as divided as initiator and consumer, aggressive and passive, predator and prey, wolf and chick, then rape is not abnormal... Rape is the logical and extreme end of the spectrum of male/female relationships'.

We are reminded constantly of our 'roles' inside this society. There is the daily dose of rank hypocrisy from the tabloids which talk sympathetically of rape whilst on the same page carry degrading and humiliating images and stories of women as willing sex objects.

From the billboards we see women being used to sell anything from motor oil to lawnmowers. From the day we're born to the day we die we're forced to live stereotypes.

This traps men and women from the pink and blue as babies, from the thin, beautiful blonde and Levi 501 body as young adults, to the dutiful wife and mother and breadwinning husband in later life.

These ideas, and the divisions they cause between women and men, have to be seen in the framework of *class* society. A society much different from that painted by femin-

ists when they talk of male violence.

It is one where the majority of people, both working class men and women, suffer because of their alienation. Where being forced to depend on selling your labour power means having no *real* control over where you live, where you work or what you earn.

Capitalism doesn't begin and end at the factory gate, it affects all aspects of our lives.

From the firefighter's wife who was speaking during her husband's strike of 1977/8 when she said:

'I can't talk to my husband when he comes in—the job makes him so tense and ill. When I tell him his dinner's in the oven or something, he often just tells me to shut-up'.

To the Ford worker who said of working on the production line in the 1960s:

'I used to come home from work and fall straight asleep. My legs and arms used to be burning. And I knew hard work... I didn't have any relations with my wife for months. Now that's not right is it? No work should be that hard'.

This is in stark contrast to what we are taught to expect from life—love, marriage, kids and eternal happiness, with perhaps a few hiccups.

The reality means unhappiness, loneliness, distorted sexual relationships and more alienation. And we should not be surprised when that results in violence. Because of the inequality and nature of society it will mean *male* violence.

No matter how hard we try we are reminded that we can't have free and equal relationships in a society which treats men and women unequally. Or a society which treats any of its members unequally.

Witness the treatment of black and white men in America.

Blacks are only 11 percent of the population and they are the poorest and most alienated.

Murder, assault, rape and robbery are the big four in violent crime in America. Blacks, in 1973, constituted 58 percent of *all* arrests for murder, 63 percent for armed robbery and 47 percent for rape.

An examination of 3,000 rapists in 11 southern states, between 1945 and 1965, showed that blacks were *seven* times as likely as whites to get the maximum sentence of death and *18* times as likely if a black man raped a white woman than if a white man raped a black woman.

The US Justice Department showed that blacks were 89 percent of *all* men executed for rape between 1930 and 1964.

A survey carried out by Amir into all reported rapes—646 cases with 1,292 offenders—in Philadelphia between the years 1958 and 1960 noted that 90 percent of rapists 'belonged to the lower part of the occupational scale, from skilled workers to the unemployed' and were aged between 15 and 19 years old. Most had previous convictions for burglary, robbery, disorderly conduct or assault—only 9 percent had a previous conviction for rape.

He concluded that the average rapist was

the 'typical youthful offender'.

The FBI has said that 61 percent of American rapists are under 25 years old. And other studies have noted that two thirds of American rapists are single and from the 'lower classes'. Their victims too are young and from the 'lower classes'.

Most studies point to the majority of rapes occurring late at night during the weekend and an increase in the numbers of rapes during the summer. They have also noted a link between the consumption of alcohol and rape.

As Susan Brownmiller has noted the typical American rapist is likely to be 19 years old and the boy next door, that is if you happen to live in a ghetto. She says:

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

We are victims of a class society, not a patriarchal society as feminists would have us believe.

'The vast majority of rapes are committed by men known to their victims'

Yet Ruth Hall, from Women Against Rape, said in 1976 that rape was 'a violent expression of men's power over women, and a backlash when that power is challenged.'

Women can fight back, we are continually reminded, but ultimately all men, although they may not all choose to rape, have the ability to rape and are aware of that fact. Hence the feminist slogan 'all men are potential rapists'.

The fact that the vast majority of rapes are committed by men known to their victims—recent British statistics show that only 26 percent of rapes are by strangers, and all rape statistics show that over a half of all rapes are committed in either the victim or rapist's home—they argue proves their theory. It allows them to draw the conclusion 'never trust a man'.

As the London Rape Crisis Centre says, 'the existence of rape is fundamental to the power structure which exists between men and women... If you are a man you cannot empathise with a woman about rape'.

The conclusions that we draw as Marxists are very different.

Rape is the violent product of a violent and brutal society based on the domination of one class over another. This society teaches its male members that women are commodities, that women are willing

sexual participants—anywhere, anytime, anyplace.

No socialist would ever condone rape or violence against women just as no socialist would ever blame individual men for a society which distorts men's lives as well as women's.

And the suffering is not equal inside society either. Feminists argue that all women, of all ages, and all classes are raped in equal proportions and are under the same reign of fear from being attacked.

We need to dispel these myths.

Looking at studies which have been carried out into rape helps us do this but it has to be done in the understanding that many cases never reach the realms of being a 'statistic'. These studies are also few and far between, and mostly American.

But nonetheless they do point to vital factors in determining the class nature of rape.

Amir found that 70 percent of rapes are planned and 11 percent were partially planned and the majority carried out by men known to the women they raped. The London Rape Crisis Centre agrees with this, saying that 80 percent are either wholly or partially planned.

As I have stated above, a recent study by Women Against Rape of 1,236 London women showed that three out of every four rapists knew the woman they raped.

The fact that the majority of rapes are carried out by young, working class kids on young, working class women does not mean that middle class and upper class women are not raped, or do not suffer the threat of rape. This would be an absurd argument.

But it is true to say, when looked at in the perspective of degrees of alienation, financial comfort and control over your life as an individual, that the threat is far more pronounced in the working class.

The Kinsey Report on sexuality in America in the 1950s conclusively pointed to the middle class having freer, easier and less inhibited sexual relationships. The same conclusions were drawn by the *Sunday Times* in May 1984 after their survey on sex and political parties. The SDP topped the poll for best sexual relationships.

As Women Against Rape note from their findings:

'Women with the least financial security—low paid jobs and/or low paid partners, poor housing and no access to a car—stood a better chance of being assaulted or sexually abused... The chances of experiencing assault or abuse are high if you are black and if your income is low.'

Often rape is seen by people as a process to intimidate and humiliate women. Although indisputably this happens, it is not the reasons men have for raping women.

More likely is that, in the words of Susan Brownmiller, it is 'stemming from a need to find or prove their masculinity. They are desperately trying to learn to be successful men'.



IS policing the answer? Cop attacks a woman on an anti-porn demo

And who determines what a 'successful man' is—capitalist society.

Gang rape, defined as when two or more men rape one woman, is common. Overt violence and sexual humiliation is not.

In Amir's study 43 percent were gang rapes. He noted that in two out of every three rapes 'non-brutal' physical violence was used. Fellatio and repeated intercourse occurred in 27 percent of all the rapes (this was how he defined sexual humiliation).

A study in Toronto showed 50 percent of rapes were gang rapes and in Washington DC it was 30 percent.

An Australian study of rapes in New South Wales in 1973 found 69 percent were single offenders and violence occurring in 13 percent of all rapes.

A study in Denver showed that in nearly all rapes there were demands for affection and co-operation.

Again Women Against Rape note: 'About half the sexual assaults and about half the rapes were accomplished by means other than the use or threat of physical violence.'

Men do not rape simply to exert violence over women. They rape out of a distorted view of sexuality—one given to them by capitalism.

This is not to say that rape should be ignored or not fought against. Far from it. For socialists the answers to rape and violence against women lies with the collective organisation of both working class men and women. For feminists it means the opposite.

In *No Turning Back*, an anthology of writings from the Women's Movement, a feminist theorist writes that,

'An economic revolution cannot eradicate patriarchal social relations as the basis for male/female antagonisms

does not lie in the economic mode of production but in the reproductive role...and it is here that the final battle will be fought.'

To believe that leads feminists into the reformist camp, with reactionary conclusions. They end up supporting, and calling for, higher sentences, male curfews, 'better' police procedure and laws and so on.

They are not the solution to the problem. They end up putting more power into the hands of the state and have the end result of, not only being substitutionist and reformist, but of further widening the divide between working class men and women.

Nearly all feminists call for higher sentences for rapists, some even support castration and hanging. In doing so they distort and misunderstand the real role of the courts and the prison service.

It is still the case that in Britain 25 percent of *all* violent crime is domestic—'crime' resulting from the frustrations in people's lives.

Violence in the home, and rape, will be with us until we get rid of the system that creates that violence. The police and courts do not exist primarily to protect ordinary women from that violence, they are an integral part of the system—which is why they spend most of their time defending the property of the rich or smashing up picket lines (note the fact that the police only ever solve 16 percent of *all* reported crime).

Only a tiny minority of people are sentenced, and when they are it is likely to be for between two and four years (the maximum penalty is life). Rapists normally serve their term of imprisonment in isolation units with little or no rehabilitation therapy.

Unfortunately there are no statistics

available in this country which enable us to analyse whether convicted rapists are likely to rape again.

But a whole range of people—from the Royal College of Psychiatrists to feminists—agree that the vast majority of rapists are not lunatics and there is evidence from America that therapy has had an 80 percent success rate.

Socialists should be against the demand for higher sentences because it wrongly locates the blame in individual men, just as we should be against demands for better policing.

It is not a question, as Susan Brownmiller says, of demanding that all lawful power structures 'must be stripped of male dominance and control' and that this is 'a revolutionary goal of the utmost importance to women's rights'.

Rather it is a question of stripping a minority of their control over the majority of people inside this society. To do that demands class unity.

Feminists draw the wrong conclusions because they have the wrong analysis of the world. They do not believe that working class men can change and see women as victims of a male dominated society. This is a strategy which leaves the working class on the sidelines of changing society and leaves women struggling to reform the system and/or 'sharing our fears and anxieties'.

One look back to the miners' strike proves conclusively that working class men and women *can* change.

It is a small example. But it goes against the argument put by feminists and demonstrates that by fighting together we can not only change society but our ideas and sexual relationships too. ■

Julie Waterson

Bans breed backlash

IN THE light of the recent publicity about rape and sexual attacks on women, many people are wondering whether the censorship of pornographic literature and films would make these attacks less likely.

Clare Short's private members' bill intending to ban 'page-three' style pin ups in newspapers was a response to womens' fears of these attacks.

On the surface it seems quite clear cut. Page three pin ups and the stupid blurbs accompanying them such as 'swimsuited Bertha is breasts ahead' do degrade women. Therefore it's understandable that many people who think these pin ups degrade women supported the Short bill.

Short argues that outlawing pictures of naked women would clean up the *Sun*. But it would leave untouched reports along the lines of 'Vicar in child sex probe', or 'Mother of two in sex orgy'. Even if the Short bill had been passed the *Sun* would be just as reactionary and anti working class as ever.

Apart from this, there are several more important reasons why socialists should not support legislation like Clare Short's.

Clamping down on degrading images of women does not stop women being degraded and does not stop womens' oppression. Banning porn does not stop it being either produced or consumed. Making it illegal only pushes it under the counter. It certainly doesn't help fight sexism.

On the contrary, it increases it. Countries which ban pornography—Spain and Portugal up to ten years ago, and Southern Ireland—are often ones where women have no contraception rights and little control over their sexuality.

Although Short actively disassociates herself from the Mary Whitehouse brigade, she ends up playing into their hands.

The truth is that Clare Short's bill reflects her understanding of how to fight sexism.

If you believe the way to change the world is through parliament, as she does, then the way to get change is to legislate for it.

One suggestion in both feminist and Labour Party circles is to introduce a statute against sexism, parallel to the racial hatred clause of the Public Order Act.

But the Public Order Act, first introduced as a result of the left's organisation against the fascists in 1936, has been used mainly against socialists to stop them demonstrating and holding meetings.

Yet in spite of the way legislation aimed at equality for women has consistently been used to increase law and order and undermine attempts to attain equality, both feminists and Labour Party members continue to look in this direction.

Janet Fookes bill on kerb crawling became law last year. It was supported by feminists and by Labour Party left wingers.

Its intention was to outlaw men harassing women from cars.

One reason the bill got such wide support was because it was argued that all women were harassed under the pretext of men looking for prostitutes.

But any idea of making it an offence for men to solicit women for sexual purposes in a manner likely to cause the woman fear was dropped from the bill at committee stage.

So, far from being a piece of legislation

to give women protection from harassment on the streets, the act has become another piece of legislation with which to persecute prostitutes.

Jane Calvert, in the feminist magazine *Trouble and Strife* has this to say:

'It is clear therefore that the act can in no way be seen as a feminist charter. The emphasis is on clamping down on prostitution rather than bringing a notion of equality into the law.'

A similar example was the feminist campaign to 'clean up Soho' in 1982. No action was taken against any 'sex shop'. But the police used the opportunity to harass every gay bookshop and cinema in the area.

The police act in a similarly repressive manner when it comes to women being murdered or sexually attacked.

At the time of the Yorkshire Ripper, when women in cities like Leeds and Bradford were scared to go out at night, the only advice offered by the police was that all women should stay indoors at night.

Any legislation which gives more power to the forces of law and order will at best be singularly ineffective and at worst it will be used against working class people, male and female, black and white.

Socialists are in favour of getting rid of repressive laws and support laws which make it easier for working class people to organise to improve the conditions they live in.

But laws in themselves are not the answer.

The only way to change ideas is to undermine the conditions which give rise to them in the first place.

The NUM magazine, *The Miner*, used to carry page three style pin ups. Scargill defended the pin ups being in the union magazine and argued against attempts to ban them.

But during the 1984 miners' strike the activity and support given to the strike by miners' wives and girlfriends, undermined the view of women as merely sex objects.

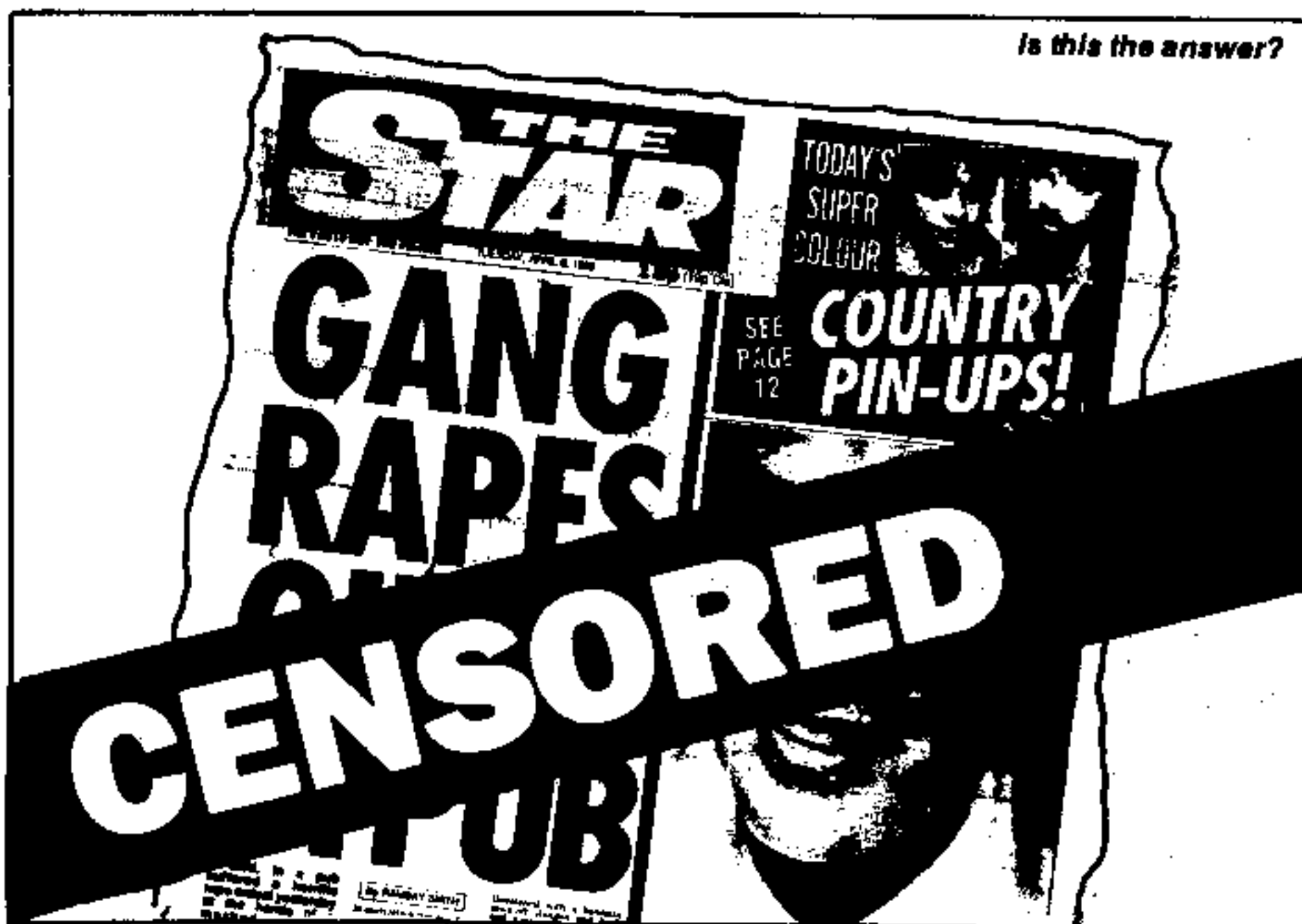
The pin ups were removed and there was no opposition to their removal. It just seemed logical at the time.

Censorship, if it is imposed from above, will produce a backlash. It creates the conditions for the growth of a black market in the banned material, and in some circumstances identifies the banned product with those fighting against the forces which banned it.

For example, when workers in Portugal overthrew fascism, one of the reactions against the repressive morality of fascism and rigid catholicism was the growth of a booming industry in pornography. Book-stalls appeared on the streets carrying volumes of Marx, Engels and Lenin, side by side with pornography.

Censorship of reactionary ideas only works if it is rooted in working class organisation. If not, it plays into the hands of the reactionary, backward, repressive ideas of the Mary Whitehouse brigade and other forces which would introduce the repressive double standards of Victorian morality. ■

Maureen Watson



The American working class

THE CENTRAL question in discussing the American working class is why there is not, and has not been, a political labour movement of any significance in the United States. This is in spite of the fact that the US is today the major capitalist power in the world, and has been since the turn of the century one of the two or three major capitalist powers.

There are a number of explanations put forward. The first set of arguments are what you might call the 'sociological' arguments. They can all be found in letters which Engels wrote to various people in America in the 1880s.

They are important because they have been recycled and refurbished, time and again, by various American liberals. They come down in essence to three propositions.

The first proposition concerns the unique character of land settlement in the US. In the post Civil War period, the victorious radical wing of the American bourgeoisie carried out their pledge to give most of the land formally in the hands of the state—the land in the west—to anyone who would actually agree to settle and improve it.

Consequently it is argued—and with some substance in that period—that this seriously delayed the formation of a permanent working class.

The second proposition is a connected one. American industry developed on an enormous scale in the post Civil War decades. The extent of this development can be seen by one statistic. In 1860, the year the war broke out, American iron and steel production (mostly iron) was one fifth of the British output. By the turn of the century US output—now mostly steel—had completely outstripped the British, and was the largest in the world.

This development was based on immigrant labour. But—and this is where it fits in with the land settlement question—this immigrant labour itself rapidly became assimilated into society.

The pattern went like this. Wave after wave of immigrants were brought in from Europe. They became, if you like, a temporary proletariat, because large sections of them moved on and up.

The important thing about this temporary proletariat, as Engels and others argued, is that it did not become stabilised and acclimatised in the cities—it was being drained at the top and the sides all the time.

The stockyards and steel mills were manned, so far as the mass of the workforce was concerned, by relatively recent, ever changing waves of immigrant labour.

This had a further consequence—the ghettoisation of the developing industrial cities, of which Chicago is the most famous example. So

the picture developed: rapidly expanding industry—murderously efficient by world standards, and brutally managed; a way out—the new frontier—and therefore extreme difficulty in developing permanent organisation; and the ghettoisation of the cities.

Will American workers ever fight? Duncan Hallas looks at the peculiar factors governing the development of the working class in the US.

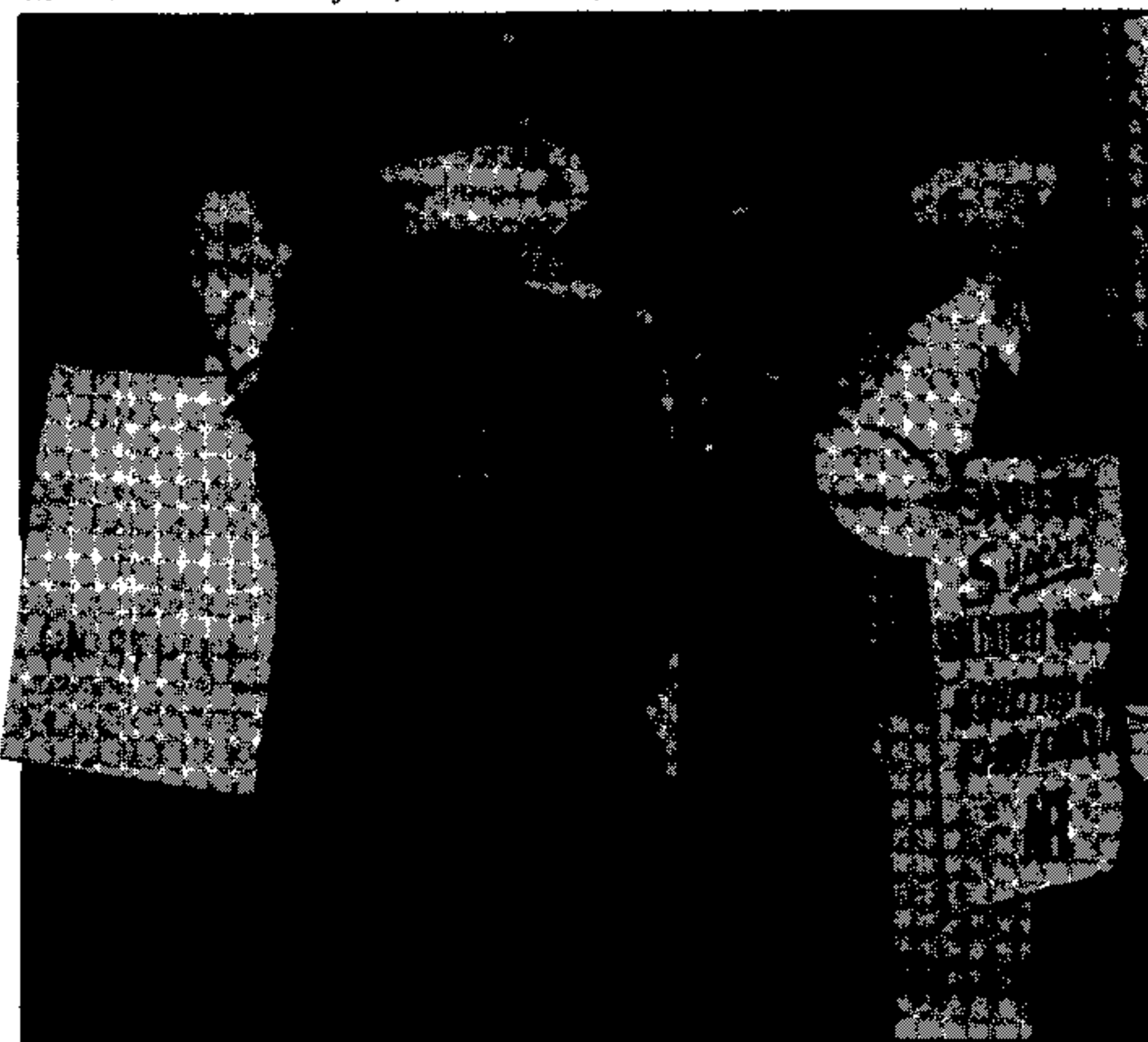
OUT OF THESE conditions arose the third of the effective 'sociological' arguments. It is something which developed quite early on. The immigrant workforce would arrive poor, in trouble, in a strange land, with no social security and no social services. Who did they look to for help?

Here we come to the final peculiarity about the development of the working class in the United States: democracy.

Democracy matters to the argument in two senses. Firstly, it is a fact that—long before it existed in Europe—there was effective universal suffrage for white males almost everywhere in the US.

Secondly, however, the system was democratic in another way—states with rights, and local government with powers, vastly greater than they have ever been in Britain.

What did this mean for the immigrant worker? There were people who, for a consideration, would do something for them or their children—in terms of jobs, or education, or talk-



Strikers on Wall Street



Immigrants
arriving at Ellis
Island, New York,
1905

ing to the precinct police captain. What was that consideration?

In short, that the immigrant workers had to learn enough English to pass the citizenship test, and then had to *turn out and vote*. The city machines, then, served in a sense as a substitute for a reformist labour movement. That is not so true now, but it certainly was in the 19th century.

For all these reasons, therefore, a political labour movement did not develop. At this point, however, we need to make a very important qualification. It is not true that in the period there was a low level of class struggle. In the 1870s and again in the late 1880s-early 1890s there were massive strikes, often very violently fought, involving large numbers of workers.

Typically, however, they did not lead to permanent trade union organisation or to a real alteration in the process whereby the workforce was being constantly renewed. This was because the wage rise and the improvement of conditions—assuming that you could get them—were still a lesser attraction than moving out.

All this seems to add up to a plausible sounding explanation, except for one obvious fact. The 'new frontier' was effectively finished by the 1890s.

True, immigration did not slow down. On the contrary, it continued to accelerate. The peak year for immigration into the United States was 1914, when five million plus entered the country in one year. But that was on the basis of *intensive* growth of American industry, not *extensive* growth. The proletariat had become permanent, in the ordinary sense, by the turn of the century. And by the 1920s immigration had become much more difficult.

Consequently, you then got a certain development of a politicised labour movement, albeit of a rather peculiar sort. Roughly between 1900 and 1914 stable trade union organisation was largely confined to skilled workers. It was very patchy, geographically, and did not significantly affect mass production industry.

One partial exception to this was coal. But in steel and the developing automobile industry, the only people who held union cards were

members of skilled craft societies.

The Socialist Party founded in 1901, which enjoyed a fair degree of support, was not therefore based on the trade union bureaucracy, nor was it at all closely associated with trade union organisation.

This is confirmed by the pattern of its electoral success. By 1912 the American Socialist Party had 100,000 members. Its strongest vote, however, was not in the eastern seaboard, which was still the major industrial area, but in the West—an area only recently settled.

ALL THE special factors which can be shown to have operated in the United States until 1900 or 1920 were now of steadily diminishing importance. So the presence or absence of a political labour movement has to be judged in terms of certain specific events and struggles.

To understand this better, it is worth looking back at the British labour movement. From the 1830s onwards there were a number of massive struggles, leading by and large to defeat. By 1850 the big struggles were in the past, and stable, mass union organisation did not exist, except in a few cases.

Then came the development of the craft societies, and 50 years of 'Lib-Labism'. This was due to two factors: the defeats, without which Lib-Labism could not have survived, and the increasing world dominance of British capitalism in the second half of the century.

It was only at the end of the century, which saw the relative decline of British capitalism, that a political labour movement in Britain was born.

How does that model compare to the United States? The First World War produced an upsurge in attempts at union organisation, many of which were temporarily successful. This culminated in 1919 with an employers' offensive.

This offensive took a number of forms. There was a massive anti-red, anti-immigrant campaign. A number of important strikes—the packing house strike, the steel strike—were defeated. The unions, where they existed, were effectively driven out of large-scale production. Consequently, the right wing inside the American Federation of Labour was reinforced, sitting on top of little craft societies.

This was combined with, from 1924, a period of very rapid economic growth. In spite of everything, real wages were rising. This, and the ideology that went with the boom, had a deadening effect.

What was the state of the significant political tendencies? The Socialist Party basically never recovered from the splits in the post war period. All the guts were torn out of it. The party's better activists went to the Communist Party, and the worst jumped on the bandwagon—share promotion schemes, the trade union bureaucracy and so on.

The Communist Party, on the other hand—the product of a fusion in 1919-20—was essentially a federation of factions. It must have been one of the very worst parties in the Comintern—and that's really saying something. It was internalised, fraught with problems and

ineffective, until two events coincided.

One was the onset of the world slump. The impact of the slump in the States was enormous. In the years 1929 to 1932 there was a catastrophic drop in industrial output of 40 percent. Secondly, by 1929 the American CP had been effectively Stalinised—all the warring factions were done away with.

This combination of things meant that the development of a political labour movement—which looked on the cards—was aborted.

SO WHAT happened? The Communist Party was initially tiny. In 1932 when they ran William Z Foster for president, they had 12,000 members. By 1938 they had 100,000 members. This growth was against a background of whatever the current line that was coming from the Stalinist centre.

That meant that until 1934 wildly ultra-left policies, and after 1935 those based on the policies of the Popular Front. However, the growth could not have occurred but for what was happening industrially.

The initial impact of the slump was to destroy utterly even those vestiges of struggle which had existed in the 1920s. But following a marginal economic upturn in 1934, the accumulation of bitterness led to a series of disputes.

After a brief check in 1935, there was a real explosion, mainly around the question of union organisation. It was really spectacular. In the short period of time from the sit-in at Flint in 1936 to the unionisation of Fords in 1941, the basic industries were organised—even in the south.

Given this mass industrial upheaval, the breakthrough to political consciousness would most certainly have taken place but for one factor: the people who were most influential in these terms were opposed to it.

They were on the one hand the newly emerging labour bureaucracies, and on the other the Communist Party—who played a central role industrially.

There was a contradiction in the period. The explosion of union organisation radicalised large numbers of workers—no question about it. But the bureaucracies themselves were largely happy with the Roosevelt administration and its New Deal. They were willing to enter into what amounted to a coalition with one wing of the government.

The New Deal, despite its restrictive elements, entitled workers to a legally binding ballot on the question of a union. It was this side of it, under conditions where people were unorganised, that helped to spark the upsurges and consequently strengthen the bureaucracies.

But the bureaucracies couldn't go into this coalition with sections of government without the support of the Communist Party. Others on the left—the remnants of the Socialist Party, the Trotskyists and all sorts of independents—were calling for the formation of a labour party. In



Workers at a West Coast shipyard

order to contain this process, the bureaucracy sometimes resorted to setting up labour parties in order to get a working class vote for Roosevelt.

In New York State, the union bureaucracies set up an American Labor Party, which of course ran candidates of its own, but whose presidential candidate was Roosevelt.

In Michigan, the auto union set up the Michigan Cooperative Federation which was a similar operation. There were many others, but in all cases the union leaders sought to tie them to the Democratic Party.

They could do so, from 1935 onwards, because the Communist Party was concerned above all else to promote the Roosevelt administration, and to prevent the development of any independent, reformist working class organisation.

This analysis stops at 1940. But subsequent events can be summarised very simply by another comparison to Britain in the latter half of the last century with its massive expansion, world dominance and so on.

A single statistic will do to draw a comparison. In the late 1940s, one half of the world total of industrial output—excluding the USSR—was produced in the USA. For a period of two or three decades this was the objective factor. There was also the subjective factor.

The real function of the cold war in America was to eliminate the substantial Communist Party influence, especially in the unions. It was to consolidate a labour bureaucracy that owed its allegiance, in the last analysis, to the American state. It was, over time, successful. By the 1950s the right wing was in control everywhere. Since then, union organisation has dropped from 40 percent to 20 percent.

Under these circumstances, the development of political class consciousness was out of the question. But just as in the British case, changing objective circumstances change the nature of the arena. This doesn't mean we'll see an automatic rerun of the British experience.

But it does mean that new possibilities will be—and are being—created by the relative decline of American capitalism today.

■ *This article is based on a talk given at the SWP Easter 1986 Rally at Skegness.*

Another tale of betrayal

In the 1930s Stafford Cripps became the most prominent spokesman for the far left of the Labour Party. His rhetoric was well to the left of Tony Benn's in the 1980s. Yet in the 1945-51 Labour government he became 'Mr Austerity', congratulated by the Tories for his budgets. *Tony Cliff* looks at the career of Stafford Cripps.

HALF a century ago the left of the Labour Party was organised in the Socialist League. Its main leader was Stafford Cripps. His story is quite revealing of the weaknesses of the Labour left, not only in the 1930s, but also today.

Cripps was born into a very rich family and was educated at Winchester then at Oxford. His father was a Tory MP for some two decades, and then received a peerage to become Baron Parmoor. Stafford was not indifferent to his father's political activities. One biographer writes: 'Stafford took up the furtherance of his father's cause as the Conservative candidate with all the ardour of a young man of drive and initiative.'

In 1913 he was called to the Bar, and a short time later was appointed Justice of the Peace. In 1927 he became King's Counsel.

'In the years from 1919 to 1926 Stafford Cripps had one other interest outside the law and the village of his adoption. He had become engaged in the affairs of the Church, and particularly in the affairs of the World Council of Churches.'

In 1924 when Ramsay MacDonald formed his first Labour government he hunted for talent outside the Labour Party, and got four Tories and Liberals to join his government: Lord Parmoor, Lord Haldane, Lord Chelmsford and H P Macmillan (later to become Lord Macmillan). 'Macmillan, with the consent of the Conservative Party leaders, accepted the office from MacDonald on a non-political basis as a matter of public duty.'

In the 1929-31 Labour government Lord Parmoor served once again—as President of the Council and Labour's leader in the House of Lords. (Stafford's uncle, Sidney Webb, who became Lord Passfield, served as Secretary of State for the Colonies.)

As the 1929 general election approached Herbert Morrison tried to attract Stafford Cripps to the Labour Party. Morrison wrote to Stafford Cripps:

'I am personally very anxious to have you in the Party. Please let me know if and when you would like to join the ranks of the Party and I shall be very happy to make the necessary arrangements.'

In May 1929 Cripps became a member of the Labour Party. Early in 1930 he became candidate for the West Woolwich division, and for the rest of that year he gave much time to that constituency. In October 1930 the Solicitor-General, Sir James Melville, resigned in ill health, and Ramsay MacDonald offered the position to

Stafford Cripps. He at once accepted, though without a seat in Parliament. On the death of the Labour MP for East Bristol, Cripps was adopted as the Labour candidate and in January 1931 was duly elected.

In government Cripps did not evince any leftist tendencies. Quite the contrary. When he spoke on the 1927 Trades Disputes Act, imposed by the Tories after the defeat of the general strike, Cripps called not for its repeal, but only its amendment.

His speech angered the TUC leaders and they protested strongly.

When in August 1931 Ramsay MacDonald joined with Tories and Liberals to form a National government, Cripps' reaction was by no means leftist either.

Cripps was abroad when the Labour government collapsed. He received a telegram from MacDonald inviting him to continue as Solicitor-General in the new government. What was his reaction?

'It is with very great personal regret that I find myself unable to accept your kind offer.'

'May I be allowed—without being considered impertinent—to say that I admire immensely the courage and conviction which have led you and other Labour ministers associated with you to take the action you have taken. My own personal hope is that the rift in the Party may be quickly healed.'

The trauma of MacDonald's betrayal led to a mass swing to the left in the Labour Party in the following couple of years. And Cripps now indulged in extreme revolutionary phraseology—far surpassing

Tony Benn's in the aftermath of the Callaghan government.

In October 1932 a group of left MPs and intellectuals, prominent among them Cripps, Strauss, Bevan, Mellor and Laski, founded a new organisation—the Socialist League.

The League was highly organised, with a clear formal structure. In March 1934 it claimed 74 branches with a total membership of about 3,000. It is clear from reading the League's material that London, South Wales and Tyneside were the only areas which sustained Socialist League activity throughout the lifetime of the organisation. One historian of the League writes: 'The elected leadership of the Socialist League was predominantly a public school and university educated group of people.' Cripps was the dominant figure in the League, and acted as its chairman in the years 1933-36. He was also the main source of finance.

In the first two years of its existence the League was quite successful in getting its resolutions through the Labour Party conferences. Thus in the 1932 conference, Frank Wise of the League moved a resolution calling for the public ownership of the joint-stock banks as well as the Bank of England. The NEC recommended rejection of the resolution, but the conference overruled the NEC and the resolution passed by 1,141,000 votes to 984,000.

In 1933 the Socialist League submitted 13 amendments to the NEC policy document *Socialism and the Condition of the People*, all intent on ensuring the Labour Party's general objective should be 'to eliminate all private enterprise as



Attlee and Bevin: Cripps happily worked with both

quickly as possible...' The NEC declared its willingness to think again its economic policy. It also accepted a resolution emanating from the League pledging the Labour Party to resist war by means which included a general strike.

In the years 1932 and 1933 Cripps formulated the most extreme left wing policies. The lesson of the collapse of the Labour government in 1931, Cripps argued, was that the capitalists would use extra-parliamentary weapons to defend their power and privileges. In a pamphlet entitled *Can Socialism Come by Constitutional Methods?* he wrote:

'The importance of these recent political events...is that they provide the clearest demonstration of the power of capitalism to overthrow a popularly elected government by extra-parliamentary means.

'The ruling class will go to almost any length to defeat parliamentary action if the issue is the direct issue as to the continuance of their financial and political control. If the change to socialism is to be brought about peacefully a socialist party must be fully prepared to deal with every kind of opposition direct and indirect and with financial and political sabotage of the most thorough and ingenious kind.

'The first requisite in bringing about a peaceful revolution is to obtain a parliamentary majority of adequate size to carry all necessary measures through the House of Commons.

'The most critical period, however, for a socialist government will be the first few months of power.

'The government's first step will be to call parliament together at the earliest moment and place before it an Emergency Powers Bill to be passed through all its stages on the first day. This bill will be wide enough in its terms to allow all that will be immediately necessary to be done by ministerial orders. These orders must be incapable of challenge in the courts or in any way except in the House of Commons.'

If need be extra Labour peers should be created immediately. If the capitalist class threatened military dictatorship:

'It would probably be better and more conducive to the general peace and welfare for the socialist government to make itself temporarily into a dictatorship until the matter could again be put to the test at the polls...

'The decisive blow at capitalism must be struck while the people's mandate is fresh and strong. That blow can be delivered constitutionally; if unconstitutional means are used to resist it, those who use unconstitutional means must not complain if they are met with force.'

Cripps went all out to denounce reformism and advocate revolution. In a book entitled *Why this Socialism?* (1934) he attacks reformism with these words:

'The reformist attitude is certain in the future, as in the past, to precipitate the



Cripps addressing an Anglo-Soviet Friendship meeting, 1942

crisis in the present system, and to lead, not to a great possibility of fundamental change, but to a greater certainty of reaction.'

Reformism leads inevitably to fascism, Cripps argues.

To prevent war a socialist revolution is needed: 'Permanent Peace Impossible Within Capitalism', is the heading of one chapter.

Even at this period of extreme radicalism, Cripps was still bounded by respectable bourgeois conventions.

In 1934 he stated at a meeting in Nottingham:

'When the Labour Party comes to power we must act rapidly and it will be necessary to deal with the House of Lords and the influence of the City of London. There is no doubt that we shall have to overcome opposition from Buckingham Palace and other places as well.'

The phrase about Buckingham Palace provoked immediate disclaimers from other Labour leaders and strong comments from ministers and newspapers. When he was pressed by newspaper men to explain what he had meant, he said that he was 'most certainly not referring to the crown'. He had used the words Buckingham Palace as 'a well-known expression used to describe court circles and the officials and other people who surrounded the king'. A few days later at Glasgow he added: 'I am in favour of a constitutional monarchy...in this country we must either have a monarch or a political president and I vastly prefer a constitutional monarch to a political president.'

Hitler's victory in Germany and the increasing threat of fascism led Cripps to put forward the call for a united front of all

workers' parties. He called for a united front of the Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party.

The call led to no tangible results.

First of all the leaderships of the Labour Party and the TUC were shell-shocked after MacDonald's betrayal, regained their nerve and confidence in 1934 and went clearly on the offensive against the left. In 1934 the Socialist League's amendment to the NEC document *For Socialism and Peace* was rejected overwhelmingly: by 2,146,000 votes to 206,000. The League's suggestion of income allowance instead of full compensation to those whose property was taken into public ownership was rejected similarly.

Another fundamental factor undermined the League. It was by and large a parliamentary group, with no direct links with workers to speak of. Hence it depended on the Communist Party for those links. This dependence showed clearly in the uncritical support of the League for the monstrous Moscow Trials.

Pressure from the right on the one hand and from the CP on the other forced Cripps and the League to slide from the policy of the united front of workers' organisations to that of the People's Front of the Labour Party, 'progressive' Tories and Liberals.

In 1936 the League's resolution calling for a united front was rejected at the Labour Party conference by 1,805,000 votes to 435,000.

On 27 January 1937 the League was disaffiliated from the Labour Party. On 24 March the NEC went even further and declared that membership of the League was not compatible with membership of the Labour Party. When this was challenged at the Labour Party conference by Cripps, Laski and Strauss, the NEC got the



MacDonal's National Government, it was with 'very great personal regret' that Cripps felt unable to serve in it

overwhelming support of the conference: 1,730,000 votes to 373,000.

Following this Cripps moved to propaganda for the Popular Front. On 9 January he sent the NEC a document that became known as the 'Cripps Memorandum', which was a call for a Popular Front. The Memorandum was rejected by seventeen votes to three. The three in favour were Ellen Wilkinson, D N Pritt and Cripps himself. Cripps claimed the right to issue his document to all Labour organisations and to get it before the conference of the Labour Party. He issued it to the press and made sure the world should know his views on the urgency of the times. That meant, to the executive, he had again begun the organisation of a rival centre of leadership. They were determined to put an end to the matter. He was asked to withdraw his Memorandum, 'by circular to the persons and organisations to whom it was addressed'. He refused, and was promptly expelled from the party. The expulsion was confirmed by the 1939 Labour Party conference, by 2,100,000 votes to 402,000.

Out of the Labour Party, Cripps indulged in general politics: he tried to convince individual Tory leaders to join forces against Chamberlain, and establish a government of *all* parties. He approached Churchill, Baldwin and Halifax (at the time Foreign Secretary in the Chamberlain government).

Cripps' voyage rightwards continued. In 1942 he was sent to India by Churchill to convince the leaders of the Indian Congress to support Britain's war effort. He failed, and following his mission Gandhi, Nehru and other Congress leaders were interned for the duration of the war.

After returning from India, Cripps joined the government, becoming Minister of Aircraft Production. One historian described his role in the ministry:

'Sir Stafford Cripps is remembered for the development of Joint Production Committees in each factory, which, beginning principally in aircraft manufacture, spread through the whole of factory management. The Joint Production Committees were designed to break through the barrier between management and workers; to attack ideas of "they" and "we".'

In March 1945 Cripps rejoined the Labour Party and a few months later started a new chapter in his life, becoming a part of the Labour government. Apart

from Attlee the two leading figures in the government were Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary and Stafford Cripps, first as President of the Board of Trade, then Minister of State for Economic Affairs and, finally, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Cripps and Bevin, enemies in the 30s, now became very close collaborators. As one historian put it:

'...the strongest link between Cripps and Bevin was now that they thought in terms of Britain as a whole and not as practised politicians looking to party advantage. They were British Ministers of the crown working in fields where they represented not the Labour Party but the whole nation, and they spoke and acted without the partisan bias that showed itself from time to time in the words and deeds of some of their colleagues.'

Cripps, in the five years he served in the Labour government, became 'Mr Austerity'. He called on workers to tighten their belts: from wage restraint to wage freeze, and to collaborate with management in the 'national interest'.

Cripps' budgets were received more favourably by the Tories in the House of Commons than by the back bench Labour MPs. After his budget speech in 1949 Anthony Eden, leading for the Tories, congratulated Cripps' speech.

One historian, very friendly to Cripps, summed up the debate thus:

'It was a budget that was acceptable to the House of Commons as a whole; the only really hostile voices came from a minority of Cripps' own party still pressing for concessions. One of these described it as a Tory budget which the Tories would not have dared to introduce.'

The trade union leaders loyal to the Attlee government to the end, found it more and more difficult to defend Cripps' economic policy.

In February 1948 Cripps imposed a wage freeze. A conference of trade union executives, on 24 March, gave a comfortable majority to the policy (5,421,000 votes to 2,032,000).

After the devaluation of the pound, in September 1949, the TUC gave Cripps support but with a much smaller margin (4,263,000 votes to 3,606,000).

In September 1950—after a further rise in prices—Cripps' policy of wage freeze was rejected by the TUC.

To add to the freeze, in 1949 and 1950 Cripps insisted on cuts in government expenditure. He threatened to resign unless economies of nearly £300 million were agreed by the cabinet.

'Cripps and Bevan...clashed...over the extent of inflationary pressure—and both hinted at resignation. Cripps was thinking of a shilling increase in National Insurance contributions; Bevan was "making it quite clear that he would have no interference with the Health Service"... With its threats of resignations from Bevan if cuts were made in the Health Service and from the Chancellor if they were not, the 1949 Cabinet clash strikingly resembles the battle over the 1951 budget.'

One of Cripps' main supporters in the cabinet was Hugh Gaitskell. Relations between the two were excellent, and Cripps groomed Gaitskell to become his successor (which duly happened when Cripps was too ill to continue in the job and Gaitskell became Chancellor of the Exchequer on 19 October 1950).

Cripps also participated in the strike breaking activities of the Attlee government. On 18 different occasions between 1945 and 1951 the government sent troops across picket lines to do strikers' jobs. By 1948, it has been argued by two historians, 'strike-breaking had become almost second nature to the Cabinet'.

Cripps' share was not limited to being a member of the cabinet. On 8 October 1945 a meeting of ministers at Chequers decided to renew the Supply and Transport Organisation of the Emergency Powers Act of 1920 and of 1926 General Strike infamy. Among the members appointed to the committee was Cripps (as well as Nye Bevan).

The committee was later replaced by an Industrial Emergency Committee. Cripps served also on this body. Meeting on 15 January 1947 the committee faced a gloomy prospect. Large numbers of London dockers had struck against the use of troops: 20,000 men were out in the capital and 8,000 in the provinces. Cripps came with an 'original' suggestion: the large number of Polish ex-servicemen should be used instead of British servicemen to break the strike.

Cripps, then had come full circle—from career politician to idealist critic of the evils of capitalism and the shortcomings of reformism, to government minister and strike breaker. This ultimate betrayal by Cripps cannot be explained by any personality defects or psychological shortcomings, but must be seen in the context of his failure, even in his most left wing period, to break with Labour and parliamentarianism.

The story of Stafford Cripps should serve as a salutary warning to all those on the left who believe the Labour Party can be changed, or that socialism can be won through a combination of extra-parliamentary and parliamentary struggle. ■

Mubarak's nightmare

ALL OF Egypt is waiting for a new political upheaval to engulf the country. 'We are ready for something every day,' says a student in the left-wing Tagammu alliance. 'It could start with food riots, with a strike, with protests over housing, transport— anything. But we are sure it will come like a great explosion.'

'The problem is that we, the left, are not ready. The movement will come like a tide and will sweep over us. At the end the winners could again be the bourgeoisie.'

The comment accurately sums up the possibilities and the problems in the most important country in the Arab world. Egypt is ripe for change; its government is faced by an economic crisis that is deepening by the day; its working class and peasantry are facing unbearable pressures; there is universal revulsion over the behaviour of the country's corrupt ruling class.

The economic crisis is so profound that President Mubarak must feel he is in the middle of a nightmare. In the past three months the four 'pillars' of the Egyptian economy have all shown signs of collapse. **OIL:** The fall in the oil price means that earnings this year will decline by at least 50 percent.

TOURISM: The police riots which destroyed hotels in Cairo in February, plus the effect of anti-'terror', anti-Arab campaigns in the West, mean that tourist bookings will fall and revenue shrink by an estimated 50 percent.

SUEZ CANAL: The recession in the oil economies of the Gulf means less traffic through the canal and a 50 percent drop in receipts.

REMITTANCES: The contracting Gulf economies are no longer providing work for millions of Egyptians, and workers' remittances—recently Egypt's biggest source of foreign currency—may fall by 75 percent.

The effect of the cuts in revenue will be to put an impossible burden on an already sickly economy. Egypt already owes \$32 billion to foreign creditors and is due to pay over \$3 billion this year. Its deficit on all trade last year was \$1.5 billion, but with foreign earnings this year certain to be far smaller, the shortfall will be much greater.

How can Mubarak make ends meet? He has asked the International Monetary Fund for an emergency loan of \$1 billion, but has been told, as in the past, that further loans depends upon his willingness to reduce the \$2 billion food subsidy programme—the mechanism which keeps millions of Egyptians alive. Bread is now two piastres a loaf (about a halfpenny).

A simple calculation illustrates its importance for a typical working-class family. A family of six eats at least 30

loaves of bread a day, spending 18 Egyptian pounds each month (£E1 = £0.35). Doubling the price of the loaf raises the cost of bread alone to a monthly sum of £E36 for a family in which even a well-paid worker may earn no more than £E100 a month.

'Very few people starve in Egypt,' says a Tagammu member. 'This is because of a generation of food subsidies. If these are changed, starvation will become a reality.'

In January 1977 strikes and demonstrations were successful in removing price rises within hours. An attempt to raise prices in October 1984 also produced a government retreat after a strike at the Kafr al-Dawwar textile mill. More recently, efforts to raise the price of fish at Aswan in the south, produced a boycott of the market and restoration of the old prices.

The price of bread is an expression of a host of new pressures which are driving millions below the poverty line. This situation is not new. Ever since the mid-1960s, Egypt's crisis has been deepening.

In the early 1970s there was a wave of protest against the government of President Sadat. A mass student movement developed, producing huge demonstrations, while in the factories there were repeated strikes and occupations. These came to a head in the 1977 riots, when the whole country rose against the government and only military intervention could restore Sadat's control.

Just at this point, when the contradictions within the Egyptian system seemed irreconcilable, pressure was released by mass migration of Egyptians to the boom economies of the Gulf states and North Africa. By 1982, it was estimated that there were between three and four million Egyptians abroad.

The impact of this phenomenon on Egyptian society was massive. Since the mid-1970s, almost every Egyptian family

has sent some of its male members abroad to work. There is scarcely a village in the whole country which does not boast the new red-brick-houses, Peugeot taxis or East European tractors bought with money earned abroad.

But emigration could only act as a safety valve—the contradictions within the Egyptian system continued to deepen. The population grew at almost a million a year. Pressure on land forced migration to the cities, which became unbearably overcrowded. The population of Cairo increased to 13 or 14 million.

But in January, just \$50 million found its way back to Egypt from workers abroad—25 percent of the figure a year earlier.

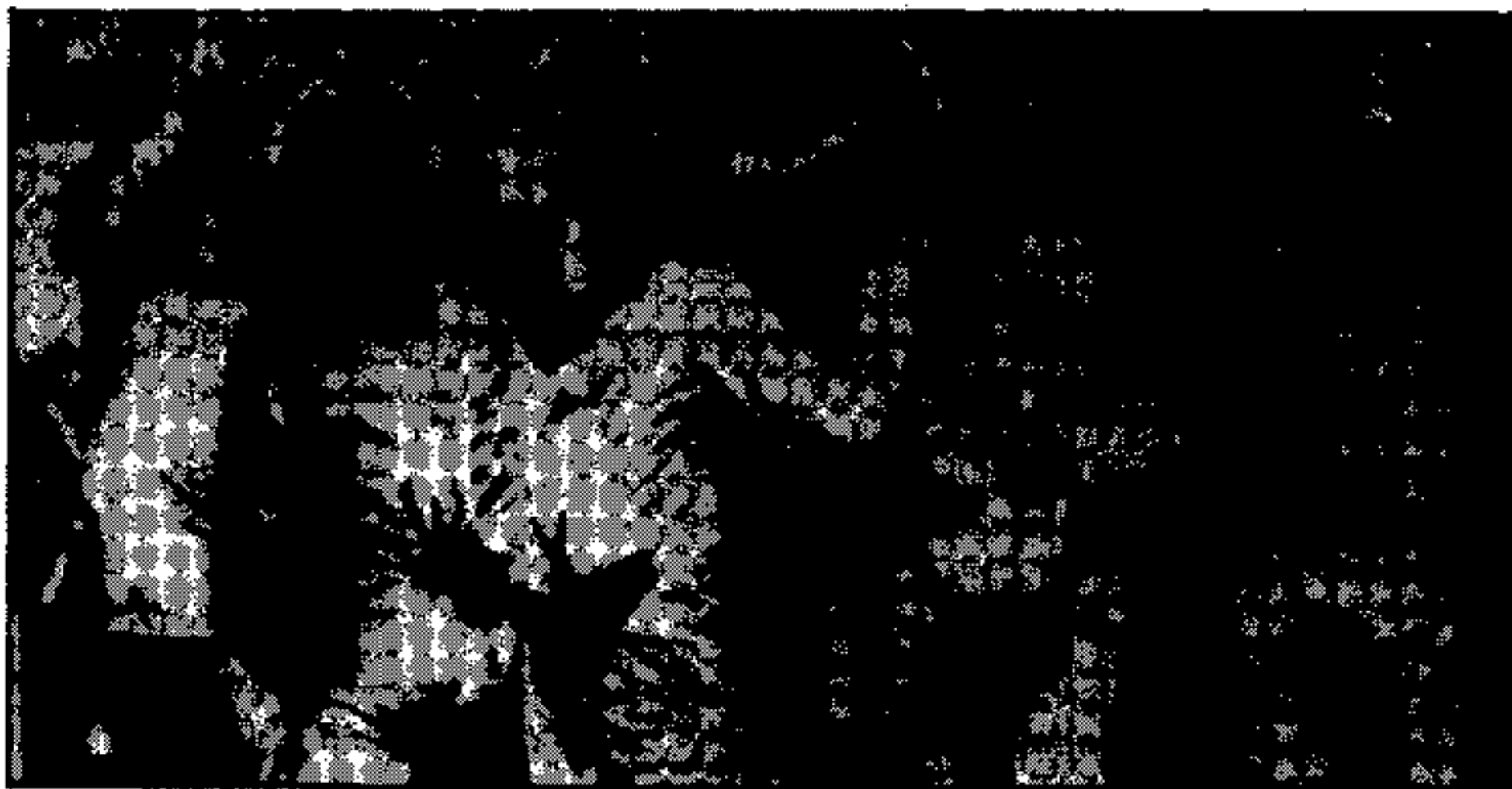
As emigration got under way in the mid-1970s, the Egyptian ruling class began to receive support from another source. In return for moving fully into the Western camp and concluding the Camp David peace deal with Israel, the US agreed to provide large sums of military and civil aid. Egypt became, after Israel, the largest recipient of American aid, receiving over \$1 billion in 1983 alone.

The policy of *infitah* ('the opening') of the Egyptian economy to private capital and foreign investment—was a condition of the US aid programmes. But the policy has exaggerated the already grossly unequal character of Egyptian society.

Since the mid-1970s an *infitah* class has developed, which specialises in finance, services and wheeling-and-dealing in the black-market operations which make up a 'parallel economy'. This 'class'—more properly described as a layer of several thousand businessmen—has grown rich as Egypt's poor have become more impoverished.

So frustrated Egyptians are returning to a country in which there is deep resentment of the corruption, privilege and conspicuous consumption of the elite. In short, the government is under siege.

The police revolt in February caused an added shock—the government lost the use of its main apparatus of control for a number of days and was forced to bring in the army. Mubarak took consolation in the fact that he was able to crush the riots before they spread, but was again reminded of the vulnerability of the whole system to



Police attacked by students on demonstration in Cairo

mass protests. The government is acutely aware of its good fortune in preventing the spread of the protests to workplaces and working-class areas.

Their concern on this front is well-founded. There are signs that Egyptian workers are regaining their self-confidence. There have been two important strikes in the past three months. In February, workers at the Mehalla al-Kubra textile mill occupied in support of a claim that they should be paid for a full 30-day month, instead of a 26-day month. In April, workers at the Esco factory in northern Cairo began an occupation over the same issue.

Both occupations were at large textile plants and indicate that pressure is now sufficiently intense for independent action in the workplaces, despite the attentions of the union officials and secret police.

Since 1981 Mubarak has allowed a degree of political freedom. This has much to do with his desire to open political 'safety valves', and he has limited open activity to five legal parties, each of which is pledged to act as a 'loyal' opposition. Four parties are explicitly bourgeois organisations of various shades, the fifth is the National Progressive Unionist Rally or Tagammu.

The Tagammu is probably the largest legal leftist organisation currently operating in an Arab country. At its core are members of the Egyptian Communist Party—one of the three main Communist currents—but it has attracted liberals, left nationalists and some radicalised youth. The active membership is composed predominantly of intellectuals and students, but in some areas there is limited working-class support.

The organisation is not a genuine

Popular Front, but a tendency seeking 'progressive' sections of the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie with which to create such an alliance. Its leadership operates at a national level with an extremely limited strategy of gaining respectability and orienting most activity around elections and vague campaigns on welfare and civil rights issues. It retains tight control over national affairs but allows its branches to determine the political complexion of local work.

General secretary Khaled Muhieddin was one of the 'Free Officers' associated with Nasser's military coup in 1952 and subsequently played a leading role in government. 'Khaled was part of the Nasser regime and he still wants to be the left face of Egyptian government,' says a member of the opposition grouping within Tagammu. 'He wants to say to the bourgeoisie "We're not harmful", to be given a real chance in the election—without harassment and corruption—and then given a couple of ministries.'

The oppositionists, who won 90 out of 350 delegates at last year's conference describe the leadership's characterisation of the Egyptian bourgeoisie as divided into a 'parasitic' section and a 'productive' section, which is 'progressive'. 'We reject the class rule of the whole capitalist system,' says one oppositionist in Cairo.

Many of the opposition are young activists, who feel that there is a generation gap between the Tagammu leadership and themselves. They see the Egyptian Communist Party as hopelessly committed to gaining respectability and thus paralysed whenever faced with a real challenge.

'In 1977 it was up for grabs,' says a member in Cairo. 'I fear that the same thing will happen again. When the masses

come onto the streets and the factories stop, Khaled Muhieddin will be called to the Palace [Mubarak's offices] just as he was during the police riots. The president will tell him and the other party leaders that he needs their help to maintain "national stability" and they will agree.'

The oppositionists believe that they are making ground, but it is slow progress. Their biggest problem at present, however, is not the inertia of the Tagammu leadership, but their own lack of a clear political strategy.

They want to move away from electioneering and towards workers' struggles, but still have some illusions in parliament. Talk of the leadership's 'Stalinism' is a criticism of style, rather than the whole current of ideas—the theories of stages, class blocs, 'national' struggles for socialism and attachment to the 'socialist' states.

The tragedy of the Egyptian left is that no current has managed to distance itself from the Stalinist tradition. The Egyptian Communist Party (ECP) is a throwback to the tradition which dogged the Communists of the 1940s and early 1950s. Then the left proved incapable of playing a decisive role in the workers' movement and watched while the army, in the person of the Free Officers' movement, took power.

But the two other organisations currently laying claim to the Communist tradition—the Egyptian Workers' Communist Party and the 8 January Organisation—have equally been unable to break from Stalinism, though they have been critical of the worst of the ECP's strategy.

In short, a real departure from the old traditions is needed. The Tagammu opposition's rejection of the Popular Front needs to be extended and expressed in an effort to build a current in Egypt which looks unambiguously at the working class as the agent of change.

Such a development is not out of the question. The same pressures which are placing the Egyptian bourgeoisie in crisis are exposing the bankruptcy of Egyptian Stalinism. There is every likelihood of further workers' struggles and the certainty that the existing organisations of the left will be unable to build upon them effectively.

The result may be that threats to the power of the Mubarak regime will allow the army to take the stage, or bring greater influence to the fragmented Islamic fundamentalist organisations. Another chance to loosen the grip of Egyptian capitalism will be passed up, and the most important Arab country, the centrepiece in Western imperialism's plan for continued influence in the Arab world, will remain within Washington's orbit.

The potential of the working class in Egypt is not in question. Workers will again challenge the system—something the ruling class seems to appreciate more than the leadership of the left. In the long term the prospects are good—providing that socialists start to change direction now. ■
Phil Marshall

Socialist Worker Review

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Lost on the left

THE FRENCH left is still picking up the pieces from its electoral defeat in March. In the Communist Party more and more members are demanding open discussion of its decline, while in the Socialist Party the fight is already on for who will be the candidate in the 1988 presidential elections.

But the crisis is deepest for those who have claimed to be to the left of the Socialist Party while treading in its footprints. The Party's main organised left-wing grouping, the CERES, has abruptly changed its name...and its policies. Meanwhile France's longstanding left socialist party, the PSU, is debating whether to dissolve.

Both the PSU and CERES trace their origin back to the early sixties, when the French Socialist Party (then called the SFIO) was in a state of decay, due to its disgusting support for the war in Algeria and its capitulation to de Gaulle.

But a bunch of bright-eyed young intellectuals, headed by Jean-Pierre Chevènement, decided that a rotting corpse was the best place for maggots to grow fat. In 1964, they joined the SFIO and formed a group called the Centre for Socialist Study, Research and Education (CERES).

The CERES is often described as a Marxist current. Certainly the rhetoric it used was that of the extreme left. It spoke of the need for a 'break with capitalism' and advocated turning the SFIO into a 'mass, class-based party'. It urged that the Socialist Party should be 'an organisation based on class struggle, exempt from both the reformist and Bolshevik deviations'.

At a time when the SFIO was still dominated by Cold War anti-Communism, the CERES advocated an alliance with the Communist Party. By recruiting Georges Sarre, a leading militant in the postal workers' union, it began to build a working class base, and soon took control of the Paris Federation of the SFIO.

From the beginning, however, the CERES was a nationalistic grouping. Its 'Marxist' rhetoric was constantly mixed with references to 'national sovereignty' and calls for protectionism.

The CERES grew steadily and by 1975 reached a peak when it claimed the support of a quarter of the Socialist Party's membership. But its growing influence led it to involve itself more and more in internal battles. In 1971 it was the CERES vote which gave the leadership of the newly constituted Socialist Party to Francois Mitterrand.

The taste of power in 1981 led Chevènement sharply to the right. That same year he announced that socialism was

'not on the agenda'. When he became Minister of Education in 1984 his main call was for more patriotism and discipline in schools.

As the Socialist leaders start to fight for the candidacy in 1988, Chevènement is backing Mitterrand for another term—though he would doubtless not be heartbroken at filling the breach himself if the 72-year-old Mitterrand were to decide another seven years would be too much.

So the CERES has been dissolved—and reborn under the new title of 'Socialism and Republic'. Chevènement claims the original aims of CERES have been victoriously accomplished.

For Chevènement now socialism is much less important than the idea of the 'Republic', which stresses the general will of all classes in the nation. The new group's draft policy statement advocates the 'double recognition of the legitimacy of union power and of the necessity for company profits.'

Behind the rhetoric lies the strategy of establishing a European confederation to challenge the economic domination of the US-Japanese axis. So much for 'national sovereignty'. So much for 'class struggle'.

The PSU (United Socialist Party) was formed in 1960 by SFIO members who had broken with their party in disgust at its racist and colonialist policy in Algeria, together with some left Christians and ex-Communists.

From the beginning the new party hedged its bets; its founding statement argued that it was possible for France 'to advance peacefully towards socialism' but at the same time declared that it did not 'dismiss the possibility of a violent outcome'. The ambiguity was never clarified; on the contrary, the idea of 'internal democracy' was used to block any attempt at political clarification.

The PSU's resolute opposition to the Algerian war helped it to grow quite rapidly, but on the basis of activities and humanitarianism rather than clear politics. In 1960 its student leaders helped to mobilise an anti-war demonstration of twenty thousand against the opposition of the Communist Party.

After the end of the war, the PSU became

the vehicle of Pierre Mendès-France, an ex-prime minister who wanted to use it for his own ambition of regrouping the reformist left outside the SFIO. But the mass strike of May 1968 gave it a new lease of life.

The PSU had many good student militants and some workers. While these played an excellent role the PSU as such followed the movement rather than taking any initiative.

Indeed, it never seemed to be clear whether it was developing the embryos of workers' power or preparing a come-back for Mendès-France. Again activism enabled the PSU to recruit—it grew to 15,000 by the end of 1968—but without any clear basis.

But the PSU had thrived on the absence of an effective social-democratic party in the sixties. When Mitterrand began to rebuild the Socialist Party in the early seventies, its attractive power was too much for the confused politics of the PSU. In 1974 its leading figure, Michel Rocard, defected to the Socialist Party, where he soon became a pillar of the Party's right-wing.

From now on it was downhill all the way. In 1981 the PSU ran Huguette Bouchardeau as presidential candidate, but in 1983 she joined the rightward-moving Mitterrand government and in 1985 resigned from the PSU.

The PSU more and more became a coalition of supporters of the ecological, feminist and anti-nuclear movements, unwilling to go beyond the political limits of these various movements. Its membership has slumped to just one thousand.

In this context many PSU members see no future. One of its founders, Bernard Ravenel has advocated dissolving the party, hoping for the restructuring of an 'autonomous, non-sectarian' left. For the moment the PSU leadership is opposing dissolution, but calling for transformation of the Party.

'We must reconstitute as soon as possible a popular force regrouping the supporters of a change of society and which will work to make possible a political and social alternative.'

Unfortunately there is not much that a discredited centrist rump can 'transform itself' into. The new formula sounds very much like the old one. The PSU leaders talk of a force on 'the left of the left', but will not touch the CP or the revolutionary left.

This leaves no option but to dissolve into the Socialist Party; the only problem is to do this so that it looks like a response to a positive evolution by the Socialists rather than an admission of the PSU's bankruptcy.

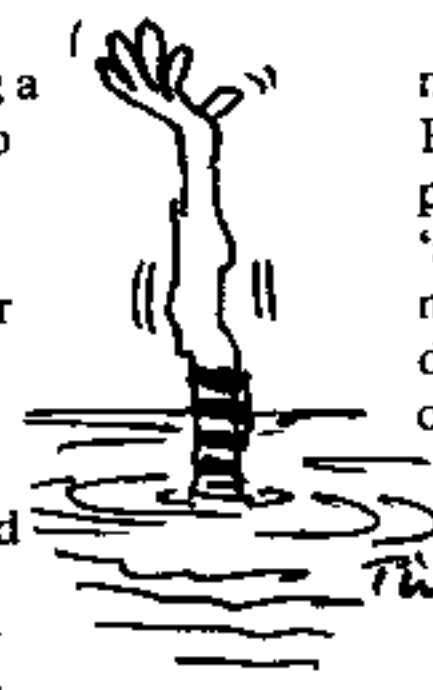
The decline of the PSU is a grim warning to those in Britain who, like Ralph Miliband, advocate the formation of a left party based on progressive 'movements' and without a clear programme.

Those who try to keep one foot in the revolutionary camp and one in the reformist camp always end up with political hernias. ■

Ian Birchall



AVANT



APRES

Man of revolt

JEAN GENET died in April on the day the bombers went into Libya. Reagan's murderous act would have angered him, but it would scarcely have surprised him. He had long learnt to know and hate the brutality of the system.

From birth, Genet was one of those whom society classifies as 'worthless'. Illegitimate and abandoned, he was placed by the Public Assistance in a peasant family; the peasants took children for the money, and the foster-children wore special uniforms.

In infant school Genet wrote an essay about his home; all the other children turned on him and jeered at him because he didn't have a real 'home'.

At ten, Genet was publicly denounced as a thief; at fifteen he was sent to a reformatory for travelling on a train without paying his fare. He joined the army to collect a bonus, then deserted.

He recorded that 'for a time I lived by theft, but prostitution was better suited to my indolence'. Genet's life was now spent among criminals and homosexuals, frequently interrupted by arrest; he spent a total of fourteen years in jail.

Genet thus found himself among the lowest depths of society, among those to whom the existing order denies any right to culture or beauty. But Genet refused this denial; for him revolt began with his assertion of his right to beauty.

He began to write, in prison, on the white sheets of paper with which he was supposed to make paper bags. And since society denied him access to *its* beauty, he sought his own beauty amid the squalor and misery of his condition, inventing an amazing poetic prose:

'There is a close relationship between flowers and convicts. The fragility and delicacy of the former are of the same nature as the brutal insensitivity of the latter. Should I have to portray a convict—or a criminal—I shall so bedeck him with flowers that, as he disappears beneath them, he will himself become a flower, a gigantic and new one.'

From a recognition of his own oppression—as an abandoned child, a convict and a homosexual—Genet came to understand and oppose oppressions of other kinds, and especially to side with the victims of racism and imperialism. He described himself as being perhaps 'a black man who happens to have white or pink skin'. Of his own play *The Blacks* he said:

'Sixty years ago, a Public Assistance child was a negro, and when this child was sent to prison, he was like a black whom people have the right to lynch. The difference is that I was alone and without hope. They are together and

they have the hope of revolution.'

Genet was fascinated by the relations between sexuality and power. In his play *The Balcony* he shows a brothel where clients act out the fantasies of power, dressing up as bishops, judges and generals. But while in modern society a police chief has more power than a bishop, he is still a grey figure, lacking colourful costume and sexual pull; so at the end of the play the police chief announces that he has been advised 'to appear in the form of a gigantic phallus, a prick of great stature...'

By the sixties Genet's novels and plays had made him famous and wealthy; he had become a commodity for publishers. Such a process is inevitable under capitalism; what is remarkable is how far Genet managed to resist the process.

Till his death he had no fixed address, collecting his royalties in cash from his publisher and moving from one small hotel to another, giving much of his money away.

'He sought his own beauty amid the squalor and misery of his condition'

Yet while Genet's work centres on power and oppression, he never committed himself to regular political activity. There could be no place for him in the Stalinist left that dominated French politics until the sixties.

Indeed, when Sartre's journal *Les Temps Modernes* serialised *The Thief's Journal* he was publicly denounced by no less than Zhdanov, Stalin's cultural hitman. For Zhdanov, Genet's praise of homosexuality was enough to label him a symptom of bourgeois depravity.

Above all Genet feared the puritanism which characterised the Stalinist left (and which has sometimes resurfaced in modern feminism).

Irma, in *The Balcony*, organising her brothel fantasies while revolution rages in the streets outside, speaks for Genet when she says: 'If the rebels win, I'm a goner. They're workers. Without imagination. Prudish and maybe chaste.'

For Genet, a revolution that rejected joy, sexuality and ritual was one he could not oppose, but would not commit himself too whole-heartedly. As he told an interviewer in 1976.

'To be honest, I don't really want a revolution to take place. The situation at this moment, the present regime, allow me to revolt... if a real revolution were to take place, I couldn't be against it. I

Jean Genet

would become a follower of this revolution. But a man like myself is never a follower of anything. I am a man of revolt. My standpoint is very egoistical. I don't want the world to change in order to permit myself to be against the world.'

Genet had no illusions that he could substitute himself for the real struggles of the oppressed. Talking of his own plays *The Maids* and *The Blacks* he said:

'I think action, the direct struggle against colonialism does more for the blacks than a play. I think the domestic workers' trade union does more for servants than a play. I've tried to win a hearing for a voice from the depths...'

Hence Genet's political alignments have been spasmodic and emotional. His deep hatred of French society led him to rejoice at the fall of France in 1940. He supported the Black Panthers and caused an outcry by his sympathy for the Baader-Meinhof gang.

But he also supported the Russians in Afghanistan, and expressed indifference to the situation in Poland and to poverty in France, on the grounds that they were nothing by the side of the suffering in the Third World.

One of his deepest commitments was to the cause of the Palestinians; in 1982 he visited the scene of the Beirut massacres and wrote a searing indictment of them (published in English in *City Limits*).

In his last interview (on BBC television in November 1985) Genet contrasted the student revolutionaries of May 1968 to 'true revolutionaries' like Lenin, and concluded: 'I'm really on Lenin's side'. That that alignment did not go all the way to a commitment to the revolutionary left was Genet's loss; it was also the left's. ■

Ian Birchall

Left of the tracks

THERE are a few honourable exceptions, but by and large most of the angry young bands of the late seventies are either lost and forgotten or have become comfortable rock stars in the eighties.

But there is a growth of exciting and very political bands whose ideas are clearly to the left of mainstream Labour and whose music, in its very different ways, is innovative and exciting.

The most famous of these bands is of course the Redskins—made up of three SWP members.

In the early days the Redskins had a lot of enthusiasm and generated excitement. Their politics from the start were revolutionary and their lyrics always reflected this.

But the vocals always seemed weak and the format of two guitarists and a drummer very dated. It also seemed likely that they could become mere chanters of political slogans.

Yet as each single was released the band seemed to get better. The release of their album *Neither Washington nor Moscow* confirms this improvement with a vengeance.

Chris Dean, the band's vocalist, has grown from strength to strength. His voice is now strong and harsh and gives extra bite to the angry lyrics he spits out.

Much of the album is taken up with reworkings of previously released material. The band now uses horns, and with snippets of Tony Cliff speeches thrown in for good measure, it really does work very well.

The Redskins' politics have not been affected by their relative success.

Their songs are ambitious, seeking as they do to look at the realities of a period of defeat and downturn, yet still to say, as one outstanding track on the album does, 'It Can Be Done'.

Yet if the Redskins' mixture of punk and soul (walk like the Clash, sing like the Supremes is their stated aim) is successful at getting their message across, it is good to see other young leftwing bands emerging who use a quite different musical style to put across similar politics.

The Fire Next Time are a four-piece band, two of whom are SWP members. To date they have only released one single though an album is due out.

Having seen the band perform very well in the worst of venues—The Rock Garden in Covent Garden where most of the audience responded best to Wham records—I will be buying the album.

The band's style couldn't be more different to that of the Redskins. They are heavily influenced by the music that came out of the West Coast of the US in the late sixties and early seventies.

This softer style at first leaves you feeling uneasy but then shocks you to attention. Somehow, something that sounds like a nice tuneful love song suddenly announcing 'The IRA are fighting and the IRA are right' carries a real impact.

James Maddock, the band's singer, has a great voice, which suits their style.

Like the Redskins, Fire Next Time don't run away from the difficulties of being a revolutionary today, but, again, there amongst the harsh reality is the optimism. All this is summed up beautifully in a song they must surely put on the album entitled 'We've lost'.

The SWP however would not want to claim a monopoly on all good socialist songs being written and performed. There are no SWP members in the band Latin Quarter.

They had a very big chart success with the haunting song of famine and the politics behind it, 'Radio Africa'.

Their style of music is very different to either the Redskins or Fire Next Time.

They are soft, melodic and full of harmonies.

It isn't just the music that's softer. They quote approvingly Billy Bragg's cry for 'Sweet Moderation', and their songs are usually about safer subjects than either of the other bands—McCarthyism, famine, people who rip off John Lennon after his death.

Yet I really like the album *Modern Times*. Their sympathies are clearly in the right place and some of the songs are strong and pierce their targets.

None better than the song about South Africa, 'No Rope As Long As Time', which tells us that 'freedom don't come easy, don't come bloodless, don't come fast', and that 'freedom's no reform' before going into the chorus that tells the white South African his future:

'Old man you can boast about the gun that's by your bed

Old man you can tell me that you're good for all your kaffirs yet
And your guns can fire, and your prisons fill

And you've yards of rope for hanging still

But your guns can shoot and never hit the sky

And there's no rope as long as time.'

Not bad for a band hailed by mainstream Radio One disc jockeys.

In addition to all this That Petrol Emotion, a band led by former Undertones, have released an album which includes songs that would frighten a Fergal Sharkey to death—particularly the ones about reality of life in Northern Ireland.



MARXISM & CULTURE

Each of these bands, in their very different ways, stand against the stream of both Thatcher and of the new realism, and the plastic and meaningless garbage that dominates so much of the popular music scene.

Yet of course being a left wing artist in an industry that is, like any other, in capitalist society, intent upon making profits, faces all sorts of dangers and pitfalls.

The cost of failure can be enormous. You can end up seriously in hock to record companies, managers, agencies and the like.

Just to get on the support bill of a better known band can cost thousands, usually loaned by the record company.

Despite all the best motives in the world, either you make some form of commercial go of it, or you go under.

The price of that success can be the politics that inspired you to perform in the first place.

For the Redskins such dangers exist, yet their style is unlikely ever to make them a 'pop band'.

The Fire Next Time's musical style could much more easily be adapted and therefore the dangers can be all the greater.

This is even more the case with Latin Quarter. They have tasted chart success with a song that was both political, and yet respectable. They will surely feel intense pressure to find another hit, and part of that pressure will be to drop the politics. It will be interesting to see how they stand up to the pressures.

Both Fire Next Time and the Redskins have a strong force pulling against the pressure—their membership of a revolutionary organisation, and the politics that go along with that.

Music will not change the world, lead the struggle, or break the grip of ruling ideas. Yet in its own modest way it can make a contribution, get people to think about issues, help inspire those of us that have got to 'keep on keeping on'.

It is great to have four bands around with very different styles, and with politics that say much more than 'vote Neil Kinnock'. Thankfully my tastes are universal enough to enjoy all four. ■

Pat Stack



Marx: ideas and struggle

The German Ideology
Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels
Lawrence & Wishart £2.50

HISTORICAL materialism is the name usually given to Marx's account of how society develops and changes. It is the method which underlay his own brilliant overview of history in the *Communist Manifesto*, his pamphlets and articles analysing major political struggles, and his account of the capitalist economic system in *Capital*.

But in his own lifetime he published only a rudimentary account of that method—in a couple of pages of his preface to his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.

This made it easy for people to distort his ideas after his death. The distortion occurred at the hands both of his enemies and of some of those who sought to popularise his ideas. They claimed that historical materialism meant that the only thing that mattered was technical or economic development, and that it determined in advance the course of political changes or ideological disputes. If this was so, there really did not seem a great deal of point in socialists struggling to build revolutionary organisations or in worrying about how to react to events. For the outcome of history was decided completely independently of their actions or their consciousness.

Such a fatalistic view was far from the attitude Marx himself, for instance, expressed in his account of events in France in 1850, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. 'Men make history,' he wrote, 'but they do so in circumstances not of their own choosing.'

But it was two works by Marx published after his death that best expressed his own views. The first of these was *The Theses on Feuerbach*, which he penned in 1845 and which Engels eventually published 43 years later.

In these he criticised the German materialist philosopher Feuerbach for not understanding the significance of human activity in shaping the world and in enabling us to test our understanding of it.

The second work, *The German Ideology*, was written jointly by Marx and Engels between November 1845 and August 1846. It did not see the light of day until the 1930s.

The work takes the form of an extended polemic against the radical German intelligentsia of the time.

Europe was experiencing the first stirrings of the radicalism which was to erupt into the revolutions of 1848. In France republicans were beginning to rediscover an audience among the quite large urban

middle class, and the first socialists were beginning to attract a following among the workers.

Germany was much more backward industrially. The middle class was weak and not prepared to go beyond the most faint hearted of challenges to the princelings who ran the different German states. The intellectuals reflected this backwardness by believing that their ideas alone could change society, without any need to mobilise real social forces behind them.

One expression of the backwardness of German society was the domination of religious ideas. Even the greatest German philosopher, Hegel, had ended up justifying these. The young radicals, known as 'Young Hegelians', believed that simply by proving the falseness of his philosophic conclusions they could undermine religion and transform society.

'The mistake of the German radicals was to see history as simply the history of a succession of different ideas'

As Marx put it:

'The Young Hegelians consider conceptions, thought, ideas, in fact all the products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men (just as the old Hegelians declare them the real bonds of human society)...'

But this meant that instead of calling for a radical change in material conditions, they simply called for a change in the way in which people interpreted this condition. In reality they had not broken with an essentially religious view of the world, but were instead trying to fight religion on its own ground. For this reason, Marx referred to two of their number as 'Saint Bruno' (Bauer) and 'Saint Max' (Stirner).

Long detailed criticisms of their writings makes up the bulk of *The German Ideology*. These are of little relevance today. But the first chapter, called 'Feuerbach' is very different. It contains very clear statements of Marx's method which remain worth reading.

His contention is not that ideas do not

matter. It is that ideas arise out of people's material activity, and cannot be detached from that.

'Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc—real active men... Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life process.'

'We set out from real active men and on the basis of this we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. The phantoms of the human brain are necessarily sublimates of men's material life process, which can be empirically established and which is bound to material preconditions.'

The mistake of the German radicals was to separate ideas off from the material circumstances in which they had arisen, and then to see history as simply the history of a succession of different ideas.

Marx's approach is to see people's ideas as developing out of the conditions in which they live, even if they then react back upon those conditions.

'The premises from which we start are not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination. They are real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find existing and those which they produce by their own activity.'

Human beings cannot live without working together to get a livelihood from their environment.

'The first fact to be established is the physical organisation of these individuals and their consequent relationship to the rest of nature... The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the actions of men.'

'We must begin by stating the first real premise of human existence, and therefore all human history, the premise that men must be able to live in order to "make history". But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things.'

This is 'a fundamental condition of all human society, which today as thousands of years ago, must be daily and hourly fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life.'

In order to get this livelihood, people have to cooperate with each other. Changes in the ways of producing such a livelihood—what Marx calls changes in the forces of production—can only occur if they are accompanied by changes in the

Bridge that gap

relations of cooperation between people. In *The German Ideology* Marx talks of 'forms of material intercourse' which develop with changes in production. In his later works he replaces this phrase with that of 'relations of production'. But the essential argument is the same.

Society as a whole is structured by the demands of production:

'The social structure and the state are continually evolving out of the life processes of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imaginations, but as they really are; ie as they operate, produce materially and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will.'

It is the needs of production which lead, for a whole historical period, to the development of different classes. Production can only advance if there is 'division of labour', with one section of society forcing others to produce a surplus which it concentrates in its own hands.

During this period:

'The social power, ie the multiplied productive force, which arises through the cooperation of different individuals... appears to these individuals...not as their own united, but as an alien force existing outside of them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they are thus no longer able to control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and action of man...'

This period of class society could not be ended until it had led to an enormous growth of the productive forces and had 'rendered the great mass of humanity "propertyless" and...in contradiction to existing wealth and power'.

Until then any attempt at getting rid of class exploitation was bound to fail:

'This development of the productive forces is an absolutely necessary practical premise, because without it privation, *want*, is merely made general, and with *want* the struggle for necessities would begin again, and all the old filthy business would be restored...'

'Empirically, communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples "all at once" and simultaneously, which presupposes the universal development of the productive forces and the world intercourse bound up with them.'

The language of the first part of *The German Ideology* is at times a bit stilted: Marx had not quite broken fully with the terminology of the Young Hegelians himself. And as he later acknowledged, some of the historical material he used in it soon proved inadequate by further research.

But it still remains necessary—and stimulating—reading for anyone who really wants to come to grips with Marx's historical method. ■

Chris Harman

THE present set of educationals; in Bow and Poplar branch in the East End of London, were set up with the clear aim of discussing the building of the revolutionary party.

We did so because there existed a gap between the need for a revolutionary party, and the realities of building such a party in the present period.

We felt that it was vital to discuss and clarify just what sort of party we were trying to build so that we could relate to, and intervene in, the periphery around us.

It was to Lenin and his experience of building the Bolsheviks that we turned.

Using the book *Lenin Vol 1: Building the Party*, by Tony Cliff, we identified five main periods in Lenin's struggle for a revolutionary organisation. We held meetings on each of the five. These periods varied from the fight for Marxism within the study circles, to the opening up of the party in 1905.

The educationals were aimed across the branch, with comrades attending that had been members from one year onwards. At the first educational, three-quarters of the branch attended, nearly all of whom had read the relevant chapters.

A speaker from outside the branch introduced each session. This was particularly useful in giving an overall view of the period being discussed, and the lessons to be drawn for today.

This last point, about how to draw out the lessons for the present conditions, is of vital importance. All too often educationals can become dry and abstract if the discussion is not related back to today's events.

Key to the success of the educationals were the questions that were given to the comrades to discuss in small workshops immediately after the main introduction.

The educational organiser needs to think carefully beforehand about what arguments arise in the branch, and work out questions that can be adapted so as to discuss these areas.

An argument that has arisen recently in our branch, for example, is the question of how we relate to workplaces with the shift to the right, and what we really mean by building 'the alternative to Kinnock'.

During the second educational on 'The Menshevik/Bolshevik Split', the questions were designed to enable a complete discussion on this whole area.

The first two questions were general, asking about Lenin's view of changing class consciousness, and contrasting it with Rosa Luxemburg's criticisms.

The third question was about Lenin's view of the party encapsulated in *What Is To Be Done*, and the last question was practical, covering our attitude and response to someone who is refused promotion to a managerial position because he is black.

So in the workshops we started by discussing complex, general political problems, and then related them to practical situations that occur here and now.

After the workshops we would have a general discussion where the speaker answered queries or problems that had arisen from the questions.

To repeat, the key is to understand how the educationals can be used to relate to the outside world.

There is another function too. After this set of educationals, we will start another set on a different topic, such as Marxist economics. This hopefully will help to create an atmosphere of continuous political education and discussion in the branch.



Already we have found that the discussion has improved in the branch meeting. More people now have the confidence to put forward good, political arguments on our attitude to a whole variety of quite difficult questions that face us such as the prison officers' dispute and the Anglo-Irish deal.

Hopefully comrades involved in these educationals can be encouraged to do branch meetings, speak at educationals aimed at newer people in the branch, and so develop into speakers in their own right.

Overall this will help us all to reach a level of Marxist understanding, and gain both the knowledge and confidence to relate to, and put forward solutions to, the complex political questions raised by today's conditions. ■

Frieda Smith

Better didn't come

Democratic Socialism in Jamaica
Evelyne Stephens and John Stephens
Macmillan, hardback £27.50, paper £9.95

THE STORY of Jamaica in the 1970s should be better known than it is to socialists in Britain. A lengthy new academic study by two American 'political scientists' provides us with more than enough information to assess what happened.

Between 1972 and 1980 the government of Michael Manley, leader of the People's National Party (PNP) sought what it termed a 'democratic socialist' road out of Jamaica's situation of economic dependence on western capital. Manley himself became one of the most prominent advocates of a 'New International Economic Order', designed to promote a 'fairer deal' and more rapid growth for countries in the south.

Yet between 1976 and 1980 living standards for most Jamaican workers fell by more than half. Twenty six percent of the labour force were unemployed in 1980 (roughly twice as high as in Britain under the Tories). Despite accepting the harsh prescription of the International Monetary Fund in 1977, Jamaica still found itself cut off from access to further bank loans.

After an election campaign marked by gang violence in the shanty towns of the capital, Kingston, and over 500 deaths, the PNP was decisively defeated by Edward Seaga's rightwing Jamaican Labour Party (JLP) in 1980. Seaga, with American backing, is still in power although the economy has continued to deteriorate.

Manley blamed his defeat on the political thuggery of the JLP, and a CIA organised programme of destabilisation. Both occurred, but the truth is that the mass support which Manley had successfully built up in his early years in office had

deserted him. Given his record that is hardly surprising.

The authors of the book argue that, despite the failure in Jamaica, 'democratic socialist development is the best alternative open to the left in democracies in the Caribbean and Latin America'. Yet they themselves provide overwhelming evidence for a very different conclusion. Reformist strategies which provoke, but do not destroy, the power of capital can lead only to disaster.

Such disaster may culminate in a military coup as in Chile. But it may also, and this is more common, involve the reformist government itself implementing cuts in living standards and attacks on working class organisation.

The intriguing question is how Manley managed to acquire such a leftwing reputation in the first place. In his background he was a typical member of the 'brown' (of mixed racial descent) political elite carefully cultivated by the British in the long transition to full independence in 1962. He inherited the leadership of the PNP from his father in 1969.

Ideologically there was little to distinguish the two main political parties in the 1960s. Both received financial support from Jamaican capitalists. Both organised their own trade unions. Both relied upon patronage (jobs, housing, land) to satisfy their supporters once in power. The JLP had traditionally the stronger base among workers, but had moved far to the right in office.

In 1972 most of the Jamaican bourgeoisie, tired of the corruption of the JLP, backed Manley. The campaign slogans were 'Better Must Come' and 'Power for the People', but there was no mention of socialism.

The new government, however,

inherited the continuing legacy of 250 years of British imperialism. All the key sectors of the economy—sugar, bananas, tourism, and especially bauxite mining—were controlled by multinational capital.

Manley never challenged private property as such. Even when the PNP committed itself to a programme of democratic socialism in 1974, socialism was defined as 'an attitude of mind that requires people to care for each other's welfare'.

But the weakness of the economy impelled them towards greater state control of resources. Takeovers of sugar plantations and hotels were a response to their declining profitability, and compensation was gratefully received by the former owners. Driven by a desperate need for increased revenue, and inspired by the example of OPEC, Manley moved against the North American aluminium multinationals which controlled the bauxite industry. But the partial nationalisation, and increased taxation, had the tacit support of most of the Jamaican ruling class.

The bauxite levy, and greatly increased borrowing from the western banks, helped finance some significant reforms. Free secondary and university education were introduced. For a couple of years living standards rose for those in work.

But in 1974 Jamaica was hit by the full force of the world economic crisis. The aluminium companies began switching their bauxite purchases elsewhere. Capital flight accelerated. Investment inside Jamaica plummeted.

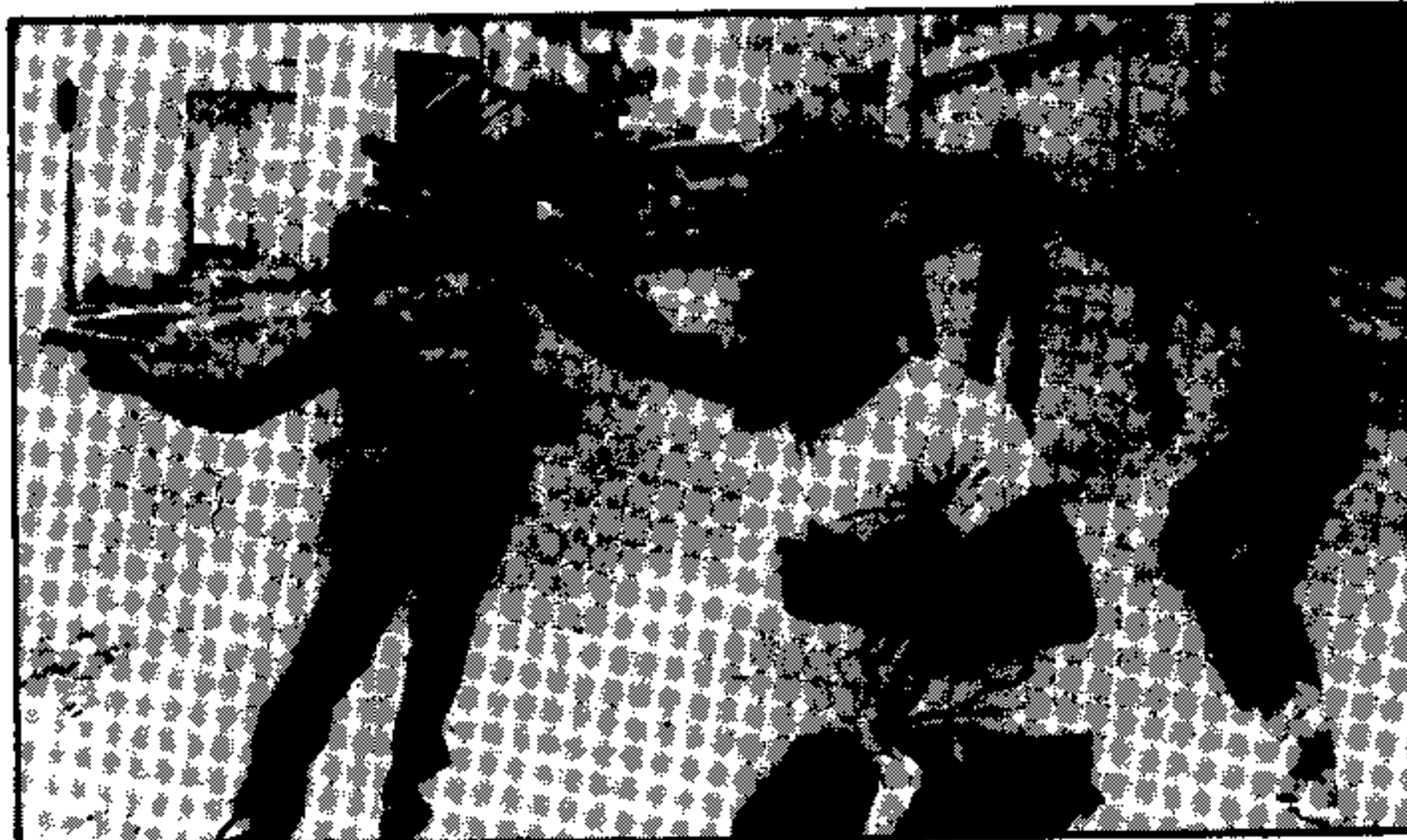
Manley's anti-imperialist rhetoric, his growing ties with Cuba, and the bauxite levy, had all antagonised the US government. In the 1976 election the CIA financed the opposition and a destabilisation campaign comparable to that in Chile under Allende.

Manley responded with a remarkable campaign. His charisma and radical rhetoric were combined with the appearance of reggae artist Bob Marley on the election platform. Twelve thousand, or the equivalent of over three million people in Britain, attended the PNP's rallies. Manley was re-elected with an increased majority.

The election slogan had been 'We are not for sale' (to the multinationals, or the western banks which were beginning to demand their money back). Yet even before the vote the government was engaged in secret negotiations with the International Monetary Fund.

Manley's opening to the left had helped get him re-elected but it had antagonised most of his former supporters in the ruling class. Now he turned on those who had voted for him, the mass of the working class.

The Stephens criticise both Manley's 'provocative' rhetoric, and his deal with the IMF. They argue that Manley's early policies were too 'redistributive', and that he failed to 'construct a viable accommodation with substantial sections of the capitalist class and the managerial and professional class'.



Armed thugs defend Seaga

They seem to believe that a strategy of 'national development', pouring resources into investment whilst holding down workers' living standards, was possible.

But this ignores the obvious point that the world crisis, and the collapse in markets for Jamaica's major exports (whether deliberately orchestrated by the western multinationals, or not), would have forced any Jamaican government into a simple choice.

Either it turned to the western banks and the IMF for loans and assistance—in which case it would be forced to accept all the usual conditions. Or it renounced its debts, and moved decisively to expropriate the wealth of the Jamaican ruling class. But that would make impossible any form of 'accommodation' with the capitalist class.

As it was, Manley and the PNP got the worst of both worlds. As the authors note, '...the privileged classes withdrew more than their votes. Capitalists froze investment, disinvested, exported capital and even migrated.'

At the same time the government was forced into implementing the IMF's cuts, drawing back only in 1979 from even harsher measures, resistance which came far too late to re-establish its credibility among workers. Indeed the JLP was able to combine 'red-baiting' propaganda with organisation of popular demonstrations and strikes against price increases.

Unfortunately even the avowedly Marxist Workers Party of Trevor Munroe continued to offer its critical support to the Manley regime in this period. The opportunities to build a genuine revolutionary organisation with a mass base were missed. That is the lesson that socialists in Jamaica itself have to learn.

One final point. There is a lot of useful material in this book. But there is a shorter, and politically much sharper analysis of the period in an article by Winston James in the journal *Capital and Class* 19, 1983. If you can get hold of it you will save both time and money. ■

Pete Green

Charting the struggle

The Chartists, popular politics in the industrial revolution

Dorothy Thompson
Wildwood House, £6.95

CHARTISM was the world's first mass working class movement.

There had been protest actions involving workers before. Strikes were as old as capitalism. Riots had been a frequent

response to food shortages. Machine breaking was a way of reacting to the wage cuts and job losses that often accompanied new technology.

Workers were involved in all the great uprisings of the French revolution and in all the popular movements of Britain in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars.

But the Chartist movement that sprang up in 1837-8 and lasted through until at least 1850 was the first in which workers identified themselves as a class fighting to transform society in their own interests.

The study of Chartism remains of tremendous interest and importance to socialists nearly a century and a half later. Unfortunately, it has not always been easy to undertake.

There have been books on particular Chartist leaders and particular aspects of the movement. But apart from the memoirs of the Chartist activist Gamage (reprinted a few years back by Merlin and still obtainable) there was not, until recently, any overall account of the movement from a sympathetic standpoint.

Dorothy Thompson's book, published only two years ago and now available in paperback, fills this gap admirably.

She describes how workers' protests over a range of issues—trade union rights, the workhouse system of the 1844 Poor Law, the demand for factory legislation, the introduction of police forces into industrial areas, coercion in Ireland—fused into a massive single movement.

The ostensible goal of the movement was political reform (the famous six points of the Charter). But for its supporters much more was at stake: a challenge to the whole structure of society which was being imposed in the wake of the industrial revolution.

She begins with an account of the movement's origins and early years.

She then goes on to look at the elements which made it up—its leaders at the national and local level, the way in which whole industrial communities were drawn into action, the role women played in fighting alongside their husbands to defend the working class family against the workhouse, the attitude of the middle classes, the class composition of the movement.

In doing so she destroys many myths perpetrated about Chartism—the myth that it was based upon backward looking artisans rather than workers affected by the industrial revolution, the myth that it failed because people refused to follow moderate leaders, the myth that the best known leader, O'Connor was nothing more than an acrimonious demagogue.

Finally, she returns to the history of the movement, to tell of its second flowering with the general strike of 1842, of the attempt to escape from the impasse of defeat in the mid-1840s with the founding of the land company (a scheme for a giant workers' co-op aimed at providing plots of land for the movement's supporters), and of the final fling with the demonstrations of 1848.

Dorothy Thompson's strength is her willingness to identify with and enthuse over the spontaneity of the struggle. There is none of that timid, Fabian disdain for self-activity and militancy which characterises so many other accounts of the movement.

For her, the Chartists failed, not because they were 'too extreme' or their demands 'too excessive', but because they faced an enemy such as no popular movement previously had had to encounter—a confident bourgeoisie which had conquered state power completely for itself.

There are two weaknesses to the book. In identifying with the spontaneity of the movement, Dorothy Thompson tends to downplay the arguments within it over ideas and strategies. This is regrettable, since many of those arguments continue to have relevance today.

Secondly, the book often assumes bits of knowledge that many readers new to the history of Chartism will not have.

But these are minor quibbles. This is a book which every socialist should get hold of and read. ■

Chris Harman

When everything was possible

June 1936

J Danos & M Gibelin

Bookmarks £5.95

THE Western European working class, we are often told, is not revolutionary material. Steeped in reformism, pampered by imperialism and very greedy, it will never challenge capitalist rule.

People who argue in this way make a simple mistake. They look at stable, everyday life and imagine that it reveals the true character of classes. The role and potential of workers, however, is clearly shown at certain points in history when the 'normal' social order is shaken.

In May/June 1936 the French workers proved that they could rise above selfishness. A massive strike wave and factory occupations directly challenged the right of the capitalists to rule. France was paralysed and the ruling class took deep fright.

The events of that struggle are related by Danos and Gibelin in detail unknown, so far, to the English reader. The translation of their book is welcome and has been overdue.

The main lesson from this book, however, is not how strong and capable workers can be in struggle. It is rather, how important the question of leadership becomes when social crises are very acute.

The revolutionary energy of France was squandered and strangled by Popular Front leadership.

This work, written by ex-Trotskyists, reveals how dreadful the role of the Communists and the Socialists was during the events of June.

The Third Republic was hit hard by the world crisis in the 1930s. The squeeze on living standards ravaged the middle class and as a result the fascists grew in strength.

Fascists rioted against the Republic on 6 February 1934 and clashed with the police. The riots forced the Communists to abandon the madness of ultra-leftism and of branding the Socialists 'social fascists'.

There was a cry for unity from the grassroots and it coincided with the beginning of a turn in Moscow in favour of Popular Fronts. A grand Front of all people, even liberal capitalists, was to be formed to defend democracy in the capitalist countries.

The French Popular Front went from strength to strength. Its moment of triumph was the victory in the parliamentary elections of May 1936.

Trotsky criticised the strategy of Popular Fronts extensively and brilliantly. He saw the Fronts as forms of class collaboration, throwing workers into the same camp as the class enemy.

To maintain such an alliance, he argued, the revolutionary party would be forced to ditch its independent, revolutionary practice. The struggles of workers would be hampered by the Popular Front. Events in France bore him out convincingly.

The election of the Popular Front government unleashed enormous pent-up anger in the working class. A strike wave, led by the most advanced workers, gripped the country.

After a dozen years of retreat, working people now thought that 'everything is possible'. They occupied their factories, did not vandalise a thing and revelled in their strength.

Meanwhile, the Popular Front took over the government and the Socialist Leon Blum did not lose a moment. Meeting industrialists, trade unionists and strikers, he desperately tried for conciliation to avoid 'bloody revolution'.

The Communists, on the other hand, spoke of unconditional support for the strikers, ran the strike committees and grew enormously.

Yet, for the Communist Party, the reality of being in the Popular Front was merciless. At the end of the day, either you support 'your' government in bringing the strikers back to work or you try to develop the strikes and make some revolutionary gains. The Communists, keen to maintain the Popular Front, opted for the first course.

Maurice Thorez, the Communist Party leader, addressed the cream of his militants and declared: 'Not everything is possible.' His clarion call in the middle of battle was, 'It is important to know how to end a strike.'

Given how crucial the role of the Communist activists was, it did not take long before the strikers agreed to return. Some concessions had been won but the capitalists once again had the cat in the bag.

Those loaded events of fifty years ago were not a defeat. They were, rather, a failure to grab an excellent opportunity to change the balance of class forces.

A victory under revolutionary leadership would have strengthened the working class and offered some hope to the rest of Europe, then gripped by reaction. The Communist Party, lost in Popular Front class collaboration, could not give such leadership.

Danos and Gibelin criticise the political weakness of Popular Front politics. They see the strength of two million strikers and regret the lost opportunity. Nevertheless, their discussion of what the revolutionary tactics should have been is rather skimpy.

At times their narrative can be dry but it is always meticulously detailed. Precisely this detail and its general political conclusions make the book an important part of revolutionary literature. The work is set in the necessary historical context in an informative introduction by Pete Fysh.

It should be said, finally, that a critique of the Popular Front does not imply that revolutionaries are sectarians not interested in alliances. The Russian revolution was won by an alliance of peasants and workers. Alliances of that kind, however, are created when society is collapsing and the other classes seek the leadership of workers.

If the middle class has confidence in the ability of revolutionaries to lead society out of crisis it will support the working class.

Far from forgetting revolutionary politics, the working class will be teaching it to other classes. Such revolutionary alliances have nothing to do with the class collaboration of the Popular Front. ■

Costas Lapavistas

End of the miracle

State and Opposition in Military Brazil
 Maria Helena Moreira Alven
 University of Texas £18.50

THERE was a time when the Brazilian economic 'miracle' and the military regime that sponsored it seemed to offer a development model for the rest of the Third World and even for flagging developed countries such as Britain.

Those days are long gone and now Brazil

is seen more as part of the problem facing international capital, rather than a solution.

There are two reasons for this. First the effect of the world recession on all third world debtor countries. Second and most crucially the emergence of a powerful combative working class movement has proved to be an obstacle to 'solving' the crisis at their expense.

The rise of the Brazilian labour movement in the dark days of military rule was one of the most important developments in the recent history of the international working class, second only to the rise and fall of Solidarity in Poland.

It gives the lie to those who see the working class as a spent and declining force. It offers hope to militants in countries where the workers are on the defensive—the Brazilian workers triumphed over a brutal military dictatorship that makes Thatcher look like a soft liberal.

It established the working class as the force to be reckoned with in a country of vital importance to the stability of the international finance system.

Maria Helena Moreira's book despite being written as a contribution to bourgeois political science, is easily the best account of the Brazilian dictatorship and the rise of working class opposition.

The military took power in April 1964 to eliminate a left populist movement whose continued existence was seen as threatening the ruling class and interfering with the process of capital accumulation.

The new military regime purged the state apparatus, banned political parties, took over the trade unions which became state organisations, and dramatically cut back living standards. This provided the background to the economic miracle that transformed areas of Brazil into advanced industrial centres.

The labour movement was brutally repressed, militants were arrested, tortured or often 'disappeared'. Strikes in 1968 were broken by the army and this served to intimidate the whole working class. By 1970 there were only 12 strikes in the entire country and in 1971 none at all. This was a downturn with a vengeance.

While the economic miracle continued the regime was able to assume that its economic success guaranteed it middle class support.

With the faltering of the miracle after 1974 this was no longer a safe assumption. The military resorted to gradual liberalisation to get support. This was always intended to exclude the working class.

Unfortunately for the generals their very success brought into being a working class whose strength was to make its exclusion impossible. The development of large scale industry (especially the car industry) created a massive and potentially all-powerful working class.

The centres of the working class opposition were the ABC engineering unions, the metalworkers of Santo Amndre, San Bernardo, Diadema, and Sao

Caetano—representing over 200,000. Here working class unrest was reaching breaking point, the unions were won over by opponents of the regime.

Discontent was fuelled by the regime's admission in mid-1977 that it had rigged the cost of living index to understate the rate of inflation.

On 12 May 1978 workers at the Saab-Scania truck and bus plant in Sao Bernardo clocked on but refused to start their machines until awarded a wage rise. The strike quickly spread so that within two weeks some 75,000 engineering workers were engaged in sit-down strikes.

The action of the engineers broke the grip of fear that the military had for so long had over the working class. By the end of the year over half a million workers had been on strike, including teachers, doctors and bank workers.

Both the regime and the employing class were taken by surprise, virtually every strike ended in some form of victory.

The following year, 1979, the ABC engineering unions once again led the way and this time precipitated a strike wave that engulfed virtually the entire country. By the end of the year over 3 million workers had been on strike, although this time a number of strikes met with fierce repression.

As far as the regime was concerned the working class revolt had by now considerably overstepped the bounds of liberalisation and this could not be tolerated. 1980 was to be the crucial year when the unions were to be smashed.

When the engineering unions entered into dispute over their 1980 claim, the regime forbade the employers to even enter into negotiations and placed the strike centres under military occupation. Despite this the unions held out for over a month before accepting defeat.

The regime's victory was short-lived. The employers suffered huge losses, estimated at over 1 billion dollars, making the dispute an experience they were in no hurry to repeat.

Moreover, the cost of the dispute put a limit on the employers' ability to exploit their 'victory' by rooting out union organisation. The unions were contained but by no means destroyed.

The defeat of the engineering unions had an inevitable impact on the rest of the working class and in 1980 the number of workers on strike fell to 600,000.

Although it had failed to smash the unions, the regime had managed to contain them and felt able to proceed towards a return to civilian rule at its own speed. At the same time it was clear that the working class could not be excluded from this process.

As Brazil's economic situation worsens, so it becomes necessary for the ruling class to break the working class movement. This task has still to be accomplished.

The success or failure of the Brazilian working class in defending itself and developing the political means to challenge

the capitalist system itself is of vital concern to all socialists.

It could well prove to become a centre of not only working class struggle but working class power. ■

John Newsinger

Myths debunked

The Worst Street in North London, Campbell Bunk: Islington Between the Wars

Jerry White

Routledge & Kegan Paul £8.85

THERE'S a myth that Tories like to propagate about the 20s and 30s. People might have been poor and unemployed but they respected the police and authorities.

This book destroys that myth. The police had to patrol in twos for safety. Child battering, wife beating, drunkenness, thieving and general disorder were prevalent in this notorious street.

However, Campbell Bunk could not be isolated from Britain as a whole. It was not an exception, it was the extreme logic of British capitalism's increasing decline.

The lumpen proletariat of the 'bunk' were brought into being by forces beyond the parameters of their street.

Unemployment, migration and the changing nature of industry made significant differences to what happened. In the end, they led to the street's complete demise.

This book is not just another community survey. It links brilliantly individual lives and experiences to the overall changing balance of class forces.

The contradiction in ideas is fascinating. Here is a street that voted Labour but hated the unions, was racist to the core but never joined the Blackshirts.

Here the family was constantly breaking down. Women suffered terrible violence, but they were more likely to be the breadwinners.

The book gives a shrewd insight into ruling class ideology. For at present our rulers can't deliver jobs or prosperity, so law and order, child abuse and rape become the issue.

It was exactly the same then.

'The NSPCC complained in 1933-4 of a "notable and grievous" increase in cases of brutality against children. In that year, 4,208 cases were brought to its notice, about 1,000 more than thirty years before.'

But as the author wisely comments, 'How far complaints to the Society reflected changing patterns of parental

behaviour must remain an open question.'

Campbell Bunk was demolished, but has been recreated in various ghettos and slum council estates of modern Britain. Here battles that take place 'puts the golden age of Campbell Bunk profoundly in the shade'.

There are very few books on the lumpen proletariat—this is a valuable addition. ■

Andy Strouthous

Bookbrief

ON SPECIAL offer from Bookmarks is the excellent **Sergei Zubatov and Revolutionary Marxism: The Struggle for the Working Class in Tsarist Russia** by Jeremiah Schneidemann. This tells the fascinating story of the attempt by police chief Zubatov to set up trade unions in order to channel off discontent and to control the working class.

The Sun Shall Rise for the Workers—the story of Mandlenkosi Makhoba is about the life of a metal worker in the East Rand recorded and then written down. A moving document in magazine format of a black South African worker published by the Ravan Worker Series. Less moving but useful is a series of facts and articles is **Apartheid: a teaching pack** by I D Grosvenor and M J Kelly, Turc.

Feminist fiction continues to boom, almost outnumbering all other types of books sent us. Of these most seem to be fantasy and/or science fiction. Our reviewers give them pretty mixed responses. **Cry Wolf** by Aileen La Tourette (*Virago* £3.95) was not thought much of by our reviewer. The *Woman's Press* have a whole series. **Herland** by Charlotte Perkins Gilman (£1.95) is a reissue of a 1915 feminist utopia novel that again our reviewer thought not worth reading, while **Passing for Human** by Jody Scott (£2.50) was liked. **The Queen of the States** by Josephine Saxton (£1.95) was thought of as 'a nice read for a train journey'.

Books not to buy: **Turn of the Screw** by Martin Walker (*Canary Press* £3.95) on the miners' strike was 'not worth reading and one of the most depressing books I've read'. It avoids any analysis of why the strike was lost, why the TUC/Labour Party didn't support the miners or why there was no solidarity action. It is a list of post-strike attacks on miners in the pits and in the communities. **Justice—the miners' strike 1984-85** by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs (*Verso* £1.95) was also not recommended. It was described as 'short and trying to please everyone by avoiding any of the questions raised by the strike'.

Otto Blum's **Austo-Marxism a Psychological Study** published by the University of Kentucky was 'an attack on socialists as lunatics and twisted characters who seek in Marxism a haven from their personal traumas. A book for the dustbins' (at £30.75 a very expensive dustbin). ■

Noel Halifax

The real elitism

IT'S paradoxical that Luke Martell (May *SWR*) accuses Chris Harman of elitism in his article on socialism and culture, because it is Martell's own comments which have the elitist implications.

He claims that the 'high art' of people like Shakespeare, Balzac and Beethoven is valued simply because it 'panders to the feelings and culture of the ruling class.' Moreover, the only reason their art is considered better than the products of popular culture is because it accords with the standards of 'bourgeois aesthetic criteria'.

If this is the case, then there hardly seems any point in arguing about art and culture: an artist is good or bad because he or she expresses the interests of the right or wrong class! If Beethoven's music can be nothing but 'bourgeois' (a truly absurd idea), then there is no point in criticising it for being the music of the ruling class.

However, if art and culture have an objective content which refers to reality, then it does make sense to argue about it and assess different responses to it. This is probably the reason why Marx admired Shakespeare and Balzac, on the other hand he may have enjoyed a good wallow in 'bourgeois ideology'.

It's the commonsense impressions of capitalism (a substantial component of popular culture) which are much more likely to lead to elitist conclusions, rather than the realistic insights into class society provided by Shakespeare and Balzac.

The important question to ask about art and culture, is whether it is realistic in relation to life, not whether it is 'high' or popular. But Martell argues that socialists should make popular culture their exclusive point of intervention.

There are at least two problems with this argument. First, the economic and ideological constraints on popular culture in capitalism are at least as great as those of 'high art'. I can't imagine Richard Branson doing a lot to improve the Redskins' record sales.

Moreover, the idea that working class consciousness can be changed by skilful manipulation of popular culture (rather than its own activity) is a

typical product of reformist politics, as can be seen in almost any copy of *Marxism Today* or *New Socialist*.

Secondly, what do you say to a revolutionary socialist who is good at writing poetry, or playing the cello? Sorry comrade, the masses will never understand it, couldn't you get a job writing scripts for 'Eastenders'? This is the real elitism.

Henry James may not have been much to the left of Jeffrey Archer, but he was certainly a better writer than Archer. This is what makes Henry James important: his realistic portrayals of ruling class life puts him into opposition with the interests of the ruling class, regardless of his own political beliefs or the wishes of his bourgeois readers.

This point is also demonstrated in Pete Green's review of the film 'Ran' (also in May *SWR*). He rightly says that the director of the film, Kurosawa, is certainly no Marxist, but he is an 'honest witness', consequently the film is worth seeing.

This element of objectivity means that we cannot afford to ignore Shakespeare, Balzac (or Kurosawa), because it is *our* reality which is being expressed, not simply that of the ruling class. To surrender this reality to the ruling class, by opposing 'high art', is a genuine recipe for elitism. ■

Malcolm Webb
Evesham

Come off it!

MAY I correct two mistakes in *Socialist Worker* (3 May 1986) and May *SWR*?

In the former there is a two-page centre spread on May Day which makes a serious omission regarding the beginnings of May Day. I refer of course to the Haymarket Affair of 3 May 1886 when the Chicago police opened fire on the picket line outside the McCormick Harvester Works killing and wounding several strikers. The following day a protest meeting near Haymarket erupted into violence when a bomb was thrown which killed a number of policemen, followed by police fire which killed four more strikers and wounded many more.

The anarchist movement was blamed for this and seven were condemned to death. Four were actually hung and one took his

own life before the execution.

Six years later all the murdered anarchists and three imprisoned anarchists were pardoned, but it was the executions which led directly to the American Federation of Labour declaring that May Day be adopted as a workers' holiday on 14 July 1889.

In May *SWR* there is a very good article on the back page on the 'Show Trials' in the Soviet Union in the period 1936-8. The article is fine until the last column where we are all told that 'apart from the courageous but tiny groups of Trotskyists' no one on the left spoke out against the show trials.

The anarchists were the first to speak out at what they saw as the betrayal of the revolution, as is well documented.

Will the SWP learn the lessons of 1917 and unite all revolutionary forces around it or will it continue on its myopic, vanguardist march to obscurity? I hope for the former but fear the latter. ■

Bill Wells
Cambridge

The reign in Spain

ANDY Durgan's article 'Saying yes to NATO' (May *SWR*) provided some interesting if sketchy information about the campaigns for and against Spain's membership of NATO.

Unfortunately, he was unable to provide an analysis of Gonzalez and the PSOE's position. To understand their position it is necessary to remember Franco.

After the death of Franco, the transfer of power from dictatorship to democracy was relatively bloodless, supported not only by the bourgeoisie but by King Juan Carlos himself. Spain now lives under a fragile democracy that has already been threatened by two military coups.

The present form of government is supported by the right because the austere economic policies of Gonzalez have benefitted the bourgeoisie. While this continues, Juan Carlos will continue to secure the support of the armed forces.

The massive US presence benefits the ruling class not only economically but politically. They know full well the capability of the US to destabilise a government that tries to implement a socialist

manifesto—look at Chile, Portugal and Grenada.

Therefore, it is naive to suggest that Gonzalez would upset this by breaking off relations with the US, especially when the US has sworn to topple any government that leaves NATO.

The memories of the Civil War and Franco are too fresh for the Spanish to risk the chance of the right seizing power. As unpalatable as it may be for socialists, this must be clearly understood before any party may start to gain the mass support they require. ■

Stuart Curley
North London

It's even worse

I'D LIKE to add something to your Middle East chronology (May *SWR*).

You report that in the course of the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 hundreds of Palestinians were massacred in Sabra and Shatila by Falangists as Israeli troops watched.

Two thousand civilians were butchered in Sabra and Shatila on Israeli orders or with Israeli approval, and let's not forget it, but neither must the carnage and destruction of Rashidiyeh and Ein el Hilweh camps in South Lebanon be forgotten, nor the razing of the city of Sidon.

Estimates vary, but we can say that between ten and twenty thousand people lost their lives in the invasion of 1982, about 90 per cent of whom were civilians. It must also be noted that in the forgotten massacres the Israeli army did not just stand by and watch as they did in Beirut.

It is important to stress that Sabra and Shatila was just one massacre among many—not to do so can involve inadvertently giving credence to the Israeli myth. ■

Simon Edge
Cambridge

We welcome letters and contributions on all issues raised in *Socialist Worker Review*. Please keep your contributions as short as possible, typed, double spaced if you can, and one side of paper only. Send to: *SWR*, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH.



MARXISM 86

**10th annual week of meetings, debates and discussion organised by the Socialist Workers Party
4-11 JULY University of London Union**

IT'S been a difficult year for the left. The miners were forced to admit defeat. Kinnock shifted Labour's policy to the right and launched a vicious witch hunt against Militant. The union leaders' 'new realism' has prevented the kind of mass picketing that could have provided a spearhead for victory in the print dispute. However, the Tories are increasingly unpopular.

In this political climate thousands of people have started to question the world in which we live. What can we do about the Tories? Why does Kinnock attack socialists? Can capitalism survive? Was Labour ever different? Can the workers win in South Africa?

MARXISM 86 aims to answer these and many other questions. We intend to present over 250 debates and meetings covering a wide range of subjects.

SPECIAL MEETINGS include:

- ★ Tony Cliff on Lenin and the revolutionary party
- ★ Paul Foot on Harold Wilson
- ★ Forum on the women's movement with Lindsey German from Britain, Sharon Smith from the USA and Goretti Horgan from Ireland
- ★ Peter Fryer with an eyewitness account of the Hungarian uprising
- ★ Sheila McGregor on the politics of the Militant
- ★ Andy Zebrowski on Libya—Gaddafi and his friends and foes
- ★ Howard Brenton on changes in political theatre
- ★ The Moscow trials—50th anniversary meeting with Harry Wicks
- ★ Raymond Williams on the socialist novel
- ★ Nuclear nightmare—the politics of nuclear power with Mike Simons
- ★ Nigel Harris on 'Why are millions starving?'
- ★ Chris Harman on base and superstructure in Marxism

★ John Gray on Workers' revolt in Irish history—the Ulster experience

THIRTY FIVE COURSES including:

- ★ Duncan Hallas on Trotsky
- ★ Resistance and revolution in South Africa
- ★ Women's liberation and socialism
- ★ Ireland—problems for socialists
- ★ The rise of the British labour movement
- ★ Capital for beginners
- ★ What makes a revolution?
- ★ An introduction to philosophy
- ★ Anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism
- ★ Marxism for school students

DEBATES include:

- ★ Socialism and black liberation with Bruce George and Marc Wadsworth
- ★ Student debate on 'Should socialists support Israel?' with Seth Harman and Zak Mokton
- ★ Duncan Hallas and Monty Johnstone on the Spanish Civil War
- ★ Is there a parliamentary road to socialism?
- ★ Mike Gonzales and John Bevan on 'Can the Sandinistas bring socialism?'
- ★ Cynthia Cockburn and Anne Rogers on 'Why are women kept out of skilled jobs?'
- ★ 'Can socialists use TV?'—a discussion with Alan Plater and Alex Graham
- ★ A discussion on the politics of soap with Jimmy McGovern

ENTERTAINMENT

Every night there will be dancing, usually with a band. We will also be having a socialist cabaret and theatre group and a film every evening for the movie buffs.

COST

This year the cost of a ticket for the week is £18 in advance (£22 on the door), £11 for the weekend (£6 for school students). Please write for further information on day tickets or block bookings.

For timetable and further details write to Marxism 86, PO Box 82, London E3 3LH.

Red hot summer

IN THE French version of the big red calendar, June is to '36 what May is to '68. Fifty years ago this month the sun shone on a few glorious weeks of general strike which threw the class of owners into a panic. The French June has remained relatively little known in Britain, overshadowed by the dramatic events of the thirties in Germany and Spain. The numbers on strike were considerably smaller than in 1968—'only' two million as against ten million. But 1936 is remembered with greater affection in France for being the *first*—the time when workers won a new unity and a new self-respect after more than a decade of disorganisation and defeat.

First propelled into battle were workers in aircraft production, the most modern branch of the engineering industry. In three different firms strikes broke out on 11, 13 and 14 May, to demand reinstatement of militants sacked for striking on May Day. All had the same novel features—100 per cent participation, occupation, active help from the local population, rapid and complete victory.

The early months of 1936 had already raised the political temperature. In February half a million people demonstrated in Paris in protest at a fascist street attack on Léon Blum, Jewish leader of the Socialist Party. This emotional event inevitably served as an election rally for the Popular Front—the alliance of Radicals, Socialists and Communists which won a hundred-seat majority in Parliament in May.

For the first time ever the Socialist Party headed the poll. This ensured its entry in force into the government and a break from its previous role of passive support for various combinations of radicalism. The Communist Party, while not entering the government, had signed the Popular Front programme and promised to abandon its previous wrecking tactics. As the size of the victory sank in, the workers sensed fantastic opportunities.

But now, as May wore on, they were galled by an unsuspected quirk in parliamentary procedure. Blum had one month to form his cabinet and would officially take over from the existing provisional government only at the beginning of June.

Encouraged by the May Day victories, inspired by the reports of mass strikes and agitation in Spain, where a Popular Front government was elected in February, and frustrated by Blum's parliamentary immobilism, engineers began to throw down their tools in all the factories of the Paris red-belt. All were occupied; one or two ran up the red flag and locked the boss in his office. The demands were: a wage

increase, the 40-hour week, paid holidays, and union recognition. On 29 May the first non-engineers joined in—building workers on the International Exhibition site. After a short lull the first week of June saw a tidal wave of strikes break all over France.

In Paris, engineering and building were out solid. Other big battalions came out in printing, lorry transport and fuel depots. The strike rapidly gripped traditionally weak sectors as well. Department stores, hotels, restaurants, cinemas and theatres were occupied. The list stretched from the sweated rag trade to banking and insurance. In some cases the workers had not a single union member in their midst who knew how to draw up a list of demands.



'The soaring spirit of June'

In the industrial heartlands of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais, mining, textiles and engineering were paralysed. In Rouen, Nantes and Le Havre, everyone had lost count of the number of workplaces occupied. The south—Bordeaux, Toulouse, Marseilles, Lyons, St Etienne—followed after only a few days delay.

June '36 was memorable not only for its scale, but for its atmosphere. The government and the bosses were afraid to use the police. Instead of bloody picket-line clashes the warm June days were passed in the factory yards with card games, boules, improvised concerts and pantomimes. But the employers sensed an eerie calm in these gentle pursuits. Accompanied by the workers' rigorous security and jealous maintenance of the plant and machinery, they seemed to contain the awful threat of total expropriation.

On 7 June Blum called employers and union officials into his office. He informed the employers that emergency parliamentary procedures were about to legalise the 40-hour week, paid holidays and compulsory collective agreements. Practically all that remained for the factory owners was to negotiate an all-round wage increase. They clutched the straw.

In the following weeks ministers, mayors, MPs, prefects and union secretaries set up and conducted negotiations everywhere at local, regional and national level. By the end of July they had whittled away the occupations, isolated the militants and broken the soaring spirit of June. Blum's government survived until the following May. One year after that the right returned to power, determined to wipe out what remained of the workers' gains.

Seemingly spontaneous, certainly independent of the Socialist ministers, utterly swamping the tiny union bureaucracies, the June movement succumbed to the iron rule of class war—if the level of political organisation cannot be raised to the level of combativity, the level of combativity must eventually fall to the existing level of organisation.

Far from raising the stakes, the two workers' parties tried everything to halt the movement and reduce its source of vitality, the occupations—the Socialists because they dared not break off their flirtation with parliamentarism, the Communists because Stalin's Russia required an alliance with *bourgeois* France to counter the menace of Hitler.

In the grim years which followed, the workers' only consolation was that defeat had not been dealt by the class enemy. Those who knew the story would evoke the scene in the prime minister's office when the employers offered 7-10 per cent and the union men turned it down.

'What, you're not happy with such rates?' demanded Lambert-Ribot, delegate of the iron and steel barons, 'Tell me, when have French workers ever had such a generous increase in their pay?'

Across the table, Benoit Frachon, whose Communism had already acquainted him with the inside of a prison cell, known in the movement as a man of few words, found all that the occasion required: 'Tell us, when have French workers ever had such a general strike?'

Pete Fysh