

WORKERS'  
LIBERTY

No. 10. 95 pence

**Le Pen: A Hitler  
for the 1990s?**

## Letter to readers

Wall Street and the City hope that they are back to business as usual after the shock of last October's crash.

In our last issue we argued that a major slump is much more probable, and a brief update in this issue reaffirms that opinion.

It makes the four million votes won in France's presidential election by the fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen all the more alarming. Economic ruin wrecks consensus politics. If the left cannot offer a radical alternative, then desperate people will turn to the far right. The labour movement has to rearm itself politically and ideologically, or risk disaster.

This issue of *Workers' Liberty* continues our discussion of themes where we challenge the conventional wisdom of the far left. Stan Crooke traces much left anti-

Zionism back to a poisoned source. Clive Bradley dissects the claim that Khomeini's Iran deserves support as 'anti-imperialist' against the US. Sean Matgamna debates with Geoff Bell on Ireland.

Another feature looks at the French general strike of May 1968, and argues that the ideas and possibilities revealed then are still as relevant as ever. We carry a further extract from Zbigniew Kowalewski's account of Solidarnosc in 1980-1, and a brief survey by him of the new strike wave in Poland.

In order to include all these articles, we have curtailed the Reviews section more than we would wish, and added four extra pages to this issue (and 5p to the price).

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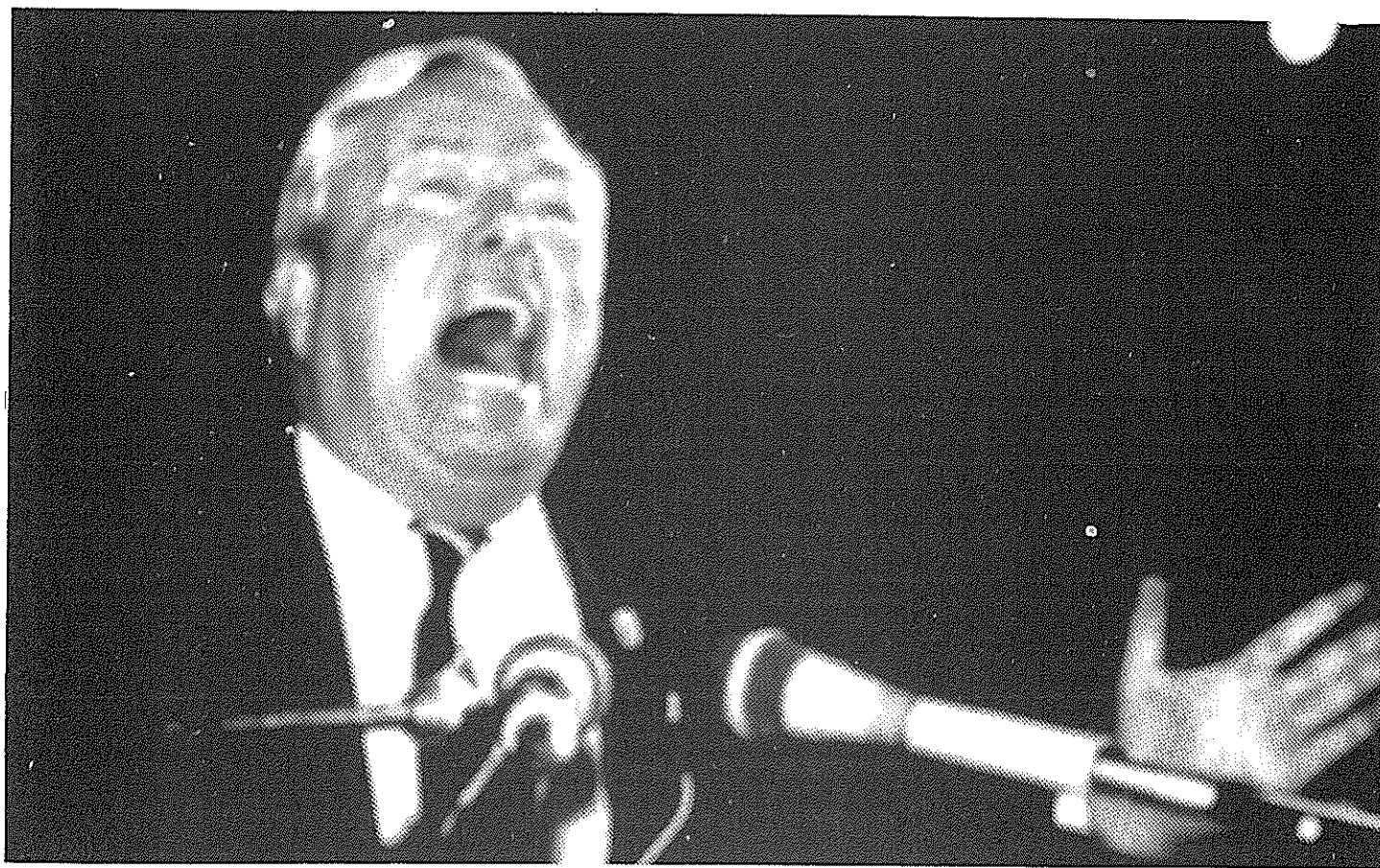
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## France sounds the alarm

**W**hen four and a half million French voters mark the twentieth anniversary of the greatest strike in history by backing an openly fascist party, then it is time for the labour movement and the left throughout Europe to beat the alarm drums.

No fascist movement has had this sort of support since World War 2. Jean-Marie Le Pen's main plank in the presidential election on 24 April was hostility to France's two and a half million immigrant workers, most of whom come from North Africa; but his National Front comes forward as the embodiment of a comprehensively right-wing outlook on the world.

The stock exchange crash of 19 October last year has yet to register in the world's economy. We do not yet know what its repercussions will be, but a profound, or even catastrophic, slump is probable. The comparatively easy and civilised politics of consensus which governed the countries of Western Europe for most of the '50s and the '60s have already been strained by economic tensions since the mid-'70s. A big slump will wreck them. The French fascists' fourteen per cent of the vote is a tremendous base for extreme reaction at the beginning of what may well be a dramatic shift in Western politics.

There is an ominous parallel with Germany. In the election of September 1930 the Nazi Party got 18 per cent of the vote. The effects of the Wall Street crash of October 1929 had only just begun to hit Germany. Then unemployment rose from three million in 1930 to four million in 1931 and five million in 1932. In January 1933, less than two and a half years after his first electoral breakthrough, Adolf Hitler was Chancellor of Germany.

Now, of course, France in 1988 is not Germany in

1930; nor is Europe today the Europe of sixty years ago. In 1930 the world economy had still not recovered from the dislocation of the First World War. Germany had been the great loser of that war; it was smarting from defeat and from the effects of the brutal Versailles peace treaty, which stripped it of its colonies and areas of influence and forced it to pay huge reparations.

Western Europe today is within four years of planned internal free trade. Despite all its tensions, the world economy is still reducing tariffs, and keeping non-tariff barriers to trade under control. In Germany in 1930 the last revolutionary convulsion was only seven years in the past; in France today, it is twenty years in the past. By the end of 1930 Hitler's SA had 100,000 organised storm-troopers; Le Pen's base is still mostly electoral.

These are very important differences. Indeed, some people dismiss Le Pen's success as not signifying much. In France itself the Poujadists — a populist movement of the far right, albeit less clearly fascist than the National Front — won 11½ per cent of the vote in 1956. Many on the left saw a serious fascist threat in the rise of De Gaulle's RPF in the late '40s, and later his coming to power with a military coup in 1958. In Germany neo-fascists got up to ten per cent of the vote in the late 1960s. In Italy the neo-fascist MSI has had some alarming spurts of support. None of these successes for the far right has come to anything much.

But what if the stock market crash disrupts the economy fundamentally? There are no grounds for complacency. Yes, the differences between 1988 and 1930 are important; what there is in common is also important. Writing about the September 1930 election in Germany, Trotsky said this:

"In the past, we have observed (Italy, Germany) a

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sharp strengthening of fascism, victorious, or at least threatening, as the result of a spent or missed revolutionary situation, at the conclusion of a revolutionary crisis in which the proletarian vanguard revealed its inability to put itself at the head of the nation and change the fate of all its classes, the petty bourgeoisie included. This is precisely what gave fascism its peculiar strength in Italy.

But at present, the problem in Germany does not arise at the conclusion of a revolutionary crisis but just at its approach. From this, the leading Communist Party officials, optimists *ex officio*, draw the conclusion that fascism, having come 'too late', is doomed to inevitable and speedy defeat. These people do not want to learn anything.

Fascism comes 'too late' in relation to old revolutionary crisis. But it appears sufficiently early — at the dawn — in relation to the new revolutionary crisis. The fact that it gained the possibility of taking up such a powerful starting position *on the eve of a revolutionary period*, and not at its conclusion, is not the weak side of fascism but the weak side of Communism''.

While the fascists have grown, the French Communist Party has declined. It had immense power after the war, when the armed workers it led could have stopped the bourgeoisie reconstructing their state. Instead the CP chose to help the bourgeoisie rebuild their state. It was in the government from 1944 to 1947. Then it was kicked out, and pushed into permanent opposition for the next 34 years. It sabotaged the revolutionary possibilities of the 1968 general strike. None of these things shattered its base, although after 1968 it was no longer able to stifle criticism on its left so effectively. It was its experience in government, with the Socialists in 1981-4, that undercut the CP. Its mystique as the party of serious opposition to the Establishment has not recovered from that. Sucked dry by Mitterrand, it was then flung away. The party which for over three decades usually got between 20 and 25 per cent of the vote is now down to seven per cent, half that of the fascists. Now it looks as if the National Front is the party of protest anti-Establishment voters as well as the hard-core Right.

Even if the economic consequences of the stock exchange crash are less than catastrophic, the fascist upsurge will pose a serious threat to the French labour movement. Disappointment and disillusionment with the Establishment and the official Left gave Le Pen his first electoral boost in 1983-4, when the Socialist-led Government turned sharply towards austerity and cuts. The 'cohabitation' of the Socialist president Mitterrand and the Gaullist prime minister Chirac between 1986 and 1988 swelled the fascist protest vote further. Now, after Mitterrand's presidential victory, a new Socialist-led Government is being formed, which will be far less inclined even than Neil Kinnock to tackle capitalism seriously. There will be more disillusionment, more despair, more fuel for the fascists.

Nor is it just a matter of France. The electoral success of the French far right will inevitably boost fascism throughout Europe. The success of the racist bigots in France will give oxygen to the forces of racial intolerance in countries like Britain.

Marxists have said repeatedly that the choice for the workers of the world is either socialism or barbarism. There has been much barbarism in Europe this century. For four decades it has been mainly in the Third World. In Vietnam and Cambodia, US imperialism rained napalm on the people. In Afghanistan, the USSR has done the same sort of thing for the last decade. Across the Third World, the advance of capitalism has driven millions of peasants off the land and left them to starve — while American farmers are paid not to produce

food, and Western Europe accumulates huge stockpiles.

For four decades, the choice of socialism or barbarism has receded for the working class in the metropolitan countries. We have lived under the constant threat of total barbarism — the destruction of civilisation through nuclear war — but from day to day there have been in-between choices. The looming prospect of the dislocation of the world economy on a scale not seen since the end of World War 2, and the rise of the racist barbarian Le Pen, show that the in-between choices may soon disappear.

Many times before workers have faced the choice of socialism or barbarism; their organisations have failed them, and they have paid the price in barbarism. The choice between socialism and barbarism was posed before 1914-18, when the ruling-class barbarians set a generation of the youth of Europe to slaughter each other in the trenches. The socialist leaders had long analysed and condemned the drive to war; but they failed to forestall it, and in 1914 they supported their 'own' ruling classes, betraying socialism.

The choice between socialism and barbarism was posed after World War 1, when workers throughout Europe rose in revolt against capitalism. But the revolutionaries failed to organise adequately in time, and the reformist socialists — the Kinnocks of that time — defended the Establishment, helping it to defeat the revolutionary workers and kill their leaders, like Rosa Luxemburg. Fascism triumphed in Italy.

The choice between socialism and barbarism was posed before Hitler rose to power. But the working-class parties of Germany would not unite to stop the fascists, and could not agree on a working-class programme for the reconstruction of society. The German Socialists had eight million voters, the German Communist Party six million, and both had strong militias able to beat the fascist stormtroopers off the streets of Berlin until after Hitler took state power. Yet they let him take power peacefully.

The result: a terrible strengthening of fascism throughout Europe; fascists taking power in Austria and Spain; and World War 2, with its tens of millions of dead in the battlefields, the bombed cities, and the death camps.

The choice between socialism and barbarism was posed clearly and sharply, in good time. To make the choice for socialism, and to defeat barbarism, demanded that the labour movement make itself fit to fight for power and fit to reorganise society.

The collapse of the old socialist movement at the outbreak of war in 1914 revealed that it had never done that. It had become no more than a movement fighting for improvements for the workers within the established system. After 1917 the new Communist Parties set out to reorganise the labour movement as a force for socialism. The rise to power of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia corrupted and destroyed those Communist Parties.

Between 1930 and 1933 Leon Trotsky warned the workers of Germany that they must win or go under. Today, knowing as we do what Hitler's victory meant, it is impossible to read what Trotsky wrote 60 years ago without emotion, and not only anger. Seeing the signs that the German Socialist and Stalinist leaders planned to submit to fascism peacefully, Trotsky wrote:

**"Worker-Communists, you are hundreds of thousands, millions; you cannot leave for anywhere; there are not enough passports for you. Should fascism come to power, it will ride over your skulls and spines like a terrific tank. Your salvation lies in merciless struggle. And only a fighting unity with the Social Democratic workers can bring victory. Make haste,**



worker-Communists, you have very little time left!"

Trotsky was right. But the Trotskyist organisation was weak, and the reformists and Stalinists could marginalise, persecute and repress it. That has been the central experience of the Trotskyist movement throughout the years when barbarism reigned in Europe, and in those years when it has been mainly confined to the Third World: to know that the choice is socialism or barbarism, but to be unable to convince the mass of workers of what needs to be done.

The whole of modern history would be different if the internationalists had gained the leadership of the workers' movement in 1914; if the new Communist Parties had pushed the reformists aside and overthrown the bourgeoisie in 1919-23; or if the Trotskyists had eclipsed the Stalinists at the end of the 1920s. We may now be entering a new cycle of history in which the central question of modern times, socialism or barbarism, is again posed to the workers of France and other parts of Europe, immediately and urgently.

Once more, maybe, everything will depend on the strength of the internationalists, the revolutionaries, the fighters for workers' liberty — will we be strong enough to shape the course of history, or will we once again be prophets unarmed? We do not and cannot know how long or short the time-scales will be. But Le Pen's election triumph, in the shadow of a looming economic slump, should focus the minds of all serious socialists.

The labour movement is not now in any state — of collective mind or body — to secure the socialist alternative to barbarism. We need to regenerate and reorient the labour movement. We need to rearm and regroup the socialists. We may not have as much time to sort ourselves out as the professional optimists or the complacent sectarians among us thought. For sure, we do not have all the time in the world.

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## Back Benn and Heffer!

**T**he decision by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer to contest the leadership is the best news in British Labour Party politics for many years.

Benn and Heffer summed up what it meant when they joined the seafarers' picket lines in Dover. The only time Neil Kinnock has been seen on a picket line in recent years was when his chauffeur drove him to a brief visit to a miners' picket at the end of their strike in 1985. Roy Hattersley has not even managed that.

There is now in British politics a whole series of big issues around which it would be possible for the labour movement to organise a powerful crusade to drive the Tories from office. The biggest indictment of the Kinnock-Hattersley 'leadership' is that they have failed to mobilise on those issues.

Registration for the poll tax is now under way in Scotland. About half the population of Britain — including many Tory voters — say they would support a campaign of refusing to pay this tax.

The social security cuts have outraged even many Tory supporters. The Education Reform Bill is going through Parliament. A poll last June showed 55 per cent in favour of its plan for schools to opt out of local authority control. By January 1988, only 18 per cent supported this idea. The huge waiting lists for council housing — in many areas, the waiting list means waiting forever — are proof that the Tories' plan to cut back council housing runs counter to the needs and wishes of millions.

Section 28 of the new Local Government Act, which threatens all facilities for lesbians and gays under the pretext of a ban on 'promoting homosexuality', has aroused the biggest demonstrations ever in Britain for lesbian and gay rights. There is widespread opposition to the Tories' attacks on civil liberties on many other fronts, especially their efforts to censor TV coverage which is politically embarrassing to them. Despite the attempts by union leaders to let the campaign peter out after 14 March, agitation against Health Service cuts is continuing.

The Ford workers' victory, the tenacious battle by the seafarers, and the strikes by and in support of the health workers (effectively defying Tory anti-union laws, and forcing the Tories to make concessions, at least on nurses' pay) show that trade union power is not finished.

Much has been written and said about the ideological grip of 'Thatcherism'. Many people on the left argue that socialist ideas in the British working class have swamped by the tide of market economics and dog-eat-dog consumerism.

There is no hard evidence for this. Detailed opinion surveys suggest that most people's attitudes have shifted, if anything, slightly to the left during the Thatcher years. Workers' confidence has been sapped by unemployment, by successive defeats, and by the feebleness of the labour movement's leadership. That lack of confidence explains the Tories' triumphs. But it is something that can change — and change quite rapidly in the right circumstances.

There is plenty of inflammable material to raise a fire of protest against the Tories — *given leadership*.

That is why everyone in the British labour movement who wants to fight the Tories must back Benn and Heffer.

# Fourteen per cent vote for French fascist

**In the first round of France's presidential election, on 24 April, the fascist candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen won 14.5% of the vote, while the once-mighty French Communist Party got only 7%. An expelled ex-CP leader, Pierre Juquin, got 2%, and the Trotskyist Arlette Laguiller also got 2%.**

From the '40s through to the '70s, the CP consistently got about 20% of the vote. The first stage in its decline came with an apparent triumph, the formation of a Union of the Left with the Socialist Party in 1972. For the CP leaders this opened up the possibility of ministerial positions utterly denied to them since they were ejected from the government in 1947 — and in 1981 the CP duly gained four places in the Socialist-led government. But the great gainer from the Union of the Left has been the Socialist Party. From having 5% of the vote in the presidential election of 1969, it has risen to become France's alternative government.

In April 1981 the CP still got 15% in the first round of the presidential election. The National Front, together with other far-right groups, totalled only 0.35% of the vote in the National Assembly elections of June 1981; Le Pen personally got only 4% in his constituency.

The dramatic rise of the National Front began in 1983. After a couple of years of attempts at reform and an expansionist economic policy, the Socialist-led government was changing course under pressure of a ballooning foreign debt and high inflation. In June 1982 it announced a first 'austerity plan', in March 1983 a second.

In September 1983 the National Front won 17% of the vote for the town council of Dreux. Elections in France are held in two rounds, with the less successful candidates eliminated for the second round. The NF established a formal alliance with the mainstream right-wing parties for the second round, and won.

In June 1984 the NF far outstripped its success in Dreux by winning 11% across the whole of France in the EEC elections. In 1986's National Assembly elections it fell back slightly to 10%. Since 1986 France has been governed by 'cohabitation' of a Socialist Party president (Mitterrand) and a right-wing government (led by Jacques Chirac); this sort of consensus politics, with continuing high unemployment, has enabled the National Front to remain attractive for many angry, dissatisfied, and bewildered people.

The NF's 14.5% on 24 April is easily the highest vote for a fascist party in

Western Europe since World War 2. The MSI in Italy gets about 7%; an earlier far-right movement in France, the Poujadists, less clearly fascist than the NF, peaked at 11.5% in 1956.

The NF's high score this year is doubly alarming because it has made its true fascist colours very plain. Last autumn Le Pen declared that the Nazis' mass murder of six million Jews was a matter of debate, and anyway "a detail in the history of the Second World War". He has done little to wipe away the taint of Nazism. On 6 April he declared: "The blame for the unleashing and the inexorable development of the Second World War must be shared... There were misdeeds not only on the side of the Germans and their allies".

Le Pen has a long record in fascist politics, going back to the early 1950s. So have many of his associates in the National Front. Not all the 14.5% who voted for Le Pen are convinced fascists, of course. But by now — and especially after Le Pen's wife fell out with him last year and denounced him very publicly — none can be unaware that Le Pen is a fascist. In October last year the NF's support had fallen to 7%; but now it has regained its former strength, and more.

Le Pen's programme, though tailored for electoral respectability, is clear:

- More legislation by referendum rather than by parliament;
- Immediate referendums on reintroduction of the death penalty and a new, more restrictive, nationality law;
- Limit the right to strike in the public sector and abolish the trade unions' legal monopoly over candidates for workplace delegates (shop stewards — at present elected by all workers, union and non-union, from lists put forward by the various unions);
- Separate social security funds for French citizens and for immigrants, and child benefit only for French citizens;
- Reduce state spending and taxes;
- Send immigrants back to their countries of origin.

The campaign against immigrants is the core of Le Pen's platform. Its appeal is the equation "2.5 million unemployed equals 2.5 million immigrants".

The Communist Party's vote has crashed while the National Front's has risen. Some people have argued that the NF's votes have come mainly from disillusioned CPers, and draw conclusions about the supposed closeness of extreme left and extreme right. But it is not true.

An analysis of National Front voters in 1984 showed that only one per cent of them had come over from voting CP in 1981. 54% had voted for one of the mainstream right-wing candidates in the

first round of the 1981 presidential election, 24% for the Socialist candidate, Mitterrand, 2% for the Green candidate, and 19% had abstained or been too young to vote. The National Front's electorate does include a significant number of former supporters of the Left, but they come almost entirely from the ranks of Socialist voters rather than from the more strongly class-conscious CP electorate.

No analysis of the political origins of the 14% who voted for Le Pen on 24 April is yet available. The figures of Le Pen's vote in different social classes, however, confirm the picture of a classically fascist electorate.

31% of shopkeepers and self-employed tradesmen voted National Front, 24% of all self-employed people, and 21% of professionals (lawyers, doctors, and so on). 19% of unemployed people voted National Front.

NF support was lowest among workers in health, education, and other social services, at 6%. Le Pen got an alarmingly high score among other manual workers, at 16%; it seems that the major part of this score came from manual workers who would previously have voted for the mainstream right, since manual workers voted 70% for the left and only 30% for the right. The once-strong Gaullist working-class vote collapsed. Le Pen got more manual worker votes than Chirac and Barre put together.

Between 1984 and 1986 the National Front electorate shrank slightly and became lower-class. Le Pen lost a chunk of his better-off supporters. The figures indicate that between 1986 and 1988 the NF has won back those supporters, and more, among the better-off, while also advancing less markedly in the working class.

Most of the NF's voters, then, are people who might otherwise have voted for the mainstream right-wing parties or maybe, if disillusioned, for the Socialist Party. The change in voting patterns in France seems to be *primarily* a general shift to the right since 1981: CP voters have moved to the Socialist Party or started abstaining, the SP has lost voters to the right while gaining from the CP, and the right wing has lost to the NF.

But the policies and actions of the Left have contributed a lot to the rise of the NF. The fiasco of the CP-SP government's attempt to patch up capitalism after 1981, and the collapse of its promises to cure unemployment, left many people frustrated and willing to look for scapegoats. The CP's combination of complicity in that futile attempt to manage capitalism with continuing adherence to a Stalinist model of socialism has caused terrible demoralisa-

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Photo Ian Swindale

tion among its supporters — who once formed a solid battalion of intense if limited class-consciousness. Recent opinion polls have shown that even the remaining rump of CP voters now have little faith in the USSR or what the CP presents to them as Marxism. Although organised, class-conscious workers have not gone over to the NF, thousands of young people must have been seduced by the NF's racism who could otherwise have been won over to the Left.

The Socialist Party has supported a broad and active campaign against the NF, called SOS-Racisme; while the CP shuns joint campaigning, there is no reason to doubt the dedication and courage with which CP activists, too, fight the racists. Yet anti-racism alone is a feeble weapon against the demagogic appeal of the NF to desperate people; it needs to be coupled with an economic programme, and also with a more solid ideological basis than the CP or SP can provide.

For the National Front's line, "French people first", strikes at a weak underbelly of the politics of the French left parties. Both the CP and the SP are deeply nationalistic. The French national flag and the French national anthem are routinely used by the SP and the CP for their own marches and rallies. Both the SP and the CP support France's 'independent' nuclear arsenal; both support a ban on any further immigration; both reneged on a promise to give immigrants the right to vote after 1981. In

December 1980 a CP mayor led an attack with a bulldozer on a hostel for African immigrant workers in his municipality, complaining that the municipality had 'too many' immigrants and they should be sent to right-wing municipalities instead.

Anti-racism does not go very far unless it is linked to internationalism and socialism: that is the lesson from France.

Martin Thomas

## A new militancy?

The recent upsurge in industrial struggle — most obviously in the NHS, the motor industry and in the Channel ferries has given the lie to fashionable ideas about the organised working class being either bought off or permanently cowed by Thatcherism. The new mood of militancy and confidence which has emerged amongst union members is due at least in part to the Tories own overblown claims of economic revival and falling unemployment.

The Ford dispute was a watershed. Although many Ford strikers considered the final settlement a sell-out, it was undoubtedly seen by most workers as a

significant victory — proof that determined industrial action can still deliver the goods.

Socialists of course welcome the new militancy without hesitation. Rank and file struggle at the point of production is the fundamental driving force behind any socialist strategy worthy of the name. But our enthusiasm should not blind us to the very real problems and weaknesses that exist at every level within the unions.

The apparent ease with which the Ford strikers were able to extract major concessions from the employers misled many trades unionists. At Land Rover for instance, the majority of the shop stewards committee were completely unprepared for the aggressive tactics adopted by management. It had been 6 years since the last strike at the Solihull plant and elementary activities like calling mass meetings and sending out delegations to other plants and the docks were neglected.

The ABCs of effective strike organisation are having to be relearnt by a generation of trades unionists, for whom industrial action is a strange new experience.

But after the bosses and their Tory-run state, the biggest problem for all strikers is still the union leaders. The Ford strike was held back throughout by the 'left wing' TGWU leadership, as well as by the 'new realists' of the AEU. In the NHS, NUPE has bent over backwards to limit action to token

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gestures aimed at retaining public goodwill — even to the extent of effectively sabotaging CoHSE's call for a day of action on 14th March.

Sam MacCluskie's desperate efforts to keep the NUS within the law prevented him from putting out the clear call for national strike action that was obviously required, not just to defeat P&O but to ensure the survival of the union itself as an effective force.

As yet the rank and file does not generally have the confidence to by-pass and defy the officials in the way workers quite frequently did in the early to mid 70s. Groups of workers will push to the limit of what has been officially sanctioned, but entirely unofficial initiatives remain exceptional.

And the 'new mood' is not evenly spread across the whole class. In the public sector workers are still in retreat while local authorities — often Labour controlled — slash jobs and undermine conditions with the connivance of the NUPE leadership.

Crucially, there is no effective national organisation for militants in the unions to relate to. This is the direct responsibility of the left. The SWP turned its back on serious industrial work in the late 70s, and wound up its 'national rank and file movement'. The virtual collapse and disintegration of the Communist Party has been paralleled by the decline into insignificance of the once powerful Liaison Committee in Defence of Trade Unions. The Broad Left Organising Committee remains little more than a front for the Militant Tendency, calling the occasional rally but organising no effective intervention on the ground.

But meanwhile the bosses are also becoming more militant. Recent months have seen a series of carefully premeditated management offensives, making full use of the courts. P&O's aggressive tactics at Dover come hard on the heels of union-busting moves at TV-AM and a spate of victimisations of workers involved in solidarity with the NHS.

The anti-union laws, used only sparingly for some time after they were first introduced in 1982, are now brought in to play as a matter of course to prevent 'secondary' action. When the NUS balloted its members for a national strike in March, the courts declared even the ballot illegal, and the completed papers lie to this day, uncounted, in vaults of the union's bank! Sam MacCluskie's ducking and diving could not prevent the inevitable showdown with P&O and the courts, but it certainly demoralised and confused the NUS membership.

If we had a union leadership worthy of the name, action up to and including a general strike would now be under discussion at Congress House. But the TUC failed the miners and the print workers; there is no reason to believe that it will respond any more effectively on behalf of seafarers.

Which brings us back to the need for a rank and file movement, of trades unionists willing — where necessary — to bypass the official leaders in action and to challenge them politically.

Jim Denham

## After the crash

Wall Street hopes that it has now put last October's Great Crash well behind it. Industrial production in the US is still rising at a rapid six per cent per year; shop's tills are still ringing merrily; the slide in the value of the dollar stopped at the end of 1987, and since then the ups have more or less balanced the downs; share prices have revived a bit; and there is even a new rush of speculative takeovers.

The story is similar in the other big capitalist economies. West Germany's economy is slower than others, but far from slumping. Nigel Lawson could wear a self-satisfied smirk when he presented his Budget. Japan is positively booming, and the Tokyo stock market has recovered all it lost last October.

Yet the capitalists' rejoicing is still nervous and cautious and for good reason. A substantial delay between the stock market crash and an industrial slump was always to be expected. In 1973-4 industrial production did not turn downwards until ten months after the stock market; in 1968-9, the delay was 12 months. The slump of the 1930s gathered momentum only in 1930-31, well after the 1929 stock market crash.

Behind last October's crash lay the basic problem of the US's position in the international capitalist economy, and its relation to the dollar's position in international trade and finance. That basic problem has not been solved at all. The US trade deficit — its excess of imports and exports — has narrowed slightly, but on present trends it will still be well

over \$100 billion a year for the foreseeable future. That is not possible. Japanese, British, Dutch and other foreign capitalists will not and cannot pour investments into the US fast enough to allow the US to spend that much more than it produces.

Present trends show the US economy needing impossible amounts of foreign capital to keep its balance; therefore 'present trends' must change. They can change in either of two ways. The US can go into a recession, with companies investing less and households spending less. That will reduce imports. It is the sort of 'cure' that countries like Mexico and Brazil have gone through because the flow of international bank loans to them stopped and they had to use the dollars they would otherwise have spent on imports on paying interest to the banks.

If the US continues to increase its investment and spending at current rates, then the 'trends' will change another way. Sooner or later there will be a drastic crash in the value of the dollar. International capitalists will get to the point that they dare not hold their wealth in dollars any more, however high US interest rates are. Such a crash in the dollar will bring a recession in the US, but also, quite possibly much worse: it could wreck the entire system of international trade and finance, which is still based on the dollar being the one sort of money that everyone in the world will accept.

The dilemma is made worse by the fact that a lot of people in the US do not want foreign investment anyway. As Japanese, British and Dutch capitalists increase their stake in US industry, they are meeting the same sort of nationalist and populist backlash that English bankers suffered in the US in the 19th century, and Yankee multinationals throughout the world after 1945. A book entitled 'Buying into America' is in the best-seller lists. An opinion poll showed 40% of Americans want a complete ban on any further foreign investment. Among those who want foreign investment limited is Felix Rohatyn, who could become Secretary of the Treasury if the Democrats win the Presidential election in November.

The Democrats' strongest advocate of import controls, Richard Gephardt, is out of the running for the Presidency. But the trade bill now before Congress encodes a danger of future import controls. It would transfer a large part of trade policy from the President to Congress, and thus make it much more vulnerable to demands from hard-hit industries for protection.

The spiralling collapse of world trade which happened in the 1930s could yet be repeated. And, paradoxically, every month that the US economy continues looking relatively upbeat probably increases the chance of disaster. We may yet have Nigel Lawson's smirk wiped off his face.

Colin Foster





# SURVEY



Photo Paul Herrman

## Anti-Gay bigots rampage

"The thugs are going berserk" warned the headline of a recent issue of London's Capital Gay.

It wasn't a reference to the antics of bigoted Tories in the House of Commons, but an accurate description of the anti-gay attacks that have engulfed the community since Clause 28 was introduced.

As we always feared, Clause 28, which seeks to prevent local authorities and schools from promoting homosexuality as a valid alternative, has provided a justification for 'queer bashing' — an 'open season' on gays.

Recent incidents form a catalogue of violence made more sinister by the mainstream media's failure to report them.

\* Several rounds of bullets were fired from a revolver into a well-known, packed, London gay bar. Luckily no-one was killed.

\* Men armed with shotguns raided and robbed the Fallen Angel in Islington, forcing terrified customers onto the floor.

\* A bomb was discovered in Leeds, planted outside the venue of a 'Stop the Clause' benefit. Had it gone off it would have killed many.

\* A community centre in Milton Keynes due to hold a 'Stop the Clause' meeting was fire-bombed and individuals threatened.

\* The offices of 'Capital Gay' were fire bombed and destroyed.

\* Two gay actors from the Sweatshop Theatre company were attacked following a performance in Croydon.

\* A large gang of thugs attacked the queue at Heaven, London's top gay disco, leaving one man bleeding from stab wounds and others badly bruised.

\* A gang of over 30 queer-bashers threw bottles and bricks at the entrance of the Vauxhall Tavern. Luckily, the doorman had seen them coming and bolted the customers in.

\* Thugs raided a gay pub in Deptford knifing a man in the process.

In almost all of these incidents the thugs abused their victims, calling them 'queer' or 'poofahs'.

While these physical attacks go unreported the 'legitimate' legal attacks gather pace.

Two teenage boys were charged and found guilty of public order offences — their crime, kissing each other in the street. This is not the first time that the section of the 1986 Public Order Act designed to combat football hooliganism has been used against affectionate gay couples.

More recently a 'Stop the Clause' meeting was banned from public premises in Wolverhampton. The Council did not want to appear to promote homosexuality and risk breaking the new law. The Advice Bureau, Law Centre and Student Union also refused to offer premises in anticipation of the same.

The Government has claimed that it does not intend for homosexuals to be discriminated against or attacked in any way, but that appears to have been the result.

Some Tories, however, are more blatant. Lord Caithness has said that the Clause was aimed at dealing with, "the whole gamut of homosexuality, homosexual acts, homosexual relationships, even the abstract concept... in short every aspect of the way homosexuality manifests itself."

His colleague Nicholas Fairbairn MP has claimed that gay people are suffering from "psycho-pathological disorders"

and that our sexuality is a "psychological perversion".

The Tory leader in Wolverhampton has called for "medical treatment" of homosexuals and Rhodes Boyson MP peddles the old AIDS scare, claiming social acceptance of homosexuality would mean "death in one generation".

In a recent television debate he argued that "If we could wipe out homosexual practices, or if they (gays) withdraw totally from homosexual practices, then it (AIDS) would die out".

The lesbian and gay community has responded to these attacks in a determined way.

Each time we organise a show of strength, the numbers get bigger — 12,000 in London; 20,000 in Manchester in February; and upwards of 35,000 in London in April. The first ever Scottish lesbian and gay mass demonstration is planned for the end of May.

Campaigns have sprung up all over the country, involving many gay and 'straight' people who have never been active in politics before.

Because of the vague wording of Section 28, the real crunch will come when individuals, no doubt backed by right-wing money, take certain local authorities to court for not implementing the section.

Already many Labour Councils have pledged total opposition to the section and are prepared to fight anyone in the courts. Haringey council recently defeated right wing Tory calls for the section to be immediately implemented, with a surprising number of Tory councillors voting against their own right wing. It seems that even some Tories think the Clause is being abused by the rabid homophobes.

In principle many Labour Councils are in favour of non-implementation, but a negative result in the first court case could make them think again.

It is essential that Councils are monitored and pressurised into sticking to non-implementation. Local government workers and teachers who are directly affected by the section should be given full backing by their unions. Last month a Bradford teacher was removed from his position for 'coming out' to his pupils. It was only after members of the local NUT branch threatened strike action that he was hurriedly reinstated.

In the longer term the lesbian and gay movement must try and gain the initiative. Not only should we fight for the repeal and non-implementation of the section, we should also fight for equality before the law. We must call for the formal protection of our basic human rights, essentially to live and love as we please without fear of persecution.

Socialists and trade unionists should not see this as a gay issue which they support but do not involve themselves in. The campaigns are open to heterosexuals as well as gays, and anyway, this is an issue of human rights and thus affects us all.

David Mathews

## Solidarnosc revives

In his May Day speech Jaruzelski issued a warning. He said the government would not allow a return to the chaos and anarchy of 1980-1.

On 1 May the police used great brutality in dispersing the independent May Day demonstration. They went further than they have gone before. In Gdansk the police went into a church to try to get some Solidarnosc supporters. They were forced to withdraw by the reaction of the worshippers.

I think the government is unsure how to react. On Saturday 30 April they defused the steelworkers' strike at Stalowa Wola by granting their wage demands. They can try to split up the movement in this way. The problem is that the Nowa Huta steelworkers are not just putting demands for themselves, but demands for all the workers in Poland — an immediate pay rise, and a sliding scale of wages. They cannot defuse that movement by granting local wage rises.

And their economic margin for manoeuvre is very small. They are under pressure from the IMF. And trying to defuse strikes by local concessions can backfire on them. You can defuse one strike that way, but it encourages other workers.

The present strikes are partly the result of concessions which the regime made in early February, after it brought in its price rises (averaging 45%), in relation to a whole number of workers' protests. They allowed increases bigger than those laid down generally.

Today the Nowa Huta workers are demanding 12,000 zlotys compensation for the price rises for all workers — that is, double the amount agreed by the government. But 12,000 zlotys is the amount won in a number of workplaces by protests in early February.

There is a chain-reaction in the working class which is very dangerous for the regime.

These strikes reflect a revival of the influence of Solidarnosc in the factories — but a revival from the rank and file level.

The Solidarnosc leadership did not foresee these strikes at all. And it has been very slow in responding to them. The first to react were other organisations — the pacifist movement Liberty and Peace, the Polish Socialist Party, and the Confederation of Independent Poland — not the Solidarnosc leadership.

Even now, the statements of support for the Nowa Huta workers are personal statements from Lech Walesa, not collective statements from the Solidarnosc leadership, which has said nothing to

date.

The reason for this is clear from an interview with Adam Michnik published recently. Michnik says that the time for big mass movements has not come, that the most important thing that has happened in the Eastern Bloc since the October Revolution is Gorbachev's reforms, and that we must not make things difficult for Gorbachev.

This attitude is very strong in the national leadership of Solidarnosc, and had already provoked many protests inside the union in the months before these strikes.

Zbigniew Kowalewski spoke to Workers' Liberty on 2 May.

### Statement of the Nowa Huta strike committee

On 26 April, at 9am, we began a strike at the Lenin steelworks. We demand an increase in the compensation for the price rises [introduced by the Government from 1 February] to 12,000 zlotys for all workers in industry, in health services, and in education, and also for pensioners. [The Government allowed 6,000 zlotys compensation.] We also demand an automatic and permanent sliding scale of wages in line with price rises for the necessities of life.

The economic policy of the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland has brought millions of workers and their families to the brink of poverty. We refuse to tighten our belts under compulsion. Our faith in the reforms promised by the Party is exhausted.

By boycotting the November referendum [on 'economic reform', i.e. price rises], we paid back the authorities in kind. To their distrust of us we responded with distrust of them.

We demand an increase in the basic wage of 50% for all the workers in the works. Through this we want to regain our right to an eight hour working day, which we won a long time ago. We want our wages to guarantee us and our families a decent life and our deserved rest after work.

We will not give up on these demands, for they reflect the will of the workers who elected us as their representatives. Experience has shown once again that the delegates elected by the official steelworkers' union do not represent the interests of the workers as a whole.

Our negotiations with the works management are difficult, but we have high hopes of reaching an agreement. We declare that the attempt by the authorities to intimidate us with the threat of an intervention by the security forces is an expression of the arrogance of the administration...

We thank all those who are supporting us actively with their solidarity action. We thank you, Lech, for the support you sent us at the beginning of our struggle. Be with us, as we are with you, for better or for worse.

Nowa Huta, 27 April 1988, 10pm.

## Five months of the uprising

After five months, the uprising by Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza continues, although it is reaching a turning point. Israel's 'incursion' into Lebanon outraged Palestinians and provoked a revival in the uprising. In any case it is still a long way from falling away.

Israeli repression also continues. Over 170 Palestinians have been killed. Demands by far right Jewish settlers for the 'transfer' — that is, deportation — of masses of Palestinians are gaining wider support. Censorship of media coverage of the repression has been increased.

We reprint here an account by Adam Keller of the situation, from 'The Other Israel', which is published by the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Many of those involved in 'the Other Israel' are connected with the broad Progressive List for Peace group in Israel.

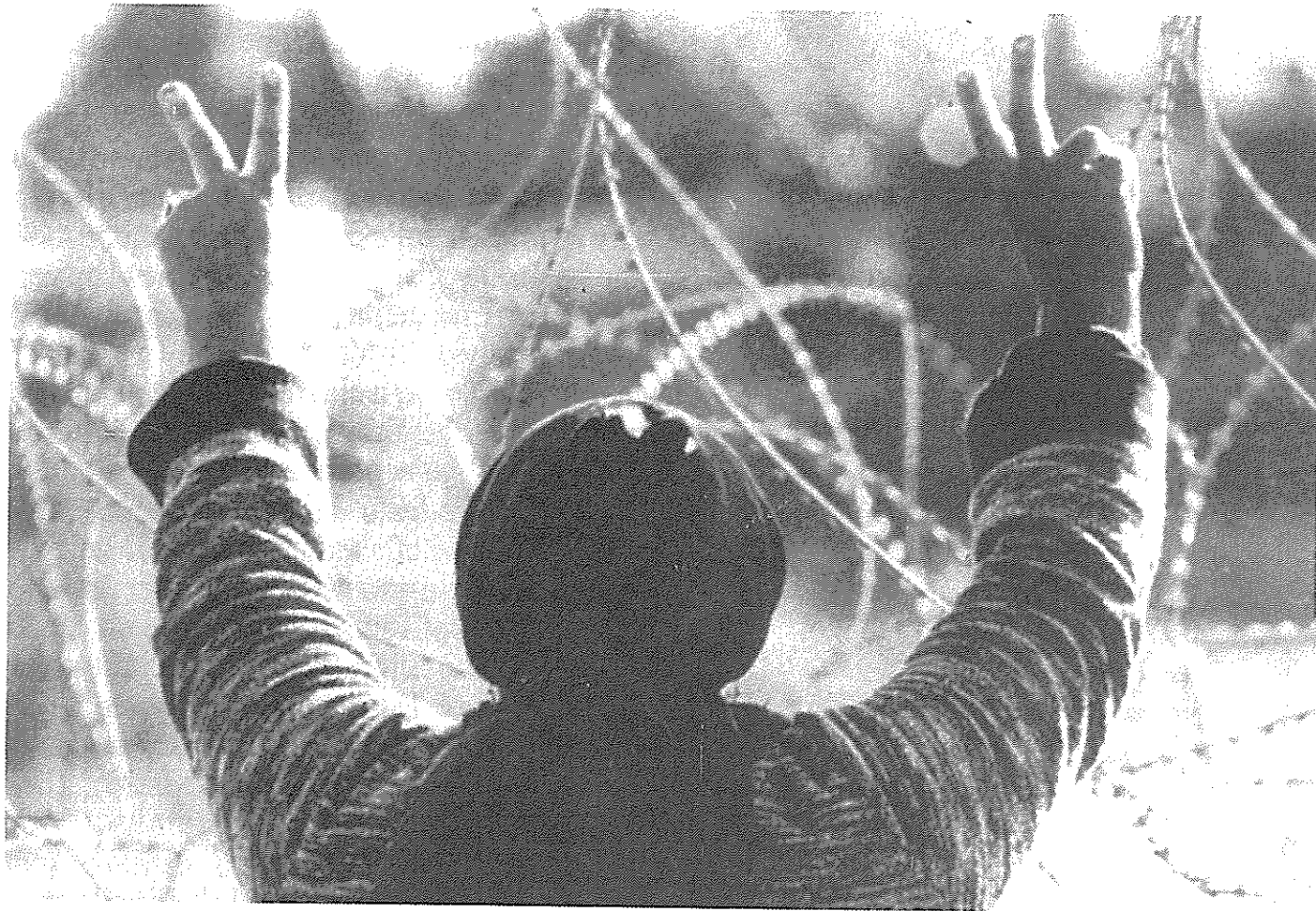
**In December 1987, the uprising started almost spontaneously; certainly nobody planned it in advance.**

Since the end of January, however, there has arisen a clandestine leadership. All the Palestinian factions which have a following in the occupied territories are represented in it: the supporters of Yasser Arafat and of his more radical rivals George Habash and Naif Hawatmeh, the Communists and the Muslim Fundamentalists. All of these are able to cooperate with each other and with the PLO leadership outside, and to agree upon a joint policy.

This 'United National Command of the Uprising' regularly issues proclamations, containing detailed instructions on when and how to demonstrate or strike. So far, 12 such weekly proclamations have been issued, printed on clandestine presses in hundreds of thousands of copies, distributed in all areas of the occupied territories — and obeyed by the entire population. In effect there are now two rival governments striving to control the Gaza Strip, West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The Israeli government has at its disposal incomparably more brute strength; the forces now stationed in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are several times bigger than those which sufficed, in 1967, to conquer these territories from the Egyptian and Jordanian armies.

For all of that, the State of Israel does not possess enough soldiers and policemen to garrison permanently each and every town, village and refugee camp in the occupied territories; yet in



practice, Israeli control of the territories is being fast reduced to those pieces of ground on which Israeli soldiers physically stand at a given moment — and there, too, they are often challenged by stone-throwing crowds.

The Israeli government lost most of the tentacles through which it was accustomed to reach into, and control, the Palestinian society. The fearsome network of spies and informers, through which the Israeli secret services used to uncover "subversive" groups, is no longer effective. The situation of open collaborators is untenable: two of them were killed; many others publicly renounced the weapons with which the military government had provided them, in order to reintegrate themselves into their communities.

Most Arab policemen in the territories resigned, despite all the efforts of the military government to dissuade them. Following the policemen, tax collectors resigned as well.

Civil disobedience is becoming widespread, in different forms: merchants' strikes, refusal to pay taxes, boycott of Israeli products, stoppage of work in Israel. In retaliation, Defence Minister Rabin announced a series of sweeping measures. The supply of gasoline to Arab stations in the occupied territories was stopped (to the stations owned by settlers; supply was continued); the telephone links between the territories and countries outside Israel were cut; to "trouble making" areas telephone lines were cut altogether, and so was electricity; licences for exports to Jordan are being denied to whole towns,

and permissions to go abroad are severely restricted; the sum of money which Palestinians are allowed to bring in from abroad is also drastically limited.

The government's repressive measures were escalated towards "Land Day", 30 March. For three days, the whole of the occupied territories were sealed up, and their inhabitants forbidden to travel to Israel or to cross the Jordan river bridges into Jordan; the whole of the Gaza Strip was placed under curfew; telephone lines were cut, to prevent the inhabitants from contacting the outside world or coordinating action with each other; the media were kept out, except for journalists "authorised by the army and accompanied by an army press liaison officer".

All of these measures did not prevent the population from again coming out and confronting the army. "Land Day" left four Palestinians dead, 45 wounded — and the Palestinians' spirit unbroken.

Measures still considered by the government include complete closure of the Jordan bridges, and altogether forbidding the workers from the territories to work in Israel. Such measures would, indeed, complete the siege of the Palestinian population; but they would also be felt by many Israeli employers and severely damage the Israeli economy on the whole.

In face of these — actual and projected — measures, the Palestinian society is developing ways of mutual help and solidarity, in order to share out scarce resources. As a matter of fact, the economically underdeveloped condition of the occupied territories makes it

easier for their inhabitants to resist the new measures. Donkeys are still around to replace the cars (paralysed by lack of gasoline); many villages are practically self-sufficient in basic foodstuffs; the clandestine leadership, in its 11th proclamation, called upon town dwellers, too, to raise chickens and rabbits and to plant vegetable gardens.

The Palestinians are setting up alternatives to the government services which no longer function. After the resignation of the policemen, government spokesmen predicted chaos in Palestinian society and the outbreak of unlimited crime; but in practice, neighbourhoods are effectively taking care of themselves through volunteer committees. The Palestinians also try to reopen schools and universities closed by the military government. (In January all educational institutes, from elementary schools up to universities, were closed for an indefinite period.)

At the same time, the direct violent confrontations between army and demonstrators continue. Defence Minister Rabin issued new directives, taking away many of the restrictions on the use of firearms — not only by soldiers but also by settlers. The death toll mounts daily, and many are the young Palestinians who will live out their lives as cripples.

With every passing day it becomes more clear that the state of Israel is facing the deepest crisis in its turbulent history.

The Israeli economy has already suffered grave damage from the uprising. The merchants' strike has denied the

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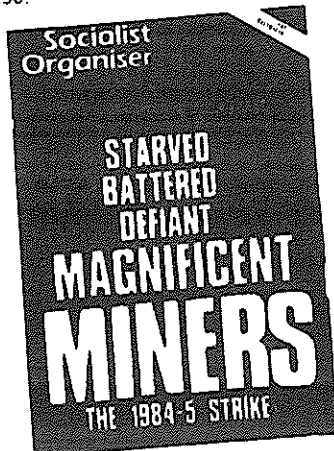
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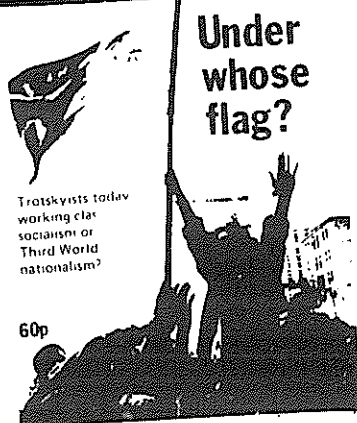
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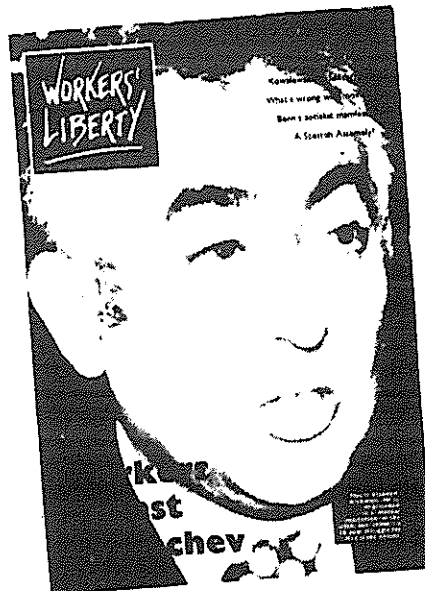
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market to Israeli merchandise; the prolonged absence of Palestinian workers, both through strikes and through the Israeli army's own curfews, has damaged Israeli industries and agriculture; daily reports of violence are driving tourists away from Israel; there are growing reports of an economic slump.

The Israeli political scene has never been so deeply divided, not even at the height of the Lebanon war. The Labor-Likud "Government of National Unity" was designed as a means of papering over the fissures which 1982 has opened in Israeli society; now, these fissures have re-appeared inside the government itself. The Labor Party has adopted the "Shultz Plan", uncritically and without reservation; the "Peace Now" movement followed suit, hoping to see in the Shultz initiative the beginning of a process which would lead Israel out of the occupied territories. For the same reason, the Likud and the extreme right furiously opposed Shultz, though Prime Minister Shamir, in Washington, very diplomatically succeeded in saying "no" without uttering the word explicitly.

The debate on Shultz manifested itself in public exchanges of sharp invective between the partners to what is still called "a Government of National Unity", and in two opposing mass rallies which, on two consecutive days, filled the municipality square of Tel-Aviv.

Yet the Likud-Labor divide — though the most visible to a casual observer — is not the only one, or necessarily the most important. Each of the two big parties is deeply divided within itself: the Labor Party is caught in the contradiction between its pretensions to be "a party of peace" and the daily acts of repression in the occupied territories, inspired and authorised by Labor's Minister Rabin.

The Likud appears more ideologically homogeneous, and the fierce struggle for control between its leaders Shamir, Levy and Sharon seems a mainly personal contest, between various shades of rampant nationalism; yet here, too, deep-rooted social forces are wrestling, and from time to time strange undercurrents and dissensions appear. Public opinion polls predict that, in the general elections scheduled for November — which may take place earlier — both of the big parties will lose voters to more radical parties of the left and the right.

The radicalisation and polarisation are even more strong and apparent among the youth. The Israeli school system, long dominated by the concept of "impartiality" and "non-politicisation" has become the battlefield of parties, movements and ideologies. Education Minister Yitzhak Navon could do little but legitimise this process, over which he has practically no control.

There is an unprecedented proliferation of new peace groups, expressing the moral outrage many previously not involved citizens feel as the Israeli army is thrust into the role of "Goliath" towards the Palestinian "Davids".





Photo: Kaveh Golestan, Reflex

# Iran-Iraq: a reactionary war on both sides

## The Third World's first total war

The Iran/Iraq war is now into its eighth year. It is a bloody barbarous and reactionary conflict, yet many on the left still hold illusions in Khomeini's reactionary regime and its 'anti-imperialism'. Clive Bradley looks at the issues.

The Gulf War began as long ago as September 1980. It has proved to be one of the most gruesome and barbarous episodes in the history of civilisation.

Recent newspaper headlines focused on skirmishes between American and Iranian military forces, and the cold-blooded American attack on an Iranian oil platform. Less publicity went to the Iraqi Kurds in the area of Halabja who suffered perhaps 4000 deaths as a result of an Iraqi attack that employed chemical weapons. The Kurds are already describing Halabja as 'our Hiroshima'.

The 'war of the cities', in which Iraqi and Iranian governments blitz each other's civilian populations with missile attacks goes on while the governments of foreign great powers have shed their usual crocodile tears. They, of course, supply the missiles.

The huge and growing American naval presence (backed, rather half-heartedly, by other Western governments like the British) adds another reactionary ingredient into the bubbling cauldron of wasted lives, mutilated bodies and devastated homes. That sections of the left internationally, like the British Socialist Workers Party, have as a result recently discovered a progressive element in the abomination of a regime enthroned in Tehran is a measure of the political tasks facing Marxists inside and outside Iran. All parties to this conflict are disgusting monstrosities — the Iraqi and Iranian regimes and their open and covert supporters like the US and the USSR.

The war began as a gambit by the Ba'thist regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Believing the Khomeini government to be weak following the revolution of 1979, particularly in the military sphere, Saddam Hussein abrogated a treaty signed with the Shah in 1975 concerning the Shatt al-Arab waterway, and invaded Iran. The objective of the Ba'th was to remove Khomeini, strike a blow at the spreading 'Islamic revolution', establish Iraq as the dominant power in the region, and fulfill some of the dreams of pan-Arab nationalism.

They miscalculated disastrously, and instead of a quick victory produced an eternal bloodthirsty standoff. The Gulf war has been the Third World's first 'total war' — deeply militarising both societies, inculcating ideologies of mind-numbing violence and resulting in terrible suffering. Estimated deaths include 300,000 Iranians and 100,000 Iraqis, perhaps more, with as many wounded. At least one and a half million people have been turned into refugees, mostly from the Iranian cities of Khuzestan.

The Iraqi regime is the indirect product of the 1958 revolution that overthrew the pro-British monarchy. The faction of the Ba'th party that took power in 1968 was the murderous opponent of the radical nationalist government of 1958. But the Iraq they rule over is very much the child of the revolution.

And the 'revolutionary' anti-imperialist

# The Islamic revival

Since the Iranian revolution in 1979 Islamic fundamentalism has been on the rise.

Old-style secular nationalists have been challenged and in some cases supplanted by Islamic militants.

Fundamentalists drove Israel out of Lebanon; some reckon it will be fundamentalists who will drive Israel out of the occupied territories. Fundamentalists killed Egypt's president Sadat. Fundamentalists, of course, are the dominant force fighting the USSR in Afghanistan.

But who are they? What do they represent? Are they a force for progress or reaction?

In fact the last decade has seen a *revival* of fundamentalism, rather than a birth, inspired largely by Khomeini. Khomeinism represents, at least in theory, a very definite political project, which is worth looking at.

Most Iranian Muslims are Shi'ites, as opposed to mainstream Sunnis. Often Shi'ism has been the sect adhered to by more dispossessed sections of Middle Eastern societies, and even in Iran where this is not so, Shi'ism is an ideology well tuned to movements of resistance and rebellion.

Shi'ism holds that no earthly government can claim any legitimacy until the return of the hidden 'twelfth Imam'. Therefore, resistance is not only justified, but necessary.

Khomeini in fact performed a neat trick with this ideology in order to justify the formation of an Islamic government. Such a government could rule in the name of God, through the section of society — the top clergy — who understood God's law. Thus the political programme of Khomeini was and is for rule by *theocracy*. In distinction to most political theories elsewhere, the Islamic republic does not vest sovereignty in 'the people' even theoretically.

Power is in the hands of 'God' — i.e. the mullahs. So all of society must be subordinated to God — i.e. the state.

Khomeini's political Shi'ism thus brought his thinking in line with the older tradition of the Muslim Brotherhood, or 'Ikhwan', founded in Sunni Egypt in 1928. They too aim for an Islamic government (and holy war, or *jihad*, to achieve it). And their political system too would be 'totalitarian'.

There are differences between militant Sunnism and militant Shi'ism: the latter has more of a tradition of revolt and 'fanaticism' to draw on. But the new fundamentalism seems to represent a convergence between the two.

The Ikhwan is a sizeable force in Egypt and Sudan, and progenitor of various fundamentalist groups in Egypt and Gaza today, has a clearly reactionary programme echoed today by Khomeini.

On women, they had a slogan 'communism equals atheism equals the liberation of women'. Muhammed al-Ghazali, an Ikhwan ideologist, advocated an economic system modelled on 'fascist Italy...Nazi Germany, and [that] still in force in Britain, (that is, state intervention).'

Politically opportunist, the Brotherhood supported first King Faruq (who said, with the agreement of the Brotherhood's leader, 'since the British will soon leave Egypt, our only enemy now is communism') and then Nasser, although later Nasser repressed them severely,

driving them underground.

Other fundamentalists are less inclined to 'realpolitik'. These words of Mustafa Chukri, a leader of one of Egypt's more prominent groups today, give something of an idea of their ideology.

"God be praised. He will prepare the land for the group of the just by provoking a war between the two great powers, Russia and America...The war is inevitable; they will destroy each other. God will thus have prepared the land for the Islamic state and the society that follows the right path. Following the destruction of the two great powers in the Third World War, the forces of the Muslim nation will be about equal in number to those of its enemies. It is then that the true Jihad will start." (quoted in Ghali Shoukri, 'Portrait of a President', p.296.)

To understand the resurgence of this fundamentalism, it is necessary to understand the failure of secular nationalism.

The post-war period saw a great rise of nationalist movements across the Middle East. Nasser in Egypt, Mossadeg in Iran, represented this new assertiveness of rising bourgeois classes.

In different ways, these movements came to grief. Nasserism, the dominant form of Arab radicalism in the late 'fifties and 'sixties, was smashed to bits in the June war of 1967. A rightward shift was accelerated, leading eventually to Sadat's 'opening' — the warm encouragement of foreign capital and trade.

Mossadeg, of course, was toppled by the CIA. And secular nationalists failed to mount a challenge to the Shah. In particular, the Communist (Tudeh) Party discredited itself by its role in that period.

Disillusionment with the secular nationalist dream was accompanied by huge social and economic changes, exacerbated by the 'oil economy' of the 1970s. Poverty went hand in hand not only with wealth, but with *Western* symbols of it. The 'Coca Cola-isation' of society took place.

The traditional nationalists had no answer at all to the terrible sufferings endured by the masses of the Middle East. Islam seemed to be an answer — a rejection both of the West and of the East ('communism') in the name of a *return to the past*. The symbols of the radical anti-imperialist recent past were in tatters. But the symbols of Islam were intact.

Lebanon is the clearest example of this process of Islamisation through despair. Since the mid-'70s, Lebanese society has undergone unbelievable torment, indeed 'society' barely existed for whole periods. Instead there was a kind of social atrophy. The Shi'ite youth have literally nothing to lose. Islam — which includes a commitment to martyrdom — gives them hope.

It is worth adding that in some cases — Egypt, the Israeli-occupied territories — the fundamentalists were 'used' by the authorities, in the early stages, and then got out of control: Sadat helped his own assassins on their way. After a period of official patronage as a counterweight to the left, they developed their own dynamic. In the case of Egypt, this has forced the government to introduce more and more 'Islamic laws' — bad news for everyone, but especially the large Christian minority.

posture of Saddam Hussein's regime — expressed through widespread nationalisations, including of the vital oil industry, anti-Americanism and good relations with the USSR — encouraged the Communist Party (who missed their chance in 1958 despite extremely favourable conditions) to join in the government until predictably it turned on them. Like its counterpart across the border, the Iraqi regime draws its legitimacy from a revolution and a revolutionary tradition.

By 1980 the Ba'th had established a totalitarian system of a scale unprecedented in the Third World. One million people, out of a population of 13-15 million, were party members. The whole of society was policed with Stalinist-type ruthlessness. Opposition was all but obliterated — except amongst the viciously persecuted Kurdish minority, and among religious sectors.

It was the threat of Khomeini's revolution influencing the Shi'ite Muslims in Iraq — believed to be a majority of the population — that particularly gave political urgency to Saddam's military gamble.

Iran's recent history is better known. Khomeini came to power in a revolution that had mobilised virtually the whole of society against the Shah. But upon taking power Khomeini and the dominant clerical militants set about creating an 'Islamic republic' through systematic suppression of women, national and religious minorities, the working class, the left and 'counter-revolutionaries' of all stripes. The Islamic republic turned out to be the most barbaric government of recent world history: a government of reactionary clerics whose political theory disclaims any rights to popular sovereignty, in the name of the rule of God — through those who understand his law.

For the Mullahs, the Gulf war was a wonderful, indeed God-sent opportunity. It provided further excuses for crushing all opposition, and every escalation in the war has given yet more. Its Revolutionary Guards — swelled by patriotic youth — have been an effective weapon of repression. If the use of chemical weapons has been Iraq's notable contribution to the escalating slaughter, Iran's has been the 'human wave' tactic. 'Volunteers', usually young, sometimes as young as 13, are sent all but defenceless into battle. In the unsuccessful assault on Basra in 1982, for example, Iran lost, in two attempts, 100,000 men and boys.

Yet both regimes have managed to survive seven and a half years of it, at first sight an astonishing achievement.

The Gulf is by far the largest importer of arms in the world. Over the period 1979-85, Iraq imported \$28.2 billion worth of weapons, and Iran \$8.5 billion. According to the American Disarmament and Arms Control Agency, between 1981 and 1985 the Middle East as a whole accounted for 49% of all world arms imports, of which the Gulf accounts for the largest chunk.

Iraq's main supplies have been the USSR and France (especially since 1982),



**Iraqi dead. Photo: Kaveh Golestan, Reflex**

while Iran's have included China, Israel, India, Czechoslovakia — and so on. Many countries have supplied both sides, including the USSR, China and Britain. Most Iranian arms, incidentally, are US-made, supplied (on the whole) indirectly.

But despite rich pickings from the war itself, foreign profiteers can look forward with enthusiasm to post-war reconstruction. According to one expert, the Iranian import market between now and the year 2000, assuming an end to the war soon, would be \$200,000 million. Both countries are rich in oil, and Iran has many other natural resources and a large population (45 or so million as against Iraq's 13-15 million).

From the point of view of the great powers, therefore, there is a problem. They want the war to end, both to take advantage of future markets and put an end to its potentially destabilising effects on the region. But it is not so easy in practice.

Neither side has proved able to win the war, but neither can afford to lose it. Nor could they easily accept 'status quo ante bellum'. Iraq has proved willing to accept UN Resolution 598 which calls for a comprehensive ceasefire and peace negotiations, and an arms embargo of the party that refuses; Iran has not accepted it, but as an arms embargo is impossible to enforce, nothing has been done about it. Iraq's acceptance of 598 is pretty meaningless under these circumstances, as the people of Halabja — or for that matter

refugees from Tehran and other Iranian cities bombed by Iraq — would bear witness.

Moreover, although the US and other superpowers want the war to end, a peace with victors would cause difficulties, especially if the victor was Khomeini. They are anxious to prevent the Islamic revolution disturbing their friends in the Arab Gulf states and Saudi Arabia. Thus the basic US policy has been *containment*. It is to this end that US ships were dispatched to the Gulf last summer.

The 'tanker war', initiated by Iraq, threatened oil exports in general; when it began to threaten Kuwaiti oil exports, the US decided something had to be done. *Import* trade routes are just as important, it should not be forgotten, as the region currently absorbs \$60,000 million worth of goods a year, of which half comes from the EEC and a third from the United States.

So the presence of the United States fleet in the Gulf is not for the objective of Khomeini's overthrow, as many on the left have believed. Of course Reagan detests Khomeini, but the US is not at present in a position to remove him. Direct colonial conquest or a Vietnam-style war would be unthinkable costly in a country as large, as populated and as relatively advanced as Iran — unthinkable politically and economically. To replace Khomeini, the US needs an alliance with a domestic political force. At the moment there is no one to ally with: *imperialism has no alternative to Khomeini*.

Who are its potential allies? Ali Pahlavi,

nephew of the deceased former Shah told Newsweek magazine (March 16, 1987): "it is in American interests to continue to supply spare parts to Iran — not to get the hostages out of Lebanon, but to support the only institution in Iran that is still on the side of the free world: the Iranian armed forces."

The best option for the US is to woo elements within the *existing* regime. Indeed it has no other option. The most likely alternative to Khomeini at the moment would be worse, for the US point of view — more fundamentalist, more anti-American. The best policy in the meantime is to maintain the stalemate, putting pressure on Iran to accept Resolution 598. This is what is going on now in the Gulf. Anyone who thinks it is now, or is likely to be, an all-out US-Iranian war has completely misunderstood the dynamics of the situation.

Within the policy of containment, the US is — for the moment — giving support to Iraq, and has put pressure on its allies (such as Israel) to do likewise. But the US knows perfectly well that an Iraqi victory is going to require more than that. An Iraqi victory is not Reagan's priority.

Within Iran, 'anti-imperialism' is the rhetoric under cover of which the regime attacks the left — who are identified with such imperialist (i.e., Western) ideas as communism. From the beginning of the revolution this was so: the US embassy 'hostage crisis' that began in late 1979 was an 'anti-imperialist' excuse to arm more



revolutionary guards and *physically* attack various 'pro-imperialist' leftists. Those sections of the left that supported this 'anti-imperialism' didn't escape the noose.

In response to US sabre-rattling, Khomeini called on more young Iranians to join up and be martyrs in the war with Satan. There are severe punishments for draft-dodgers, indicating that draft dodging is a problem. While many Iranian youth continue to be inspired by the Islamic revolution, others are less than enthusiastic. Last October Khomeini called for 500,000 new volunteers and others to the front, but less than half that number turned up.

Iranian society seems war weary. According to one Iranian professor, "The people never talk about politics anymore. They are simply tired. Their energy is drained by waiting in long lines all day to get the simplest things... Whether they are monarchists or leftists or whatever, they are all irrelevant to the day-to-day problems of life in Iran." (Quoted in MERIP no. 148, p.18).

There have been some strikes against the war's effects, nevertheless. In 1984, for example, various factories went on strike against the forced contribution of part of workers' wages to the war. In fact there have been widespread but localised strikes throughout the war period,

sometimes indicating the activity of underground militant workers' committees. This movement was powerful enough to force a government retreat on an anti-labour bill in 1983. May Day 1985 saw so many strikes that half way through the morning the government declared it a holiday.

The national minorities continue to fight, but the Kurdish struggle still suffers from one of its major long-term problems: Iraq's Kurds look to Iran for assistance. The atrocity in Halabja was in retaliation for a successful joint offensive by Iraqi Kurds and Iran.

In Iraq the opposition, aside from the Kurds, is weak. The Communist Party is dead. The Shi-ite movement is difficult to assess.

In 1984, after witnessing the carnage of the battlefields, an Iranian doctor said: "I have seen young boys burned alive. I have seen Iranian and Iraqi boys tearing each other literally with their nails and teeth. It is raging hate against raging hate."

This bitter chauvinism is the fruit of an inhuman war. A socialist policy is one aimed to end it. And the only way to end it meaningfully is to destroy the two regimes who unleashed it. Saddam Hussein and Khomeini must be overthrown.

Of course we must oppose the US force in the Gulf, and call for the withdrawal of it and other imperialist ships. Indeed a

withdrawal of the Great Satan's ships would help Khomeini's victims by removing one of his shibboleths.

But anyone who concludes that as a result of a US naval presence there is grounds for supporting Iran is a traitor to socialism. Our priority must be solidarity with the workers and oppressed masses in Iran and Iraq, not solidarity with their oppressors. And this is not the 'politics of neutrality' as the Socialist Workers Party would have it.

There is a dreadful logic to the SWP's argument. If you support Iran now, how can you justify ever having opposed it? The force of the logic drives Socialist Worker (23 April 1988) to give a list of all the aspects of the war 'started' by Iraq. But as Ramy Nima puts it: "Clausewitz's maxim that war is a continuation of politics by other means is precisely the case here. Therefore, the question as to which of the two reactionary regimes drew the first gun has little significance." (The Wrath of Allah", p.126).

Khomeini's war is as reactionary now as when it started — as reactionary and chauvinistic as Iraq's and as contrary to the interests of socialism.

- US out of the Gulf!
- Overthrow Saddam Hussein and Khomeini!
- Solidarity with the oppressed masses of Iran and Iraq.

## The British left and the war

A statement from Iranian socialists

Revolutions are the best test for revolutionary politics and for those claiming to be revolutionaries. The Iranian Revolution of February 1979 was no exception. Many groups on the British Left would rather forget what they said and did in the few years that it took for the "anti-imperialist" regime of the mullahs to crush it.

Let us not forget that there were those who were expecting this regime to transform itself into a workers' and peasants' government, hailing its militancy against imperialism, supporting it in the war against Iraq while conveniently covering up the brutal repression against Iranian workers, peasants, national minorities, women, students, and in short, every section of the revolutionary mass movement.

The intervention of American imperialism in the Gulf has once again brought out positions within the British Left which, to say the least, leave a lot to be desired. Basically these centre around an inability to distinguish between the necessary condemnation of imperialism and avoidance of any moral, material or political support to the counter-revolutionary regime of the mullahs in Iran.

The justification for this confusion runs something like this: if imperialism was to get away with this intervention it would damage the cause of revolution internationally and hence despite whatever disagreement we might have with the Iranian regime, we must support it in its conflict with imperialism, and fight for its victory.

Just to give some examples:

*Socialist Action* wants to prevent the imperialists from "dealing blows against Iran" (against "Iran"!?) and would, therefore, "defend Iran against imperialist attacks".

And, of course, this "Iran" turns out to be no other than the Iranian regime, the very same regime which they now belatedly have to admit is "the butcher of the Iranian Revolution" and nothing less than "the main prop of capitalism".

Inside the Iranian Left, this form of reasoning is now a text-book case of the worst kind of opportunism. There were those within the Iranian Left who argued for the strengthening of the Pasdaran Army because it was supposed to be an "anti-imperialist" force while the regular army was considered to be "pro-Western". They even supported the call by the mullahs for "heavy armaments for the Pasdaran Army!" They thought this would weaken the chances for the return of imperialism. It did not occur to them that the Pasdaran Army was the main prop of reaction while the rank and file of the regular army had been recruited to the side of the Revolution.

*Socialist Worker*, for more or less the same reasons, would thus "be happy if Iran gives the Americans a bloody nose"; because, "every struggle for liberation from Nicaragua to Palestine will see its enemy weakened". They seem to forget that there is also a struggle for liberation in Iran. A "bloody nose" for the Reagans of this world would certainly bring a smile to the faces of us all, but any strengthening of the Iranian regime would doom any chances of progress in the entire region.

There are other examples of such "revolutionary" positions. What they all lack is any regard for the actual and current class struggle in Iran itself. With diatribes such as "we here in Britain must fight the main enemy", the inability to take a proletarian revolutionary stand against Khomeini's regime is theorised. As if imperialism is not everywhere

the main enemy! And as if nobody knows that it is this very same regime which by crushing the Iranian revolution has allowed the imperialists to come to the Gulf. It is thus assumed that because of some mysterious objective logic the very same force which has colluded with imperialism in crushing the Iranian revolution can now be transformed into a force capable of inflicting mortal blows against imperialism.

The fact that the best way to oppose imperialism is to oppose both the Iranian regime and the imperialist intervention seems to be beyond comprehension. According to all such opportunist reasonings, all the toilers and oppressed in Iran must also forget for a while that their exploitation is being organised by this capitalist regime and hope for the situation in which their oppressors have given "a bloody nose" to the "Americans".

It is sufficient for one imperialist gunboat to appear anywhere on the scene for our "internationalists" to forget class struggle.

It does not occur to these groups that the Islamic regime in Iran represents one of the most vicious counter-revolutions seen in recent history, and that the presence of the Western imperialists in the Gulf is also providing it with further pretexts for the suppression of all opposition to itself and its reactionary war with Iran. It is simply forgotten that while any victory scored by the Iranian regime — which in fact cannot go beyond blowing holes in a few tankers — may or may not seriously weaken imperialism, it would certainly strengthen reaction in the entire region. It seems beyond their comprehension that you can have imperialism and reactionary "anti-imperialism". Nothing can strengthen imperialism more than a victory for the reactionary, anti-democratic and thoroughly obscurantist anti-Westernism of Khomeini's regime.

*The Supporters of "Socialism & Revolution" in London, the organ of the Regroupment for the Union of Revolutionary Socialists in Iran.*





Riot police under attack, May '68

# May '68: when 8 million workers took capitalism by the throat

France in May 1968 gives us our best picture of what a socialist revolution will be like in the most developed

capitalist countries. Martin Thomas describes what happened, and discusses some of the lessons.

It began, like many other revolutionary movements, over something small. In March 1967 students at Nanterre, a bleak new campus on the outskirts of Paris, started a campaign for the right to visit each others' rooms after 11pm.

The campaign grumbled along. It drew in other issues — overcrowding, and the content of courses. On 2 May 1968 the exasperated administration shut down the campus.

On Friday 3 May the Nanterre activists went to the Sorbonne, in the centre of Paris, for a protest meeting. There were rumours that fascists would attack the meeting. These fascists had set fire to the national students' union (UNEF) office at the Sorbonne the previous day. In the early '60s, towards the end of France's war in Algeria, there had been many violent clashes between extreme right-wingers and the left in the university district.

The students prepared to defend themselves. The university authorities panicked and called in the CRS riot police. As 500 students were taken away in police vans, hundreds of others rallied, threw bottles at the vans, and fought the police. The police occupied the Sorbonne.

Student radicalism had been on the increase before May. The Vietnam war had drawn many students into activity: the US had started bombing North Vietnam in 1965, and January 1968 saw a spectacular counter-offensive by the North Vietnamese and NLF. There had been big student struggles in the US, Britain, West Germany, Italy and Spain. In 1965-6 the French Union of Communist Students had expelled two dissident factions, which became the Trotskyist Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire and the Maoist UJC-ml.

But these were small shifts after 20 years of isolation, marginalisation and attrition for the revolutionary left. The JCR, the most prominent group of the far left in 1968, had only 300 members. Only one left group — Voix Ouvrière (now Lutte Ouvrière) — had the resources to produce a weekly paper. The whole of the revolutionary left — Maoists, anarchists, Trotskyists, the lot — numbered perhaps 3,000, including unorganised sympathisers.

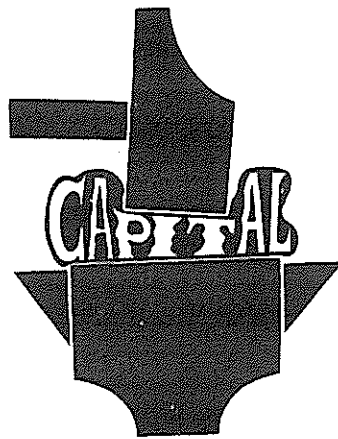
Those 3,000 were disproportionately concentrated in places like the Sorbonne. UNEF, the national students' union, was led by a member of the PSU (Unified Socialist Party), a leftist split-off from the then-moribund Socialist Party, with about 10,000 members. UNEF organised 50,000 out of France's 540,000 university students — a decline since 1960, when it had organised 100,000 out of 200,000.

The police raid on the Sorbonne galvanised many more students than just the left-wing activists. On the night of 3-4 May UNEF and the junior lecturers' union SNESup (led by a Maoist) called their members out on strike. They demanded the re-opening of the Sorbonne, the withdrawal of the police, and the release of the arrested students.

The following week, 6-11 May, thousands of students took to the streets of Paris. On Monday 6th 25 to 30,000 students marched and fought the police. On Tuesday 7th, 50,000 demonstrated.

On Thursday 9th 5,000 assembled for a big meeting to discuss the campaign. The Maoist UJC-ml proposed that the revolutionary students should scatter to the factories in order to "serve the people". A would-be Trotskyist group, the OCI, argued that the meeting should pass a resolution demanding that the leaders of the trade unions call a general strike.

The activists from Nanterre — led by Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who thought of himself as a sort of anarchist — and the JCR argued that the best way to create worker-student unity was in struggle. The students must develop their own battle against the state as audaciously as possi-



"The general strike had a revolutionary logic whatever its initial demands"

ble.

Voix Ouvrière reported the debate: "should the movement address itself directly to the workers, as Cohn-Bendit proposed, even if that means risking confrontation with the political and trade-union bureaucracies who lead them? Or should the students put themselves 'at the service of the workers' as the representative of the UJC-ml said? Or should they pass a resolution demanding [the CGT leaders] launch a general strike, as a CGT militant, apparently influenced by the OCI, suggested?"

A school student reported on plans for a strike in the secondary schools, and another speaker called for the extension of the network of Action Committees which had begun to develop in the different districts of Paris.

The next day, Friday 10th, 20 to 30,000

students assembled for yet another demonstration. They wanted to continue the battle; no-one quite knew how. After circling aimlessly for a couple of hours, the demonstration arrived near the Sorbonne. Observing the ranks of riot police all round them, the demonstrators spontaneously built barricades. Members of the CP and OCI denounced this "adventurism", and tried to lead people away; but the majority stayed at the barricades.

At 2am the police attacked the barricades. They used tear gas and CS gas. They smashed into houses in order to seize students who fled when their barricades were breached, and batoned everyone in sight. The students fought back bravely. Battles continued until 6am.

Elsewhere, in 1968 and the years around then, such battles between students and police would find the mass of the population uncomprehending and hostile to the students. But in Paris on the 'Night of the Barricades', 10-11 May, most people saw the students as bravely resisting arbitrary brutality from a government which was unresponsive to reasonable demands. An opinion poll showed that four-fifths of the people of Paris supported the students.

The students were overwhelmingly middle-class. Only 10% of them came from manual working-class families. The Communist Party, which maintained a jealous monopoly over left-wing politics in the working class and beat up student agitators at factory gates, was hostile to the student leftists. CP leader Georges Marchais wrote on 3 May:

"Small left-wing groups...have joined up in what they call the 'Nanterre movement of 22 March', led by the German anarchist Cohn-Bendit. Not satisfied with the agitation they are fomenting among students — which...invites fascist provocation — these pseudo-revolutionaries are now presuming to give lessons to the labour movement. They are more and more often to be found at the factory gates...These false revolutionaries must be energetically unmasked, because in actual fact they are serving the interests of the Gaullist regime and the great capitalist monopolies..."

"For the most part they are the sons of rich bourgeois who despise students of working-class origin and will quickly turn off their revolutionary ardour and go back to manage daddy's firm..."

After 10-11 May the CP realised that it had to change its tone. The CP-led union federation, the CGT, joined with other trade unions in calling a one-day general strike for 13 May. "Public opinion", they declared, "has been shattered by the ferocious police repression which has been unleashed against the students and academics in the Latin Quarter".

Even de Gaulle's prime minister, Georges Pompidou, felt obliged to say that he was "inspired by a profound sympathy with the students". He agreed to withdraw the police from the Sorbonne and reopen it, and said that appeals for amnesty from the arrested students would be considered.

It was too late. The students swarmed back into the Sorbonne and, for the next month, turned it into a non-stop festival of revolutionary and utopian debates. Many young workers would join these debates.

On Monday 13th, one million workers and students filled the streets of Paris. There were big demonstrations in other cities, too.

The unions' call for a one-day general strike had been less dramatic than a similar call would be in Britain. France's unions, with much weaker workplace organisation but much stronger legal protections against employers' victimisation than Britain's, had long used protest strikes by minorities as a form of struggle.

France had (and has) three main trade union federations, defined politically. The CGT, dominated by the Communist Party, was by far the strongest in big factories. The CFDT was an ex-Catholic federation which had recently (in 1964) broken its links with the Church; in 1968 it was often more sympathetic to the students than the CGT was. The PSU was strong in it. FO (Force Ouvrière) had originated as a cold-war split from the CGT, and was mostly right-wing; but in some areas it was led by leftists excluded from the CGT by its Stalinist leaders.

The CGT claimed 1,500,000 members, the CFDT 800,000, FO 450,000, and other union groups about 400,000, giving a total of about 20% of the workforce unionised. In fact, most of France's big factories had only about 10% of the workers in trade unions. France's labour law enabled unions to win recognition and to establish 'shop stewards' or delegates (elected by all workers, union and non-union alike, from lists proposed by the unions) even with such tiny memberships.

The CGT and the CFDT had called a national protest strike over social security and unemployment only six months earlier, on 13 December 1967, and only a scattering of workers had responded. No doubt the union leaders hoped that the action on 13 May would let off steam and then things would return to normal. They got more than they bargained for.

The next day, Tuesday 14th, the workers of Sud-Aviation in Nantes occupied their factory, shut the manager in his office, and deafened him by repeatedly playing a record of the Internationale. The occupation was called by the established union leaders in the factory — one of the FO leaders there was a Trotskyist, a member of the OCI — and was based on demands which had been in dispute before May: full pay for shorter hours, no sackings, a wage rise, and conversion of casual workers to full status.

On Wednesday 15th, a number of other workplaces were occupied. The most important was the Renault car factory at Cleon. It had only had a turnout of 40% or so for the strike on the 13th. The CGT and CFDT had scheduled a lightning protest stoppage over the government's social security policy for the 15th. A group of some 200 young workers took over and transformed the action into an indefinite

occupation. There were no precise demands. Posters round the occupied factory declared: "United we shall win", "Trade union freedom", "Give us the time to live!", "The left to power", "Popular government".

On Thursday 16th the biggest Renault factory, at Billancourt near Paris, was occupied. The action started in two sections where an anarchist and some members of Voix Ouvrière were influential. The CGT hesitated for three hours, as the strike spread through the huge factory, before swinging behind it.

A set of demands was formulated for all the Renault factories: reduction of the work week to 40 hours without loss of pay, an increased minimum wage, earlier retirement, more holidays, repeal of the government's latest social-security decrees and more trade union rights. These were mainly demands which the unions had been pressing for years without getting any response from the bosses.

By the end of the week some two million workers were on strike. A general strike was under way. The trade unions supported the strike movement, though they never actually called an indefinite general strike. The Action Committees spread; by the end of May there would be 460 in the Paris area alone. Some concentrated on revolutionary propaganda, some on organising refuse collection and food supplies. They partly did what the revolutionary organisations could not do because of their small size.

Individual students and individual workers — especially young workers — joined efforts in Action Committees. But links between the student movement and the workers' movement remained difficult. On Thursday 16th, and again on Friday 17th, some thousands of students

marched from the centre of Paris to Renault Billancourt. The CP-dominated union leadership at Billancourt had already limited participation in the factory occupation to the union-activist minority of the workers, and now they locked the gates against the students. The union leaders explained to the workers that it was necessary to protect the machinery from being smashed up by the students. Only a few younger workers came out to talk to the students, or held hesitant conversations through one of the locked gates at the back of the factory.

But the general strike, which paralysed all the ordinary workings of the capitalist economy, had a revolutionary logic whatever its initial demands. And this was soon recognised on all sides. On 16 May the Sorbonne Occupation Committee suggested a list of demands beginning "Occupy the factories! Power to the workers' councils!" On 18 May the Communist Party declared: "It is time to get rid of the government and to promote an authentic democracy capable of opening a path to socialism...It is time to envisage the creation of a popular government of democratic unity". A Trotskyist magazine commented acidly: "but who could call for non-popular government?...All anyone knows about such a government is that the Communists are to participate in it, as in 1945."

On 19 May Pierre Mendes-France, who had been a Radical prime minister in 1954-5 but was now a member of the leftish PUS, proposed himself as a replacement for de Gaulle. On 21 May the Trotskyist JCR explained: "the power we want is not that of a left-wing government taking over from a right-wing government. The power we want has nothing to do with parliamentary combinations of



Art students produce anti-de-Gaulle posters



bourgeois and reformist politicians. The power we want should create the direct democracy of socialism, based on the authority of local committees in the enterprises and in the neighbourhoods. The power we want should emanate from strike committees and from workers' and students' action committees".

The Nanterre student activists, in a leaflet of the same date, addressed themselves to workers: "You are asking for a minimum wage of 1,000 francs in the Paris area, retirement at sixty, a 40-hour week for 48 hours' pay. These are long-standing and just demands: nevertheless they seem to be out of context with our aims.

"Yet you have gone on to occupy factories, take your managers hostage, strike without warning... These struggles are even more radical than our official aims, because they go further than simply seeking improvements for the worker within the capitalist system, they imply the destruction of that system... The form that your struggle has taken offers us students the model for true socialist activity: the appropriation of the means of production and of decision-making power by the workers".

Many Action Committees adapted the JCR's text for their own leaflets. A leaflet of 24 May signed by several Action Committees declared: "Let us prepare today the power of tomorrow (direct food supplies, the organisation of public services: transport, information, housing, etc.)... For the abolition of the employers, for workers' power!"

De Gaulle responded on 19 May by declaring "La reforme, oui; le chienlit, non" (reform, yes; shitting in the bed, no), and on 24 May by announcing a referendum on his reform plans. It was no good. The strike grew. On Friday 17 May there were about two million workers on strike; on Monday 20th, about six million; by Friday 24th, and until the end of May, about ten million were reported on strike.

Careful calculations have indicated that the peak number on strike was six to eight million rather than ten million. But it was by far the biggest general strike in history. France's general strike in 1936, and Britain's in 1926, mobilised far fewer workers — about two million in each case.

For each worker who had been willing before May to take the minimal step of joining a trade union, three would now go so far as to join a general strike. All large-scale industry was shut down. Power workers continued to supply electricity only to homes. Chorus girls and other staff at the Folies Bergeres music hall went on strike, the Cannes Film Festival was shut down in solidarity with the strike movement, and the headquarters of the employers' federation was occupied by junior managers.

A Central Strike Committee took control of the city of Nantes for a week, from 26 to 31 May, monitoring traffic, food supplies, and petrol distribution. On the night of 24-25 May, another big demonstration in Paris led to the fiercest street-fighting yet, and the Stock Ex-

change was set on fire.

On Monday 27 May the union leaders emerged from talks with the government and the employers with the 'Grenelle Agreement' — a 30% increase in the national minimum wage, a 10% rise in all private sector wages, a cut in the working week of one or two hours, and concessions on social security, union rights in workplaces, etc. CGT leader Georges Séguin hurried to the CP's greatest industrial fortress, Renault Billancourt, to sell this deal. Sensing the mood of the workers, he avoided a direct call for a return to work; he presented the results of his negotiations as positively as he could and told the workers they must decide.

The workers boomed and whistled.

The same morning, many other factories rejected the Grenelle deal. The strike continued. Clearly the working class



## "The working class wanted more than economic concessions of the usual sort"

wanted more than economic concessions of the usual sort.

By spreading the sort of local workers' power that had been created in Nantes, linking together the local workers' committees into a national congress of workers' councils to underpin a workers' government, and organising workers' militias to fight off the counter-revolutionaries, the movement could indeed have gone further. It could have overthrown capitalism. But those who had some idea of what to do, because they had studied such matters — the Trotskyists — did not have the strength and the roots in the working class to organise it; and the group which did have the strength, the Communist Party, did not want to organise a revolution.

On 27 May UNEF, the leftist PSU and the ex-Catholic union federation CFDT

staged a 50,000 strong rally. The PSU had called for "Workers' power, peasants' power, student power", and the CFDT leader Andre Barjonet declared at the 27 May meeting that "Today, revolution is possible". But the PSU version of "workers' power" comprised only a say for workers in the running of workplaces, "the extension of the public sector", and "workers' management" of social security. The 27 May rally functioned in fact as a platform for Mendes-France's aspirations to replace de Gaulle. The next day, 28 May, another veteran minister from the 1950s, Francois Mitterrand, proposed himself for President, with Mendes-France as prime minister.

On Wednesday 29 May half a million workers marched in a huge CGT demonstration through Paris. They chanted "Adieu de Gaulle" (Goodbye, de Gaulle), and "Dix ans, ça suffit" (Ten years is enough; it was ten years since de Gaulle had come to power in 1958). The revolutionaries were unable to intervene effectively. The national students' union UNEF stupidly boycotted the demonstration on the grounds that the CGT had refused to support the Nanterre student leader Cohn-Bendit, who had been deported by the government. (He was not a French citizen).

How was the strike movement to replace de Gaulle by a "popular government"? The CP wasn't saying, and no wonder. General strikes can force quick, limited concessions or, if they continue, they can generate the power of workers' councils, emerging to take the place of capitalism's paralysed mechanisms. They are not a good means of changing parliamentary governments.

De Gaulle understood that. The next day, Thursday 30th, he called off the referendum and announced that there would be general elections of the National Assembly in June. He called for 'civic action' against the revolutionaries. Over half a million people joined a pro-Gaullist demonstration in Paris, chanting "Back to work!", "Clean out the Sorbonne!", "We are the majority!" Some cried "Cohn-Bendit to Dachau!" and "Mitterrand to the firing squad!"

While the CP proudly hailed the election called by de Gaulle as a victory for the CP, the revolutionaries protested about the "election blackmail". The Trotskyist Voix Ouvrière wrote: "What we don't get from striking we won't get from the elections... We must not let go of what we've got just to clutch at straws and give up the strike for a ballot paper."

No doubt many workers agreed. But the combined weight of the government and of the main traditional leaders of the working class now began to press towards a return to work and reliance on the election. The revolutionaries — mainly because of their lack of numbers, rather than because of mistakes they made — were not able to show workers a sufficiently convincing alternative path.

On Friday 31st armed police seized the post office in Rouen, driving out the workers who had occupied it. On the



weekend of 1st-2nd June the government, with the cooperation of the union leaders, was able to ensure that petrol was available for holidaymakers leaving Paris. The next week the general strike started to break.

From 3 to 7 June workplaces abandoned the strike one by one, usually after winning some slight improvement over the Grenelle terms. On Friday 7 June the police went in to try to break the occupation at Renault Flins. Students came from Paris to Flins to support the workers. There were several days of fighting between the police and workers and students until the CRS left and the workers re-occupied on 11 June. A student was killed in the course of the fighting, on 10 June. The Flins workers eventually voted (4811 to 3456) for a return to work on 17 June.

On Tuesday 11th police broke the occupation at Peugeot Sochaux, killing two workers. As at Flins, the workers managed to reoccupy, but returned to work soon after. On Wednesday 12th all the revolutionary left groups were banned; on Saturday 15th, Raoul Salan was released from jail. Salan was a former general who, together with many other French army officers, had mutinied in April 1961 and led a murderous right-wing terrorist campaign against independence for Algeria. Salan's old comrade, Jacques Massu, now commander of the French army in Germany, had demanded an amnesty for Salan and all his associates in return for promising his support to de Gaulle in the May crisis.

On Sunday 16th the Sorbonne fell to the police, and on Tuesday 18th, Renault Billancourt returned to work. Only a few workplaces stayed on strike into July. On Sunday 23rd and Sunday 30th the elections were held for the National Assembly (in two rounds, as is the way in France). The Gaullists increased their majority from 244 to 353 out of 486 seats in the National Assembly. They had increased their share of the first round vote from 38% to 44%, while the CP dropped from 22.5% in 1967 to 20% in 1968 and the 'Left Federation' (in which the main force was the Socialist Party) declined from 18.5% to 16%.

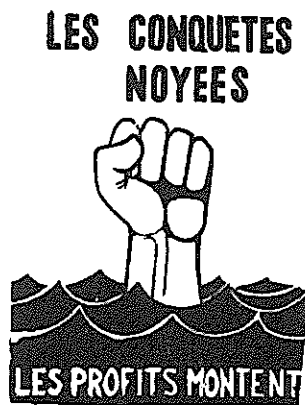
The PSU, the only well-known party which had identified at all enthusiastically with the strikers and the students, increased its vote from 2% to 4%. But the election seemed to prove that all the talk of revolution in May had been utter fantasy. Not so.

In May millions of workers had started thinking for the first time that society could be organised differently. They had gained a new confidence; they had dared to think that perhaps the working class could run society, without the capitalists ruling over it.

Except among a small minority, these thoughts were vague, unclear, tentative. Then the traditional leaders of the working class did all they could to make the strike movement fade and peter out, with only minor bread-and-butter gains; and they went into an election where the CP strove no less than the Gaullists to present

itself as the Party of Order. No wonder many workers who had joined the general strike became disillusioned and voted for the real Party of Order. Working-class confidence and activity is not something that can be stored away like a bank account and then cashed on an election day chosen by the established order; either it develops, grows, and organises itself, or it can quickly turn into demoralisation and disillusion.

Were the workers revolutionary in May? The workers' immediate demands everywhere were about wages, jobs and conditions. But slogans, chants, and banners made it clear that the workers had political demands, too, even if they were expressed in vague terms like "Ten years [of de Gaulle] is enough" or the call for "democracy" and "self-management" which was very widespread in May. Rosa



"The power we want should create the direct democracy of socialism"

Luxemburg long ago pointed out that this very intermingling of political and economic demands is characteristic of revolutionary upheavals: bitter struggles over apparently minor workplace issues can be found in the midst of all the great revolutions. "The movement as a whole does not proceed from the economic to the political struggle, nor even the reverse...With the spreading, clarifying and involution of the political struggle, the economic struggle not only does not recede, but extends, organises, and becomes involved in equal measure".

In one area where the May strikes have been studied minutely (Nord-Pas-de-Calais, in the north of France), 47% of workplaces were occupied. This included 88% of nationalised enterprises and 70% of factories in the metal industries.

Sometimes the occupations were run by

a minority of union activists. But half the metal-working factories in Nord-Pas-de-Calais were occupied by over 25% of the workforce.

At the Berliet truck factory in Lyons, the workers rearranged the letters on the 'Berliet' sign to read 'Liberte'. At the CSF electronics factory in Brest, the workers continued production — making walkie-talkies for use of strikers and demonstrators. The workers at the FNAC chain of shops passed a resolution on 24 May declaring: "We have gone on strike not to see particular claims satisfied but to take part in the movement which now mobilises ten million manual and intellectual workers...to challenge the legitimacy of the whole leadership of the country and all the structures of the society...The workers want to put in its place the power which would represent them truly and democratically, i.e. they want self-management at the level of the plant and of public services as well as at the national level...For a true workers' democracy!"

At the Atlantic Shipyards in St. Nazaire, the workers showed that they wanted something more than improvements within the existing system by occupying the yard and for ten days refusing to submit a list of demands to the bosses. They knew they wanted something more than a little improvement in wages and conditions; they did not know how to put the aspiration to change society into the form of a list of demands; but they did not want to be tied down to limited demands.

The survey in Nord-Pas-de-Calais found that in only 59% of workplaces did the workers want immediate negotiations on their demands. Another survey — of 100 workplaces across France — found that only two-thirds presented a list of demands soon after beginning their action.

The Renault factory at Cleon, although its occupation started on the initiative of young workers who went over the heads of the factory union leadership, did quickly adopt a list of demands worked out by the CGT. Its strike committee, elected on the first night of the occupation, was dominated by the factory CGT leaders. This strike committee was able to block a demand from activists for the election of workshop committees, and it was energetic and effective in securing a return to work on 16 June.

Yet there was a revolutionary impulse at Cleon, too. There were two general assemblies of workers every day to discuss the running of the occupation. About 1500 of the factory's 5000 workers took part in the pickets. Films were shown, and plays by Brecht and Chekhov were staged in the occupied factory. There were meetings and discussions on all sorts of issues — a series of four debates, for example, on sexuality and contraception. Sexual freedom was a major issue of discussion in the May events, though feminist issues and demands were scarcely raised at all: the modern women's movement emerged in France only some years after.

The workers read leaflets from the JCR and from Voix Ouvrière, and were interested particularly in their calls for workers' control. Towards the end of the strike workers dissatisfied with the conservatism of the strike committee formed an Action Committee.

At Renault Flins, 5000 at least out of 10,500 workers attended the mass meeting every morning, and 1000 joined the picket lines. At the meeting on 20 May the workers applauded a CFDT speaker who declared: "The students say — this is the meaning they have given to their struggle — we have to get rid of this present-day society. Are we Flins workers in agreement?"

Conflict with the union leadership at Flins came at the end of the strike, when the police tried to smash up the occupation. The CGT initially opposed students helping the workers to resist the police, but was forced by rank-and-file pressure to accept the students and allow student speakers at the workers' meetings.

At the Nuclear Research Centre at Saclay, the 10,000 workers organised a highly democratic workers' council and established links with farmers to organise food supplies for workers in a nearby shanty-town. They requisitioned medical supplies from the Centre's stocks for the casualties on the barricades.

In Caen the unions blocked access to the town for 24 hours after the Grenelle Accord. And in Nantes a Central Strike Committee ran the city for a week, from 26 to 31 May.

Road blocks were set up round the city. Only necessary food supplies and supplies needed by farmers were allowed to pass. The Central Strike Committee also controlled the distribution of petrol.

A couple of days before, on 24 May, the initiative had been taken by working-class housewives in the Baignolles district of Nantes, who organised themselves into 'family associations' and then set up joint food-supply committees with the farm workers' unions. After 26 May district committees were set up in all working-class districts.

The Central Strike Committee opened its own sales depots for food, supervised the prices charged by private shops and issued coupons to families with no money. It also made sure that farms got electricity and any equipment they needed. It organised squads of workers and students to help in the fields and increase the supply of food.

If the established trade-union and political leaders of the French working class had wanted to, they could have spread the example of Nantes all across France. And if they had done that, de Gaulle could have been replaced by a workers' government based on workers' councils.

Already the official administrative machine had lost its grip, and the capitalists had lost their control over the means of production. Capitalist power was reduced to its hard core: the armed forces of the state. And those armed forces were not completely solid or invin-

cible. On 22 May the police federation had come out in support of the strike and declared the police would refuse to be used against it.

On Wednesday 29th de Gaulle went to Germany to talk to Jacques Massu, commander of the French forces stationed there. He got a promise of support from Massu in return for an amnesty for Salan and his 'keep Algeria French' rebels. But would the army have stayed solid in the face of mass armed resistance by the workers — the soldiers' fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, school friends?

All historical experience suggests not. And on 22 May an action committee from one mechanised infantry regiment stationed in Mutzig put out a declaration: "The young people and the workers must know that the soldiers *will never shoot workers...* We shall fraternise... Long live



"They had dared to think that perhaps the working class could run society"

solidarity of workers, soldiers, students, and secondary school pupils! Long live workers' democracy! Long live joy, love, and creative work!"

It was not the strength of the capitalist order that saved de Gaulle, but the weakness of the established opposition to capitalism.

Nowhere did the workers decisively throw off the leadership of the CP. Does that mean there was no revolutionary drive among the workers? No. The CP rode the movement with some skill. At first it condemned the militant students, then it supported them. It called only for a one-day general strike, but when a bigger strike movement developed, it supported it. A survey has found that in 35% of workplaces the strike was started by the established union leaders there. In only 16% of workplaces did it start directly

against the wishes of the union leaders.

At first (and later, in its apologetics after the event) the CP said that the strikes were, and should be, only about wages and conditions. But in the midst of the general strike the CP was willing to make its main demand "a people's government"? What did this mean? To workers who wanted to change the system, the CP explained that the "people's government" would be "a democracy in which everyone will contribute to the orientation, running and control of the economy".

The CP leaders hoped that the Grenelle Accord would end the general strike. They soon saw it wouldn't; so they abandoned any effort to push the strikers back to work, and even called for the continuation of the strike. They preferred to have the factory occupations run by a trusty minority of union activists, but they did not insist: the survey in Nord-Pas-de-Calais found that there had been mass occupations (by more than 25% of the workforce) in 53% of workplaces where the CGT was the major union, and in only 13% of workplaces where the notionally more sympathetic CFDT dominated.

The CP leaders never set themselves brutally against the movement. They relied on the fact that a general strike cannot mark time. At a certain point, if it does not go forward, it must retreat. They gently stifled the possibilities of the struggle going forward, and then waited for it to ebb. Only when the return to work was gathering momentum did the CP come out strongly against continued strikes.

To the revolutionary students and to some young workers, it was glaringly, shockingly clear that the CP leaders were trying to stop a revolution. To CP worker-activists, and to workers accustomed to seeing those CPers as the best fighters against the bosses, things probably seemed different.

The French Communist Party of 1968 was something very different from the British Communist Party of 1988. It had long ceased to be genuinely revolutionary and become bureaucratic, gearing itself to USSR foreign policy and the search for positions within French capitalist society; but for 20 years it had been a pariah party, regularly condemned in the most vehement terms by the rulers of France. However much its leaders wished otherwise, it had no place in the corridors of power. It embodied a 'counter-culture' of sorts; it harboured an intense, if limited, class-consciousness; it organised the great majority of the most militant workers.

Workers who joined the CP thought they were joining a revolutionary party — indeed, *the* revolutionary party. Before 1968, most workers would never have come across Trotskyist politics, except possibly in the form of leaflets distributed at their factory gates by a few students. In May 1968 the CP explained the issues as a matter of the sober, sensible revolutionaries (the CP) against the wild-eyed 'pseudo-revolutionaries'. "Our Party is aware of the harm that utopia and anarchism, impatience elevated to the level of a theoretical argument, a foolhardy

evaluation of the balance of forces and pseudo-revolutionary verbiage, have done to the labour movement in the past." The CP quoted Lenin on "revolutionary phrasemongering", and denounced the revolutionary left as "opportunists" whose "slogans merely mask their fear of reality, their evasion when faced with today's tasks..."

After May 1968 the revolutionary left grew at least tenfold in numbers and even more in profile. In the 1974 presidential election, a Trotskyist candidate, Arlette Laguiller, got 700,000 votes. Numerically, though not relatively, the CP gained more. Between 1966-7 and 1978 the CP doubled its membership, from 350,000 to 700,000; it also doubled the numbers of its youth organisation. The Socialist Party also gained, growing from maybe 60,000 members in 1968 to 200,000 in 1978.

May 1968 confirmed what had already been indicated by the events of 1918-19 in Germany and 1936 in France: in countries with a well-established labour movement, in times of revolutionary upheaval, a great number of workers turn first to the established parties, even if those parties are utterly reformist. In Germany in 1918-19, the flowering of workers' councils led to the development of a small Communist Party but also to the growth of the reformist Social Democratic party from 250,000 to over one million members. A new workers' party cannot be improvised out of nothing on the spur of the moment. Workers coming fresh into politics will try the big established workers' party first - unless they are absolutely clear and confident about the merits of a smaller party proposing a more revolutionary policy, and few will be so clear and confident.

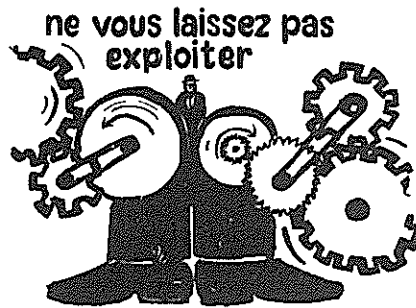
The dilemma in such revolutionary situations for the Marxist groups is that they have to combine two tasks pulling them in different directions. They have to express and channel the bitter fury and the urgent will for action of those workers and youth who have seen through the phrases of the established workers' parties. At the same time they need to relate to the greater number of more cautious workers who still give the established parties credence.

The small revolutionary groups in France played a role in May '68 out of all proportion to their size. The biggest of the groups had only 300 or so members. But without them the student protests of 3-11 May might have dissipated. Without them it is not certain that the general strike would have started: in key factories like Sud-Aviation and Renault Billancourt they were central in beginning the action. They were present and prominent in Nantes (the OCI), Saclay (the JCR), and the regiment which put out an appeal for soldiers not to shoot workers (the JCR again).

If there had been a revolutionary Marxist organisation of just a few thousand members — instead of groups with only a few hundred — and if that organisation had had members active and well-respected in a few hundred of France's

major workplaces, then the strike movement could have gone a lot further. If that revolutionary organisation had avoided major blunders, it could have spread the example of Nantes to many other cities, and created a network of workers' councils. In those workers' councils it could have found opportunities for joint action with rank-and-file CP workers.

No amount of energy, dedication and political astuteness could have permitted France's revolutionary Marxists to build themselves a mass party in the decades before 1968. But nothing in the overall politics of that period made building an organisation of a few thousand impossible. There must have been many times in the '50s and early '60s when the daily grind of building a revolutionary organisation — the paper sales, the



"If there had been a revolutionary organisation of just a few thousand... then the strike movement could have gone much further"

meetings, the attempts to activate the inactive, the endless theoretical debates and arguments — seemed unproductive and futile. But in May '68 every effort expended over the previous decades was repaid a hundredfold; every lapse or mistake cost dear.

French capitalism seems to have absorbed the impact of May 1968 with great ease. Though the revolutionary left grew, it remained small, and has stagnated since the early '70s. The growth of the Communist Party and Socialist Party in the 1970s posed no threat to capitalism, as those parties showed when they took governmental office in 1981-6. In recent years the SP has declined, and the CP even more so, while the fascist National Front has gained ground.

Economically, the immediate result of the wage rises won in 1968 was a consumer

boom which in turn fuelled an industrial boom. Industrial production rose at 6.6% per year from 1967 to 1973, an improvement on the already brisk rate of 5% a year recorded between 1958 and 1967. The share of profits in non-agricultural value-added even rose, despite the big wage rises.

It has sometimes been argued on the left — with the aid of misused quotations from Trotsky — that a general strike is a sort of Armageddon: it leads either to revolution, or to the crushing of the labour movement. May 1968 disproves that argument. If the inertia of an established labour movement slows down the revolutionary dynamic of a general strike, it also slows down the capitalists' search for revenge.

The French capitalists, however, should not take too much comfort from their system's proof of its capacity to adapt. One of the lessons of 1968 is that capitalism can generate revolutionary crises even when it is relatively prosperous and flexible.

In hindsight it is possible to list factors which made France explosive in 1968. For ten years Charles de Gaulle had ruled the country under an authoritarian presidential regime introduced when he took power through a military coup in 1958. Although France still had the normal mechanisms of a parliamentary democracy, the parliament always had a Gaullist majority, and de Gaulle could use it to give him power to legislate by decree.

The French economy had grown fast. Industrial productivity had risen at about 5% a year. Real wages had increased too, but more slowly — at about 3% a year. The share of profits in non-agricultural value-added had risen from 15% in 1958 to 20% in 1968. The trade unions were weak: the CGT's membership had declined from 5½ million in 1947 to 2½ million in 1952 and 1½ million in 1968. France had the most unequal distribution of income in Western Europe, and the longest hours of work (an average of 45½ hours in manufacturing). Yet the growth of industry must have given workers a sense of increasing power: the workforce in engineering industries rose from 22½ million in 1954 to 26 million in 1968. Strike action increased from 980,000 striker-days in 1965 to 4,204,000 in 1967.

The number of university students had risen from 192,000 in 1958 to 540,000 in 1968. Facilities had not kept pace with this growth: lecture halls, libraries, and canteens were overcrowded, and between one-third and one-half of students did not finish their courses.

Hindsight can, however, be deceptive. Anecdote has it that in May 1968 exam papers at Oxford University (written a few weeks earlier) included the question "Account for the great political stability of France in recent years". Be that as it may, no-one at the time thought that France was about to explode. The revolutionaries were as surprised as anyone. Afterwards Daniel Cohn-Bendit said: "having lived through it, I can't ever say: 'It will never happen'..."

# Poland: the fight for workers' control

**The summer of 1981 brought a big change for the movement for workers' self-management.**

Up until then it had gone through a phase of primitive accumulation, especially within the big factories. The regional leaderships of Solidarnosc — in the first place, those in the main industrial centres — gradually got drawn into the movement, thus contributing to its advance.

From July the struggle for self-management made a qualitative leap forward, becoming broader more generalised, and a factor in national politics. This tremendous advance was the result of the revival of the mass struggle which was linked to the deepening of the socio-economic and political crisis.

The creation of the Network of pilot workplace organisations, and the initiatives which it took, were a very important contribution in this new phase of struggle. This was a horizontal structure based on 17 big factories in different regions. The Network was set up in mid-April, and launched its draft "Law of Social Enterprise" at the beginning of June, in opposition to the bureaucracy's programmes on workers' self-management and state enterprise...

Basing itself on the aspiration to a real socialisation of the means of production, the Network gave substance to this demand with the slogan of the 'social enterprise', a slogan which immediately gained enormous popularity and became a benchmark for the whole social movement. The Network presented its initiative in the form of a 'social draft law', the very existence of which served to highlight and crystallise the differences between Solidarnosc's position and that of the bureaucratic regime on self-management. One of the strong points of the initiative was that it encouraged workers not to wait for the creation of full-fledged workers' councils, but to organise 'constitutive committees of workers' self-management'. In fact, the process of forming councils often took time because of the size of workplaces or their geographical distribution. The Network's proposal allowed the rapid establishment of a provisional organisation, and an immediate start to the struggle.

The Network saw the social enterprise as an economic unit and as a fundamental form of property in the means of production. In parallel would exist cooperatives and private enterprises, and also state enterprises, which, unlike the social enterprises, would come directly under the central state administration — railways, post

Solidarnosc lives! As *Workers' Liberty* goes to press, a strike at the giant Lenin steelworks in Nowa Huta is spreading to other factories.

One of the most important ideas of Solidarnosc in 1980-1 was "workers' self-management" — industry being controlled by workers' councils rather than by unelected bureaucrats. The conflict between different perspectives in Solidarnosc was largely focused on different ideas of what "self-management" meant.

This extract is translated and abridged from the book 'Rendez-vous nos usines' ('Give us our factories') by Zbigniew Kowalewski, a leader of the left wing in Solidarnosc. It describes the debate on 'self-management' in the last months before Solidarnosc was banned under martial law in December 1981.

and telephones, banks, social security, power stations, and workplaces coming under the ministries of justice and of defence. This idea provoked negative reactions among the Solidarnosc leaders on the railways, because they were convinced of the possibility of developing forms of self-management in the repair workshops and the necessity of installing advanced forms of workers' co-management in the national railways.

The negative side of the Network's draft was to do with its excessive inclination to market economics — to enterprise autonomy seen above all in its economic dimension. "The state may only influence the functioning of this type of enterprise through economic instruments such as taxes, custom duties, and credits, and general legal norms, quality norms, or norms concerning the protection of the environment", said an adviser to the Network.

In July, the regime launched a furious ideological campaign against the Network's project, calling it 'anarcho-syndicalist'. Anarcho-syndicalism is the favourite bogeyman of the bureaucratic witch-hunters when it comes to dealing with real workers' self-management. The authorities also accused the Network of wanting to dismantle state property to replace it by group property. Adam Swinarski, one of the leaders of the Network, replied:

**"We are accused of wanting to prevent society from influencing the definition of economic objectives and the means of attaining them, and to deprive the socialist state of any power in the running of the economy and the attainment of social objectives. We are also accused of aligning ourselves with the Yugoslav reforms of the '50s..."**

**However, our project has nothing to do**

**with group property or with the idea of transforming Solidarnosc members into shareholders in their workplaces... We do not want to change the system, but we do want to go back to a working-class version of socialism.... How could we accept the idea that the workforce of an enterprise should play a role analogous to that of a capitalist owner? The Network's project declares clearly that the enterprise must meet overall social objectives, because it belongs to the whole people'.**

The position of the Network was determined by a political logic. It was marked by the absence of any project for a vertical system of workers' self-management, and it was not by chance that one of the main disputes inside the Network was about the powers of a Self-Management Chamber in Parliament, and indeed about whether or not the social movement should seek to establish such a Chamber. The strategy of 'self-limiting revolution' [i.e. of a revolution which would transform society without overthrowing the state power] conditioned the Network's project. Consciously or not, it conformed to a political vision according to which it was certainly possible to overthrow bureaucratic power at the grass roots — in the workplaces and in the municipalities — but not at central level.

The bureaucracy's monopoly of economic power rests on two linked factors: on one side, the total suppression, by political means, of democratic institutions of self-organisation and representation of the workers and the citizens, and the lack of any control by such institutions over the central authority; and, on the other side, the large-scale administrative suppression of the other factor of control, market mechanisms. The law of value cannot be suppressed in a post-capitalist





**Anna Walentynowicz, a leading Solidarnosc activist, addresses workers occupying the Gdansk shipyard in 1980**

economy. It has to wither away, in parallel with other market categories, including the buying and selling of labour-power. The re-establishment, to a certain extent, of the operation of the law of value as an element of control over the plan, is one of the indispensable objectives of reform of economic management in the revolution against the bureaucratic regime. But if you consider that, for political reasons, the development of democratic institutions of the working class cannot go beyond a certain threshold (the 'geopolitical factor' [the threat of USSR intervention] determining the relation of forces in the last analysis), then you automatically seek to limit the power of the bureaucracy by the maximum development of the market. If workers' councils cannot exercise real control over the bureaucratic regime, then let the market do it instead: such was the Network's logic. The question was posed in the following manner: if we can only take power in the workplaces, the workers' councils must be able to base themselves on a maximum of enterprise autonomy in relation to the organs of power held by the central bureaucracy.

Many self-management activists disagreed with this position and argued that there could be no workers' power in the workplaces without resolving the question of power at the level of the state. As conscious supporters of real central planning, they approached the problem from a different angle. Even so, for tactical reasons, it was not opportune to demand more power for the workers' councils and for the other democratic institutions at that precise stage of the struggle; so it was necessary to demand of the bureaucracy that it leave as much scope as possible to market mechanisms, and then do all we could to make sure that the space thus liberated was occupied by the workers' councils and by the self-management system in general. It seemed pointless to focus energy on an ideological discussion with the Network activists and debate economic theory. What was decisive, on the contrary, was to emphasise the establishment of the indispensable means to develop a workers' democratic counter-power as soon as a space for it opened up, and the need for the forces which could be mobilised by the Network to take up that task...

Karol Modzelewski, one of the main leaders in Lower Silesia, said at a meeting of the national leadership:

**"If the system of self-management is put in place, if we manage to enforce it as we wish, then Solidarnosc must keep its independence from that system in order to avoid the traps they have fallen into in Yugoslavia. Those social dangers are the only rational argument advanced by official propaganda against the self-management solutions proposed by the Network. The argument is that those solutions would introduce new social injustices, since enterprises which are modern, well-equipped, and well-placed in the market or in a monopoly position would be able to take advantage of their**

**situation for the particularistic interests of their workers, while the weaker enterprises and the economically less developed regions would lose out. That has happened in Yugoslavia, in spite of all the positive sides of its self-management system.**

**But, unlike in Yugoslavia, we have the great good fortune to be able to create a self-management system at a time when the powerful and authentic trade-union movement of Solidarnosc already exists. That trade union is capable of enforcing principles on institutional solutions, the way self-management is conceived, and the distribution of the national income, which will limit those aspects which we see as negative of the self-management system".**

Everything depends, said Modzelewski, on the way in which the power over distribution and utilisation of the surplus product which belongs to society as a whole is exercised, and who exercises control over that distribution. In Yugoslavia, the only force able to claim to exercise such control at the national level is the Communist Party. That is why the growth of social inequalities is inevitable. In Poland, on the contrary, there is a force capable of exercising control in the interests of society as a whole and of enforcing social justice: that force is Solidarnosc.

The vanguard sectors of the social movement who agreed with the Network's project, or with Lodz's or other initiatives, were not immediately concerned with the relation which should exist some day between the plan and the law of value: they seized on these initiatives as instruments allowing them to carry on the struggle and to impose their power where it was possible. The essential thing was to know who in future would decide how to run the economy, and not what the exact content of the decision would be. That is why Jean-Yves Potel is quite right when he says that the self-management projects of Solidarnosc — and among them the social enterprise project worked out by the Network — which aim to suppress the principle of the 'nomenklatura' [the ruling party's right to choose people for all positions of power] and to install real workers' power in the workplaces, had an immediate revolutionary import, because they challenged one of the essential presumptions of 'actually existing socialism'. **"Solidarnosc made social property in the means of production a theme taken up by millions of workers"**.

On 8 July, a meeting took place at the Gdansk shipyard, called by the Network, with nearly 1000 representatives of workers' councils and constitutive committees of self-management coming from several regions of the country. It was the first massive public expression of the self-management movement, and its first challenge at the national level.

The meeting was extraordinarily militant. **"Give us our factories"** was the slogan put forward by Edward Nowak, a worker leader from the Lenin steelworks at Nowa Huta. This slogan summed up

the tone of the debates well. **"The struggle for the social enterprise is worth a general strike"** said Nowak, in a brilliant speech in which he emphasised the fact that the state machine would not give up of its own accord the control over the means of production which it had usurped and give it to the workers. He aroused enthusiasm when he said that the workers' councils should get national representation through the Self-Management Chamber which should be established in Parliament, and this would guarantee a truly social character for the ownership of the factories. It rang out like a call to arms.

Only four days after the Gdansk meeting, and independent of it, an inter-regional conference was held at Lublin on 12 and 13 July, called by the Lodz and Lublin Solidarnosc leaderships, on the theme 'Solidarnosc and workers' self-management'. Representatives of about 300 structures of the self-management movement and of the union, from 15 regions, participated...

**"Conscious of the negative experiences of the self-management movement of 1956-7 and of the power of united workers' action and solidarity, we think it is necessary to take initiatives which will establish agreement and coordination between the organs of workers' self-management in the regions and in the whole country"**, said the final declaration of the conference, which decided to establish a permanent organ to carry on its work: the Working Group for an inter-regional initiative to coordinate workers' councils, subsequently known as the Lublin Group. The objective of this group was not only to encourage the formation of workers' councils in the workplaces and to contribute to the establishment of regional coordination, but to organise in the short term the calling of a first national congress of delegates from the regional coordinations of workers' councils in order to establish common purpose and set up a permanent organ of coordination at the national level...

A programme of action [was outlined] in 'Ten commandments for the workers' councils', published at the beginning of August by the Lublin Group... In very accessible language, it explained how not to fall into the trap of a supposed co-management of enterprises, it unmasked the fake measures promulgated by the government on economic reform, and it stressed the tasks which the workers' councils could carry out immediately. These included:

- a halt to the flow of funds from the enterprise to the [official] associations and central bodies of industry (on condition that the workers had the support of other workers' councils in the region or sector of industry, and that the enterprise would not be paralysed by cutting necessary economic links),
- taking control over the make-up of production by demanding changes which would, in particular, take account of the needs of agriculture,
- exercising control over the allocation of what was produced in the workplace and



over wastage.

**"If you observe wastage of raw materials, of machines, or of other means of production, act immediately without demanding authorisation. Do not fear to break regulations if they are leading to wastage and losses"**. No less characteristic of these commandments was their way of defining the relation which should exist between the struggle and the law. **"Remember that, in order to get out of the crisis and to carry out a successful economic reform based on self-management, it is not enough to have good laws, for which we are struggling today, but it depends on your ability to win over all the workers of your workplace to the cause of self-management... Remember that by your practical activity you are establishing a law which will not be adopted as such by the legislative power of the People's Republic of Poland unless you struggle relentlessly to impose it"**.

The Lublin Group thus became a second national centre of the self-management movement, outside the Network while wanting to collaborate with it. Contacts were immediately established, with declarations of mutual support on both sides. The Lublin Group served especially as a platform for the positions of the Lodz Solidarnosc leadership. However, problems arose quite quickly. **"Although apparently complementary, the Network and the Lublin Group were going to have difficulty working together. Their different origins and experiences led to a series of differences of opinion which became, bit by bit, two competing political poles. This came out very clearly at the Solidarnosc congress and in the months which followed"**. (Jean-Yves Potel)...

On 26 July, the national Solidarnosc leadership adopted a resolution which can be called historic: it declared its **"full support for the social movement for workers' self-management"** and called on **"the union at all levels to give all support and assistance necessary to the establishment of workers' councils as the essential force for the struggle for economic reform"**...

During the first part of the Solidarnosc congress, which ended on 10 September, the extreme political tension which prevailed in the country was reinforced by the adoption of three resolutions each of which was a challenge to the regime of 'actually existing socialism'. They were seen as such by the bureaucratic authorities, in Poland and in the USSR and the other countries of the 'Soviet bloc'.

The first was a message to the workers of Eastern Europe and of all the nations of the USSR in which the Solidarnosc congress, convinced of the common character of the destiny of the working class in all these countries, expressed its support to all those who **"have taken the difficult path of struggle for a free trade union movement"**. The second was a general declaration. It stated the main aspirations of the Polish people: an improvement in provision of food through

the establishment of social control over the production, distribution and prices of necessities; an economic reform through the establishment of real workers' self-management and the abolition of the 'nomenklatura'; true information, through social control over the mass media; and democracy, through the introduction of free elections for Parliament and the people's councils.

The third resolution was about workers' self-management. Karol Modzelewski said it was the most important resolution of the congress, an assessment shared by the delegates and the mass of trade unionists in general, as well as by the whole of the bureaucracy. Written mostly by Grzegorz Palka, it explicitly took up the positions of the Lodz leadership. Its content was unusual: the trade union threatened to take on the supreme organ of the state, according to the constitution of the Republic — that is, Parliament — and to rebel against it if it continued to submit to the bureaucratic diktat of the PUWP and of the state by adopting scandalous laws on self-management.

*[This congress resolution was backed up by referendums in factories. For example, 90% of the 24,000 workers in the Lenin steelworks voted for "the workers' council running the enterprise" and "choosing and recalling the manager".]*

*Parliament — until then a rubber stamp — split under the pressure. But then the Solidarnosc leaders negotiated a compromise on self-management with representatives of Parliament, and Parliament voted that compromise into law on 25 September. It left appointment of the managers in all the country's major enterprises in the hands of the central bureaucracy.]*

The second part of Solidarnosc's congress opened on 26 September. The recent shock meant that there was immediately a very agitated and prolonged debate. The decision of the three members of the presidium was subjected to implacable criticism, aimed especially at Walesa and the experts. Jakubowicz was not spared insults calling him an 'impostor'. Some delegates defended the compromise, including the representatives of seven enterprises involved in the Network. But it soon became clear that they represented a minority in the congress.

Walesa tried to explain, but in a confused and fairly desperate way. Solidarnosc's leader had a bad time and his prestige was severely reduced. In the election for president of the union, he won but with only 55% of the vote. The compromise on self-management, and the disregard for union democracy which he had shown, cost him 30 or 40% of the vote...

During the debate, the Lodz leaders were the only people to present a collective position for their regional delegation. As would be shown, the firmness they showed won a big response in the congress. They said, in broad terms, the following: the laws adopted by Parliament do certainly imply some concessions to the social movement, but they aim to preserve

the essential mechanisms of the system of bureaucratic management of the economy and of the 'nomenklatura'. The compromise is not in any way justified and is a flagrant violation of the statutes of Solidarnosc and of the resolution of the first part of the congress. So far no-one had proposed to cancel that resolution: let its opponents dare to do that, if they exist. We must ignore this illegal compromise; to accept it would mean giving up the struggle for workers' self-management and capitulating. The first thing to do is to apply the decisions of the congress resolution, that is, to submit all the points where Solidarnosc is in disagreement with the laws on self-management to a popular referendum in the workplaces, to be organised within six weeks, and to base ourselves on the will thus expressed by the working class to conduct an energetic struggle with the aim of amending those laws.

Given the wide agreement that existed on the need to avoid the affair of the compromise transforming itself into an internal crisis of the union, the congress adopted a moderate declaration emphasising that the presidium had acted in an incorrect manner, violating trade-union democracy, and that it was necessary to redefine the role of the experts so as to put an end to their excessive influence on the decisions taken by the national leadership.

Along the lines of the position which it had defended, the Lodz delegation presented a draft resolution on the laws about self-management and on the referendum to be organised. According to this motion, the congress should clearly express the intention of Solidarnosc to continue the struggle for real self-management and to support the workers' struggle for that aim, even if it led to breaking the laws.

A counter-motion presented by the most moderate elements, favourable to the compromise, advocated that Solidarnosc should content itself with putting pressure on the government to get favourable decrees about the application of the laws. The laws which had been adopted should be tested in practice for six months. The weapon of the referendum should only be used afterwards, if the experience had been negative...

Under the pressure of the moderates, the platform manoeuvred to delay the vote on the motions, hoping that this would give time to amend the Lodz motion and soften it. In a very firm intervention, Grzegorz Palka demanded that the vote be taken with no further delay. An overwhelming majority backed the Lodz motion — four-fifths of the delegates — and celebrated the victory with a prolonged ovation for the Lodz delegates in particular, thanking them for not having given way. This congress decision had an enormous influence: despite the partial defeat it had suffered following the vote in Parliament, the social movement avoided demoralisation and setbacks in its struggle for self-management. In the weeks that followed, indeed, it became more combative and broader.

# The Stalinist roots of 'left' anti-semitism

**What should the socialist attitude be towards Zionism? For much of the left the answer to that question is simple: the same as to racism or fascism.**

'Anti-Zionism' is a central principle for many socialists, equal (and equivalent) to 'anti-racism'. Zionists have been banned in some British college student unions. In one college, students had to pledge commitment to 'anti-Zionism' to be entitled to union membership. That Zionism is a form of racism is the official policy of the United Nations.

Many people see Israel as not only racist, but also a major bulwark — for some, *the* bulwark — of imperialism in the Third World. Zionism is an extension of, or the sharp end of, imperialism. Israel is like South Africa or even Nazi Germany.

For Socialist Action "Zionism represented a historic accommodation to anti-semitism...Its offspring, the Zionist state, today concretises the reactionary origins of Zionism in its racist laws (etc)."

The story, as told by Socialist Action or by the British Socialist Worker, can be summarised thus. There was anti-semitism in Europe. Some Jews capitulated to it and resolved to build a Jewish state in Palestine. These evil men shared the attitudes of the imperialist anti-semites and conspired with them. Likewise they were racist against the Arabs. Israel today is the fruit of their work.

There are some facts which seem to back up this story. Most of the leaders of the Zionist movement were cynical wheeler-dealer bourgeois politicians, no better than any others of their sort. Especially in the early years of their movement, they shared the racism common in Europe towards Third World peoples. The Arabs in Palestine scarcely merited any consideration; if they were considered, most Zionists assumed that the Arabs could only gain from Jewish colonisation.

And Israel today *is* brutal towards the Palestinian Arabs.

There is one thing drastically wrong with the story current on the left. It presents the whole history of the working-out of a bad idea, as a conspiracy by evil people.

But Marxists understand history differently. We ask: why did the 'bad' idea of Zionism gain mass support among Jews? What material factors brought this about? Why did 'evil' people like Herzl succeed in their 'conspiracies'? Who are the Israeli Jews today? They are not just extrapolations of the 'bad' ideas of their forefathers.

And we look at the *whole* reality of Zionism. Some Zionist leaders were evil people. One (minority) strand of Zionism was even fascist-inspired. But similar elements of chauvinism and racism can be found in all nationalist movements. If Zionism stood out among nationalist movements, it was in fact for the larger-than-usual minority within it that *opposed* the chauvinist and racist excesses.

Socialist Action and Socialist Worker just take particular incidents and elements from Zionist history to fit their own story.

A good example is the famous visit to the Tsarist Minister of the Interior, Von Plehve, by Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism. It did happen, and it was the first of many disreputable Zionist negotiations with anti-semites. But the readers of SA and SW would never know that Herzl's talks provoked outrage amongst Russian Zionists.

Again, Socialist Worker and Socialist Action tell us about the plight of the Arab peasants driven off their land and made destitute as, up to 1948, the Zionists bought up 6% of Palestine's land. They do not mention the plight of the peasants made destitute by the profit-grabbing efforts of Arab landlords on the other 94%. They tell us about the atrocity at Deir Yassin in 1948, where Zionists murdered some 250 peaceful Arab villagers, but not about the pogroms just a couple of years before in Poland where dozens of Jews had been killed.

They tell us about the terrible sufferings of the Palestinian Arab refugees, but not about the plight of the European Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. Those survivors faced pogroms in countries like Poland, but the British and US government told them to stay in those, their 'home' countries. No one in the world would welcome them except the Zionist community in Palestine.

Socialist Action and Socialist Worker tell us about how over half a million

Arabs were driven out of what became Israel during the 1948 war. They do not tell us about the almost equal number of Jews driven out of the Arab countries by anti-semitic persecution in the following years. They do not tell us that the 1948 war was started by the Arab League — with British-officered armies and intentions that had little to do with helping the Palestinian peasants.

They tell us about the alleged collaboration of Zionists with the Nazis during World War 2, but not about the actual collaboration of Palestinian Arab leaders with the Nazis.

None of the facts omitted by Socialist Action and Socialist Worker justify the crimes of the Israeli state. But those facts do tell us that the history of Zionism is one of oppressed people trying to hold their own corner in the dog-eat-dog world of capitalism and imperialism, not one of a demon let loose on an otherwise tranquil universe.

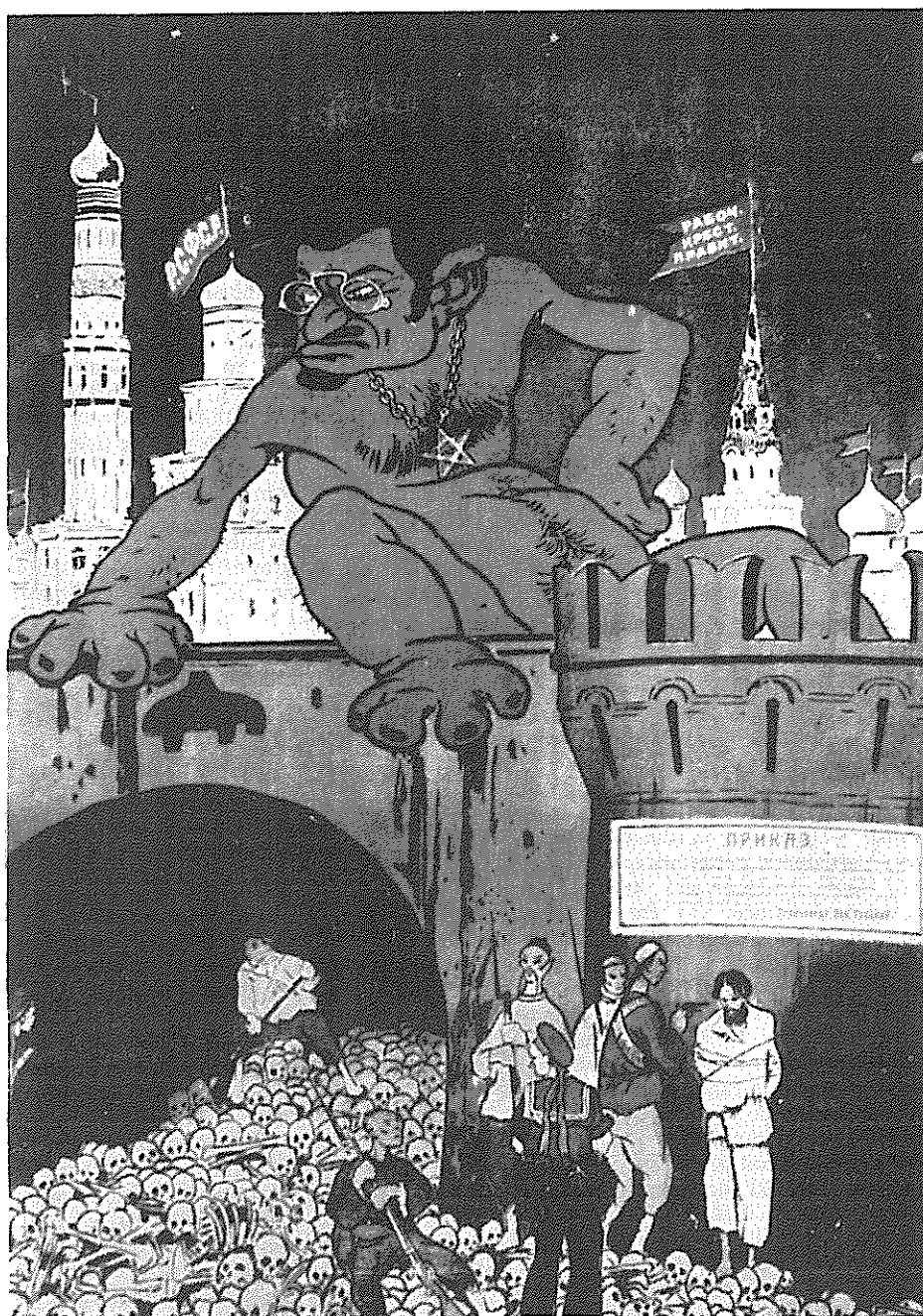
The socialist movement has historically opposed Zionism — and similar nationalisms. Marxists argued against the Zionist project of an independent Jewish state as the solution to anti-semitism; they argued for working-class unity and the fight for socialism instead. Against the notion that anti-semitism — or any other prejudice — is unchangeable or natural, Marxists have argued that it is possible to build workers' unity to fight all oppression and discrimination.

Socialists also pointed out that Zionism was forced by the logic of its own enterprise into an alliance with the British colonial authorities who ran Palestine, and into conflict with the indigenous Arabs.

Many Zionists did argue that Gentile anti-semitism was more or less impossible to change — in the same way that radical feminists consider male sexism to be permanent.

Socialists rejected this view. But in the propaganda of Socialist Worker and Socialist Action, this traditional critique of Zionist nationalism is given an extra twist. The 'acceptance' of anti-semitism is treated as an *explanation* for Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, and for its alliance with imperialism. This is a 'conspiracy' or 'evil men' view of history — like the school textbook versions which describe the past as an affair of 'good kings' and 'bad kings'.





White Russian anti-semitic propaganda produced during the Civil War attacks Trotsky and the Bolsheviks. Stalin later revived these traditional themes.

Socialist Action comments on the 1930s: "Zionism, by counterposing the fight against Nazism to the colonisation of Palestine, sabotaged the united front that was needed to defeat Nazism". But where, exactly, was this united front? What sense does it make to blame the bourgeois Zionist leaders for not forming a workers' united front against Hitler? It was Stalinism on the one hand and Social Democracy on the other, that sabotaged that united front. Wasn't it? Or will Socialist Action give us their critique of Trotsky's writings on the rise of fascism? No doubt they think that rather than denounce the Stalinist Communist Party, Trotsky should have denounced the Zionists instead.

Zionism's responsibility for the rise of Nazism was utterly marginal; and Zionism's growth can only be understood in terms of the *failure of the labour movement*. In the late 1920s Zionism looked like a fiasco, a hopeless fantasy. As the '30s marched on, the claims of Zionism appeared more and more to be vindicated;

by 1945 they seemed, in the wake of the Holocaust, to be entirely vindicated from the point of view of many of Nazism's victims.

Socialist Action evokes the memory of the Trotskyist, Abram Leon, who died in Auschwitz, whose book "The Jewish Question" they describe (not very accurately) as "the first...systematic Marxist critique of Zionism." Yet Leon's basic argument was that it was *impossible* to create an independent Jewish state under capitalism — hardly the same argument as today's 'anti-Zionists'.

Leon Trotsky, too, speaks against the kitch-Trotskyist "anti-Zionists". All his life he had been an opponent of Zionism. He never supported nor believed in the Zionist project in Palestine. Nevertheless he wound up a believer by the late '30s in the need for a Jewish national state, convinced by the experience of Stalinist, Nazi and other strains of anti-semitism which polluted the world's air with its "poisonous vapours" in the 1930s. (See the Workers' Liberty pamphlet "Arabs,

Jews and Socialism".)

The Jewish nationalists of the Zionist movement are said by the left to have "capitulated to anti-semitism" and to have taken their stand on the same ground as the anti-semites when they concluded that a Jewish nation state was the only progressive solution to anti-semitism. In that case, Trotsky, too should be denounced for "capitulating to anti-semitism."

Israel did not come about just because a handful of wicked Zionists managed to get their way — either by convincing some imperialist power or other that Israel could be an "outpost of civilisation against barbarism" or by any other devious trickery. Above all, Zionism achieved its objective because of what happened to the Jews in Europe, and because of the utter failure of the labour movement to prevent it.

The traditional Marxist critique was not wrong. The nationalist answer to the Jewish problem did lead to conflict with Arabs because of the 'colonial' character the Zionist enterprise had to take. Deutscher likened what happened in Palestine to someone jumping out of a burning house who lands on a person walking past and injures them. They might pick each other up and live peacefully afterwards, or they might fight each other. In fact, the one who is to blame for it all is the person who set the house on fire.

The Israel/Palestine conflict is a bit like that. The Zionist settlers, fleeing from the fires of European anti-semitism, from the beginning behaved like settlers — mistreating their Arab neighbours. Israel was eventually founded via a war of conquest and the driving out of 500,000 or more Arabs; later more wars of conquest followed. But without even attempting to understand the rise of Zionism as more than an evil pro-imperialist plot, the realities of the conflict today can only be blurred.

In fact the demonology is a way of rewriting history to fit in with a preconceived political conclusion. Papers like Socialist Action and Socialist Worker argue not for the right of the Palestinian Arabs to an independent state of their own alongside Israel (as Workers' Liberty would), but for the *destruction* of Israel. Zionism is so evil that the only answer is to deny the 'Zionists' (the Israeli Jewish nation) the right to govern themselves, and to put them under the control of an Arab state.

The modern 'left-anti-Zionist' attitude to Zionism is completely different from that of Lenin, Trotsky or indeed the post-Trotsky Trotskyist movement up to the late 1960s. It is not Marxist. The most striking proof of this is the fact that *all* its main themes were first formulated as tools in a vicious anti-Jewish campaign by the ruling bureaucracy of the USSR. Stan Crooke's article documents this — and shows that the basic thesis of the Stalinists' alleged 'Marxist critique of Zionism' was a re-run of the old myth of the 'world Jewish conspiracy'.

# The Stalinist roots of 'left' anti-semitism

In the 1970s the rulers of the USSR launched a sustained "anti-Zionist campaign which put a crude "Marxist-Leninist" gloss on traditional anti-semitic themes. A number of the campaign's themes have since become the stock in trade of much of the British and international "far left".

In the late 1940s and early 1950s the Stalinist propaganda machine in the Soviet Union had churned out a virulent anti-semitism, thinly disguised as "anti-Zionism" and "anti-cosmopolitanism". "Rootless cosmopolitan" and "the person without a home" became code words for "Jew".

This "anti-Zionist" campaign figured prominently in the Stalinist show-trials of Rudolf Slansky and others in Eastern Europe in these years. Mordekhai Oren quotes the following interchange with the prosecutor at his own trial:

"Would you be ready to confess that in 1948, after Tito's betrayal, you met Moshe Pijade as well as Dr. Bebler in Belgrade?"

"I didn't meet Pijade in 1948, and even if I had, that would have been no crime. Nor was it a crime to meet Bebler."

"He's a Jew, and you too, and both of you are Zionists." (1)

By 1953 the stage had been set for the mass deportation of the surviving Jews of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe; an anti-semitic show-trial was due to be staged, in which five Jewish doctors from the Kremlin's own hospital were to face charges of poisoning and plotting. As with the Crimean Tatars after the war, such a mass deportation would have cost the lives of countless tens of thousands. Stalin died before the trial could be held, and his successors dropped it.

In the late 1960s a new official "anti-Zionist" campaign was launched in the Soviet Union, in the aftermath of Israel's victory in the Six Days' War over Arab states friendly to the Soviet Union. In the 1970s, as Israel inflicted another defeat on Arab states in the Yom Kippur War of 1973, and Jewish organisations internationally stepped up their campaign for Soviet Jews, the "anti-Zionist" campaign ran rampant.

Proceeding backwards from a concept of Zionism as a bulwark of anti-socialist pro-imperialism, the origins of Zionism were described in terms of a conscious plot to dupe the Jewish working class, strengthen the position of the Jewish bourgeoisie on an international scale, and advance the interests of imperialism in the Middle East.

"Political Zionism emerged at the close of the nineteenth century as the ideology,

Stan Crooke looks at the crudely anti-semitic campaign against 'Zionism' in the USSR, and finds that Western left wing 'common wisdom' on the issue has borrowed a lot from the Kremlin.

and then the practice, of the reactionary Jewish bourgeoisie, fearful of the awakening of the heroic self-consciousness amongst the Jewish proletariat." (2) Jewish workers in European countries were participating ever more actively in the class struggle and revolutionary movements. Hence, "to tear them away from this struggle, to confine them to a new, but this time "spiritual ghetto" — such was the social instruction given to Zionism by the bourgeoisie which created it." (3).

The creation of a national home for Jews was the means whereby Jewish-bourgeois hegemony over Jewish workers was to be maintained: "The powerful Jewish bourgeoisie, allied with imperialism, needed the creation of a "national home"...first and foremost in order to keep under its influence the mass of Jewish workers." (4).

But the Jewish bourgeoisie was motivated not only by fear of the growth of socialist influences. "In the West Jewish capital became such a powerful force that it was able to participate independently in the colonial division of the world." (5). This growth in the power and influence of the Jewish bourgeoisie was "one of the principal impulses behind the birth of the new Jewish nationalism — political Zionism, with its idea of a Jewish state...The emergence of political Zionism was...a consequence of the struggle of the Jewish bourgeoisie to extend its positions in the economy of the most powerful capitalist states of that time and in the economic system of world capitalism as a whole." (6).

Elsewhere, however, it was argued that the colonisation of Palestine did not represent Jewish capital *competing* with other capitalist groups, but rather *serving* them or acting as their vanguard and leader.

"The capitalists of England, the USA, France, Germany, and other countries, amongst them millionaires and multi-millionaires of Jewish origin, who had their eyes on the wealth of the Near East, helped the creation of the Zionist idea. From the very outset it was linked with the

project of the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish state as a Jewish fortress, a barrier against Asia." (7).

If the Soviet "anti-Zionist" publications of the 1970s made any reference at all to the anti-semitism of the late nineteenth century, then it was only to deny any causal relationship between it and Zionism. The Soviet Academy of Sciences' publication, "The Ideology and Practice of International Zionism", for example, mentioned in passing that "it is claimed (by "Zionist ideologues") that Zionism is nothing but a reaction against anti-semitism." (8).

The Soviet Academy of Sciences referred to the Dreyfus affair — in a footnote. It was not the anti-semites but the Zionists who exploited the affair: "The Dreyfus affair was used by the Jewish bourgeoisie of Western Europe for the consolidation of nationalist political forces in the united World Zionist Organisation, set up in 1897 in Basle." (9).

According to Soviet "anti-Zionism": "Zionism and anti-semitism are two sides of the same coin — racism. Zionists greeted the anti-semitic policies of Tsarism in its time and also the monstrous policies of genocide at the time of Hitler." (10).

On the surface, Zionism and anti-semitism might appear to be enemies. But the Soviet "anti-Zionists" probed beneath the surface. "Both Zionists and anti-semites acknowledge the "exclusiveness" of Jews: the former in their sense of superiority and being the chosen people, the latter in a totally negative sense. Zionists and anti-semites are nationalists and chauvinists. Zionists regard every non-Jew as a "goy", as anti-semitic. Anti-semites regard all Jews as Zionists. Both the one and the other see the resolution of the Jewish question in contemporary conditions as possible only through the segregation and despatch of Jews to Israel." (11).

Zionism and anti-semitism did not merely have much in common. Zionists regarded the existence of anti-semitism as being to their advantage: "Zionist ideologues have never concealed their positive attitude towards anti-semitism, in which the powerful Jewish bourgeoisie and Judaic clericalism saw a convenient means of maintaining their influence over the Jewish communities." (12). Anti-semitism is "a form of national and religious intolerance which expresses itself in a hostile attitude towards Jews," but at the same time, "this reactionary, anti-human phenomenon has been used (and still is used today) in a speculative manner by Zionists and rabbis as a bugaboo with the help of which it was intended to achieve a consolidation of the crumbling Jewish communities." (13).

Nor is this the only use which Zionists make of anti-semitism: "Zionists have used anti-semitism in the political practice of the Jewish bourgeoisie...Any manifestation against the industrialist-Jew, the banker-Jew, the merchant or the middle-man, was characterised as "anti-semitism"; protests of workers and clerks

against the most difficult conditions of employment with boss-Jews were also included under the heading of "anti-semitic" manifestations." (14).

Thus, the Jewish bourgeoisie and its ideologues have shown, and continue to show today, "great interest in the existence of anti-semitic attitudes, in the whipping up of anti-semitism at the level of state policies." (15). The idea that Zionism was a response to anti-semitism had gained ground merely because of the "efforts of the Jewish bourgeoisie and of the press which it has bought". (16). The Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign moved on to accuse Zionists of not merely using or welcoming, but promoting anti-semitism, financing anti-semitic organisations, and inciting anti-semitic pogroms:

"In 1930, at the time of a crisis in the United States, there emerged more than a hundred organisations, the time and resources of which were spent on propaganda of hatred towards Jews. (It is important to note that many of them were covertly financed by secret Zionist funds.)" (17).

In the late 1940s and early 1950s: "Secret agents of Zionism whipped up feelings of fear amongst the Jews of Syria, Libya, Tunisia, the Lebanon, Algeria, Morocco, and Egypt, from where entire city communities departed (for Israel)...In the course of several years Zionists stoked up and provoked in every way possible "useful anti-semitic activities" which helped promote the mass exit of hundreds of thousands of believers in Judaism from Arabic countries." (18).

Zionists did bomb a synagogue in Iraq to promote Jewish emigration; but the Soviet campaign extrapolated from such episodes to present the whole wave of anti-Jewish persecution in the Arab countries which followed 1948 as a conspiracy by Zionists.

In Western Europe "As early as 1950 hatred towards Jews was already very widespread in the West. The powerful Jewish bourgeoisie was far from being the least responsible for this. The many anti-semitic organisations which it created, the state machines in a series of imperialist countries which bowed down before powerful (read: Jewish) capital, and, finally, the ruling Zionist camarilla of Israel used anti-semitism in their class interests." (19).

And in the 1970s: "The propaganda of anti-semitic views in many capitalist states has kept its importance as a tool of reaction...The Jewish bourgeoisie itself and the many groups and parties which it has created in the service of powerful capital play their role in this...Anti-semitic organisations have been set up with the resources dispensed from the secret funds of Zionism." (20).

These (unspecified) anti-semitic organisations then became a further means whereby the Zionists could maintain their influence over Jewish communities: "These organisations committed provocative actions, the object of which were poor Jews and the Jewish mid-

dle strata. The highest stratum of the Jewish bourgeoisie, the finance and finance-industrial magnates, who constitute the core and the leadership of the entire system of international Zionism...had the possibility of presenting themselves as the "sole defenders" of the Jewish population...and of demonstrating on more than one occasion "Jewish solidarity" with the victims of anti-semitism." (21).

The "anti-Zionist" sections of the British far left have refrained from the more exotic allegations raised by the Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign with regard to the relationship between Zionism and anti-semitism, though the same interpretation has frequently been placed upon Herzl's statement (often quoted in the Soviet campaign) that "in Paris I achieved a freer attitude towards anti-semitism, which I began to understand and pardon."

Alleged collaboration between Zionism and fascism was one of the leitmotifs of the Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign, as —

## "The Stalinist propaganda machine churned out a virulent anti- semitism thinly disguised as 'anti- Zionism' and 'anti- cosmopolitanism' "

in a rather less hysterical form — it is in Jim Allen's play 'Perdition'.

"The Zionists welcomed the arrival in power of the fascists in Germany." (22). "What saved the Zionists? Fascism! It sounds paradoxical, but it was exactly thus." (23). The Zionists wanted Jews to leave Germany, and so too did the Nazis: "The plans of the fascist and Zionist leaders coincided: the fascists planned to drive the Jews out of German "living space", and the Zionists wanted to realise their goal at the expense of those Jews driven out." (24).

(Cf. "Perdition": "The Nazis wanted the Jews out of Europe and the Zionist leaders were only too happy to oblige — providing they went to Palestine. Thus, in form, if not in essence, the interests of Zionism and Nazism coincided." (25).

The Zionist-Nazi links which the Soviet campaign claimed to have uncovered were merely a continuation of the traditional alliance between Zionism and anti-semitism in general: "We know that Zionism always saw in anti-semitism an ally in the achievement of its goals. It was no coincidence that a mutual understanding emerged between the Nazis, who horribly persecuted Jews, and the Zionists, who played the role of "saviours" of the

Jews." (26). Hence it came about that Zionists "co-operated with Hitlerites and helped them to destroy millions of Jewish lives, attempting to save only the capitalists. The Zionists always regarded anti-semitism, and still do so, as an important means of forcing all Jews to leave their countries and escape to the "Promised Land" in Israel. (27).

(Cf. "Perdition": "Without anti-semitism there would be no Zionism. Why emigrate to Palestine when you are doing all right in New York, Berlin, or London?...Then Hitler arrived to confirm the Zionist rationale that assimilation would not work." (28).

There was, moreover, an overlap between the theories of Zionism and fascism: "As regards the theory of "racial purity", the treatises on "lower" and "higher" peoples, the concepts of the "Aryan" and the "superman", here there is really not a little in common between the Zionists and the fascists." (29). The theories of various "Zionist ideologues" did not differ "at all from the views on racial exclusiveness to be found in the "collected works" of Hitler, Rosenberg, and other fascist theoreticians." (30). "Zionism is akin to Nazism" (31) because "the ideologues of Zionism and apartheid are related to it (Nazism), (and) are merely contemporary variations of the myth (the Nazi "myth of the twentieth century" about the supposedly innate inequality of people and races" (32).

(Cf. "Perdition": "They (the Zionist leaders) entered into secret negotiations with the Nazis, arguing that they too believed in racial exclusiveness..." "Are you saying that the German Zionists accepted the Nazi concept of race?" "No, but they did accept racial separateness." (33).

Thus it was that Zionism and fascism ended up collaborating with one another: "The monstrous plans of the fascist animals, based on the inhuman and racist ideology of Hitlerism, met with the co-operation and support of other racists — Zionists." (34). "Co-operation between the Zionists and Hitlerites spread to the occupied territories of the USSR. The Zionists helped uncover those of Jewish origin who were hiding from the Gestapo and the police, handed them over to the fascists, and took part in the mass slaughter of Jews." (35). "It has become known that Polish Zionists who have now fled to Israel worked side-by-side with the Gestapo and the Nazi military intelligence service during the war." (36).

(Cf. "Perdition": "The fact is, Doctor Yaron, your daily contacts with Eichmann and the SS, the step-by-step compliance and co-operation with the German and Hungarian fascists ultimately led to out-and-out collaboration." (37).

The Zionists, claimed the Soviet campaign, were not concerned about the fate of Jews living (and dying) in Germany under Nazi rule: "The Zionists were completely unconcerned with the interests of the German Jews." (38). The fate of the Jews in Nazi Germany "did not at all alarm the Zionists during the years of the

war against fascism. And this in a situation where the Jews were the victims of atrocious terror and persecution." (39). For the Zionists, creating a Jewish homeland in Palestine was more important than saving Jewish lives: "The Zionists reconciled themselves to the camps and the ghettos, to the extermination of millions of Jews...The Zionists needed the corpses of these Jews because across them lay the road out of the occupied countries and into Palestine. The Jews who were allowed to be victims of fascism were 'proof'...of the necessity of the creation of a Jewish state." (40). The attitude of the Zionists was: "let millions (of Jews) drown in blood if there remains one road open for hundreds of thousands — to Palestine." (41).

(Cf. "Perdition": "Doctor Kastner was a fanatical Zionist...he would have sacrificed a thousand or a hundred thousand of his blood to achieve his political goal." (42). "Had the refugee problem been divorced from Palestine, international pressure and sympathy for a Jewish state would have evaporated." "To him (Kastner) this act of collaboration was justified in terms of building the Jewish Homeland." (43).

The only Jews whom the Zionists were concerned to save from fascism were the wealthy — they cared nothing for German Jews "with the exception of German Jew-capitalists, who, as soon as Hitler came to power, transferred their capital to Swiss and German banks." (44).

Cf. "Perdition": "You chose suitable candidates for salvation, did you not? The rich, the 'prominents', and the Zionist functionaries." (45).

The Zionists were prepared to let the weak go to their deaths so that only the strong would be left to inhabit Israel: "With the assistance of the Nazis, the so-called 'selection' of the settlers was achieved, the citizens of the future Israel. 'The dust of the old world' was turned into ashes of the concentration camps." (46).

Cf. "Perdition": "Once the extermination programme began, it then became a salvaging operation: the salvation of the 'best biological material'...(which) would help build the Jewish homeland in Palestine." (47).

Financial greed was cited as a further factor behind the collaboration with the Nazis: "Zionist leaders over the seas made friendly agreements with Hitler and consented to the extermination of hundreds of thousands of Jews...At a time when the ovens of Buchenwald and other death camps were burning hundreds of thousands of Jews, American millionaires and multi-millionaires of Jewish nationality traded with fascist Germany via 'neutral' middlemen, supplying it with weapons and credit." (48).

Similar themes were a pronounced feature of earlier versions of "Perdition": "phrases which stereotyped Jews in terms of financial dealing and Christian rhetoric also disappeared (from later versions of the play). For example:... 'Was it (Israel) worth it? Was the purchase price of half a

million Jews worth it?'... 'The road to Golgotha (which) passes along Park Avenue' where rich American Jews in 'fur-lined dug-outs' hurl contributions at Israel." (49).

Without the assistance of the Zionists, the Nazis could not have carried out their extermination programme: "Could the fascists have managed without their Zionist assistants? This question can be answered only by clarifying the role of the Zionist leaders in the extermination of the Jews of Europe. Their assistance gave the fascists the possibility of exterminating hundreds of thousands of Jews at the hands of dozens or a few hundred selected killers." (50).

Cf. "Perdition": "What made it (the Holocaust) possible was the presence of Jewish leaders who carried out the instructions of the Nazis." (51).

Particularly important in this respect was the role of the "Judenrate" (Jewish Councils): "The Judenrate sincerely and

## "Facile analogies now prevalent on the British left featured constantly in the Soviet campaign"

exactly carried out all the orders of the fascists, even orders about the physical mass elimination of the Jewish population...In the shape of the Judenrate the activities of the Zionists were legalised and their leaders became loyal executors of fascist policies." (52).

Cf. "Perdition": "Co-operation ended and collaboration began when the Judenrate participated in the killing operation...The majority of Jewish leaders acted as filing clerks in the extermination process, making up the lists for deportation, providing ghetto police to seize Jews and put them on trains." (53).

The Zionists also attempted to prevent any opposition to the Nazi policies: "Wherever the inhabitants of the ghettos who were condemned to death succeeded in organising uprisings against the fascists, especially in Warsaw in 1943, the Zionists helped the Germans frustrate the uprisings, or crush them where they occurred" (54) — but the Warsaw uprising was in fact led by a Zionist!

Cf. "Perdition": "When Jewish workers went out onto the streets joining forces with the German working class to fight the Brownshirts, most of the Zionist leaders waved olive-branches and condemned all anti-Nazi activity." (55).

In addition, the Zionists spied on behalf of the Nazis: "In many cases the Zionists served as a 'fifth column' for Hitler, their international network was used in pursuit of the goal of establishing the world domination of Nazi Germany." (56). In a number of countries they presented themselves as victims of German fascism and "introduced themselves into the state and economic apparatus of the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition and betrayed secret information to the Abwehr." (57).

Cf. "Perdition": "What did the Zionists have to offer in return?" "Co-operation. Even to the extent of providing the Nazis with intelligence information." "You mean spying for them?" "Yes". (58).

The central message of the Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign in relation to the alleged Zionist-Nazi collaboration was clear: "The Zionist crimes in the ghettos and the death camps must be completely uncovered, so that it can be recognised at what price it was that the state of Israel was created...That the state of Israel was created by hands warmed in Jewish blood is indisputable." (59). Here, as on so many other points, Jim Allen (and his camp-followers in the Socialist Workers Party) is of a similar opinion: "Perdition is the most lethal attack on Zionism ever written because it touches at the heart of the most abiding myth of modern history, the Holocaust; because it says quite plainly that privileged Jewish leaders collaborated in the extermination of their own kind in order to help bring about a Zionist state." (60).

### The Zionist state

"There is an unbroken continuity from the earliest Zionist writings, through Zionism's criminal response to the threat of Nazism, to its present policies towards the Palestinian people," claims the avowedly Trotskyist newspaper "Socialist Action". The Socialist Workers' Party would be of the same opinion. And so too was the Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign.

"Zionism, being the official ideology and policy of the ruling Israeli circles, created a racist state which oppresses the people of this country and represents a constant source of danger for its Arab neighbours...Racism is the basis of the domestic policies of Israel as well." (61). Immediately upon the creation of the state of Israel, "Zionism, a dangerous, fascistic force reminiscent of the Black Hundreds, a doctrine which is reactionary and expansionist by its very nature, became the ideology of its ruling circles." (62). "Such is the irony of history: the Zionist rulers of Israel carry out the very same policies of genocide in relation to the Arabs as those which were carried out by the Hitlerites in relation to the Jews." (63).

The three factors which Soviet "anti-Zionism" had discovered behind the emergence of Zionism — the devilish cunning of the Jewish bourgeoisie in its efforts to maintain control over the Jewish working class, the participation in imperialist expansion by the Jewish



bourgeoisie as an independent force, and the role of the Jewish bourgeoisie as the vanguard of imperialism in general — likewise lay behind the creation of the state of Israel: "The monopoly Jewish bourgeoisie established control over Jewish workers in different countries of the world, strengthened its positions in the major capitalist countries, and achieved an extension of colonial expansion in Asia and Africa. The most important instrument in the realisation of these tasks of the Jewish monopoly bourgeoisie in contemporary conditions is the state of Israel, which is ruled by Zionists — an inseparable part of international Zionism." (64).

"In a situation where the colonial system was collapsing, imperialism began feverishly to search after and work out new forms and methods for the achievement of expansionist policies. The state of Israel was created just at the time when the waves of the rising national liberation movement in Asia and Africa began to destroy the colonial empire (65). The creation of Israel was thus "the creation of a strategic "buffer" between Europe and Asia, an advance outpost of the struggle against communism and the national liberation movement." (66). You would hardly know that Israel got its weapons for the 1948 war from Soviet-controlled Czechoslovakia; that the USSR was the first state to recognise Israel; that the left-Zionist group Mapam, very influential in the Zionist armed forces in 1948, ardently supported the Soviet Union; that the CIA was extremely worried about what it saw as the leftist and pro-USSR tinge of Israeli politics after 1948; or that the British Empire, through Arab armies largely controlled by Britain, made war on Israel in 1948.

Israel continues to fulfil the same function today: "Israel was and remains so today an important tool in the hands of imperialism in the struggle against the national liberation movement of the Arab countries, in the struggle for control over the oil of the Arab East." (67). It is "an advance outpost of the imperialism of the United States in the Near East...To this state has been allotted the role of being a co-participant in carrying out the neo-colonial policies of the imperialist powers in the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America." (68). It has the job of "acting as a gendarme in armed conflict against the Arab peoples". (69) and performs a similar function in newly created states as well: "It must be noted that Israel actively carries out its mission as an agent of imperialism in young developing states." (70).

Apart from acting on behalf of imperialism in general, Israel also acts on behalf of the Jewish bourgeoisie in particular: "With the aid of the new Zionist political programme, the monopoly Jewish bourgeoisie attempts to continue the realisation of its class tasks, but on a more extensive basis, i.e. on the basis of the state of Israel." (71). Israel therefore exists "for the defence of the strategic and economic interests of the imperialist

powers and also for the colonial expansion of the powerful Jewish bourgeoisie." (72). Although Israel "acts everywhere as a tool of imperialism, at the same time it pursues its own goals, flowing out of the Zionist doctrine and the fantastic plan of the creation of a "Jewish Empire" or a "Great Israel"." (73).

And Israel was not just an aggressive but small sub-imperialist state. The great Jewish power behind it enabled it to act as the veritable vanguard of imperialism.

Israel's own resources did not allow it to pursue policies of economic expansion into "Third World" countries, but "in such cases international Zionist capital comes to its assistance." (74). This has an impact on the nature of the Israeli state: "The financial-economic support of Israel on the part of international Zionist circles transforms it into a parasite-state." (75). This economic backing also means that "the economy of Israel is in reality controlled by the internationalist Zionist corporation, by Zionist capital of the USA, England, France, and a series of other countries." (76). Thus, "the nationalistic ruling stratum of Israel is in fact part of the international Zionist concern, based in New York and controlled from the United States." (77).

The Soviet "anti-Zionist" presentation of Israel as an outpost of imperialism differed from the British left on one point — to the disadvantage of the left. The Kremlin hacks did write about class struggle within Israel. "The working class of Israel responds to increased exploitation and oppression by the traditional method of the proletariat — strikes. In the struggle for its rights and interests, it is forced to oppose not only the bosses and the government, but also the leadership of the Histadrut." (78).

### Israel and South Africa

Israel and South Africa are vastly different societies. Israel is a Jewish nation state in which there exists a comprehensive Jewish society divided along class lines. Whilst Arabs living in Israel face institutionalised discrimination and Arabs living in the occupied territories are denied basic rights (above all, the right to a state), these factors are separate from the existence of the Israeli state. In South Africa, on the other hand, a minority white population exists as a ruling caste, resting on the submergence and helotry of a numerically much larger black population. To equate Israel with South Africa is to blot out reality. But the equation is nonetheless a popular one on the British left, and also figured in the Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign: "Israel has a special relationship of the closest kind with South Africa. Israel and South Africa are linked to one another by economic, political, military, and ideological ties...Israel and South Africa are linked by a common racist ideology and practice, and by reactionary domestic and foreign policies...The union of the racists of Israel and South Africa is a massive threat to the African peoples and to the whole of humanity." (79).

Facile analogies, now prevalent on the British left, featured constantly in the Soviet campaign. Zionism and apartheid possessed "common ideological roots". (80). In both Israel and South Africa, "racial-biological doctrines have been raised to the level of an official ideology and of state policies, in accordance with which people are divided into the "elect" and the banished. (81). Both Zionism and apartheid had common religious roots: the former in the Judaic concept of the "chosen people", and the latter in the Calvinist notions of "pre-destination" and the elect. Both states were also linked with imperialism, both in terms of their historical origins and their current policies: "in view of their important strategic position and wealth of national resources, South Africa and Palestine had long attracted the attention of the colonisers." (82). Hence, "in the South of Africa, in the Republic of South Africa, and in Palestine, close to the Suez Canal, there arose two platforms of world imperialism, summoned...to put a check to the national-liberation movement of the peoples." (83).

The immigration policies of the two states were cited as proof of a common racism: "In South Africa the immigration of whites is encouraged, in Israel the immigration of Jews from developed countries, mainly European ones." (84). But the Israeli Law of Return, which allows any Jew in the world to go to Israel and claim Israeli citizenship, and which is denounced by Socialist Worker and Socialist Action as proof of the racist essence of the Israeli state, was attacked not as racism but from a very different point of view. It was "gross interference in the internal affairs of foreign states." (85). "Zionist immigration goes beyond the boundaries of the competences of the state of Israel insofar as it involves interference in the internal affairs of other states where Jews live." (86).

It was not by chance that "the most fervent passions of love are aroused by Zionist Israel and racist South Africa among neo-Nazis, unreconstructed Hitlerites, and right-wingers in the Federal Republic of Germany (87).

The Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign did differ from the Far Left's frequent equating of Israel and South Africa in that it was rather more imaginative in discovering supposed parallels. It was, after all, no coincidence that "the entire history of South Africa and Palestine reveals very many identical events and common traits," (88) the most notable ones being:

- In 1880, in the Cape Colony, the first South African nationalist party had been founded; in the same year the first Zionist organisation was set up in Russia; the former advocated separate development for Blacks; the latter opposed assimilation.

- The turn of the century was a period of conflict between the Boers and the British, resulting in the Boer War; at the same time inter-imperialist rivalries for colonies became more acute, "above all

between British imperial capital and international Jewish capital." (89).

•In the opening years of the century both Zionism and South African nationalism used social demagoguery to attract support: "all possible variants of petty-bourgeois socialism became common in Zionism, just as in South Africa there was national socialism and labourite reformist socialism." (90).

•Both the Zionists and the African nationalists exploited the 1914-18 war, the former obtaining the Balfour Declaration through exploiting the contradictions between the imperialist powers, and the latter through being prepared to organise armed revolt against Britain in order to obtain concessions.

•After the war "both African nationalism and Zionism ever more overtly became the right flank of imperialism, together with fascism." (91).

•In the inter-war years "the Afrikaner bourgeoisie and international Jewish capital created a series of secret organisations, in their own way centralised Mafias." (92).

•In the 1939-45 war both the Zionists and the South African nationalists were "close in spirit to Hitler (93); whilst "English soldiers died on the battlefields, fighting against the Nazis who had set themselves the goal of exterminating the Jews, Zionist extremists did not stop even at the use of terror against the English authorities" (94); the South African nationalists "attempted in an analogous manner to use the war situation to pursue anti-English goals, in order to strengthen their position in the country." (95).

•Immediately after the close of the war Zionism allied itself with American imperialism, and so too did the South African nationalists, in order to "break free of dependence on the British Empire. The Empire lost control over the Palestine problem, and its influence over South Africa fell sharply." (96).

•The state of Israel was proclaimed on 14 May 1948; on 26 May 1948, the Nationalist Party came to power in South Africa. In this evil alliance, however, the leading role belonged as ever to the Zionist conspiracy.

"By 1945...Jewish immigrants (to South Africa), with the support of international Zionist capital, had rapidly occupied the key positions in the economy and trade, and had begun to extract profits from the system of racial inequality dominant in the country." (97). And within a matter of years "the racists (of South Africa) in reality collapsed into economic dependence on the Zionists." (98).

### Zionism and the Soviet Union

In pre-revolutionary Russia, claimed the Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign, Zionism collaborated with Tsarism as a result of their mutually shared interests: "Tsarism and Zionism had an interest in the maintenance of anti-semitism and in the attempts to tear away the Jewish masses from the working class movement, which was gaining in strength." (99). The

Zionists "covertly did their utmost in cooperation with reactionary monarchists to tear away workers of Jewish nationality from unity with the workers of Russia." (100). Such was the relationship between Zionism and Tsarism that "Herzl himself met with the Tsarist Minister of the Interior, von Plehve." (That the meeting nearly led to a split in the Zionist movement in Russia was not mentioned). The Zionists also benefited from the pogroms: "The pogroms of the Black Hundreds forced some Jewish workers to emigrate to Palestine...These pogroms were led by the monarchists, but the Zionists amassed the political capital." (101).

Zionist anti-Soviet activities began "in the very first days of the existence of Soviet power." (102). In the civil war "they acted as allies of the counter-revolution...They created Zionist military units which conducted an armed struggle against the Soviet republic." (103). So too did the left variants of Zionism: "the social-Zionist parties, in conjunction with other Zionist organisations, actively participated in the struggle of the united forces of counter-revolution and foreign intervention against the young Soviet state." (104). (We look in vain for any mention of the Zionists who supported the Russian Revolution and fought in the Red Army alongside of the Bolsheviks). The motivation of the Zionists in supporting the Whites was that "they needed the anti-semitism of the counter-revolution in order to force Jewish workers to side with the Zionists and to emigrate to Palestine as a way of escaping the pogroms." (105).

In the years following the civil war "Zionists made anti-sovietism, anti-communism, the main content of all their activity." (106). As a result of the "open hostility towards Soviet power on the part of the Zionist organisations, their active anti-Soviet hostility, the Soviet organs, taking into consideration the demands of the broad masses of Soviet Jews, were obliged to take the decision to ban the functioning of Jewish (and also other) nationalist parties and organisations (107). In fact left Zionists continued legal activity in the USSR until 1927. It was this "pathological anti-communism and anti-sovietism" on the part of the Zionists (108) which explained their collaboration with the Nazis in these years: "The Zionists saw in fascism the force which, by their calculations, was capable of...destroying the Soviet power which was so hated by international Zionism and smashing the international communist and workers' movement" (109).

Hostility towards the Soviet Union remains a central feature of Zionism today: "Zionism and anti-communism, Zionism and anti-sovietism — these concepts are inseparable. This is proven by the whole history of Zionism, and by its contemporary practice." (110). Today, "the main direction of the struggle of international Zionism against the revolutionary forces of the world is the struggle against the USSR." (111). It must not be forgotten that "the main thrust of Zionism is struggle against the USSR, against its

Leninist foreign and domestic policies, against Marxist-Leninist ideology and Soviet culture. The goal of the Zionists is to discredit anything to do with the Soviet Union, the basic content of their propaganda is unprecedented slandering of the Leninist politics of the Communist Party." (112).

By pursuing this anti-Soviet campaign, Zionism, again, acts in the interests of imperialism: "Imperialism bestows upon Zionism a special role in the subversive activities directed against the USSR." (113). Hence the readiness of "American and other millionaires and multimillionaires...to finance such ideological actions and activities of espionage and diversion." (114). Especially important in the financing of these anti-Soviet activities is the role of the "powerful Jewish nationalist bourgeoisie (which) makes available massive resources for the financing of various operations of an ideological order and also for the financing of the activities of anti-communist and anti-Soviet centres in different regions of the world." (115).

One last piece of evidence adduced by the Soviet campaign as proof of Zionism's innate hostility towards the Soviet Union was its record of collaboration with Trotskyism. In the late 1920s, "the Zionists looked for support amongst the defeated anti-Leninist factional groupings, amongst the Trotskyite oppositionists." (116). It was therefore "far from being a coincidence that the Zionist newspaper "Tayit" addressed itself to Trotsky in 1927, calling him "our brother", and inviting the Trotskyites to "unity of action". (117). In the attempts to undermine socialism in Czechoslovakia Zionists worked hand-in-glove with the Trotskyites: "...with the remnants of bourgeois parties which emerged from the underground, with right-wing social-democracy, with "national-communists", with Trotskyites." (118). Contemporary Zionism continues to co-operate with "extremists and openly fascist forces, and to maintain at the same time contacts and close links with Trotskyites and revisionists of all shades." (119). Today, "Zionism closely co-operates with many other battalions of anti-communism — neo-fascists, Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists, Horthyite Ustashi, South African racists, Trotskyites, and Maoists." (120).

Even this kind of cant finds an echo on the British far left. It was, after all, the Workers' Revolutionary Party, backed up by some sympathetic Labour Party members, which declared with editorial authority: "The Zionist connection between these so-called "lefts" in the Labour Party (i.e. Socialist Organiser) right through to Thatcher and Reagan's White House is there for all to see in its unprincipled nakedness." (121).

### Zionism and American imperialism

The Kremlin argued: "The real masters of international Zionism who finance and inspire the aggression of Israel against Arab

# Babiy Yar

**This poem, powerfully denouncing Russian anti-semitism, was published by Yergery Yertushenko during Khrushchev's thaw.**

Over Babiy Yar  
there are no memorials.  
The steep hillside like a rough inscription.  
I am frightened.  
Today I am as old as the Jewish race.  
I seem to myself a Jew at this moment.  
I, wandering in Egypt.  
I, crucified. I perishing.  
Even today the mark of the nails.  
I think also of Dreyfus. I am he.  
The Philistine my judge and my accuser.  
Cut off by bars and cornered,  
ringed round, spat at, lied about;  
the screaming ladies with the Brussels lace  
poke me in the face with parasols.  
I am also a boy in Belostok,  
the dropping blood spreads across the floor,  
the public-bar heroes are rioting  
in an equal stench of garlic and of drink.  
I have no strength, go spinning from a boot,  
shriek useless prayers that they don't listen to;  
with a cackle of 'Thrash the kikes and save Russia!'  
the corn-chandler is beating up my mother.  
I seem to myself like Anna Frank  
to be transparent as an April twig  
and am in love, I have no need for words,  
I need for us to look at one another.  
How little we have to see or to smell

separated from foliage and the sky,  
how much, how much in the dark room gently  
embracing each other.  
They're coming. Don't be afraid.  
The booming and banging of the spring.  
It's coming this way. Come to me.  
Quickly, give me your lips.  
They're battering in the door. Roar of the ice.

Over Babiy Yar  
rustle of the wild grass.  
The trees look threatening, look like judges.  
And everything is one silent cry.  
Taking my hat off  
I feel myself slowly going grey.  
And I am one silent cry  
over the many thousands of the buried;  
am every old man killed here,  
every child killed here.  
O my Russian people, I know you.  
Your nature is international.  
Foul hands rattle your clean name.  
I know the goodness of my country.  
How horrible it is that pompous title  
the anti-semites calmly call themselves,  
Society of the Russian Race.  
No part of me can ever forget it.  
When the last anti-semiter on the earth  
is buried for ever  
let the International ring out.  
No Jewish blood runs among my blood,  
but I am as bitterly and hardly hated  
by every anti-semiter  
as if I were a Jew. By this  
I am a Russian.

countries and the anti-communist, anti-Soviet activity of Zionist organisations, are the most powerful monopolies and banks of the USA and other countries, that is, the driving forces of contemporary imperialism." (140). But this begs the question of who exerts the major influence and control over "the most powerful monopolies and banks of the USA".

"The existence in the United States of the most numerous grouping in the world of capitalists of Jewish origin...is the most important factor determining the specific nature of American Zionism...About 20% of American millionaires are Jews, although, as is well known, the proportion of Americans of Jewish origin does not exceed 3% of the entire population of the USA." (141). American Zionism, therefore, constitutes "a mighty and powerful detachment of international Zionism, by virtue of both its numbers and also its financial-political possibilities." (142). In the American political arena it thus performs a dual

function: "as spokesperson of the interests of one of the groupings of the bourgeoisie of the USA, playing no small role in circles which determine the policies of Washington, and as part of international Zionism, closely connected with its other groupings." (143).

"The powerful Jewish bourgeoisie is far from occupying the lowest position in the financial oligarchy of the USA." (144). "The position of the middle-man in relation to the organisation of major long-term loans is in reality monopolised by seventeen of the most powerful Wall Street firms. The majority of them belong either partially or entirely to the powerful Jewish bourgeoisie. (145). "A series of monopolies which have contracts with the Pentagon are controlled by the Zionists. The Lazard brothers, for example, who are members of the American Jewish Committee, control the aviation company "Lockheed", 90% of the work of which is for the Pentagon. Zionists have an entrenched position in the "General Dynamics" corporation as well...It is necessary to say that these and other firms

with contracts with the Pentagon are the main suppliers of weapons to Israel." (146).

"American Zionists dispose of massive financial resources and a far-reaching network of organisations. They possess a powerful propaganda apparatus and control a significant share of the means of mass communication in the country." (147).

Other spheres of influence of Zionism in America include the CIA ("The interests of the powerful Jewish bourgeoisie and other groupings of finance capital are interlaced in the secret service just as in other spheres of politics, economics and ideology." (148), primaries for the selection of Presidential candidates ("The participation of Zionist capital in the financing of the primary campaigns and in working out the platforms in the primaries of the candidates for President — this phenomenon is characteristic of political life in the USA" (149)), and the Mafia ("The leadership of the Mafia was (at the time of Al Capone) closely linked with

Zionists and international Zionism, and some Zionists...became its leaders." (150).

It is therefore far from clear who is the tail and who is the dog. American Zionism might be characterised by its loyalty to the interests of American imperialism, but at the same time it is also the driving force behind it: "Zionism has now become one of the most influential forces in the American political arena...The union of the Zionists with different political forces in the USA, expressing the interests of the entire American ruling class, significantly strengthens the possibilities of Zionism exerting an influence on the policies of Washington." (151). Dependent on imperialism in the opening years of the century, a junior partner of imperialism after the creation of Israel, and now a major influence on international politics and on imperialism itself — such was the evolution of Zionism mapped out, in the tradition of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, by the Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign.

### The Stalinist Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

The original version of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion was published in Russia in 1903 by Pavel Krushevan. Supposedly the record of a meeting held in Basle in 1897 at the time of the first Zionist Congress, in which the participants plotted to achieve world domination, this piece of fiction quickly became a warrant for anti-semitic pogroms, often organised directly by the Tsarist secret police. The major themes of the forgery were: Jews controlled and manipulated the media in order to gain in power; Jews used cunning and guile to strengthen their position in society; international finance and banking were under Jewish control; Jews aspired to world domination, using these methods of control of the media, cunning and deceit, and control over international finance; this aim was to be achieved in partnership with the Freemasons.

The Soviet "anti-Zionist" campaign of the 1970s was tantamount to an updated version of these Protocols. The leitmotifs of the Tsarist anti-semitic forgery were reproduced seventy years later under the guise of "Marxism-Leninism", coupled with hypocritical denunciations of anti-semitism.

Zionist control over and influence on the mass media was not confined to the United States, or to the Czechoslovakia of 1968, but was portrayed as a general characteristic of international Zionism: "In many bourgeois countries, Zionist organisations have implanted their 'cadres' and 'sympathisers' into the central press agencies, the editorial offices of radio and television, into the cinema, the sciences, arts, and literature. Using these powerful levers, the Zionists influence public opinion, overtly or covertly preaching their ideas, skirting round in silence or distorting anything which contradicts their ideology in the slightest." (152).

(The author of "Perdition" would be in

agreement with such a point of view: "Most of the thirty minutes of his (Jim Allen's) talk was taken up...with a crude and simplistic account of what he continually termed the "conspiracy" (Zionist, not Jewish, he assured us) to stop his play being shown...He drew the fantastic conclusion that the "Zionists" had greater access to the top media people than the British ruling class." (153).

Zionism exerts "major, sometimes overwhelming, influence on means of mass communication, culture, and the state-administrative apparatus of the major capitalist states." It focuses its attention "in particular on the cinema, television, radio and daily newspapers." (154). As a result of this control over "means of mass communication, the "intellectual industries" and cultural institutions... Zionism is an indispensable part of the capitalist world, in which "mass culture" fulfills precisely expressed functions of the ideological armoury of the bourgeoisie." (155).

The implantation of Zionist "cadres" and "sympathisers" into the media throughout the world, and the Zionist subversion in the "socialist" states, were not the only examples of Zionist cunning and guile dealt with in the more modern version of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. Zionists, for example, were not always open about their activities: "Analysing the organisational labyrinth of international Zionism is very complicated. This is to be explained by several factors. Firstly, the secret of the organisational structure is carefully concealed from the uninitiated." (156). Another factor lies in the fact that "many Zionist organisations...prefer to appear in the guise of "Jewish", "religious", "socialist", "benevolent", "cultural", "educational", "scientific" leagues, funds, unions, groups, and parties" (157). That they do not call themselves "Zionist" is merely a matter of "tactics, of the means whereby to realise the policies of the Jewish nationalist bourgeoisie." (158).

Synagogues are one example of institutions used as a cover for Zionist activities: "Where Zionist political organisations are unable to exist legally, such as in the countries of socialism, they (the Zionists) come running to the services of the synagogues and the rabbis for the purpose of pursuing their subversive activities and recruiting supporters from amongst the believers." (159). Cultural activities can also be another cover for Zionist subversion: "The events in Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1967-8 and also the trials in Leningrad, Riga and Kishinev in 1970 and 1971 bear witness to the fact that the "cultural" activity of Zionists is far from being the harmless affair that they would like to present it as." (160). Literature is likewise used for the propagation of Zionism: "Zionist and pro-Zionist writers attempt to impose upon people false, anti-scientific and anti-historical conceptions which are of benefit to Zionism. As fairly typical examples it is possible to name such writers as Kingsley Amis, Bernard Malamud, Eugene

Ionesco, and many others." (161).

Zionism, in short, is prepared to resort to any form of duplicity in pursuit of its goals: "Zionism uses particularly dirty and provocative methods in this struggle for people's minds. Deception, diversions, espionage, terror, blackmail, bribery, intimidation, falsification, playing on family and national sentiments, unbridled chauvinism — this is a far from complete list of the methods of Zionist propaganda and practice." (162).

Also: "Over the years, Zionism changed into a powerful international concern. The international Zionist corporation...its countless branches and subsidiaries...is one of the most powerful units of finance capital." (163). The economic basis of Zionism is "the most powerful financial industrial-monopolies of the West...Economic conferences of Jewish millionaires are capital united on a world scale, used to exert pressure on states and governments in a series of capitalist countries in pursuit of political goals" (164). The Zionist organisations are controlled by the powerful Jewish bourgeoisie: "in the leadership of the Zionist organisations there has never been, nor is there now, a single worker or peasant; instead, at all levels of the Zionist hierarchy are rabbis, millionaires, bankers, stock-brokers, speculators representatives of monopolies, etc." (165).

The same principle also applies to Judaism, from which according to the "anti-Zionist" campaign, the racist Zionist concept of "the chosen people" is derived (166): "Wherever the rabbis rule together with the Zionists, everything is subordinate to one goal — serving the interests of capital. Therefore, as a rule, the leading roles in religious communities not only in Israel but also in the USA and other capitalist countries are played by wealthy people: businessmen, directors of companies, financial bosses." (167).

The "anti-Zionist" campaign replaced the term "Jewish finance capital" of traditional anti-semitism with the supposedly more Marxist-sounding term "Zionist capital": "In speaking of Zionism we do not stress by chance that this is the creation of imperialism, of the powerful Jewish bourgeoisie which today constitutes an international unification of powerful finance capital. It is not only family and marriage ties which have made possible the coming together of the families of the representatives of the Jewish bourgeoisie. First and foremost they are united today by a common ideology — Zionism — and a common practice — providing assistance to Israel and to Zionist organisations throughout the world. Therefore the formulation used in relation to this "international of financiers" by Soviet and foreign Marxist researchers is fully appropriate: Zionist capital." (168).

The discovery of "Zionist capital" by the "anti-Zionist" campaign not only allowed a traditional anti-semitic theme to be revived in a "Marxist" guise, but also added to the wildly incoherent amalgam of "Zionism", the "powerful Jewish



bourgeoisie", the "international Zionist concern", and support for Israel (a characteristic associated only with the "powerful Jewish bourgeoisie" rather than Jews in general), as well as fitting in with the final and over-arching theme of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion: the striving for world domination.

Zionism, which was "called into life at the will of the Jewish bourgeoisie" (169), knows of "ways in and out of the corridors of power of which the uninitiated are ignorant." (170). Apart from its influential position in the politics and economies of the United States and Western Europe, and its subversive activities in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, "the powerful Jewish bourgeoisie is firmly entrenched in Spain and Portugal, in the economies of a series of Latin American countries, in Australia and New Zealand. Its sphere of influence extends to the countries of Asia as well, including Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines, and Malaysia. As a rule, this involves representatives of families which are involved in a series of countries and also in several continents." (171). In Latin America, for example, where "the Jewish bourgeoisie is encouraged by foreign capital, which has transformed it into its base in line with not only its economic but also its political plan" (172), "banks and also securities in Brazil,

Mexico, Argentina, Columbia, Venezuela, and also other countries as well belong to pro-Zionist capital...The powerful Zionist bourgeoisie of the USA plays the role in Latin America of the most aggressive detachment of North American imperialism." (173).

The organisational structure of international Zionism is based on "subsidies of Zionist bankers and other capitalists, (through which) was created an extensive extra-state and even supra-state system of organisations entangling, like a cobweb, many capitalist states which spread out their tentacles into the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. To this system belongs first and foremost the World Zionist Organisation and the World Jewish Congress." (174).

It is therefore "no exaggeration to say that the system of organisations of international Zionism (which extends throughout the entire world and, at the same time, is strongly centralised) united with a powerful financial-economic base in the shape of the monopoly bourgeoisie of Jewish origin...is the main source of strength and activity of Zionist influence on the politics of a series of leading capitalist states. At present, international Zionism...given the depth of its penetration into the most variegated spheres of political, economic, and social life of the capitalist countries, has no equal amongst

the other bourgeois-nationalist and anti-communist currents and detachments of world reaction." (175).

International Zionism is not satisfied with merely having no equal in the imperialist world. It strives for world power, in the traditions of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion: "The representatives of international Zionist capital openly aspire to world domination, although they mask their ambitions of world conquest by way of vague phrases about 'ethical socialism'." (176). Going beyond the original version of the Protocols, however, the more modern version suggests that this goal has already been achieved (albeit only outside the borders of the vigilantly "anti-Zionist" "socialist" countries): "Too much bears witness to the fact that in the sum of various factors — economic, political, ideological, social, religious, societal, etc. — which determine the course of action of the ruling circles of the leading capitalist states, the cosmopolitan Jewish bourgeoisie, and Zionist capital (closely linked with Judaic clericalism) emerge as significantly more organised, more ambitious, and more powerful than any other influential monopoly (family, banking, regional) groups and groupings of the financial oligarchy." (177).

None of this, of course, was anti-semitism. It was simply "anti-Zionism."

# FOOTNOTES

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V. Skurlatov (1975): "Zionism and Apartheid".

R. Brodsky/Y. Shulmeister (1976): "Zionism — A Tool of Reaction".

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M. Mitin et al. (1978): "The Ideology and Practice of International Zionism".

D. Soifer (1980): "The Collapse of Zionist Theories."

1. Prisonnier Politique a Prague, Mordechai Oren, quoted in Givet;

2. Soifer, p.5.

3. Bolshakov, p.8.

4. Bolshakov, p.8.

5. Skurlatov, p.39.

6. Kiselev, p.6.

7. Soifer, p.5.

8. Mitin, p.54.

9. Mitin, p.58, footnote.

10. Soifer, p.21.

11. Soifer, p.12.

12. Mitin, p.58.

13. Mitin, p.19.

14. Mitin, p.58.

15. Mitin, p.59.

16. Mitin, p.59.

17. Mints, p.165.

18. Mints, p.169.

19. Mints, p.169.

20. Mitin, p.62.

21. Mitin, p.62.

22. Soifer, p.42.

23. Brodsky, p.75.

24. Brodsky, p.82.

25. Allen, p.21.

26. Mitin, p.224.

27. Soifer, p.38.

28. Allen, p.36.

29. Bolshakov, p.27.

30. Brodsky, p.33.

31. Davydov, p.7.

32. Skurlatov, p.4.

33. Allen, p.36.

34. Soifer, p.43.

35. Soifer, p.49.

36. Bolshakov, p.39.

37. Allen, p.21.

38. Soifer, p.42.

39. Bolshakov, p.25.

40. Brodsky, p.78.

41. Brodsky, p.84.

42. Allen, p.17.

43. Allen, p.31.

44. Soifer, p.42.

45. Allen, p.60.

46. Bolshakov, p.43.

47. Allen, p.21.

48. Davydov, p.80.

49. Allen, p.112.

50. Brodsky, p.89.

51. Allen, p.46.

52. Brodsky, p.90.

53. Allen, p.42.

54. Soifer, p.46.

55. Allen, p.36.

56. Bolshakov, p.28.

57. Soifer, p.50.

58. Allen, p.37.

59. Brodsky, p.117.

60. Allen, p.123.

61. Brodsky, p.127.

62. Mints, p.97.

63. Soifer, p.22.

64. Kiselev, p.12.

65. Mints, p.180.

66. Soifer, p.34.

67. Soifer, p.123.

68. Mitin, p.83.

69. Mints, p.180.

70. Mints, p.180.

71. Kiselev, p.12.

72. Kiselev, p.24.

73. Soifer, p.131.

74. Mints, p.185.

75. Mints, p.95.

76. Bolshakov, p.96.

77. Kiselev, p.75.

78. Kiselev, p.107.

79. Soifer, p.127.

80. Skurlatov, p.43.

81. Skurlatov, p.4.

82. Skurlatov, p.4.

83. Skurlatov, p.47.

84. Skurlatov, p.65.

85. Mints, p.36.

86. Kiselev, p.78.

87. Skurlatov, p.113.

88. Skurlatov, p.21.

89. Skurlatov, p.46.

90. Skurlatov, p.51.

91. Skurlatov, p.55.

92. Skurlatov, p.55.

93. Skurlatov, p.58.

94. Skurlatov, p.57.

95. Skurlatov, p.58.

96. Skurlatov, p.59.

97. Skurlatov, p.84.

98. Skurlatov, p.112.

99. Mitin, p.22.

100. Davydov, p.12.

101. Davydov, p.13.

102. Mitin, p.218.

103. Davydov, p.4.

104. Mitin, p.75.

105. Bolshakov, p.20.

106. Soifer, p.42.

107. Soifer, p.40.

108. Mitin, p.224.

109. Mitin, p.224.

110. Bolshakov, p.4.

111. Soifer, p.80.

112. Soifer, p.84.

113. Soifer, p.82.

114. Soifer, p.82.

115. Mints, p.132.

116. Mints, .218.

117. Mitin, p.223.

118. Mitin, p.115.

119. Mitin, p.266.

120. Soifer, p.50.

121. "Newslite", 9.4.1983.

140. Bolshakov, p.58.

141. Kiselev, p.113.

142. Kiselev, p.113.

143. Kiselev, p.114.

144. Bolshakov, p.48.

145. Bolshakov, p.51.

146. Soifer, p.65.

147. Kiselev, p.148.

148. Bolshakov, p.173.

149. Bolshakov, p.80.

150. Bolshakov, p.162.

151. Kiselev, p.130.

152. Mitin, p.98.

153. "Jewish Socialist", no. 11, 1987, p.22.

154. Kiselev, p.15.

155. Mitin, p.95.

156. Bolshakov, p.90.

157. Bolshakov, p.90.

158. Kiselev, p.123.

159. Mints, p.128.

160. Mitin, p.85.

161. Mitin, p.93.

162. Soifer, p.183.

163. Bolshakov, p.5.

164. Soifer, p.59.

165. Mitin, p.245, footnote.

166. See Mints chapter three, 'Judaism and Zionism'.

167. Mitin, p.31.

168. Bolshakov, p.58.

169. Bolshakov, p.5.

170. Bolshakov, p.5.

171. Bolshakov, p.72.

172. Kiselev, p.163.

173. Kiselev, p.164.

174. Mitin, p.188.

175. Kiselev, p.15.

176. Skurlatov, p.118.

177. Mitin, p.127.

## More loyalist than the loyalists

Recent articles in *Workers' Liberty* have challenged the common left attitude to Ireland. Geoff Bell believes these articles have gone too far. Sean Matgamna replies.

There is nothing wrong in reassessing Marxist interpretations, but where this has led *Socialist Organiser* as far as this particular exercise is concerned is to the other side of the class divide. This is illustrated in the January edition of the magazine *Workers' Liberty* and an article therein by Sean Matgamna.

This is entitled 'Ireland: lies the left tells itself'. A more fitting headline would have been 'Ireland: examples of the lies the right tells itself'. For what has now emerged from what at first was a sloppy and impressionistic analysis is the one which stands four square with the opinions of the British ruling class.

We are told that there would be a bloody sectarian civil war if British troops left the north of Ireland, that those troops have every right to be there anyway because 'Northern Ireland has been part of the British state since the 12th century', and that Britain has no political, economic or military interest in staying in the north of Ireland.

The reason they do so apparently is because of the 'power of the Orangeists on the ground', and it is this power which if British troops did leave, would result in all sorts of nasty things happening to Catholics.

Not only do we have a series of views which suggests the role of the British army is to keep two sets of mad paddies apart, we have an additional reactionary bonus. This is that Protestants in the north of Ireland are quite right to resist any attempt to submit them to the rule of the Irish majority because they are British, have always considered themselves so and because they are faced with 'Sinn Féin's Catholic Irish nationalism' which is alien to them and their 'traditions'. These politics of Sinn Féin are also something which break from the traditional republicanism of Wolfe Tone which contrary to Sinn Féin's version, was non-sectarian.

There is, in all this, so much disinformation it is difficult to know where to gasp most. But, for example:

- 'Northern Ireland' was only part of the British state in name



Photo Andrew Moore (Reflex)

since the 12th century. Ulster was so resistant to British occupation that it did not happen in reality until the 17th century when the native Irish were driven from their land and were replaced by English and Scottish settlers.

- The Protestant community of the northeast of Ireland have rarely considered themselves as 'British' in the sense that term is understood in Britain. From the Home Rule Bills of the 19th and early 20th centuries to the Anglo-Irish accord of today they have continually resisted the 'right' of the British parliament to rule them. Moreover, historically speaking, the protestants in

Ireland as a whole have generally defined themselves as 'Irish' or some variant of that — 'Anglo-Irish', 'Scots-Irish', 'Northern Irish' or 'Ulstermen' (sic). Even today the majority of northern Irish Protestants reject the view that the British parliament has the right to tell them what to do. They also toy with advocating an independent Ulster (the UDA) or Ulster as a British dominion in the way Canada is (Ulster Clubs).

- The notion that contemporary Sinn Féin republicanism is different from that of Wolfe Tone is an historical illiteracy. Sad to say, but in fact the examples of anti-Protestant sectarianism in Wolfe Tone's 1798 rising were much more commonplace than in the present IRA's campaign, although in both cases such sectarianism was no part of the politics of the vast majority of those involved.

- To define Sinn Féin as 'Irish Catholic nationalism' is slander. Irish nationalism has often had a rather right wing and Catholic side to it, but Sinn Féin in word and deed has resolutely opposed it. If there are present day Catholic Irish nationalists they are most likely to be found in the SDLP in the north or Fianna Fail

in the south.

- The attempt to justify the presence of British troops in the north of Ireland by raising the spectre of the Protestant backlash is rather old hat these days. Let us remember that the troops went onto the streets in 1969 because the loyalist security forces had been defeated. And today the political unity which would be necessary for the Loyalists to be a real threat to Catholics in the event of British withdrawal is completely missing. The failure of the Loyalists to defeat the Anglo-Irish agreement is just one example of the limited capability of the 'Protestant backlash'.

In seeking to minimise British responsibility for the situation in Ireland, in suggesting that, for the good of the Irish, British troops must stay, in painting the 'Loyalists' more 'British' than they paint themselves, *Socialist Organiser* ends up calling for the extension of both Loyalist 'rights' and the British presence.

The advocacy is for Protestant self-rule — in other words, a statelet drawn up purely on a sectarian headcount. This statelet would apparently be part of a federal Ireland. But then comes the biggest howler. There have to

*Socialist Organiser* and Ireland:

### More loyalist than the loyalists

A sample of coverage in *Socialist Organiser* of the left's attitude to Ireland. The article is a reprint of an article by Geoff Bell in the January edition of *Workers' Liberty*. The article is a reprint of an article by Geoff Bell in the January edition of *Workers' Liberty*. The article is a reprint of an article by Geoff Bell in the January edition of *Workers' Liberty*.



From *Socialist Outlook*



be 'ties of some confederal sort between that united Ireland and Britain'.

In other words, Brits into the south of Ireland. Wave the Union Jack and pass the ammunition.

Geoff Bell

## Marxism or Catholic chauvinism?

If it was worth Geoff Bell's while to respond to my article, then it was worth doing properly — especially, perhaps, given that he and I are an Irish 'Protestant' and an Irish 'Catholic' arguing the 'wrong' way round, and that can't have happened very often in the last 100 years.

It is a shame he didn't. But he scarcely bothers to argue. He hunts heresy and denounces as from a pulpit, and none too

scrupulously — as if guided by the injunction that the faithful are not obliged to keep faith with heretics.

He nit-picks and goes off at tangents. Even if he were right that 'Northern Ireland' was not really in the 'British' state until the 17th century — essentially he isn't — would that make a difference now to our attitude to Ireland's Protestant minority, which certainly dates only from the 17th century? You could throw the pedantry back in his face. He equates British 'occupation' (of Ulster) with colonisation: so was the uncolonised (or unsuccessfully colonised) part of Ireland never 'British-occupied Ireland'?

Geoff Bell further argues that the Protestants are not British because they will not obey the British Parliament. So what were the British colonists in America in 1776 when they declared independence from the British government? Or the British colonists in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe in 1965 when they made their Unilateral Declaration of Independence? Some notion of development and dialectics would help here, Geoff.

He uses strong words without

in his text justifying their use. I am on "the other side of the class divide". Yes I am, if vicarious Catholic Irish nationalism is the working-class side; but if it isn't, on what side of the class line are Geoff Bell and the others who 'forget' Marxism and a large part of the Irish working class, and embrace Catholic nationalism garnished with misleading (and, in the circumstances, irrelevant and even deceptive) socialist phrases and aspirations.

Geoff Bell tries to damn what I say by association. I stand "four square", he says, with "the opinion of the British ruling class". If true, that literally means that I support the status quo. Of course, he means that I recognise that the pressing and irreducible problem is the division among the people who live in Ireland.

Is it true or isn't it? That is the question. Geoff's best approach to an argument here is a quibble about whether the Protestants think they are British or not "in the sense that term is understood in Britain". For sure they don't consider themselves Irish in the sense in which that term is understood in Dublin!

He translates what I say into the language of crude British chauvinism: Britain "keeps two sets of mad paddies apart". He then contradicts himself in the next sentence by angrily accusing me of saying that the Protestants are anything but mad to resist being reduced to a minority in a Catholic-dominated state.

Geoff Bell goes in for rewriting history, too. He writes that "the troops went onto the streets in 1969 because the loyalist security forces had been defeated". Some of the Protestant state forces were beaten back in Derry in 1969 — but the resources even of the Six County state were not exhausted; and the Orange forces had not been beaten in Belfast.

Geoff insists that "the examples of anti-protestant sectarianism in Wolfe Tone's 1798 rising were much more commonplace than in the present IRA's campaign". Which "Wolfe Tone rising" is he talking about? There were at least three disparate movements in 1798. Indeed there was sectarianism in the risings. But there was no sectarianism in the programme of Tone's United Irishmen, which counterposed to existing and old divisions the goal of replacing the denominations of "Protestant (Anglican), Catholic and Dissenter (Presbyterian)" by the common name of Irish. There is sectarianism in the programme of the Provisionals — which is a programme for the majority to incorporate the minority into a unitary state, leaving them no protection if the majority choose to override them.

If Gerry Adams had any serious aspirations towards Wolfe Tone's politics, would he go around in Northern Ireland

parading his religious creed, as when he publicly explained his escape from assassination by his going to Mass regularly? Sinn Féin has "resolutely" opposed sectarianism in words, especially in words for export. Deeds are another matter.

"If there are present-day catholic Irish nationalists", writes Geoff Bell, "they are most likely to be in the SDLP". Read the papers, Geoff. In the spate of elections triggered by the Unionists in March 1986 to have, in effect, a referendum on the Anglo-Irish Agreement, Sinn Féin — which opposed the Agreement — proposed a common front to the SDLP, which supported the Agreement. This common front could only be on the basis of Catholic head-counting, as the gleeful John Hume pointed out.

You could — though I don't especially want to — make a case that, taken all in all, what they do as well as what they say, the SDLP, despite being a narrow communal party, is nearer to Wolfe Tone Republicanism than the Provisionals are.

Geoff Bell cites "The failure of the loyalists to defeat the Anglo-Irish Agreement" — which has little practical consequence for them so far — to argue that they would be no "real threat to catholics in the event of British withdrawal". So they would not try to hold on to what they have? They would not resist incorporation into an all-Ireland Catholic-majority state? Draw comfort from that sort of reasoning if you can, Geoff. I take it as proof that you can't face the facts.

One of the strangest reactions to the Anglo-Irish Agreement was that of People's Democracy, the Irish group linked to *Socialist Outlook*. Criticising even the Provisionals for softness on the Agreement, they denounced the Dublin government for betraying 'the 1937 Constitution' — that same Constitution which contemporaries, including at least one writer in the leading Trotskyist magazine of that time, the *New Internationalist*, denounced as clerical-fascist in tendency. (To this day the Irish Senate is chosen on the basis of the Catholic corporatism dominant in the '30s).

In the same vein Geoff Bell throws back his ears and gives out an angry philistine bray at the idea of some revived — confederal — link between Britain and Ireland. What does he think of that dirty old West-British shoneen Karl Marx, who came late to support for Home Rule and then disgraced himself by arguing that "after separation may come federation"?

We have to raise the issue of confederal links between Ireland and Britain because over 100 years of political struggles have proved that Irish unity and Irish independence are incompatible. In a different historical and political world De Valera tried to



## Ireland and Sri-Lanka an analogy

AN ANALOGY may help to explain the issues — the case of Ceylon/Sri Lanka. I assume Geoff Bell and *Socialist Outlook* are in favour of the right of the Tamils to secede from the Sinhalese-dominated Sri Lankan state and set up their own state. But how did things in Ceylon/Sri Lanka turn out like this? Look at the history.

Some of the Tamils were a favoured minority under British rule. Does that not morally condemn them and deprive them of minority rights, like the Protestants? Why shouldn't the Tamils submit to 'the Sri Lankan majority', as you say the Irish minority must submit to the Irish majority (and to hell with all that Leninist nonsense about consistent democracy)?

To people of Geoff Bell's political outlook, Ireland and Sri Lanka are radically different questions. In fact the parallels between them are instructive. The main difference lies in the way the conflict evolved. The split in the British ruling class on Home Rule in 1886 and up to World War 1 heated up the intra-Irish division before any part of Ireland became independent. In Ceylon/Sri Lanka the division heated up after independence, under majority rule.

Ceylon became independent in 1948 under a capitalist ruling class led by a British-educated elite consisting of both Tamils and Sinhalese, in the United National Party (UNP). Sinhalese-Buddhist chauvinism developed initially as a grass-roots cultural movement.

Soon the demands for a Buddhist 'Sri Lanka' and for privileges for the Sinhalese language were voiced. The political elite split. Solomon Bandaranaike founded the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in 1951. A process of communal conflict began which led to civil war.

Socialists should have advocated Sinhalese-Tamil unity. In fact the Ceylonese Trotskyists destroyed their once imposing organisation by accommodating, from the mid-'50s, to Sinhalese chauvinism. The Trotskyists of the LSSP were part of Geoff Bell's international tendency, which covered for them for almost a decade, until the LSSP broke away from the Mandeliste 'Fourth International' and entered a Sinhalese-chauvinist coalition government in 1964.

When immediate Sinhalese-Tamil unity became impossible, socialists should have supported the Tamils' right to secede. To do

less would be to break with the very ABC of Leninism on the national question.

In Ireland the sort of communal split that has broken the political unity of the island of Sri Lanka emerged before independence. It was manipulated by the British ruling class. It was made the basis of a peculiarly unjust Partition, which created a second, artificial, Irish minority, the Northern Catholics.

Suppose it had been different. Suppose Ireland had got Home Rule in 1886 — or 1893, when a House of Commons majority



**Tamil refugee  
Photo Andrew Moore**

voted for it — and then gone the way Sri Lanka went. Suppose the Catholic majority had begun to push for special privileges the way the Sinhalese did. Suppose the sort of Catholic Church encroachment on civil society that we had in the independent South from the 1920s onward had occurred in a united Ireland.

I can see reason for believing that the tensions would have died down if Ireland had got Home Rule in the early 1880s. A big Protestant minority in a united Ireland might have helped preserve or re-establish the pluralist values which had vanished in the South by the 1930s. But, for the sake of the argument, suppose that the Catholic majority had pushed aggressively.

Suppose the systematic imposition of a Catholic-confessional framework — abolition of the right of divorce, and so on — which culminated in the De Valera constitution of 1937, had applied to the whole island (as in-

deed that constitution claimed to.) Suppose the attempt by the 26 County state to revive the Gaelic language — which for generations of Irish children like myself, whose native language was English, meant that our schools produced 'illiterates in two languages' — had happened in an all-Ireland state; suppose it was used to discriminate against those of a non-Gaelic background.

Wouldn't all that have led to a Protestant movement something like the Tamil movement in Sri Lanka? If not, why not? Because the Irish are better than the Sri Lankans? Because we're not 'mad paddies', but white Europeans, and therefore we do not behave like Asians, those 'lesser breeds without the law'?

If it sounds far-fetched, remember that the revivers of Gaelic games 100 years ago, the Gaelic Athletic Association, were virulently exclusivist. Remember that modern historians point to the way boycotting during the Land League wars helped the burgeoning Irish Catholic bourgeoisie to defeat Protestant competition in nationalist Ireland. Recall the debate on divorce in the South 4 or 5 years ago when the majority of voters ignored appeals from Protestant and Jewish leaders not to enshrine Catholic theology as the law of the state.

Suppose all that had happened in a united Ireland over the decades. It would have generated a Protestant national consciousness, as surely as the actual events in the 26 Counties have hardened the Six County majority's commitment to staying with Britain and determination not to go into a Catholic-dominated united Ireland.

How could any Leninist refuse to back the Protestant minority, in the areas where it was a majority, in the demands that would arise for exclusion from the writ of the majority — in certain questions, and maybe in all? You could not, any more than you can in Sri Lanka refuse to back the Tamils — some of whom were once favoured by Britain, and some of whom now commit terrible sectarian acts against Sinhalese.

Things did not go that way in Ireland. We do not have a revolt of a Protestant-British minority against a Catholic-majority state. We have the revolt of an artificially created second minority, the Northern Catholics. We should support that revolt — but we should do it as Marxists who take a broad historical overview. There are enough Catholic nationalists and Catholic chauvinists. What are lacking are Marxists, internationalists, and consistent democrats in Lenin's tradition on the national question.

come to terms with the problem in 1921, when he came out for 'external association' with the British Empire, primarily as a means of maintaining a common framework between the Irish majority and minority. For the same reason he was privately against Ireland's withdrawal from the Commonwealth in 1949.

You might remain on Marxist, internationalist ground, and oppose confederal links between Ireland and Britain because a process of necessary separation had not had enough time to do its healing and reconciling work. Northern Ireland cuts across all that.

Part of Ireland remains in the UK. It is torn apart between two communities, one of which is determined to remain with Britain and the other to link up with independent Ireland. These facts, which are likely to remain immutable for a whole historical period, point unmistakably towards the recreation of a broader framework within which to seek a solution to the Catholic-Protestant impasse in Northern Ireland. Even within a Socialist United States of Europe, Britain and Ireland would still stand in a specially close relationship to each other.

The ruling classes have begun to re-knit links. Under the Anglo-Irish Agreement provision is made for a British-Dublin-Belfast Interparliamentary Committee, which draws the two islands politically closer than at any time in 65 years.

Why should the Irish Marxists be like mystical Irish nationalists, and take their stand on complete Irish separation and independence as an absolute principle outside of history? That absolute independence has nothing more to give the Irish people, and the Provisionals' drive for it helps prime a sectarian civil war.

Opinion polls tell us that a big majority in Catholic Ireland does not want, or radically fears, a united Ireland. Election results tell us that in the North the Provisional Republicans have the support of little more than one Catholic in three. Their support in independent Ireland is minuscule — less than two per cent in elections.

Of course, moods can change and swing, and in Ireland they do tend to swing according to what we call 'the politics of the last atrocity'. Opinion swung to the Republicans after the Gibraltar killings and the Milltown massacre, *against* them after the two soldiers were spectacularly killed at a funeral, and so on.

But in the last 20 years those shifts have not changed the rocky underlying facts of communal antagonism, nor altered anything fundamental. 20 years of the IRA's war have resulted in stalemate and stasis.

The lesson of this last 20 years is the same as the lesson of the



100 years since Gladstone's first Home Rule Bill: the goals of Irish unity and Irish independence flatly contradict each other. They are irreconcilable. The linked aspirations of the Irish majority for independence and for unity are incompatible.

The Irish minority, define them how you like, will not have a united independent Ireland, and, if they are thrown entirely on to their own resources, they will fight to prevent it. Of course, in the past sections of the British ruling class stirred up and used that Irish minority, playing the 'Orange card'; but the minority had to be there in the first place to be so used. It is still 'there' now that the British ruling class is united in policy for Ireland as it never was between 1885 and 1922, and no section of that ruling class has any use at all for the Irish Protestants.

The British-designed Partition put a proportionately bigger Catholic minority in the 'Protestant' state than the Protestants would have been in an all-Ireland state. The Northern Catholics were oppressed because they were seen as a threat. The consequence has been the prolonged Northern Ireland Catholic revolt and the partial destabilisation of the state system established in 1920-22 by the British and the different sections of the Irish bourgeoisie.

It is necessary to support the half-million Catholics in their opposition to the unjust settlement of 1920-22; but it would be no solution to force one million Protestants into an all-Ireland state against their will and leave them feeling — and maybe reacting — as the Northern Ireland Catholics do now. The Leninist policy for situations like this is long-established and very much to the point. As Trotsky summarised it: "In so far as the various nationalities, voluntarily or through force of necessity, coexist within the borders of one state, their cultural interests must find the highest possible satisfaction within the framework of the broadest regional (and, consequently, territorial) autonomy, including statutory guarantees of the rights of each minority".

Now it is absurd to say that Partition helps either capitalism or imperialist domination of southern Ireland today. But even if it did, socialists could still not dismiss the legitimate democratic claims of the Irish Protestant minority. In such conflicts between communities — in Ireland, in Palestine, in Sri Lanka, or anywhere — Marxists recognise that all the antagonists have rights and seek working-class unity across the divide on the basis of justice, conciliation, and whatever state structure the peoples concerned find most acceptable and least divisive.

The idea that there are good and bad — or 'imperialist' and



**Photo Dereck Spiers (Report)**

'anti-imperialist' — nations or countries comes from narrow irredentist and populist nationalism (sometimes in Maoist or other versions), not from Marxism, Leninism or Trotskyism. These are the Marxist policies for Ireland:

- Consistent democracy,
- Conciliation,
- Defence of the oppressed Catholics,
- Guarantees for the Protestants who fear oppression by the Catholic Irish majority,
- Working-class unity on a programme of democratic rights,
- And on that basis a struggle for socialism. In the language of the Trotskyist movement: a programme of democratic and transitional demands.

My *Workers' Liberty* article spelled out the false ideas and assumptions which — I believe — bewilder the far left and turn them into cheerleaders, usually ignorant cheerleaders, for Sinn Féin. Geoff Bell has written books and pamphlets which codify the dominant ideas of most of the 'hard left' about Ireland. How does he respond to my systematic listing of arguments against those ideas? Take them point by point.

• Southern Ireland is not a neo-colony, and in any case, with most foreign investment in Ireland American and German, not a British neo-colony. Geoff Bell is silent about this.

• Northern Ireland is not merely 'British-occupied Ireland', unless the desires of the Six County majority count for nothing. Geoff Bell's only relevant comment is to quibble about the length of time Northern Ireland has been linked to Britain.

• Ireland is one island, but plainly not one people. To pretend that Ireland is one unit is a to confuse geography with society, nationality, and politics. Geoff Bell pretends it is, but de-

fend the pretence he does not.

• It is not just bigotry or irrationality which motivates Protestant resistance to a united Ireland. The laws of the 26 Counties impose Catholic morals even on those who reject them, banning divorce for example. Geoff Bell is very contemptuous about this argument. He ignores the Protestants, and implies that they should be ignored by claiming that the Provisionals are not in any way sectarian and that Protestant resistance to a united Ireland would not be substantial.

• To pretend that Protestants are only concerned to protect their job privileges is to ignore the distinct history and insistently-proclaimed distinct identity of the Six County Protestants. Geoff Bell is positively heroic in his determination to ignore it!

• Marxists cannot see the issue as just Irish majority rights. No majority — neither in Northern Ireland nor in all of Ireland — has a right to oppress a minority community. We are concerned with minority rights, too — with consistent democracy. Geoff Bell's programme is not that of a Marxist, but of an adoptive Catholic-Irish nationalist. He is, rightly, concerned with the second, artificial, Irish minority, the Northern Ireland Catholics; but, absurdly, he is indifferent to the concerns of the much bigger basic Irish minority, the Protestants.

• The Orange veto depends on the threat of Orange resistance. It is not something Britain grants. It has been coupled since 1976 with a Catholic veto over internal political arrangements in Northern Ireland. That Catholic veto is based ultimately on the armed strength of the IRA. My argument on the Orange veto makes Geoff Bell indignant. He does not, however, try to refute it. Why not?

• Britain does not gain economic advantage from Northern Ireland (yes or no, Geoff?), but pays out £1.5 billion a year.

• Far from giving overall military advantages to Britain, control of the Six Counties has deprived NATO of the 26 Counties for 39 years. True or not, comrade Bell?

• The existing Six County state is indeed an artificial, unviable entity; but nevertheless a viable Orange entity is possible if Northern Ireland's borders are moved north and east, shedding the mainly Catholic areas. Such a new 'Northern Ireland' would be the certain result of sectarian civil war. It was recognition of this fact that led De Valera and other mainstream bourgeois Republicans to rule out violence as a means of uniting Ireland. They knew it could not work. What makes you think it could work, Geoff?

• The Protestant community organised, threatened, and armed

to stop a united Ireland, and settled reluctantly for Partition in 1920-22. They smashed the Power-Sharing Agreement with a general strike in 1974. The Anglo-Irish Agreement remains intact, and Protestant opposition to it is ineffectual; but it has not had much real effect yet. Northern Ireland remains under the control of the British government which, despite everything, the Protestants consider their own.

If the British state advocates, leaving the Protestants the choice of incorporation in a Catholic state or resistance, they will resist. At the very least a proportion of them equal to the IRA's proportion of the Catholic community will resist.

At the *Socialist Organiser* summer school in 1986, Geoff Bell admitted that civil war would probably break out — but he said he thought it would be a small, controllable civil war. What if it isn't controllable? Who will control it? Southern Irish troops? UN troops? British troops? The common demand that Britain should 'disarm' the Orangeists before going implies that we rely on British troops to control the civil war; it also implies not fewer, but more British troops, and for a long time to come!

• Troops out without a political settlement will not lead to a united Ireland, but to sectarian civil war and bloody repartition. It will not lead to self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. It can only set the Protestants in motion to secure their self-determination — against the Irish majority.

I would be happy to be convinced that this nightmare is not the certain consequence of troops out without a political settlement. Geoff Bell seems sure that it will not be, but the only reason he cites for his sureness is that the Protestant resistance to the Anglo-Irish Agreement has been limited.

• The thin veneer of left activists who form one facet of Sinn Féin's public face make it a socialist organisation only for those who want to be convinced. Sinn Féin is confined to the Catholic community; its leaders, like Gerry Adams, publicly parade their Catholicism; it has no interest in the Protestant community; its policies leave it no possibility of even talking to the Protestant community; some of the IRA's killings are scarcely-disguised sectarian acts, and all of them are seen by the Protestant community as sectarian acts.

Much space in the Provisionals' paper *An Phoblacht* is given to denouncing 'sectarianism'. But does it ever denounce sectarianism on its own side? Why not? Does no sectarianism at all exist on the Catholic side? Denouncing the sectarianism of the others can also be a means of appealing for communal solidarity and of incitement against the

other community.

Unlike most of his political tribe, Geoff Bell does know something about the real Ireland, as distinct from the fantasy Ireland in the collective mind of the 'anti-imperialist' British left. Is it unreasonable to conclude that his flaccid performance in this polemic says something about the nature of the position he wants to defend? Is it an accident that he ends his article with a piece of Gerry Healy level misrepresentation of what I advocate?

Geoff Bell says I advocate "Brits into the south of Ireland. Wave the union jack and pass the ammunition". Where did I advocate that? When? Confederal links between Ireland and Britain could not mean that. Nothing I say can be loyally read as advocating or implying it. Confederal links imply voluntary association of the sovereign Irish and British states.

Bell is indulging himself in ridiculous hyperbole. But there is more here than a confession that he can't handle the facts, the issues, or the arguments.

Some readers of *Socialist Outlook* are bound to think — on Geoff Bell's authority, and not having read my article — that I really do advocate something like 'British troops into the South'. I've grown used to boneheaded and malicious sniping and misrepresentation, but this, I repeat, is Gerry Healy stuff.

The chain of publications put out by Geoff's tendency over the years — *International*, *Red Mole*, *Red Weekly*, *Socialist Challenge*, *Socialist Action* — have not, in my view, contributed much to political enlightenment, least of all about Ireland, but they did not deal in shameless factual lying and outright misrepresentation like this. You should not start now, Geoff Bell.

A few words, finally, about the broader issues involved in this discussion. It links, obviously, with similar debates like that on the rights of the Jewish nation in Palestine.

Our attitude to these questions is all of a piece, and so is that of *Socialist Outlook* and the 'kitsch-Trotskyist' political culture of which it is part. Geoff Bell and his friends are comprehensively wrong. The issue goes way beyond Protestant and Catholic Ireland and Arab and Jewish Palestine.

Vast areas of the world are now covered by multi-national states — many of them old colonial units of more or less arbitrarily grouped peoples which have remained units after colonialism and become bureaucratic states. Almost everywhere in these states there is the domination, sometimes genocidal, of people over people, nation over nation or fragment of nation.

The Marxist programme for this vast area of world politics

has already been outlined — consistent democracy. Depending on circumstances that may mean the right of various peoples to full independence, to local autonomy, or to special cultural rights, etc.

The alternative to this Marxist approach is to decide that some peoples are bad and some good, to ascribe some universalist and transcendental 'world-revolutionary' significance to the nationalisms of chosen nations, and to deny any collective rights to other nations.

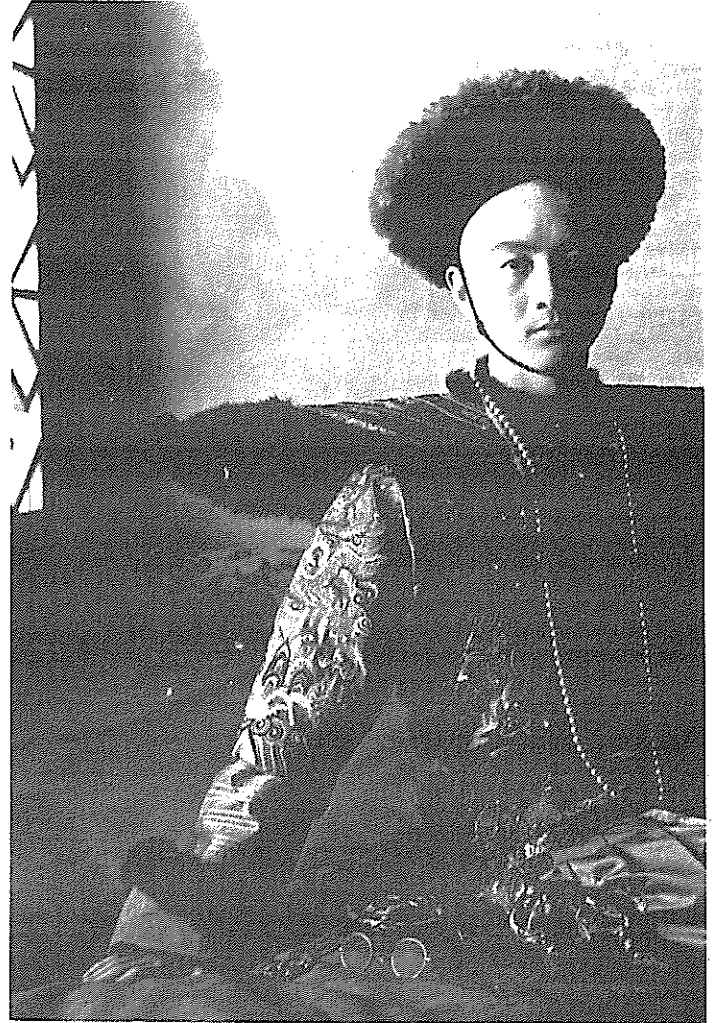
Of course, on some issues you have to take sides, sharply and clearly, as we side now with the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza against the Israeli occupation, and as the tendency to which I belong has always supported the Northern Ireland Catholics in struggle against the British state and against the oppression to which Partition consigned them. But you must do that within the political framework of the Marxist and Leninist programme for resolving conflicts like those between Arabs and Jews and between Catholics and Protestants.

Where the only proper Marxist approach in national conflicts is to argue for the equality of peoples — and in the first place for equal rights and unity within the working class — the kitsch-Trotskyists pick and choose, designating 'good' and 'bad' peoples, 'pro-imperialists' and 'anti-imperialists'. They do not know it, but they are in the tradition not of the mature Marx or Engels, or of Lenin and Trotsky, but at best of the young Frederick Engels, who in 1848 denounced "small, pig-headed nations" in Europe. (Engels argued that such nations would inevitably serve as the tools of reactionaries wanting to obstruct the then progressive unification of the big nations of the continent).

More: Geoff Bell and his friends hold to the view of a 'world revolution' marching inexorably ahead as if guided by some god of history. This teleological view lends itself especially to the approach that designates some nations 'good' and others 'bad'. The nationalism of the 'good' nations is in the camp of the 'world revolution'; the nationalism of the 'bad' nations is in the other camp, of 'imperialism'.

In Geoff Bell's case, this approach leads a member of the Protestant Irish minority not to rise above the tragic communalism dividing the people of our island to working-class internationalism — or even Wolfe Tone Republicanism — but simply to swap communities. Communalism is the problem. Consistent democracy, and the fight for working-class unity on that basis — that is, socialist Republicanism — is the answer.

Sean Matgamna



## They were the bad old days

Belinda Weaver ("Big Screen Blues" — *Workers' Liberty* No. 8), contends that films today are worse than those of the past and that this is because they are made to a simple formula that exploits the audience. I disagree.

The formula, epitomised in the rash of sequel films, includes big stars, exotic locations, simple (or simplistic) story, a hit song and a massive advertising campaign.

The main reason given for this is that the film industry has been taken over by people whose chief interest is not films, or telling stories, but rather maximising profits.

Undoubtedly there is an element of truth in these assertions

but I think it relies on a view of the past that is distorted. It's a view that is reminiscent of that hoary old myth that things were better in the old days.

It is very easy to rattle off a list of awful films that satisfy Belinda's criteria. And yes many of them are sequels — *Superman*, *Rocky*, *Police Academy*, *Porkys*, *Star Trek*, etc., etc., etc. They are lowest common denominator films aimed at a predominantly young audience, but this is neither new nor does it tell us much about contemporary film.

It's just as easy to make an equally long list of atrocious films made in Hollywood's boom days — Hopalong Cassidy, the Andy Hardy series, Francis the talking mule, Ma and Pa Kettle, Batman, cowboys and Indians, John Wayne World War II movies, etc. And are we really to believe that today's 'stars' are really worse actors than Alan Ladd, Audie Murphy, Gary Cooper, Frankie Avalon, Annette Funicello, to mention only a few?

The point is that poorly made stock films are not new.

Hollywood absolutely dominated movie making for thirty years, and in that time made some outstanding movies, but also made many more films that were dreadful. They were totally

commercial, full of sexist, racist, heterosexist and chauvinist stereotypes that were thankfully consigned to the archives.

Profit was just as big a motivator for the likes of the Zanucks and Cohens and the other company moguls as today. It is not true to say that today's companies are run purely by managers whose sole interest is in the bottom line.

Regardless of what one thinks about their material, people like David Puttnam, Dino de Laurentis, Francis Ford Coppola, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, who are now major producers and company directors, are primarily movie makers.

They, and other contemporary directors, are responsible for many outstanding films, too long to list. If Belinda's contention about the predictability of the formula is true then why are there any flops? Why do we regularly see the so-called 'art house' and non-Hollywood films (such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*, *Crocodile Dundee*, *Mad Max*, *My Life as a Dog*, *Le Cop*, *La Cage aux Folles*, *Room with a View*, *The Gods must be Crazy*, *Jean de Florette* to name a few) break through and become big hits? The claim that there are basically two types of cinema — commercial (bad) and art-house (some of which are good) — apart from being too simple, doesn't really tell us very much.

The article in general is too conspiratorial. Basically we are asked to believe that film companies are controlled by men (e.g. Murdoch) who are only interested in profit and have made films a commodity which is therefore exploitative and alienating. But the market dominates all artistic endeavour in capitalist economies. It's not an invention of the past thirty years. Does the market's existence mean then that no worthwhile art can be produced under capitalism? Does this also hold true for literature, music, art? Surely not.

I think that there have been two fundamental changes in contemporary film-making that give some explanation of the differences on the modern screen. Firstly the total dominance of 'realism' as a technique, and secondly the development of national theatres in the wake of Hollywood's decline.

Today's audiences, unlike those of forty years ago, will only accept physical 'real life' on the screen. Near enough is not good enough. Whether it is sets, costumes, accents, or language everything has to be real to be believable. So in a film like 'Raging Bull' Robert de Niro puts on the necessary five or six stone in weight in order to play Jake La Motta.

Similarly George Lucas and then Steven Spielberg made it mandatory for movies set in space to be like space. This has

not only meant that costs have soared, but more importantly it has changed the way that people see films now.

One of the consequences of this devotion to physical realism which Belinda has identified is a corresponding lack of attention to the story or plot. Too often the plot is neglected in favour of some of the whiz bang gadgetry or make-up.

But should those who pioneer technical breakthroughs be blamed for how they are used?

Spielberg is singled out for special attention in the article, accusing him of rehashing the past and only gaining respect because of his money-making abilities. Ironically the US Academy, those who should be most impressed by these very qualities, have gone out of their way to ignore Spielberg. But there seems to me no doubt that Spielberg has had more influence on current American cinema than any other director.

*Gone With the Wind's* success was due not only to its romantic epic script, but also because of its technical breakthrough. There had not been anything to compare with its scope or grandeur and it revolutionised film-making in the 1940s.

Spielberg's *Star Wars* had a similar impact. No-one before had contemplated or carried off such a spectacle, and it also revolutionised film-making. To disregard this and other outstanding films like *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Duel*, *Sugarland Express* and *Close Encounters* is to pay scant regard to Spielberg's directing, writing, technical ability and imagination.

Secondly, there has been a great diversification in film making. Belinda concentrates solely on Hollywood film making while ignoring the most dynamic contemporary centres.

The French New Wave were the first to make radically different films, and were soon followed by the German and Polish New Wave and more recently by Australian, New Zealand and British cinemas. Indeed directors like Fassbinder, Schlöndorff, Wenders, Von Trotta, Wajda, George Miller, Beresford, Armstrong, Weir, Schepisi, Puttnam, Merchant and Ivory etc., are among the most popular modern film-makers.

More importantly the strength of their work has enabled them to reach large international audiences while telling stories pertinent to their own environments.

This, along with the growing independent American cinema, the freer East European cinema and the rapidly developing Asian cinema, means that Hollywood's stifling, homogenous cinema of the 1930s-1960s is looking to be a thing of the past. And this is something that should be acknowledged and welcomed.

Tony Brown

## Confusion and Palestine

The five-month-old uprising, or 'intifada', by the Palestinian people against Israeli occupation, has focused very sharply the national question at the heart of the conflict.

The central demand of the uprising is clear: Israel should get out of the West Bank and Gaza, and allow the Palestinians living there the right to self-determination, i.e. to their own state.

Most of the international Left has supported this demand. Yet many hedge it around with 'radical' qualifications that



destroy its content.

The programme endorsed by most of those people aiming to be Trotskyists is for a single state in Palestine, amalgamating the two peoples, who would live as equal citizens. Usually the formula used is the PLO's — a 'secular democratic state'. Sometimes Trotskyists add the word 'socialist' or substitute some other formula, but the gist — one state — is common to most.

It is a programme of abstract internationalism, which counterposes a future in which nations no longer exist to present-day reality. There are two nations in Palestine, and simply to demand the 'abolition' of one or both of them is utopian. If it is meant as an immediate demand, it can in practice be endorsed only by ultra-nationalist Arabs who deny the Israeli Jews are a nation with rights, and want to see them 'smashed' by military force — force which could not be that of the PLO, but rather of the combined Arab governments. Alter-

natively, it plays into the hands of the Israeli *right wing*, who also, of course, want 'one state'.

The acceptance by many Trotskyists of the one-state programme leads them, inevitably, to regard a Palestinian state next to Israel with great suspicion. The British Socialist Workers' Party and Socialist Action devote great energy to opposing the 'two state' programme at the same time as they call for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories.

Socialist Action and Socialist Outlook have carried long articles comparing Israel and South Africa — a superficial and misleading equation — and concluding that an independent Palestine is just what imperialism wants (although George Shultz does not seem to have realised this yet) and so on.

The main 'world Trotskyist' group, the Paris-based United Secretariat of the Fourth International, does not, in fact, support the one-state programme. It recognises the right of the Israeli Jews to self-determination — once the 'Zionist state' has been destroyed. This is an evasive formula, leading them to argue in maximalist fashion that no national struggle or demand is worthwhile short of socialism.

Instructively, the Israeli section of the USFI argues:

*"We think that after 20 years of occupation, it is much more realistic, more reasonable, to start raising demands against the anti-democratic and religious sectarian system imposed throughout the territory, demands that people in the whole territory (i.e. Israelis and Arabs) can mobilise behind, than to call for a Palestinian state alongside Israel"* (International Viewpoint no.134).

This position is actually reactionary. It is not the role of Israeli socialists to tell the Palestinians that an independent state is 'not realistic' and that they should prefer to be equal citizens in Israel. But it is also at least a consistent position, drawing out the logic of the one-state programme once it is taken seriously.

For the other, Arab-chauvinist, logic, we need look no further than the other main 'world Trotskyist' group, the International Workers' League (IIT), based in Argentina. They also want a 'democratic, secular and non-racist Palestine' — but with no rights for Jews! An article by their deceased leader Nahuel Moreno argues against the slogan of a constituent assembly even after the destruction of Israel.

*"[This] is precisely the shameful manner to support the Zionists and justify their presence, giving a 'democratic' veneer to their fascist usurpation. If you want to insinuate that this assembly would be made with non-Zionist Jews... these imaginary inhabitants do not exist"* (Correo Internacional, March 1988).

Moreno puts forward the slogan, consequently of unambiguous meaning, 'Zionists out of Israel', and goes on to say: *"Tomorrow [we will also oppose] Arab racists. But tomorrow, not today. Because today Arab racism against Israel is progressive"*.

Moreno is not just endorsing the nationalist militancy of Palestinian youth. It is relevant to remember that Argentina, Moreno's home, is one of the most anti-semitic countries on earth.

The French group Lutte Ouvriere provides a voice of sanity in this madness.

*"[The Palestinians] should tell the Israeli masses... that they do not fight to oust the Israelis from the land they live on, nor to prevent them from speaking their own language, or from having their own state and their own national existence if they so desire"*. (Class Struggle, no.16).

Unfortunately LO adopt a rather abstract approach, calling on the Palestinians to 'spread the revolution' to the Arab countries. Of course revolutionaries do want uprisings in the Arab countries — and not only in the Arab countries. But it is absurd to call upon the dispersed Palestinian nation — all classes of it? — to act like a proletarian vanguard. Why not suggest that the answer for Northern Ireland is for the dispersed Irish to lead a socialist revolution in Britain and the US?

Also calling for 'spreading the uprising', though rather more absurdly, is the British SWP. The SWP puts forward the defeatist argument that the Palestinian uprising is doomed unless, effectively, there is a revolution in Egypt (and how the Palestinians are supposed to start a revolution in Egypt is not explained). And they forthrightly reject any role for more than a handful of the Israeli Jews in this panorama. The Jews are just going to have to wait until the 'Arab revolution' smashes their state for them.

That this Third-Worldist, Arab-nationalist drive can pass as revolutionary socialism is a tragedy.

But it is also revealing. The 'secular democratic state' is advocated on the one hand by those who counterpose it to a Palestinian state because they believe that by making the issue individual democratic rights they can mobilise the Israeli Jews. On the other it is advocated by those who consider the Israeli Jews too reactionary even to talk to.

A socialist programme needs to include the immediate democratic demands of the Palestinians, and to develop practical steps for their realisation. Beyond that, it must deal with a whole range of other democratic issues, and give answers to pressing economic and social problems.

It must point the way to a

socialist federation of the region in which all people can enjoy equality and national freedom. So far 'world Trotskyism' has not worked out such a programme — because it has lost its bearings on the national question.

Clive Bradley

## Islam in Gaza

I think there is need for more discussion about the involvement of Islamic fundamentalists in the current unrest in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

According to the Observer (10 January), for example, *"the strike in Gaza was called by members of the Islamic Jihad... Jihad's success in organising the strike implies a significant shift of loyalties away from traditional organisations like the PLO..."*

*Young Palestinians who hoisted the Palestinian flag shouted religious slogans as they clambered up telegraph poles"*.

One would have to be blind not to recognise that the 'anti-Zionism' of Khomeini's Islamic fundamentalism is straightforward anti-semitism with a long tradition: even when the Shah was in power, Khomeini used anti-semitism to strike up opposition to him, likening him to a Jew and suggesting that pieces of his legislation were "perhaps drawn up by the spies of the Jews and the Zionists".

Khomeini was equally open about his support for destroying the state of Israel, referring to the need to "uproot this germ of corruption", which was run by "a gang of Jews", from the Islamic world. The perpetuation of such an outlook today is reflected in the fact that the Khomeini agent recently expelled from France, Vahid Gorgi, used Iranian money to finance French pro-Nazi newspapers.

Now it is certainly true that the PLO retains the support of the majority of Palestinians, whatever the exact extent of the growth in influence of the Islamic fundamentalists in the Gaza Strip. It is equally true that the role of the Islamic fundamentals does not alter the fact that the Palestinians are an oppressed people whom socialists must support in their struggle against oppression.

But the confusion on the Left in the aftermath of the overthrow of the Shah in 1979 is surely also a warning against any facile belief that mass struggle against oppression (whether that of the Shah of Iran or that of the Israeli occupation) will automatically result in a government of liberty and enlightenment — especially where Islamic fundamentalism has any say in the matter, as it clearly now does in the Gaza Strip.

The growth of fundamentalist influence should especially provoke some self-critical thought on the part of those socialists who see their role merely as being cheer-leaders for the Palestinians. Or would the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Action have us believe that Islamic fundamentalism is now playing a 'progressive' and 'anti-imperialist' role not just in the Gulf War but also in an Islamic Jihad (holy war) against Israel?

Stan Crooke

## Angry slogans

It is hardly surprising that Tony Greenstein (WL7) pounces on John O'Mahony's condemnation of Jim Allen's "Perdition". Greenstein is merely following in the footsteps of the other ardent supporters of "Perdition", who substitute for serious analysis with angry slogans and charges of plots.

It is ridiculous for Greenstein to ignore the hard realities that have emerged out of the "Perdition" affair. At the press conference launching the publication of "Perdition" by Ithaca Press, Jim Allen referred to a "Zionist conspiracy". Allen later denied that he implied a "Jewish" conspiracy; nevertheless he utilised the language of anti-semitism in order to justify his charge that Zionist pressure led to the cancellation of the play, a charge that is in the main false. Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre condemned the play's "latent anti-semitism", whilst a Royal Court Theatre spokesperson described the play as "third rate". Indeed the Royal Court's Stafford Clark is on record as saying that Zionist pressure had no effect on the play's cancellation.

The sweeping statements against Zionism contained in "Perdition" are also highly questionable. Director Ken Loach spoke of Zionist leaders doing deals with the Nazis, whilst the Jewish workers fought in the streets; in fact, the Jewish working class was swiftly rounded up when the Nazis arrived in Budapest. Ironically, the play also leads us to investigate another aspect of the Third Reich's relationship with Palestine that has so far been ignored; the collaboration between the Nazis and the Palestinian national movement.

Anyone familiar with the history of Nazi Germany will have seen the photo of Hitler shaking hands with a smiling Haj Amin-al-Husseini, the Palestinian Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. In the Mufti's eyes, the Palestinians were natural allies of the Nazis,

since both were engaged in fighting Jews. He wrote "this brings our ideologies closer together and facilitates co-operation". Hitler himself replied, on the issue of Palestine, that: "Germany has no other interest here, other than the annihilation of the power protecting World Jewry". For Allen, the idea that Israel is a racist state is a logical consequence of the ideological similarities between Nazism and Zionism, and the alleged collaboration between the two. Surely, then, by that same logic, the Palestinian national movement, because of its Nazi connection, is also racist.

John O'Mahony is right on commenting on Allen's Stalinist type amalgam between Zionism and religion. Indeed, Allen's idea that Zionism is "tied to God through its religious faith" is reminiscent of the statement made by the Russian Stalinist Vladimir Begun, that "Zionist gangsterism is rooted in the scrolls of the Torah and the Talmud". Indeed, there are strong elements of anti-semitic imagery in "Perdition", with references to "crucifixion" and "polluted wells". In one line, Allen echoes the pathos-ridden words of the stereotyped Shylock in Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice". Varn, speaking of Scott, comments "I felt he was ramming spears into my body". In the "Merchant", Shylock cries to Antonio: "Thou stick'st a dagger in me!". Thus, Allen reproduces the worn-out picture of the weak, defeatist Jew.

The tragedy of "Perdition" is that through both historical discrepancies and appallingly wooden literary technique, Allen has helped neither Israeli Jews nor Palestinian Arabs. And there are no lessons in "Perdition" for those of us struggling for peace between the two peoples and for socialism in the Middle East. Benjamin Cohen, Jewish Labour Caucus

## John Maclean

I am presently writing a biography of John Maclean (1879-1923), the Glasgow Marxist teacher who had six trials in his short life in and out of the courts.

It is not generally realised that John travelled the country, north and south, England, Ireland, and Wales, touring and speaking.

If any of your readers has any information about any of his contacts in Trades Councils, trade unions, etc. I would be glad to receive them. Perhaps there may be references to him in old Minutes Books. He was particularly popular among miners.

Peter Kearney,  
6a Wynford Road, Glasgow G20 8EP.



## The Thatcherite project

Jack Frain reviews "Mrs Thatcher's Revolution. The Ending of the Socialist Era" by Peter Jenkins.

"The Socialist Age was coming to an end... across the whole swathe of Northern Europe the mode of politics which had dominated the post-war period, and much of the twentieth century was in decline... Socialism had come to reek too much of the past. It would live on as a dying creed, perhaps the priesthood remaining as the congregation departed".

So writes Peter Jenkins columnist for 'The Independent'. Jenkins welcomes the 'Thatcher revolution'. What does he mean by 'revolution'? In an article not reproduced here, written during the 1987 election he wrote: 'beneath the surface of this election campaign, beyond the reach of economic statistics or standard opinion surveys, a profound transformation of the political culture is in progress. The Old Order continues to crumble, the new struggles to be born as the south edges northward'.

And what is so striking about this book is the total and utter confidence that Thatcherism is a progressive, forward looking force with history on its side and that our side offers only so many antique curios with no future. Thatcher's recent image of Labour — "prehistoric animal trapped in the Siberian ice" — could easily have been written by Jenkins.

But to understand why Jenkins is wrong we must first understand what he has got right. Firstly that Thatcherism is indeed a coherent project attempting a 'profound transformation' of British society. Second that Labour's 'alternative' is indeed an antique curio. Crosland's hope of an ever-expanding capitalism delivering a yearly quota of reforms and an



Father Christmas arrested for collecting for the miners

ever-increasing standard of living, generating greater equality and thus greater freedom, benignly overseen by Labour governments was never a real alternative to capitalism. But, during the long boom it could stumble along. The crisis changed that. The dream was over. As Jenkins puts it "When the IMF foreclosed on Britain it foreclosed on Croslandism". Exactly. What is the Kinnock-Hattersley statement of aims then, explicitly Croslandite as it is, other than an antique curio. Jenkins even tumbles Kinnock's much vaunted policy review. "Not so much rethinking as the continuous process of repackaging". And, elsewhere, he makes the correct point that, alongside Thatcher, it was Tony Benn not the present front bench 'team' who "faced squarely the issue of decline".

Jenkins of course has no 'answers' for Labour because he believes socialism, in any shape or form, to be a silly dream the human race got hooked on for a while and which, growing up, it is now putting aside. Jenkins looks forward to the forward march of Thatcherism unhalting until it has achieved a new consensus, which, he admits, is still being contested, though rather in the way Chelsea might be said to be 'contesting' Liverpool for this year's league championship.

I think serious socialists have to accept that what Jenkins calls socialism is dead. Does that mean he and his ilk are right? Not at all. The point, of course, is that there has never been an 'age of socialism'. There has been an age of welfare capitalism. Dignify it with the title '1945 socialism' if you must. Call it the 'post-war

settlement'. Marx would have called it capitalism tempered by "The political economy of the working class". The whole point is that the post-war consensus was a labourist stop-gap — a compromise. And when capital feels strong enough it comes back and restructures society again, according to its own priorities and with its own methods. This process of "passive revolution", to use Gramsci's phrase, is what we are living through in Britain right now.

Thatcherism is the long-term coherent project of 'their' side to end the stand-off between the classes that existed during the 1960s and '70s. Our tragedy is that the labour movement, the politically headless labour movement has no comparable project. That's why she wins the ideological war so easily.

Thatcher's project is opposed to the Post-War Settlement in principle, in total. Jenkins is absolutely right to say "Hers was the first conservative administration since 1945 which saw its task not to postpone or mitigate the advance of collectivism but to reverse it." Thatcher seeks to establish a new consensus, a new 'common-sense', a new framework for thinking — how to survive, how to satisfy needs, wants, aspirations — individualised, privatised solutions where the market rises as a secular god to pass final judgement on all worth and all value.

Now this project confuses some sections of the left who see, I think, only a 'return to the 1930's', destruction etc. We end up likening Thatcherism to some 'invading army' roaming the land wreaking and spoiling. But, in

reality again taking a point from Gramsci's notion of 'passive revolution' Thatcherism is also a modernising project. As Stuart Hall has argued it is "simultaneously regressive and progressive".

That's why the project has won a degree of 'consent' from workers. (36% of workers voted for Thatcher in June 1987, the Tories highest proportion ever.) It's not just that a section of workers have benefitted materially, though they undoubtedly have. It's not just that our side is saddled with a leadership which refuses to fight, though undoubtedly it is. It is also that Thatcher speaks directly to people's felt experiences and fears (especially the fears!) of decline and malaise. Furthermore she offers, fundamentally, not 2p off the tax or whatever but an alternative understanding of that decline and an alternative solution to it. She does this not in ritualised exchanges across the dispatch-box but by... well let her explain what she is about: "What irritated me about the whole direction of politics in the last thirty years is that its always been towards the collectivist society. People have forgotten about the personal society. And they say: do I count, do I matter? To which the short answer is yes. And therefore it isn't that I set out on economic policies; it's that I set out really to change the approach and changing the economics is a means of changing that approach. If you change the approach you really are after the heart and soul of the nation. Economics are the method: the object is to change the heart and soul."



**Thatcher**

If you are wondering what this means just watch the new Midland Bank advert for its 'Orchard' Home-buying scheme. It is a quintessentially Thatcherite advert. 2 executives. 1 young, 1 old. The older has asked the younger to plan a new home-buying package for the bank. Having achieved this he asks his boss to meet him high up a derelict broken down tower block. They, and we, look out through the broken panes to the town below. "Why have you brought me here?" asks the elderly man, incredulously. The younger man replies, with feeling "Because when they built these things they didn't listen. People didn't want houses, they wanted homes." Most Thatcherite themes are played to perfection here. Bureaucratic, faceless, inefficient labour ('they') are to blame. Didn't listen to you did they? ('the people'). They took away our communities ('homes') and built the council estates ('houses') the last vestiges of feudalism in Britain. With that, and the dependency that comes with it went self-reliance, self-respect and order. Hence the broken panes, the dereliction. The collective solution is utterly discredited. But always, always, the new individual market-based solutions are at hand. "Tell me about Orchard then..." In such ways are we witnessing "a profound transformation of our political culture".

We have no need to fear approaching Thatcherism in this way. We can debate with the limited insights of a Stuart Hall for example without taking seriously a current like Marxism Today which tells us it was social-democratic labourism which paved the way for Thatcher and then proposes tactical voting and a Lib-Lab pact as an alternative to Thatcher.

But I can't believe I was the only one who found Chesterfield in many respects not an uplifting but a depressing experience. One of our problems at the moment is that the 'hard left' has cast itself as a 'defender of the faith'; invoking a timeless socialism which we must 'preserve' and 'restate'. Mixed into this brew is a creeping soft-Stalinism, which means that

state hirelings from Eastern Europe not Solidarnosc exiles were invited to Chesterfield. One wondered at Chesterfield how many had actually read the keynote conference paper "The Working Class and Socialism" which argued 'socialism will come about by the self-emancipation of the working class or not at all'.

This defensiveness is not difficult to understand. The organisational attack from the right-wing; the hijacking of the very notion of 'rethinking' by that right-wing to push through its 'Bad Godesburg' on the cheap, the suspicion of letting old certainties go until you know the calibre of the new ideas.

But if this defensiveness is understandable, it is also a gift horse to Kinnoch. A journal like *Workers' Liberty* is in a position to play a much more positive, fructifying role in this debate. For ours is emphatically the politics of socialism from below, of socialism as the self-emancipation of the working class. Ours is a socialism made by the creativity and skill of millions and millions of working people as they, simultaneously resist the old and erect the new. Our socialism is that of the vast extension of the elective, democratic principle into all those areas of life where the untrammelled role of the rich and privileged holds sway. We abhor all bureaucratic top-down 'socialisms' whether of the Fabians or the Stalinists. We take James Connolly's words on nationalisation as our guide. "State ownership and control is not necessarily socialist. If it were the army and the navy and the police and the judges and the gaolers, the informers and the hangmen would all be socialist functionaries as they are all state officials — but the ownership by the state of all the lands and material for labour, combined with the co-operative control by the workers of such land and materials would be socialist... To the cry of the middle class reformers, 'Make this or that the property of the government' we reply 'yes, in proportion as the workers are ready to make the government their property'."

Our task which I have not addressed here is to make socialism from below aimed at a genuine self-governing democracy live in today's debates as a force not just to inspire but to direct. As Alan Johnson argued in Socialist Organiser's post election discussion "That should not be hard for us as Marxists to accept. That idea — working class people getting together and liberating themselves by their own activity — is something that's always been a central part of our history. I think it's more the reformist left which has had an idea of everything coming from above. I think we need to get back to working class socialist politics that stresses people organising

together from below, to transform their own society. And we need to embody that idea in forms of policy".

In other words we have the chance to argue for a renewal of the whole socialist project as it is practised in Britain for the 1990s and beyond. If we can begin the work on that we could take the smile off Peter Jenkins' face.

## A crisis in English studies

**Brian McKenna reviews 'Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976-84, ed. Francis Barker et al, Methuen 1986 and 'Popular Fictions: Essay in Literature and History', ed. Peter Mumm et al, Methuen, 1986.**

These twin volumes register the much-vaunted 'crisis in English studies' that occasionally breaks out of the review pages of the Sunday papers and into the public eye.

Both are essay compilations culled from two radical publishing projects — the Essex University 'Sociology of Literature' Conferences and the Thames Polytechnic journal 'Literature and History'.

The 'Essex' volume is a farewell to '1968'. The collection's 'Introduction' tends, I think, to (mis)read history backwards in the way it presents its litany of 'novel political forces and issues' (including 'anti-psychiatry, counter-cultural activity and community welfare action') as being what the 'events' of '68 were originally about.

Surely one must distinguish between the greatest workers' strike in world history and the debris consequent upon 'the sense of frustration and bitterness the

self-criticisms and guilty introspection, the fatigue and depoliticisation that followed May 1968' (Frederic Jameson).

This is not to gainsay the importance of projects such as the French 'Groupe Information Asiles' (1971) or programmes such as Channel 4's recent 'We're not Mad We're Angry' which have given voice to the psychiatricised. Nevertheless, socialists should be aware that such 'post-structuralist' political activity in France has rejected any 'global' political practice (such as socialist revolution) or indeed any systematic theory (such as Marxism) as oppressively 'totalitarian'.

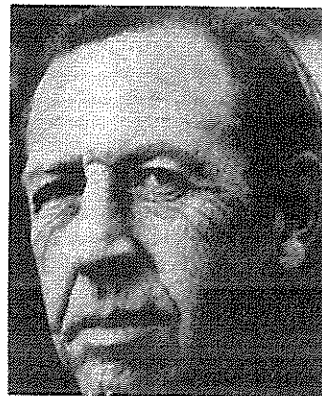
It is a relief to turn from some of the more abstruse essays to the opening article (on fictional forms in 1848) by that venerable old 'empiricist' Raymond Williams. By contrast I found the closing contribution by Edward Said, illustrious author of 'Orientalism', rather disappointing.

The most overtly political of the essays is Simon Barker's 'A History of the Present' which discerns in that nauseating English nationalism that was mobilised so effectively during the Falklands War a genealogical taproot: namely the myth of an Elizabethan 'Golden Age' (with Thatcher as 'Gloriana' herself). Central to this myth is a bourgeois notion of Shakespeare as 'our' national poet; this 'hegemonic' operation, argues Barker, must needs be resisted by the Left, as part of a general fight to disrupt the continuum of History and to produce a knowledge of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a period of crisis and rapid change.

The significance assigned by Barker to arguing about Shakespeare would seem to find vindication in the essay in the companion volume 'Popular Fictions' by Graham Holderness, 'Agincourt 1444 — readings in the Shakespeare myth'. Holderness assesses three wartime 'Shakespeares' and shows that whereas the grotesque patriotism of Wilson Knight's pamphlet 'The Olive and the Sword' and the 'martial rhetoric' of Laurence Olivier's technicoloured 'Henry V' are now consigned to the margins of literary history, E.M.W. Tillyard's 'equally strange discovery of a governing philosophy of "order" in Elizabethan society and in Shakespeare's plays lives on as a potent ideological force'.

The 'Thames' volume generally shows a historical awareness less evident in the 'Essex' volume. Michael Denning's piece on John Gay's 'The Beggar's Opera', for example, shows how a literary work can play a constitutive role within its own historical moment (in this case that of Walpole's London).

Similarly, Paul O'Flinn's essay on 'Frankenstein' recounts the multitude of historical existences



**Raymond Williams**

produced for Mary Shelley's original 1818 tale by those whose interest has been to defuse its radicalism (including the older Mary Shelley whose conservative 1831 Introduction informs Ken Russell's immensely silly 'Gothic').

To conclude: it seems to me that those on the Left who are currently working (or trapped?) within 'literary studies' face twin temptations exemplified here by these two collections: to practice High Theory or to excavate the marginal and repressed.

Given the patently bourgeois ideological nature of English Literature as an academic subject such temptations are understandable. Indeed to some extent they should be yielded to: after all, questions concerning, for example, the constitution of the gendered subject in language address important gaps within Marxist theory; moreover the sexist and bourgeois canon of English Literature badly needs 'deconstructing'.

However there is still a need to do a job of work with the tools of radical literary theory on those canonised texts foisted upon unsuspecting A-Level and undergraduate students. (Though personally I think the Left should evacuate the 'Age of Shakespeare'; more than enough initials have been carved on that particular altar already). In this respect the Essex volume *does* indicate some useful casework in an appendix; it is a pity that 'Popular Fictions' does not follow suit.

If such work is done properly then the Left could begin to fashion an audience for a readable cultural review which could incorporate what is good about 'Marxism Today' whilst going beyond it.

## Gorbachev's Russia

Janet Burstall reviews "The Waking Giant: the Soviet Union under Gorbachev", by Martin Walker. London, Sphere, 1987.

"Soviet condoms come in two kinds: the military variety that are so thick they could be used as galoshes, and the domestic brand that are so thin that they are holed either before use or during lovemaking. There is a lively black market in East German and Hungarian contraceptive pills, but growing concern about their effects on health. And,

except for the well connected, the supply of pills is too irregular to be relied on. Soviet gynaecologists insist to Western interviewers that there are five sizes of diaphragm available, but few Russian women would claim to have found more than two sizes — too big, or too small."

Martin Walker's chatty book is full of anecdotes and readably presented facts about how the system works, or often doesn't, in the USSR.

Walker has been living in Moscow since 1984, as the Guardian's third resident correspondent there in 60 years. He has been able to draw on a wide range of sources, to write what seems to be a very well-informed work.

The book also puts an argument as to why reform is being attempted in the USSR, what sort of changes Gorbachev would like to make, and sources of support for and opposition to Gorbachev's changes.

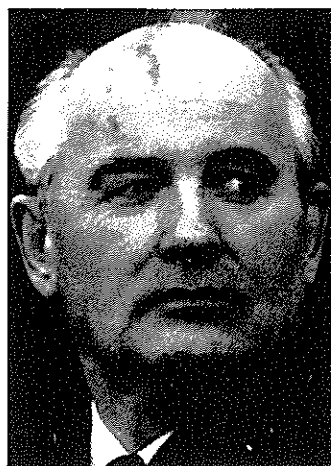
The pressure within the bureaucracy for reform comes from an educated "younger" generation (only in their 50s!). Gorbachev is the first leader of the Soviet Union, since Lenin, to have been university educated. This layer has fond memories of Khrushchev's attempts at reform, and is frustrated with stagnation. Economic crisis has become more acute since the price of oil fell on the international market. Soviet oil wealth had buoyed the economy in the '70s.

The reforms which Gorbachev is trying to make, are virtually all directed at increasing productivity, encouraging a managerial/intellectual layer to apply themselves to economic problems, integration of the black economy into the state-controlled economy, limiting alcohol availability, and introduction of quality controls. Walker describes many of the reforms, planned or underway, and the obstacles to their success. The reforms, rudimentary as they are, have led to a variety of tensions and conflicts in different layers of Soviet society. These conflicts are illustrated in the book.

Reduction in the military's share of resources would free up materials and labour for more productive industry. The military is, of course, not willing to have its resources reduced.

The KGB is cracking down on corruption and the black market. This is not popular, because the black market is the only place to go to keep a car on the road, or for many other items or services which are only just in excess of basic essentials in the USSR.

There is increased financial autonomy for factories within the centralised economy. In a system where one's future as a manager is dependent on the arbitrary



Gorbachev

reactions of one's superiors, financial autonomy doesn't necessarily lead to more rational decisions.

Attempts to enforce quality controls have the effect of pushing down workers' output and thus their pay, which is by piece work. Quality controls cannot improve quality, when workers do not have the necessary materials to produce quality goods. They are not reported in Walker's book, but there have been strikes reported in the official Soviet press, over the loss of income due to quality controls.

Limited public scrutiny of access to membership of the 'party', i.e. the bureaucracy, and of the behaviour of party members, has been introduced. The powerful elite is reluctant to accept any public scrutiny which might diminish its power. They rejected (at the 27th Party Congress) a rule change which would have limited their tenure of positions. This was Khrushchev's Rule 25, which had been diluted by Brezhnev, and which reformers had wanted to reintroduce in 1986.

The chapters on Chernobyl, and on the women's lot, in particular, reveal some of the most detrimental effects of Stalinist rule.

Walker accepts that Gorbachev is a good guy, who might be able to reform the Communist Party, democratise the USSR, increase productivity and living standards, and make a crucial contribution to reducing the risk of nuclear warfare on the planet. He doesn't even mention the lack of right to independent trade unions nor that Gorbachev organises the repression of the working class, let alone understand that the bureaucracy's entire existence could be threatened by a working class with increased freedom to organise.

But Walker is an honest enough journalist that there is plenty of useful, factual material in the book for those wanting to know more about Soviet life and politics. It's also a good read.

## Labour and 'local' politics

Clive Bradley reviews "Democracy in Crisis — the Town Halls Respond" by David Blunkett and Keith Jackson, Hogarth.

The main arguments of Blunkett and Jackson are that local democracy is a vital element in a democratic society and that the Thatcher government's attack on local government is a major part of an erosion of democracy in general. The experience of Sheffield (and South Yorkshire) is, of course, seen as particularly instructive.

They don't see local democracy as exclusively concerned with local government. 'Local politics,' more generally, includes a wide variety of groups — voluntary groups, tenants' associations, and so on. But local councils are very important. "Local councils counterbalance the power of Parliament when it fails to represent important sections of the population." (p.69)

This theme, of national *versus* local politics, underlies Blunkett and Jackson's approach — even where they describe the national implications of local councils' policies (for example in the campaign against rate-capping). Theoretically, they see regional inequalities as the product of the same basic processes creating international inequalities — "development and underdevelopment" in a characteristic phrase borrowed (rather anachronistically) from development sociology. The north gets a bad deal from the south (in England); Britain gets a bad deal from "international" capital, the EEC and the City, which is "located in Britain but the interests it serves are not those of the British people". (p.109). 'National politics', by implication, would be a broader application of 'local politics', on the international arena. Yet this is all that is suggested by way of implication for 'national' politics; 'local politics' is the theme.

In fact to have opted for 'national' politics is seen as one of the Labour Party's biggest historical mistakes — the main one of many criticisms the authors make of Labour.

Blunkett and Jackson have some interesting things to say, although often the book is a bit pompous, and frequently consists of page after page of banality. Overall, it's nowhere to go for political answers.

# Workers' Liberty

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