

20 March-19 April
1982 3.50p

41

socialist
REVIEW

Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

**Central America – from
repression to revolution**



Bread and Terraces

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

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

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

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

It is much more likely that the cause of the long term decline is that the development of modern capitalism has driven leisure more and more back into private consumption in

the home—accounting for both the decline in football and cinema and the massive pre-dominance of TV in leisure activity.

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

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

Business logic

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

This does not mean that the bigger clubs have it easy—costs have risen sharply too. Ground expenses have shot up, players' wages are now quite high and transfer fees are phenomenal. The accumulated debts of the Football League clubs run to about £25m. But the bigger clubs can also attract bigger backers.

For many years football has been subsidised by local capitalists as a hobby and a good ideological gesture to their workers.

But as the gap between income and expenditure rises, and the subsidy needed to maintain even a tiny club like Halifax gets bigger, there comes a point when business logic takes over from sentimentality and public relations. That is the point which more and more clubs have reached in the last few months.

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

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

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

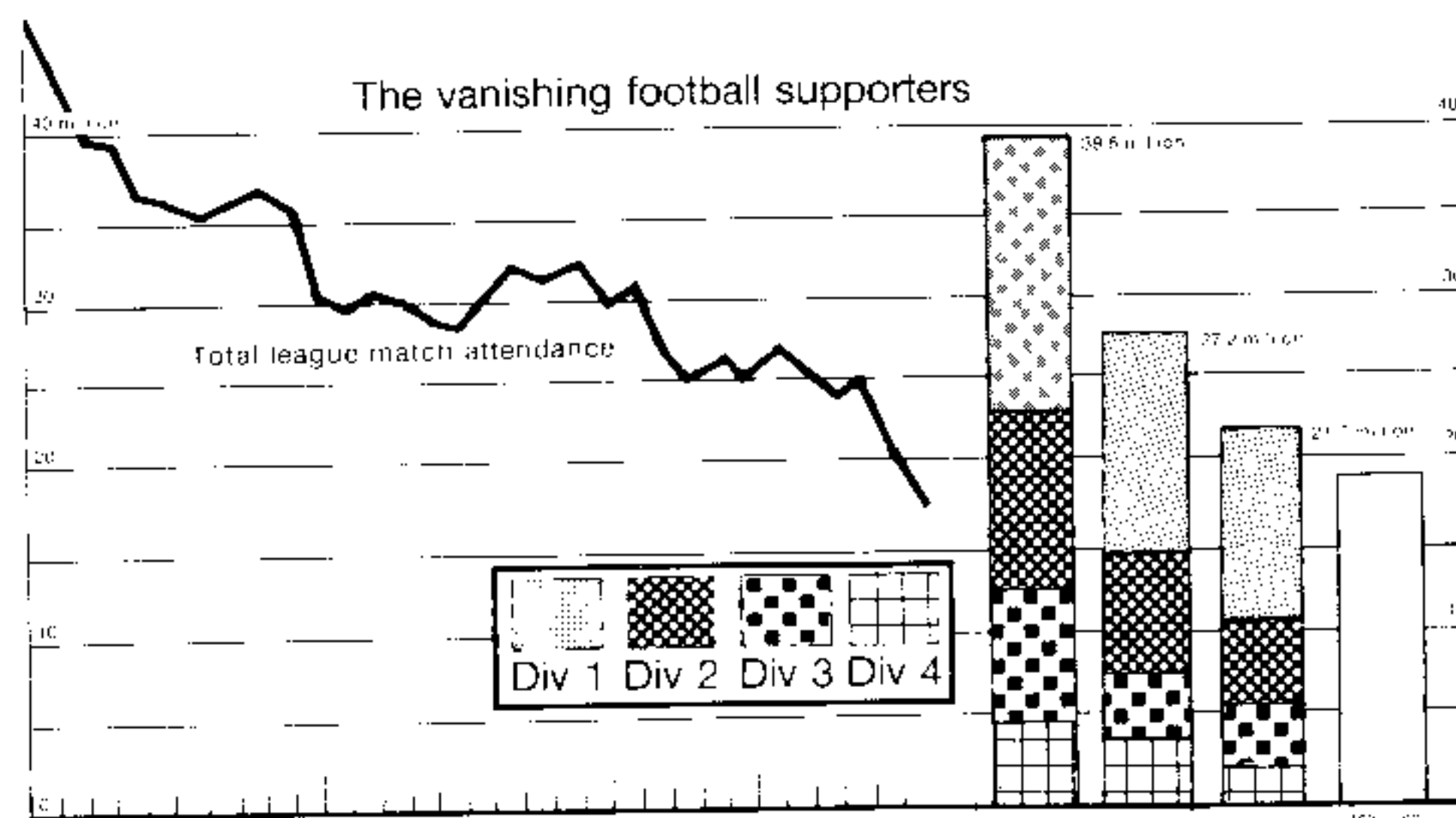
But this move involves a substantial capital investment, implying not only fewer and fewer clubs but a shift in the way they are run. As the amounts of cash at stake get larger, so the 'hobby' approach will have to give way to a much more serious attitude towards investment.

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

There seems to be no way that the Football League can escape the logic of capitalism. It must leave behind the petty local capitalists who have dominated it from birth to pass into the hands of banks and the big capitalists who run the more substantial sections of the leisure industry.

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

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





From repression to revolution

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

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

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

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

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

Washington is directly involved in the bloodbath now taking place.

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

The guerillas in El Salvador have now

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Cover photograph courtesy of Other Cinema

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Correspondance and subscriptions to Socialist Review, PO Box 82, London E2. Please make cheques and postal order payable to SWD. Socialist Review is sent free to all prisoners on request.

ISSN 0141-2442

Printed by East End (Offset) Ltd,

(TU All Depts) London E2

CENTRAL AMERICA

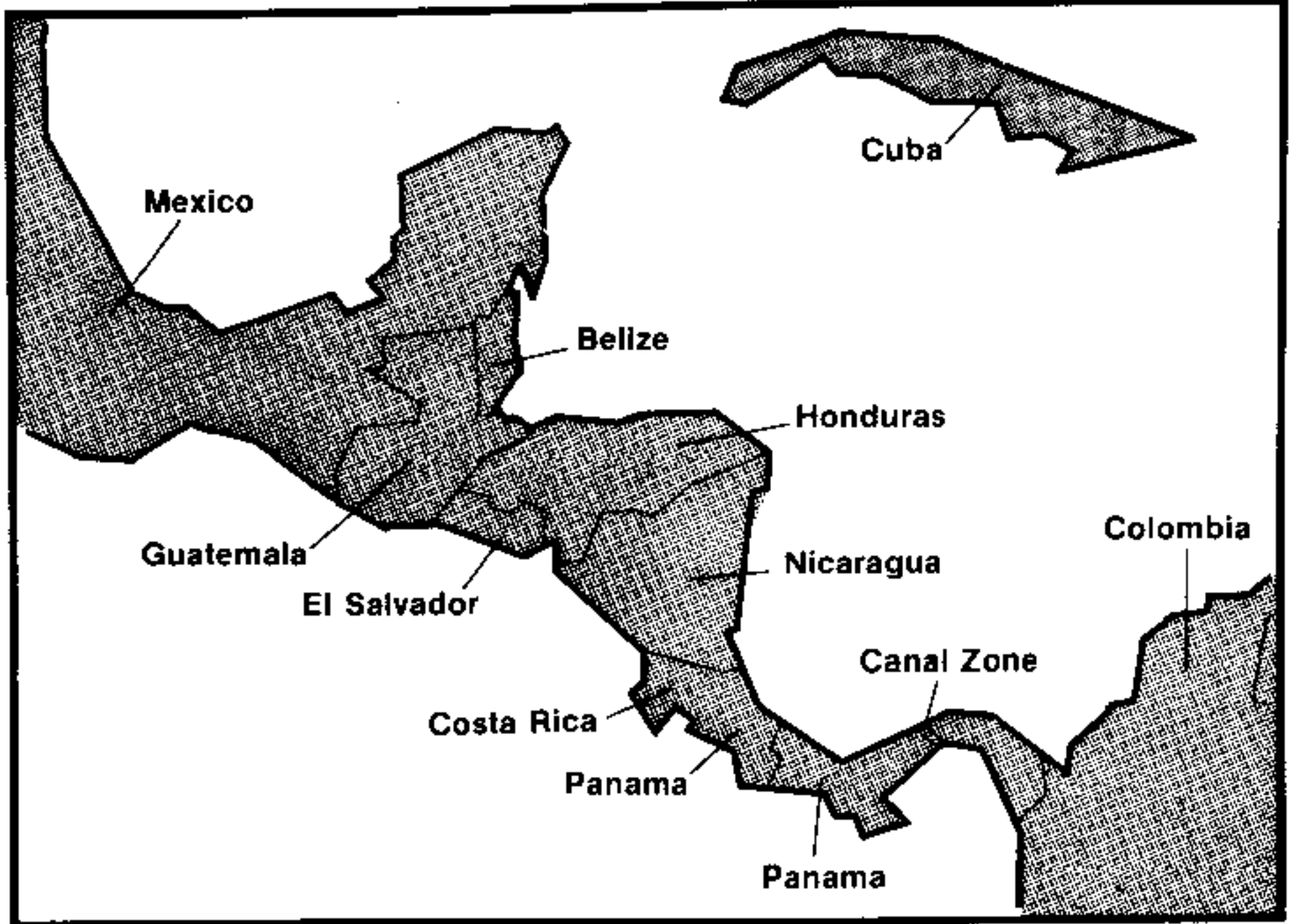
consolidated their hold over one third of the country, while the four guerilla organisations in Guatemala have just announced the formation of a National Revolutionary Unity. It is only a matter of time before they launch a major offensive. The civil war in El Salvador may well become a regional Central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

The roots of repression

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

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

In these circumstances no independent national bourgeoisie has emerged in either country, able or willing to challenge the oligarchy or imperialism. The diversification of the economies into new export crops and industries which took place particularly in the 1960s and 1970s did



so under the auspices of the oligarchy itself, frequently through joint ventures with US capital.

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

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

Industrialisation and class struggle

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

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

This process was most acute in El Salvador, where there is little surplus land available (the population density of El Salvador is 505 per square mile compared to an average of 93.7 for Central America as a whole). The number of landless peasants rose from 11.8 per cent of the rural population in 1961 to 40.9 per cent in 1975, and in 1980 was estimated to be a staggering 65 per cent.

Some peasants emigrated to Honduras in search of a living, but in 1969 a war between

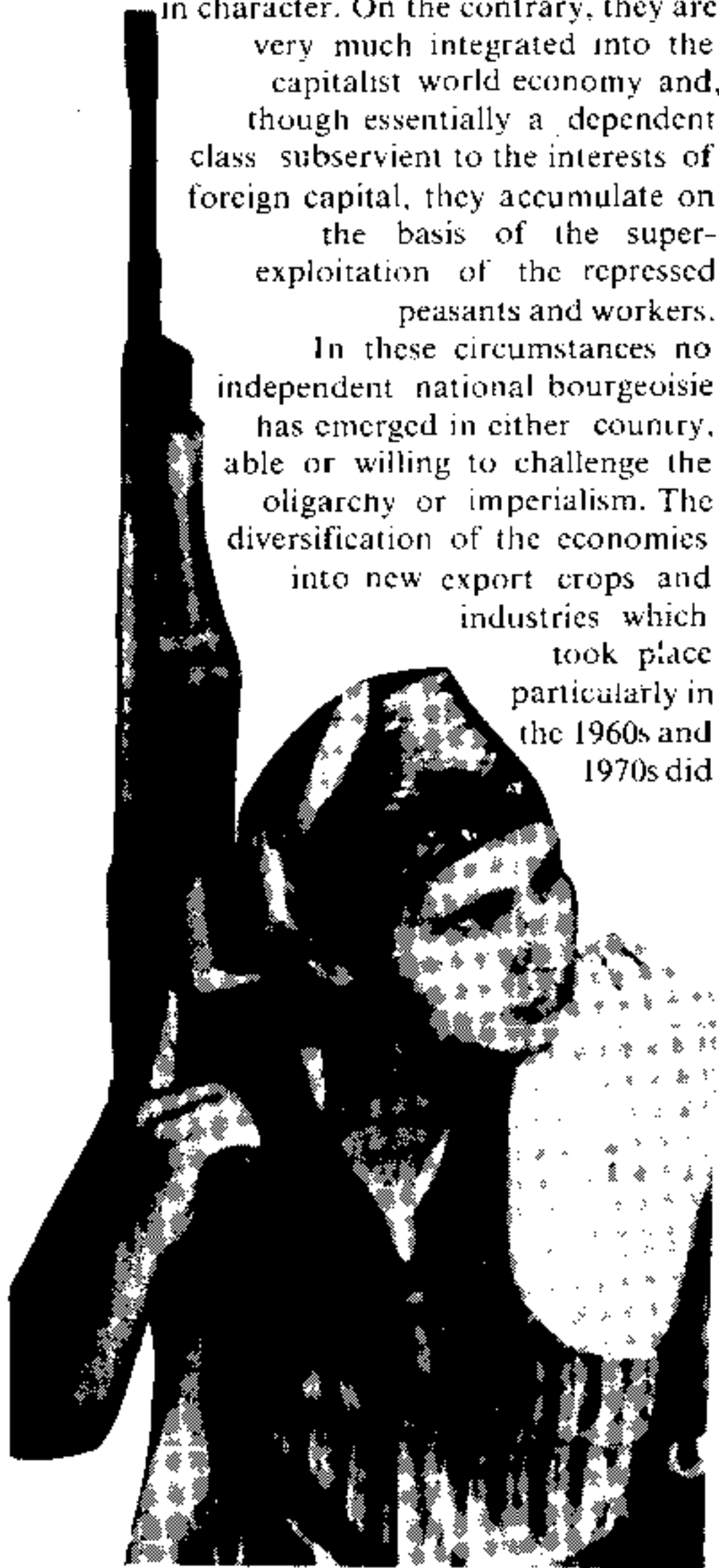
the two countries closed this avenue of escape. Most entered the ranks of the semi-proletariat, working on the plantations for starvation wages during the harvest season from October to February. Unemployment outside these months has been estimated at between 50 and 80 per cent of the rural population.

In Guatemala the process of proletarianisation of the peasantry has also accelerated in recent years. By 1977 it was estimated that at least 50 per cent of Guatemala's subsistence farmers undertake seasonal labour at one time or another during the year. In that country the amount of land dedicated to the production of corn, the staple food of the peasantry, diminished by ten per cent while the population doubled. Nutritionists have estimated that in 1965 42 per cent of the population of Guatemala consumed fewer than the necessary calories, by 1980 the estimate was 80 per cent.

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

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

In El Salvador parties of the centre representing middle class professionals and some urban workers sought reforms through elections throughout the 1960s. In 1972 an alliance of the Social Democrat, Christian Democrat and Communist Party was deprived of victory by a fraud. It became evident to the oppressed of both countries that the parliamentary road to change just does not exist. Violence and fraud have characterised all elections. The army dominates political life. In Guatemala it not



only carried out repression on behalf of the oligarchy, but has institutional and economic interests of its own, having enriched itself through control of the state apparatus. Many officers own large tracts of land and have received lucrative kickbacks by selling the country's mineral resources to foreign capital.

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

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

The new revolutionary movements

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

In 1980 the guerilla organisations formed the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and the mass popular organisations joined by the reformist parties formed its political wing, the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR).

Within this alliance there are a number of contradictions, particularly between the reformist and revolutionary organisations. The FDR programme represents the interests of the reformists and is anti-oligarchic, anti-imperialist and anti-monopolistic rather than socialist. The reformist parties clearly are more committed to a negotiated settlement of the present conflict.

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

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

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

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

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

The intense wave of repression which began in 1978 has elevated the guerilla struggle to the main focus of political activity, as open political work has become impossible. A key factor in the growth of the

guerilla movement has been the incorporation of the Indian peasantry into it for the first time. The appalling massacres of Indians in the last two years show that the oligarchy recognises their key role in the struggle.

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

Towards a civil war?

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

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

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

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

The election on 28 March will solve



The United States began to consolidate its hold over Central America at the beginning of this century. The United Fruit Company bought up vast acres of prime agricultural land at giveaway prices which it dedicated to the production of bananas for export. It came to own half a million acres in Guatemala and was exempted from all taxes and allowed unlimited profit remittance.

The US marines gave protection to United Fruit and to other US business interests in the region.

In 1909, for instance, the Liberal government of Jose Santos Zelaya in Nicaragua defied these interests by negotiating a loan with a London syndicate which was a US bank. His government was subsequently overthrown by a US-backed insurrection, and the US bankers Brown, Brothers and Seligman negotiated new loans.

US marines subsequently occupied Nicaragua from 1912 to 1925 and returned in 1926, this time to face the challenge of the Nicaraguan nationalist Augusto Cesar Sandino. It took 4000 marines to defeat Sandino, and the US then turned to the corrupt and vicious Somoza dynasty to preserve its interests in the country.

General Smedley Butler who headed many of the interventions in Central America in these early years wrote in his memoirs in 1935:

'I spent thirty-three years and four months in active service as a member of our country's most agile military force—the Marine Corps. And during this period I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle man for Big Business, for Wall Street and, for the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer for capitalism.'

The US has never abandoned the use of the big stick in Central America. In 1932 it sent a cruiser and two destroyers (two Canadian destroyers were sent at the behest of the British) to help put down a peasant rebellion in El Salvador. In fact they weren't needed, as the murderous local oligarchy suppressed the rebellion itself at the cost of 30,000 peasant lives.

At the height of the Cold War in 1954 the United States organized a coup which overthrew the reformist government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. According to the US Ambassador, 'Arbenz thought like a Communist and talked like a Communist and, if not actually one, would do until one came along'.

Thousands were killed in the repression which followed the coup, and all the progressive measures of the Arbenz government—such as land reform and the right of peasants and workers to organise—were reversed.

Following the Cuban revolution, the US became even more resolutely determined to prevent the emergence of any organised opposition to the local olig-

archies. It began to train large numbers of Central American military personnel (17,500 were trained altogether 1950-76) in counterinsurgency techniques.

These techniques were applied most violently in Guatemala in the late 1960s by US advisors flown in from Vietnam. An estimated 8000 Guatemalans were slaughtered. Many died at the hands of right wing paramilitary death squads which were set up with US encouragement. Others were killed by napalm dropped by B-26 bombers on Guatemalan villages suspected of harbouring guerrillas.

In neighbouring El Salvador the US helped set up ORDEN in 1968, a rural paramilitary vigilante organization, which aimed at eliminating peasants who were considered 'subversive'.

The United States sent 20,000 marines into the Dominican Republic in 1965 to overthrow the elected president.

In 1964 the US set up CONDECA—a regional military alliance of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Its aim was to promote regional co-operation in suppressing the popular movement. The backbone of this alliance was Somoza and his National Guard.

During the Nicaraguan revolution 1978-79 the US did everything possible to preserve this National Guard even when it was clear that Somoza himself would have to go. This tactic helped prolong the war which in the end cost 35-40,000 dead, 100,000 wounded, 40,000 orphaned children and 200,000 families made homeless.

The US did attempt to get together a force to intervene militarily and prevent a Sandinista victory in Nicaragua from amongst the Latin American countries and the Organization of American States (OAS). The OAS refused to collaborate. Subsequently, however, the US has made clear that it will not allow a 'second Nicaragua'.

Since the last year of the Carter presidency in 1980 the US has employed many of its vast array of techniques of 'counterinsurgency' and destabilization in Central America.

Honduras has replaced Nicaragua as the US's bastion against 'Communism' in the region. The \$10.7m in military aid to that country in 1982 is more than it received during the entire period from 1950 to 1979. In addition the US has encouraged the Honduran military to collaborate with Somoza's exiled National Guard in incursions against the Nicaraguans. Other members of the National Guard are being trained along with Cuban exiles in various military camps in Florida. The US government has stated that it can do nothing as they are being trained on 'private property'.

Reagan has not yet denied the allegations that the CIA have a fully fledged programme of destabilization of Nicaragua. Nor have any of the Administration ruled out military action against Cuba and Nicaragua as well as El Salvador.

nothing for the US. The FDR/FMLN are resolutely opposed to the fraudulent elections. Only the British government and a few US-backed regimes such as Uruguay, Egypt and Chile have agreed to send observers. And Jose Napoleon Duarte, the US-backed Christian Democrat president of El Salvador may well lose the election to one of the extreme right wing parties. This would remove the last remaining element of international credibility to US policy in the country.

Direct intervention is clearly a last resort for the US government and fraught with problems. US public opinion is against such action, and the administration itself is divided on its feasibility.

Military solution

But the US's options if it wishes to avoid a guerilla victory are now very limited. The Salvadorean army cannot absorb much more military aid, as it lacks the personnel and the expertise to handle it. An indirect intervention using Argentine troops would almost certainly require considerable US logistical support.

The only other option would be to try and split the FDR/FMLN and negotiate with the 'moderates', but no such compromise would survive long without the support of the guerilla movement.

Even if such a scenario could be attempted in El Salvador, Guatemala will be much more problematic. Here, unlike in El Salvador, there are strong US economic interests. Guatemala has oil reserves and these border on the very important Mexican oil wells. US investment is greater in Guatemala than elsewhere in the region, and the fraction of US capital involved in this investment is that most closely linked to right wing Republicanism and Reagan's power base. Much more is at stake in Guatemala, therefore, and the present Administration could not afford a guerilla victory there.

The signs are that the US is committed to a military solution in Central America at whatever cost. The British left must mobilise against US imperialism in the region and Thatcher's support for Reagan's policies. International solidarity could play a big role in the struggle for social justice in Central America today.

Carla Lopez

Demonstrate

Against USA intervention March 28th

Assemble 12.30pm March from Speakers Corner to rally in Trafalgar Square 2.30pm

Called by El Salvador Solidarity Campaign

The power to stop the city

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

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

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

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

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

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

But the Tory machine soon set to work. Heseltine imposed a massive penalty of £111 million on the GLC block grant, thus ensuring that the supplementary rate to pay for the fares' subsidy would be substantial. And, ominously, when the GLC offered £20 million to British Rail to reduce its London fares, Heseltine threatened to cut his subsidy to British Rail by the same amount. The rail

commuters of South London were not to be allowed to benefit.

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

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

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

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

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

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

They produced a scheme which was not planned to break even as the Lords required, but would still require a subsidy of some 12 per cent as the minister had hinted. The Labour councillors calculated next year's rate. They had to make up the money lost through the cancellation of the supplementary rate plus the £3 million the Tories had spent on pre-election fare-cutting. Their alternative was to borrow the £125 needed from the City at a cost of £300 million over five years.

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

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

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

Since the ruling an impressive campaign has grown to save cheap fares. Several organisations have sprung up. 'Fare Fight' is 'a broad non-sectarian grouping ... a peoples campaign.' 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' is a campaign based on the left-wing Labour GLC councillors and there is also an official GLC campaign.

The demands are 'no fare increases', 'no



cuts in services' and 'no redundancies in London Transport'.

The tactics include publicity, lobbying, demonstrations and, after March 21, fare refusal. However, the official GLC campaign is not prepared to recommend this last, illegal, tactic.

Thousands have attended meetings, tens of thousands have bought badges and posters, and hundreds of thousands have signed petitions. Ken Livingstone, Dave Wetzel and Valerie Wise of the GLC have addressed huge meetings—900 strong in Hackney, 500 strong in Camden and many others, smaller. Rousing speeches about the 'vandals in ermine', rude comments about the Tories' contempt for democracy and dire predictions of the chaos that will ensue after 21 March make it a stirring campaign. The public support is huge. Campaigners report being deluged with requests for leaflets and petition forms.

But the campaign has several weaknesses. Firstly, it demands legislation.

'Demand the debate is brought to the House of Commons before 21 March,' says the GLC leaflet. 'The transport unions are campaigning for the government to change the law to stop the increases and the cuts,' says Fare Fight approvingly.

Crumbling

The danger is that the government will introduce legislation to enable subsidies to be paid and will then fix the level of subsidy at the previous miserable level or below. The service will then return to its crumbling pre-Fares Fair state. It ought to be obvious that asking the Tory Government to pass legislation about financing public transport is to invite them to make matters worse.

Secondly the campaign concentrates on the passengers rather than the unions.

'It is not for us to tell the unions what to do', says Dave Wetzel. 'If the unions strike that's great, but we are not going to ask them,' says Fare Fight. The orientation is to people rather than workers and to voters rather than trade unionists.

Thirdly, there is, for the Labour Party, an ulterior motive. Elections in the London boroughs take place in May. The Labour Party's poll ratings got near to an all-time low late last year. A good rousing Fares Fair campaign will improve the party image no end, provided things don't get out of hand. At least one local party is combining work on Fares Fair with election canvassing.

The danger is that this magnificent campaign will simply become a support group for the Labour Party and will thus be limited, by and large, to parliamentary tactics. Then not only will the campaign not succeed, but it will actually reinforce the political illusions that made the campaign necessary in the first place.

The key to the success of the campaign is the rank and file response from the transport unions combined with the support of the passengers. The decision of transport stewards to hold a one-day strike on 10 March is a vital step forward. But a lot more needs to be done, both in terms of industrial action and public support.

Transport workers are not used to the idea of public support. Their most frequent

LETTING
PEOPLE HAVE
WHAT THEY
VOTE FOR
IS TAKING
DEMOCRACY
TOO FAR



encounters with the public are unfriendly ones. They get blamed for breakdowns in service, which aren't their fault. They get bossed about, abused and assaulted often by other workers who are rushing to work, fed up after a bad day at work or the worse for wear after a few pints.

The idea that these same people will campaign on behalf of transport workers needs convincing explanations backed by real evidence of support. The idea that transport workers should themselves influence the pricing of fares must also be got across.

Once again revolting

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

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

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

The occupations and demonstrations are

A vital weakness of the Fares Fair policy was that it was introduced in the first place without any real involvement of the transport workers.

Jobs are at the centre of the argument. There will be a reduction of 7,000 jobs, 5,000 as a direct result of the cuts and 2,000 from cancelled expansion plans. More jobs will go as outside contracts are cancelled. Working conditions will also worsen. There will be more assaults on staff. The roads will be more congested, sustain more damage and be more dangerous. A hundred extra road deaths per year have been predicted.

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

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

Transport workers have the power to stop the city. They must be convinced of the need to use that power now.

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

A common view of student occupations is of a few people 'sitting in', eating rolls and drinking tea.

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

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

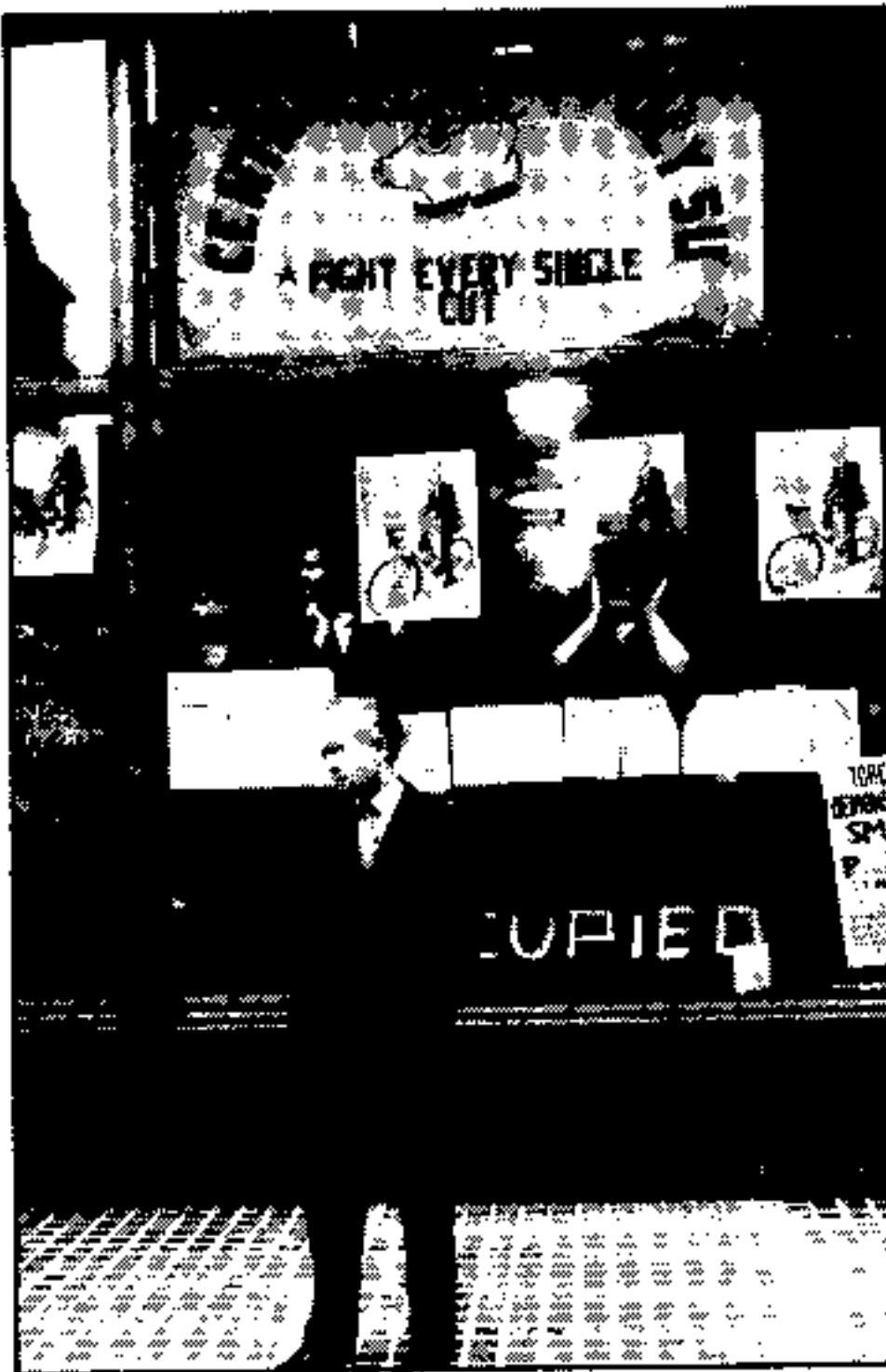


Photo: Simon Grosset

visibly reminded that the membership aren't quite as dead as they would wish them to be.

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

What are the lessons of the rise in activity?

First, it shows that there are a large number of students who are prepared to fight. Second, and more importantly, it shows that where the work has been done, by consistently informing people and arguing the case for direct action, small numbers of committed socialists have been

able to win large meetings to our side, despite some real manoeuvrings in many places by the local bureaucracies.

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

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

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

Their nuclear debate

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

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

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

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

Wallpapering

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

This had no effect on the NUS bureaucracy. But when the more militant students have moved, the leadership have been

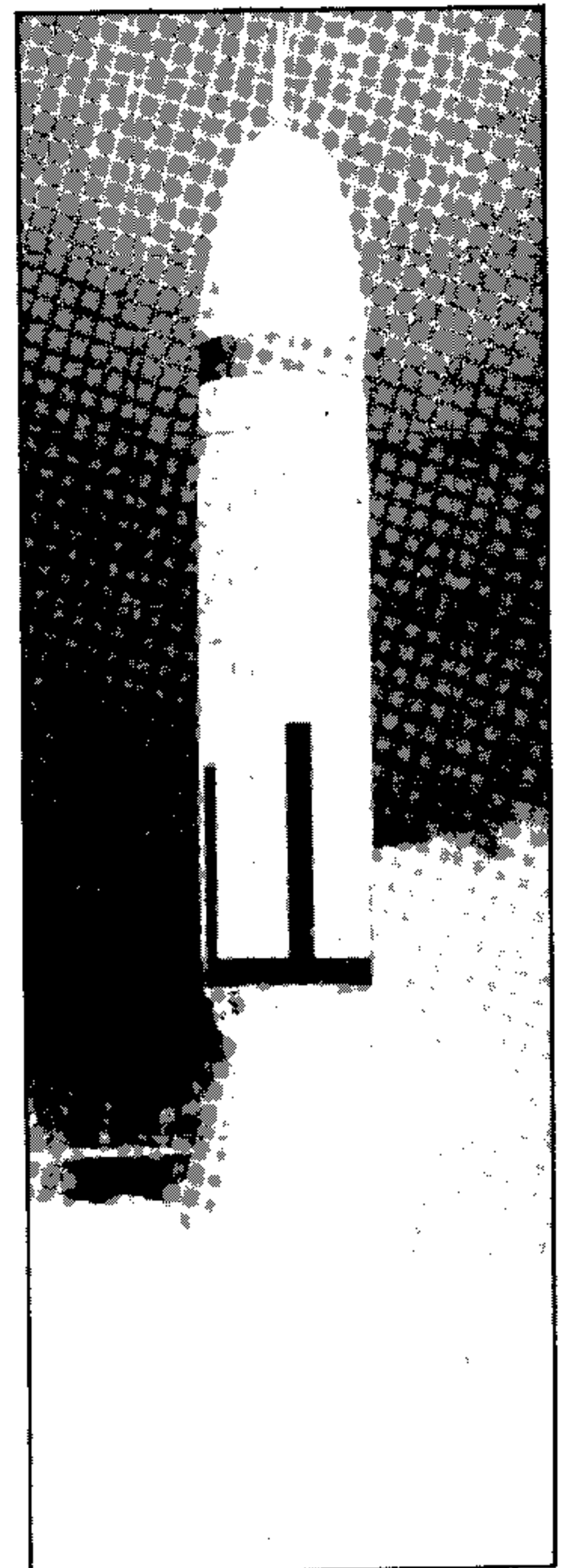
The announcement of Reagan's visit in June is likely to provide a new focus for the anti-nuclear weapons' movement right across Western Europe. But a different sort of argument has broken out within the top ranks of the British ruling class—over whether to accept the latest American offer of a cut-price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

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

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

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

In any case it seems that the jobs argument will do little to quell the



opposition to Trident in either D5 or C4 form. Even at the cut-price rate the D5 Trident will cost at least £7 or £8 billion, and many Tories and defence buffs are unhappy about cutting back on conventional forces to fund it.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Uphill

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

Whether or not the government accepts in principle the Americans' offer, it is clear that

the debate over Trident will rumble on for quite some time. An opinion poll conducted for *Weekend World* suggested that 63 per cent of the electorate now disapproves of the purchase of Trident, and more than half of these people believe Polaris should be scrapped as well. However hard the Tories push the Trident scheme it is unlikely that any work on it could begin before the next election. That means it will be much easier for any incoming government to cancel the project altogether.

In short, it is not beyond the bounds of

possibility that the Trident project will never see the light of day. If that happens, it will be the victory of one set of interests within the ruling class over another. The danger is that many members of CND will hail it as *their* victory and some of the steam will be taken out of the campaign. That is a problem inherent in fighting the anti-bomb campaign on a single issue basis, in separating the campaign against Trident from the campaign against Cruise, and so on. We must never lose sight of the fact that we are fighting to get rid of the whole bloody lot.

CND crosses the Wall

The suppression of Solidarity in Poland has by no means put an end to opposition movements in Eastern Europe. In the last few weeks there have been reports of anti-militarist agitation in Hungary, East Germany and Estonia (inside the USSR itself). **Marta Wohrle** looks at the East German experience.

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

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

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

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

The East German Communist Party, the SED, are visibly shaken. The Dresden

demonstration showed the contradictions in the SED's foreign and domestic policy. In recent months the East German media have condemned NATO's 'superrüstung' or war-mongering, while praising the growing resistance to missiles and the bomb in the West. Now the SED is forced to recognise the vigorous condemnation of the arms race on their own doorstep.

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

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

The increased political role of the church is giving the SED cause for deep concern. And anger and fear may lead to repression. Already church activists have been arrested. The Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg, Reiner Eppelmann, was arrested on Thursday 11th. He was released two days later.

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

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

Marta Wohrle

Solidarnosc: From Gdansk to Military Repression is the first full-length analysis of Solidarnosc to be written since the imposition of military rule. Drawing on a variety of original Polish sources Colin Barker and Kara Weber trace the unfolding crisis in Poland and the debates it provoked within Solidarnosc. They argue that Solidarnosc was too deeply rooted in the factories to be co-opted, that real revolutionary possibilities existed, but tragically this was only grasped by the radical wing of Solidarnosc too late.

The book also includes a major section on the underlying causes of the Polish economic crisis.

160 pages £1.95 from all good bookshops or (plus 30p post) from IS Journal, PO Box 82, London E2.



A time to eat their rulers?

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

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

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

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

What is not easy to see is how anyone on

the left here can be taken in by it.

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

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

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

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

Deaths

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

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

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

In this situation the latest attempt to solve the problem has been by a turnback to private production. Since last year the state has been actively encouraging more production on the small *private* plots of the collective farmers, which already produce about a *quarter* of agricultural output. Some people in the West may be naïve enough to believe Jaruzelski when he blames the Polish problems on the private peasant farmers. They



One cause of the food shortages is lack of equipment—a Russian harvester factory

should puzzle why Brezhnev doesn't share their views.

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

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

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

Having to make do with less than is needed leads to the second problem—the attempt to squeeze out the maximum produc-

tion through highly centralised state control. Every detail of agricultural life is subject to the attempted control of the centre. Of course, the state doesn't succeed—it couldn't do. But what it does do is to destroy any initiative from below.

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

Mad drive

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

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

pneumonia'. For the last decade this has not been true. Southern Irish capitalism has found new confidence and a solid base for its governments—even when the struggle in the North has threatened to spill over.

There has been no mystery to the South's success. American capital, for example, has been guaranteed its highest return on investment at 28 per cent a year by using the South as a corridor for exporting into the EEC. The country's labour costs have been significantly lower than the rest of the EEC and it also handed out goodies in the form of tax free profits and massive grants. The Economist Intelligence Unit estimated that there are now 800 foreign firms operating in the South, with a combined investment of £2.4 billion.

However, the industrialisation programme created its own difficulties for the Irish ruling class. The very weakness of the economy meant that it had to increase its level of imports to supply the new sectors. A major spending programme was also demanded in order to make up for such basic deficiencies as a telephone service that only worked by chance. All of this has led to a crisis in its balance of payments and to massive foreign borrowing.

These contradictions have come to a head in the last two years. In 1977/78 the South of Ireland had the highest rate of growth and investment in the EEC. Buoyed up by those achievements, the Fianna Fail government of Charles Haughey desperately tried to sustain the level of growth—despite the oncoming international recession—through even more massive foreign borrowing. Yet interest repayments were doubling each year.

Its only option was to crack down hard on the unions with a battery of legislation and wage cuts. It called a general election in June last year, to get a free hand. It lost through the intervention of the H Block prisoner candidates, and a minority coalition government was formed.

The Coalition of Fine Gael and the Labour Party is by any standards a strange arrangement. It involves an alliance between a party that still has the allegiance of the official union movement and one which was previously renowned for its conservatism. Its only logic is to provide a means of keeping Fianna Fail out of government and thus dispense patronage to its own followers.

Its programme was based on a drastic reduction of foreign borrowing through cuts and indirect taxation. The budget on which it finally fell involved the ending of food subsidies; the imposition of VAT on clothing and footwear; and the taxation of unemployed workers on Pay Related Benefit.

Decline

Quite clearly such a programme involved the destruction of the mildly reformist Labour Party. That decline was not as dramatic in voting terms, as many thought for the simple reason that the Party's access to patronage helped to preserve its base in rural areas around particular personalities. Yet in Dublin, an expanding working class city, its vote has been halved over the last decade.

In many ways the decline of the Labour Party has become the pivotal point of Irish

Harsh lessons for the Irish left

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

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

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

describe the imperialist relationship between Ireland and Britain by saying that 'When the British economy caught flu, Ireland got



Garrett Fitzgerald—the loser

politics. The striking fact is that in a period of deepening crisis for the Irish economy, the strictly bourgeois parties of Fianna Fail and Fine Gael still command the vote of 80 per cent of the electorate.

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

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

By definition Fianna Fail populism cuts



Bernadette McAliskey—did not get as many votes as socialists and republicans hoped

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

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

But what of the left?

The big winners are Sinn Fein the Workers Party (SFWP)—not to be confused with Sinn Fein. They increased their vote substantially, won three seats and are currently beginning to challenge the Labour Party. The SFWP or 'the Stickies', have a long history of zig-zags since the days when they helped to initiate the Civil Rights Movement in the North in 1968.

Today they line up with the Unionists in the North, calling for a 'devolved' government and support a 'reformed' RUC. In the South, their main concern is industrialisation in order to form a working class that is big enough to impose a state capitalist regime (their own terms!).

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

Sacrifice

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

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

Southern capitalism has many 'hangovers' that give the SFWP ample scope to tack left. The Southern ruling class does not have a strong industrial base. It has stretched downwards to encompass mini property



Charles Haughey—back again

speculators and tax dodgers. The SFWP hits at the heart of this. It attacks these sections and also holds up the farmers as scapegoats. These policies have a wide appeal to a working class that has not yet seen itself capable of fighting a militant struggle.

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

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

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attacks workers faced. Unfortunately, that is precisely where they fall short.

Some did not bother to try. One Provisional Sinn Fein leaflet in Dublin simply said, 'Remember the 10 dead hunger strikers', and printed their photos. In general though, they tried to give the answer in purely anti-partitionist terms. They pointed to the £500 million spent on border security or the fact that a 'partitioned Ireland' was at the root of the problems of unemployment, redundancies, and poverty. They missed the simple point: it is not just partition that has failed, but Irish capitalism as well.

The elections and the growth of the SFWP should provide harsh lessons for the left. It is not good enough to hold up the national question as the achilles heel of the SFWP, and to tail republicans in the hope that a spill over from the North will dislodge the 'stickies'. The SFWP have to be opposed politically on the class issues, and the connections drawn with their position on the North. An 'anti-imperialist' framework is not sufficient: it demands an openly socialist force that sees Irish capitalism and its links with the world economy as the root of the problem.

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Womens Voice page 18

Cold steel—



Belgian style

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

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

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

In the meantime, the crisis has not gone away. What has changed is that Belgium has a new centre-right government (made up of Liberal and Christian parties), much more determined to push through tough measures. In response to the first one day general strike, called by the unions to oppose the introduction of the government's austerity package, the government showed it meant business by

bringing in the receivers to the country's leading but debt-ridden shipbuilders, when the workers there refused to accept wage restraint.

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

Gambling

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

The government is gambling on the split between the more militant socialist trade union and the traditionally more moderate christian trade union (which in any case has links with the christian-democratic partner



in the government coalition). The general strikes have been called by the socialist trade union only, and while very effective, have been largely limited to the French-speaking, steel-producing south, with one or two notable exceptions in the Flemish-speaking north.

This split between Flanders and Wallonia creates serious problems for the trade union movement. As against the national and Flemish leadership of the christian union, Walloon section came out in support of socialist union's general strike call

Federalism has grown considerably in the last twenty years, with the political parties divided on regional grounds and each section building their base on cultural and language differences. One factor in the present crisis is the exclusion of the socialists (and hence Wallonia) from the government. The way this split extends into the trade union movement could turn the growing opposition to the central state's austerity package and industrial restructuring proposals away from a unified workers' response towards mutual recrimination between the two halves of the country.

Crunch

The government also hopes to count on the caution of the trade union leadership (even the socialist one). The pressure for action has largely come from below. Nowhere is that clearer than in the steel industry, which is the principal industry in Wallonia and which is reckoned to have more than 150,000 people dependent on it.

State aid for restructuring and modernising the industry is conditional on reductions in capacity equivalent to 10,000 jobs and acceptance of wage restraint. In turn, state aid is subject to approval by the EEC, which will foot the bill. It is this, together with the general austerity measures, that have become the crunch issue for steelworkers. They have no option but to stand and fight, something they have already shown in their Brussels' demonstration and confrontation with the police on 11 February.

Negotiations between the steelworkers and the EEC have broken down, and demonstrations and an unlimited steel strike are now taking place. If this is the start of much wider industrial disruption, then not only does it spell the end of the present government but the opening up of an altogether more intense phase of class struggle.



Inside a capitalist dream

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

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

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

Sick bags

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

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

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

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

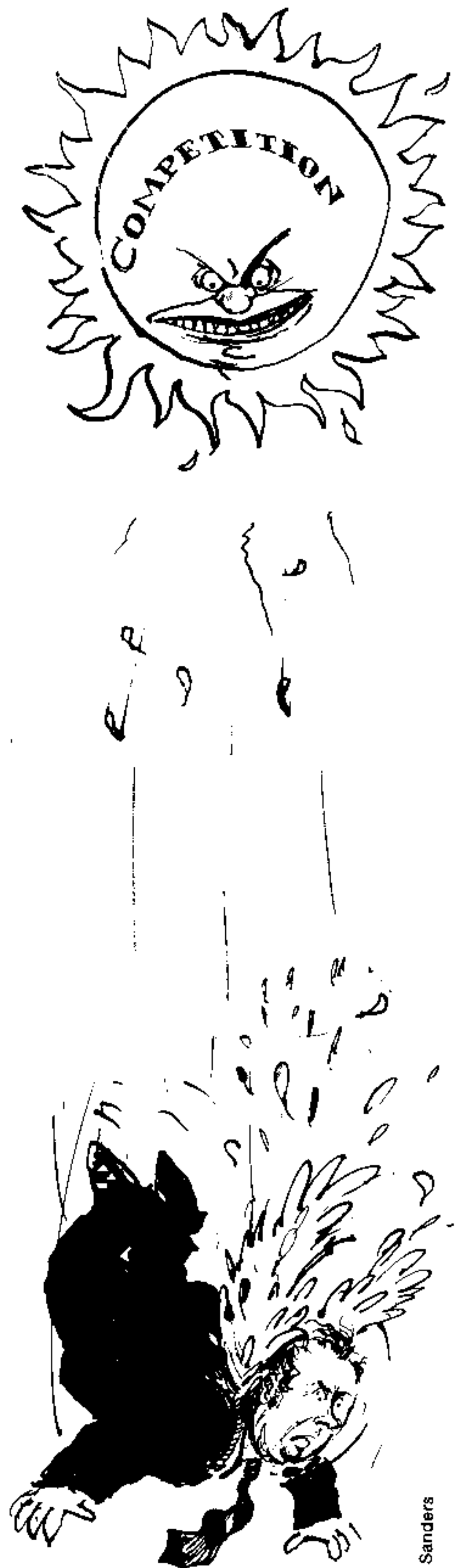


Illustration: Tim Sanders

and you were expected to give up your own. I have been on long flights when all I got to eat were a few odds and ends.

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

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

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

'From the flight safety point of view it is considered that longer cabin staff duty periods are justified because should an emergency arise necessitating cabin staff

to fulfil their major functions, the degree of arousal caused would be sufficient to suppress any reasonable degree of tiredness or fatigue which may be present.'

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

Rostering

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

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

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

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

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

There was nothing you could do about all this. The attitude towards anyone mentioning a union was that you could always go and work elsewhere. With dozens of girls

queueing up at the door, they would have no trouble at all in filling your job.

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

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

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

LETTER

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

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

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

Peter Alexander,
Southall.



Laker during better times

Facing up to Tebbit's bill

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

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

Colin Sparks and David Beecham provide some of the answers.

The lessons of 1972

The 1971 Industrial Relations Act actually came into full effect on 28 February 1972. It was the most serious attempt to curtail trade union power for half a century.

It attacked union powers on many fronts. It allowed individual scabs to challenge the closed shop. It allowed unions to be sued for causing a 'breach of contract.' It gave the government the power to order the postponement of strike action ('cooling off periods') while secret ballots were organised. It called for agreements between unions and employers to be legally binding.

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

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

Two things were important here. The first was a proviso that unions could register under the Act and gain a certain protection from the law (so that, for instance, the

maximum any employer could sue them for would be £100,000). But in order to register they had to alter their rule books so as to do away with the right of stewards or district committees to take action without the say so of the union nationally.

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

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

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

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

At first the focus for this opposition was provided by a body called the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions—which had come into being in the course of the struggle against the previous



Labour government's attempt to introduce an anti-union law (called In Place of Strife).

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

On 11 November—less than six months after the Tory government had come to power—there was a first one day unofficial strike against the Bill, with a hundred thousand workers striking, mainly in Scotland. Three days later the Liaison Committee had its most successful conference ever, with more than a thousand delegates cramming into a hall to vote for a programme of militant action, including a one day strike to take place on 8 December. On that day half a million people joined a stoppage which was unofficial—except in the case of SOGAT whose leadership went into hiding for 24 hours to avoid being served with an injunction ordering them to call the strike off. Early in January similar but separate one-day strikes took place in Birmingham and Coventry.

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

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

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

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

Yet such was the feeling in the movement as a whole that many of these leaders had to vote at the special congress to 'strongly

advise' unions not to register. And by the annual TUC congress that September, the mood was hard enough for the word 'advise' to be replaced by 'instruct'. The generally recognised implication was that unions should not co-operate with the Act or the Court set up under it in any way.

The majority of unions now followed TUC policy and refused to register under the new law. In some cases it was only after a tough internal fight. In ASTMS, for example, Clive Jenkins advised the conference to register but was defeated after a stormy debate by 67,280 to 61,650 votes. In other cases it was almost a walkover—the AUEW National Committee voted 68 to nil against registration.

The road to Pentonville

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

The first tests came in April 1972. The government ordered the NUR to postpone a railway strike and to hold a secret ballot on the issue. The union obediently complied, and it was only the determination of railway workers in voting overwhelmingly for strike action that prevented a serious defeat. In the same month Jack Jones of the TGWU begged his executive to pay a fine of £80,000 the Court had imposed. In both cases the TUC endorsed what the union leaders had done—effectively dropping the principled policy it had voted for only six months before.

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

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

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

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

Relations Court to impose the first £80,000 fine on the TGWU.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Goad affair

Neither did the NIRC just crawl away and die. At the end of 1972 it fined the AUEW for refusing to admit a scab called James Goad to membership, provoking a very muted response. Again, in late 1973, the AUEW was fined £75,000 for its handling of a small dispute with a company called ConMech, and while 350,000 workers struck in protest this was organised by the





district committees of the AUEW rather than the national leadership.

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

But this time, however, the government was on its last legs, and it finally collapsed under another attack from the miners in February 1974. The subsequent general election brought a Labour government to power, explicitly committed to repealing the Industrial Relations Act.

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

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

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

Prior: ducking the issue

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the two most important disputes to involve legal threats since the Act was passed—Ansells and Laurence Scotts—the role of union legal officers in blocking solidarity has been crucial.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The T&G also figures in the strike by Bestobell ladders at the same time—in this case largely by its absence. The ladders eventually occupied the company's Glasgow office; the company got an injunction; the police moved in and arrested the ladders, who were fined £6,000 for contempt of court. Not a peep from 'Britain's Biggest Union', once again right behind its members.

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

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

A question of control

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



pickets during the civil service dispute.

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

For example, the Prior picketing code (not law, but it can be quoted in court) says 'an experienced person, preferably a trade union official who represents those picketing, should always be in charge of the picket line. He should have a letter of authority from his union ...' It says 'authorised pickets' should always wear armbands.

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

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

Apart from the major issues of solidarity in disputes and picketing, the Employment Act has been little directly used. There are,

however, enough examples to show what can happen.

In December last year, for example, the Court of Appeal upheld a High Court injunction which had scuppered blacking in Hull docks. Fourteen Turkish seamen on board the 'Antama' had asked the International Transport Workers Federation for support in a pay dispute. NUR members blacked the ship by refusing to operate the lock gates. The courts ruled it illegal because there wasn't a contract between the employer in dispute and the employer whose workers were taking action. This was the first ruling on the secondary action provisions of the Employment Act.

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

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

The story itself ends quite happily. The tribunal in Grimsby decided he was sacked fairly. But the T&G, far from using the case to show exactly who might benefit under Tory moves to undermine the closed shop, was absolutely silent.

Official silence

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

A third incident, involving the quiet operation of the 1980 Act, involved TV technicians blacking a company because of a threat to jobs. Originally, the High Court refused an injunction to the company, Hadmor Productions. Then the Appeal Court (with Lord Denning to the fore) ruled against the union, ACTT. Finally, the House of Lords reversed the Denning ruling

Days of Hope

THE GENERAL STRIKE OF 1926

A new Socialist Workers Party pamphlet by Chris Harman and Duncan Hallas. Single copy: 65p plus 20p postage/ten for £5.50 post free. Available from Socialists Unlimited, 265 Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park, London, N4 2E.DE



and said that workers blacking a company because of jobs fears counted as a 'trade dispute' and were therefore immune from prosecution.

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

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

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

Dave Beecham

Stage army or picket power

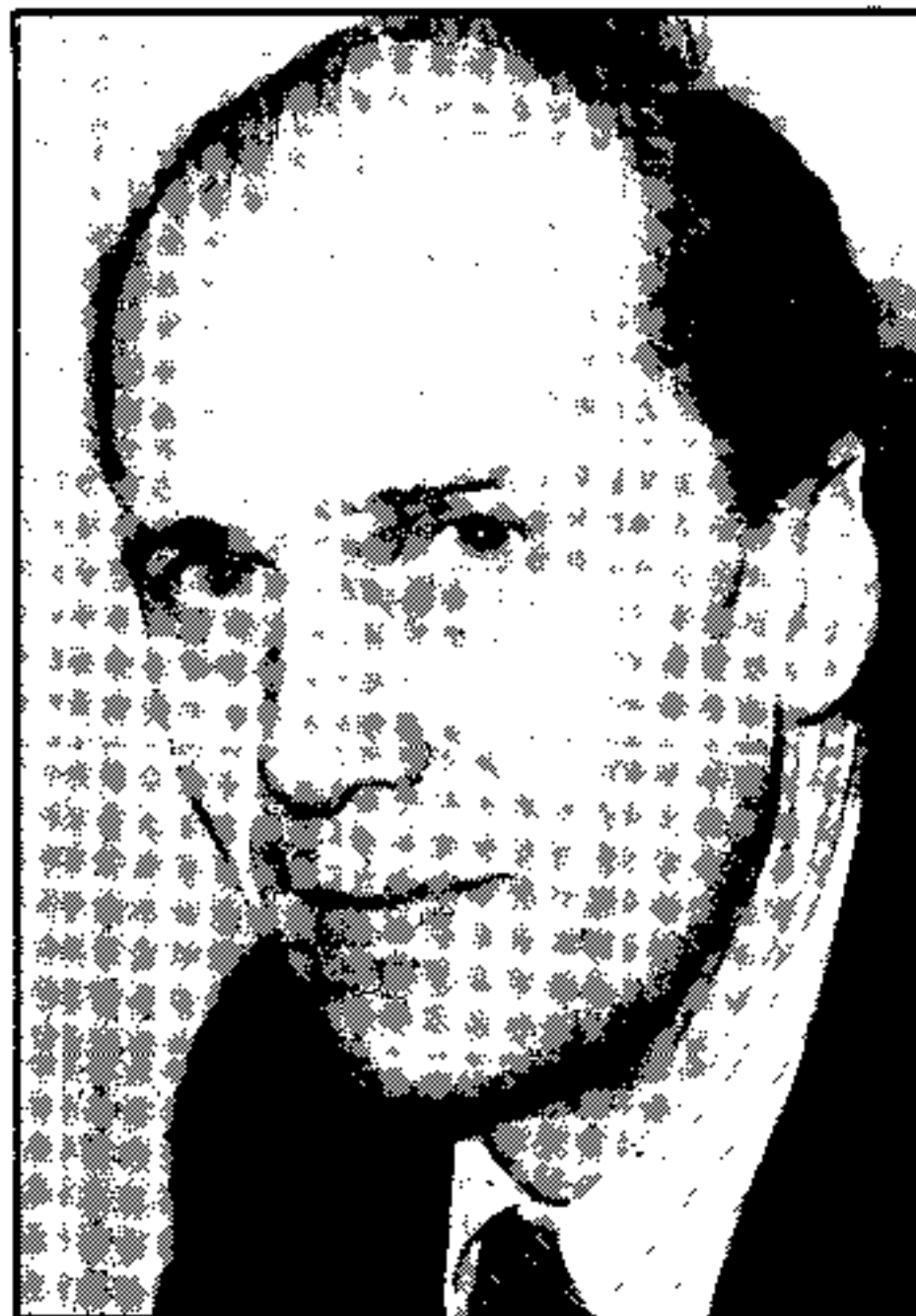
On 5 April, union executives meet at Wembley at a TUC special conference on Tebbit's new Employment Bill. It is hardly the Cup Final, more the first round, and despite the huffing and puffing in the *Morning Star*, *Tribune* etc we should not expect very much from it.

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

A different response

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

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



him, however foolish foolishly as their man in the cabinet. But the union leaderships do

see Tebbit as a threat to them, especially financially, with the possibilities of massive damages or at least a steady bleeding of union funds.

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

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

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

The struggles of the 1970s were not built

What Tebbit does

The main aim of the Bill is to pressurise unions to control their own members. To this end it removes the immunity to civil damages given them back in 1906. It allows them to be forced to pay up to £250,000 damages for 'unlawful' forms of industrial action.

Tebbit reckons that union leaders will fight like hell to get their members back to work rather than risk such damages.

Linked to this are further restrictions on what counts as 'lawful' action. Prior's law banned some forms of secondary action. Now Tebbit is extending this to make unlawful:

- Industrial action *not* part of a dispute between workers and their own employer is a ban on all sympathy action and blacking in support of workers employed elsewhere, even when they are employed by a company associated with your own.

- Action in support of disputes taking place outside Britain—eg blacking of South African or Polish goods, the International Transport Federation Campaign to make 'flag of convenience' ships pay union rates, action in support of strikes taking place elsewhere in your multinational employer.

- Political strikes—eg the TUC's day of action of two years ago, strikes against hiving off, etc.

One very important new point in the Bill is that it enables scabs sacked for not joining unions to sue the union *as well as* the employer. At present only the employer can be sued. In other words, the Bill gives scabs a free hand to milk the union's funds.

The Prior law was carefully designed to avoid the direct confrontations with powerful groups of workers that

occurred under Heath. It encouraged trade union leaders to avoid certain practices, but did not often lead to them or their members being dragged into the courts.

Some of this care has gone into Tebbit's Bill. For instance, there is no special Industrial Relations Court to earn trade unionists hatred as Donaldson's court did ten years ago. Nor is there the whole procedure of 'registration', which led to every union and every union branch having to discuss its attitude to Heath's law. Again, there is a restriction on the damages unions can be forced to pay—ten years ago unlimited damages could be imposed on 'unregistered' unions.

Since trade union organisation at the shop floor level has been seriously weakened over the last few years, Tebbit has a greater chance of being successful than last time round.

But success is not guaranteed for him in advance.

He cannot avoid the possibility that groups of workers who still have strength (miners, lorry drivers, power workers, dockers, even train drivers) will be dragged before the courts, either by scabs or by 'rogue employers', in ways that the more intelligent members of the ruling class would see as dangerously provocative. Then individual activists with the guts and the support to defy the courts could still call the law's bluff as the dockers did in 1972 and the engineers' union did in 1974.

But that cannot happen unless socialists campaign strongly now for non-co-operation with and *active defiance of the law*. That means getting the message across *now* as to the Bill's dangers to every trade unionist.

up out of rhetoric. On the contrary, things started very small, with demonstrations of 2000 or 3000 people. The TUC leaflets—belated and badly written—were in general not given out, or given out half-heartedly. But people produced their own leaflets and there was regular information, sometimes several times a month, which played a considerable part in informing the mass of workers—particularly in the AUEW.

We have to relearn some simple lessons and not get carried away by the rhetoric.

Even under the Industrial Relations Act the flashpoints were generally small—usually piddling little disputes, issues you didn't know about, places and firms no one had heard of. This time it is likely to be exactly the same. Tebbit is not going to threaten Bill Keys with prison: it's that small workshop outside Telford where someone says 'enough is enough', that is the battleground. And this is what makes the blethering of the union leaders so absurd: their statements in no way relate to the realities of winning the arguments about Tebbit.

We launched into the fight against the Industrial Relations Bill at the end of 1970 just after the council workers' successful strike for a 55 shilling increase (£2.75).

The points we made then were that workers should take up official TUC and union initiatives but at all costs not to rely on them. That is was only by building on existing struggles and organisation that the Tory laws were going to be defeated. It was certainly not going to be by waving flags and passing resolutions.

No reliance on leaders

That of course was when the Broad Left had some genuine muscle. But now as then the test of what can be done is going to be in activity and in action, in our response to the disputes that occur and what we do about linking them up and building solidarity. The object of the Tebbit laws is above all to break down solidarity, to intimidate trade unionists from taking action. We would be quite crazy to rely on union leaders in this kind of situation. A crucial part of the new legislation is the threat to union funds. We have just seen how the AUEW reacts to its members fighting for jobs at Leyland Vehicles—by sabotaging the strike and then moaning that the dispute cost the union £400,000.

What comes out of the special TUC Conference will be very limited. The official policies and positions of unions are nevertheless important, and a tougher stance will have to be fought for in the forthcoming union conferences. But the first and most important way to confront Tebbit is by raising the new law as a threat on every picket line, in every dispute, in every union meeting—in terms of what it would do if unchallenged. We need to strengthen the arguments for blacking, for 100 percent unionism, for determined picketing, for solidarity in all disputes. These are the things the Tories want to destroy and these are the things that ultimately can destroy the Tories.

Dave Beecham



Caspar Weinberger



Alexander Haig

Reagan's gang fall out

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is a policy of 'roll-back', which was talked about a great deal in the early years of the first Cold War, but was soon replaced by

the concept of 'containment'. It is being raised again at a time when America's power is much less than it was then: economically it has been successfully challenged by West Germany and Japan, particularly; militarily it has been through the defeat in Vietnam.

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

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

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

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

Poland, Afghanistan, Libya

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

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

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

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

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

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

The differences over sanctions against Poland have pointed up the varying and contradictory interests of US and European capital. The West Germans, in particular, have very important trading interests with the Eastern bloc, especially in high technology goods (which the Americans want stopped by sanctions) whereas trade with the East is really only significant in one

"This budget should not be judged against social programmes, but against the threat we face."

That was how the US Deputy Defence Secretary introduced Reagan's 1982 Budget, which provides for the largest increase in defence spending—\$43.7bn—in US peacetime history. Defence will account for nearly a third of total spending by 1983, and if Reagan gets his way, for nearly 40 per cent by 1987. Total non-defence spending is set to fall in real terms by six per cent in the next year.

Where will the money come from?

Partly from cuts in social and welfare spending, of course. Reagan is committed to tax cuts, so it can't be financed that way. Instead the limited programmes which do exist in America for unemployment pay, medical care and other welfare provision are to be viciously slashed.

Unemployment is standing at over nine million, nearly a post war record. Whole areas of the country have been devastated by the crisis in the motor and steel industries. Unemployment pay is only available for 26 weeks—after that, nothing. It is no wonder that the soup kitchens are reappearing in the richest country in the world.

Now cash benefits to families in the form of food stamps, and special allowances for young children and pregnant women will be reduced. If the recipient of benefit is in work, he or she will lose five per cent of food stamps for every extra dollar earned. If the person is unemployed, he or she will have to produce evidence of 'diligent' search for work.

Users of medical services under the two public medical schemes (which apply only to those over 65, or those on welfare or those on very low incomes) will have to pay more towards the costs of treatment. Medicare (the programme for the old) will also pay two per cent less to the hospitals.

Other cuts include limiting cost of living increases for retired civil servants; means tests for student loans; big cuts in federal employment and training programmes; and cuts in housing. Numerous local health and welfare schemes will also get chopped.

But these measures still won't make the books balance, in spite of the terrible effects on the old, unemployed and low-paid.

That means that the government will have to raise at least \$100bn a year to bridge the gap between what it spends and what it receives. It's this—the budget deficit—which is worrying the European politicians and bankers.

Reagan says that the economy will start to grow very fast as a result of tax cuts. His advisers say it will grow faster than at almost any time since the war—that is faster than in the most sustained boom capitalism has ever known.

A lot of people are very sceptical about such predictions, especially as the US equivalent of the Bank of England—the Federal Reserve—is determined to retain its policy of restricting the money supply and credit, which can only mean making the slump last longer—businesses won't be able to get credit, or if they do, only at very high interest rates. So Reagan's idea—that government revenue will rise as the economy expands, and so will reduce the deficit—looks an absurd assumption.

For the Europeans that spells trouble in the international money markets. America will be borrowing huge funds (bigger than the money washing around the system when the oil exporters accumulated their surpluses). There will be higher interest rates, not just in America, but internationally. And the result could be a much longer recession in Europe, too.

area to the Americans—the export of grain to Russia. The failure of Reagan to embargo grain sales to Russia is undoubtedly due to the importance of the US farming lobby. American agriculture is having problems, and can't afford to lose the Russian market.

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

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

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

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

Symmetrical crises

The problems facing Reagan are in some ways similar to those facing his arch-rival, Brezhnev. Both super powers increasingly lack the economic muscle to get their way.

Both face growing revolt within their empires. Both have reached for military solutions—in El Salvador, in Poland, in the deployment of MX, Cruise, the SS20—in an attempt to restore their waning influence. Hence repression, East and West, and the new Cold War.

The new Cold War threatens to be infinitely more dangerous than that of the 1940s and 1950s. But it could also be infinitely more damaging to the internal cohesion of both blocs. For it takes place as the two super powers grow weaker and their ability to exercise international influence declines—as the rows in NATO all too clearly show. The first Cold War, by contrast, developed out of the growing strength of the US on the one side and the USSR on the other. That is why resistance this time round could be much more successful, in both camps.

The drum that lost its beat

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

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

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

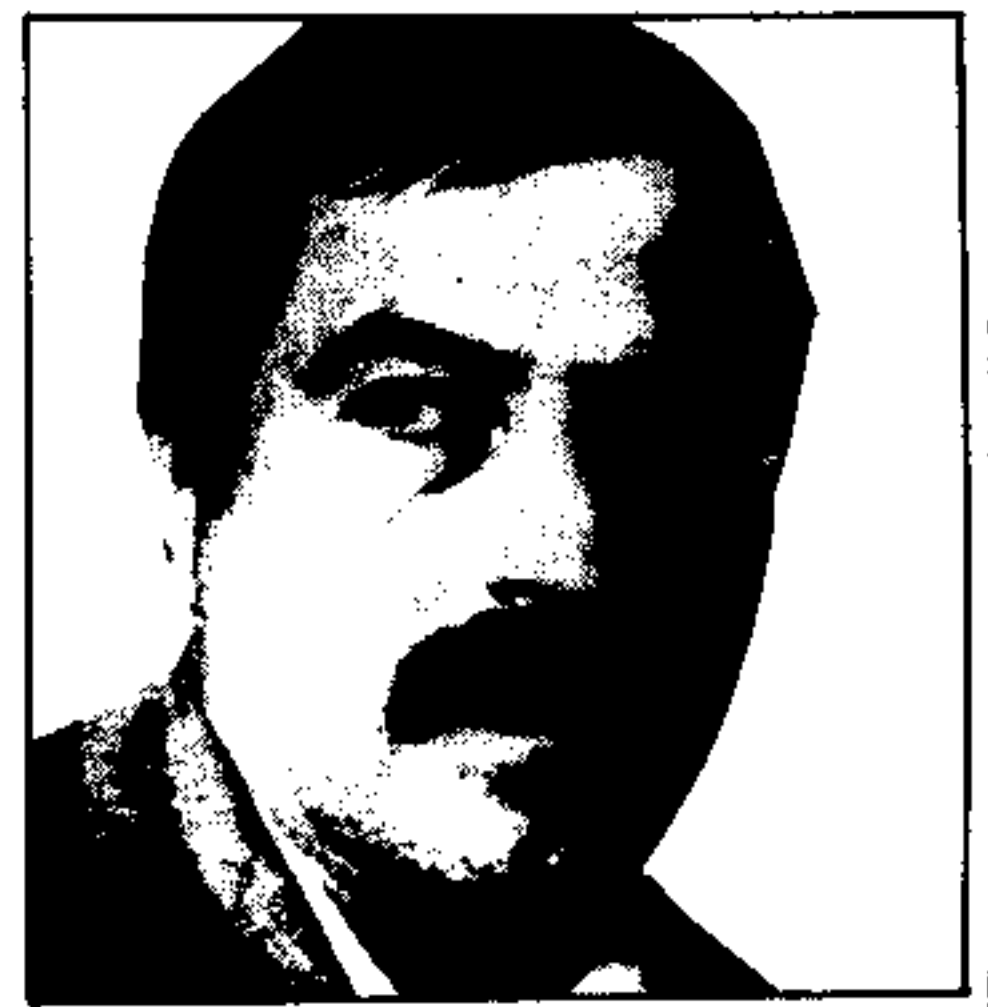
Like Oscar, Gunter Grass was born in Danzig (the present Gdansk) in 1927, when it was a 'free' city between Germany and Poland, administered jointly by them. Like Oscar, Grass fought as part of the German army and was captured by the Americans.

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

The *Tin Drum* was published in 1959, selling 300,000 copies in Germany and after translation into English over 500,000 in America. Grass's second novel *Cat and Mouse* appeared in 1961 and the last of the trilogy, *Dog Years* in 1963. *Cat and Mouse* is a much more 'normal' book, covering in part the same events in Danzig as the 'Tin Drum', with Oscar now a secondary character. It is a much smaller, tighter and concise novel, and acts as a comment on the first book. *Dog Years* continues the story in the style of *Tin Drum* into the post-war years, a Germany of boom and guilt.

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

Also of this period was his play *The Plebians Rehearse the Uprising*, set in Berlin of 1953 where Brecht (the old Marxist playwright and poet) is nicely settled into his new theatre provided by the East German government. Brecht's company are rehearsing the play *Coriolanus* by Shakespeare. During the rehearsal the theatre is invaded



by workers taking part in the 1953 uprising against the East German government, Brecht is caught between his general support of workers on the one hand and his acceptance of East Germany as socialist and his vested interest in keeping his nice new theatre on the other. It is an excellent play that again brilliantly blends dreams (the play) and reality (the uprising) into each other and questions the role of theatre as a guide to action.

His later works have all been less successful, while his politics have moved to moderate reformism and support of the German SDP. *Local Anaesthetic* and *From the diary of a Snail* were published in the 70s and are attempts to fuse the earlier style with the arguments for gradual reform against revolution. The *Snail* represents the gradual approach, slowly improving society.

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

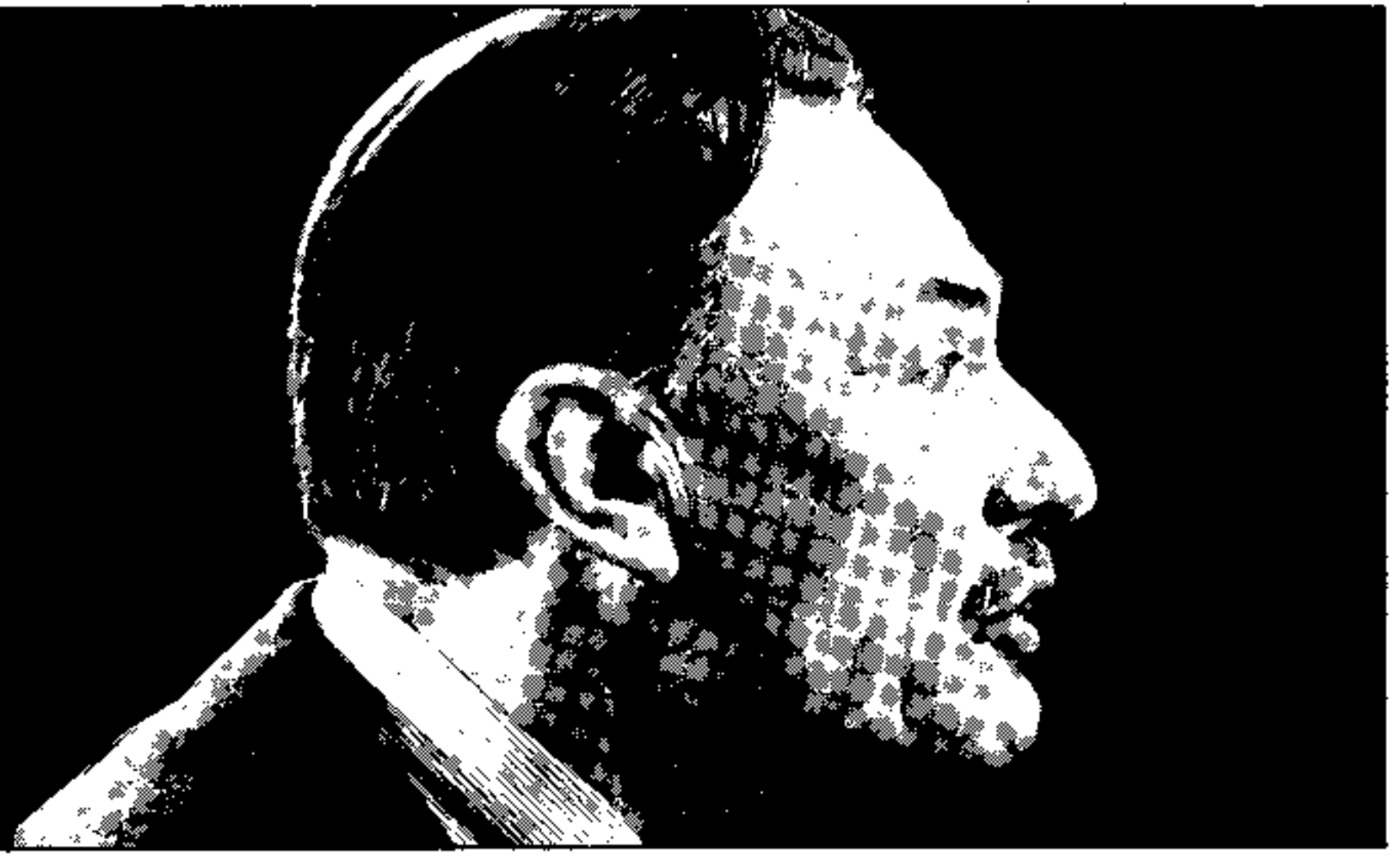
His latest work is *The Flounder* published in 1977 and subtitled 'a celebration of life, food and sex'. I can't help feeling that a better title would have been *Floundering* rather than *The Flounder*. Grass abandons the real world of his other works for a mythical past, a time of matriarchy, a pre-history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

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

Noel Halifax



Biologists for the new right



The New Racism
by Martin Barker
Junction Books £4.95

It is not often that those on the far left can greet, with enthusiasm, the publication of a book by a professional philosopher. *The New Racism* deals in a comprehensive and lively fashion, with the relation between racism, Darwinian theory and something called 'sociobiology'. Since Marx was one of Darwin's most ardent admirers, and while Richard Verral, of NF fame, has claimed that sociobiology has 'buried Marxism', it is clearly important that socialists know something of that relation.

This book is not about the causes of racism as such; nor does it provide a blueprint for fighting racism in the workplace or on the streets. The author restricts himself, rather, to spelling out what he means by the 'new racism', how it finds expression in the policies of the major political parties (especially the Tories), and the supposed scientific support for such views provided by certain recent developments in biology.

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

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

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

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

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

Creeping in here is a theory of human nature: it is very natural for people to form groups, bound together by a common culture

and attached to a particular territorial area – hence all the talk of the British nation, the British way of life, what makes Britain great, and so on. The theory is nicely summed up by Enoch Powell:

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

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

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

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

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

Leading with the right

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

Most readers of *Socialist Review* will probably take no convincing that the Tory Party is racist. Nonetheless, Barker has performed an invaluable service in documenting the rise of the new racism and showing its theoretical implications. But it is the rest of the book, which investigates the links between sociobiology and the new racism, which deserves more attention from

socialists than many on the left are likely to give it.

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

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

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

The solution is a bit technical, but basically, it is possible to demonstrate mathematically that sacrificing oneself for one's close relations can actually increase the probability of shared genes surviving. So a mechanism for non-selfish behaviour might develop but limited strictly to closely related organisms. How does an organism recognise its own kin? Primarily because its kin will look, or perhaps smell, similar.

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

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

So the new racism gains support from contemporary biology and for that reason,

REVIEW ARTICLE

Barker argues, it is much more dangerous, because 'it appears to be neutral, it appears to be pure science.'

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

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

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

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

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

cultural influence.

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

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

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

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

Whatever our short term strategy for

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

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

Tim Bateman

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Rape: another view

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contradiction

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

Further, the majority of rapes were committed at the weekend—usually on a Saturday and between the hours of 8pm and 2am—and the peak month for rapes was July. There was a significant association between the consumption of alcohol and forcible rapes at the weekend.

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

The truth is that it is working class kids that hang about the streets—when was the last time you passed a gang of middle, or upper, class kids on your way to the chip

shop? And they *are* kids—the majority of rape victims are single and aged between 15 and 24, the majority of rape offenders are single and aged between 15 and 19.

As Susan Brownmiller notes in *Against Our Will*:

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

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

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

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

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

Even when women outside of the working class are raped, I feel they can deal with it

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

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

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

Change

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

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

Rape should be raised in our workplaces and trade union branches. Noone is saying this is easy, but it can be raised in a concrete fashion by arguing for better lighting, against sexual harassment, for transport home at night. These are the sort of demands which challenge the Tories and the bosses, which change men's ideas about women and that build women's confidence.

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Paying for the hour

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

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

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

Implementing an hour off the week for dayworkers has brought disputes throughout several industries, most notably in engineering where the 39 hour week came in last November. There was a rash of

disputes through October to January about how the cut was to be made. Most employers wanted 12 minutes off each day, with the claw back of ending afternoon tea breaks, to offset the cost. But dayworkers generally wanted the hour off the Friday shift as a symbol that the reduction was just the start of moves to the 35 hour week and an early start to the weekend.

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

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

By 1985, the government said, they wanted 38,000 redundancies, and the way to achieve them would be by battering the unions into

submission on productivity. Not being a man of violence, Sidney Weighell doesn't need a lot of convincing. Conscious that his own members have a bit more backbone, he took to 'ramming flexible rostering down his members' throats' as the *Financial Times* put it. In the case of the guards, among the aristocracy of NUR members, it has proved more than many can stomach and unofficial strikes have broken out around the country.

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

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

The drivers' strike in 1919 which forced the introduction of the eight hour day was part of a general socialist agitation for shorter hours - eight hours for work, eight hours for rest, eight hours for leisure. It was a slogan which took for granted that less hours would fundamentally benefit workers, not concentrate their exploitation into fewer hours and thus (especially in a recession) minimise employers' overheads. We want shorter hours for *our* benefit, not to make capitalism more cost effective and profitable.

Trying to overturn Weighell

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

Following the apparent victory of ASLEF on the flexible rostering issue, the leadership of the NUR, and 'Hissing Sid' Weighell in particular, are coming in for an unprecedented amount of abuse and opposition from their own members. As any reader of the popular press or watcher of Panorama will know, Sid has been adamantly proclaiming the complete support he and 'his executive' are receiving from the members on the issue of flexible rostering.

Initially we were informed that 99.9% of NUR guards were completely satisfied. In recent weeks however he has been claiming that a more modest 30% have come to local agreements on the issue.

It is almost impossible to find out the real figures. What is obvious is that there exists a massive dissatisfaction with the deal cobbled up last August, and this has resulted in a series of wildcat strikes by guards in all regions.

The guards' resentment is fuelled by the ASLEF victory and the knowledge that other sections of the railway received the 39 hour week with practically no strings. On the engineering side, for instance, last year's deal granted the 39 hour week with no commitments other than an agreement to talk about productivity and flexibility. These talks have been going on for years.

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Part of the guards' suspicion stems from the P&E agreement for track workers of two years ago which resulted in rostering for many staff of four ten-hour days. This agreement was thrown out twice by the P&E Annual Delegate meeting, but the Board and the NUR insisted on implementing it.

For many railworkers the leadership of the NUR is rapidly becoming indistinguishable from the British Rail Board. Indeed the 29 January edition of *Transport Review* – in the middle of the ASLEF dispute – contained a long article entitled 'British Rail's Top Men'. It gives a cringing account of the members of the British Railways Board, talks of 'career railwaymen' like Clifford Rose, the hard-faced personnel director, and about 'sophisticated management techniques' at the very time these sophisticated managers were bankrupting the rail system in their attempt to smash ASLEF.

Stoppage

Since the rostering dispute started, the propaganda machine at the NUR HQ, Unity House, has been churning out volumes of material aimed at selling the deal, with broadsheets and leaflets appearing almost every day. In addition the executive members have been touring the country trying to convince the rank and file of the deal's alleged advantages. So far the only result of this has been the 24 hour stoppage and the mass lobby of Unity House by 200 guards. The guards involved have now set up a rank-and-file co-ordinating committee and are attempting to get 180 branches to demand of the executive a re-call conference on rostering.

Undoubtedly dozens of branches have already done so, with most also calling for the resignation of 'hissing Sid'. My advice would be that they send the resolutions recorded delivery, since the executive are claiming no knowledge of such resolutions.

Weighell has weathered one such storm before. When a move was made to replace him, he went sick for months, no doubt genuine – but many NUR members marvelled at the timing.

The problem in the NUR is the old one of divide and rule. The executive is elected from the sections, and EC members are not allowed consecutive terms of office. So a good left EC has three years in which to make its mark and then its members have to return to the job. Sounds nice and democratic in theory, but what it really means is that the full time officials at Unity House run the union.

What it can also mean is that good boys on the EC (it is of course all male) can look forward to a nice job when they return to the shop floor or foot plate. Weighell and the other full time officials are not, of course, up for re-selection every three years, they can only be got rid off at the AGM, and since they control the AGM ... enough said.

So, in conclusion, nothing is yet clear as to how successful the present revolt will be, but one thing – the NUR is ripe for democratisation and any further talks on amalgamations must hinge around this fact.

Their latest sick scheme

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

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

The government have been forced to beat a hasty retreat, with their new Social Security and Housing Benefits Bill in tatters.

However, this savaging of the new proposals by the employers still leaves workers worse off. Not only will state sick pay be paid by employers in future, rather than the DHSS, but the amount of sickness benefit will be significantly reduced for the majority of workers and be subject to tax and National Insurance contribution deductions.

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

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

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

After attempts to come up with alternative proposals for compensating employers, the government gave up and postponed any legislation during 1981. Other suggestions by the DHSS, such as different reductions for different circumstances, also failed after hostile

reaction from the bosses, but finally it was agreed that employers would agree to pay the benefit as long as they were reimbursed 100 percent. This is to be done by employers subtracting their outlay on state sick pay from their National Insurance contributions.

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

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

Snoopers

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

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

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

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

Left wing communism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Russia during the last 15 years had experienced:

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

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

Historically Bolshevism had fought two enemies: social democratic opportunism on the right and petty bourgeois anarchism on

the left. When in opposition the main danger had been from the right, now in power, with the Second International in decline, the danger was from the left.

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

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

The ultra lefts were opposed to all compromises *in principle*. Lenin accepted that it was not always easy to distinguish between necessary and treacherous compromises. But it was

'The communists did not believe socialism was possible through parliament. This body had to be destroyed along with the rest of the capitalist state and had to be replaced with a system of workers' democracy based on soviets'

'absurd to formulate a recipe or general rule ("no compromises") to suit all cases.'

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

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

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

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

The key to any such necessary

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

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

So Lenin insisted:

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

Above all it was necessary to analyse each concrete situation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Millions of workers in England, France and Germany are *for the first time* passing from complete lack of organisation to the lowest, most simple, and (for

those still thoroughly imbued with bourgeois-democratic prejudices) most easily accessible form of organisation, namely, the trade unions. And the revolutionary—but foolish—left Communists stand by, shouting “The masses, the masses!”—and *refuse to work within the trade unions*, refuse on the pretext that they are “reactionary”.

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

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

In this context Lenin wrote:

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

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

‘Why? Were they all invertebrate liars? Just the opposite. They all spoke and acted frankly, their language was clear and direct, deception was unknown to them. For they were too proud of showing themselves as they really were.’

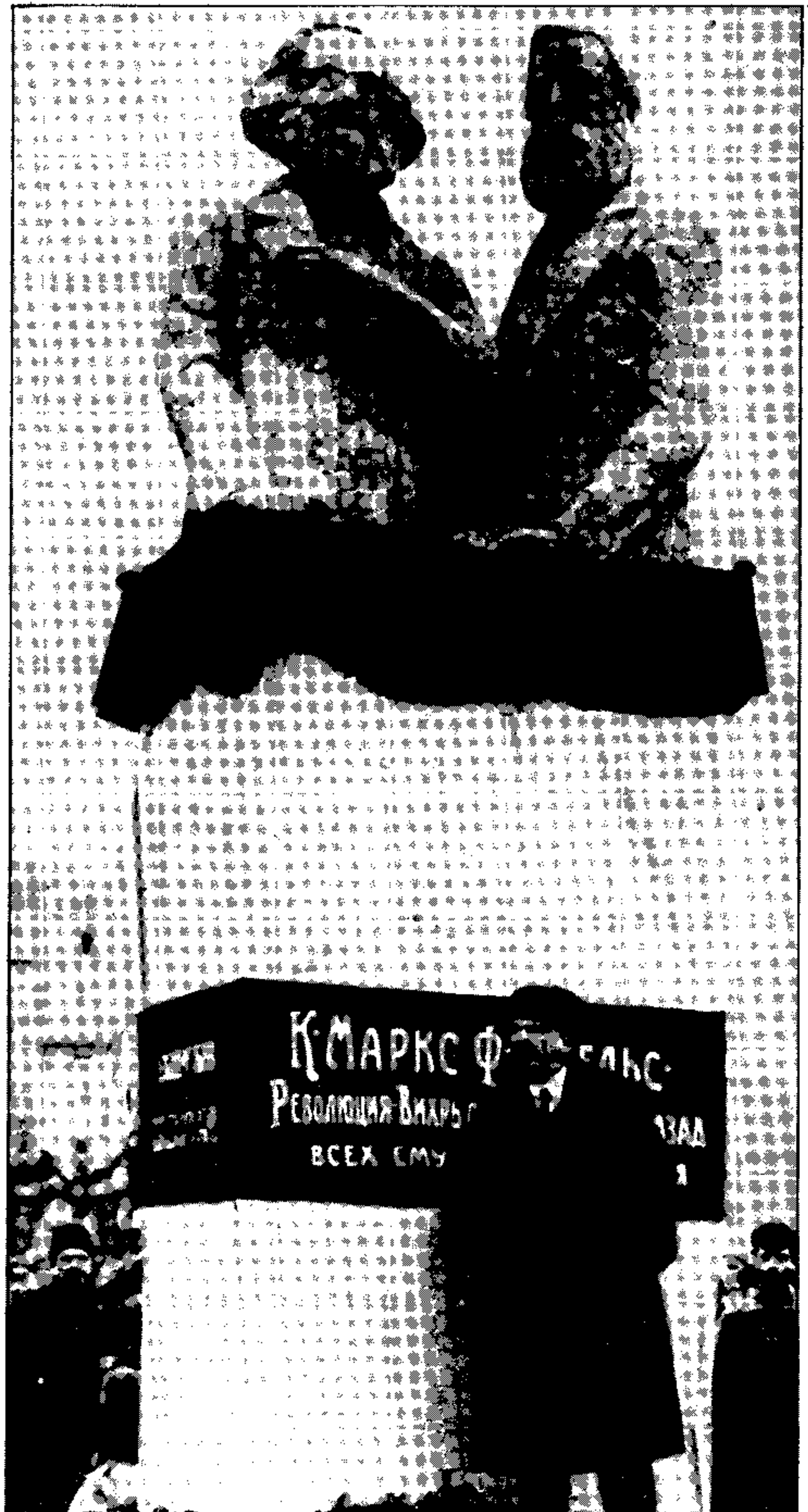
In order to understand Lenin’s proposals, it is necessary to understand the context of 1920. As Rosmer described it:

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

‘It must be understood that such a state of affairs is, after all, an exceptional situation, it is a state of war, and war requires trickery, above all when one is fighting an enemy who has available to him the whole repressive machinery of the state.’

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

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



Every revolutionary has to be trained in strategy and tactics.

‘Politics is a science and an art that does not fall from the skies or come gratis, and ... if it wants to overcome the bourgeoisie the proletariat must train its *own* proletarian “class politicians” of a kind in no way inferior to bourgeois politicians.’

There is no easy road to revolution. We

can’t always choose the terrain we fight on or the weapons we use. The Bolsheviks managed to develop their strategy and tactics in the long, arduous years before the revolution without losing sight of their ultimate aim—socialism. Lenin’s pamphlet is as full of relevant lessons for today as it was in 1920 and remains vital reading for all serious revolutionaries.

Andy Durgan



The horror they left behind

Aftermath: The Struggle of Cambodia and Vietnam

John Pilger and Anthony Barnett
New Statesman Report 5: £3.50

For those who think Vietnam was just a campaign issue for the sixties generation, this collection of *New Statesman* articles by John Pilger, Anthony Barnett and others is a sharp reminder of the millions of people in Indochina who still have to live (or die) with the legacy of Western imperialism. This is a very valuable compilation, especially for those of us who will not have the *New Statesman* in the house (one would not wish a young child to pick up an article by Christopher Hitchens).

As reporters who have had the courage to travel in Indochina and the honesty to report what they saw, Pilger and Barnett have few parallels in contemporary journalism. Pilger describes the continuing effects on North Vietnamese life of the years of US bombings:

'In some forests there are no longer birds and animals; and there are lorry drivers who will not respond to the hooting of a horn because they are deaf from the incessant sound of bombs.'

Barnett and Mike Goldwater tell of the lasting effects of spraying with Agent Orange: in one heavily affected area near Saigon still, in 1980, 'one quarter of all births are miscarriages.' (This, of course, was not enemy territory; these were the people the Americans were defending).

Barnett managed to rescue from Cambodia documents about the torture and mass executions under Pol Pot. One document (the 'confession' of Hu Nim) gives a fascinating account of one of the original members of the Pol Pot government, who subsequently became an oppositionist and who was framed as a CIA agent in terms reminiscent of the Moscow Trials.

Finally, Pilger reminds us that while those who organised the war, like Henry Kissinger, can make fortunes writing about it, those who did the dirty work on the ground are cast aside; in 1979 sixty per cent of all black combat veterans were unemployed.

In their search for those responsible Pilger and Barnett spare no-one. Not Margaret Thatcher, whose intervention cut off supplies of milk to malnourished children in a Saigon hospital. Not the Russian and Chinese advisers in Vietnam, whom Pilger accuses of the same racist arrogance as their American predecessors. And not François Mitterrand, who switched the French vote in favour of seating the representatives of Pol Pot in the United Nations (Giscard had the decency to abstain).

Moreover, Pilger shows with devastating detail how Western aid organisations are being manipulated in order to further American plans to use Khmer Rouge forces still fighting in Cambodia to weaken the Vietnamese regime. He writes in 1980:

'Certainly, my own journey across the border, to Phnom Chat, produced a spectacle of proof of how UNICEF (United Nations Children Fund) and the Red Cross have restored the Khmer Rouge and helped to mould them into an effective force now estimated at 30,000 troops or double their strength since the inception of "cross border feeding".'

Next time someone asks you to buy a UNICEF Christmas card, remember you may be financing the gang who murdered hundreds of thousands of Cambodian children.

Pilger claims that he and Barnett write 'with subservience to no ideology'. This is their strength... and their weakness. For, in the last resort, they end up seeing things from the point of view of the options open to the present Vietnamese regime.

This is not the starry eyed fawning of 1930s Stalinists (Pilger, for example, comments acidly on the elimination of former NLF combatants from public life in South Vietnam). It is rather an inability to perceive any alternative.

To argue that, in the war-weary, blood-soaked territory of Indochina the only way forward is a new revolution may well seem intolerable. Yet in their gripping reports, Pilger and Barnett confirm that this is indeed the bitter truth.

Ian Birchall

The road to Jaruzelski

The Summer before the Frost

Jean Yves Potel

Pluto £3.95

The Polish August

Neal Ascherson

Penguin £2.50

Solidarity, Poland's Independent Trade Union

Denis MacShane,

Spokesman £3.50

Five months with Solidarity

John Taylor

Wildwood £2.65

The Book of Lech Walesa

Penguin £2.50

Solidarnosc: From Gdansk to Military Repression

Colin Barker and Kara Weber

International Socialism 15 £1.95

Poland, Solidarity, Walesa

Michael Dobbs, K S Karol and

Dessa Trevisan,

Pergamon Press £4.95 (pbk)

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

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

Each has its own angle—Denis MacShane writes as a trade union bureaucrat who praises Walesa as the skilful negotiator; Neal Ascherson as the left leaning Scot Nat who emphasises the progressive role of Polish nationalism; John Taylor as a clear writing but not highly theoretical Western socialist; Jean Yves Potel as the 'anti-Leninist' revolutionary (increasingly Pluto's general stance) who can be very clear and informative when looking at the Polish church, but deeply obscure when he talks of the early years of a regime he still deigns to refer to as 'socialist', and deeply reformist when he praised Kuron and Modzelewski for abandoning the revolutionary views they held in the 1960s.

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

Potel has the advantage over the others of having been able to write an introduction to the English translation of his book after the imposition of martial law. In it he criticises the Solidarity leadership for 'lack of strategic preparedness'. Unfortunately, the main body of the book, which appeared in French before the coup, contains not a hint

of such criticism—instead it defends the 'spontaneity' of the Polish process against those who would argue the needs for a clear Marxist pole of attraction within that spontaneity.

Poland, Solidarity, Walesa, is a coffee-table picture book. The pics of workers in struggle are fabulous despite a massive overdose of Lech Walesa in various poses. The text is uneven, as you might expect from three different writers, and at points factually inaccurate. What applies to the other journalistic accounts applies very much to the text of this book as well.

The Book of Lech Walesa is quite different in origin to the others. It is a collection of essays on the Solidarity leader that first appeared, legally, in Poland itself a year ago. The individual essays have some interest in that they refer to events (the near revolution of 1956, the smashing of the students in 1968, the massacres of 1970, the strikes of 1976) which were previously taboo in the official Polish media.

But put together they are both very repetitious and create a quite nauseous cult of the individual (perhaps intentional, given the desire of much of the Polish intelligentsia this time last year to see Walesa's moderate wing victorious within Solidarity). It is as if the thousands of other activists who risked every-

other CINEMA

El Salvador
The people will win
(90 mins £35)

Revolution or Death
(41 mins £20)

Another Vietnam
(50 mins £35)

Portrait of a liberated zone
20 (63 minutes £30)

Films available for hire from: The Other Cinema, 79 Wardour Street, London W1V 7TH Tel: 01 734 8508



thing to build the union were mere walk-on extras in Walesa's rise to stardom.

Colin Barker and Kara Weber's book is in a league of its own. Written in three weeks flat, it is the first book out which seriously looks at the whole period of Solidarity's existence, from its birth to the coup. And it is written not just out of hindsight, but on the basis of an analysis which, long before the coup, warned that if Solidarity did not smash the Polish state, the state would smash Solidarity.

It provides a narrative account of the whole process, interspersed with more theoretical chapters which look at things like the class divisions which led to the strikes of 1980, the role of the church, the inability of the party to reform itself, the faults in the analysis of KOR, the state capitalist nature of Poland, the causes of the economic crisis

throughout the Eastern bloc.

In it you will find the only real discussion on the ideas of Solidarity leaders which refers not just to Walesa and the occasional KOR leaders, but to the various 'radical' regional leaders who are now probably suffering most in the internment camps and prisons.

It is a must for all readers of *Socialist Review*—and at £1.95 is a real bargain.

If you want to follow it up with accounts that contain slightly different detail there is not a lot to choose between the others. In terms of price and length Ascherson is probably the best buy—although don't take everything he says on trust (at some points I had to restrain myself from shouting out loud with anger at his view of historical events). Read Barker and Weber first!

Chris Harman

Kathe Kollwitz
Graphics Posters Drawings
Edited by Renate Hinz
Writers and Readers £7.95



Up to now I thought I didn't like Kathe Kollwitz's work. The result of only seeing her prints poorly reproduced in books about political posters.

This book with its excellent reproductions helped to change my mind. After reading it's hard not to begin to think of Kathe as a comrade, so closely did she identify with the workers' struggles in Germany between the two world wars.

Her work is certainly very grim to look at, with its stark portrayal of unemployed workers and mothers with starving children. Yet she draws and prints the unhappiest of subjects with a compassion that comes from a great love. Kathe wrote of her work that it was something she felt called upon to do. She believed it was her duty to depict the struggle because without struggle there was no hope for a better life.

It is to this book's credit that more of us are able to see just how powerfully Kathe depicted that struggle.

Peter Court

The unpopular war

You, You & You

Pete Grafton
Pluto Press £2.95

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

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

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

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

(3) Despite howls from politicians

and the press about 'stabbing our troops in the back', workers still continued to go on strike—more days were lost in 1944 through industrial disputes than in any year since the General Strike.

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

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

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

Ray Challinor

BOOKSHORTS

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

Issac Deutscher *The Non-Jewish Jew and other essays* (Merlin £2.70) is an interesting, though uneven, collection of Deutscher's writings on Zionism and twentieth century revolutionary movements.

Welcome reprints include Ralph Miliband *The State in Capitalist Society* (Quartet £2.50) and Louise Bryant *Six Red Months in Russia* (Journeyman £2.95), which is being brought out to coincide with the release of the film *Reds*. Also, Reg Groves *Sharpen The Sickle* (Merlin £2.00) about farm workers struggles in the last century.

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

Two new books about women workers. Jackie West *Work, Women and the Labour Market* (RKP £4.95) is a collection of

worthy but uninspired essays. *Women on the line* (RKP £5.95) is much better, written by a socialist feminist, Ruth Cavendish, who gave up a university teaching post to work in a factory. It contains excellent descriptions of the women she worked with. She concludes by examining why the contemporary women's movement has failed to involve working class women.

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

Of a more theoretical nature there is Bernard Semel (ed) *Marxism and the Science of War* (OUP £125.95) is a very mixed and arbitrary collection of Marxist writings on war. Another offering from the extremely eclectic and baffling 'Motive' series is *Theory and Reality* (Allison and Busby £5.95) by former Polish communist leader Wladislaw Bienkowski, is mostly sociological ramblings. He comes close to describing the Polish and Russian economies as capitalist, but nowhere does the working class feature in his analysis.

Tommy Talker to UB 40

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

The last time that there was anything like the present level of unemployment was in the 1930s. Then it was concentrated in the old industrial areas like the North, in some places reaching 50% of the working population. Like today this had its social effects—a low strike level, riots, Labour Party splits etc. It also had its music.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The return of high unemployment has been reflected in music

with Punk, Two-Tone even Oy, and Bands such as UB 40, the Specials, the Beat sing about life on and the dole. Last year's hit 'Ghost Town' was about life in Coventry, UB 40 is named after the dole card.

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

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

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

Of course as things stand, any budding musician is just as likely to



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

Of the art forms popular music is the least appropriated by the middle

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

Noel Halifax

Bad apple, good play

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The play covers a whole range of police attitudes, including an entrenched contempt for women,

and there is also a lot of humour in it.

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

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

The real power in society is let off the hook.

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

Operation Bad Apple is an excellent political entertainment, and everyone should get to see it.

'The most perniciously doe eyed epic about the birth of communism ever committed to film . . . A trivialisation at best, a whitewashing at worst, of a dream-engendered fanaticism that went horribly wrong.'

The *Financial Times* reviewer had no doubt about his class's reaction to *Reds*, the Warren

Beatty film currently showing at three locations in London and soon likely to be on general release.

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

REDS

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

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

Reds, *Reds*, *Reds*. For Hollywood, a swearword. Remember all those cold war John Wayne movies - 'we're gonna get those murderin' Reds'? You can still see them on wet Monday afternoons on TV.

One thing is certain, Warren Beatty's *Reds* will be a long time showing before it appears among the TV remainders.

As far as I am concerned, it is the best political film to come out of Hollywood ever. The thirties movies of the 'Hollywood Ten' were films which rarely if ever went beyond liberal interpretations of history. 'Communists' were only hinted at and never appeared as real or sympathetic characters.

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

stranded whales.

Reds is already facing the same problem. Those arbiters of working class opinion in the metropolis, *City Limits* and *Time Out* have already judged it as inadequate. 'Radical chic' proclaims *Time Out* - well, it should know, though since the split it has been more chic than radical. *City Limits* hedges its bets, but opts this week for a hostile review by Chris Auty which will no doubt run and run, and which again fails to see the potential power of the film to change ordinary people's ideas about 'communism'.

You'll probably have realised by now that I am 99.9% in favour of *Reds*. Warren Beatty develops the character of John Reed, sometimes rather crudely, but always with integrity. The 0.1% concerns the first part of the love story - the bait to the hook of the politics.

New woman

The attempt to show Louise Bryant's escape from the stuffy provinciality of pre-war Portland, Oregon, isn't completely successful. Her efforts to define herself as a 'new woman', which appear shocking in Portland, are reduced to the commonplace in Greenwich Village, where she is seen by all and sundry as simply 'Jack's latest'. ('What do you do, my dear?' 'I'm a writer'. 'Oh, you paint do you?') Bryant's struggle to assert herself as an individual separate from Reed gives the story relevance to socialists today.

It tries to explain the problems of love and commitment. Reed has his struggle for socialism and his

love for Bryant tearing him in two directions, while she has her commitments to herself as a writer and to Reed tearing her in the other. Yet, when faced with the possibility of having a lover who is prepared to commit himself totally to her (Jack Nicholson as a marvellously cynical Eugene O'Neill) she chooses Reed and an increasing commitment to his ideas. For some socialists this would appear to be the weakest part of the film, but show me a socialist with no romanticism and I'll show you the potential Stalinist bureaucrat.

But if the first part of the film tends towards radical romanticism, it does provide a background to Reed's increasing commitment to socialism. What seems to his Greenwich Village friends to be an eccentricity, his constant disappearing from their circle to attend conferences and speak on platforms of the revolutionary union, the IWW, is used by Beatty as a device to build up to the second part of the film, which shows Reed's commitment to the Bolshevik Revolution and to the creation of the American Communist Party.

The scenes of the October Revolution and of the anti-war movement in the US are extremely moving (take your tissues with you).

The small points of detail show a genuine attempt to be faithful to Reed's account of the seizure of power. In the Winter Palace Red Guards stop looters and guard the paintings. At a factory meeting Reed is called in to speak - a direct contrast with an American Socialist Party meeting on the War, shown earlier, in which he is refused speaking rights since he is only a

journalist, not a delegate (as a Russian worker says, 'you need no credentials here, comrade'). There is no overstatement, just a feeling of irresistible power as the Petrograd masses march on the Winter Palace.

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

Reed then returns to Russia to try to gain Comintern recognition for his faction of American Communism.

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

Viewable

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

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

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



MARCH 1919

On 2 March 1919 about fifty delegates assembled in an old imperial court of justice in the walls of the Moscow Kremlin.

Lenin opened the proceedings with a speech that can have lasted no more than five minutes. He began by asking all present to stand in memory of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, murdered only six weeks before. He went on:

'Our gathering has great historical significance. The bourgeoisie are terror stricken at the growing workers' revolutionary movement. The people are aware of the greatness and significance of the struggle now going on. All that is needed is to find a practical form to enable the proletariat to establish its rule.'

That form was now discovered - soviet power.

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

If the size and composition of the conference was anything to go by, it was rather a toothache step. True, the 50 delegates claimed to represent 35 different organisations from almost as many nationalities. But in reality most of these organisations were small, and in many cases, as Lenin said, they were enthusiastic.

Many of the delegates were not even very representative of their own organisations. Many were foreigners who just happened to find themselves in Russia at the time of the revolution, in some cases as prisoners of war, in one case as attaché to the French embassy.

Only five of the delegates had actually come to Moscow from abroad specifically for the meeting. Only two of these represented significant organisations. One, Stange, was from the Norwegian Labour Party, a mass but distinctly unrevolutionary party. The other, Eberlein, was from the revolutionary, but new and raw, German Communist Party, growing fast but still with only a few thousand members.

And he was mandated to oppose the immediate formation of the International. Not out of principle, but from the very plausible piece of commonsense that such an unrepresentative gathering could only do preparatory work.

A good deal of arm-twisting was applied by the Russians.

'We have a victorious proletarian revolution in a great country,' said Zinoviev. 'We have a powerful revolution moving towards victory in two countries... Are we still to delay? Nobody would understand it.'

Lenin and Trotsky spoke in the same tone. They carried the day, with a little help from an American delegate who arrived late bubbling with optimistic news.

For once it was right to throw caution to

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

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



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

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

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

'To demand of the proletariat that it devoutly comply with the rules and regulations of political democracy in the final life-and-death combat with capitalism is like demanding of a man, fighting for his life against cut-throats, that he observed the artificial and restrictive rules of French wrestling, which the enemy introduces but fails to observe.'

In this kingdom of destruction where not only the means of production and transport but also the institutions of political democracy are heaps of blood-soaked stumps, the proletariat is compelled to create its own apparatus designed first and foremost to cement the inner ties of the working class and to assure the possibility of its revolutionary intervention in the future development of mankind. This apparatus is represented by the workers soviets...

This irreplaceable organization of working class self-rule, this organization of its struggle for state power, has been tested in the experience of various countries and constitutes the mightiest conquest and weapon of the proletariat in our epoch.

The message took hold. Indeed, by the next congress in July 1920 the worry was

that the Communist International was becoming 'fashionable'.

Parties of hundreds of thousands like the French and Italian Socialists, and the German Independent Socialists, had either joined or were about to join. But, as events were to show, it would have taken years to knock them into shape as real revolutionary parties that had not merely the desire, but also the experience, knowledge and nerve to fight for soviet power effectively.

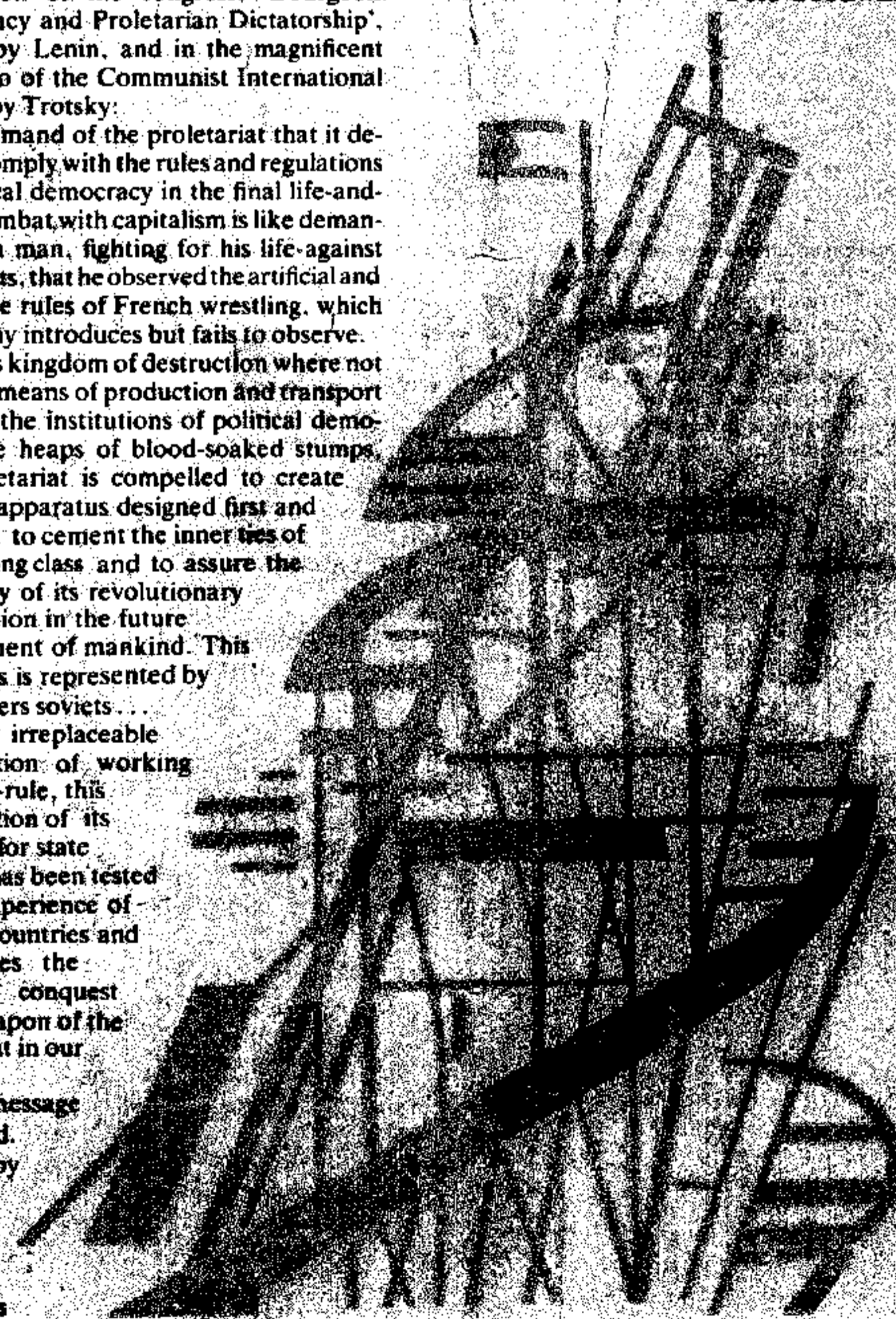
Those years were not to be allowed.

The going got tougher after 1919 as the bourgeoisie recovered confidence and the workers became more cautious. Revolutionary possibilities there still were. But scarcely had the Communist International sharpened the weapons to cut through them than the International fell into the hands of Stalin's bureaucracy and set about systematically blunting those weapons. The world party of proletarian revolution was turned into the craven appendage to the foreign policy of a new exploiting class.

But the records of the first five revolutionary years of the Communist International remain. Five rich years of experience of building mass revolutionary parties.

For those who care to use them today they are broad shoulders to stand upon.

Pete Goodwin



Tatlin's projected monument to the 3rd International