

**CRIME AND THE
COMMUNITY**

**THE CONTROL OF
NEW TECHNOLOGY**

BOOK REVIEW

ON THE BUSES

COMMENT —

POLAND

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

THE FRANKS REPORT

THE LABOUR PARTY & DEFENCE

NUCLEAR BASES

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**The
MARXIST**

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Crime and the Community

In the struggle for Socialism it will be necessary to overturn the class dictatorship of the bourgeoisie by force, because the capitalist class will never relinquish state power voluntarily. It is inevitable, therefore, that a revolutionary insurrection is to succeed, 'law and order' must breakdown.

This does not necessarily mean that the community will be engulfed by a wave of crime and savagery. It does mean, however, that the power of the police and armed forces, whose ultimate function is to maintain capitalist class rule, must be broken.

Consequently the ruling class and its spokesmen in Westminster and the media can portray the revolutionary Left as advocating anarchy and chaos. As few people would welcome disorder or lawlessness, this is powerful propaganda.

The problem is compounded as the Marxist Left in Britain holds no constructive attitude on the issue of law enforcement. Marxists recognise that laws in Britain provide the framework for the capitalist state. They therefore recoil from taking any position that may be seen as giving legitimacy to laws or law enforcement. The only crimes they feel safe to condemn are those committed by landlords, employers and police, and sexual crimes against

women.

It is as if the problems of theft, robbery, burglary, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour did not exist. This petty-bourgeois liberal approach is exemplified by the Trotskyist groups. In their unprincipled attempts to ingratiate themselves with the black population, the Trotskyists have adopted an almost laudatory attitude to law-breakers, particularly those among black youth.

Marxist-Leninists should look at the question of crime and law enforcement constructively. It is correct to expose and give prominence to the crimes of the exploiters and the police. But crime clearly does not end there.

More than half the recorded crimes in England and Wales are committed by people under 21. Few offences could be described as 'anti-authority'. While it is important to recognise the corrupting influence of capitalist society on the young - society gets the criminals it deserves - we cannot adopt the amoral stance of Trotskyism.

At present there is considerable public interest in law enforcement. The riots in 1981 led to a public discussion of the methods of policing. Operation Countryman brought sharply into

focus the problems of abuse of police powers. Against the background of a record figure of three million crimes reported in England and Wales last year the present government is introducing a number of legislative measures on the powers of police and courts and the rights of suspects. These matters are under even greater scrutiny since the shooting of Stephen Waldorf in Kensington, and Sir Kenneth Newman's supposed reorganisation of the Metropolitan Police.

Marxist-Leninists should participate in this discussion to promote democratic demands on the issues of the police, law enforcement, sentencing offenders, and so on. It is an important part of the propaganda battle to weaken the capitalist ideology.

The Police: Methods and Objectives of Policing

The police are ultimately the repressive arm of the state. Their behaviour in this role is most clearly seen in Northern Ireland where they are equipped like an army of occupation.

Within certain communities in mainland Britain also they are seen as having only this role. In 1981 the police faced more or less spontaneous outbursts of resentment in several cities that stopped short only at the use of firearms by the local people. Since then attacks on foot patrols in Moss Side, Manchester and Toxteth, Liverpool

have indicated that some of the local youth would like to create 'no-go areas' for the police. But these would be neither practicable nor desirable.

During the existence of 'no-go areas' in Northern Ireland in the early seventies, the paramilitaries crudely but effectively controlled the crime rate. On both sides of the political divide they enjoyed a significant degree of support within the local communities and had the manpower and arms to command obedience.

In Britain no organisation exists to fulfil this role. Removal of an effective police service from run-down inner city areas would leave communities at prey to criminal elements. This is not speculation. To some extent it happened in Brixton in April 1982. Now in the Toxteth and Cantril Farm districts of Liverpool, Unigate are having to sell off milk rounds following a number of savage robberies of roundsmen. One can think of countless other examples of anti-social behaviour which might be prevented by an effective police presence.

By and large, however, Britain is still policed by consent. The argument, therefore, concerns not the presence of the police but the functions they perform and the methods they use.

Our attitude to policing is determined by the question: What are the police doing? We say that the police resourc-

es should be directed to the peaceful duties of protecting society.

In terms of manpower and deployment of resources the police pay little attention to the safety of persons and property in working class areas. In a recent report, the GLC Police Committee Support Unit revealed that fewer than 3,500 officers are likely to be available at any one time to patrol London's streets although police officers in London number 26,600 and with civilian support staff total 39,000.

This extraordinary figure gives the lie to claims that political and trade union demonstrations take officers "off the beat". Sir David McNee, the last Metropolitan Police Commissioner, made a veiled reference to this in his retirement speech last September. He alleged that when thousands marched through central London on the TUC Day of Action, other areas of the capital were denuded of police officers.

"It means only one thing. The other parts of London were less well policed. I think it is a factor that the people of London should bear in mind when they are looking at crime and other issues that impede on policing."

The GLC figure also helps to explain the low crime detection rate. Although the Metropolitan Police has an annual budget of about £720 million, the clear-up rate for reported crime is the low-

est in the country. Since 1977 it has fallen from 21% to 17% of reported crime. In 1981 only 9% of burglaries committed in the Met. district and 12% of robberies were solved.

Even giving credit to McNee where none is due, political demonstrations of any size in London are rare. So what does take the officer "off the beat"? One explanation was given by Brian Hilliard, Editor of Police Review and former inspector in the Met. Police. Writing in the Sunday Times, he said:

"A PC can join the CID, become a traffic patrol officer, volunteer for the SPG, transfer to one of the many squads set up to deal with vice, pornography, drugs, or gaming. He can become a dog handler, a collector, a court officer, a clerk, a computer programmer or a royal bodyguard. The one role for which he receives no support or encouragement is that of beat constable."

Hilliard went on to stress that even by their own objectives the specialist groups which take officers off the beat fail consistently. Research into the CID in the seventies suggested that the 'clear-up rate was about 3%. Sir Robert Mark has said that 5% would be an optimistic estimate.

"This is the depressing outcome of the 'form a squad' system of policing which counters any unusual surge in crime like mugging or car

theft, by taking men off the streets and putting them in plain clothes in the hope that they will catch rather than detect or prevent those responsible."

The specialist units are the phenomena of the 1970s and 1980; in London the Special Patrol Group, D11 and the new Immediate Response Units; in Manchester the Tactical Aid Group; on Merseyside the Operations Support Division; in Nottinghamshire the Special Operations Unit, and so on.

Quite apart from the question of efficacy, we should oppose the development of these specialist units on political grounds. Just like a professional army, the further the police are removed from ordinary life and contact with the community, the more susceptible they become to reactionary ideas. Hence in civil conflicts they will identify themselves more closely with the ruling class and behave more brutally towards the people. Additionally as Countryman demonstrated, elite units are more prone to corruption.

The growth of such units further strengthen the rationale for distribution of firearms. About 4,300 officers in the Met. Police (and 11,000 nationally) are now trained to shoot. The use of guns by both criminals and police is by and large, restricted to London. The increase in police use of firearms was ostensibly justified by the increase in armed robberies in the 1970s. But

the armed crime rate during the seventies rose only half as fast as police issued guns during the decade.

The shooting of Stephen Waldorf in Kensington illustrated how proliferation of guns caused such confusion that the police were evidently unaware where the shots were coming from. (It is notable that, despite the presence of several uniformed gunmen and dozens of other officers, the passenger of the ambushed vehicle was fortunately able to escape.)

To summarise the above, we would support demands for the following practical changes in police composition and methods:

- a) Restriction of motorised units and the disbandment of special squads,
- b) Recognition by pay differentials and other benefits of the value of beat officers,
- c) Curtailment of the use of guns and related riot equipment by the police; a ban on the use of plastic and rubber bullets,
- d) Training for police cadets and probationers outside police ranks but within the communities which they are meant to 'serve'.

Three points about all this need to be made to avoid misconceptions. The first is that, as society gets the criminals it deserves, so also does it get the police force. Capitalist society in Britain since 1945 has led youth

to have high expectations of wealth and possessions. It cannot now meet those expectations but its pop culture continues to promote consumerism and individualism.

It is hardly surprising that youths with no prospect of a secure future or a reason to identify with society become involved in crime, much of it nasty. The police have to deal with this crime. Society expects answers to the rising crime rate and it is little wonder that police become brutalised, particularly in their treatment of suspects.

The second point is that laws should be enforced without discrimination. Periodically we hear calls for one or more ethnic or cultural communities to be exempted from a particular law. The question that should be asked is, "Is this law right or wrong?" rather than "Is this law offensive to one section of the community?" Appeals for exemption from particular laws on grounds of race, national origin or religion are, by and large, reactionary diversions which incidentally serve to deepen racial divisions within society.

The final point is that the police can only play a limited role in crime prevention. Much, if not most, crime occurs where a police patrolman would have no access to 'the scene of the crime'. The more advanced thinkers in the police service recognise this.

Sir Kenneth Newman, the new Metropolitan Police Commissioner, gave an interview to the Times on his appointment last October:

"The direction and purpose at Scotland Yard will be towards 'proactive policing'. In Sir Kenneth's view, policing has become 'demand-led', which means the police are on a treadmill, constantly responding to incidents."

Newman criticised those who believe in "the war against crime" which he considers a meaningless phrase because, in relation to most crime, there is not an identifiable enemy.

"The proactive answer to burglary may be to adopt a system now used in Detroit of "neighbourhood watchers", where neighbours in an area have been banded together under local police officers to look after each other's property. It is an idea Sir Kenneth thinks could be applied to the densely populated inner London area."

(Newman has, of course, developed this idea in his recent report.)

Self-policing of communities must come about. In the long term this is the ideal solution because it involves the people in the prevention of those crimes that give the police the justification for acting arbitrarily and harshly. Naturally the danger exists that a

'vigilante mentality' could develop but this danger is secondary to the political advantages which would flow from the experience.

Accountability and Political Control

Public scrutiny of what the police are doing would be helped by local control of the police. This is a democratic demand which is both practicable and unanswerable.

The public are now paying 15 pence in every £1 of rates, as well as 4 pence in every £1 of income tax to the Police. In 1982-83 London ratepayers will contribute £323 million to the total police budget. (As the GLC Police Committee Support Unit states, in terms of cost effectiveness the 'Met.' is noticeably less efficient than other Metropolitan forces and vastly more expensive.)

In exchange for this financial contribution the public get little control. At present the police forces in England and Wales are controlled by 43 Chief Constables, including the City of London and Metropolitan Police Commissioners. The Chief Constables with an army of 120,000 men and women under their command wield considerable power.

Each police force is 'controlled' by a Police Authority (also known as a Police Committee) consisting of two-thirds elected local councillors and one-third local magistrates. The Police Authority

appoints its own Chief Constable. It provides over half of the force's budget; the other half is paid by the Home Office.

The Police Authority is supposed to advise the Chief Constable of policing policy but he is not bound to accept its advice.

The demand for Chief Constables to be made more acceptable for their policies has steadily increased over the years. Police Authorities have, on occasion, clashed with their Chief Constables. The Authority on Merseyside, chaired by Lady Simey, refused to authorise the purchase of extra riot equipment wanted by Kenneth Oxford, the Chief Constable. In Nottingham the Authority refused to authorise the purchase of plastic bullets.

In London there is no Police Authority. The Police are directly controlled by the Home Secretary. (The GLC 'Police Committee', though funded by the GLC, is the creation of the present Labour administration and will no doubt disappear on a change at County Hall or if the Conservative government manage to abolish the GLC.)

At present there is, therefore, no chance for local representatives in London to challenge police methods or aims. This absence of democratic control is more pertinent now since Newman's appointment. Newman came to London from his post of Chief Constable

of the RUC in Ulster. He considers his experience useful because the social problems of Northern Ireland make it a kind of police laboratory for the rest of the U.K.

Newman's 'perception' of the social problems of Northern Ireland is marked by his answer to the allegations of brutality at Castlereagh, the RUC's main interrogation centre, that many of the injuries were self-inflicted for propaganda purposes. He also favours the use of the plastic bullet to quell disturbances.

For all the apparent liberalism of the Newman approach, his talk of consultative committees, 'omnicompetent constables', and close co-operation with local leaders is merely an attempt to placate the growing calls for police accountability. He has made his own position crystal clear. He is accountable to the Home Secretary, who is accountable to Parliament which contains 92 London MPs accountable to the London electorate. End of discussion.

The GLC have recently proposed a locally controlled police authority for London comprising the GLC Police Committee and 32 borough Police Committees. We support this demand and would press for maximum discussion of police operational policy.

Should we take Police Committees seriously? Participation in Police Committees can enlighten people about the

role of the police. It can give them a taste of control; and when the capitalist class shrugs off such democratic shackles as it will eventually do, the 'wrench' from democratic norms will be all the harder.

The bourgeoisie promote capitalism as the most democratic framework for society. The demand for complete police accountability will help expose this fiction. One of the present difficulties is that the ultra-Left have, to some extent, devalued the demand. They see it as a vehicle for rendering the police ineffective and are too witless to even attempt to conceal their aim. So most people, who do not share the aim, regard calls for police accountability with some apathy, if not suspicion.

The demand for accountability extends to police treatment of suspects, particularly those in custody. It is a fundamental principle of English law that the accused is innocent until proven guilty. To surmount this initial hurdle the police can, and do, abuse their powers on the streets and in the police station. It is very important that these abuses are resisted.

The presumption of innocence is useless unless it recognises the dangers of abuse and strengthens the rights of the defendant in the criminal process. There have been a number of attacks on the presumption of innocence over the past decade which have had the effect

of strengthening the forces of repression.

Ten years ago the Criminal Law Revision Committee proposed that the defendant's right of silence be removed. This proposal was fortunately resisted and defeated. Under the Criminal Justice Act this government has abolished the right of the accused to make an unsworn statement from the dock, (admittedly a right of little persuasive value).

By the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill the police are given greater licence to arrest and hold people for questioning and can detain suspects for up to 96 hours if, as is likely, a Magistrate's Court is prepared to authorise detention. The Bill contains new and wider stop, search and arrest powers: rules on confession statements so that evidence extracted during the new periods of extended detention may be more readily admitted in Court; and the power to fingerprint children under 14.

All the above are changes which are detrimental to the interests of the working class and people. They are not irreversible and we should support calls for their repeal.

A number of measures could be implemented now to make the police more accountable and responsible to the people; we would support the following demands:

- a) a nationwide system of police authorities comprising elected local representatives.
- b) a fully independent Police Complaints Board.
- c) Public supervision of police educational standards.
- d) tape recording of interrogations.
- e) a system of public prosecutors for England and Wales independent of the police who now carry out this function.

The Powers of the Courts

It would not be possible here to undertake a thorough review of sentencing policy. But the increase in crime rates and prison overcrowding have focused attention on the problem of sentencing offenders. Unfortunately there are no easy solutions, as Whitelaw must now realise in view of the dismal failure of the 'short, sharp shock' treatment for young offenders.

Present day penal policy has been tailored to meet the continuing economies in public expenditure. The prison and borstal populations now stand at record levels and the system is in danger of collapsing under the weight of numbers.

Therefore - ironically - the Conservative government (traditionally the party of 'law and Order') has been urging courts to impose shorter jail terms and alternative sentences on non-violent offenders. The courts can now impose a 'partly suspended' sentence:

and under the Criminal Justice Act the threshold at which prisoners eligible for parole will be lowered.

The Government regards the situation as so acute that its preparations to resist the waterworkers' strike included a request to the courts through the Lord Chancellor's Department to impose fewer prison sentences during the continuance of the strike!

There appears to be a wide realisation that custodial sentences are unwarranted and inappropriate for most offenders. Recidivism in borstals, detention centres and prisons is notoriously high. Moreover, it is very doubtful whether more spending on the prison service would have much effect on the problem.

Since 1945 the prisoner population has risen by 174%. During the same period the number of prison officers rose by 607%. During the past five years more prison officers than prisoners have been recruited to the system. The Prison Department has done better for resources than any other government department. The 607% growth in prison staff since the war compares favourably with a 119% increase in police manpower.

Given that high security prisons now cost approximately £400 per prisoner per week to run, and open prisons £140 per prisoner per week, it is hardly surprising that the Government is looking for alternatives to custodial

sentences.

One option announced in January is to make jobs available for convicted defendants through the Manpower Services Commission. Offenders would be paid £60 per week and the type of work offered is ostensibly designed not to take jobs away from other unemployed. How it will work in practice remains to be seen.

It is fair to say, however, that we would support any move that would result in penal policy being primarily concerned with work and genuine community service rather than sitting in a cell.

This could be allied to a system whereby offenders in crimes of violence would be ordered to compensate their victims. There is already a scheme of compensation from the state in the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. By and large, however, the awards made by the Board are very low and there is no good reason why the violent offender should not help to alleviate the suffering caused - at least in money terms.

* * * * *

In this article we have been concerned with law and order under capitalism. How would our approach differ when the proletariat seizes power? Will there be proletarian laws, or will the law and legal institutions under the dictatorship of the proletariat be merely a hangover from capitalist society? We will return to these questions in a future article.

March 1983

The Control of New Technology

Book review

The increasing rate of advance in all fields of technology is such as to raise questions about the very meaning of progress. Of course, the idea of challenging anything as basic and particular to the human species as progress is tantamount to disowning one's ancestors. At best one stands the risk of being labelled a latter day Luddite.

So the questions are not raised too loudly or too frequently.

However, in manufacturing industry where the impact of new technology is immediate, the subject is causing a great deal of concern and some unrest.

We are often persuaded that the application of automation, the silicon chip and modern computer, to industry is the dawn of a new era when the workers will be released from arduous and repetitive jobs.

But the fact is that technical advance has invariably deskilled jobs still further, rendering them more repetitive, boring and intense than before. Nowhere is this more evident than on the assembly line in any manufacturing plant you care to select. The very rationale of any proposed mechanical or electronic aids to assembly includes, as prime factors -

1. That they should reduce the opera-

tor's contribution to the process, whether by hand or brain. This reduces the training time necessary and makes replacement easier, lowers the standards of ability required in the recruitment of a workforce and, accordingly, the wage levels paid for that work.

2. That they should incorporate, wherever possible, a controlled cycle time for a given process, thus tying the operator to the machine and dictating the pace of work.

Taking the use of euphemisms a stage further, it must surely be apparent that technological advance in the context of a capitalist society is 'releasing', and will continue to 'release' large numbers of us permanently.

So the idea that we might exert a degree of control over developments that so affect our lives and livelihood is a very desirable aim. It is this aim that provides the basis for this publication.

Employers have always endeavoured to keep their workforce in the dark about their future plans until the last possible moment. There is an old saying, "Forewarned is Forearmed", and the active intervention of an organised body of workers, intent upon defending their conditions, is the last thing an employer wants in an already difficult world.

The point is made in the opening pages of this book, the first third of which is devoted to the ways in which employers seek to introduce new methods and systems in both industry and commerce.

"In order to deal with the current offensive by corporations we need as clear a picture as possible of the company's overall strategy. By piecing together the apparently disparate changes which management tries to introduce, we can start to see what their aims are and therefore can begin to draw up appropriate bargaining strategies and tactics.

We maintain that the trade unions can deal effectively with new technology only if we understand the role that technological change has in a company's overall corporate strategy."

Perhaps the most powerful weapon in the employers' hands is, and has always been, the threat of unemployment. Not surprisingly then, in the present circumstances, it is being used as a lever. "Accept the changes and all that goes with them or we will move the job elsewhere." A particularly powerful argument where the transnationals are concerned.

"Against the background of nearly four million unemployed, many companies, such as Lucas Industries

and Metal Box, are telling their various workforces that jobs and plants will only remain if there is an acceptance of investment in new technology. They say that if new technology is invested in a particular plant then its future will be more secure than one in which it is not introduced - but that its introduction will depend a great deal on the co-operation and productivity levels of the workforce. There are instances where workers in a German factory were told the same as their counterparts in the same company but in a factory in Britain."

The government speaks of an "air of realism that is developing." This is simply another name for the fear of the sack. It has returned after an absence of nearly half a century and accordingly appears the more dreadful to those suffering it for the first time.

Examples given in this section of the book show how the employers choose their ground carefully, sometimes bypassing the shop stewards and appealing to the full-time officials, at other times directing their assault against the shop stewards.

"Also a great many companies have been introducing new technology & equipment without any agreement and have resisted trade union efforts to negotiate over the matter. This has often overturned established customs and practices where trade

unions have had some influence and control over equipment, plant and working methods."

Perhaps the most startling innovation, given the natural insularity of British management, is the adoption of a Japanese practice, generally referred to here as 'quality circles'. These are groups of employees, including representatives from the shop floor, supervision and the lower management levels which meet to discuss ways of increasing efficiency and productivity, the elimination of waste and reduction in costs.

The nearest approach in Britain to this kind of set-up were the Joint Production Committees that were formed during the war. But, even though it was an emergency situation, they were regarded with suspicion by the workers and resentment by the employers who strongly objected to the implied suggestion that the workers could show them anything. They were disbanded as soon as decently possible.

Suggestion schemes, run by many firms over a considerable period, are always on a commercial basis and are accordingly limited in scope.

The circumstances in which these 'quality circles' are being formed make them quite distinct. Increasingly, workers, both manual and clerical, find themselves interfacing with computerised equipment. In the case of craftsmen the machine is programmed to absorb

and reproduce their skills, but in general the worker must adapt to the machine. The existing systems and method of work must be adjusted to meet the demands of the automated and computerised equipment.

When problems arise the quick common-sense solutions are out. Instead some convoluted arrangement has to be devised in order that the computer can 'accept it'.

The tendency is, therefore, for workers to become increasingly alienated from their daily occupation. The opportunity to become involved in decision making and the broader scheme of things is an opportunity to be grasped with both hands.

On the employer's side, the practice of promotion from below, limited though it always was, has almost ceased. In the main, echelons of management are recruited from college graduates who are then given a week or two in the different departments. This is to create the illusion of "working their way up".

So it is that the workshop floor, always a jungle, becomes even more impenetrable to this type of manager. So it is that quality circles are catching on. An article in the Sunday Times reported:

"The technique is the use of quality circles in which workers meet to try and solve the problems

which crop up during production. They were first introduced in Japan in 1962 and Wedgwood is one of 100 or so British companies which have caught on to the idea in the last two years Wedgwood have 150 such circles involving 30% of the workforce and, from the speed at which other British firms are introducing them, it seems that quality circles are the one Japanese import of which we cannot get enough. British Aerospace, I.C.L. and the titanium oxide makers B.T.P. Tioxide are among the roll call of firms that have squared the circle. Marks and Spencers, for whom quality has always been a way of life, encourages all its suppliers to introduce the circles

Before we are bemused with the idea that these circles deal solely with quality, let us return to the book where the following passage provides a bit of balance. These are the objectives set out for the quality circles at Lucas C.A.V.:

"To reduce stocks (including work in progress) by 50%

To increase total machine utilisation by 75%

To reduce substantially the cost of quality

To increase payroll productivity by 50%."

As terms of reference, these are, to say the least, as wide as a barn door.

But there are other factors not included in that list. For example, as the following passage from the book illustrates, there is the question of trade union strength at shop floor level, where it really matters:

"These super-suggestion schemes are described by one Rolls-Royce director as a way of getting at the 'gold in the mind of the employee'. Quality circles may turn out to be extremely important for they appropriate information and knowledge from employees quite directly for management purposes. People's ability to point to - and use - management idiocies and inefficiencies are in many ways a source of trade union power and independence from management plans. Quality circles seek to undermine this. Workers are invited to pass on their knowledge and, in return, are offered absolutely nothing."

Finally, on the subject of quality circles, those of us who have worked or are working in industry will not be surprised at the following:

"It is often found that, in these 'After Japan' drives, there are some very large changes in supervisory structures proposed. In Lucas the company has proposed a reduction of two-thirds in the numbers of lower and middle supervisory staff required as new methods of work organisation are in-

roduced. This has, of course, frightened the wits out of many supervisors and they have become ever more anxious to carry out management's plans on the shop floor."

The final pages of this section contain a summary of the policies pursued by successive Governments, Labour included. Legislation enacted has, with few exceptions, had the aim of weakening the trade unions and strengthening the employers.

Worthy of note is a reference to the way in which a Labour government debilitated the trade union leadership by inviting them into the corridors of power:

"The Labour Government's 'industrial strategy' extended an invitation to trade union leaders to be more closely involved in government indicative planning and industrial administrative agencies - all the little 'Neddies', the Industrial Development Advisory Board, etc. But the effect of this involvement seems to have weakened rather than strengthened trade unionism."

It is always difficult to determine where error of judgement ends and calculated misdirection begins. There is also room for disagreement as to the condition of the trade union leaders before they become involved. But one thing is clear, the present government

believes that they no longer warrant serious consideration and has accordingly ignored them.

"Cast aside like an old Russian boot" might well be the caption to a cartoon we leave to the artistic imagination of the reader.

* * * * *

The second section, entitled "New Technology and its Implications", is concerned with developments in the different fields and the effects of their application.

The numerically controlled lathe, the robotic welding or spraying plant, computer aided design, etc., all are 'wonders' of modern technology and all of them, within the context of capitalist economy, constitute a threat to our economic well-being.

In addition to this, we have the growing ability to link the various areas in manufacturing industry, commerce and administration into one central command post that will control, monitor and report on any selected part of the operation.

"Each step in the use of computers in design, draughting and manufacturing generates a store of information, (data base), which is centralised in a central data base and is usable in any other part of the design and manufacturing pro-

cess. This means that, for example, the design of a product, its manufacture, storage and distribution are integrated, with possibilities of control over all functions considerably extended.

"A recent Financial Times report made it clear that the future trend is for networks of computers and computing facilities which are tied into actual production and a whole range of clerical and technical tasks. The view of most large companies in this business is of an open interconnection of all manner of office equipment - business computers, word processors, telephones and ancillary machines with C.A.D./C.A.M.*, not only on a single site but across different factories in different parts of the country or in different countries."

It is difficult to convey in words the full import of machines which can absorb human knowledge and skills, acquired over years of study and practice and which can then regurgitate rapid and endless repetitions of those processes like a demented parrot.

Appendix 'A' is a reproduction of a "New Technology Briefing Sheet" produced by the Joint Shop Stewards Committee at Lucas Aerospace, Burnley. Contained in that document is a quote from "Computer", (dated 25.9.80) which succeeds in that endeavour.

Not only does it convey a measure of the individual and personal tragedy, it also provokes an awareness of the extent to which power is transferred when the employer has that knowledge and skill, stored on tape or disc, to be used wherever and whenever he demands.

"Numerically controlled machine tools have taken away highly developed skills and now workers face a hostile force.

A highly skilled tool-room jig-borer, watching his machine, now numerically controlled, may observe that it is imitating a labour process which he, the toolmaker, had developed over perhaps 30 or 40 years as a skilled craftsman.

Likewise the skilled turner, observing a numerically controlled (N.C.) lathe, will note that it takes its first cut at a depth which he had determined through tacit knowledge at earlier stages. And, just as he had done, the machine leaves sufficient material for a finishing cut to impart the surface finish quality required of the component.

The jig-borer and turner may also note that their skill is no longer required; they have become de-skilled. They have conferred their skill on the machine and the more they have given the less there remains of themselves.

they have given the less there remains of themselves.

The knowledge passed from craftsman to apprentice, refined and developed, has now indeed been turned into an object - the N.C. tape - which belongs, not to the worker, but to the employer. And that skill, which was the worker's to take home each night, forming the basis on which bargaining with the employer took place, has now been objectivised by the machine system and confronts him as an alien force.

That objectivised labour has an existence outside the worker is well demonstrated if the employer decides to take the tape to another country and have the work done there. This, of course, is precisely what the multinationals do.

In the past companies would only have been able to do this by training foreign workers. In that case it could at least be argued that the processes would aid the technological development of the country involved.

With N.C. tapes both are losers. The workers in the country of origin are deskilled while those in the foreign country have a deskilled and therefore debilitating labour process imposed upon them.

Before the introduction of these 'sophisticated' machines employers had to retain the skilled work in the immediate vicinity of the trained workers or offer them the opportunity to follow the work. Rolls-Royce is a case in point. It has one of the most highly skilled workforces in the U.K. The accumulation of generations of their skill, ability and ingenuity has made possible the production of aero-engines such as the RB211. In the last few years these talents have been objectivised into control tapes for the machines used to produce RB211 components.

Events last month in Rolls-Royce's Sunderland plant have impressed the workers. They discovered that the company intends to take the tapes and use them on machines in Miami. There, thousands of miles away, their own knowledge will undermine their job security and bargaining power in Sunderland."

The "Age of the Robots" is a very old sci-fic concept. In it monster machines took over and ruled the humans. They were generally portrayed in some kind of horrific humanoid form. In fact they have arrived and they come in the shape of old servants the lathe, the jig-borer, the television screen. The horrific humanoid forms are in the background pulling the strings.

Least we dismiss the psychological aspect too lightly, consider this:

"..... other companies try different tactics, depending on the section and the strength of the union organisation. They introduce VDUs first simply as space invaders, chess or golf games. Large numbers of psychologists are employed to devise these tactics along with ensuring that computers have friendly harmless sounding names like Pet and Apple."

No detail, however small, is overlooked.

* * * * *

So the size of the problem is fairly presented. But the title refers specifically to control. That is the yardstick by which its contribution must be judged.

"All these changes and threats have to be faced up to and dealt with now. If the only alternative to the employers' and Tories' offensive is the development of a set of policies to be implemented by a Labour Government, then the question which remains as to just how the problems we have outlined here will be dealt with."

The first requirement, already referred to, is to establish the extent to which the employer intends to effect

changes in the work-method and organisation. At Massey-Ferguson the Joint Shop Stewards Committee set up a sub-committee for the purpose of collecting and collating all available information relating to changes anywhere within the total ambit of the company's operations. Some examples are given, illustrating the way in which an employer seeks to conceal the long term aims of the change. The following are just two:

"Massey-Ferguson has introduced small electric trucks on runners into the stores. At the present time they have an operator but close inspection showed that the trucks do have an automatic mode. The company has also introduced small pallets into the stores for the first time. It is trying to cut down all stock, divide it into manageable quantities and have it at the right place at the right time. The new technology sub-committee estimates that in the future there will be only 30 jobs left in the finished parts shop now employing 200 storemen."

The second concerns the same company:

"The company informed the unions that it was installing a ring mains system into the factory to run 19 V.D.U.s into the goods receiving, finished parts and print shop. The new technology sub-committee discovered that the ring main cost

£350,000 and clearly had capacity greater than for 19 V.D.U.s. On discovering this, convenors from the major unions saw the management and were told that the installation of 52 V.D.U.s was planned but that it had not yet been decided just where. Currently negotiations are still under way."

The remainder of the book is concerned with advice on the method and means to be adopted by Combine and Joint Shop Stewards Committees. Tips on the gathering and interpretation of information about proposed or suspected changes, signs that may be look for indicating a deeper purpose than that expressed by the employer, bargaining points that could be useful in negotiations.

Two elements, essential to any good and effective trade union organisation are referred to, and because of their universal importance, are worth quoting here. In order of importance they are, firstly:

"At British Leyland, Longbridge, the use of new technology on the Mini-Metro line coincided with management's onslaught on trade union organisation. The skilled workers needed for the Metro plant seem to have been hand-picked for their lack of interest in trade unionism. And B.L. encouraged these recruits to elect "employee reps" rather than stewards, and to identify with the product. There was real need

to strengthen union organisation on the site.

Initially the convenor and stewards from other sections of the plant asked if there were problems which were resolved. Then people were encouraged to stand for election as stewards and were given initially a lot of support from other stewards and the convenor until they felt able to deal with the issues themselves.

The stewards spent more time with individuals, held more mass meetings and published bulletins encouraging members to think about a wide range of issues. These tactics aroused far more interest than simply meetings devoted to stewards reporting back."

Which is, after all, what good trade unionism practice should be at all times. And secondly:

"It is clear that some form of multi-union co-operation is essential. While this may not mean negotiations as such, at the very least provisions need to be to help avoid inter-union disputes or sell-outs - which can happen without the union realising it. This is particularly likely if members from different unions are not aware what changes negotiated in their section may mean for another section."

An aim which seems far from achievement despite the fact that the equipment that this is all about is destroying both craft and professional distinctions.

Throughout this book the subject matter is presented objectively and there is no attempt to diminish the problems. The advice offered is culled from the experience of shop stewards who have faced the challenge of computerised equipment and the need to devise some form of defence. But, taking the aim to be long term control over the introduction and use of this equipment, there is a wide divergence between the aim and reality.

This is illustrated by an example given of events at Lucas Aerospace, Burnley. Appendices B and C are reproductions of agreements reached between the employer, the District Confederation Shop Stewards Committee and the Joint Shop Stewards Committee at the Shaftmoor Lane site of that company.

Without exaggeration they could be termed 'model' agreements of a kind regarded with cautious suspicion by many experienced shop stewards.

Subsequent to these agreements a dispute occurred at the Shaftmoor lane site. Initially the company refused any extra payment to workers called upon to operate the new equipment.

Manual and clerical workers withdrew

their labour and discussions ensued between trade union and management. The centre of the dispute moved from the issue of payment to a demand by the trade unions for national negotiations with any settlement applying to all sites, whilst management insisted on site negotiations.

Eventually the unions accepted that negotiations should proceed on a site to site basis. The company then announced that it would install the new equipment regardless of any negotiations.

Their attempts to carry out this threat were thwarted on the first occasion by the Skilled Allied Trades and, on the second, by the EETPU.

The company then issued an ultimatum and, in response, the EETPU proposed strike action providing TASS would agree to act simultaneously. TASS, however, would agree only to call a mass meeting as soon as the EETPU stopped work. The EETPU then went into negotiations with the management and concluded an agreement on terms for installing the equipment.

Failure should not preclude further attempts but it demands a re-examination of the circumstances and this includes a realistic assessment of the forces involved. For example, if the point of issue is a matter of a few pounds more or less out of gross profits, that is one thing.

But if the issue is one of survival as a viable enterprise in a rapidly shrinking market place, then it is a very different ball-game. We must always remember that an agreement, any agreement, is worth just the muscle that can be put behind it, no more.

So the real question is - can we envisage the establishment of long-term control over the introduction and employment of the new technology, the effect of which is to decimate the ranks of workers engaged in manufacturing in-

dustry? What are the limits of trade unionism? In particular the craft unions will rapidly become anachronistic.

As our productive capability multiplies, the markets shrink. How long can we continue to greet everything new as 'progress'? If we are to evaluate progress, what should we use as criteria?

These questions will be dealt with in our next issue.

March 1983

On the Buses

It began in June last year when rumours circulated that us residents of Carleton Road were to be serviced by a No. 4 bus which London Transport was to re-route for that purpose. Initial reactions were unfavourable; the road was unsuitable for several reasons - it contained two schools and a nursery, it was narrow and winding, and inadequate for the traffic already using it.

A phone call to London Transport confirmed the rumour and, after some consideration and discussion, it was felt that the local residents should be given the opportunity to express their views. Together with a couple of friends we decided to leaflet the road explaining the situation and including a short letter to the local councillors

which, we suggested, might be detached, signed and sent off by the recipient of the leaflet. We distributed 300 of these along the road and sent one to the local paper.

Two local councillors live in this road; one is a bus driver and shop steward at the garage where the No. 4 is based. Several attempts to contact him were unsuccessful but we managed to contact the other councillor. She suggested to us that there was nothing to worry about as the Council had the matter in hand.

We expressed our lack of confidence in local Councils and our doubts as to their intentions. We explained that there was a need to involve the people

concerned and that we intended to do just that.

There was a measurable reaction, with people knocking on our door expressing concern and asking what could be done. We explained our intention of calling a public meeting but, in the meantime, they should write to anyone concerned with the re-routing and register their opposition.

We then contacted the local paper and informed them of the developments, criticizing the attitude of the local councillors, especially the bus driver who, despite our leaving our address and phone number, had made no attempt to get in touch. They requested a photograph, so we got a group of the interested residents together. The photo, along with an accurate account of events, appeared the following week.

The first reaction to this was a visit from the bus driver who was somewhat belligerent. He, like the first councillor, did not see any cause for involving people as the Council had the matter in hand. We pointed out that this was paternalism and that L.T. might possibly be better influenced by a sizeable number of local residents than by a handful of councillors.

The second reaction was that Islington's Planning Dept, beat us to it and called a public meeting themselves, partly as a face-saver and secondly because they wanted to get the reins in

their hands. But they made the usual mistake of making their views known on the leaflet, instead of simply calling the meeting in an impartial way to let the residents make their views known.

This obviously discouraged those who might be in favour of the re-routing and the result was that only thirty people and six councillors (the latter arriving late) turned up.

Most of the available time was taken up by the councillors making their views known to the people. The chairman stated that the Council was prepared to erect barriers and dig up the road to stop London Transport. We residents did not react with revolutionary fervour to that proposal since we used the road ourselves.

The bus driver explained that, as part of the economy drive, L.T. was to cancel the 239 bus route. This runs from Archway to Waterloo and serves hospitals, schools and factories along its route. But despite the loss in wages and the prospect of redundancy in the long term, the bus crews involved in his garage had expressed no wish to oppose the plan.

We suggested that we might take steps to demonstrate to the bus crews that there was some opposition outside, but he did not receive it with any enthusiasm.

The councillors also informed the

meeting that another bus, the C.11 would be re-routed to cover part of the 239 route, but this was considered as totally inadequate by those present.

Some residents took the view that the Council should be doing more for us, but we argued that we must be prepared to do it for ourselves. The very favourable response to this latter point produced the suggestion that an Action Committee should be formed to organise future activity. The chairman offered financial support from the Council should it be needed.

After the meeting we questioned the poor attendance and felt that some investigation was called for. We visited a local school and spoke to some mothers there. We quickly discovered that they were in favour of a bus route along Carleton Road. They saw it as a direct link with the Nag's Head shopping area, as well as a means of getting to the two schools in the road.

Canvassing a Council estate produced the same result on the issue of the No. 4. But everyone we spoke to was opposed to the removal of the No. 239.

So, whilst there was a considerable divergence of opinion of the No. 4, we had unanimity on the need to retain the No. 239. At our first meeting the Action Committee decided this provided the most favourable basis upon which to continue the campaign. Either way we were attacking the broad strategy of

London Transport to reduce expenditure at the expense of the travelling public.

Our next step was to mount a leaflet and poster campaign covering a wider area than before, taking in large parts of the 239 bus route. We explained London Transport's proposals and invited all along to a meeting to discuss this issue. We didn't make the same mistake that Islington Borough Council had done, but we briefly stated that L.T. planned to alter the route of the No. 4 and cut out the No. 239 in September, and invited people to have their say about this.

There was great enthusiasm among Action Committee members with everyone pulling their weight and promises to get as much help as possible. Assistance in distribution of the leaflets and the display of posters was overwhelming. One lady, using her DAP bus pass, travelled up and down the 239 route giving leaflets to passengers and talking to the bus crews. She persuaded some of the latter to put a poster on their garage notice board.

Five days before the meeting we read in the local paper that, because of local objections, L.T. had agreed not to route the No. 4 bus down our road, so this left the way clear to concentrate on saving the 239.

We had had some difficulty finding a venue for the public meeting and had to

settle for a students' residence dining hall which was a bit off the beaten track. Nevertheless, 55 people turned up. As it was a dining hall the seats were arranged for that purpose. We simply turned the chairs round facing one another and, with no platform to intervene, people could address one another.

Those who came were very representative; middle class, working class, young and elderly, some had travelled in from the neighbouring borough. Discussion was equally wide-ranging, most contributing at least once. The decision was unanimous - the 239 must be saved.

In addition to writing to L.T. it was suggested that we should convene another public meeting and invite the District Manager along. Some doubt was expressed as to whether he would attend. A local councillor said that, in that event, she would make an appointment to see him and then take us along as well.

This was agreed to with some enthusiasm. Leafleting would be on an even wider scale, and 23 names and addresses were volunteered to assist in this effort.

The time and place of the second meeting were soon arranged. The District Manager, along with the Deputy Area Manager, agreed to attend. We had received some very favourable comments on the way in which the previous meeting had been conducted, so we decided to do the same again.

Local papers were informed, and the local SDP member on the GLC asked if she might be allotted time to address the meeting. We informed her that if she wished to attend she was welcome, but only on the same basis as everyone else.

On the night of the meeting it poured with rain. Despite this, 67 people attended. We started by explaining that there would be no opening statements, and so we moved straight into questions and discussions. There ensued a very positive and enthusiastic session. The representatives from London Transport admitted that they had received more letters re the 239 than any other.

In reply to one questioner, the District Manager said that bus services are being cut to match the number of crews available; an odd way of determining the frequency of service when there are several thousand unemployed in the vicinity.

However, it became clear that, however inadequate their performance might be, they were there with a clear and unalterable mandate. The 239 was to be chopped and that was that. Their role was one of Public Relations Officers whose task it was to convince us that what had to be done would hurt them more than us.

Not that we gave up easily. A few made last minute efforts to change the District Manager's mind. But others

came up to the Action Committee and asked what we should do now.

One person described the efforts that we had made as a waste of time, but this is incorrect. At the present time when both apathy and frustration appear to be on the increase, it is more important than ever to encourage people to become actively engaged in the defence of their own interests.

The example given here did not gain its objective but it provided us with a better insight into the mood of people

in one locality, and them with experience of a different type of leadership.

Up and down the country hundreds, perhaps thousands, of these 'insignificant' actions are taking place. If they are encouraged and multiplied it is possible that they can be developed into a mass movement outside the control of the main political parties.

In any case, it is much better than waiting on the sidelines for the revolution to break out.

March 1983

Comment

Since Thatcher came into office things have gone from bad to worse on the economic front as far as the working class is concerned.

Manufacturing production is now 20% below what it was before she took office; unemployment is well over the four million mark and still rising; the National Health Service has continued on the downward slope it was on under the previous government; the earnings related supplement has been abolished from employment and sick pay benefits which have also been made taxable; and laws have been introduced to penalise trade union activity and elevate anti-trade union workers to the rank of freedom fighters.

The Government was able to conduct a war eight thousand miles away from home in order to retain a colony without meeting serious opposition from the Opposition, and to cap it all, the Boundaries Commission has come forward with proposals which, if implemented, will on present estimates automatically increase Tory representation in Parliament by about thirty seats. That it will reduce the chances of a majority Labour government being elected in the foreseeable future is of less importance than the fact that it reduces working class representation in Parliament. The former is of immediate interest to some; the latter is of long term concern to the class.

Despite all this and more, current indications are that the Tories can still muster a majority of voters in the country as a whole. The miserable showing of the Liberal/Social Democratic Alliance proves that little traditional Labour Party support has gravitated in that direction. It certainly looks as though a lot of people who previously voted Labour are either voting Tory or abstaining.

To put it down to apathy is to beg the question. Why have they become apathetic and, in many cases, anti-Labour?

Appeals to anti-Tory sentiment no longer attract votes to Labour to the extent that it used to. "One is as bad as the other" is now the most usual comment when the relative virtues of political parties are under discussion.

The failure of Keynesian panaceas has led to a crisis of credibility for all those who thought that they would give capitalism a human face. It has shown itself in the Tory party where Butlerism has been replaced by Thatcherism.

The effect within the Labour Party is proving to be devastating. Callaghan and Healey had been forced to adopt monetarist policies when in office. It had become impossible for them to ignore the fact that continual increases in government borrowing, far from solving the problems of the economy, were actually making them worse. Increased amounts of money had to be pumped into

the system each year in order to produce the same effect on unemployment levels as the year before, but then at the expense of an ever increasing rate of inflation.

Falling employment in the manufacturing sector was concealed by a deliberate policy of expanding employment in the non-productive, and State and Local Authority sector. Services were not improved, but that was considered to be secondary to the need to keep total unemployment figures down. No one minded very much as long as it did not appear to be costing anyone any more money but now that the bubble has burst, people are being forced to recognise that nothing is for nothing.

The question of who will pay has now become a burning issue and is giving rise to sharpening social contradictions. Rising rate bills are forcing people to question Local Authority expenditure. Council jobs, for long regarded as a secure haven from the turmoil and stress of manufacturing industry are now very vulnerable. Social Security payments, which had come to be regarded as a god-given right that came from heaven and did not have to be paid for, are now under attack.

Workers in nationalised industries who have been given the impression that they had secure jobs for life have now been forced to realise that state monopolies can be even more difficult to deal with than private ones.

The technological revolution which was supposed to lead to a universal increase in highly paid leisure time has resulted in a vast amount of low paid enforced leisure time for a rising percentage of the population.

The Tory party has maintained, even regained, some credibility among its traditional supporters because it has ceased to flirt with reforms aimed at making capitalism more egalitarian, and reverted to its pre-war role as the unashamed champion of the privileged and well-to-do.

The Labour party, whose appeal has always rested upon its claim that capitalism can be peacefully transformed into a utopia, is now split from top to bottom as it becomes increasingly clear that the future holds the prospect not of peaceful progress but of deeper class divisions, where lines will be more clearly drawn, thus making anti-working class compromises more easily detectable and trendy solutions less acceptable.

In short, the Labour party is on trial and in consequence it is split into almost as many factions as there are ideas concerning ways of meeting the challenges that society is throwing out.

It is claimed that the multiplicity of factions is evidence of the democratic structure of the party. In fact, it only demonstrates the ineffectiveness of ultra-democracy. While Left-

wing factions issue their statements and even occasionally get one of their motions accepted by National Conference, the Parliamentary/Right-wing trade union de facto alliance gets on with really deciding Party policy.

Factions of any hue are tolerated only so long as they do not threaten that alliance which has dominated the Labour Party since its formation.

The Labour Party was formed for the sole purpose of securing the election to Parliament of people sympathetic to the aims of the trade union movement. In the early days both the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party affiliated to it in the hope that it would become a vehicle for promoting socialism. When it became clear that the Party was irrevocably committed to pursuing only trade union, not socialist, aims they withdrew.

In the wake of the Russian revolution the Party inserted a clause into its constitution which called for the public ownership of the means of production. Its sole function has been to attract idealists into that party in the belief that some future Labour government would implement it.

Because of that illusion several generations of political activists have misdirected their energies into trying to change the Labour Party instead of getting on with the job of building a new one.

It is undeniable that there are many well-intentioned and dedicated people in the Labour Party but the road to hell is said to be paved with good intentions.

POLAND

The lifting of martial law only indicates that the authorities have, for the time being, knocked the stuffing out of the opposition and, to a certain extent, isolated the leadership. The Party and bureaucratic elite which has emerged as a new ruling class has gained a breathing space during which it must either come to terms with the working class, or sink deeper into the economic and political mire.

In our previous issue, we took the view that ultra-leftism of the Solidarity leadership had made a government crackdown inevitable. No ruling class is going to stand idly by while moves are afoot to overthrow it. It had either decided or allowed itself to be pushed into a position in which it was sure to be defeated.

If the Polish authorities had been unable to cope, Soviet forces would have been used, because an anti-Soviet government in Poland would have changed the political and military balance in Europe in favour of NATO, and no one in their right mind could expect the Warsaw Pact countries to allow that to happen.

It is conceivable that some of these

who advocated what we term ultra-Leftist policies did so in the hope that it would lead to a crackdown and defeat, and therefore make a rapprochement between the working class and the state more difficult.

Consciously or unconsciously, they served the interests of U.S. imperialism in particular, and capitalism in general, because they wanted to destroy the existing state rather than make it more responsive to the needs of the people.

This, of course, immediately raises the question of whether it is possible for the Polish working class to extend its power gradually so that it will eventually become the actual, rather than the nominal, ruling class.

According to orthodox Marxist theory, once the capitalist state has been overthrown, advance to the next state (Socialism) requires that the working class establishes its own unique form of state power.

Part of that process is the transfer of large-scale industry into public ownership. That has been done in Poland but although it is nominally the property of the working class, it is actually under the control of the Party and bureaucratic elite who, in theory, exercise that control on behalf of the working class but, in practice, operate as though it were their private property.

As this phenomenon has occurred in every country in which the working class is supposed to be in power it strengthens Mao's theory that class struggle will remain the key link for a very long time, and that a whole series of revolutions will be necessary before Socialism is secure. This implies that he considered it likely that new classes whose interests run counter to those of the working class and Socialism will be spontaneously created during the building of a socialist society.

One of the orthodox theories which has been discredited by practice is that concerning the role of the trade unions in a workers' state. The idea that they can be restricted to being a mere transmission belt for the implementation of Party policy has proved to be woefully wrong. They must be free to elect their own leaders and to openly disagree with the Party and the state, if necessary.

NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

The Soviet Union has now clearly gained the political initiative in Europe as far as the anti-nuclear movement is concerned. The stupidity of Reagan and the uncompromising attitude of Thatcher have helped strengthen the unilateralist wing of CND.

The feeling is gaining ground that the NATO member states are loath to engage in meaningful negotiations aimed

at eliminating nuclear weapons from Europe. This impression is not short of the mark because NATO cannot contemplate a nuclear-free Europe as long as it remains committed to the doctrine of Flexible Response, whereby a successful invasion of Western Europe by Soviet conventional forces could, if other means failed, be met by resort to nuclear weapons.

If that were to happen, the target area would be Western Germany due to the fact that Warsaw Pact forces would already be occupying a sizeable chunk of it. No wonder that the anti-nuclear movement is strongest in that country.

The suicidal nature of that strategy has caused some Western military commentators to question whether even the Soviet military consider it to be a credible deterrent.

Be that as it may, the possibility remains that NATO may be the first to use nuclear weapons. This is strengthened by Reagan's statement that a nuclear war can be limited to Europe, an attempt to damp down fears in his own country that it would inevitably escalate and nuclear weapons could land on the United States.

Although CND focuses attention on mid-range nuclear weapons, the greatest danger arises from the stationing in Europe of battlefield nuclear weapons. It is those that are most likely to be used first in accordance with NATO's present

strategy and once used, escalation would be almost inevitable.

The crucial thing, therefore, is to demand the withdrawal of those weapons as part of a campaign to compel NATO to abandon its present strategy in favour of a non-nuclear one.

As far as mid-range nuclear weapons are concerned, it is necessary to preserve a balance so that neither side will lightly use them to stave off military defeat. The statement by the late Brezhnev that the Soviet Union would not be the first to use nuclear weapons should be matched by a similar statement from NATO, or at least from its European members.

Unilateral disarmament by either side would increase the danger of war rather than diminish it, for history shows that in the vast majority of cases aggression only takes place when one side is convinced (rightly or wrongly) that it has a decisive, if temporary, advantage over the other. It is for that reason that the transition from a nuclear to a non-nuclear defence strategy will have to be a phased operation.

The unilateralist stance of CND is aimed at undermining current NATO strategy by denying it back-up mid range nuclear weapons. That is its positive aspect. Its negative aspect is that if it were successful, and mid-range as well as battlefield nuclear weapons were withdrawn from Europe before the

necessary conventional forces were in position, the balance of military forces in Europe would be tilted decisively in favour of the Warsaw Pact.

Objectively, the unilateralists can be reckoned as being among the pro-Soviet political forces in Europe. The reasons why individuals take up unilateralist positions are manifold but two main reasons stand out; one is pacifism, the idea that it is wrong to bear arms under any circumstances; the other is that the Soviet Union is not an expansionist power but is solely concerned with its own security and that of the countries adjacent to it.

Pacifism does not have deep roots among the British people, certainly not among the working class, therefore for present purposes it can be ignored. The main danger arises from the belief that Soviet intentions are entirely defensive.

Soviet foreign policy has undergone a series of changes over the years. In the very early days Lenin favoured the idea of using the Red Army to give support to the revolutionary forces in Germany. As the revolution receded in Europe, and fascism came to power,

Stalin was more concerned with ensuring the security of the Soviet borders.

After the last world war he aimed to enhance Soviet security by creating what can only be described as a number of buffer states in order to push back the frontiers of imperialism in Europe.

In the Khrushchev era there was a tendency towards seeking accommodation with the U.S. for the purpose of agreeing on a division of the world into their respective spheres of influence. But the U.S. rejected the idea because it still believed that this was the 'American century'.

Its defeat in Vietnam knocked that idea on the head and marked the beginning of its decline. The post-Khrushchev leadership, encouraged by this, stepped up its efforts to expand Soviet influence throughout the world. Its methods of doing so are no less brutal and no less inimical to the interests of the people and countries concerned than those of other imperialisms.

The upshot is that both superpowers are still seeking to divide the world between them, not in collusion, but in contention with each other. Therein lies the danger of another world war.

The Second and Third World countries are faced with the problem of how best to prevent either superpower establishing its hegemony over them.

In this real world, every country must look to its own defences if it is to avoid being subjugated by one or other of the superpowers. The question is not whether we should be in a position to defend our national sovereignty at all times, but how best to do it.

Reliance on nuclear weapons runs the

risk of destruction on a hitherto unknown scale. On the other hand, an expansion of conventional forces will add to the repressive forces of the state, and also increase the ability of the ruling class to indulge in imperialist adventures like the Falklands. There cannot be any guarantee that armed forces will not be used in that way, but if defence is based on popular, rather than professional, forces that danger is minimised.

To base defence on popular forces requires the adoption of a strategy that is really concerned with defence rather than thinly disguised aggressive forces awaiting an excuse to counter-attack and engage in hot pursuit.

The advantage of adopting a purely defensive non-nuclear strategy is that it would not only clip the wings of the more warlike American generals and politicians but, if accompanied by a propaganda offensive, would help isolate those Soviet leaders with expansionist ambitions from the mass of the Soviet people, who certainly do not want war; they suffered enough during the last one.

Their fear of being attacked by Western imperialists is justified by history. If that fear can be dispelled they will be less likely to support the imperialist adventures of their own ruling class.

* * * * *

Since the above was written, Soviet spokesmen have welcomed the idea of withdrawing battlefield nuclear weapons and McNamara, one time Secretary of State for Defence, has called upon NATO to abandon its doctrine of flexible response. Support for those initiatives will outflank the pacifists and introduce an element of reality into the campaign for nuclear disarmament.

The Franks Report

The public debate that has ensued since the publication of this report shows quite clearly that responsibility for the whole Falklands cock-up lies with the House of Commons which, over a number of years, had insisted that those islands remain under British sovereignty. It refused to face up to the fact that the only viable options were (and still are) to either concede the Argentine claim to sovereignty, or make them a Fortress.

Neither Carrington nor the Foreign Office can be blamed for failing to find a solution when Parliament has refused to face reality by telling the Falklanders that their only options were either to accept Argentine citizenship or assisted resettlement in a country of their choice.

The result is a situation in which Britain stands condemned by a large part of the Third World. The option of Fortress Falklands has become a reality, a reality which everyone knows is un-

workable in the long term.

Apart from the drain on our resources, the Falklanders are having their way of life changed by the very process which is ostensibly designed to defend it. A permanent occupation force of three servicemen to every islander is a sure formula for discontent and at the end of the day Britain will have to surrender sovereignty. A return to civilian government in Argentina will probably provide Britain with the opportunity to get off the hook.

The Labour Party and Defence

The showing of the Labour Party on this subject is just as confusing as it is on most other questions. Apart from a few honourable exceptions the Party did not publicly oppose the Falklands war, neither has it rejected the Thatcher thesis that self-determination is the overriding consideration.

In that respect, it will be interesting to say the least, to hear what its attitude is on the question of Hong Kong and the New Territories. The Chinese Government has quite rightly said that they are part of China and must therefore be returned to China in due course. The prevarication of the British Government on the issue is just as great as it was over the issue of sovereignty over the Falklands.

Another similarity with the Falklands is that that part of the population in

the New Territories and Hong Kong whose views count for anything with the British Government will certainly prefer to remain under British jurisdiction. In the very likely event of the Chinese Government being 'intransigent' are we to anticipate the sending of another Task Force to uphold the 'right' of the population of those territories to self-determination. Ridiculous? Maybe, but Thatcher's soul-mate Reagan appears to be intent on keeping Taiwan separated from China.

It is extremely unlikely that Thatcher will still be Prime Minister when China decides to bring matters to a head but she is not the only neanderthal in British politics. The Left must begin the campaign now for Britain to recognise Chinese sovereignty over those territories, and to begin negotiations in earnest now concerning the way in which sovereignty will be handed over.

Nuclear Bases

The decision of last year's Labour Party conference to oppose the siting of nuclear weapons in Britain while still remaining in NATO could, with a little stretch of the imagination, be interpreted as being a conscious step in the direction of forcing NATO to adopt a non-nuclear defence strategy. If that is so, it should follow up with the publication of a broad outline of the kind of defence system that it has in mind. Silence on this matter gives

the impression that they have no clear views on the subject.

John Nott, former Secretary of State for Defence, showed himself to be much more consistent in his approach. In contrast to the waffling on of Callaghan, Silkin and others about the need to maintain naval strength in surface ships, presumably to enable Britain to play the role of world policeman, Nott was unequivocal about the primacy of defending Britain. Speaking in the debate on the White Paper on the lessons of the Falklands campaign, he said:

"The prime duty of the British Government was to defend the people of these islands. The defence of the U.K. base is the only part of our conventional contribution which is relevant to every possible defence policy option. ... Britain could no longer afford to be the policeman of the world acting in the same role as the United States."

There appears to be a contradiction between the views expressed by Nott and the moves to make the Falklands a British base in the South Atlantic. If that is the case, the Labour Party should be opposing the latter development and concentrating on the defence of Britain and, by implication, that of Western Europe.

The pacifist element in the Party is

doing its damndest to play on the very natural fears of the people concerning the consequences of nuclear war, but is ignoring both the need in the present state of the world for each country to cater for its own defence and the need to prevent imperialism from imposing its will on Third World countries.

The antics of some Labour controlled Local Authorities are reducing the whole question of war and peace to the level of a farce. One example is the decision of the GLC to declare London a nuclear-free zone. Enthusiasm for the idea is limited to a very small circle of committed pacifists. Most people are unmoved, even though they are just as concerned about avoiding war as are the pacifists.

People have sufficient common sense to know that the absence of weapon sites is no guarantee against attack; Coventry, Rotterdam and Dresden prove that. In any case the Authorities concerned have no power to determine where nuclear weapon installations shall be, apart from the fact that no Government would contemplate siting them in highly populated areas.

To make any zone nuclear-free would require that every potential aggressor would have to give cast-iron guarantees (if there is such a thing) that no nuclear weapons would be targeted on that zone.

While the whole thing may give paci-

fists a nice warm feeling that they are doing something for the human race, the whole thing is, at best, a sick joke. At worst, it is deception.

Things are far too serious to be left in the hands of either warmongers or pacifists. It is high time that an alternative was presented. But where is the political party that can do it?

The Water Workers

Oh, what a surprise for the duchess! She, like many others, thought the danger was over when the miners accepted the Coal Board's offer. To suffer defeat at the hands of the water workers, one of the most docile sections of manual workers in Britain, must be a bitter pill for her to swallow. No wonder that she was driven to attack the settlement as being too high.

Although it was probably tactically correct for the negotiators to recommend acceptance, it needs to be borne in mind that the 12% increase is on average earning levels, not on basic rates. Nevertheless, it was a significant victory which will give heart to the gas and electricity workers who are next in the firing line.

Workers in the public utilities are, at the present time, in the most favourable position for challenging Government wages policy. Those employed in the manufacturing, and oil and coal industries have less muscle be-

cause their products can be stockpiled, can be substituted by imports, and are more subject to considerations of profitability.

Water supply and sewage disposal are continuous processes which cannot be interrupted for long without disastrous consequences ensuing to the community at large.

The gas and electricity workers are in an even stronger position in some respects. Although the effect of a withdrawal of labour does not so directly affect public health, its effect on industry can be almost immediate.

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