WORKERS' LIBERTY

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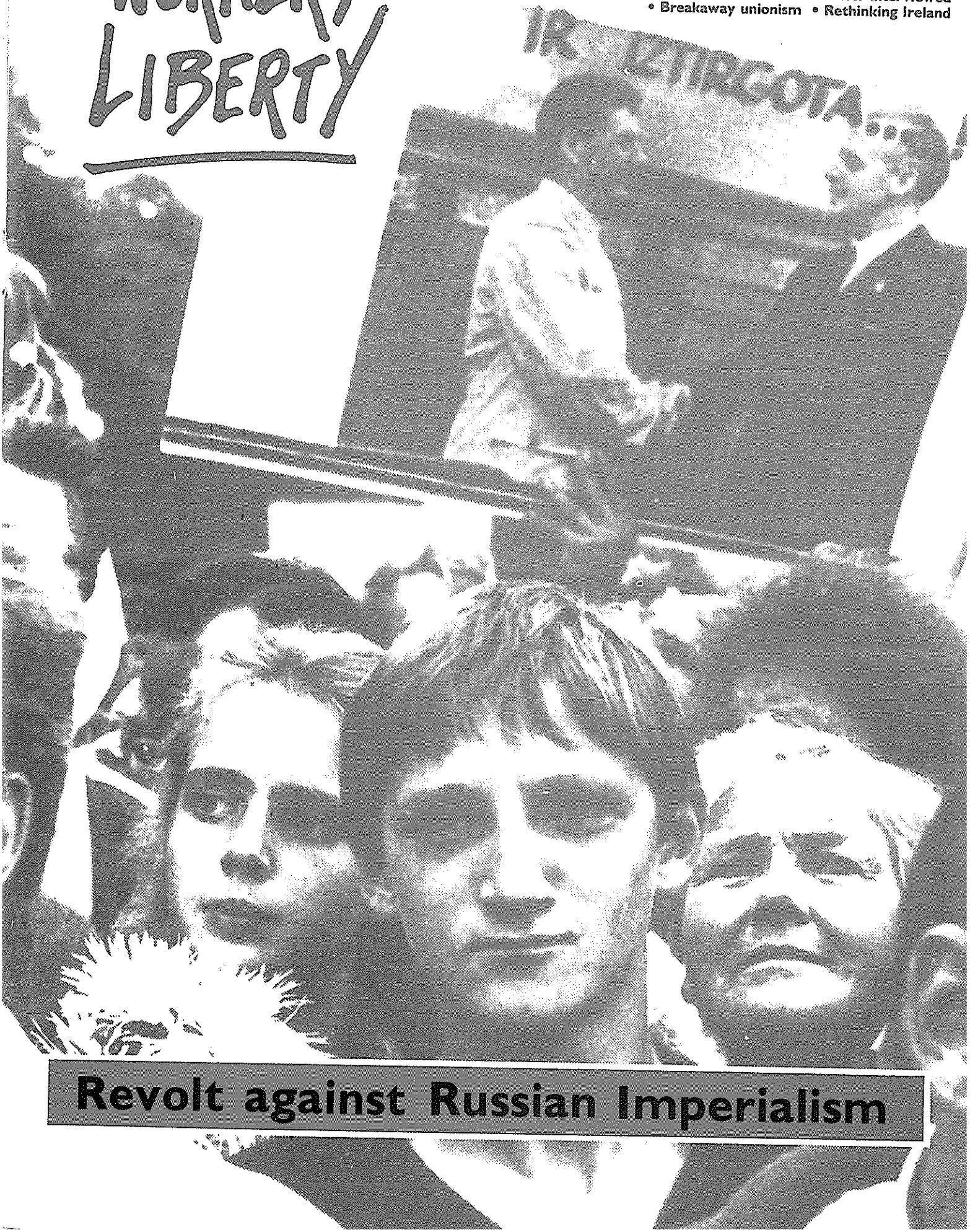

Revolt against Russian Imperialism

WORKERS' LIBERTY

The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of sex or race.
Karl Marx

Letter to readers

A large part of this issue is given over to discussion material about the class character of the Soviet Union and similar states.

The advent of the second reforming Stalinist Tsar, Mikhail Gorbachev, has once again raised the question of the state-monopoly systems to the front rank of issues in the labour movement. Gorbachev has as yet done little to change anything. Even that little is welcome; but he obviously has no intention of allowing the working class in the USSR the elementary freedom to organise.

There are many in the labour movement willing, indeed eager, to glorify Gorbachev. In these days of setbacks for socialism, with Reagan and Thatcher triumphant, there is obviously a great demand for socialist fatherlands to believe in or fantasise about.

Serious working-class socialists, however, must be more cold-eyed and clear-headed.

Among the material in this issue is the first instalment of a selection of articles by Max Shachtman. *Workers' Liberty* wants to break out of the narrowly-defined factionalism which has fouled up discussion in the Trotskyist movement for so long. Shachtman wound up politically very far from where we stand, and he got many things wrong, but in his day he was right on many issues against the official Trotskyist movement.

We also print a final instalment of our translations from Zbigniew Kowalewski's book on Poland 1980-1, in which Kowalewski outlines his views on the nature of the state-monopoly systems.

The attempt by *Marxism Today* to theorise the view that the working class is a thing of the past is examined in an important article by Chris Reynolds. Bob Fine surveys the vast range of restrictions that allegedly 'libertarian' Thatcherism has brought in to buttress the State.

Trotskyism today covers a vast range of discordant political positions: our editorial analyses the way this situation has been created in the 50 years since the Fourth International was proclaimed.

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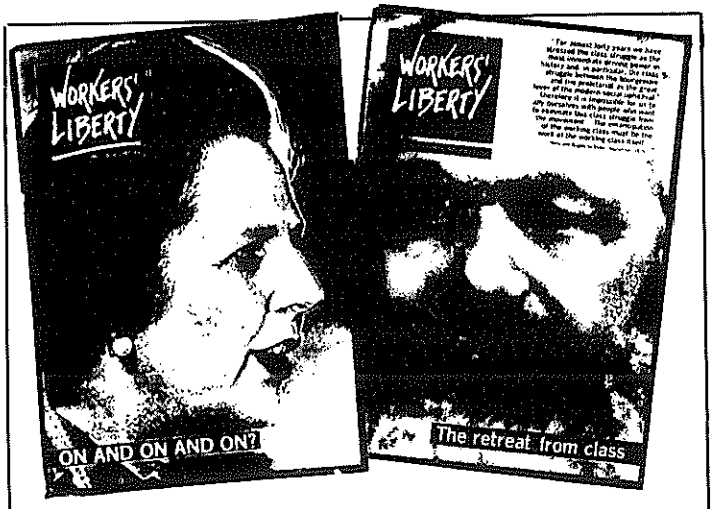
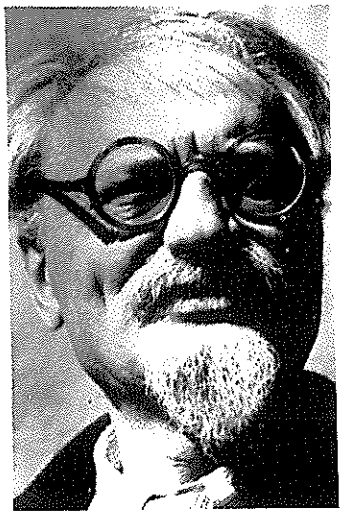
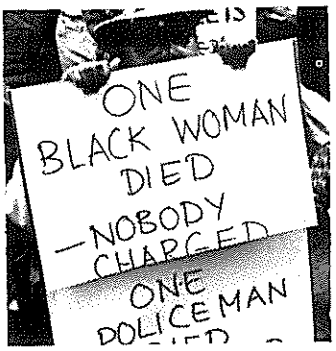






Our cover: demonstration in Latvia. The placard carries a picture of Stalin and the Nazi leader Ribbentrop, protesting against their carve-up deal in 1939 which led to the USSR seizing the Baltic states.

EDITORIAL

50 years after the founding of the Fourth International

50 years ago, in September 1938, 30 Trotskyists met in Paris and declared that the 'World Party of Socialist Revolution' was now in existence, the fourth Marxist International, in the direct line of succession from Marx and Lenin.

Workers' Liberty bases itself on the politics personified by Trotsky until 1940. Yet we find ourselves at odds on many issues with almost all the wide spectrum of groups which today call themselves Trotskyist. We have recently concluded that we can no longer give even the most qualified assent to one of the central dogmas of modern (post-1951) Trotskyism: that the societies of the Eastern Bloc are some form of workers' state. They are in fact new exploiting societies; they are not progressive compared to capitalism.

What did Trotskyism mean in 1938? Was the declaration of the Fourth International a futile gesture? What has happened to Trotskyism over the last half-century, and what does Trotskyism mean today?

The First International, the International Working Men's Association (1864-72) had organised the earliest working-class movements of a handful of European countries. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels were active within it, and their work laid the theoretical foundations of a scientific labour movement.

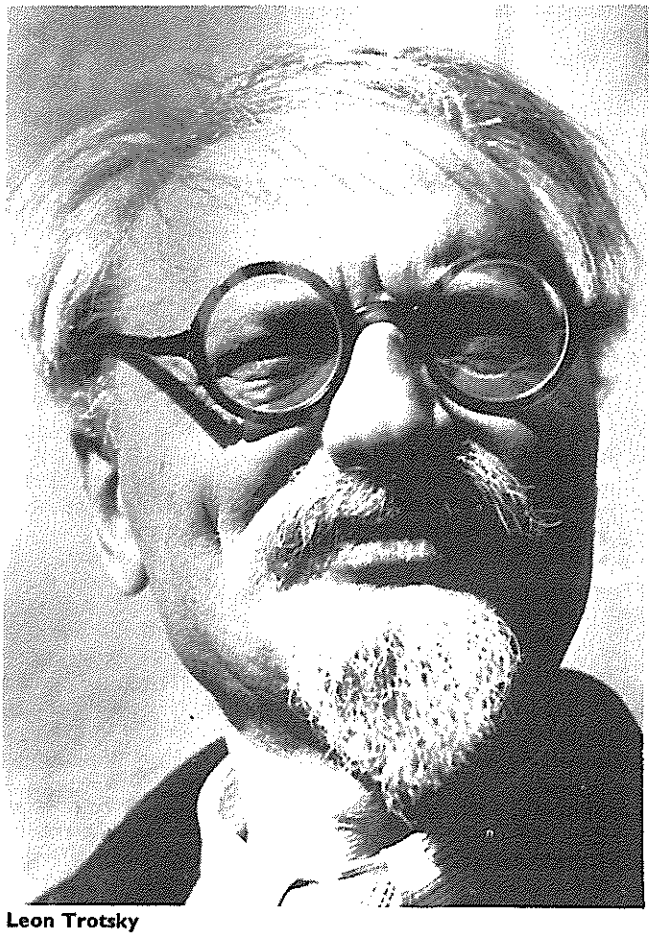
The Second International (the Socialist International, 1889-1914) had organised an immense growth of the labour movements of Europe, and a few countries outside Europe, and had been formally Marxist. But its upper layers in almost all countries became enmeshed in the bourgeois parliamentary system and in routine trade unionism within the capitalist framework. The Second International collapsed when war broke out in August 1914. Its leading sections supported their own bourgeoisies and helped incite their own workers to slaughter the workers of enemy nations, yesterday's comrades in the Socialist International.

The Third, Communist, International (1919-1933) was set up by those who had led the Russian Revolution of October 1917. It rallied workers all over the world and bound them into a militant army of the revolution. Red Russia was its citadel, the headquarters of its general staff. But the USSR was isolated. The revolutionary workers in the West, in Italy, Germany and elsewhere, were defeated by the bourgeoisie, aided by the old reformist working-class parties. The workers who had made a socialist revolution in a backward country were left isolated, with immense problems, in conditions where socialism was impossible.

A new bureaucratic ruling elite grew up, led by Stalin, and seized power in the USSR. Still proclaiming themselves communists, they took control of the Communist International. In defiance of the ABCs of Marxism, they declared that it was possible to build socialism in one country, and that country none other than backward, war-ravaged Russia.

But they held power in the state created by the workers' revolution. They said that they were the communists and the Leninists, and that those who opposed them were 'Mensheviks' and counter-revolutionaries. They used the massive resources of the USSR's state to corrupt sections of the Communist International and bamboozle the rest. They purged the Communist International of the genuine Leninists. They transformed the Communist International from being a revolutionary International into a movement subordinated to Russian foreign policy.

A whole series of revolutionary possibilities in Europe and Asia were destroyed because of the bunglings of the Communist International led by Stalin and Bukharin, which talked



Leon Trotsky

communist revolution but pursued other goals: the German revolution of 1923; the British General Strike of 1926; the Chinese revolution of 1927. The isolation of the USSR was deepened and perpetuated, the bureaucracy strengthened.

In 1933 the powerful German labour movement — the reformist Social Democracy with eight million votes, and the Communist Party with four million, both with their own militias able to drive the Nazis off the streets of Berlin — surrendered peacefully to the Nazis, who had been called to power by the bourgeoisie. When the Communist International did not rise in revolt against those responsible for what had happened in Germany, Trotsky concluded that the Communist International was dead for the socialist revolution, murdered by Stalin. "The Third International is dead, long live the Fourth International!"

Trotsky had already by that time spent ten years fighting the Stalinist bureaucracy, inside the USSR and in the Communist International. He had criticised the official Communist International policy on Germany (1923), Britain, China, and then again Germany in the years during which Hitler rose to power. No more tragic and terrible literature exists in the history of politics than the writings on Germany produced by Trotsky between 1930 and 1933. Trotsky saw and foresaw with great accuracy exactly what was happening and would happen. He warned the German labour movement — warned in good time, while it was still possible to crush the fascists. But Trotsky's comrades in Germany numbered a few hundreds. Trotsky could do nothing but warn.

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It was the pattern of the 1930s, and it would be repeated in France and Spain later. Trotsky understood and analysed and argued for what the working class needed to do to win; but he was isolated and powerless, and the labour movement was defeated and crushed in country after country.

In the USSR, the bureaucracy was strengthened by the defeats of the European labour movement. The bureaucracy had balanced between the working class and the residual or reviving bourgeoisie throughout the 1920s. In 1928-30 it eliminated the bourgeoisie and made itself the sole master of society, enslaving the working class. It moved from confused bunglings in Britain and China — albeit bunglings rooted in the logic of its anti-Marxist doctrine of socialism in one country — to outright treachery in Germany, France and Spain. It shifted from the ultra-leftism it had fomented in Germany — where it had declared the Social Democrats to be worse enemies of the working class than the fascists were — to advocacy of alliances with bourgeois parties 'against fascism', that is, against Germany. In France, party secretary Maurice Thorez would go so far as to advocate a common front with patriotic — that is, anti-German — French fascists..

It was against this background of defeat and gross degeneration of the communist movement that Trotsky in 1933 broke definitively with the Communist International and called for a Fourth International.

Trotsky did not declare the existing Trotskyist movement to be the new International. The Trotskyist organisation was its pioneer, but the new International could only come about by regroupment of the forces of the working-class movement, just as the Communist International had regrouped sections breaking out of the Second. To do its work, the Fourth International had necessarily to be a mass International. In this spirit, Trotsky in 1934 greeted the publication of a new US journal as follows: "Its name, 'The New International', is the programme of an entire epoch".

This was a period of ferment in the international labour movement, as socialists responded to the threat of fascism and the experience of Stalinism. The Trotskyists set about seeking regroupments and new alliances. They entered socialist groups moving to the left in France, America, and other countries. But the movement for a new International faced tremendous difficulties. The reformist and Stalinist parties survived and grew and brought new defeats on the working class, defeats which weighed down on the whole international working-class movement. The movement for the Fourth International remained essentially the Trotskyists.

Central to the impossibility of a wider regroupment were major political differences, on the USSR, for example. Trotsky analysed the degeneration of the USSR stage by stage. Soon after the call for a new International, the Trotskyist movement decided that the road to reform was blocked in the USSR, and that only a new revolution would defeat Stalin. They called it a 'political revolution' because it would preserve the existing state property, while eliminating the specifically bureaucratic features imposed on it by and in the interests of the bureaucracy. By contrast, the Right Communists (Brandlerite) groups which had also split from the Communist International (and which were numerically stronger than the Trotskyists) criticised the policies of the bureaucracy and advocated more democracy, but refused to identify the bureaucracy as a distinct caste and rejected the call for a new revolution.

In 1936 — the year of the great French General Strike and the initial victories of the Spanish workers against the insurgent fascist armies of General Franco — Trotsky proposed to the Trotskyists' international conference that it there and then declare itself the Fourth International. The conference rejected this proposal, holding to the old view that there would first have to be a substantial reorientation of the forces of the existing labour movement towards revolutionary politics.

In 1938, on the very eve of war, the Trotskyists did finally decide to proclaim themselves the Fourth International. Trotsky wrote:

"Sceptics ask: but has the moment for the creation of the Fourth International yet arrived? It is impossible, they say, to create an international 'artificially'; it can arise only out of great events... The Fourth International has already risen out of great events: the greatest defeats of the proletariat in history. The cause for these defeats is to be found in the degeneration and perfidy of the old leadership. The class struggle does not tolerate an interruption... The Fourth International... has no need of being 'proclaimed'. It exists and it fights..."

The objective situation was now much worse than in 1936. The Spanish revolution had been strangled by the Stalinists, and the final victory of Franco's armies was only months away. Europe was visibly heading towards the war which broke out exactly a year later. The savage purges which killed millions in the USSR led Trotsky, in the programmatic document of the 1938 conference, to declare that Stalin's political regime **"differed from fascism only in more unbridled savagery".**

The new International was organisationally feeble. The 30 delegates deliberated for one day only. The only groups with significant numbers were the Belgian and US organisations, the latter having about one thousand members. The chair was Max Shachtman, who was to lead half the US organisation out of the International 18 months later. The 'USSR section' — in fact already liquidated by the GPU — was 'represented' by a Stalinist police agent.

There was implicit in the declaration of the Fourth International a shift from the ideas of the previous period. Before, everything had been seen as resting on a reorientation of sections of the existing movement, on the creation of mass parties as the prerequisite for revolution. The perspectives of Trotskyism now, while continuing to conceive of the reconstitution of mass communist working-class parties as the central goal of their activities, stressed the element of mass spontaneous working-class upsurge, bringing a new vanguard, rather than the reorientation of the given vanguard. If the stress of the Trotskyists up to 1933 had been on the "1902" side of Leninism, the need for inner-party rectification, now it was the "1905" side, the perspective of the revolutionaries being able to put themselves at the head of a mass "spontaneously socialist" revolt that would break through the bureaucratic crust.

These were in fact *fundamentally* correct perspectives — as perspectives, as a guide to action, though not as crystal-ball prediction. The programme and analyses of Trotskyism were still fundamentally adequate to the world the Trotskyists operated in — except for the limited forces at the disposal of the Trotskyists, in 1938 as in the preceding 15 years.

Trotsky's perspective was utterly defeated. In retrospect what has happened seems to have been *necessary* given all the conditions which in fact made for it. It might seem nonsense to say that a perspective that failed to take full and accurate account of the specific weight of certain factors that were later to render it inoperable was nevertheless a correct perspective for those who fought for it. It is a matter of the historical time scale, and of what a Marxist perspective is.

As the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci argued:

" 'Too much' (therefore superficial and mechanical) political realism often leads to the assertion that a statesman should only work within the limits of 'effective reality'; that he should not interest himself in what 'ought to be', but only in what 'is'. This would mean that he should not look farther than the end of his own nose...

In reality one can 'scientifically' foresee only the struggle, but not the concrete moments of this struggle, which cannot but be the result of opposing forces in continuous movement, which are never reducible to fixed quantities, since within them quantity is continually becoming quality. In reality one can 'foresee' to the extent that one acts, to the extent that one applies a voluntary effort and therefore contributes concretely to creating the result 'foreseen'. Prediction reveals itself thus not as a scientific act of knowledge, but as the abstract expression of the effort made, the practical way of creating a collective will".

The Trotskyists did *predict* accurately the mass working class upsurge which came at the end of World War 2. They could not *predict* their own defeat in the struggle for the masses, except at the cost of simply eliminating themselves as a factor in the situation. In fact, at no point at least up to the middle or late 1940s was it possible for revolutionaries to have a perspective of capitalist and Stalinist

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reconsolidation, without submitting to a premature admission of defeat. The logic of such an admission would have been that the Trotskyists should have *given up* as soon as they decided, in 1933, that the mass Communist International was dead for revolutionary purposes.

When Trotsky was killed by a Stalinist assassin in August 1940, the Fourth International was organisationally more feeble than it had been in 1938, having just suffered a major split. It soon collapsed organisationally in Europe, with some incidental political confusion, as the Nazis conquered France and the Low Countries. The centre was moved to the USA, from where Trotskyist seamen went around the non-fascist world to maintain contacts.

In the occupied countries, Trotskyists maintained their activities underground, suffering many casualties. Among the most heroic achievements of that underground was the production of a clandestine newspaper in France aimed at German soldiers, a voice of internationalism in that world of national hatred and mad chauvinism. In 1944 the Trotskyists were able once again to organise a European conference, and began to put the organisation back together again. The organisational reconstruction would culminate in the Second World Congress of February 1948, representing substantially bigger forces than the first congress, ten momentous years earlier. A number of groups were now several hundred or a few thousand strong.

But by 1948 the Trotskyist movement was in a tremendous political crisis. The working class had risen in a series of revolts throughout Europe, in France, Italy and Greece. But the bourgeoisie and the reformist and Stalinist bureaucracies held control, quelling the workers' movement.

The root of the crisis of Trotskyism was not just the defeat of the Trotskyist attempt to win the masses, and the defeat of the mass upsurge. Clear ideas had never been a guarantee against defeat. The Trotskyists had been defeated often before. What was new was the emergence of *forces outside Trotskyism carrying through a part of its programme.* The Russian army and its agents in Eastern Europe, and independent Stalinist forces in Yugoslavia and China, carried through social overturns. Although the Stalinists stifled or crushed the working class in these countries, they also achieved as much — essentially, the nationalisation of industry and the destruction of the old capitalist class — as the Trotskyists recognised as surviving from the October Revolution in Russia.

Either those overturns defined the new Stalinist states as "deformed" workers' states, similar to the "degenerated" workers' state of the USSR except that they were bureaucratised from the start — or the whole assessment of the Soviet Union since the political triumph of Stalinism had to be changed.

Up to 1943, and with increasing doubt until the end of the '40s, the Fourth International could regard itself as a movement based on a given 'Marxism', which guided practice and interpreted reality in the present and clearly indicated alternatives for the future. But from the mid-'40s, and especially after 1948, it became a matter of increasingly desperate efforts to catch up with events which appeared to contradict all expectations.

The movement was thrown into a great debate as to how, and in what sense, the Stalinist movements could be 'revolutionary'. It had to assess the expansion of Stalinism and, later, a great revival of capitalism.

It never resolved the crisis satisfactorily. As the post-war working-class upsurge receded, and the Cold War developed, the Trotskyists became isolated politically. Their numbers dwindled. In France, where the Fourth International now had its centre, the Trotskyist group shrank from over 1,500 in early 1948 to 150 members in 1952. These losses increased the disorientation, and made the political problems harder to resolve.

Mao Zedong

The core problem was understanding Stalinism. For Trotsky, Stalinism was a transitory regime of crisis, a social structure in which the bureaucracy was in agonising contradiction with the nationalised economy because it was in sharp conflict with the working class. The bureaucracy balanced unstably between the working class and pressure from world capitalism.

But Stalinism survived the war, and Stalin expanded his system into vast areas of Eastern and Central Europe, right into the heart of Germany. Independent Stalinist organisations, peasant-based, took power in Yugoslavia and China. These countries all had replicas of the USSR's society imposed on them. The new ruling Stalinist bureaucracies could not be said to be in agonising contradiction with the new nationalised economies; they had created them.

In his last writings on Stalinism, Trotsky had argued that the Kremlin bureaucracy had all the essential features of a ruling class — except the stability, substance, and basis in an economic system of its own which would allow it to play a big historic role. (See the introduction to 'The essential Shachtman', p.18).

The only logical conclusion that could be drawn from the facts of the 1940s was that it was no longer possible to consider the Stalinist societies workers' states in any sense, however residual.

After much thrashing around, however, the mainstream Trotskyist movement arrived between 1948 and 1951 at radically different conclusions, codified at the Third World Congress of August 1951. They concluded that the new Stalinist states were "deformed workers' states". They denied that Stalin had created an empire. Trotsky had recognised the element of imperialism, in the broad sense, in the USSR's actions in 1939-40, though he still then believed that the basic defining fact was conflict between Western capitalism and the USSR's nationalised economy, and thus thought it best to confine the term 'imperialism' to finance-capital. Now the Trotskyists used that idea of conflict between finance-capital and nationalised economy to blur over or define away the Kremlin's vast land-grab. They maintained as a dogma the idea that the defence of the USSR against (Western) imperialism was a core principle of working-class politics, and in a world dominated by two imperialist blocs that lined them up with the USSR-dominated bloc.

After 1950 they welcomed the expansion of Stalinism as 'the Revolution' (albeit in deformed shape), and began to look for good things from the Third World War which many people then reasonably thought to be inevitable. This, they said, would be a War-Revolution: the Russian advance into Western Europe would compel the big European Communist Parties to act as revolutionaries.

They failed, in a world in which all sorts of capitalist regimes used extensive nationalisations, to break with the increasingly untenable idea that a given quantity of nationalisation in an economy necessarily aligned that economy with the working class in the long view of history. They did not register one of the key facts of modern history: that Stalinists can be revolutionary against the old order, but simultaneously counter-revolutionary against the working class. In their attitude to the *revolutionary* Stalinists — in Yugoslavia, China, and so on — they dropped backwards a whole historical period to the standpoint Trotsky rejected in 1933, that of critic and advocate of reform rather than revolution. They inserted into the Trotskyist movement the politics of the Right Communist (Brandlerite) opposition of the 1930s — applied not to the USSR, towards which they maintained the politics of Trotsky, but to the new autonomous state-monopoly systems like Yugoslavia and China. It took the post-1951 mainstream 20 years to come out for a working-class revolution against Mao!

The 'Trotskyism' redefined at the 'refounding' Congress in 1951 was thus an unstable and broken-backed affair, incoherently amalgamating contradictory politics, the politics of the Right Communists of the 1930s and of Trotsky. In all

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the strands that have resulted from the multifarious splits since 1951, post-war Trotskyism has been dominated by an incoherent dialogue between the ghosts of Brandler and of Trotsky. But it has not been an equal dialogue: the face of the movement has been turned with Brandlerite attitudes and expectations towards the "developing" and "rising" "process of world revolution" — in practice, towards various Third World struggles led by Stalinist forces and to the newly-emerging state-monopoly systems.

The mainstream of this Trotskyism has been the current led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel. Groups like the British Socialist Labour League/Workers' Revolutionary Party and the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste/Parti Communiste Internationaliste have been their embittered 'heretics', sometimes being far cruder in their Brandlerite politics and sometimes recoiling incoherent from the Brandlerite politics of the mainstream, but also operating within the shared framework of the world view outlined in 1951.

One other characteristic of post-1948 Trotskyism needs to be sketched in: its millennarianism. Millennarian movements are religious or quasi-religious movements which desire great changes in the world, yet look not to their own activity but to some outside force — usually Christ in his Second Coming. Often they rally behind some bandit, madman, or warlord, believing that God acts through him. Millennarian-type movements and sects are characteristic of peasant revolts and of the earliest labour movements. They do not or cannot work out a coherent concept of means to achieve their ends.

The Trotskyist movement under Trotsky was a rational movement: its means was working-class action, its method building revolutionary parties, its perspective that capitalism by its convulsions would force millions of workers onto the revolutionary road. Post-1951 Trotskyism was in various ways millennarian, looking to some mystic power ('the Revolution') which would move through the alien and hostile forces of Stalinism to bring us towards socialism. The War-Revolution scenario of the early 1950s was the first and most extreme case of this neo-millennarianism. In this scenario, the profane appearance of things would be world war and the expansion of Stalinism; the essence, world revolution! Stalinism was a product of Russia's isolation; the expansion of Stalinism broke that isolation; the strengthening and expansion of Stalinism was therefore in truth its "decline and fall".

The millennarian search for other forces to carry through the Revolution, and the 'recognition' of revolutions carried through by such forces — such has been the focus of the political life of most post-Trotsky Trotskyism. For the rational politics of Trotsky — based on conscious action by the working class — they have substituted the idea of a 'world revolution' stalking across the world, autonomous from the working class and indeed sometimes, in the victorious forces of Stalinism, murderously counterposed to it.

Post-1951 Trotskyism has thus opened itself to a vast variety of alien elements. 'Trotskyist' groups operate with basic ideas of the Bolsheviks and Trotsky alloyed with bits of 'new revolutionary' ideas ranging from Stalinism through petty bourgeois nationalisms to Islamic fundamentalism. The movement is in political chaos.

Nowhere is that chaos more graphically shown than in the fact that those who have maintained the idea that the state-monopoly systems are some form of workers' state — following Trotsky's views on the USSR up to 1940 — *in fact* describe something different. Within the sheath of the verbal "workers' state" formula, they describe a new form of society where the bureaucracy is the creator of the nationalised economy, not an alien force imposed on and in agonising contradiction to a nationalised economy shaped by the working class.

Must we then, on the 50th anniversary of the Fourth International, conclude that the history of Trotskyism has been "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"? No. That is not our conclusion.

The living continuity of revolutionary Marxist socialism flows through the First, Second, Third and Fourth Internationals. That the movement for the Fourth International led by Trotsky failed, and then lost its way politically, was the result of the successive defeats suffered by the forces of unfalsified communism as the hands of capitalist reaction and of the new state-monopoly ruling elites, beginning with the USSR's.

The roots of that movement are alive. No other consistent revolutionary working-class politics exist apart from the politics personified by Trotsky up to 1940. The working class in the state-monopoly societies and in the market capitalist societies needs those politics. Because the class struggle can never be stilled, the working class will find a way to those politics. Living Marxists will cleanse the Trotskyist movement of the encrustations and irrationalities accumulated over the decades of defeat and disorientation. There exists no more deadly measure against which to judge what has passed for Trotskyism these last decades than the writings of Leon Trotsky himself.

Faced in 1914 with the collapse of the powerful Second International on the outbreak of World War, Lenin and his comrades set about digging down to the roots of the corruption, examining what had passed for Marxism over the previous 20 years and more in the light of that collapse. They found their way back to the Marxist roots. A similar task needs to be accomplished today by those who want to continue the fight for Trotskyist politics and yet are forced to recognise that much that passes for Trotskyism is incoherent and irrational. That is one reason why we publish *Workers' Liberty*.

Margaret Thatcher

The frame-up of socialism

Margaret Thatcher says she wants to 'wipe out socialism' from British politics. Bryan Gould and *Marxism Today* follow in her footsteps.

They denounce traditional socialism as bureaucratic, drab and old-fashioned; what they offer in its place is only a pretty-fied version of the market economy. The bureaucrats of Eastern Europe chime in. The old talk of socialism and capitalism as opposed and irreconcilable systems is outdated. Now there is only 'modern economics', in various forms, and a common drive for efficiency and enterprise, in which Poland's new prime minister declares he wants to be Margaret Thatcher's pupil.

In France, in Spain, in Australia, in New Zealand, Socialist and Labour governments denationalise, deregulate, and cut; the old collectivist ideals, they say, don't fit these cost-conscious times.

Socialism, they all agree, means lack of individual liberty, massive bureaucracy, and grey uniformity. What we want is freedom and choice, they say. The Tories counterpose their 'ideals' of liberty, individuality, and choice to a restrictive and dictatorial socialism; and much of what is

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supposed to be the Left chimes in with feeble dissent.

It's a frame-up! The socialism Thatcher uses as a bogeyman is no socialism at all, but either the state tyranny of the Soviet Union and its allies, or the state-capitalist nationalisations of post-war social democracy.

Given a choice between Britain, even Thatcher's Britain, and the Eastern Bloc societies, with no political liberties, no trade union rights, and shortages of basic foodstuffs, it is not surprising that workers reject what is called 'socialism'. But that's not the choice.

The socialism of Marx, of Lenin and Trotsky, and of *Workers' Liberty*, is different. It is about workers taking control in society, and building a new world based on people's needs. It is about ending the wage-slavery of the workers to the capitalist owners of the means of production. Private property in the means of production will be taken from the capitalist class as a means to an end — the democratic running of society, the use of resources on the basis of need rather than profit. Society should be run on the basis of human rationality rather than the chaos of the market.

Such a society would for the first time in history provide real freedom and choice for all: "the free development of each as the condition for the free development of all", as Marx put it.

Contrast this to the Tories' freedom and choice. Thatcher's freedom is the freedom of the market. The freedom of landlords to charge ridiculously high rents without constraint. The freedom of employers to attack workers' conditions and pay. The freedom of the rich to undermine public education and public health by opting out into the private sector.

The Tories sell their policies in education and housing under the label of 'choice'. Their new housing law, they say, enables people to 'choose' their landlord, rather than remain council tenants. Parents can 'choose' whether to vote that their children's school should 'opt out' of local authority control.

All this is cynical doublespeak for doing away with the welfare state. For those without money, without jobs, there is no choice, no freedom — except maybe the choice between low-paid work and the dole, the choice between eating and paying the rent.

The post-Stalinists of *Marxism Today* eulogise the 'High Street revolution', the new possibilities for individual development in the 'post-Fordist' epoch. For them, being able to have a choice of winter overcoat at 'Next' may be exciting. For the sweated labour that produces the garments, for the millions who cannot afford new clothers, their enthusiasm has a hollow ring.

In his earliest writings as a communist or socialist, Marx rejected 'barracks communism', and emphasised that socialism must *go beyond* bourgeois individualism rather than just negating it. He criticised "crude communism... levelling on the basis of a preconceived minimum... abstract negation of the entire world of culture and civilisation, the reversion to the unnatural simplicity of the poor and wantless man who has not gone beyond private property, has not yet even achieved it".

As the first mass working-class socialist movements developed at the end of the 19th century, they scorned 'state socialism'. Engels wrote: "A certain spurious socialism has recently made its appearance... which without more ado declares *all* nationalisation, even the Bismarckian kind, to be socialistic. To be sure, if the nationalisation of the tobacco trade were socialistic, Napoleon and Metternich would rank among the founders of socialism... the Royal Maritime Company, the Royal Porcelain Manufacture, and even the regimental tailors in the army would be socialist institutions..."

> "State ownership and control is not necessarily socialist — if it were, then the judges, the gaolers and the hangmen would all be socialist functionaries"

The Irish revolutionary James Connolly repeated the argument: "State ownership and control is not necessarily socialist — if it were, then the army and the navy, the police, the judges, the gaolers, the informers and the hangmen would all be socialist functionaries as they are all state officials - but the ownership of the state of all the land and material for labour, combined with the cooperative 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'."

As capitalist state intervention in the economy increased hugely during World War 1, Lenin and the Bolsheviks warned that this state regulation was not socialist but a mechanism for tyranny and exploitation. Lenin went back over the writings of Marx and Engels to reinstate struggle against state tyranny as a central part of working-class politics. The working class would need a state, he wrote — but not a bureaucratic machine raised above society, as the old ruling classes had had, but a 'semi-state' in which 'every cook would govern'.

If the government did not belong to the workers, then state property was not socialist. Trotsky emphasised this in his struggle against Stalinism. "State property becomes the property of 'the whole people' only to the degree that social privilege and differentiation disappear, and therewith the necessity of the state. In other words: state property is converted into socialist property in proportion as it ceases to be state property. And the contrary is true: the higher the Soviet state rises above the people, and the more fiercely it opposes itself as the guardian of property to the people as its squanderer, the more obviously does it testify against the socialist character of this state property".

The bludgeons of fascism and Stalinism drove these ideas — the ideas of workers' liberty — to the margins of politics. In their place was installed an impoverished, meagre, cut-down version of socialism, tailored so that the USSR (or a glossed-up picture of it) could be presented as socialist. As workers' illusions about the USSR have faded, we have had to re-learn authentic socialist politics, slowly and clumsily. In the meantime, drab ersatz '1945 socialism' serves as a scarecrow for Tories and renegades.

But the frame-up will not work. We have an alibi! Socialism was somewhere else! The Tories say that the spirit of socialism has resided with the Stalinist state-monopoly systems of the East and with the bureaucratic state enterprises of the West. No it hasn't! Socialism — the struggle of the working class against tyranny and exploitation — has been with the workers who rebelled in East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, France in 1968, Portugal in 1974-5, Poland in 1980-1... Since 1968, in particular, we have had chances to re-learn. The uncorrupted ideas of the great Marxists have been circulated, discussed, absorbed. The remaking of the working-class socialist tradition will not be easy, any more than its first creation was. But it is under way.

EDITORIAL

Revolt against Russian imperialism

Throughout the USSR, nationalism has become explosive. From Armenia and Azerbaijan to the Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia, there have been demonstrations, protests, declarations, even riots. The local bureaucracies of the ruling party have been drawn into the nationalist upsurge.

Why is there so much nationalism in the Eastern Bloc? Because there is so much national oppression. The old Tsarist empire used to be called the 'prison house of nations'. Its core nationality, the Great Russians, ruled over and oppressed dozens of other nations.

The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 liberated the oppressed nationalities. Their right to secede was recognised — and some, like the Finns, used it. Those nationalities that remained within the USSR were offered a voluntary federation, with determined efforts to guarantee their rights to use their own languages and develop their own cultures.

As the workers' state was gradually undermined from within, and then overthrown by Stalin's bureaucratic counter-revolution, so too the national minorities fell under the yoke of oppression. The Russian nation dominated. Other nations had less access to power. Their languages and cultures were persecuted, often severely. Some small nationalities, like the Crimean Tatars, were deported en masse.

The Ukraine, a nation of 60 million people and a part of the USSR, is probably the largest oppressed nation on earth today.

The Russian bureaucracy came through World War 2 not only strengthened within the USSR, but with control over a vastly enlarged area in Eastern Europe. Apart from the Baltic states, most of the new territory was not formally incorporated into the USSR, but it nevertheless became part of its empire. The governments rested on Russian occupying troops and Moscow-picked bureaucracies. Sometimes, as in Czechoslovakia, they had some real popular base within the country; sometimes, as in Poland, they were crudely imposed from the Kremlin; but everywhere they were viceroy governments, under Stalin's overlordship. In East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, and in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the USSR used armed force to maintain its empire.

Nationalism looms so large in the East also because there is so little space for political opposition in the USSR and in East European societies. In the absence of any kind of democratic forum and of free political or trade union organisation, traditional nationalism becomes the vehicle for dissent.

Nationalism has been at the core of every major conflict in Eastern Europe since 1945. The Hungarian revolution of 1956, which was unambiguously working-class in its social character, focused around demands for national independence and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, as well as for a parliament and free elections. In 1980-1, a drive for Poland's national rights was one of the major motor forces in Solidarnosc.

Polish workers carry Lech Walesa in triumph, 1980

The current upsurge includes many other sorts of nationalism than the Hungarians' or the Poles' justified demands for self-determination for long-oppressed nations. Azerbaijanis have massacred Armenians. In Yugoslavia, Serbia demands full control over the Albanian-minority area of Kosovo.

One of the chief indictments in the charge-sheet against Stalinism is that, by its brutal suppression of national rights, it made nationalism more intense and bitter. Intense nationalism, even in an oppressed nation, easily spills over into chauvinism.

Socialists want a free federation of the peoples — not the break-up of multinational states like the USSR and Yugoslavia into myriad statelets, nor an explosion of recriminations between the nations of Eastern Europe over their dozens of disputed border areas and pockets of each others' populations within each others' territories. But bureaucratically-enforced unity cannot foster internationalism, harmony and reconciliation: the present ferment exists because dictatorial Moscow centralism has done exactly the opposite, heating national grievances to fever-point. A phase of fragmentation and multiplication of small nation-states may prove to be a necessary transition; in any case it would be better than the status quo.

The programme to combat both Russian imperialism and small-nation chauvinism is the one the Bolsheviks had in 1917: *consistent democracy*. As Lenin put it: "We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressing nation and do not in any way condone the strivings for privilege on the part of the oppressed nation".

The right to self-determination for every nation; regional autonomy for every area occupied by a distinct community within states of a mixed national composition; full rights for every language-group, and full individual rights for even the smallest and most scattered minorities; free federation of nations; workers' unity across all national divisions — those were the principles of the Bolsheviks, and those are the principles that workers need to fight for in the USSR and Eastern Europe today.

PLO goes for 'two states'

Israel elects the most right-wing government of its history, and PLO leader Yasser Arafat recognises the right of the Jewish state to exist, explicitly and unequivocally. How can these wildly divergent tendencies both be happening?

Israel's move to the right is a fact, but is best understood as an expression of a deep social and political crisis. As a result it may prove temporary. The PLO's shift to 'moderation' has been impelled by the last year's powerful **intifada** in the occupied territories, and is best seen as a shrewd grasping of the nettle. The **intifada** is thus at the root of both processes.

What made the **intifada** possible, after 20 years of occupation? A number of factors came together. First, there was a natural fruition of the Palestinian movement in the occupied territories. The external resistance was in a bad state, and had suffered bitter defeats and divisions. This might have led to demoralisation among West Bank and Gaza Arabs, the most compact parts of the Palestinian nation. In fact it did not. The political organisations developed in particular since the mid-1970s were able to move to the fore, seizing the political opportunities. Moreover, in the months preceding the **intifada's** beginning, the various PLO factions were able to rebuild their own unity and cohesion in a way they had not since the defeat in Lebanon in 1982. The split in the PLO (which had reached civil war proportions in 1983) was healed, only a few hard-line pro-Syrian groups excluding themselves from the new unity.

So by the end of 1987, the movement was strong enough to undertake an uprising. The **initiative** came within the occupied territories, where PLO groups forged an alliance with a young Islamicist movement. But immediately co-ordination began with the external leadership.

The **intifada** put Israel on the defensive — both politically and diplomatically. Politically, the Israeli army found itself plunged into a repressive policing operation that broad layers of Israeli society could not approve of. Internationally, Israel was seen as a South African-style repressive state. The PLO would have been fantastically ultimatistic and ultra-left if it had not seized on the opportunities this situation presented by declaring a Palestinian state. This entailed recognising Israel (which was done obliquely by accepting UN security council resolution 242) but the question for the PLO leadership was not whether they should recognise Israel, but whether they could persuade harder-line nationalists to go along with it. They succeeded in doing so, with a compromise in which a government-in-exile was not formally proclaimed. Thus a small ammount of ambiguity remains in the PLO position — enough to be seized upon by Israeli propagandists, but not enough to worry the various governments the PLO wants to appeal to. 50 such governments including, with reservations, the USSR, have recognised the new Palestinian state.

In Israel, the **intifada** is a nightmare come to life. Israel was always supposed to be the Middle East's democratic trailblazer, founded on democratic and even socialist principles. Israel was supposed to have an army that fought only defensive wars, and only killed anyone if it really had to. And here Israel was, bashing children's skulls.

The effect this has had within Israeli society, provoking a **moral** as well as a political debate, should not be underestimated. Indeed much of Israeli opposition to repression remains, for now, on moral grounds, and on the sentiment that this sort of behaviour is bad for Israel's soul.

Israeli brutality is not in reality new. But this is the first time Israelis have acted **so** brutally so close to home for such an extended period — and in such international view. The Israeli army itself believes the **intifada** will not die down for years to come. And so the moral and political dilemmas will only become sharper.

The move to the right in Israel is very

profound (which is not to say irreversible), although different elements in this 'new right' need to be distinguished. There is the **religious** right; there is the **ideological** Zionist right; and there is the 'mainstream' right represented by the Likud Party (although Likud itself is a coalition of different elements, and Shamir as an individual is closer to the ideological far right — closer than was, for example, his predecessor Menahem Begin).

Religious parties have always been prominent in Israel, and have always forced religiously-based legislation on essentially secular governments. But the old National Religious Party, which accepts Zionism as a political creed, used to be the ally of the various Labour Zionist parties, and unaggressive on other than narrowly religious issues. Even the NRP has moved to the right now; and the new 'oriental' Jewish, orthodox Shas Party has more seats than the NRP in the new Knesset. The orthodox groups, which do not accept Zionism (the most extreme refuses to participate in elections), have grown in strength.

The anthem of the secular, 'Revisionist' Zionist right proclaims: "Jordan river has two banks. One belongs to us and so does the other!" and all the far right draws its ideology from this tradition. Shamir in fact comes from a still more extremist tradition that lays claim to the entire area from the Nile in Egypt to the Euphrates in Iraq.

Now there is a rise of ultra-right groups calling for the 'transfer' (deportation) of Arabs from the occupied territories which they see as rightfully Jewish. One of these racist parties, the more-or-less explicitly fascistic Kach Party, was refused permission to participate in the elections. Others get elected (obviously picking up Kach votes).

Different factors have affected the rise of these groups. There is an element of political logic to it — getting rid of the Arabs is a logical way to maintain Israel's Jewishness. There is the deepening social and political (and economic) crisis — which typically produces a growth of right-wing forces out of desperation. And there is social change. Israel is a peculiarly stratified society. The old establishment is European Jewish Labour Zionist; 'Oriental Jews' were always at the bottom of the social pile (although above the Arabs), and excluded from the centres of power. Thus they gravitated to the oppositional right who knew how to appeal demagogically to them. Oriental Jews nowadays outnumber Europeans. Likud has incorporated Orientals far more than Labour has (one of Likud's most fearsome leaders and likely successor to Shamir is an Oriental), has adopted social programmes designed to help them and so on. When Labour lost the 1977 election to Begin it was partly due to ignoring this demographic, as well as political, shift.

It is more complex than that, of course, and Orientals should not be regarded as 'naturally' with the right. But the big problem for the Israeli left is how to win the Oriental — that is, largely working class — Jews. Plainly a **social** programme is necessary; and traditional left Zionism, which is very kibbutz based, is totally unable to develop such a programme.

The left remains based on sections of the European middle class, and the Israeli Arabs. The Communist Party, which is thoroughly Stalinist, remains by far the strongest section of the left, also drawing its support largely from Arab voters.

Social change also underlies developments among the Palestinians. The old pro-Jordanian rural notables who dominated Palestinian society into the 1970s have literally died out, although Jordan's recent 'disengagement' from the West Bank is still an economic shock.

Many of the militants in the occupied territories were not even born when the resistance was at its most self-assured in the late 1960s. Even older ones will barely remember, for example, the 1973 war. Social contact with refugees outside the territories is minimal.

Both the West Bank and Gaza have been incorporated into the Israeli economy to a high degree, particularly as suppliers of cheap migrant labour (although unlike in South Africa this labour force constitutes a **minority** subproletariat in Israel). Ultimately and in theory this process of incorporation could lead to the demand for independence being rendered obsolete; Israel could evolve into a new South Africa. So far this has not happened: rather, the process has led to a sharpening of the demand for a state in the West Bank and Gaza. This is partly because a big element in the conflict is over **land.** Jewish settlement, which has grown enormously since late '70s, focusses nationalist anger — both against the seizure of land and the imperialistic arrogance of the settlers.

The essential aim of the **intifada** has been to demonstrate the impossibility of continued Israeli rule. An entire population is in revolt. Deeply-rooted political structures have been formed, which potentially at least have a greater weight than the exile leadership.

All Israel's attempts to form quislings to 'negotiate' with have flopped; and now there is obviously little point in trying again. If Israel wants 'legitimate' leaders to negotiate with, they are there — and in open support of the PLO.

So how will the crisis resolve itself? The rise of the Israeli right is unsustainable in the long term without Israel ceasing to be a democracy (which it is, for Jews). Voices favouring a settlement are growing louder all the time.

So far an explicitly working class voice has yet to be heard. But Palestine's turmoil can and must increase the openings for such a voice.

Clive Bradley

Yugoslavia

'Market socialism' crumbles

The unstable compromise which has held Yugoslavia together for the past 40 years has begun to fall apart.

Over the past months, not a week has passed without news of strikes, nationalist protests, and the sackings of party officials. The country is in turmoil.

The biggest protests have been around the ethnic conflict in Kosovo, a predominantly ethnic Albanian province of Serbia. The Serbs, under the leadership of regional magnate Slobodan Milosevic, have claimed that the 20% Serbian minority in Kosovo is being persecuted and have demanded that Kosovo be re-integrated into Serbia. Serbian nationalism has resurfaced in an ugly form.

Meanwhile, Yugoslavia is in the grip of a tremendous economic crisis. Inflation is running at over 200% a year. Around one million are unemployed — 15% of the workforce. In some regions — the poorer south — the rate of unemployment is nearer 30%.

Unable to keep up with repayments on a foreign debt of $20 million, the federal government has come to a rescheduling deal with the IMF; the IMF's demands, not surprisingly, being an austerity plan removing state subsidies to loss-making enterprises and a wage freeze.

The crisis, and the austerity plan, have

Serbs and Montenegrins protest

fuelled workers' protests. Last year there were 1570 reported strikes in Yugoslavia, involving some 365,000 workers. Workers and groups of students have demanded an end to the economic attacks on the working class and also the right to organise.

But the crisis has also exacerbated regional tensions. The north — Slovenia and Croatia — is considerably more properous and highly developed economically than the south — Macedonia and Montenegro. The Northern bureaucrats resent what they see as being forced to subsidise the poorer South.

The increased reliance on the IMF will further affect the South, as the federal government will not be encouraged to subsidise the loss-making enterprises there. The results: further poverty and unemployment in the South.

The Yugoslav CP, under Tito, took power after a guerilla war in 1944, and broke with Stalin in 1947. They had massive support in Yugoslavia because of their struggle against the Nazi occupation. Stalin could not deal with a ruling CP with an independent base.

In 1947 Tito ejected the capitalist ministers from the government and began a programme of nationalisation. Between 1948 and 1950 Stalin withdrew all aid to Yugoslavia.

But Tito's programme remained a Yugoslav version of "socialism in one country". Many socialists saw Yugoslavia as a new anti-Stalinist model of socialism because the system of "workers' self-management", introduced in June 1950, appeared to give workers real power over their factories and communities.

But the "self-management" structures were never more than a top-down system to give the workers only token power. All real political power lay in the hands of Tito and the CP. As time went on it became clearer and clearer that in the factories the technocrats ruled, that the "power" of the councils was circumscribed by federal government. It was pseudo democracy with no real content.

Tito got Western financial aid after the split with Stalin. Industry was rebuilt and developed. Between 1950 and 1960 the economy grew at an average rate of 13% a year. But the economy was beset from the start by sharp regional variations in development, and by empire-building which meant that regional bureaucrats duplicated production wastefully and ran many plants at a loss, putting a massive economic strain on the central government.

Tito's answer to this was "market socialism". Only profitable enterprises were to qualify for state money for expansion. From 1955 all central plan directives to enterprises were abandoned. The new scope for market forces led to unemployment, increased inflation, growing foreign debt. It also exacerbated the divide between north and south. The federal government intervened to subsidise prices of basic goods and to direct banks to invest in the poorer regions. The bureaucracies in the richer regions resented this.

Yugoslavia — the state was originally established as the victors of World War 1 tried to sort out the fragments of the collapsed Turkish Empire — comprises six republics and two autonomous provinces in Serbia. There are four main religious groups, 22 ethnic groups, and even two alphabets. In Vojvodina autonomous province, the public notices are all in four languages. Tito had to find some mechanism to avoid ethnic disintegration.

In 1974 a new constitution was introduced, giving considerable powers of self-government, including the right to raise taxes, to the republics. The federal government worked on a consensus basis so that no particular grouping could dominate. Sitting on top of this edifice, and holding it together, was Tito himself, with his huge personal prestige.

After Tito's death in 1980 a "collective presidency" was established consisting of representatives of each of the six republics — an arrangement which still exists.

By the late 1970s signs of a crisis were beginning to show. Over the past few years things have become steadily worse, culminating in the IMF agreement.

Workers have struck and protested, but the dominant form of dissent is nationalism, partly for the reasons outlined above, but also because in a state where workers cannot organise legally, nationalism is a sanctioned form of dissent.

The nationalist agitation in Serbia is going well beyond the bounds with which the federal government could feel comfortable. The Serbian leader, Slobodan Milosevic, is exploiting the discontent of the Serbian population to gain a bigger role on the national political stage for Serbia and himself. The leaders of other republics look on this with horror as it will threaten their own power.

On more than one occasion Milosevic has ordered striking Serbian workers back to the factories, with the promise that they can "rely on him". The nationalism of provincial bureaucrats like Milosevic is a form of petty empire building and has nothing in common with the legitimate demands for regional and national rights which would be part of the programme of a democratic workers' movement in Yugoslavia. The demands for re-integration of Kosovo into a strengthened Serbia is thoroughly reactionary.

Kosovo is 85% ethnic Albanian, and should have the right to secede if the population so wish. (In fact is is highly unlikely that the demand for secession to Albania would win much popular support; Albania being the most notoriously repressive of the Eastern Bloc countries.)

A democratic programme would include:

- Autonomy for Kosovo — up to and including the right to secede.
- Guaranteed rights for national minorities.
- The legal right to organise independent trade unions and to strike.
- Free all political prisoners.

Despite all its peculiarities, in many ways Yugoslavia today shows the future for the whole of the USSR and Eastern Europe: the inability of "market socialism" to cure the crisis of the state monopoly systems, the explosive force of nationalism as the grip of Stalinist repression is eased, and the unbridgeable conflict between the bureaucrats and the workers.

Workers on the streets of Belgrade

have shouted "Down with the socialist bourgeoisie!" A democratic programme on the lines outlined above would be the starting point for workers to organise against their bureaucratic rulers.

The crisis in Yugoslavia now shows the impasse of the sort of "market socialism" that other Eastern Bloc countries are looking towards introducing. What is clear is that the system is fundamentally irreformable, that only real workers' power, rather than the sham of "self-management", can provide a future for the workers and oppressed nationalities of Yugoslavia.

Lynn Ferguson

The economy

An uneasy balance

Give them their due: by luck or by judgement, the big capitalist governments of the world have kept their balance well in the aftermath of last October's stock market crash.

That crash was triggered by increasing unease among capitalists over the US's huge trade deficit. To avoid the crash turning into a slump, the governments needed to manage a *gradual* redressment of the deficit — a gradual cutback of US consumer spending, and a gradual reduction of the dollar's exchange rate.

So far they have done it. Since the end of 1987 US share prices have stabilised. The dollar declined towards the end of 1987, and has stabilised and risen a bit since then; in November 1988 it was slightly lower against the yen, and about the same against the deutschmark, as in August 1987.

After rising at 5% a year for some years, US consumer spending slowed down to about 2½% increase in 1987, and probably about 2% in 1988. US exports have increased. US industrial production in October 1988 was a respectable 5% up on October 1987. Most remarkably, industrial investment in the US has increased from a low point in 1986.

All that is pretty much just what's wanted to cope with the crash without getting a slump. There's just one problem: but it's a big one!

Despite all favourable trends, the US payments deficit is still huge. From mid '87 to mid '88 it was $146 billion. The IMF expects that it will still be above $130 billion in 1989.

Can world capitalism live with this huge imbalance? And for how long? It is difficult to say. But for sure the system has not yet solved the problems that led to October's crash. Bear in mind that in the past there have often been big delays between a stock market crash and the subsequent industrial downturn. 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 1930-1, well after the 1929 stock market crash.

The capitalists themselves are jittery. That was shown by the sudden Wall Street slump after George Bush's presidential election victory in November. Capitalists are worried about Bush's lack of any defined policies to correct the deficits in the US government's budget and balance of payments.

The underlying problems can be summed up in two sets of figures.

Between 1968 and 1988, labour productivity (output per employee) rose only 11% in the US, but an average of 86% in the 4 next biggest capitalist economies. The US, which once had a huge advantage in productivity over all other economies, is falling behind. But the world system of trade, credit and finance still depends on dollars — IOUs repayable, ultimately, in US-produced goods — being considered "as good as gold". In 1985, $2,400 billion was held in bank accounts outside the United States. If confidence in the dollar slides dramatically, and the holders of all those dollars try to change them for other assets, the US's gold reserves could be wiped out in days.

Martin Feldstein, one of Bush's top economic advisers, has said that he thinks the dollar should be valued 20 to 30 per cent lower than it is now. Otherwise — so he says, plausibly — the US's trade deficit won't be corrected before it becomes disastrous. But Feldstein's opinion itself could become a cause of disaster. If capitalists worldwide become convinced that the dollar is going to lose value, then they will sell their dollars — and send the dollar crashing.

The surprising robustness of Wall Street after last October's crash has, paradoxically, created another factor for crisis. In November 1988, the giant US insurance company Metropolitan Life sued the big tobacco and food corporation RJR Nabisco. MetLife boss John Creedon said he wanted to get $40 million damages from RJR, but also "to preserve our great capitalist system" from excesses of speculation and greed.

Why does Creedon think that speculation and greed is endangering his "great capitalist system"? RJR Nabisco has been taken over by the KKR financial group in the biggest yet of the so-called "leveraged buy-outs". Cash for these is raised by selling "junk bonds" — bits of paper whose resale value is uncertain (hence "junk") but on which high rates of interest are paid.

MetLife was angry because the sale of new junk bonds drove down the value of the old non-junk RJR bonds it already held. The RJR Nabisco buy-out is a sign

Nigel Lawson

of surprising robustness on Wall Street because the only thing that makes it worthwhile for KKR is the prospect of being able to resell the RJR shares it has bought at much higher prices in the future. And the continuing buy-out boom makes nightmares for capitalists because it means a spiralling increase in dodgy credit. The latest figure for the junk bond market is $175 billion. In 1983 it was little more than $40 billion.

It is surprising that the buy-out boom survived the October 1987 crash. It is unlikely to survive future upsets; and the longer it does survive, the bigger the ensuing crash, and the wider its effects.

Meanwhile, another factor of instability has been added to international capitalism by the sudden explosion of Britain's balance of payments deficit. Here again, a superficial boom combines with fundamental imbalances.

Britain's Tory government claims to have brought about a veritable economic renaissance. The evidence for this is slight.

Manufacturing industry has grown quite briskly in the last year or so. Profits have increased a lot, with the real rate of return on capital rising from 4 per cent in the early '80s to 11 per cent today. The Tories's implicit strategy of establishing Britain as a low-wage offshore site for multinationals to produce for the EEC market has had some success —substantial Japanese investment, in particular, has come to

Britain. But that is all.

By October 1988 Britain was in as bad a state with its trade as the US: its exports covered only 70 per cent of the value of its imports. This is not a passing problem or an episodic blip.

Throughout most of the 1980s, income from North Sea Oil has provided a large and soft cushion for British capitalism. In the early 1980s, Britain, once the 'workshop of the world', plunged into trade deficit on manufactured goods; it started importing more manfactured goods than it exported. At first, because of the oil income, that caused no problem in the balance of payments. Now the oil income is dwindling.

The small boom in British manufacturing over the last years goes nowhere near redressing the position. Over the 1980s, capital investment in Britain has been markedly more sluggish than in other major capitalist economies; it runs at an average of 17 per cent of national income, well below the figures for Japan (29 per cent) or for France, West Germany, and Italy (all over 20 per cent). A recent survey in the Financial Times reported that "British companies no longer make many of the products necessary to beat back imports in some sectors". Britain's position in more modern and rapidly-expanding sectors, like information technology, is particularly bad. Its share of the world market in information technology has dropped from 9 per cent in the 1970s to 5 per cent today, and it imports £8.9 billion of information technology while exporting only £6.8 billion (1987 figures).

Ronald Reagan may yet end his presidency on a note of triumph. But what will the Thatcher/Reagan 'revolution' look like a couple of years from now? The evidence is mounting that it will be revealed as a showy but ineffective attempt to boost two of the world's laggard economies — and one that contributed to tipping world capitalism into a damaging slump.

Martin Thomas

Nicaragua

Harassed into crisis

Three times in 1988, the harassed Sandinista government in Nicaragua has introduced drastic economic reforms. And despite 1987's Arias peace plan, military activity by the contras continues.

An economic package in February 1988 introduced a new currency, the cordoba (C$). In mid-June the cordoba was devalued, from 10C$ to 80C$ to the American dollar. Inflation was up to 2,000%, industrial production dropped by 34%. As a result of the June reforms, transport and fuel costs rose by over 100%. Wages in the public sector were raised by 30% and big state subsidies on health, education and transport were maintained.

In August the cordoba was devalued again. Public sector wages were raised by another 140%.

Things are bad for the average Nicaraguan. After the June package, the Institute of Sociology at the University of Central America (UCA) found that "the raising of wages by 30% was perceived as a slap in the face or a cruel joke because the price of some basic necessities has risen, along with the exchange rate, by as much as 566%, and the price of fuel and transportation rose respectively by 1,066% and 350%." (*International Viewpoint* No.149)

Many people working in the capital, Managua, but living in its environs, would have to pay more in fares to get to work than they could earn in wages. Interestingly, the UCA's survey of Nicaraguan attitudes found that people felt the government, as well as US imperialism, were responsible for the economic crisis. Indeed, only 19% of Managuans believed Reagan, the war or the blockade to be the cause. Even so, a poll found that 71.7% of the population of Managua supported President Daniel Ortega, and the Sandinistas generally.

American harassment must be a major cause of Nicaragua's economic difficulties. An economic blockade continues. And despite the Arias Peace Plan and a US Congress decision to withdraw aid from the Contras, the war goes on.

The Arias plan allowed for a ceasefire in the Contra war in exchange for various concessions from the Sandinistas. For example, the liberal oppositionist newspaper *La Prensa* was relegalised, Radio Catolica relegalised and censorship lifted from the media.

As negotiations continued afterwards, however, Contra leaders pushed for impossible concessions. For example, Contra leaders demanded the immediate separation of the Nicaraguan army from the Sandinista government, an amnesty for ex-Somozist National Guards, and the right to unrestricted political activity for the Contras.

This would be tantamount to the Sandinistas laying down their arms in a situation that would still be close to war. No government could be asked to do that. The Contras' intention was merely to provoke the Sandinistas into breaking off negotiations and thus renew outright war.

The Sandinistas said they were prepared to make concessions — but only in stages. On a fundamental political question — the direction of the economy — the Sandinistas have retreated from socialist (or rather Cuban-model) ambitions. Ortega has said that the economy can survive only by adopting measures "similar to those taken by capitalist countries."

Conflicts are developing even between the Sandinistas and their own union federation, CST, whose leaders have called for a sliding scale of wages to keep up with inflation.

The labour movement should show solidarity with Nicaraguan workers. Simultaneously we should show solidarity with the Nicaraguan people as a whole, including their government, against continuing US—inspired aggression and American hostility. George Bush will be no friendlier to Nicaragua than Ronald Reagan was. America must never be allowed to think a second Grenada is possible.

Gerry Bates

Brazil

Gains for the Workers' Party

Brazil's municipal elections on 15 November saw remarkable gains for left- wing parties, especially the Workers' Party.

The most spectacular PT gain was Sao Paulo, Brazil's largest city, where Luiza Erundina won the election for mayor, defeating right winger Paulo Maluf.

The other leftish party to make big gains was the populist Democratic Labour Party (PDT) of Leonel Brizola.

The formerly huge centre party, the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB), which supports President Jose Sarney, did extremely badly.

Now PT leader Luis Inacio da Silva, known as Lula, a former metalworkers' leader, is a serious contender for the next Presidential elections.

The immediate background to the left victories is Brazil's economic chaos. The 1964-85 dictatorship presided over an 'economic miracle' which did expand industry fast but also left Brazil the Third World's largest debtor and millions of Brazilians in desperate poverty. In 1985, the army handed over to civilian rule in the midst of a slump.

Famine was also developing in the north.

Jose Sarney was not elected: he took over when the man who was elected, Tancredo Neves, died before taking office. And Sarney has not proved popular. On public appearances he has needed his armed escort.

Brazil is a big country of big contrasts — from the gradually diminishing Amazonian rain forests, where some people are barely out of the Stone Age, to the huge car plants of Sao Paulo. It

was in these car plants that the dictatorship's fate had been sealed, and the PT born.

After a decade of lull, the working class burst onto the scene in a wave of mass strikes in 1978. A new militant trade unionism, similar in certain respects to South African democratic unionism, grew very quickly. Car workers in the metalworkers' union, were central to all this, and their most prominent leader was Lula.

Early on elements in the new movement felt the need for a political wing and the PT was founded in 1979. The following year it became a legally-recognised party.

A number of different forces came together to form the PT. As well as militant trade unionists, leftist intellectuals (many from former Guevarist or Castroite organisations, some even ex-guerillas) and radical Catholics were involved. From the start there was tension about whether the PT should be a party with strict rules and structures, or a broad 'movement'. Also, of course, there were debates on policy. There is a strong revolutionary left in the PT, including various Trotskyist groups.

From a firmly revolutionary perspective in its early stage, the PT seems to have evolved in a more parliamentarist direction. Nevertheless, it has remained committed to the independence of the working class.

A big issue was Brazil's move from dictatorship in 1984-85. Strong pressure was put on the PT to do like the Communist Party and support a 'single candidate of the opposition' — ie the PMDB. After a long debate, the PT refused to do so. Rather, it was central to the enormous campaign for **direct** elections, instead of the 'electoral college' set up by the army.

Recent electoral successes have demonstrated the value of keeping out of the PMDB swamp.

The PT's growth has gone hand in hand with the rank-and-file based union movement. There are two major union federations in Brazil, the bureaucratic CGT, and the PT-dominated CUT (United Workers' Central). The CUT also has developed close links with the movement of landless peasants.

Six days before the voting the army shot dead 3 striking steelworkers in Volta Redonda near Rio, a grim reminder of the army's role in Brazil. Many commentators believe the fingers on the trigger will get ever itchier as presidential elections approach in a year's time.

Brizola's PDT is of the traditional Brazilian populist stock. Brizola was a figure in the government led by Joao Goulart that was overthown by the army in 1964.

He is a political heir of the 1930s populist leader Getulio Vargas. 'Vargismo' is similar to Peronism in Argentina,although more diffuse and less organised.

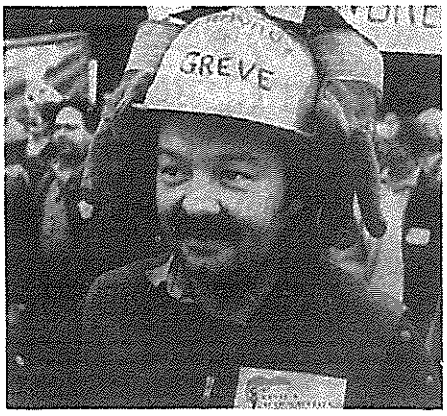
There is talk of a lash up between the PT and PDT for the presidential elections. On current performances it would make them unstoppable. But who would dominate? An electoral victory would be little compensation for the submersion of independent working class politics into Brizola's nationalism and populism.

Brazil's crisis continues to deepen, with inflation approaching 1000%, the foreign debt growing (despite a small amount of rescheduling earlier in the year). Capitalism means making the workers and poor pay for the crisis. But the ruling class can't implement its austerity.

Indeed it was the PMDB's association with such an austerity programme last year, immediately after a huge success in National Assembly elections, that probably saw it off. This latest humiliation is only the most recent — the PMDB has previously lost state governor elections to the right.

The PT still says that it does not look purely to elections to bring about change. We must hope that the Marxists in the PT can hold it to a perspective of mass struggle through next year's electoral challenge.

Max Collins



Link up with European workers

The EEC's 'single market'

Whose Europe in 1992?

The single European market promised in 1992 has been a long time coming, and falls far short of what some of the European Community's founders wanted. But it is an inevitable next stage in Western Europe's evolution.

The transition to a 'European' capitalism, superseding French, German, British or whatever, was bound to be bumpy. Britain has been a particularly obstreperous obstacle to it — joining the EC late (in 1972) and to this day opposing many changes according to what Mrs Thatcher sees as "good for Britain".

But with 1992 the transition will reach a new level. What will it mean? The Single Europe Act passed by EC member countries aims to create a Western Europe-wide movement free of the restrictions that currently exist on the movement of people, goods, services and money.

Already there are increasing (though still small) numbers of cross-European mergers. The Financial Times comments: "The vision of an economically more integrated, barrier-free Europe may be starting to be something of a self-fulfilling prophesy. Even if the 1992 legislative programme ground completely to a halt, the economic landscape would have undergone irreversible changes." (November 11, 1988).

The labour market may prove less flexible than others (money is easier to move than workers). But there will be an increasing integration of companies' activities. Peter Evans of the OECD's trade union advisory committee, says: "It is likely there will be some convergence in industrial relations procedures in European companies. But it will be another matter whether there will be any convergence in the substance of collective bargaining."

Bosses will prefer to keep collective bargaining localised. Forthcoming pay negotiations at Fords will test unions' abilities to coordinate action across Europe.

1992 is also supposed to bring a common social policy — a Social Europe. An equalisation of welfare benefits and workers' rights is indeed a logical corollary of creating a single market for labour and capital. Some steps have already been taken in this direction: Britain's Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination laws owe much to EEC pressure.

But child benefits and family allowances in France are about three times as high as in Britain. Unemployment benefit in Denmark is much higher than in Britain, and is paid for much longer. Italy has many more public holidays, more nurseries, and wide-ranging legal rights for workers to have trade union representation and to strike.

No national working class will easily agree to have its social benefits levelled down to the rate of those countries with more meagre provision, like Britain. But to level up would be very costly for the capitalists. That is why Margaret Thatcher is so vehemently opposed to a "Social Europe", and why EEC President Jacques Delors has gone silent on the issue.

Every evening now on television, business people tell us that they are preparing for 1992. It's time the labour movement started preparing seriously, too — to win a "Social Europe" by way of levelling-up, to demand that the best conditions won anywhere in the EEC are extended everywhere in the EEC, and to fight for a Socialist United Europe.

Edward Ellis

Born in the labour movement

Eric Heffer MP spoke to John Bloxam and John O'Mahony about his life, struggles and ideas. This is part one of an interview to be continued in the next issue of Workers' Liberty.

We turned up, slightly late, on a Thursday morning to meet Eric Heffer in the Central Lobby at Westminster. Heffer took us across the vast, empty, echoing St Stephen's Hall — where a plaque on the floor tells you that Charles Stuart, the king defeated by Parliament and then beheaded, sat there during his trial and condemnation in January 1649 — to a Committee Room off a corridor decorated with drawings of old parliamentarian heroes, men like Oliver Cromwell, Charles Stuart's conqueror.

The walls of the Committee Room too are decorated with portraits. One is of Viscount Castlereagh, a man prominent in the savage repression of all popular movements during the reaction produced by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. It was of him that the poet Shelley wrote after the "Peterloo" massacre of 1819, when peaceful demonstrators in Manchester demanding reform were hacked down by the yeomanry:

I met death upon the way
He had a face like Castlereagh.

In fact, to judge by his portrait, Castlereagh had a pleasant enough face. A bit like the face the British ruling class presents to Labour MPs, perhaps, the face which ensnares, cajoles, flatters and seduces so many of them.

And Eric Heffer, too, some of the "anti-parliamentarians" on the ultra-left will tell you, pointing with scorn to the title of his book of 20 years ago, 'The Class Struggle in Parliament'. Now it is true that Eric Heffer has the air of a man at home in Westminster — he has been there 24 years now — and you can walk past the former Tory Prime Minister Lord Home in Heffer's company and find them exchanging friendly first name greetings. But it's not true that Heffer has sold out or been seduced. After a quarter century in what Lenin on a sightseeing trip at the turn of the century pointedly referred to as "their parliament", Heffer is still a man who knows himself to represent the dispossessed and exploited class in the citadel of

their oppressors, the fortress of those who rose up by dispossessing them.

He is still a radical socialist. He is still not entirely convinced — after 24 years — that fundamental social chance can be brought about through Parliament. He is still vigorously committed to fighting the class struggle on the streets and on the picket line.

Heffer and Tony Benn went down to Dover to stand on the seafarers' picket line. Last May Eric Heffer said this about the NUS battle with the P&O bosses:

"The state machine is rolling in to back the employers against the workers. That is what the law is designed to do. It is such open class law that workers now have no alternative, if they want to defend themselves, but to break it. Everywhere workers turn now, they come up against the law....

"The whole machinery of the trade union movement must move into action to build solidarity with the men and women who now stand in the front line of the war to defend the labour movement. If it means things like cutting off supplies, then trade unionists should be prepared to do it. Other workers must help on the NUS picket lines."

Is this the voice — speaking out clearly in the middle of a major working class struggle — of someone who has been hypnotised by Parliament?

Heffer is the foremost voice — in truth there is little competition — putting a broadly marxist point of view in the House of Commons: a consistent marxist view, for Heffer doesn't just side with British workers and with the workers in capitalist hell holes like Chile and South Africa, concerning which the left has no difficulty in taking sides: he is sharply distinguished from most of the left by his consistent support for the working class in the Stalinist states against their rulers. You could quarrel with him and disagree on some points, but it would be a dispute within the general framework of marxist politics and economics. Yet Heffer is also a practising Anglican, and seemingly a devout one.

Eric Heffer told us about his early life and how his outlook on the world was formed.

I was born into the labour movement. Not that my parents were active members of the Labour Party, but they never voted anything other than Labour.

Politics was discussed in my house all the time, and it was always left wing Labour politics. On Sundays, we had 'Reynolds News' coming into the house, a very good left wing newspaper, and took the 'News Chronicle'. And from time to time my father used to buy other left-wing papers.

My brother was a socialist — my elder brother who died when he was 21.

So I came from a working class background. I left school at 14 and became an apprentice carpenter-joiner in a very small country town just outside London, Hertford. My father had been a professional soldier. He ran away from home when he was a boy, served in the army for many years. He came out of the army and joined the police force, but he couldn't stand it and left the police. Then he was called up when World War 1 broke out and he was back in the army. He was, believe it or not, a serjeant-major. But despite all that he was a good socialist — that is the interesting thing, and it's quite a contradiction, I suppose, but he was a believer in left-wing ideas. He had had associations with the marxist Social-Democratic Federation as a young man in the army.

My mother was a professional cook, she had worked in the homes of aristocratic families, starting off as a scullery maid, ending up as a cook. She always used to say to me "I'd never curtsy, didn't believe in curtsying, they weren't any better than us, and I didn't see any reason why we should curtsy to them". My mother was quite involved in Church of England affairs, but she was also a very active member of the co-operative women's guild.

So I came from a traditional sort of working class background, but with a clear bias towards the labour movement and towards the socialist ideas.

It would have been in 1936 I began my apprenticeship. Almost as soon as the apprenticeship was over, a matter of months, I was called up and I spent four years in the Royal Air Force, until 1945. By the time I went back to my 'trade' I had met my wife, who is from Liverpool, where I had been stationed for a while.

I had joined the Labour Party as a youngster when I joined the union, but then I left the Labour Party for the Communist Party because I didn't think the Labour Party was strong enough, active enough, or socialist enough. Labour was not supporting the struggle against Fascism as I thought it should be supporting it.

I didn't think they were supporting the struggle in Spain where fascists and anti-fascists were fighting a civil war. Spain was a very important question when I was fairly young. My brother was always on about Spain, and all the political people who used to come to the house would talk about what was happening there and how it was vital to support the Spanish government against Franco and so on. These were everyday household discussions.

But I don't think there was an understanding of the conflicts within the Spanish Republican camp. I don't think, for example, that we understood what was happening to the POUM, the left wing party which the Stalinists suppressed and denounced as 'Trotsky-Fascist'. At the time the important thing was to mobilise everybody to support the Spanish Republican forces, fighting against Franco's fascists.

Not that my father was ever a member of the Communist Party. In fact, when I joined the Communist Party he had a word with me about it, but in the end he said:'you must do what you think is right. If you think it's right to join the Communist Party, join the Communist Party. You'll learn, you'll learn. It's no good me telling you now. In a few years time you'll know that you were wrong to join the Communist Party'. Of course I didn't listen, but I did learn.

My first inkling that things were wrong in the Communist Party came during the general election in 1945. It happened like this. I hadn't kept up with all the Party's theoretical journals, though I read Party papers when I could get them, and I didn't know that the 'Party line' was for a new Labour-Tory coalition government.

I was stationed just outside Banbury on one of the air bases there, and we used to go to all the meetings of the Tory candidate who was MP for the area and heckle. All the lads would go. It was amazing how many of the servicemen used to turn up at these meetings. You could see these Tories quailing when they saw a crowd of servicemen arrive, because they knew they were going to have a rough time.

A chap called Brian Roach was the Labour candidate. He had been an International Brigader in Spain, a left wing Labour man. They needed somebody to speak on the eve of poll, to help keep it going until the candidate arrived because he was doing a series of meetings and would get there late, and they asked me if I would speak. I said: 'I'm in uniform, I can't speak in uniform'. They said:'we'll

give you a civilian suit'. I said:'OK, but we'll have to be careful because I'll be breaking the law'. So they gave me this suit which was far too small — I was a tall lanky young fellow and the sleeves came half way up my arms and the trouser legs way above the shoes!

It was a packed meeting and there was tremendous enthusiasm — we nearly won Banbury. I started off my speech by attacking the Conservatives for imagining that the war had been won by one man, Winston Churchill. I asked:'What have the rest of us been doing?' I then talked in favour of a Labour government that would begin to transform society to socialism, saying that we had to concern ourselves first with the interests of the working class. It brought the roof down.

But afterwards this bloke came up to me and said:'I understand, comrade, you're a member of my party — I am a member of the Communist Party and I have been told you're a member of the Party', and I said: 'yes, I don't deny it'. He said:'you haven't quite understood the line, comrade, you see the Party has reluctantly come to support the Labour Party in this election, but what we really wanted was a government of national unity, which would include progressive Tories like Churchill and Eden', and I said:'you must be joking comrade, you really must'. He said:'Oh no I'm not, I will give you some of the Party documents, which maybe you haven't seen'.

So he did give me those documents and they made my hair stand on end. It was the stuff that was coming out at the time — for "national governments" everywhere in Europe supported by or involving the Communist Party. In Britain it was so silly!

In some parts of Europe there might have been an argument for the Communists to try and get in on the government at that stage, but in Britain it was ridiculous. You either had a Labour government or a Tory government. The idea that you had a government of national unity was simply ridiculous.

I got discharged from the forces then under what they called B release, which meant you could come out there and then or risk being sent to Japan, and I reckoned four years was enough in His Majesty's Forces. I went back to my trade in the construction industry, building temporary houses in Hertford.

I got married. I'd met Doris at a Young Communist Party meeting in Liverpool during the war, when I was asked to speak to them about 'What is Marxism'. Of course, in those days you considered yourself knowledgeable about everything, so I went along.

Then I helped to create a Communist Party in Hertford. I stood as a candidate for the Communist Party in the municipal elections, and I nearly won, losing by only a handful of votes.

But now I began to read seriously — Lenin and the theoretical works of Marx and Engels and, of course, like all good Communists in those days I read Stalin — 'The History of the CPSU' and so on. But I studied Lenin in particular — 'Left-Wing Communism', 'State and Revolution' — I'd had his twelve volumes of 'Selected Works' before the war but I hadn't read them. Now I read them and they led me to the view that the policies of the Communist Party at that time were not really communist.

There was a chap called Frank Roy, who when he was at Oxford had recruited the poet C.Day-Lewis into the Communist Party. We had long discussions.

The Welwyn Garden City branch and Hertford came out strongly against the drift in policy. We put down resolutions to the Party Conference.

We were of course attacked very strongly. I think they decided that I was to be eased out of the Party.

But before they got to that in Hertford I had gone to live in Liverpool. We couldn't find anywhere of our own to live in Hertford, so we had to live with my parents

> "I studied Lenin...(his works) led me to the view that the policies of the Communist Party at that time were not really communist."

and that was very unsatisfactory. And Doris was also getting fed up with being in a small town. She was used to being in a big city — was born and bred in one — so we went to live in Liverpool. And then I started work on the line of docks, ship-repairing, with a friend of mine, a joiner, who was also a member of the Communist Party.

We had a big strike of ship repair workers in 1947. There were 12-13000 of us out for 6 weeks. Of course there were a lot of disputes. The seamen had unofficial strikes. The dockers struck from time to time. It was a tremendous feeling.

The Communist Party was then against strikes! Strikes, they said, were 'undermining the Labour government'. We argued:'this is ridiculous. The class struggle has not stopped just because you have got a Labour government, they have not got rid of the class power that runs this country. The ruling class is still there, the working class has still got to struggle'. So we had this great, continuing argument...

I was in a minority in the Liverpool CP but there were a few who supported me. Eventually I was expelled. Not by the ship repair branch that I was in, but by the District Committee on the instructions of the Central Committee. They called me to a meeting by telegram. It came in the morning and in the evening I rushed down there, and they told me. The ship repair workers were furious about it. Here was a comrade they knew, had worked with, been on strike with, who had been on the strike committee — a man clearly dedicated to the movement and the struggle. There was a lot of argument, but they were instructed. There was no vote on it, just 'that's it'. And I was out, on charges of 'anti-Party activity' and of being a 'Trotskyite'.

I had encountered Trotskyists when I was still in Hertford. Because of my stand at the CP Congress, who should appear on the door step one day but Ted Grant, of today's Militant Tendency, with a bundle of Trotsky's books under his arm. I was always a friendly sort of chap, so I let him into the house and we talked. He showed me copies of the journal they were producing at the time, 'Socialist Appeal'. He gave me a copy of Trotsky's 'Transitional Programme' and lent me these books by Trotsky. I read them and I found I did not agree with all of them.

For example, when Trotsky argued about the militarisation of the trade unions I did not agree with that, and I told Grant that. I thought that was wrong, whether you were in a socialised economy or not you could not have the militarisation of the unions. Trotsky did not argue that after 1921 but he argued it before — I did not agree with that. And I did not agree with his defence of the shooting of the seamen at Kronstadt either.

I told Grant there was a lot I did agree with Trotsky on because it was in line with what I had been reading in Lenin, but I did not agree with these two points and there were other things I was not entirely happy with. So we had a nice discussion but that was the end of it.

I never did become a Trotskyist at any time. Never an anti-Trotskyist but never a Trotskyist. Certainly I became anti-Stalin later — but, then, I was just learning about Stalin. At that stage, when I was thrown out of the Communist Party, I wasn't anti-Stalin, though I was beginning to be more critical.

So I was expelled from the CP. Then they discovered that Doris was still a member of the Party, so they asked her to go down to the Party office. She was interviewed by Sid Foster, who was the District Secretary of the Communist Party on Merseyside — he was also a joiner by trade — and Foster said she would have to make up her mind: she would either have to cease 'associating' with 'an anti-Party element' or she would have to leave the Party.

She said:'are you telling me that I have got to leave my husband?', because that is what it sounded like. There was quite an argument and she eventually said:'well, if you persist in this line then I will probably have to tell the capitalist press about what is happening'. Anyway they did not do any more about it. They did not expel her, they just did not renew her membership at the end of the year. In those days you had to re-register every year as a member of the Communist Party. They did not re-register her, so she was out. By then, she was quite happy to be out.

I remember going to one very big dance, a 'Daily Worker' dance, in St Georges Hall in Liverpool. Certain peo-

ple, because they were against my expulsion, were friendly but the rest — it was like walking into the ice box. There was one comrade who came right across the room and held his hand out and said:'I'm not supposed to talk to you, but they can go to hell'. I always remember that because it was a great act of solidarity.

My mate always kept friendly, but he was so sickened by what happened he just went away and worked out of town. He went to Sellafield to work. But when he came back he found a job working with me, and we were mates again, despite the fact that I had been thrown out of the CP.

At the time they asked Doris to go into the office, I was working on the building of Bromborough Power Station and was the senior shop steward there — the federated steward for the entire site.

When Sid Foster said:'you are associating with an anti-working class element', Doris replied:'I'll tell you what you can do, why don't you call a meeting of all the workers on Bromborough Power Station and explain to them that their senior steward is anti-working class? They would throw you in the Mersey'. We had just had two great battles and won them.

There were some great industrial struggles in Liverpool and I was very much involved in all of them. And the mass of the CP working class membership were never really hostile. It was the bureaucracy and the more middle class element, I have to say, who were keeping their distance — not the working class element at all.

I was a delegate to the Liverpool Trades Council and Labour Party, because I paid the political levy, from my union branch. After a bit it seemed to me that I might as well join the Labour Party. I thought:'I am not going to join one of the small groups that remain outside the Labour Party — I am going to get in the Labour Party'.

The truth is, at that point in my political development, I didn't really know much about 'the groups' at all. I only really began to meet 'the groups' when I got into the Labour Party, for example: the forerunners of 'Militant', who had just come out of the recently collapsed RCP. I discovered that there were a number of other 'groups' — the people who later formed the Socialist Workers Party and the Healy group, which sold 'Socialist Outlook'.

But I never joined any of those groups. Never, at any stage, did I become involved in any of them.

After a number of years I got a bit fed up with things in the Labour Party — the rise of Gaitskell and the move to the right, and so on. I left. Looking back on it I was wrong. But, then, I felt that the time had come to begin to form a new party.

Together with Harry MacShane, who by then had come out of the Communist Party, and one or two other people in London, I helped form a group called the Socialist Workers Federation. That was in either 1953 or 1954. It lasted about two years. By then I realised that we were getting nowhere, and old Harry realised that we were getting nowhere, so we decided to disband and go our own ways. We wound up the SWF and I became very active as an individual member of the Labour Party. I had never been out in a sense because I had been on the executive of the Liverpool Trades Council and Labour Party. I had always paid my political levy, and in those days you did not have to be an individual member to be a delegate.

There was some argument about whether they would actually accept me back into my constituency but they did. And within a year I was chairman of the Toxteth Constituency Party, as well as being on the executive of the Liverpool Trades Council and Labour Party. Then I began to be elected as delegate to the Lancashire Federation of Trades Councils and Labour Parties; got elected to the executive; got on to the Regional Council of the Labour Party. I was well and truly back!

I continued to be a shop steward in the ship yards and the big sites. Then, in 1960, I was pressurised by the left into standing for the council. I had never been interested in being a councillor, but I did stand and got elected, in Pirie in Walton, for a safe Labour seat. But we lost seats everywhere that day in Liverpool, and I only just won the seat by a handful of votes. When I stood 3 years later I won it again, with a 1750 majority.

Then there was a discussion about whether I should stand for Parliament. It had never crossed my mind to go for Parliament. I didn't really like the idea of parliamentary positions at all — again there was pressure from comrades in the Party. I said 'OK, I'll stand'. Then I had to come down here and be interviewed by the right wing Labour Party officers — Ray Gunther and company, Bessie Braddock, and others. I think it was touch and go whether I would be accepted as a Labour candidate. Finally, I just about got on. The truth of it was that I had been selected for a seat they thought could not be won. Walton was a Tory seat.

So I stood for selection, thinking I wouldn't get it. But I did — I got it on the first vote.

At the same time I stood for the Assistant General Secretary of my union, which was the ASW in those days, again under pressure from the left in the union. I came second. I got quite a lot of support in the big urban areas, but lost in the rural areas and Ireland. Not that I was terribly upset. I thought it much better playing a role at the local level.

So I was, you might say, pushed towards Westminster and, in October 1964, to Parliament. What did the new MP for Walton stand for?

Although I had been in the Communist Party, and later tried to form the Socialist Workers Federation, I'd had basically the same ideas since my early days when I first got involved in politics and joined the Labour Party. I had never really changed. I have — I hope — learnt quite a lot, but nothing I have learned in 50 years has changed me, or shifted me from the socialist bedrock — the class struggle position. I believe that the whole idea is to transform and change society, to build a socialist society and that only in that way can the working class come into its own. Lots of people throw over the basic ideas they championed when young. I have never thrown them over. All I have ever done is to read a lot of interesting books from all sorts of angles and different points of view. My views have been modified here and there but, in the main, reading and experience have not weakened but strengthened the views I started out with, strengthened them.

I started off in the 1930s with the simple idea that the working class had to fight for their rights, that there was a class struggle going on and that you had to be involved in that class struggle. At first I thought you could do it through the Labour Party and then I thought you couldn't, and that the Communist Party was much more involved in the actual class struggle. I was of course beginning to read pamphlets, and Left Book Club books. It was pretty rudimentary — I hadn't read anything much in depth.

One of the books that did influence me — and, of course, at that time we had not got the full version, only an expurgated version — was the 'Ragged Trousered Philanthropist'. I remember reading that.

I read things like 'Red Skies Over Moscow' — I can't even remember who wrote it now...I was a voracious reader of the socialist works of the time. But I didn't read Orwell on Spain at that stage. Orwell was somebody you didn't read because, in a sense, he was on a proscribed list. You weren't encouraged to read Orwell and I had no particular reason to read him. It was either immediately after or during the period of being thrown out of the CP that I read 'Homage to Catalonia' and that had a tremendous impact on me.

After I was .out of the CP I read everything I could get my hands on. Fenner Brockway, Trotsky, Bevan, all the historical stuff. In a sense it was a new world — I even read the anarchist documents on Spain and Richard's book — all that stuff, everything. A new world opened up because in the CP, although you were encouraged to participate in political discussion and to read, nevertheless it was narrowly guided reading. For example, it was only after I came out of the CP that I realised the tremendous part that John Maclean had played in Scotland during the World War and after. When I met Harry MacShane later — he had been one of Maclean's lieutenants — and he talked, it opened up a new world to me.

And you got a new view of the Soviet Union. It was clear to me that it wasn't the socialist millennium at all, and that the workers were as bureaucratically controlled — and more so, in some respects — than they were in capitalist Britain. Therefore a new revolution was necessary in the Soviet Union, and the fight for a revolution there was as important as in this country.

Towards US-style education

The Government's attacks on further and higher education come under two broad headings — the privatisation of education and the erosion of student financial support.

The groundwork for the privatisation of public sector education has already been laid through the Education Reform Act. April 1st 1989 is 'vesting day', the day the Polys and colleges formally leave local authority control and take charge of their own finances.

The governing bodies of these institutions will radically alter — from democratically accountable representatives (like councillors, trade unionists, and students) to at least 50% of governors nominated from business and industry. College directorates will have far more power than previously — to privatise services, renegotiate wages and conditions locally, alter the balance of courses, sell buildings and land, and drop commitments to equal opportunities.

Already in some institutions the directors are sending out new contracts to all their staff (and it's not just the employer's name which is new) and changing long-established and negotiated working practices. Many of the new college governors are noted not for their commitment to education but for their record on 'rationalisation' and redundancies in the businesses they run!

In other institutions the Government's 'challenge' has sent directors scurrying into the arms of nearby colleges — and in this context 'nearby' can mean up to 100 miles away. All the signs are that we are in for a spate of ill-conceived college mergers, with job losses and course closures.

Whilst talking about increasing access, the Tories are taking education out of democratic control, putting their co-thinkers in place as 'managers', systematically starving the system of resources, and encouraging 'competition' between public and private sectors.

Meanwhile students' entitlement to a free education is being eroded. The real value of the student grant has dropped by 25 per cent since 1979, and it wasn't generous then. Parental contributions have risen by over 200%. Largely out of desperation, students have begun to claim welfare benefits on a massive scale — housing benefit, and unemployment and supplementary benefits (now Income Support) in the vacations.

As the value of the grant dropped, student unions started mass rent-registration drives and, in cooperation with local councils, organised mass benefit claims.

The Tories introduced full-cost fees for overseas students, abolished the 'equipment allowance' for many courses, halved then abolished the minimum grant,

Liz Millward surveys the British Tory Government's drive to 'privatise' further and higher education and to force students to support themselves financially

abolished the travel grant for students in England and Wales, stopped 'covenants' which gave tax relief to parents, and, through the Fowler Reviews, stopped many students claiming housing and other benefits.

At the same time local authorities were cutting back on discretionary awards, and in some cases abolishing them altogether for certain courses, so that young people were more likely to finish up on YTS than at college. Those who did study under the '21 hour' loophole were stopped last year when the Government made YTS compulsory.

Clearly the government's intention was

to close down many of the routes into further and higher education, particularly for working-class youth, mature students, and women. The erosion of financial support for those already in higher education was also deliberate.

The government (wrongly) thought that students would be less hostile to proposals for loans if they were virtually penniless. Exactly on cue, the Tories have introduced a White Paper outlining a system of student loans. At the same time leaked Tory discussion papers reveal even more devastating plans to introduce a system of tuition fees and 'vouchers' which would, if enacted, restrict free education of a high standard to about 15% of the student population, leaving the rest to struggle by on a mixture of loans, grants, and American-style 'work-study'.

In addition, colleges would have to compete with each other for students (or rather their fees), with only a few prestigious institutions able to offer anything like the quality of education now generally available. A student's ability to get a good education would be in direct relation to their parents' spending power.

The loan proposals currently outlined would leave students worse off by about £100 a year — *and* with big debts by the end of their courses. In the short term, the scheme will cost more to set up and administer than simply *giving* the money to students. All the international evidence points to loan systems being inefficient, costly, and likely to reduce access for working-class, women, mature, disabled and black students.

Neither the banks nor the Treasury want to guarantee or administer the scheme. Students don't want loans, and they have the full backing of the campus unions.

The logical conclusion of what the Tories are doing will be an American-style higher education system. Every institution will be expected to stand on its own, competing with all the others, and getting finance from wherever it can — with a heavy emphasis on the private sector. This will inevitably lead to lower standards at the 'cheaper end of the market', while the prestigious institutions, the equivalents of Harvard and Yale, will get more money and become even more elitist.

In other words, there is a determined class basis for what the Tories are planning. They want to take us back to the streaming concepts of the 1944 Education Act, with children being educated for 'their station in life'. Working-class children will be channelled into 'vocational' courses earlier and earlier in life, with the City Technology Colleges (for those both talented and lucky) leading to a few subsidised places in higher education.

Middle-class children will get precisely the education their parents can afford — and there will of course be provision for buying your way into college for the very rich. Subjects like the arts, law, medicine, architecture will once again become the privilege of those with a lot of money. Openings in these fields will simply not be available to working-class people.

Our response to these attacks must be as well-planned, thorough-going and comprehensive as possible. The Tories' proposals all fit together, and serve the ends of their class. Our response should be the same — we should be absolutely clear about what we are doing, and prepared to fight for our class interests.

Students should fight with our allies — the trade unions, Labour Parties, community groups, and all those who will lose out if the Tories get their way. Within NUS we have to get in touch with our own membership, and take the message out to school students. Our aim must be to unite around a package of demands, related to action to win those demands. There are no short-cuts to beating the Tories, and no easy victories based on hoping for the best and smiling nicely at back-bench Tories.

Liz Millward is a member of the National Union of Students national executive, writing in a personal capacity.

Introduction to Shachtman

Max Shachtman is to the post-Trotsky Trotskyist movement what Trotsky was to the official 'Communist' movement — the arch-heretic, the great traitor, the Lucifer.

Shachtman was one of those leaders of the American Communist Party who, with James P Cannon and Martin Abern, broke out of that organisation in 1928 and started the Trotskyist movement in the USA. For the next dozen years he expounded Trotsky's politics. Probably he was the world's leading voice for those politics after Trotsky himself.

He broke with Trotsky in 1940, a few months before Trotsky's death, in a dispute which started over the Russian invasions of Poland and Finland in late 1939.

In August 1939 Stalin and Hitler agreed a non-aggression pact. It freed Hitler's hands for war. On 1 September 1939 the Nazi army invaded Poland. On 17 September the Russian army invaded Poland from the East, by agreement with the Nazis, and took control of a large part of the country.

In November the USSR gave Finland an ultimatum to surrender certain strategic parts of its territory to the USSR or go to war. This too had been agreed with the Nazis (as had been the Russian occupation of the three Baltic states of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, carried through in June-July 1940).

The Finns decided to fight. Instead of an easy victory, Stalin — whose purges had decimated the leadership of the Russian army two years before — found himself embroiled in a war that dragged on for 15 weeks. British and French aid to Finland by sending troops was, for a time, a serious project. It would have brought Stalin into the World War on Hitler's side.

The war ended with Finland ceding the demanded territory to Stalin on 13 March 1940. On 28 March the Allies decided to occupy bases in Norway; on 9 April the Nazis forestalled them by conquering and occupying Denmark and Norway. A month later, on 10 May, the Nazi blitzkrieg in the west began.

Trotsky was for the unconditional defence of the USSR for the sake of its nationalised economy. He considered that this was the decisive issue in Poland and Finland; he also, initially, expected the advance of the Russian army to spark mass anti-capitalist struggles. So he supported the Soviet Union. Shachtman argued for what became known as "conjunctural defeatism" — that is, favouring the defeat of the Soviet Union in Finland though in general favouring its defence.

The debate which ensued became mixed up with organisational grievances inside the American Trotskyist movement, and Shachtman became the leader of an opposition which had the most diverse views on the USSR but united in criticising the 'bureaucratic conservatism' of the American Trotskyist leadership. The Trotskyist movement split in April 1940. And the positions taken in that debate, on the very eve of Trotsky's death, shaped and, I believe, warped the entire future of the mainstream Trotskyist movement.

For, of course, it was a discussion of far more than Poland or Finland or the Hitler-Stalin pact. It was about drawing up the balance sheet on Stalinism.

Already there were people in the ranks of the American Trotskyist movement who considered that the USSR could not in any sense, even the most residual, be considered a workers' state. They included James Burnham, a college teacher who was joint editor, with Shachtman, of the movement's magazine.

Trotsky himself produced a new balance-sheet, *The USSR in War*, in September 1939, in which he accepted the theoretical possibility that the USSR could maintain the nationalised economy which came out of the revolution and nevertheless have to be considered a new form of class society. Trotsky's arguments against in fact considering it such are very important to examine.

"Scientifically and politically — and not purely terminologically — the question poses itself as follows: Does the bureaucracy represent a temporary growth on a social organism or has this growth already become transformed into a historically indispensable organ?'...

The historical alternative, carried to the end, is as follows: either the Stalin regime is an abhorrent relapse in the process of transforming bourgeois society into a socialist society, or the Stalin regime is the first stage of a new exploiting society [which is to supersede capitalism]... *But are there such incontrovertible or even impressive objective data as would compel us today to renounce the prospect of the socialist revolution? That is the whole question...*

By the sweep and monstrous fraudulence of his purge, Stalin testifies to nothing else but the incapacity of the bureaucracy to transform itself into a stable ruling class. Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall? Posing this question clearly should alone in our opinion restrain the comrades from terminological experimentation and overhasty generalisations..."

After Trotsky's death, those who had been on his side in the 1940 split continued to maintain, for decades, that nothing much had changed in the USSR and that it was not necessary to change the framework in which it was viewed. The reality that the bureaucracy had shown itself to have gained solidity and substance, to be capable of running the nationalised economy as its own and replicating it outside the USSR, nevertheless forced its way into their theory and left them operating with a description of so-called "degenerated and deformed workers' states" which was actually one of new bureaucratic societies. Trotsky's "workers' state" tag functioned only to signify that these new bureaucratic societies were progressive, post-capitalist, and transitional between capitalism and socialism.

Shachtman broke with Trotsky in April 1940. In December 1940 he argued — as others like Burnham had already done during the faction fight — that the USSR was in fact a new form of class society, what he would eventually called 'bureaucratic collectivism'. He went through a range of versions of this theory in the 1940s, for a while calling the USSR bureaucratic-collectivist and *progressive*, then eventually settling for the view that it was *barbarism*, the alternative to capitalism and its historical successor if the working class did not make a socialist revolution in time.

Trotsky had argued that if the then economically dynamic USSR were considered a new form of class society, amidst the unending capitalist decline and stagnation of the 1930s, then the logical conclusion had to be that this new form of society was the next historical stage after rotting capitalism. No such conclusion necessarily followed from seeing the USSR as a new form of exploiting society in the epoch of vast capitalist expansion that followed World War 2; in that framework, the state-monopoly systems clearly appear as no more than a historical parallel to capitalism (and in many ways a backward one) in a number of relatively underdeveloped countries.

Yet Shachtman, who lived until 1972, never made the necessary rectification to the views on this that (from a different angle) he shared with the Trotsky of 1940. He always talked of the state-monopoly systems as the *successor* to capitalism, and always of capitalism as declining. In this he paralleled the official Trotskyist movement, which took decades to register the post-war revival of capitalism.

In the '40s Shachtman's organisation, the Workers' Party, maintained a militant activity. Around 1947 there was serious talk of a reunification with the official Trotskyists. In 1949 the Workers' Party retreated and became the Independent Socialist League.

In 1958 it dissolved into the Socialist Party and its forces scattered. Shachtman reportedly supported the US-backed mercenary invasion of Cuba in 1961 and backed the US in the Vietnam war — considering the state-monopoly systems to be the worst evil and a mortal threat. He was a member of the Socialist Party when he died in 1972.

Workers' Liberty believes that the state-monopoly societies are systems of class exploitation, broadly parallel to capitalism in the development of the productive forces. Some of us think, with Shachtman, that these societies are a new form of class society, different from capitalism and in many fundamental respects — notably in what they do to the working class and to its possibilities of organising itself — regressive. With Shachtman's later politics — which flowed from his basic incoherence on the place of the state-monopoly systems in history — we have of course no sympathy. And it seems to us that Shachtman played a terrible role in 1940 when he split the Trotskyist movement.

But Shachtman is an important figure in the history of the Trotskyist movement, not least because his bureaucratic-collectivist thesis was an explicit working-through of the logic of Trotsky's ideas of 1940 — whereas the official Trotskyists have worked through those ideas incoherently and often irrationally. Much of the politics of the SWP in Britain, too, can only be understood as a dialogue with Shachtman: the forerunners of the SWP were associated with Shachtmanites until the end of the 1950s, and sold their literature.

We print here the first of two instalments of key articles by Shachtman as discussion material on the character of the bureaucratic state-monopoly class societies.

The essential Shachtman part I

Reflections on a decade past

Man, the political animal, does not start with theory but with action. It is only after a variety of actions have accumulated that he feels the need of drawing conclusions and acquires the possiblity of theory which is only a generalisation from experience past to guide him in experience to come. Human progress is made only to the extent that this need is felt and the possibility utilised. If the goal of that progress is true human dignity, the process is not straightforward or uninterrupted or as rapid as it might be, it is due in large measure to the fact that the mind, while the most remarkable organ we know, is also one of the most conservative: each idea which finally lodges in it after long and suspicious scrutiny offers resistance to every new idea or new theory.

All this holds true for man associated in political movements, including in different degrees the most iconoclastic or revolutionary. The greater his consciousness and his capacity for thinking, the more he strives to make his thoughts comprehensive, to bring order and system into them. But beyond a certain point, this striving, which is utterly indispensable for logical thinking and fruitful action, runs the risk of sterilising the movement and its action by freezing thought into dogma. This risk is run especially by the revolutionary movement, precisely because of the importance it attaches to theory. The consequences of this risk are not unavoidable. They cannot be conjured away, however, simply by repeating after Engels that our theory is not a dogma but a guide to action. To understand why it is not a dogma and cannot be, is much more important.

In a world where everything but change itself is continuously changing, and where action (or inaction) contributes to change, theory, which is a guide to action applied to given conditions, cannot possibly apply in exactly the same way or to exactly the same extent under altered conditions. If theory is to remain revolutionary and valid, it must of necessity always be open to the criticism of experience, reaffirmed where practice confirms its validity, modified where that is dictated by a modification of conditions, and discarded where it proves to be ambiguous, outlived or false.

This constant re-examination and readiness to revise itself is provided for by Marxism itself which, because it is revolutionary and scientific, is critical and

therefore also self-critical. It is its only safeguard against shriveling into a dogma. By misapplying this safeguard, or ignoring it altogether, the Marxian movement of our time has contributed to its own enfeeblement. In this sense, it is not Marxism that has failed, as many gloomy critics find it so popular to say nowadays; it is the Marxian dogmatists who have failed.

To enter the second half of the century with nothing more than the political equipment the movement had at the beginning of the war is not so much criminal as it is preposterous. Those whose greatest boast is an impressive capacity for boasting may claim as their proudest virtue a "finished programme"; they are only announcing that their programme is as good as finished and they with it. As for ourselves, we lay no more claim to having a "finished programme" (what a *stupid* phrase! Just when was it finished? Just what finished it?) than Marxists have ever claimed since the days of the programme which Marx and Engels presented. We seek constantly to clarify, renovate and strengthen the socialist programme in harmony with the real developments and the needs of the struggle. Since it is a programme for struggle, and not a home for elderly radicals, we cannot say just when it will be "finished". The question is of little interest to us.

The principal new problem faced by Marxian theory, and therewith Marxian practice, is the problem of Stalinism. What once appeared to many to be either an academic or "foreign" problem is now, it should at last be obvious, a decisive problem for all classes in all countries. If it is understood as a purely Russian phenomenon or as a problem "in itself" it is of course not understood at all. It exists as a problem only in connection with the dying out of capitalist society, on the one hand, and the struggle to replace it by socialism, on the other. It is only in this connection that we can begin to understand it.

If our movement had done nothing more than to make its contribution to the understanding of Stalinism, that alone would justify its existence. It is our unique contribution, and all our views are closely connected with it. We consider it decisive for the future of capitalism, in so far as it has one, and for the future of socialism.

An understanding of Stalinism is too much to expect from the bourgeoisie. The modest theoretical capacities at its disposal are still further restricted by class interests which blind it in the investigation of serious social problems, especially when it is so exclusively preoccupied with frenzied but futile efforts to patch together a social order that is falling apart at every point. To the extent that its thinkers and statesmen try to *explain* Stalinism in more or less coherent terms, they inform us that collectivism necessarily leads to tyranny — a homily usually prefaced by the well-worn banality from Lord Acton about how power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The explanation does not explain much, least of all how it happens that the tyranny of collectivism is supplanting the freedom of capitalism. But nothing more can be asked from a theory which was intellectually developed and popularised by the savants in the abattoirs of American yellow journalism.

Most of the time, the bourgeoisie does not transcend demonology. It explains Stalinism in the simple terms of evil spirits, witchcraft, black magic, conjurations and other unnatural forces, which can be exorcised by adequate police measures or by stocking more atomic bombs than the demonic forces. Stalinism remains for the bourgeoisie what Winston Churchill, not its most obtuse representative, describe as an enigma and a riddle and a mystery. The military mind of Mr Churchill — which is only a species of the common police mind — hears no special call to undo the enigmas, ravel the riddles and pierce the mysteries of society. Explain Stalinism? It is enough to blow it up by an atomic bomb.

"Stalinism is that gruesome punishment visited upon the working class when it fails to perform the task of sweeping doomed capitalism out of existence".

The international Social Democracy has little more to offer. Theory in general and Marxian theory in particular ceased long ago to hold its interest. In part this explains why it alternates between joining with the Stalinists against the bourgeoisie (in the East) and joining with the bourgeoisie against the Stalinists (in the West). About a quarter of a century ago, the Russian Menshevik leaders who retained some respect for theoretical generalisation described Stalinism as "state capitalism" or as "one of its forms". In more recent times, the same theory has regained a pallid existence, or a multiplicity of existences, among smaller groups in and around the Trotskyist movement: Stalinism is Red Fascism or bureaucratic Fascism, or caste-ruled state capitalism, or bureaucratic state capitalism or some other variety of state capitalism

One inconvenience of this theory is that the Stalinist social system is not capitalist and does not show any of the classic, traditional, distinctive characteristics of capitalism. Another is that there is no capitalist class under the rule of Stalinism, and there are as many embarrassments in conceiving of a capitalist state where all capitalists are in cemeteries or in emigration as in grasping the idea of a workers' state where all the workers are in slave-camps or factory-prisons. A third is that nowhere can an authentic capitalist class, or any section of it, be found to support or welcome Stalinism, a coolness which makes good social sense from its point of view since it is obvious to all but those who extract theories from their thumbs that Stalinism comes to power by destroying the capitalist state and the capitalist class. There are a dozen other inconveniencies about the theories of "state capitalism," or any theory based upon the idea of a single "universal capital" which Marx, rightly, we think, jeered at as nonsensical. But the most important one is the fact that the theories preclude any understanding of the actual social conflict in which Stalinism is involved and offer no possiblity of an effective political course for the working class movement. To combat it as a capitalist force is like galloping with tilted rubber hose at a windmill that is not there.

There remains the Trotskyist movement. During the lifetime of Trotsky, his theoretical contribution to the understanding of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution out of which Stalinism was born, was the only serious and fruitful one produced within or outside the Marxian movement. In the Trotskyist movement today gnomes have succeded the giant and misery has fallen heir to grandeur. The changing tides of events which sweep the islet on which they are marooned without sail or chart or compass or ship or pilot, seems to give them the illusion that it is they who are moving. Actually, they are immobilised victims of a dogma. They repeat ritually that although Russia is a vast prison of the workers and the peoples, it nevertheless remains a workers' state because property is in the hands of the state. This state is, however, completely in the hands of an uncontrollable bureaucracy which directs the economy in its own interests. And while it is totalitarian and counter-revolutionary, it nevertheless overturns capitalism in one country after another and extends the domain of the workers' state as it was never extended before. More baseless theories have been concocted about many things; a weirder one is hard to think of.

This dogma is the substance that has made it possible, today as in the past, for Stalinism to exercise a strong magnetic attraction upon the Trotskyist movement, forcing it into reluctant alignment in the most fundamentally important political developments and leaving it essentially only with the criticism not so much of what Stalinism does as the "methods" by which it does it. This was already true in part during Trotsky's leadership; since his death, it has become *the* trait of the Trotskyist movement, which is obscured at times only by its erroneous analyses of Stalinism's line as a "capitulation" to capitalism. This the bourgeoisie would

Roosevelt and Stalin

like to believe in, but it has come to understand ruefully that the "capitulation" is only chimerical. The growing frenzy of enthusiasm which the Trotskyist movement has worked up for the Tito regime, which is socially identical with the Russian Stalinist regime even if the Fourth International only yesterday solemnly designated it as Bonapartist capitalism, is only another case of the magnetic attraction to which it yields. This disoriented movement cannot, without radically reorienting itself, make any positive contribution to the reorientation of the working class movement in general.

The Second World War served at least this useful purpose: it underscored the tendencies of development of capitalism and Stalinism, and by making more explicit what was already implicit in them, brought them into clearer perspective.

The decay of capitalist society continues at a rapid pace and almost without interruption. One after another, its organs are attacked by the poisons of decomposition. The mere fact that one part of the capitalist world found it imperative to ally itself with so mortal an enemy of capital as Stalinism is enogh to show that we are in the presence of a dying social order. The same thing is shown by the fact, now almost universally acknowledged by the bourgeois world, that the problems which the incredibly destructive war purported to solve are still unresolved and must wait for solution upon victory in the "cold war" which, it is not very sanguinely hoped, will prevent the open military collision of a third world war. Another world war, the third in two or at most three generations and this one a war of incalculable consequences for whatever civilization we have — is more than any social system we can endure. Yet there is no other perspective before world capitalism, and few serious representatives of the capitalist camp confidently offer any other.

The economy of capitalism has never been so chaotic, unstable and so far removed from classical capitalist economy. The reactionaries who complain, unavailingly, that the sytem of "free enterprise" is being undermined in all capitalist countries, *even* in the United States, by "socialist" measures, are quite right, in their own way. All they fail to understand is that for capitalism to exist *at all* nowadays it must allow for its *partial negation,* for that "invading" socialism of which Engels wrote some four-score years ago. However, the mixture of the "invader" with decaying capitalism produces an increasingly insufferable monstrosity.

The chaos of capitalist economy is organised, as it were, only by an ever heavier emphasis on war economy, on the production of means of destruction which do not re-enter the process of production to enrich the wealth of the nation and which "enter" the process of production of the enemy nation only to disrupt and destroy it. If the war budgets were reduced throughout the capitalist world to what was normal no more than thirty years ago, complete economic prostration would follow immediately and automatically. Such burdens, capitalism cannot escape. They are breaking its back, no matter how much they are shifted to the shoulders of the working people.

In the political sphere, there is a corresponding development. It would almost suffice to point out that in the last real fortress of capitalism, the United States, taken on the whole, there is today less democracy than existed under the Hohenzollern and Habsburg monarchies before the First World War. Partly under the neccessity and partly on the pretext of fighting the "fifth column" of Stalinism, one long-standing democratic right after another is being assaulted in the country, undermined, restricted or wiped out altogether. The criminality of the assualt is matched only by the hypocrisy of the Stalinist protestants, the cowardly flabbiness if not direct connivance of most of the liberal world, and the tacit approval of the drive by the official labour movement which conducts its own drive in parallel with it. In the other capitalist countries the situation is no better; in many of them it is worse and much worse.

The more the ownership and control of the means of production and exchange are concentrated in the hands of the few — the greater is the centralization of authority and power in the hands of the state and the further are the masses removed from control of economic and political conditions. The deeper the economic crisis of capitalism, the shakier its foundations, the greater the ineffectualness of the market as the automatic regulator of capitalist production — the wider and deeper is the intervention of the state into the economy as substitute-regulator, substitute-organiser, substitute-director. The more extensive the wars and the war preparations, the vaster, more critical and more complex the efforts required to sustain them both in the economic and the political (and the ideological) fields — the more the state is obliged to regiment and dictate in all the spheres of social life, the less tolerant it becomes of all "disruption", the more it demands conformity to the "national effort", to state policy, for all the classes.

The working class is least able to conform because the accumulating burdens rest primarily on its shoulders. To protect its economic interests it is compelled to oppose the prevailing trends. To resist effectively it must have and exercise those democratic rights which, while valuable to all classes, are absolutely indispensable to the working class. The more it exercises these rights out of the simple necessity of defending its economic position — the stronger is the tendency of the bourgeois state, out of the simple necessity of defending *its* position, to curtail these rights and even to nullify them entirely. Self-preservation generates in the working class a craving for democracy and dictates the fight for it *against the bourgeoisie.*

The socialist movement, which is (or should be) nothing but the conscious expression of the fight of the working class, can be restored to a decisive political force if it realises that, today far more then ever before, the all-around and aggressive championing of the struggle for democracy is the only safeguard against the encroaching social decay, and the only road to socialism. We are or must become the most consistent champions of democracy, not so much because the slogans of democracy are "convenient weapons" against an anti-democratic bourgeoisie, but because the working class, and our movement with it, must have democracy in order to protect and promote its interests. The last thirty years in particular have confirmed or reminded

us or awakened us to the fact that without the attainment of democracy all talk of the conquest of power by the working class is deceit or illusion, and that without the realisation of complete democracy all talk of the establishment of socialism is a mockery. A socialist movement, grant it the best intentions in the world, which ignores or deprecates the fight for democracy — for all democratic rights and institutions, for more extensive democratic rights and the most democractic institutions — which is suspicious about such a fight being somehow not in consonance with or something separate from (let alone inimical to) the fight for socialism, which trails along behind that fight or supports it reluctantly or with tongue in cheek, will never lead the fight for socialist freedom.

To cling to the terms of the old polemics between left and right wings of socialism — "dictatorship" versus "democracy" — not under a passed situation but in a radically different situation, is political madness. The Russian Revolution has been destroyed; it is no longer the polestar of the socialist proletariat. The Socialist proletariat is no longer on the offensive; its struggle for power is nowhere on the order of the day. The main obstacle on the road, not to socialist power, but simply to the reconstitution of a socialist working class movement, are not the parliamentary illusions of the proletariat. They are the illusions of Stalinism.

Today, not reformism but Stalinism is the principal threat to the integrity, the consciousness, the interests of the working class. Today, the term dictatorship does not bring to the mind of the worker the image, clear or dim, of the inspiring soviet democracy of the Bolshevik revolution. It represents what he had experienced in his own day and on his own back: Fascist or Stalinist totalitarianism. The fear and hatred which these despotisms stir in him are deep and justified. The worker of today who wants "democracy" and rejects "dictatorship" does so for entirely different reasons than the worker of 30 or more years ago. He is unerring in his class instincts, and right in his "prejudices" for democracy, despite the confused form in which he may express them. The meaning of political terms especially is determined in the long run by the people and not by an élite, and even if that élite is socialistic and scientific it loses little or nothing by bowing to the popular verdict.

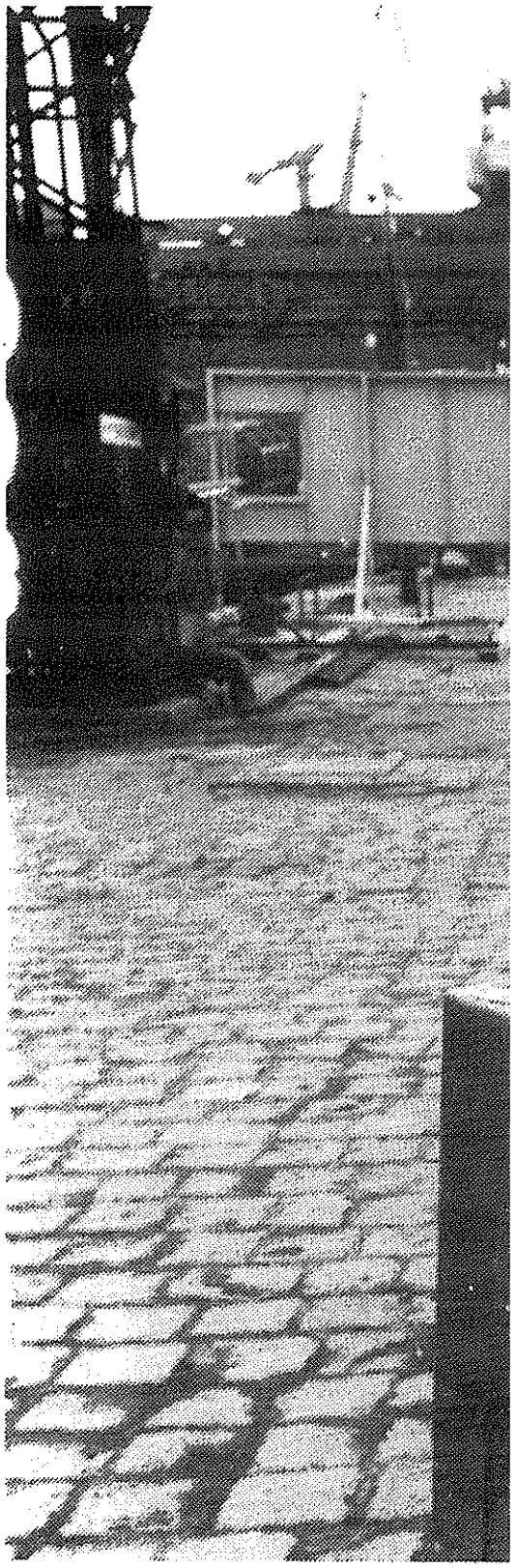
The class instinct of the proletariat are a safeguard against many things. But they do not suffice for the victory of socialism. For that, a *conscious* proletariat is required, a socialist proletariat. The question that once arose as an academic one is now posed as a real one: what is the social trend when capitalism has become ripe and overripe, objectively, for the socialist reorganisation, and the working class, for one reason or another, fails to develop its socialist consciousness to the point where it is capable of dealing capitalism the death-blow?

Socialism does not and cannot come into existence automatically. Does capitalism then continue in existence automatically and indefinitely? We are familiar with the theory that Stalinist Russia is a workers' state which decays and decays and decays further, but which will nevertheless always remain a workers' state until overturned by the capitalist class. There is evidently also a theory that capitalism continues to decay and decay and decay still further but that until it is overturned by the socialist proletariat, no matter how long that may take, it will continue to exist as a capitalist society. Neither theory, for all the stereotyped references to dialectics, is worth the paper devoted to it.

To say that capitalism is decaying is to say that it is increasingly incapable of coping with the basic problems of society, of maintaining economic and political order — that is, or course, order on a capitalist foundation. Modern society, based on large-scale machinofacture and world trade, is an intricate and highly integrated complex. Every serious disturbance of its more or less normal operation — crisis, war, sharp political conflict, revolution — violently dislocates the lives of millions and even tens of millions all over the world. The dislocations in turn render difficult the return to normal operation. The difference between capitalism flowering and capitalism declining lies in the growth of the number, scope, gravity and intensity of these disturbances. It is increasingly difficult for capitalism to restore an equilibrium and to maintain it for long. Where the crisis reaches an acute stage, and the forces of capitalism are more or less paralysed, the proletariat is called upon to restore order, its own order, by the socialist revolution.

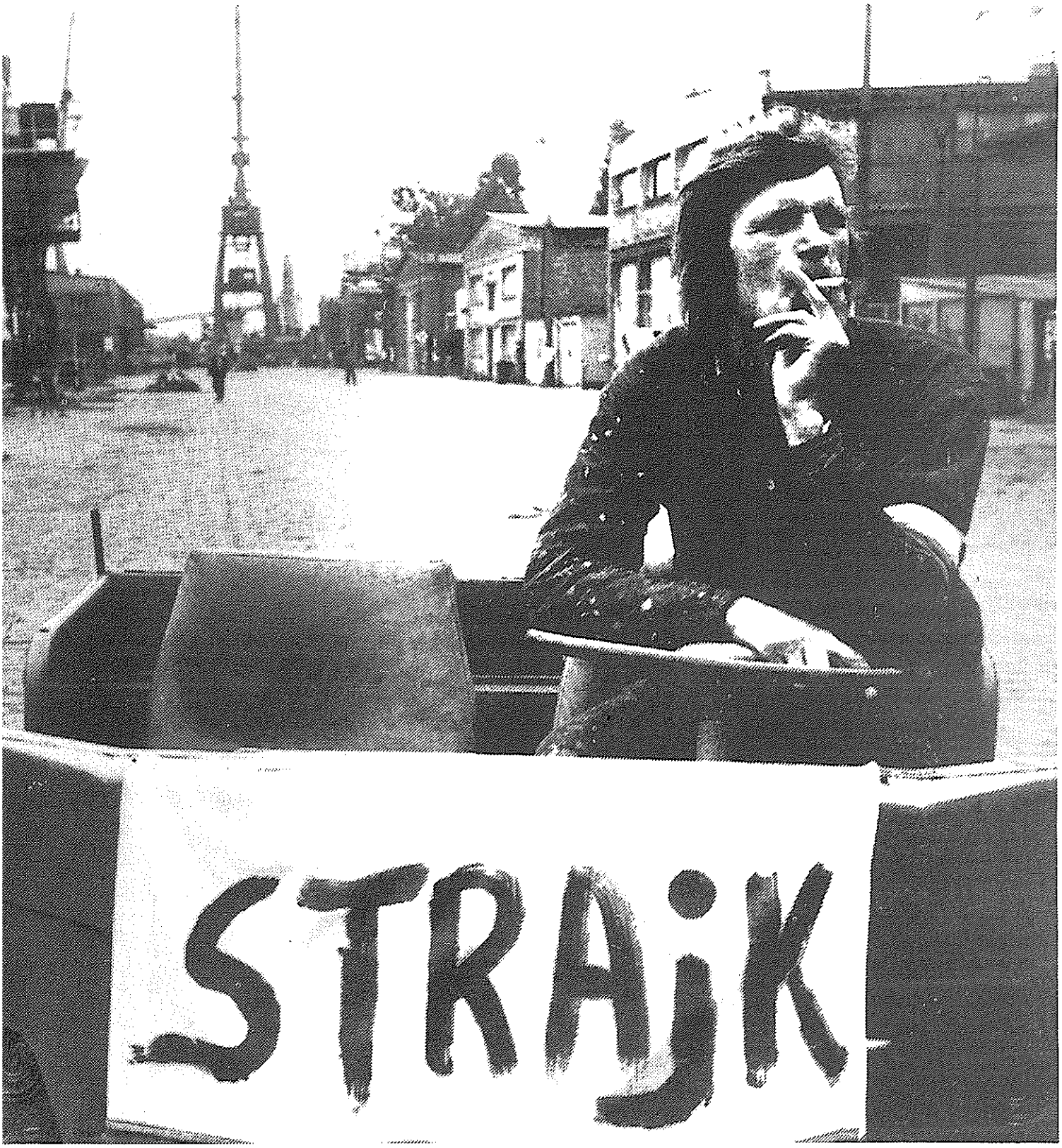
But what if the proletariat is not organised to carry through the socialist revolution? Or, having carried it out, as in Russia in 1917, what if it remains isolated and is therefore not yet able to discharge its only task as a new ruling class, namely, to abolish all ruling classes by establishing socialism? From the days of the Paris Commune to the defeat of the Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, the answer was always the same: the proletariat pays off failure in bloody retribution inflicted by the bourgeoisie restored to power.

In the last quarter of a century, an epoch of the exceptionally rapid disintegration of capitalism, we have seen that the answer to the failure of the working class may also take another form. Where the bourgeoisie is no longer capable of maintaining (or, as in the case of Russia), of restoring its social order, and the proletariat is not yet able to inaugurate its own, a social interregnum is established by a new ruling class which buries the moribund capitalism and crushes the unborn socialism in the egg. The new ruling class is the Stalinist bureaucracy. Its social order, hostile both to capitalism and socialism, is bureaucratic or totalitarian collectivism. The bourgeoisie is wiped out altogether and the working classes are reduced to state slaves.



Poland, 1981

The elements of the new ruling class are created under capitalism. They are part of the vast social mélange we know as the middle classes. Concentration of capital, capitalist crisis — these uproot the numerous strata which are intermediate between the two basic classes. They tend more and more to lose their stake in the capitalist system of private property. They lose their small properties or the proper-



ties lose their value; they lose their comfortable social positions or their positions lose importance. The sharper and longer the agony of capitalism, the more of these elements become declassed. Their old social allegiances give way to new ones, the choice depending on a whole mass of circumstances. They are attracted to anti-capitalist movements, real or spurious.

When the socialist movement is in a growing, healthy, self-confident condition, they are drawn to it, become its valuable allies and are greatly influenced by its democratic and socialist ideology. Under other circumstances, many of them are drawn to a fascist movement which promises to check the excesses of capital without permitting the rule of labour. However, fascism in power proved to be a crucial disillusion to the anti-big-capitalistic middle classes and, particularly since its defeat in the war, suffered a tremendous moral-political blow on a world scale. Today it is Stalinism, in the absence of a revolutionary socialist movement which it has helped so signally to strangle, that exercises a magnetic power over these elements.

Stalinism is represented by a powerful and seemingly stable state. Outside of

Russia it commands, or tries to command, powerful mass organisations. Its authentically anti-capitalist nature is established in the minds of all social groups, including the precariously-situated or declassed elements from the old middle classes: intellectuals, skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled; individuals from the liberal professions; officials and employees of all sorts, including those from the swollen but impoverished governmental apparatus; and above all else, labour bureaucrats. They have less and less to lose from the abolition of private property by the incorporation of the bourgeoisie, and more and more to gain from a movement which will overturn capitalism without imposing upon them the democratic discipline and equalitarian principles of the socialist proletariat.

In Stalinism they find a movement able to appeal to the masses for the struggle against capitalism, but yet one which does not demand of them — and the socialist movement does — the abandonment of the ideology which is common to all oppressor classes, namely: command is the privilege of superiors, obedience the lot of inferiors, and the mass must be ruled by kindly masters for its own good. Such elements gravitate easily to the Stalinist bureaucracy precisely because it already has, or has the possibility of acquiring , the leadership of one of the main social classes, which has in common with them a growing disinterest in the preservation of capitalist property.

Given the existence and normal growth of the proletarian movement and its assimilation of a socialist consciousness, all these elements taken together would not constitute a very decisive social force. But the weight of social forces is not absolute but relative. The socialist consciousness and coherence of the working class have suffered tremendous blows in the past three decades from reformism, on the one hand, and from Stalinism on the other. Its disorientation and demoralisation have been aggravated by the continuing decomposition of capitalism. While we do not believe for one moment that this condition will continue without end, the fact is that this is what the situation has been for some time.

Compared with a working class in such a state, the elements we have described, *especially when bolstered by a big Stalinist state,* can for a time act as a decisive social force in one country after another where the crisis has prostrated the bourgeoisie. What is more, this force can destroy the bourgeoisie, its state and its economy, and transform itself into a new ruling class. It can do it and it has done it. That the autocertified Marxists refuse to recognise this fact is small comfort to the bourgeoisie that has been crushed and the working class that has been subjugated.

While the power of Stalinism was confined to Russia, this analysis and conclusion may have appeared abstract or premature. The reserve is no longer possible. It *is* possible now to re-read the history of the Russian Revolution with greater profit. It proved that the working class, democratically organised, self-acting and class-conscious, can carry out the socialist revolution, can "establish democracy". Unless this is attributed to some we-do-not-know-which quality unique to Russians, it is valid for the working class as a whole. It proved also that the working class in power either moves toward the socialist reconstruction of society or loses power altogether.

During and after the Second World War, the new Stalinist bureaucracy became the master of just those more-or-less peripheral countries in which the most striking and complete collapse of the bourgeoisie — economic, political, military and ideological — occurred, and precisely because of that collapse. Poland, Hungary, Albania, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, China — these are not yet the world, or the decisive part of the world; far from it. But whether Stalinism conquered them from abroad (regimes imposed by the Russian army) or by means of a native movement, the symptomatic significance of the events is clear. A new state machine, replica in every respect of the Russian state machine, is established by the bureaucracy and under its exclusive, totalitarian control. All the means of production and exchange are sooner or later converted into state property. The decadent and demoralised bourgeoisie is soooner or later exterminated. The working classes are deprived of any right whatever and transformed into modern slaves.

> "We are, or must become, the most consistent champions of democracy... because the working class, and our movement with it, must have democracy in order to protect and promote its interests".

Capitalism has become reactionary and obsolete not because it no longer develops the productive forces but because it converts more and more of those forces at the disposal of society into means of destruction which do not enrich but impoverish it, and prevent it from making the progress that a rationally-organised economy would assure. That — according to Marx and according to what we can see all around us with the naked eye.

The reactionary character of Stalinism is determined in the same way. The productive forces available to society are converted into means of destruction to no smaller — perhaps even to a larger — extent under Stalinism than under capitalism. The enormous wastage in production under Stalinism is notorious and inherent in bureaucratic collectivism. The physical using up of the most important productive force in society, the workers and their down-right annihilation in the slave camps, is appalling under Stalinism; it has yet to be exceeded by capitalism. The vast technological advantages of state ownership are constantly dissipated precisely by the social relations established by Stalinism and its parasitic ruling class. To determine the class character of the Stalinist bureaucracy by asking if it is historically necesary, in the way Trotsky demanded and his unthinking epigones repeat, is, to put it quietly, erroneous. They would be hard put to it to prove that all ruling classes in history were historically necessary in the sense they give to this phrase. Was the feudal ruling class historically necessary? It would be interesting to hear what The Theoreticians would answer to this question, and how their answer would differ from, let us say, the one given by Engels.

The Stalinist bureaucracy in power is a new ruling, exploitive class. Its social system is a new system of totalitarian exploitation and oppression, not capitalist and yet having nothing in common with socialism. It is the cruel realisation of the prediction made by all the great socialist scientists, from Marx and Engels onward, that capitalism must collapse out of an inability to solve its own contradictions and that the alternatives facing mankind are not so much capitalism or socialism as they are: *socialism or barbarism.* Stalinism is that new barbarism.

The old Marxists could forsee it in general but could not describe it in detail. We can. The workers will fail to take command of society when capitalism collapses only on penalty of their own destruction, warned Engels. Stalinism is that gruesome punishment visited upon the working class when it fails to perform the task, in its own name and under its own leadership, of sweeping doomed capitalism out of existence and thus fulfilling its social destiny. For this failure it must record not the triumph of the invading socialist society but of the invading barbarism.

These are the basic thoughts that determine our outlook and politics.

They detemine our attitude toward Stalinism and other currents within the working class movement. The analysis we have made of the social forces and trends excludes any consideration of Stalinism as a working class tendency. It operates *inside* the working class movement, but is not *of* the working class. Those who put the Stalinist bureaucracy on the same plane with the reformist labour

bureaucracy are like people digging a well with a washcloth. The security and progress of the reformist leadership require the maintenance of a reformist labour movement — but a labour movement! — of some form of democracy — but not its complete abolition! The triumph of the Stalinist bureaucracy *requires* the destruction of the labour movement and of all democracy. Whoever cannot see this after the victory of Stalinism in a dozen different countries, cannot see a fist in front of his nose.

Therefore, drive Stalinsim out of the labour movement! But only by the informed, democratic decision of the working class iself, and *not* by the bureaucratic methods of the reformist and conservative labour officials.

We are for democracy, in full and for all, in every field, including above all the labour movement. Complete and equal democratic rights for the Stalinists in the labour movement and outside of it, we say, and not the aping of Stalinism in the fight against it. Relentless struggle to uproot Stalinism from the labour movement by democratic political and organisational means, and combination with all democratic elements in the labour movement to defend it from conquest and subjugation by the champions and protagonists of the most outrageous anti-labour regimes in the world! Whatever scores there are to settle between socialists and reformists or conservatives in the labour movement — and there are not a few — will be settled democratically and at the right time inside the labour movement. But no thinking socialist, no thinking worker, will combine with Stalinism, or do anything but resist it, when it invades the labour, or in general, the democratic movements and seeks to replace the present leadership with its own.

Our views determine our attitude toward democrats of different types. We do not differ from them because they are for democracy, but because to support captalism, to tolerate it, to do anything but work for its replacement by socialism, is to be reconciled to a narrow class democracy and to be armed in face of that sapping even of bourgeois democracy which capitalism requires for its continued existence. It is not necessarily true that to fight against capitalism is to fight for democracy, we grant. But it is decidedly true that to fight for democracy is to fight against capitalism.

We do not differ from any socialist because he is for democracy as the road to socialism. That we believe — in the sense given that ideal by Marx and Engels, in the sense that the attainment of democracy is possible and equated to the winning of political power by the socialist proletariat. We differ with those who believe in the growing democratisation of capitalism. It is an illusion. We differ with them because of their belief in the collaboration between classes which are irreconcilable. We differ with anyone who shows resistance to the complete independence and self-reliance of the working class. We differ with those who, hating Stalinism without understanding it, oppose it by tolerating and even urging the subordination of the working class to the doomed and dying capitalist regime. It is this very policy of reconciliation with capitalism instead of socialist struggle against it that has made possible the rise of Stalinism and its victories. The workers need a lifebuoy to carry them out of danger from the foundering ship of capitalism and not the anchor. We are revolutionary socialists, we are democratic socialists.

If a socialist can at all permit himself the overly youthful luxury of using such terms as "optimistic" or "pessimistic" about theoretical questions or even political perspective, it would be in this connection. Pessimism does not lie in stating that Stalinism has conquered here and there and defeated the working class. Our "optimism" does not consist in the belief that the working class is always revolutionary, or is always ready to make the revolution, or that it cannot be defeated, or even that it is always right. If derives from our belief, scientifically grounded, that the working class, no matter what the setbacks it suffers, has a solid position in society, which gives it inexhaustible powers of self-renewal and recuperation to resume the attack against the conditions of its existence. These attacks have continued; they will continue because they must.

Capitalism is dying and even disappearing, along with the capitalist classes. But the working class cannot be killed off, and it cannot exist without struggle. Stalinism has, it is true, appeared on the scene, but before this regime of permanent crisis can think of consolidating itself all over the world its first excursions beyond its original frontiers have already brought it into a violent and irresolvable conflict with itself which is doing more to reveal its real nature to the working class world than a dozen good theories.

The idea that the working class can struggle but never win, that it can do nothing more than suffer under new oppressors, is a superstitious prejudice which ruling classes have ever been interested in cultivating. The idea that the workers, whose numbers are overwhelming, can forever attack but never break through to self-rule is worthy of an inventor of perpetual-motion machines. The working class learns more slowly than was once thought; but with interruptions and distractions it learns. Sooner or later it will learn its emancipating task, and the power it has to perform it. On its banner then the watchword of democracy will be indistinguishable from the watchword of socialism. We are here to help make it sooner.

Isaac Deutscher's Stalin

We come finally to Isaac Deutscher's biography of Stalin. The author's credentials entitle him to a serious hearing for a serious work. He was a militant in the old Polish Communist movement, then in the Polish Trotskyist movement which he seems to have left either just before or after the outbreak of the second world war. He is obviously at home in the history of the Russian revolution and of the revolutionary movement in general. His book is free of those bald errors, grotesque misunderstandings and falsehoods which swarm over the pages of most of the current literature about the Bolshevik revolution. His appraisal of Stalinism does not aim, as do most others written nowadays, to discredit that revolution and with it the fight for socialism.

He refuses to regard the Bolshevik revolution as the Original Sin from which all the evils of our time flow, and endeavours to present an objective sociological, even Marxian, analysis of Stalinism, free of the primitive diabolism which is generally substituted for analysis. Deutscher's analysis really comes to grips with what has become *the key* question of our time.

What is Stalinism? Deutscher finds the basis for understanding it in what he sets forth as the fundamental development that "has been common to all revolutions so far". This, essentially, is the development:

"Each great revolution begins with a phenomenal outburst of popular energy, impatience, anger, and hope. Each ends in the weariness, exhaustion, and disillusionment of the revolutionary people. In the first phase the party that gives the fullest expression to the popular mood outdoes its rivals, gains the confidence of the masses, and rises to power...Then comes the inevitable trial of civil war. The revolutionary party is still marching in step with the majority of the nation. It is acutely conscious of its unity with the people and of a profound harmony between its own objectives and the people's wishes and desires. It can call upon the mass of the nation for ever-growing efforts and sacrifices; and it is sure of the response. In this, the heroic phase, the revolutionary party is in a very real sense democratic, even though it treats its foes with dictatorial relentlessness and observes no strict constitutional precept. The leaders implicitly trust their vast plebian following; and their policy rests on that trust. They are willing and even eager to submit their policies to open debate and to accept the popular verdict".

But this relationship hardly survives the civil war. The party emerges weary and the people wearier. "The anti-climax of the revolution is there". The fruits of the now secured revolution ripen too slowly to permit immediate fulfillment of the promises made to the people by the party.

"This is the real tragedy which overtakes the party of the revolution. If its action is to be dictated by the mood of the people, it will presently have to efface itself, or at least to relinquish power. But no revolutionary government can abdicate after a victorious civil war, because the only real pretenders to power are the still considerable remnants of the defeated counter-revolution...The party of the revolution knows no retreat. It has been driven to its present pass largely through obeying the will of that same people by which it is now deserted. It will go on doing what it considers to be its duty, without paying much heed to the voice of the people. In the end it will muzzle and stifle that voice".

The chasm between the rulers and the people widens, without the former having a full understanding of what is happening as they "acquire the habits of arbitrary government and themselves come to be governed by their own habits". The party divides in two.

"Some of its leaders point in alarm to the divorce between the revolution and the people. Others justify the conduct of the party on the grounds that the divorce itself is irremediable. Still others, the actual rulers, deny the fact of the divorce itself: for to admit it would be to widen further the gap between the rulers and the ruled. Some cry in alarm that the revolution has been betrayed, for in their eyes government by the people is the very essence of revolution — without it there can be no government for the people. The rulers find justification for themselves in the conviction that whatever they do will ultimately serve the interests of the broad mass of the nation; and indeed they do, on the whole, use their power to consolidate most of the economic and social conquests of the revolution. Amid charges and counter-charges, the heads of the revolutionary leaders begin to roll and the power of the post-revolutionary state towers hugely over the society it governs...

It is in this broad perspective that the metamorphosis of triumphant Bolshevism and Stalin's own fortunes, can best be understood".

That, according to Deutscher, is the law of revolutions, it is the "general trend of events; and this has been common to all great revolutions so far". To make his analysis more specific and to round it out we must go further with Deutscher. Although Stalinism represents a "metamorphosis of Bolshevism", it is not its negation. In Stalin, there is still the Bolshevik, but no longer in the more or less pure state, as it were. His puzzled opponents ask: "What is Stalin, after all? The architect of an imperial restoration, who sometimes exploits revolutionary pretexts for his ends, or the promoter of Communist revolution, camouflaging his purpose with the paraphernalia of the Russian imperial tradition?" Deutscher answers: *Both!* Stalinism is revolutionism *and* traditionalism, stranded in strange interplay; or as he puts it elsewhere, in Stalin there is the "conflict between his nationalism and his revolutionism". As a result of this duality (in Stalin or Stalinism), he carried out, five years after Lenin's death, Soviet Russia's "second revolution". It is true that

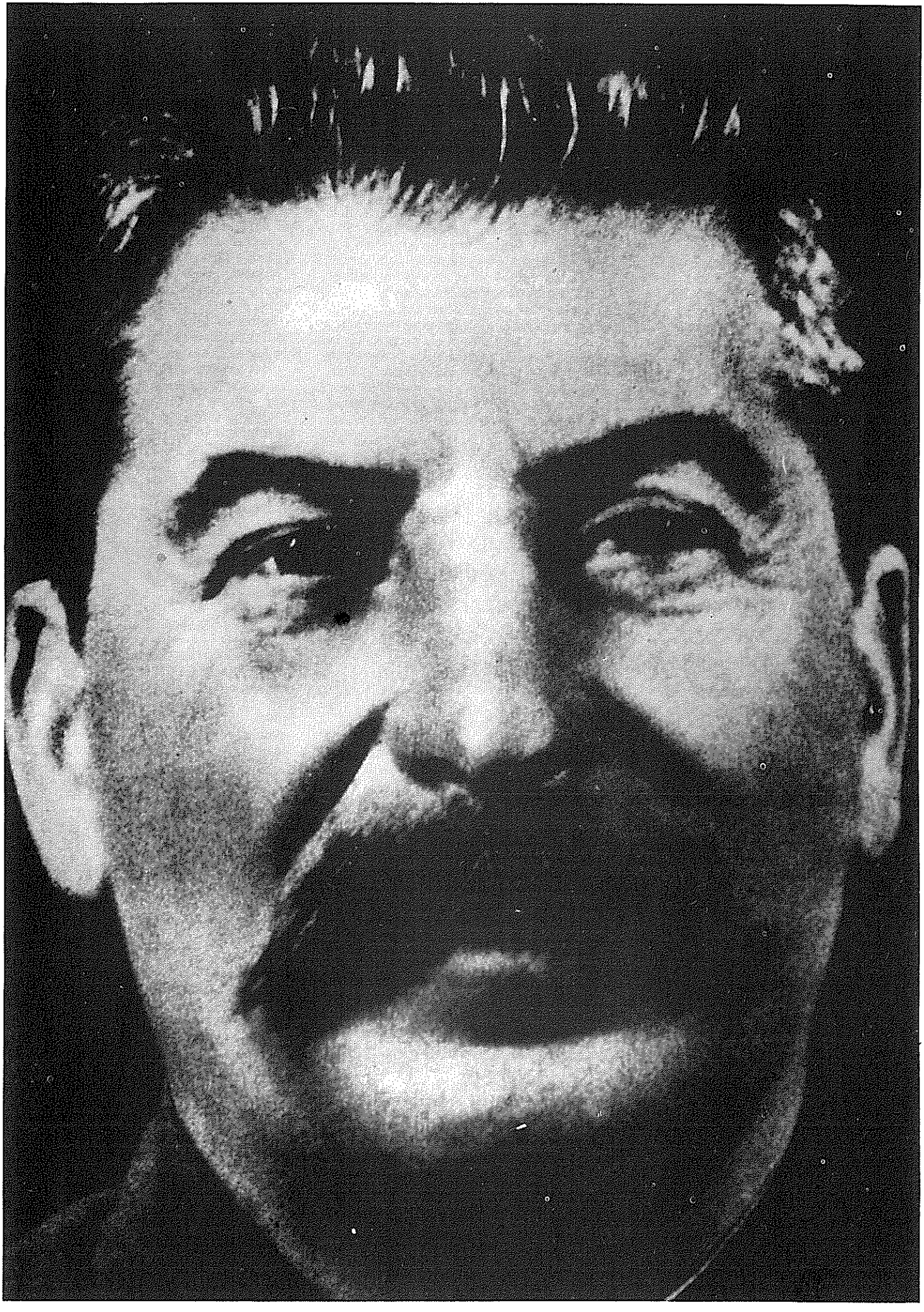
"The ideas of the second revolution were not his. He neither forsaw it nor prepared for it. yet he, and in a sense, he alone, accomplished it."

It is likewise true that the cost was "the complete loss, by a whole generation, of spiritual and political freedom", but the "rewards of that revolution were astounding" — namely, the rapid industrialisation, the modernisation of agriculture, the reduction of illiteracy, the bringing of Asiatic Russia nearer to Europe even while European Russia was detached from Europe. Yet the Stalinist revolution differs from the Bolshevik revolution, and the most important difference

"..lies in the method of the revolution. Broadly speaking, the old Bolshevism staked its hope on the revolutionary momentum of the international labour movement. It believed that the Socialist order would result from the original experience and struggle of the working classes abroad, that it would be the most authentic act of their social and political self-determination. The old Bolshevism, in other words, believed in ***revolution from below*** *such as the upheaval of 1917 had been. The revolution which Stalin now carried into eastern and central Europe was primarily a* ***revolution from above.*** *It was decreed, inspired, and managed by the great power predominant in that area".*

The movement connected with his name, "at once progressive and retrograde," shows Stalin to be of the 'breed of the great revolutionary despots, to which Cromwell, Robespierre, and Napoleon belonged" (elsewhere Deutscher adds: Bismarck and Czar Alexander).

"Like Cromwell as Lord Protector or



Napoleon as Emperor, Stalin now remained the guardian and trustee of the revolution. He consolidated its national gains and extended them. He "built socialism"; and even his opponents, while denouncing his autocracy, admitted that most of his economic reforms were indeed essential for socialism".

But the fact that Stalin can take his place by the side of Napoleon and Bismarck is not accidental. Here Deutscher finally rounds out his analysis so that the conclusions are clearly implicit in it. Stalin's role

"...results from one peculiar parallelism between the bourgeois and the Socialist revolution in Europe, a parallelism that has come to light only since the Second World War. Europe, in the nineteenth century, saw how the feudal order, outside France, crumbled and was replaced by the bourgeois one. But east of the Rhine feudalism was not overthrown by a series of upheavals on the pattern of the French revolution, by explosions of popular despair and anger, by revolutions from below, for the spread of which some of the Jacobins had hoped in 1794. Instead, European feudalism was either destroyed or undermined by a series of revolutions from above. Napoleon, the tamer of Jacobinism at home, carried the revolution into foreign lands, to Italy, to the Rhineland, and to Poland, where he abolished serfdom, completely or in part, and where his Code destroyed many of the feudal privileges. Malgré lui-meme, he executed parts of the political testament of Jacobinism....The feudal order had been too moribund to survive; but outside France the popular forces arrayed against it were too weak to overthrow it "from below"; and so it was swept away "from above". It is mainly in Napoleon's impact upon the lands neighbouring France that the analogy is found for the impact of Stalinism upon eastern and central Europe. The chief elements of both historic situations are similar: the social order of eastern Europe was as little capable of survival as was the feudal order in the Rhineland in Napoleon's days; the revolutionary forces arrayed against the anachronism were too weak to remove it; then conquest and revolution merged in a movement, at once progressive and retrograde, which at last transformed the structure of society."

Now the reader has all he needs to know about Deutscher's analysis of Stalinism. It is not identical with Trotsky's analysis, but only because it is an extreme and one-sided presentation of it. Yet the similarity between the two leaps to the eye. To the extent that Trotsky incorporated it into his own analysis, he drove himself, toward the end of this work, into a theoretical and political blind alley, in which his sightless followers have since milled around with such calamitous consequences. Deutscher himself does not follow the practice that his theory entails, for reasons that are not clear but which cannot possibly be objective. His book ends with a tentative sort of advocacy of what Trotsky called the "supplementary revolution" against Stalinism. But this half-hopeful note does not even modify the fact that Deutscher has worked out **the theoretical basis for a socialist capitulation to Stalinism.** To the extent that the working-class and socialist movement shares this theory, any progressive struggle against Stalinism is doomed and with it the struggle for socialism itself. The socialist movement can rise again to a full consciousness of its problem and how to resolve it **only** — we stress it again: **only** — it if understands the root-falsity of the theory to which Deutscher has given such utterly tragic and disorienting expression.

The crux of Deutscher's disaster lies in his "peculiar parallelism" between bourgeois and socialist revolutions. Historical analogies are by their very nature seductive. There is especially good reason for comparing the socialist revolution with the great bourgeois revolutions of the past two centuries. Indeed, unless they are compared, and their similarities established, the socialist revolution becomes incomprehensible or, at best, is cast back to the utopias of pre-scientific socialism. But this is no less important: unless they are contrasted, and the fundamental differences between them clarified, the socialist revolution becomes impossible! Deutscher's treatment of the two revolutions suffers from two defects, but those two suffice: he does not deal with their differences at all, and he presents them as similar precisely in those respects where they are and must be different, decisively different, so different that they cannot be compared but only contrasted to one another.

"Deutscher has worked out the theoretical basis for a socialist capitulation to Stalinism".

The aim of every bourgeois revolution was simple: to establish the economic supremacy of the market, of the capitalist mode of production. These already existed to one degree or another under feudalism. But feudalism impeded their full unfoldment, it "fettered" them. Its outlived laws, customs, traditions, regulations, estate-ish and geographical divisions, privileges — all blocked off the "primitive accumulation of capital" required for the full expansion of the new mode of production; all were constricting clamps upon the winding and unwinding of that mainspring which is the stimulator and regulator of capitalist production, namely, the free market. The removal of these fetters, blocks and clamps was all that was **essentially** required for the triumph of the bourgeois revolution, and not necessarily the complete destruction of feudalism in all its forms or even of the feudal lords themselves. Indeed, in many (if not most) countries where the fetters of feudalism were finally broken, the new mode of production could and did co-exist, either at home or within their world empires or both, with the old feudalists and their economic forms, intact or more or less capitalistically transformed.

But because social progress required the victory of the bourgeois revolution, it did not follow that the bourgeoisie was everywhere the organiser and leader of the revolution. In our Marxist literature, the bourgeoisie of the period in which feudalism was generally replaced by capitalism is often referred to as having been "a revolutionary class" or "the revolutionary class". This is true, but only in a very specific, distinctly limited sense. The capitalist mode of production, even in its incipiency under feudalism, to say nothing of its post-feudal days, was inherently of a kind that constantly required expansion, and was therefore an intolerant rebel against the feudal fetters upon it. The bourgeoisie was revolutionary primarily and basically only in the sense that it was at once the agent, the organiser and the beneficiary of capital; in the sense that it was the bearer of the new mode of production which was irreconcilable with the supremacy of feudal backwardness and stagnancy. But never — more accurately, perhaps, only in the rarest of cases — was the bourgeoisie revolutionary in the sense of organising and leading the political onslaught on feudal or aristocratic society. That would have required either a radical break with the feudalists for which it was not prepared, or the unleashing of "plebian mobs and passions" which it feared — or both.

The Great French Revolution was great — the greatest of all the bourgeois revolutions, the classic among bourgeois revolutions — precisely because it was not organised and led by the French bourgeoisie! It was the work of the Jacobins, of the lowly artisans and peasants and tradesfolk, the plebian masses. The Cromwellian revolution was far more the work of the small independent landlord, the artisan, the urban tradesman than the work of the then English bourgeoisie — in fact, Cromwell's Puritans had to fight bitterly against the Presbyterian bourgeoisie. Napoleon, who extended the bourgeois revolution to so many lands of feudal Europe, based himself not so much upon the bourgeoisie of France as upon the new class of allotment farmers. In Germany, it was not the bourgeoisie that unified the nation and levelled the feudal barriers to the expansion of capitalism, but the iron representative of the Prussian Junkers, Bismarck.

He carried out the bourgeois revolution in the interests of the feudal Junkers, and made his united Germany a powerful capitalist country, but without the bourgeoisie and against it. Much the same process developed in distant Japan. As for that late-comer, czarist Russia, the bourgeoisie remained a prop of the semi-feudal autocracy to the last, and the bourgeois revolution was carried out in passing by the proletariat and only as an episode in the socialist revolution.

Yet in all the countries (except of course in Russia) where the bourgeois revolution was carried out — always without the bourgeoisie, often against the bourgeoisie — it did not fail to achieve its main and primary aim: to assure the social rule of the bourgeoisie, to establish the economic supremacy of its mode of production. This was all that was needed to satisfy the fundamental requirement of bourgeois class domination.

It cannot be underlined too heavily: Once the fetters of feudalism were removed from the capitalist mode of production, the basic victory and the expansion of the bourgeoisie and its social system were absolutely guaranteed. Once the work of destruction was accomplished, the work of constructing bourgeois society could proceed automatically by the spontaneous expansion of capital as regulated automatically by the market. To the bourgeoisie, therefore, it could not make a **fundamental** difference whether the work of destruction was begun or carried out by the plebian Jacobin terror against the aristocracy, as in France, or by the aristocracy itself in promotion of its own interests, as in Germany.

Neither the revolutionary French plebians nor the Napoleonic empire builders could replace feudalism with a special economic system of their own, or create any social system other than bourgeois society. In Germany, no matter how exclusively Bismarck was preoccupied with maintaining the power of the Prussian king and the Junkers, with modernising the nation so that it could defeat its foreign enemies, the only way the nation could be united and modernised was by stimulating, protecting and expanding the capitalist order. A prerequisite for this was of course the removal of all (or most) feudal and particularist obstacles in its path.

If Bonapartism and Bismarckism prevented the bourgeoisie from exercising the direct political influence that, ideally, it prefers, this was more than compensated by the fact that they suppressed or curbed an infinitely greater threat to the rule of the bourgeoisie — the plebian and later the proletarian masses. And if the bourgeoisie gives up or allows the curbing or even destruction of its own representative parliamentary institutions, under a Bonapartist or Bismarckian regime, or under its most decadent manifestation, fascism, it only admits, to quote the famous passage from Marx, "that in order to preserve its social power unhurt, its political power must be broken; that the private bourgeois can continue to exploit the other classes and rejoice in 'property', 'family', 'religion' and 'order' only under the condition that his own class be condemned to the same political nullity of the other classes". But its social power is preserved "unhurt" just the same, and the evidence of that is the prosperity that the bourgeoisie enjoyed under Napoleon, Bismarck and Hitler.

When, therefore, Deutscher stresses the fact that east of the Rhineland the "popular forces arrayed against it (moribund feudalism) were too weak to overthrow it 'from below'; and so it was swept away 'from above'," he is as wide of the mark as he can possibly be **if this fact is adduced to show the similarity between "the chief elements of both historical situations"**, namely, the spread of Bonapartism and of Stalinism.

The absurdity of the comparison is clear if we bear in mind the equally incontestable fact that whether feudalism was swept away "from above" or "from below", the difference in the result was, at the very most, secondary. In both cases the victory of capitalist society was secured and its growth guaranteed. Once the feudal fetters on capitalism were broken — whether by Cromwell's Ironsides or Napoleon's Grand Army, by Robespierre's Jacobins or Bismarck's Junkers — capitalism **and only capitalism** could be solidly established.

> "The socialist revolution does not lend itself to the kind of comparison with the bourgeois revolution that Deutscher makes".

According to Deutscher, feudalism could be swept away and the rule of capitalism installed by a revolution carried out, from above or below, by the plebian masses, the petty bourgeois masses, the bourgeoisie itself, even by feudal lords themselves (and even by the modern imperialist big bourgeoisie, as we know from their work against feudalism in some of the colonies they penetrated). For the comparison to be less than ludicrous, it would have to be demonstrated that today "moribund capitalism" can also be swept away and the rule of socialism also installed by a revolution carried out by the petty bourgeoisie, the bourgeoisie, and any other class, as well as by the proletariat or as an adequate substitute for it. It would also have to be demonstrated that, just as it made no essential difference to the bourgeoisie how its revolution was effected, so today it makes no decisive difference to the proletariat whether it makes its own socialist revolution or the revolution is made by a GPU which enslaves and terrorises it. To demonstrate that would be difficult.

The socialist revolution does not even lend itself to the kind of comparison with the bourgeois revolution that Deutscher makes.

The emancipation of the working class, said Marx, is the task of the working class itself. To which we add explicitly what is there implicitly: "of the conscious working class". Is this mere rhetoric, or a phrase for ceremonial occasions? It has been put to such uses. But it remains the basic scientific concept of the socialist revolution, entirely free from sentimentality and spurious idealism.

The revolution which destroys the fetters of feudalism, we wrote above, assures, by that mere act, the automatic operation and expansion of the new system of capitalist production. (We stress the word "new" to distinguish capitalism in the period of its rise and bloom from capitalism in its decline and decay, when the automatic regulators of production break down more and more frequently and disastrously. But that period is another matter.) Conscious direction of the capitalist economy plays its part, as does the nature of the state power; but at most these are secondary or, better yet, auxiliary to what Marx calls the "self-expansion of capital".

It is **altogether** different with the socialist revolution. In this case we cannot say that regardless of what class or social group destroys the fetters of capitalism, the act itself assures the automatic operation and expression of socialist production. Socialist production and distribution will take place automatically, so to speak (each will give what he can and take what he needs), only decades (how many we do not know or need to know) after the revolution itself has taken place, only after civilised socialist thinking and behaviour have become the normal habit of all the members of the community.

But immediately after the socialist revolution takes place, production and distribution must be organised and regulated. The bourgeoisie can no longer organise production, since it has just been or is about to be expropriated, and thereby deprived of the ownership and control of the means of production. The market can no longer regulate production automatically, for it has been or is being abolished along with the other conditions of capitalist production; in any case, it disappears to exactly the extent that socialist production advances.

Unlike capitalist production, socialist production (that is, production for use) demands *conscious* organisation of the economy so that it will function harmoniously. It is this consideration and this alone that requires of the new revolutionary regime the nationalisation, sooner or later, of all the principal means of pro-

duction and exchange. And it is this centralisation of the means of production that makes possible, to an ever-increasing degree, the harmonious planning of production and distribution.

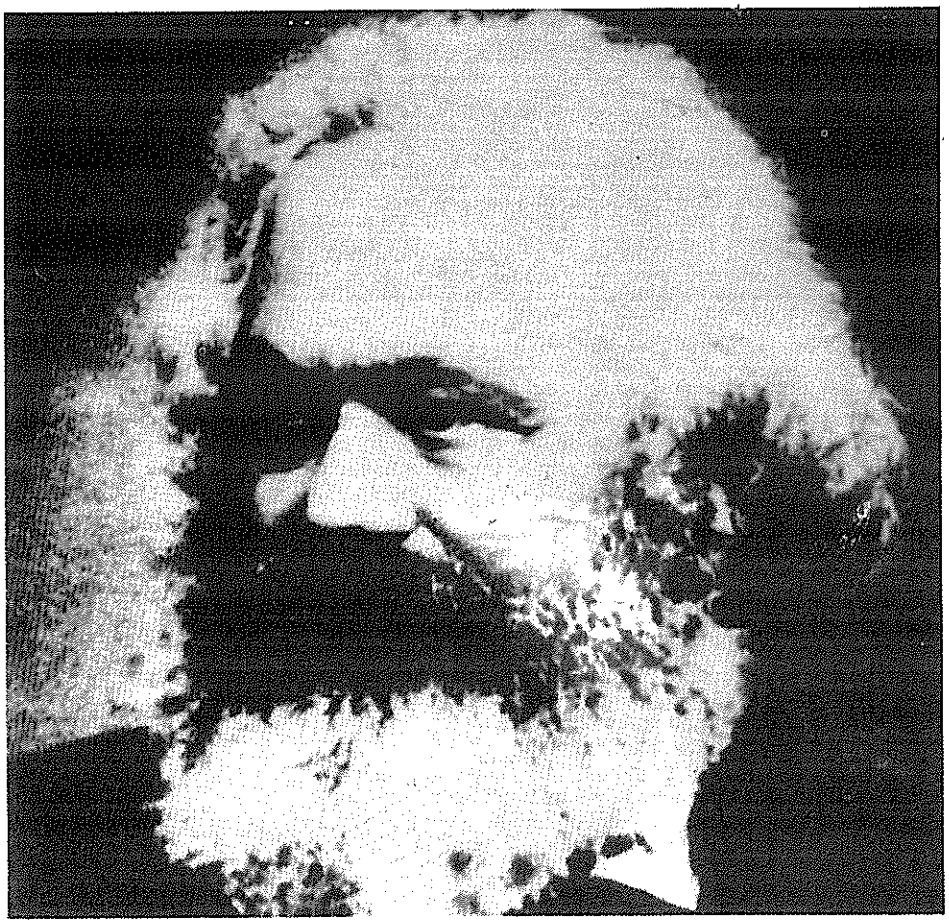
Planning, in turn, implies the ability to determine what is produced, how much of each product is produced, and how it is distributed to the members of the community (limited only by the level of the available productive forces) — to determine these things consciously, in contrast to capitalism which produces according to the dictates of the blindly-operating market and distributes according to glaring class inequalities.

Now, what assurance is there that the masses, who have made the revolution in order to establish a socialist economy, will be the main beneficiaries of the planned decisions that are taken and executed? (We say, cautiously, "main" and not sole beneficiaries, for obviously, in the first stage of the new society the economy will necessarily be encumbered by "parasitic" specialists, military households and bureaucrats.) Only one assurance: that the decisions on what and how much is produced and how it is distributed are taken by the masses themselves, concretely, through their freely and easily elected — and just as freely and easily recallable — representatives. Otherwise, there is no assurance whatever that those who make the decisions on how the economy shall be organised will make them in conformity with the economic principles of socialism, or principles that are socialist in type, socialist in direction.

In other words, the economic structure that replaces capitalism can be socialist (socialistic) **only** if the new revolutionary regime (the state) is in the hands of the workers, only if the working class takes and retains political power. For, once capitalist ownership is destroyed, all economic decisions are necessarily political decisions — that is, decisions made by the state which now has **all** the economy and all the economic power in its hands. And if the working class then does not have political power, it has no power at all.

Here we come to another basic difference between the two social systems, and not their similarity, as Deutscher says. It relates to the question of **how** social power is exercised in each case.

The bourgeoisie's power over society rests fundamentally upon its ownership of property (the means of production and exchange). That ownership determines, in Marx's excellent phrase, its mastery over the conditions of production, and therefore over society as a whole. Any state, any political power, which preserves capitalist power, is a bourgeois state, is indeed the "guardian and trustee" of the social power of the bourgeoisie. This holds for the state of Napoleon, Bismarck, Roosevelt, Ramsey Macdonald or Hitler. Deutscher understands that well enough, for he writes that "when the Nazi facade was blown away, the structure that revealed itself to the eyes of the world was the same as it had been before Hitler, with



its big industrialists, its Krupps and Thyssens, its Junkers, its middle classes, its **Grossbauers,** its farm labourers and its industrial workers". The social power of the bourgeoisie was and remains its property ownership, its economic power.

It is exactly the other way around with the proletariat! It is not a property-owning class and it cannot be — not under capitalism, not under the revolutionary regime that separates capitalism from socialism, and certainly not under socialism itself, which knows neither property nor proletariat. The revolution which expropriates the bourgeoisie does not turn its property over to the workers (this worker or group of workers now owns a steel mill; that one a railroad; the other a bank, etc.). That would indeed be a revolution-for-nothing, for it would merely create a new type of capitalist, property-owning class. No, the revolution nationalises, immediately or gradually, all social property, turns it over to the new regime, the revolutionary state power. That is what happened in Russia in 1917, when the revolution was carried out "from below" (the "old Bolshevik" method). Every politically-educated person knows that it was a socialist revolution, that it raised the proletariat to the position of ruling class, that it abolished capitalist property and established socialist (socialistic) proerty in its place.

In that case, wherein lies the **fundamental** difference between that revolution and those carried out "from above" by Stalin throughout the Balkans and the Baltic? The bourgeoisie was expropriated, politically as well as economically, its property was nationalised and turned over to the new state power.

According to Deutscher, there is no basic difference, no class difference, so to say. Just as Napoleon carried the bourgeois revolution to Poland, so Stalin carried the socialist revolution all the way to Germany. The "orthodox" (Oof!) Trotskyists are reluctantly but irresistibly drawing closer to the same monstrous conclusion. Their embarrassment over Deutscher is due entirely to the fact that he has anticipated them.

Yet there is a difference and it is fundamental. The *Communist Manifesto* stresses (and how much more emphatically should we stress it in our time?) "that the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy". It is not just some new political power in general that will socialistically expropriate the bourgeoisie, but the new proletarian power. As if in anticipation of present controversies, Marx underscores the point, at the beginning and at the end: "The proletariat will use **its political supremacy,** to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the state" — what state? to make sure he is understood, Marx adds: "i.e. **of the proletariat organised as the ruling class**". That test of this "formula" for the socialist revolution (to say nothing of a dozen other tests) was passed

precisely by the Bolshevik revolution.

Nothing of the sort happens in the case of the Stalinist "socialist revolution", the revolution "from above". The proletariat is never allowed to come within miles of "political supremacy". What the new state "wrests" first of all, and not very gradually, either, are all the political and economic rights **of the proletariat,** reducing it to economic and political slavery. The difference between the revolution "from below" and the revolution "from above" is not at all a mere matter of difference in "method" but one of social, class nature. It might be compared to the difference between cropping a dog "from the front" and "from behind". By one "method", the tail is cut off, and the dog, according to some fanciers, is healthier and handsomer; but if the other "method" were employed and his head were cut off, we would not have a "bureaucratically-degenerated dog" but a dead one. Like all comparisons, this one too has its limitations: Stalinism does not cut off the head of the socialist revolution only because it does not allow that revolution to grow a head.

Yet Stalin, while depriving the proletariat of all political power, did maintain state property in Russia, did extend it vastly, and did convert capitalist property into state property in Poland, Rumania, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere. Because the Bolshevik revolution established state property, and Napoleon's extension of bourgeois property seems to lend itself to analogy, Stalin becomes, to Deutscher, the representative of those rulers who, "on the whole, use their power to consolidate most of the economic and social conquests of the revolution", and even to extend these revolutionary conquests at home and abroad. The formula, alas, is originally that of Trotsky, who wrote that the Russian workers "see in it (the Stalinist bureaucracy) the watchman for the time being of a certain part of their own conquests". If that is true, so much the worse for the Russian workers. In any case it does not reduce the magnitude of the error.

By what it says and implies, this formula tells us that the state is socialistic (a proletarian state) because the economy is nationalised, statified. The nature of the state is determined by the property form. That is indubitably true in all societies where private property exists. But it is radically false when applied to a society where the state owns the property. The exact opposite is then true, that is, the nature of the economy is determined by the nature of the state! That it is necessary to **argue** this ABC of Marxism and of evident social reality today, is one of the indications of the sorry state of the radical movement.

The theory that the economy is socialistic simply because the state owns it was originated by Stalinism. It was needed by Stalinism to help achieve its counter-revolution. It constitutes to this day the quintessential theoretical basis for its worldwide mystification. As early as 1925, almost coincidental, significantly enough, with the launching of the theory of "socialism in one country", the Stalinists began to put forth, cautiously but unmistakably, the theory that Deutscher has so uncritically taken for granted. As cautiously as the one but not so uncritically as the other, the then Leningrad Opposition (Zinoviev and Kamenev) took issue with the theory and warned against it. Kamenev's speech on the question of the nature of the economy toward the end of 1925, is therefore of prime interest:

*"Do we perhaps doubt that our factories are enterprises of a "consistently-socialist type"? No! But we ask: Why did Lenin say that our enterprises are "enterprises of a consistently-socialist type"? Why didn't he say directly that they are **genuinely** socialist enterprises?*

*What does this mean: enterprises of a consistently-socialist type? It means that these enterprises are **essentially** socialistic enterprises. They are socialist in what are called **property-relations.** The factories belong to the proletarian state, that is, to the organised working class...*

The correct conception of our state industry consists in this, that our state enterprises are really enterprises of a consistently socialist type, inasmuch as they represent the property of the workers' state, but that they are far from being complete socialist enterprises because the mutual relations of the people engaged in them, the organisation of labour, the form of the labour wage, the work for the market, represent no elements of an unfolded socialist economy".

At this point, it is worth noting, the congress minutes report an interruption from one of the hostile Stalinist delegates: **"You have discovered America!"** In those early days, the Stalinists did not dare challenge, directly and openly, the simple ABC ideas Kamenev was expounding. His ideas are clear. The property, the economy, can be considered socialist-in-type (not even socialist, but as yet only socialist-**in-type**) only because "they represent the property of the workers' state", only because "the factories belong to the proletarian state, that is, to the organised working class". The character of the economy is determined by the character of the political power, the state!

The Stalinists needed the very opposite theory in order to cover up and justify their destruction of the political power of the working class and **therewith** the workers' state. Where Kamenev, **and all other Marxists,** declared that the property is socialist only because it is owned by a workers' state, "that is, the organised working class" in power — the Stalinists declared the state is socialist simply because it owns the property. This theory is now canonised as constitutional law in all Stalinists lands and all arguments against it are promptly and thoroughly refuted by the GPU.

The theory is a Stalinist invention from start to finish. The finest-toothed comb drawn through all the writings of every Bolshevik leader — Lenin, Trotsky, Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev — will not find so much as a phrase to sustain it. Until Stalin turned the Marxian view upside-down, every one of the Marxists, without exception, repreated literally thousands of times that because the state is in the hands of the proletariat, **therefore** the economy is proletarian (socialist-in-type). They never argued that because the economy is in the hands of the state, **therefore** the state is proletarian — never!

How could they? The proletariat, not similar to the bourgeoisie but in contrast to it, establishes, asserts and maintains its social power only when it gets and holds political power. As the bourgeoisie is nothing without its economic power, its ownership of property, so the proletariat is nothing without its political power. Only political power can give it economic power, the power to determine the "conditions of production".

Deutscher's theory, or rather his adoption and adaptation of Stalin's, leads him to downright apologetics for the new tyranny — all very objectively put, to be sure, for there seems no doubt about his personal antipathy toward the abominations of the regime.

There is, first of all, the law of revolutions which Deutscher sets forth, as we have quoted it above. It is superficial; it is false and misleading. Certainly all the old revolutions and their leaders made promises to the masses that they did not fulfill. But that is a "law" of all **bourgeois** revolutions and is absolutely characteristic of them. Bourgeois revolutions are made under the sign of **ideologies,** using that term strictly in the sense in which the early Marx used it, namely as a synonym for *false consciousness* or as we would say after Freud, for **rationalisation.** They **think** and say they are fighting for Freedom. "They" includes, as Marx wrote, not only men like Danton, Robespierre, St.Just and Napoleon, "the heroes as well as the parties", but even "the masses of the old French Revolution". But no matter what they think or what they say or what they do, the revolution does not and **cannot** go beyond the "task of their time: the emancipation and the establishment of modern bourgeois society". At bottom, all that Freedom can mean in the bourgeois revolution is...freedom of trade.

That's why the bourgeois revolutions could not keep their promises to the masses, why they often had to establish the most dictatorial governments over and against the masses in the post-revolutionary period. But since Deutscher has tried the impossible task of formulating a law of all revolutions, when he might have known that every different social revolution develops according to different laws, the most important fact has escaped his attention: **the bourgeois revolutions did fulfill their promises to the bourgeoisie.** The plebian masses were crushed after such revolutions, but that was only in the nature of the revolution: while it may have been made **by** them, it was not and could not have been made **for** them. It was made for the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie prospered under it. Which is why it deserves the not-at-all

dishonourable name, bourgeois revolution!

Deutscher, however, gives Stalin's overturns the distinctly honourable name, **socialist revolution,** and adds with a refined shrug, if the masses suffered all sorts of horrors, cruelties and oppressions after this revolution, if the promises made to them were not kept, why, "this has been common to all great revolutions so far".

Preposterous conclusion: while the bourgeois revolution does keep its promises to the bourgeoisie for whom it is made, the socialist revolution does not keep its promises to the masses for whom it is made.

Correct conclusion: the Stalinist revolution is not a socialist revolution in any sense and therefore is not intended to make good its promises to the masses; it is a revolution of the totalitarian bureaucracy and it most decidely does keep its promises to this bureaucracy!

There is, in the second place, Deutscher's weird justification of the "follies and cruelties" of Stalin's "second revolution", the industrialisation of Russia. We have listened with sheer amazement, in recent times, to the same justification on the lips of British socialists who are not abashed at abusing the name of Trotsky by assuming it. Now we see it in print under Deutscher's signature. Stalin's "follies and cruelties" we read, "inevitably recall those of England's industrial revolution, as Karl Marx described them in *Das Kapital*". He continues:

"The analogies are as numerous as they are striking. In the closing chapters of the first volume of his work, Marx depicts the "primitive accumulation" of capital (or the "previous accumulation", as Adam Smith called it), the first violent processes by which one social class accumulated in its hands the means of production, while other classes were being deprived of their land and means of livelihood and reduced to the status of wage-earners. The process which, in the Thirties, took place in Russia might be called the "primitive accumulation" of socialism in one country...

In spite of its "blood and dirt", the English industrial revolution — Marx did not dispute this — marked a tremendous progress in the history of mankind. It opened a new and not unhopeful epoch of civilisation. Stalin's industrial revolution can claim the same merit".

The comparison is so microscopically close to being an outrage as to be indistinguishable from one, and it shows how Deutscher has literally lost his bearings.

The period of the old Industrial Revolution was a brutal one, but a harsh social task faced society and it had to be performed. By whom? The feudal aristocracy could not perform it; the foetus of a proletariat was not yet able to perform it. There was left only the young, lusty, callous bourgeoisie. It proceeded to concentrate property and capital in its hands in sufficient quantity to develop the forces of production of a vast scale and at a breath-taking pace.

Who suffered the hideous cruelties and horrors of this accumulation? The little people — small peasants, the yeamanry, tradesfolk, the artisans and their social kith and kin. Who were the beneficiaries of these horrors? The bourgeoisie. Moral indignation apart, the process unfolded as it had to unfold, given the times, given the class relationships. It was a question of the primitive **capitalist** accumulation.

Accumulation is a need of all societies, the socialist included. Indeed, fundamentally the problem of a socialist accumulation was the economic rock on which the ship of state of the Russian Revolution foundered (a subject that requires the special study that it merits). The problem was not unknown to the leaders of the revolution. They debated it often and warmly. In the early Twenties, Preobrazhensky devoted a special work to the subject, which soon evoked a violent controversy. He pointed out that in the past, every social order achieved its particular accumulation at the expense of ("by exploiting") earlier and inferior economic forms. Therefore, continued Preobrazhensky:

> "The Stalinist revolution is not a socialist revolution... it is the revolution of a totalitarian bureaucracy".

*"The more economically backward, the more petty-bourgeois, the more agricultural is the country that is passing over to a socialist organisation of production, the slighter the heritage that the proletariat receives for the fund of its socialist accumulation at the time of the social revolution — the more the socialist accumulation will have to base itself upon the exploitation of the presocialist economic forms and the lighter will be the specific gravity of the accumulation derived from its own basis of production, that is, the less will this accumulation be based upon the surplus product of the worker in socialist industry". **(The basic law of Socialist Accumulation, in the Herald of the Communist Academy, 1924.)***

Although the Trotskyist Opposition, of which Preobrazhensky was a prominent leader, did not endorse his views, the Stalinists let loose a hue and cry against Preobrazhensky that echoed for years. In his restrained way, Stalin denounced these views because they would "undermine the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry" and shatter the dicatatorship of the proletariat — no less — for Preobrazhensky's views so easily lent themselves to the interpretation that the peasantry as a whole had to be exploited to build up the fund for socialist accumulation.

But what if someone had merely hinted, in the most delicate way, that the **socialist** accumulation fund would have to be built up not only by exploiting the peasantry, which is not, properly speaking, a socialist class, but also by exploiting the proletariat, which is **the** socialist class; and that the **socialist** accumulation would have to proceed along the same barbarous lines as the primitive capitalist accumulation in England? If he were not hooted out of sight as a crude defamer of socialism, it would only be because everybody else would be stricken with dumbfounded silence.

That Stalin's "second revolution" did start a process "by which one social class accumulated in its hands the means of production", and along the lines of the primitive capitalist accumulation, is absolutely true. But his accumulation, like the English, was directed against and paid for by the popular masses. It had nothing in common with socialism or socialist accumulation. It was not the "second revolution"; it was the counter-revolution.

"Marx did not dispute this", Deutscher reminds us. He did not dispute that the industrial revolution "marked tremendous progress in the history of mankind", but only for the reason given above: there was no other class but the bourgeoisie to carry it out and it carried it out in the class way characteristic of it. To have looked for the proletariat to carry out the old industrial revolution was **utopian,** because whatever proletariat existed then in England or Europe was utterly incapable of performing the mission which therefore fell to the bourgeoisie.

It only remains to ask: is it likewise utopian to expect the present proletariat to carry out the modern revolution for the socialist reconstruction of society? Or, since capitalism today is moribund and cannot be reinvigorated by man or god, must the work of dispatching it be left to a social force that puts in its place the most obscene mockery of socialism and social progress ever devised by man?

Deutscher gives no direct answer, to be sure. But implicit in his theory, in his whole analysis, is an answer in the affirmative, even if it is accompanied by shuddering resignation.

He writes movingly about those tragic figures, the great captains of the revolution, who were paraded through the prisoner's dock of the Moscow Trials by a new ruling class installed in the "second revolution". He explains — rightly, on the whole, we think — what brought these once indomitable revolutionists from recantation to capitulation to recantation until they finally allowed themselves to be used for the nightmarish indignities of the Trials. Deutscher's appraisal of the

revolutionary capitulators is noteworthy: *"Throughout they had been oppressed by the insoluble conflict between their horror of Stalin's methods of government and their basic solidarity with the social regime which had become identified with Stalin's rule".*

Insoluble conflict? Right. But especially right if we understand that all of them had abandoned any belief in the possibility of a proletarian revolutionary movement independent of Stalinism. That only removed the last barrier to an already indicated capitulation. They believed that the Stalinist regime represented at bottom a socialist or proletarian state, and horror over its methods could not eliminate the feeling that it was the regime of their class and by that sign also their own. So long as they thought, as Trotsky also did for a long time, that Stalinism represented a return to capitalism, they fought it openly and vigorously. They were wrong in that analysis and Stalin was not long in proving them wrong. When it became perfectly clear that Stalinism mercilessly crushed capitalism wherever he had the power to do so, that he preserved and extended the realm of statified property, they simply equated his anti-capitalism with the defence of socialism. Their "basic solidarity with the social regime which had become identified with Stalin's rule" decided, if it did not guarantee, their capitulation to Stalinism.

And really, from the standpoint of Deutscher's analysis, why not? The German bourgeoisie may not have been enthusiastic over all the methods of Bismarck, of Wilhelm II, and later of Hitler. But they were "in basic solidarity with the social regime which had become identified", successively, with those three names. They never fought these regimes; they never rebelled against them, except, perhaps, for an inconsequential handful of bourgeois and military plotters against Hitler. In their way, they were certainly right: "It is our regime, the regime of our class".

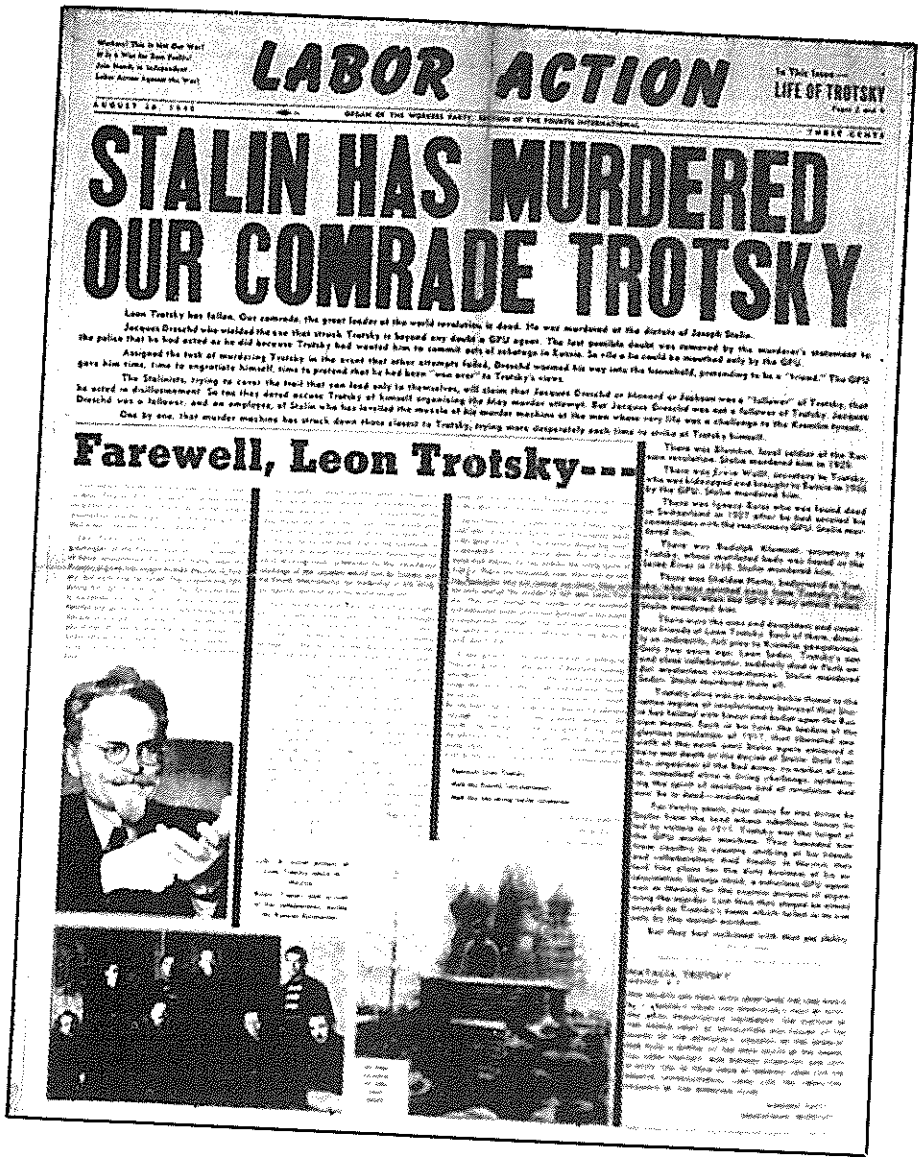
"In his exile", writes Deutscher, after the words we quoted above, "Trotsky, too, wrestled with the dilemma, without bending his knees". True. We do not believe that Trotsky would ever have capitulated to Stalinism, and that not only because of his unsurpassable personal qualities as a revolutionist. To the extent that he shared the fatal theory that Stalinist Russia is a workers' state and that the Stalinist bureaucracy is still a sort of watchman over some of the conquests of the revolution, the same must be said of him as that said of Deutscher: the course of most of his followers since his death bears witness to this.

But everything within limits. In the first place, Trotsky introduced a radically modifying "amendment" to this theory, in a small but increasingly invaluable section of his ten-years-ago polemic against us which has proved so much more durable than those remaining sections which should be mercifully consigned to the archives. The amendment did neither less nor more than allow that events might prove that the Stalinist "workers' state" was only a new class system of totalitarian collectivist exploitation, the state of neo-barbarism. In the second place, he replied unhesitatingly and confidently in the affirmative to the key question he posed there: "Will objective historical necessity in the long run cut a path for itself in the consciousness of the vanguard of the working class?"

These views, despite his internally-contradictory theory about Stalinist Russia, enabled Trotsky to remain the active and dreaded mortal enemy of Stalinism. Because he could write that the one and only decisive standpoint for the revolutionist was the enhancement of "the consciousness and organisation of the world proletariat, the raising of their capacity for defending former conquests and accomplishing new ones", he remained the greatest contemporary champion of the proletarian socialist revolution, that "revolution from below" which alone is socialist. It is these views that mark the chasm between their upholders, on the one side, and those who, out of despair or panic or premature fatigue, have retired from the struggle for socialism or gone over to any enemy camp.

Let them go. But those still resolved to carry on the fight must rid themselves and all others of the last trace of the view that, in some way, in some degree, the Stalinist neo-barbarism represents a socialist society. The view is disseminated, for different reasons but with similar results, by both the bourgeois and the Stalinist enemies of socialism. It has become the curse of our time. Of that, Deutscher's book is only another and saddening proof. Its value in the fight against Stalinism can only be to startle some people into thinking and rethinking the problem of Stalinism and seeing it for what it is. For it is a problem about which we can say with Jean Paul: **"Wenn Ihr Eure Augen nicht braucht, um zu sehen, so werdet Ihr sie brauchen, um zu weinen"** — If you do not use your eyes to see with, you will need them to weep with.

December, 1949



LABOR ACTION

In This Issue — LIFE OF TROTSKY

STALIN HAS MURDERED OUR COMRADE TROTSKY

Farewell, Leon Trotsky---

US Shachtmanite paper tells of Trotsky's murder, August 1940

Squeezing the workers

Zbigniew Kowalewski, a former leader of the left wing in Solidarnosc now living in exile, argues that the Eastern Bloc states have a systematic tendency to super-exploitation of the workers — though he still considers them 'post-capitalist'.

The bureaucracy has all the reactionary traits of the old possessing classes — parasitism, squandering of the social surplus product, oppression of the direct producers and even their exploitation — without having their progressive traits: a historic function for the introduction and defence of relations of production which are superior from the point of view of the development of the productive force of social labour. It manages only to exploit for its own profit the relations of production established by the overthrow of capitalism...

Between the bureaucracy and the working class, there are no relations of production, although there are relations of exploitation. Relations of exploitation distinct from the relations of production we can call 'inorganic'. What constitutes this inorganic exploitation?

Given the postcapitalist, but hardly transitional, nature of 'actually existing socialism', bourgeois norms of remuneration of labour necessarily remain as a powerful factor for the development of the productivity of social labour. These are bourgeois norms, **"insofar as the distribution of life's goods is carried out with a capitalist measure of value and all the consequences ensuing therefrom"**[1].

The social inequality which these norms sanction not only engenders bureaucracy, but is also one of the most important factors in the tendency to bureaucratic degeneration of the postcapitalist state. Trotsky said in relation to the bureaucracy: **"In its very essence it is the planter and protector of inequality. It arose in the beginning as the bourgeois organ of a workers' state. In establishing and defending the advantages of a minority, it of course draws off the cream for its own use. Nobody who has wealth to distribute ever omits himself. Thus out of a social necessity there has developed an organ which has far outgrown its socially necessary function, and become an independent factor and therewith the source of great danger for the whole social organism"**[2].

To the extent that this bourgeois organ of the postbourgeois state usurps the political power of the dominant class (that is, the working class), the conditions arise which allow the bureaucracy to appropriate a portion of the social surplus production in the form of major material privileges. This is the first aspect of exploitation: it is founded on bourgeois norms of distribution, that is, on the remuneration of labour not only according to its quantity, but also according to its "quality"[3]. The functions of the bureaucracy **"are related, in their essence, to the political techniques of class domination"**[4].

Appearing before the working class as a layer of specialists in these political techniques, and in the techniques of organisation and management of production and of the economy in general, the bureaucracy imposes a remuneration for labour corresponding to the "higher quality" — which it determines itself — of its own labour. It is that which allows it to live on the backs of the working class. **"The difference in incomes is, in other words, determined not just by the difference in individual productivity, but by the masked appropriation of others' labour"**[5].

The bureaucratic state apparatus develops from an organ of defence of bourgeois norms of distribution into an organisation of defence of the appropriation of the labour of the working class to the benefit of the personnel of this apparatus and of the whole wider bureaucratic layer on which it bases itself. The sources of income, overt and covert, of the bureaucracy, **"do not constitute a system of exploitation in the scientific sense of the term. But from the standpoint of the interests and position of the popular masses it is infinitely worse than any 'organic' exploitation"**[6].

The phenomenon of 'inorganic' exploitation of the working class is not limited to that. And what we have described does not constitute the most important aspect of it. The exclusive political power of the bureaucracy allows it to dispose of the whole social surplus product (economic surplus). Besides appropriating a part of that surplus product in the form of individual and collective material privileges, the bureaucracy distributes and utilises the social surplus product to impose and reproduce its domination over the working class and the whole of society.

"The working class has no influence on the size of the surplus product, on its use and distribution, since — as we have seen — it is deprived of influence on the decisions of the authorities, who have at their disposal the means of production and the labour product itself... The surplus product is... taken away by force from the working class in proportions that have not been fixed by the workers, and is then made use of outside the range of their influence and possibility of control..."[7].

It is in those terms that, in 1964, the Polish dissidents Jacek Kuron and Karol Modzelewski explained the reasons why one can and should consider, from a Marxist point of view, that the working class in 'actually existing socialism' is exploited. And it is the best and most correct explanation. Its only weakness is in the thesis, which cannot be sustained, that the worker only gets a subsistence minimum for his labour.

It is a simple explanation: the working class is exploited because it does not dispose of the social product, it does not collectively determine its use and its distribution, and because it is a social group separate from the working class, exercising power over it and not participating in productive labour, which entirely disposes of that social product, according to its own interests and needs, with the objective of reproducing the conditions of its own domination.

The working class does not determine the use and distribution of the social surplus product; and, simultaneously, it does not determine the proportions in which surplus product is extorted from it, that is, the proportion between the labour time necessary for the reproduction of labour power and the surplus labour time. On the contrary, it is subjected to permanent pressure for the augmentation of the surplus labour time at the expense of the necessary labour time, including the pressure of a tendency to augmentation of absolute surplus product, which correspondingly diminishes the possibilities for the reproduction of labour power. The permanent tendency to super-exploitation is inherent in capitalist relations of production, but in postcapitalist society under bureaucratic power, far from disappearing, it increases significantly.

In relation to capital which exploits the direct producers without being a social relation of production, Marx says that this exploitation occurs **"under conditions worse than those under the immediate control of capital"**[8]. This applies entirely to the bureaucracy, too. The overthrow of capitalist relations of production creates conditions favourable to the development of the productive forces and to increasing the productivity of labour. But, at the same time, bureaucratic power is an obstacle to that development and, what's more, a relative obstacle which tends to become more and more an absolute obstacle[9]. At the same time — I will come back to this question later — if labour is not free but subject to the bureaucracy, its

subjection is not real, as is the case in capitalism, where it **"not only transforms the situations of the various agents of production, it also *revolutionises* their actual mode of labour and the real nature of the labour process as a whole"**[10].

In a postcapitalist society, labour can only be really subjected to the working class itself; that is to say, this subjection is only possible with the progressive development of the self-organisation of the labour process by the working class itself and of its own control over the process of production. But in 'actually existing socialism', the dominant class does not dominate its own labour (except, as we shall see, negatively), and that is why a constant revolutionising of the labour process and of production is impossible. All this is expressed by the inevitable development of the tendency to super-exploitation: the daily average of increased surplus labour is not an increase in relative surplus product, but the extortion of absolute surplus product (whether or not combined with the extortion of relative surplus product).

The scope of super-exploitation in 'actually existing socialism' increases enormously if we do not take the book-keeping presentation of surplus product (of surplus value) in Marx as a 'complete' theory of exploitation, that is, if we do not abstract from the condition of work in which the extraction of surplus product is carried out and from the conditions of reproduction of labour power[11]. Dust, noise, vibrations, toxic gases, heat and cold, etc., in the factories, and pollution in the industrial zones, are also a powerful factor of destruction of the use value of labour power.

Whatever may be the possibility of realising the tendency to super-exploitation in the framework of time wages and collective piecework rates (this latter being widely applied today to the work of 'semi-autonomous' or even 'self-managed' teams), the fundamental means, in 'actually existing socialism', is individual piecework rates. The generalisation of piecework is a degenerate form through which is expressed the tendency of postcapitalist society to remunerate according to the quantity of individual work. It allows for the measurement, through a determinate quantum of product, of the different degrees of aptitude, strength, energy and perseverance of the individual workers. At the same time, it fits in well with the demands and the conditions for the exercise of bureaucratic power over the process of production: it allows for the transfer onto labour power and its remuneration of the consequences of irregular and discontinuous work, for the maintenance in the units of production of a reserve labour force without having to keep it regularly occupied, for the maintenance of a large supervisory staff, and so on.

It imposes the atomisation of the workers in the labour process (piecework facilitates a low level of cooperation, very useful for damaging or breaking the unity of groups of workers) and forces them into intense competition between themselves. (The bureaucracy launched the Stakhanovite movements precisely on the basis of individual piecework). But, on top of all that, or above all, individual piecework is, in the hands of the bureaucracy, an effective means for subjecting the workers to super-exploitation, a fact which the Hungarian dissident Miklos Haraszti demonstrates exhaustively in a book which describes and analyses the author's experiences of manual work.

"The real meaning of piece-rates lies in the incessant increase in production. The bosses do not have to impose it. It is enough for them to register that it has happened and then to incorporate it officially by changing the norms. Of course, there are sometimes abuses and injustices: occasionally management pushes matters and goes a bit too far in setting the new norm, even though the compulsion to loot would get the same result anyway. But clever management simply acknowledges the results which have been achieved, and bases further increases on them.

The production graph is used to justify a revision of the norm. They could establish its trajectory for each individual worker, but usually they prefer to base it on the largest possible sample, taking, for example, the average increase in production throughout the sections, or that of all the turners. The calculation is simple. If I produce at the official 100 per cent, my output is 100 per cent; if I produce more it is more. (We are on a 'continuous', and not 'declining' piece-rate: this means that every piece over and above the 100 per cent norm is paid for at the same rate). And so who isn't producing more than 100 per cent? The pay for 100 per cent is fixed in such a way that we have to make more. That is clear. So we always try to squeeze the maximum out of every job...

There is no way out of this. To make our living, we are forced to provide the rate-fixers with irrefutable arguments for the revision of the norms, and so for the reduction to an ever more unreal level of the time per piece and consequently the pay per piece. This incites us to speed up the rate still more to try and reach a greater level of production. Therefore we prepare the ground, slowly but surely, for yet another increase of the norms'"[12].

1. Leon Trotsky, *Revolution Betrayed*, p.54.
2. Ibid p.113.
3. See A.Zimine, *Le Stalinisme et son «socialisme réel»*, p.57-67.
4. Translated from Kowalewski's French text, which cites Trotsky, *Oeuvres* vol.2, p.256.
5. Translated from Kowalewski's French text, which cites Trotsky, *De la révolution*, p.297.
6. Trotsky, *Writings 1938-9*, p.325.
7. K.Modzelewski and J.Kuron, *An open letter to the Party*, p.14. No passage quite corresponding to the French text quoted by Kowalewski can be found in the English edition. The French text translates as follows: **"Clearly the worker cannot receive the equivalent of his production in the form of real wages. For production to expand, it is necessary to set aside an accumulation fund; to maintain the non-productive sectors necessary for the needs of the worker and of all society (education, health, science etc.) a part of production must be given over. But, in the present system, the worker only gets, in the form of wages and services, the subsistence minimum. The surplus product is taken from him by force (the worker has no control over its size and its distribution) and is used for objectives alien and even opposed to him. This means that he is exploited: he produces the subsistence minimum for himself and has the whole power of the state against him; the product of his own labour is raised up against him in the force of an alien or enemy force and thus does not belong to him. If the product created by the worker does not belong to him, that means that his labour, the source of that product, does not belong to him either".**
8. K.Marx, *Capital* vol.3, p.335.
9. See P.Frank, *Le Stalinisme*, p.35-41.
10. K.Marx, *Capital* vol.1, Penguin edition
11. See L.Althusser, *Enfin la crise du marxisme!* in Il Manifesto, *Pouvoir et opposition dans les sociétés postrévolutionnaires*, p.249-250.
12. M.Haraszti, *Worker in a workers' state*, p.59-60 and p.63.

This is a translation of an excerpt from Zbigniew Kowalewski's book 'Rendez-nous nos usines!' ('Give Us Back Our Factories!'), published by La Breche in Paris.

Building for bleakness

Every single caller after Prince Charles's recent TV programme criticising modern architecture supported him. The architects are on the defensive. Should they be? Why? And what's the alternative? Belinda Weaver discusses the issues.

Some architects defend hated modern buildings by saying "The Eiffel Tower (Crystal Palace, etc.) was hated in its day!" However, many modern buildings were not hated or protested about in their "day". It's *now*, after years of looking at them, that the outcry has come against soulless tower blocks and ugly offices. In their day they were praised.

In his book 'Heroes', journalist and filmmaker John Pilger shamefacedly quotes a 1968 article he wrote praising Sheffield's Hyde Park Flats "great glass towers...that face, not blades of soot, but trees and green." He believed these "multi-storey flats, planned to retain something of the neighbourly warmth of the old rotten rows" would be communities in the sky, where "no child need sit forlorn in his boxed isolation, but instead play all around and up and down."

Alas, he sees now that these "jerry-built human pigeon lofts" have "disfigured much of the landscape and life of Britain." How true.

Let me state right off that I'm not just a stuffy old cultural conservative (I hope). Modernism as a style and as a method has been distorted and misrepresented. It didn't set out to blight people's lives.

On the contrary, many early Modernists, particularly those of the Bauhaus movement in Germany, were socialists, anxious to use new materials like concrete, steel and plastics, and new methods of industrialised building, to provide cheap housing for workers, then living in slum conditions all over Europe.

The new materials and methods meant that taller buildings could be built, housing more people, faster. A lot of bold talk about building "machines for living" was floated about. Strip off all the unnecessary and expensive ornament, cried the architects. Let the function define the form!

In hindsight, we know that was a flop. But it wasn't obvious then.

The (German) Bauhaus and (Dutch) De Stijl architects wanted to break from the 19th century mould of building copies of Greek temples for the few; they wanted to create a totally new architecture, one that would be human in scale, rather than overwhelming like the cathedral/temple replicas. It would be architecture for the common man, not for the rich. The new materials and methods would be the basis for this totally new style of simplicity and integrity.

Many designs resembled the flat roofed white cubes that Mediterranean people inhabited. These were simple, functional structures. The flat roofs were for sitting on or sleeping on in hot weather. The white reflected the sun and kept the houses cooler. The lack of eaves did not matter in a dry climate.

But a stark white cube with a flat roof didn't belong in northern Europe. Snow and rainwater tended to collect on flat roofs, causing them to weaken or collapse. Without overhanging eaves to protect them, windows leaked in wet weather. In turn, this encouraged damp and mould in many buildings. And rain also created ugly streaks and trails on concrete. White soon became dirty white or grey. Under a grey sky, these buildings soon began to look bleak and cheerless.

And people didn't want these machines to live in. They didn't want small rooms, cramped hallways or low ceilings. They wanted nests. Inside their cubes, they tried to create cosiness and clutter. Stark interiors are cool; no-one wants to be cool in northern Europe winter.

Many people won't accept tower block flats now. They form part of many councils' hard-to-let accommodation. Generally it is single people who are prepared to take them, whereas families shun them, for good reasons. And no-one dares to build them now.

The lack of storage and workspace curtails activities like DIY and gardening. There is nowhere to dry clothes in cramped flats. It's hard to keep tabs on kids playing twenty or thirty floors down. If the lifts break down (as they tend to do), it's hard getting up and down stairs with kids and shopping.

Tower block estates are full of areas such as lifts, stairways, corridors and "common" grassed areas that are neither private nor public. Many such areas become graffiti-covered, littered, vandalised, urine-smelling and frightening. Tall buildings are also vulnerable in case of fire. If someone breaks into a flat, there are no passersby, as on a street, to see.

As worker housing, Modernism was a gigantic flop. The people Modernism was designed to help have turned away from it in droves. It's not snobbery to say most workers would rather have a house than a flat, especially a tower block flat. They would.

And high rise building has not even led to higher densities of people. Much higher densities can be achieved with low rise accommodation. Space on high rise estates that could be used for living is wasted. Each tower block sits in lonely isolation far apart from its neighbour. The ground in between, forlorn strips of littered turf, despised even by playing children, remains desolate and unused.

It would not only be far better to use the land to build two and three storey houses with gardens and streets; it would also be cheaper. High rise costs more to build, and much, much more to maintain. If mistakes occur in low rise building, they can usually be fixed; in high rise construction, a mistake soon becomes a catastrophe. In high rise buildings, the maintenance of lifts is a major expense.

The blame for tower blocks can't be laid entirely at the Bauhaus's door. The tower block horrors of today were flung up by building contractors, who creamed the cheap aspects of Modernism off — the lack of ornament, the quick-and-dirty construction methods — and left out the extras such as community centres, shops, laundries, creches, gardens and so on that the early Modernists insisted on.

We didn't know then that concrete would weather so badly, turning even a posh, expensive development like London's Barbican into a rainstreaked, bleak estate. We didn't know how tower blocks, and their corridors and walkways, would foster crime and vandalism. We didn't know how they would be starved of resources — for repairs, for concierges — by cash-strapped councils.

But if Modernism was never given a real chance with housing in this country, how did it fare elsewhere? Have architects done better with large, modern public buildings? Alas, no.

Modernism, as imagined by the Bauhaus/De Stijl architects, never really got a look in. Instead, architects took some of the basics — concrete and steel, lack of ornament, industrialised building methods, flat roofs — and called it a style. The International Style had arrived.

It is this increasingly discredited International Style, rather than Bauhaus Modernism, that Prince Charles and others are attacking. The Style is associated almost solely with tall, ugly, concrete-and-steel boxes.

The glass and steel box and the steel and

The Seagram building in New York, designed by Mies van der Rohe. Since the 1950s city centres all over the world have been filled with replicas of this 'International Style'

concrete skyscraper are a terrible blight on the world. Since their spread, every city centre has similar dead areas, killed off by the grey pall of unadorned concrete.

Most big modern buildings fail spectacularly in one key area — entrances. At the Barbican and the South Bank Centre people have to come in feeling unsure they've actually arrived; they feel they've crept in the back way; nothing is "announced". Maybe architects wanted to rebel against the grandiose entrances of wedding cake Victoriana and the Greek temples. If so, they've bent the stick too far the other way.

Too many modern buildings present a blind face to the street. Some entrances look so mean and small that people discount them.

The South Bank Centre assumes everyone will arrive from the river. The signposting only makes sense from that vantage point. Since we are not yet amphibious, this seems daft. Getting to the National Film Theatre from the bus stop on Waterloo Bridge is a dispiriting experience — down a concrete stairwell into a narrow corridor, and that's it. You feel there must be a proper way in that you happened to miss. But no.

Confusion does not end with entrances either. Many modern buildings are labyrinths inside, with no landmarks for orientation; every floor and section looks the same. The Barbican Centre is notorious for this. The main entrance is hidden down a roadway. The interior is so confusing that bewildered visitors have to be constantly redirected.

Why should places designed for entertainment be so grim? Even apart from entrances, the buildings look joyless and forbidding. The South Bank Centre is a great, ugly concrete bunker with tiny windows. The window is another feature that modern architects have got completely wrong.

Windows should let in air and light. But modern architects have turned that on its head. Windows now ***exclude*** air and light. Huge glass curtain walls are a feature of many modern buildings, but the windows cannot be opened, and many are made of dark solar glass that blocks out daylight. Workers in these buildings have air conditioning instead of air, fluorescent light instead of daylight. The cost in electricity is enormous. The cost to health is immeasurable.

And the interior spaces don't work. If modern architecture's claim is that the function defines the form, then it has comprehensively failed. These buildings are meant to function as offices, and they don't work. Workers hate them. The form has flopped.

Outside, we have blank, blind buildings that seem to exclude people, while inside, we have dark, cramped corridors, offices full of static and fluorescent light, and a miserable, ill-feeling workforce who can't tell through their big picture windows of solar glass whether it's rain or shine outside.

Euston Tower, the DHSS building in Euston Road, is a tall concrete building, designed with vertical rubber insets to carry window cleaning cradles. Sadly, the rubber has long perished, so it is no longer safe to use the cradles. From inside, it's never fair weather; the windows haven't been cleaned in months. They can't, of course, be opened, so workers there have had to get used to the gloom.

One of the International Style's main problems is how cheap it looks — even when it cost millions and millions. In old-style architecture, the money's on show; you see just how it was spent. Going to places like Versailles can be overwhelming. Every surface is encrusted and marbled and panelled.

But in modern architecture, those millions fall into a pit. All that money! It goes on digging a hole big enough to have foundations strong enough to build a building tall enough — to be an eyesore!

So who do we blame for the sorry state of our cities and homes and workplaces — the architects? Not them alone.

Capitalists wanted tall buildings to maximise their profits on sites and have done pretty well out of them (even ugly offices can be let for large sums of money); councils wanted cheap housing and ended up with unlettable, expensive to maintain, fast-deteriorating tower blocks.

> "Far from being a new development or a return to first principles, Post-Modernism is just the same old concrete and steel boxes with ornament stuck on."

Labour councils who built tower blocks were doing the best they could, then, pushed along by profit-hungry building contractors. The tower blocks seemed to be better than the slums that workers endured before.

But they're not. They are a catastrophe. The problem is not who to blame now, but rather how do we stop things like this happening again?

We have to educate ourselves in the theory of housing, architecture and design so we can take so-called experts on and expose the schemes they work on for the sham they are — schemes to ruin our environment for money. We have to tear the masks off the developers, and be as truculent with the city developer as we are with the countryside despoiler.

The city is our environment too; we have to fight to protect our interests. We know now what modern and high rise mean in human terms — miserable home conditions and horrible workplaces, collapsing tower blocks and windswept canyons.

Architecture is in a blind alley now. Some of the former die-hards of the International Style are now embracing Post-Modernism or the New Classicism, with its pretty pastels and its fake ornamentation. Old Glass-and-Steel himself, Philip Johnson, is now proposing a Gothic castle for the South Bank.

But far from being a new development or a return to first principles, Post-Modernism is just the same old concrete and steel boxes with ornament stuck on.

All the new ornamentation is done as "ironic references" rather than honestly. Rather than admit they have failed, some architects send up the fact that they have had to go back to ornament by not treating it as seriously. Instead of designing Greek temples, they now put up astonishing hybrids — buildings with absolutely no cohesive style, buildings that borrow fragments from every conceivable period, buildings painted in all colours of the rainbow. Of course, the windows still don't open.

There is a small core of architects who have never embraced Modernism but who have gone on building as if the twentieth century has never dawned. Architects like Quinlan Terry see nothing better than Classical architecture, and have gone on building in that style despite the hoots of derision.

The joke's on the Modernists now, as some people turning to Classical architects as a revulsion from glass and steel. Terry's new development of stone and brick offices at Richmond is attractive. The entrances are obvious, and every building has ornament. The windows open and the development is low rise. Modernity in the form of computer floors and car parking is accommodated, but gracefully. The Modernists titter at it.

Terry would like to see this style replace Modernism. It certainly seems more appealing than the mish-mash of Post-Modernism, which never rises above the kitsch. And it's cheaper. What's worrying about Terry and the other "Golden Age" enthusiasts is that Georgian design was primarily for the rich while the poor lived in hovels. Elitism won't give us the kind of cities we need. I quite liked Terry's Richmond development, but I certainly don't want to see a return to Georgian or Victorian values.

The left has been a bit weak on the whole architecture/city planning debate. I think we have been too afraid to say that workers deserve decent houses and attractive cities and towns. We don't want to seem too bourgeois, so we tiptoe round the issue, and end up allowing the majority of working class people to live and work in rotten, unsafe, ugly buildings.

Socialism was never about levelling ***down***, but about levelling ***up***. We want to abolish the cheap, the shoddy and the substandard and keep the nice things.

Workers deserve nice things. The left has to take the view, as Kingsley Amis's Lucky Jim does, that "nice things are nicer than nasty things". That isn't bourgeois; it's a matter of using art and technology to build a better world.

The dockers' breakaway

The story of how 10,000 dockers broke away from the then right-wing TGWU in 1954-5.

"The sections of the Fourth International should always strive not only to renew the top leadership of the trade unions, boldly and resolutely in critical moments advancing new militant leaders in place of routine functionaries and careerists, but also to create in all possible instances independent militant organisations corresponding more closely to the tasks of mass struggle against bourgeois society; and, if necessary, not flinching even in the face of a direct break with the conservative apparatus of the trade unions.

If it be criminal to turn one's back on mass organisations for the sake of fostering sectarian factions, it is no less so passively to tolerate subordination of the revolutionary mass movement to the control of openly reactionary or disguised conservative ('progressive') cliques. Trade unions are not ends in themselves; they are but means along the road to proletarian revolution".

Leon Trotsky, The Transitional Programme.

At its 1988 Congress the TUC expelled the scab-led EETPU. The creation of a breakaway electricians' union, the EPIU, which is seeking TUC sponsorship, has brought the question of 'breakaway unionism' back into the labour movement as an immediate and burning issue.

The *general* principles of socialists on this question were distilled by Trotsky in 1938 from the entire history of the workers' movement up to then — from both the many examples of sectarian breakaway unions, and the times when promising working-class movements had been destroyed because their leaders feared to break with the incumbent bureaucrats.

The most important breakaway union movement in the history of British labour was the breakaway of 16,000 dockers, in Manchester, Liverpool and Hull, from the TGWU in the mid-'50s. This article by Bill Hunter, written in 1958, tells the story.

The breakaway 'Blue' union survived into the 1980s and then, a much depleted force, merged with the TGWU. Bill Hunter is a long-time member of the Socialist Labour League/Workers' Revolutionary Party who is now a supporter of the Morenist current. The article first appeared in *Labour Review*, January-February 1958.

Between September 1954 and May 1955 ten thousand men left the Transport and General Workers' Union and joined the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers. This 'walk-out' involved approximately 40 per cent of the dock workers in Liverpool, Birkenhead, Manchester and Hull.

The scale of this union transfer proved that here was no artificial and isolated adventure by a handful of men acting on impulse. It came about in conditions which have made the post-war history of the British dockers more stormy than that of any other section of the working class.

Arthur Deakin: ruled the TGWU with an iron fist.

During the ten years preceding this large-scale recruitment to the 'blue union' there were at least six major dock strikes. In these struggles pressure was building up inside the TGWU, to which the overwhelming majority of dockers belonged, and the 1954-55 break with this union has to be seen in the context of these strikes and of daily life on the docks.

It is well known that dockers' wages and conditions have improved somewhat since the great strike for the 'Dockers' Tanner' at the end of the nineteenth century and the organisation of portworkers which won that victory. Again, since the second world war the dockers have been better off in many respects than in the pre-war days of casual labour and unemployment. The Dock Labour Scheme[1] abolished some of the worst features of casual labouring on the docks.

Nevertheless, the dock worker is by no means living in a workers' paradise. The dockers' millennium has not yet arrived. Government officials, trade union leaders, learned sociologists, all those gentlemen who have put the dock workers under the microscope (in the years since the war the dockers have been subjected to more 'learned' inquiries than any other section of the British working class) have all tended to assume that the Dock Labour Scheme has raised the status of the dockers from the most depressed industrial workers to the most privileged, well-paid and even coddled of trades. But it is necessary to brush away the slush and to assess the Dock Labour Scheme in its true light and examine closely the real conditions in the trade which have existed since the end of the war. We must examine the real relations between the employers and the dock workers.

With the post-war expansion of trade and almost negligible unemployment in the country as a whole, the docker was in a much stronger position than before the war to press home his demands for an improvement in pay and conditions. During the war it had been found necessary to abolish the system of casual hiring of dock labour and it would certainly not have been possible to return to casual labour after the war. 'Fall-back' pay and its accompanying indirect control of labour under the Dock Labour Scheme was a price the employers had to pay for preventing the full realisation of the dockers' aims.

Thus the Dock Labour Board's disciplinary powers have been used to compel workers to do particular jobs and to accept conditions of work which were formerly accepted only under the threat of unemployment. Compulsory overtime, for example, is a burning, unresolved issue on the docks and has been sustained only through the threat of suspension and other penalties which the employers are empowered to impose under the scheme. However it would not be true to say that the dockers oppose the Dock Labour Scheme. Dock workers are most resolute in the maintenance of 'decasualisation' and often their demands have been concentrated on improving the scheme. On Merseyside, for instance, the dockers have complained that employers have in many cases broken the provisions of the scheme in employing non-registered workers.

Nevertheless, seen in relation to the power which the dockers have had since the end of the war, the scheme has helped the employers to maintain 'discipline', to maintain their grip on labour during a period of trade expansion.

Most important in any study of conditions which gave rise to the 'blue union' movement in the northern ports is a consideration of the position occupied by the Transport and General Workers' Union in the scheme. Already before the war, a gulf existed between the bureaucracy which

ran the TGWU and the rank and file of the union. In the Dock Section of the union, the power of the bureaucrats was strengthened through the Dock Labour Scheme, for under it TGWU officials sat on boards which disciplined the men. Militant trade unionists who kicked against working conditions quickly found that they had to fight not only the employers but also their own union representatives. Union officials thus had almost complete power inside the union and now had the power to deprive men of their livelihood. The worker who was active in opposing the bureaucratic policies inside the union now had other official powers ranged against him.

The union bureaucracy was also strengthened by the way in which the scheme was used to guarantee contributions to the TGWU. On Merseyside and in Manchester registration books (without which no docker can be accepted for work) were issued only on production of a clear TGWU card. Thus the union was guaranteed its members no matter how little activity was carried on in their interests. The vast majority of dockers in these two cities stamped up their union cards only at the six-monthly intervals when the registration books were issued. They looked on the union not as an organisation for the defence and betterment of their conditions but as an 'overhead charge' for the maintenance of their job. The official could ignore the worker's dissatisfaction with the way the union was behaving, secure in the knowledge that union dues would still be paid each April and October.

The TGWU official machine was quite generally detested by the dockers. Officials made agreements with the employers behind the backs of the men. Men were disciplined with the consent of union officials and often saved only by 'unofficial' strike action.

A group of students who investigated conditions on Manchester docks in 1950-51 reported: "There is no doubt that there is widespread dissatisfaction with their union among dock workers in Manchester. Relations with the union were criticised more than any other aspect of employment."[2] In their interviews these investigators heard repeated a story which summed up the attitude of the full-time union officials, who, of course, are not elected by union members but appointed by the union leadership. One official, it seems, informed the dockers at a branch meeting that he did not care what they thought about him. He had himself and his job to think of first and if he had to choose between being popular with them or standing in well with the high officials, he would not hesitate to choose the latter.

Most of the leaders of the mass resignations from the TGWU to join the 'blue union' had been members of the TGWU for many years. There were ex-branch committee men and ex-lay officers among them, and all had put up a prolonged fight inside the union against the officials. But, secure in their appointments, the officials could afford to ignore the demands of the rank-and-file members, to ignore votes of censure and votes of no confidence. Thus rank-and-file dockers who sought to further the interests of the men with traditional militancy and solidarity continually collided with the bureaucratic apparatus of the TGWU. The desire for a national, democratic portworkers' union in these conditions inevitably grew and matured.

Ever since the war real working-class leadership on the docks has been in the hands of unofficial committees which sprang up in every dispute. In every major strike, too, one section of the workers had proposed a break from the TGWU. But always the leaders of the unofficial committees put forward the alternative of transforming relations inside the TGWU and wresting democratic rights from the entrenched union apparatus. Finally however in 1954, in the words of one rank-and-file leader, the bankruptcy of this policy of staying in the TGWU became clear and led to the 'biggest prison break in all history'.

The 'prison break' first began in Hull, at the end of August 1954. Four thousand Hull dockers had come out on strike on August 16 against an antiquated and dangerous method of unloading grain known as 'hand-scuttling'. Men had to stand up to their waists and deeper in loose grain in the hold of a ship and shovel grain into sacks with big metal scoops. Even the secretary of the National Dock Group of the TGWU described hand-scuttling as 'a rotten, dirty, underpaid job that should have died with Queen Victoria'.

To be sure, his statement was made after the strike had been on for six days and after his union's attempt to break the strike had signally failed. The TGWU had actually tolerated hand-scuttling for years. But, significantly enough, what the TGWU had tolerated the militant but unofficial action of Hull dockers abolished. This strike however had much wider repercussions. All the frustration and seething discontent felt by these docker members of the Transport and General Workers' Union at the set-up in their union came suddenly to a head. A mass meeting of striking dockers on August 22 decided almost unanimously to apply for membership of the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers. A few days later a leaflet was issued by their strike committee and sent across to Merseyside. It summed up their feelings in this way:

"For many years we dockers of Hull have resented the way the Transport and General Workers' Union has handled our disputes. Time after time we have reported our grievances to the TGWU only to receive the reply: there is nothing we can do, our hands are tied.

We of Hull believe the time has come to do some untying: that is, to untie ourselves from the TGWU and enter the blue union. We also believe that the experiences of the Merseyside dockers in the TGWU are the same as ours in Hull.

We therefore call upon you to defend your interests by joining with us and supporting us in our attempt to achieve the unity of dockers within the democratic structure of the blue union."

Four weeks after the Hull meeting a thousand Birkenhead dockers packed themselves into Birkenhead Town Hall and enthusiastically agreed to follow Hull's example. All but a tiny handful of Birkenhead's 2,000 dockers subsequently applied to join the NASD. Manchester followed soon after and by the end of the year dockers were flocking into the 'blue union' from every group of docks on the Mersey waterfront.

This was not the first time that a great body of dockers had broken with the TGWU. The Scottish Transport and General Workers' Union exists today as a result of a breakaway in 1932 embracing all the dockers in the ports of Glasgow and Campbeltown. They broke from the TGWU on whether their branch had the right to elect its eight full-time officials annually or whether they were to be appointed by the union's official leadership. The branch won a judgment in the courts confirming its right to elect its officials. Ernest Bevin, general secretary of the TGWU, promptly changed the rules of the union. In response, the dockers of Glasgow formed their own union.

The Dockers' Section of the NASD was itself formed by a break from the TGWU. In June 1923 40,000 dockers came out on strike against an agreement signed between the TGWU leaders and the port employers accepting a reduction of wages. As a result of this sell-out by Bevin and his colleagues, thousands of London dockers and lightermen left the TGWU and joined with the Stevedores' Protection Society (a union of long standing which did not join in the amalgamation of dockers' and other unions which led to the formation of the TGWU in 1922) to form the National Amalgamated Stevedores, Lightermen, Watermen and Dockers' Union.

The new union was expelled from the TUC, since the trade union leaders were anxious, as ever, to protect the growing power of the TGWU bureaucracy. In 1927 the new union divided to form two separate organisations, the Watermen, Lightermen, Tugmen and Bargemen's Union and the National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers.

It was the latter union, by now a member of the TUC, that the northern dockers joined when in 1954-55 they marched out of the TGWU like a previous generation of dockers thirty years before. At the time of the Hull strike the NASD had 7,000 members — 3,000 in the Dockers' Section and 4,000 in the Stevedores' Section. It operated only in London. The militant and democratic traditions of the 'blue union' attracted the northern men. Traditionally, in the NASD all major issues were referred back to the rank and file for final decisions. So it was necessary for the applications to join the union from the dockers of Merseyside, Manchester and Hull to be discussed by the rank-and-file members. The London meetings of the NASD came out overwhelmingly in favour of accepting these applications. The 'blue union' began to enrol the new members.

As in 1923, the General Council of the TUC immediately gave its support to the bureaucrats of the TGWU and the NASD was suspended from the TUC for 'poaching'. But the 'blue union' continued to expand in the North. Offices were set up in Hull, Birkenhead, Manchester and, finally, Liverpool. The TGWU leaders threatened dockers with loss of jobs if they joined the 'blue union'. In September 1954 the Birkenhead branch of the TGWU posted notices inviting 1,000 men to register at once to fill their waiting list for jobs on the dock and thus to replace dockers who wanted to join the NASD.

But in April 1955, when the dockers in Merseyside and Manchester applied for their new registration books, the threat to deprive 'blue union' members of their livelihood was decisively defeated. When 'blue union' men were refused registration books because they could not produce a TGWU clearance card, the men of the Manchester and Birkenhead docks struck, together with 13,000 of Liverpool's 17,000 dockers, completely paralysing the three ports. After a two-day strike the Manchester Dock Labour Board capitulated and the Merseyside Board followed suit. The first attempt to bludgeon men back into the TGWU had failed — miserably.

"What a startling contrast to the tiny branch meetings of the TGWU! Apathy disappeared. In its place came enthusiasm."

In the early months of 1955 large mass meetings of dockers were held in Hull, Manchester and Liverpool. Branches and regional committees of the NASD were rapidly set up. By March 1955 there were five branches in Birkenhead, twelve in Liverpool, two in Manchester and seven in Hull. Full-time officers were operating in all these northern ports. The popular nature of the movement was shown in the large attendances at branch meetings. Hundreds of dockers were swept into trade union branch activity for the first time in their lives. Many, acting as branch officers and committee members, gained their first experience of organising, administration and meeting procedures.

That first great organising of the dock labourers sixty years before must have resembled, in many ways, these virile, raw but energetic forces which thronged the union meeting rooms. What a startling contrast to the tiny branch meetings of the TGWU! Apathy disappeared. In its place came enthusiasm. Dockers felt not just that they 'belonged' to the union. The union belonged to them.

Meanwhile opinion was hardening that it was time to begin negotiations for the recognition of the NASD by the employers in the northern ports. Finally a delegate meeting in London at the beginning of May 1955 resolved to propose strike action as from May 23 if recognition was not granted. The recommendation went before mass meetings in London, Hull, Manchester and Merseyside. In Hull only twenty-two men, in a meeting of 1,500, voted against the strike ultimatum. It was the same in all the ports. Everywhere the recommendation was endorsed by absolutely decisive majorities.

Over 20,000 dockers stopped work on the Monday the ultimatum expired. Several thousand TGWU men came out in sympathy with the 'blue union'. Surveying the beginning of that strike now, it is clearer than ever that there was every chance of victory. The strike had solid support in the ranks of the NASD.

The employers placed the onus for non-recognition on an 'inter-union struggle', stating that recognition was a matter for the unions to settle among themselves. In this way the employers left themselves a way of retreating. There was also a great measure of public opinion behind the 'blue union' dockers on the issue of their fight to belong to a union of their choice. This feeling was reflected in a sympathetic editorial in the *Manchester Guardian*.

Sympathetic action by dockers in other ports could have been developed. The TGWU leadership was desperately afraid of the spread of the strike. Mr A.E.Tiffin, general secretary of the TGWU, was later to reveal how near they felt the NASD came to success. Speaking to a Docks National Committee in August 1955, and dealing with the resistance of his union to the demand of the 'blue union' for recognition, he declared: "That battle could have been lost. In his opinion it was one of the greatest crises we have had to face for a long period of time". A statement issued by the TGWU on the eve of the strike testified to a state of near-panic. It called on its docker members to remain at work, and declared that only 'a reign of anarchy and terror' could result from the 'blue union's' action.

The TUC condemned the strike and demanded that the 'blue union' should hand back the northern men to the TGWU. What the 10,000 workers concerned thought about it was apparently felt to be unimportant in Smith Square. Then, as now, the matter was for the TUC leaders merely a question of making 'suitable' arrangements at the top. The ranks could be herded around and bartered.

When the strike started, leaders of the TGWU declared that they were willing to spend £9 million to break it. Such prodigality with the union funds was unheard of when it was a matter of a wages application being rejected by the employers. Here it was a matter of defending the power of the union apparatus. There were no barriers now to releasing the full financial resources of the union and the energy of officials, all of which had usually remained securely under lock and key in fights against the employers.

The campaign the TGWU launched failed — at least so far as the rank and file were concerned. Officials in Manchester, who boasted they would lead the men back to work, waited at the dock gates — alone. When national officers of the union called their members to a meeting in Liverpool 3,000 dockers gave them such a rough handling that they had to call in a police escort before they could leave. As they left they were pelted with crusts of bread — a reply to an earlier threat of one official that the strikers would be forced to eat crusts.

The strike lasted six weeks. The men received no strike pay and suffered very real hardship. But in the end it was not a break in the militancy of the rank and file which prevented victory. If the outcome had rested solely on that there is no doubt that the 'blue union' would have won. Success can never be absolutely guaranteed in any working-class struggle. There were, however, many essential ingredients for success present at the beginning of the recognition strike. Why then did it fail? The answer lies partly in the lamentable weakness which quickly showed itself among a section of the London leadership of the NASD. They had welcomed the northern men into the union. They ended, not only by letting down the men in the north, but also by flouting the whole democratic tradition of the 'blue union'.

But lack of firmness, of understanding, of loyalty to the ranks on the part of individual leaders is not the whole answer. For that we need to consider the part played by the leaders of the Communist Party. In the months before the strike for recognition, Communist Party leaders opposed the development of the 'blue union' in the provincial ports. When Hull dockers joined, Harry Pollitt attacked their action and called for 'unity in the fight to democratise the Transport and General Workers' Union'. In fact however the Stalinist policy aimed only to secure by any means (and certainly not by principled methods) the lifting of the ban on communists' occupying official positions in the TGWU.

The official line of the Communist Party towards the 'blue union' movement was not accepted by its own dock members without many misgivings and much opposition. Nevertheless in the days before the Khrushchev speech this did not prevent the 'line' from being carried through. As a result, not only did the Communist Party help to defeat the recognition strike, but in the process its own influence and membership on the docks were almost completely destroyed.

On December 31, 1954, an article by Vic Marney, a well-known docker member of the Communist Party, appeared in *Tribune*. *Tribune*, incidentally, gave a sympathetic treatment to the 'blue union'. Marney, at this time, was secretary of the 'Liaison Committee', an unofficial committee of TGWU members, influenced by the Communist Party. He declared in his *Tribune* article that the Liaison Committee had decided "under no circumstances will they be involved in any struggle for the recognition of the NASD in the outer ports". This was clear

notice of an intention to blackleg. But when the strike began docker members of the Communist Party refused to become blacklegs. Unfortunately the Communist Party undermined the strike more effectively than if its members had openly crossed the picket-line.

The strike had not been on more than a few days when the Liaison Committee, together with the executive of the lightermen's union, met the London executive committee of the NASD and demanded they call the strike off. The pressure which they continued till the end of the strike on the London leadership of the NASD was supplemented by the *Daily Worker* whose reports played down the numbers on strike and the possibility of support in other ports. The paper continually gave the impression that the strike was about to be called off.

A fortnight after the strike began the London executive of the 'blue union' pushed the Liaison Committee's recommendation through at a conference between the executive and delegates from the northern ports. To achieve this the chairman, an officer of the union who had recruited men in the North and who, a year or so later, was to join the TGWU, used both his ordinary vote and a casting vote. The recommendation was carried against the united opposition of the northern representatives. Members of the London executive were not so desperate as to break with the democratic practices of the NASD and they did put their recommendation before the rank and file. Mass meetings in London and the North rejected the proposal. They gave similar treatment to another recommendation for a return to work a fortnight later.

But the damage was being done. However near the employers came to giving way in face of the determination of the rank and file, they still held back in the hope that the opponents of the strike inside the trade union movement would succeed in their efforts to break it. The national delegate conference was forced to spend hour after hour, day after day, discussing formulas for capitulation, when a vigorous campaign to win support for recognition of the 'blue union' had every chance of a quick and overwhelming victory. The closing stage was reached when the delegate conference agreed to go before a disputes commission set up by the TUC. At the disputes commission the NASD was represented by the chairman, and two national officers — both of whom were leaving their jobs at the end of the month.

Then came the last act, a betrayal of the democratic traditions of the 'blue union', of the loyalty of the men in the North, and of the London rank and file.

The TUC disputes commission demanded the expulsion of the northern men from the 'blue union'. In return, the suspension of the NASD from the TUC was to be lifted. Excluding northern representatives from the vote, the London executive met on Friday, July 1, and carried a resolution moved by a Communist Party member to accept the demand and to instruct the strikers to return to work the following Monday. This action was directly contrary to the procedure which had always been operated in the union. Previously rank-and-file meetings had always had the final word in beginning or ending strike action. The following weekend meetings called by northern leaders were held in the northern ports. Rank-and-file leaders called a meeting in London.

Despite the defections amongst the London leaders, morale remained high in the ranks. But the northern committeemen had to take into consideration the length of the strike, the necessity to preserve forces and the added strain, after the repudiation of the North by the London executive, on the TGWU members who had supported the strike. They therefore recommended a return to work — but as members of the 'blue'. Six thousand dockers meeting in Liverpool reiterated their intention of remaining in the 'blue union'. They announced that, while returning to work, they would carry on the fight for recognition as a united force with their brothers in other ports and would continue the struggle against "all those who opposed and undermined our fight for recognition". In Birkenhead a great number voted against a return to work. A picture of the spirit of the men in the North was given by the *Manchester Guardian* reporter who attended the Manchester meeting:

"As in Merseyside (and, it seems, in accordance with the new general policy of the 'Blue Union' in the Northern ports) the retreat was made in good order and the language was as firm and militant as it has been at any time in the last six weeks. No one, from the cheerfulness of the crowd, would have guessed that it was the end of a six week strike".

In Hull the strikers marched back to work, as they had marched through the city several times while the strike was on.

In the following week the secretaries of 'blue union' branches in the North received letters from the acting general secretary of the NASD coldly informing them that they were excluded from the union as from July 6. It was in this way that a majority of the union's members were expelled.

But, absolutely amazingly — or so it must have appeared to Transport House and Smith Square — the 'blue union' organisation in the North refused to be killed. The northern men continued to pay their subscriptions, to maintain their branches, their committees, and their full-time officials. They kept up the offices in Liverpool, Birkenhead, Manchester and Hull, which remain there today. They decided to fight their expulsion in the courts.

The six-weeks recognition strike demanded great sacrifices from these dockers. Since its betrayal they have fought a war of attrition which has imposed even greater strains on them. Legal proceedings dragged on for nine months. On the docks 'blue union' militants were disciplined for the smallest offence. Recognition was still denied. But the movement remained and was capable from time to time of showing its teeth. In October 1955 10,000 Merseyside dockers responded to a call for a one-day stoppage and won the reinstatement of two 'blue union' members sacked after an allegation that at a bus stop they called another docker a 'scab'.

In March 1956 their 'test case', Spring versus National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers, came before the Liverpool court. The courtroom was crowded with dockers. A few days later judgment was given. Spring was declared wrongfully expelled. The northern men were back in the NASD.

Undoubtedly the 'blue union' movement in the northern ports was a progressive development. Perhaps the biggest task in the trade union movement today is the reassertion of rank-and-file control. It is foolish to think that this can come about without shake-ups in trade union structure and without explosive movements. For in the heavily bureaucratised, and often corrupt, unions of Britain today rank-and-file 'democracy', like democracy in the capitalist society in which they exist, is often just an expensive farce. Democracy is not simply a question of balloting, resolutions and waiting for enlightenment and a change of heart among the leaders.

If the bureaucratic apparatus ceases to be a servant of the members, if it preserves itself as master over the ranks, to perpetuate itself by a system of 'appointments' rather than elections, if it constantly beats down militant workers and groups, then expulsions are inevitable. So, too, struggles in which the workers have to fight against both the employers and the trade union leadership are inevitable. Moreover, given the right circumstances, large groups of trade union members will seek to break out of what has for them become a union 'prison house' in which all workers' initiative, all attempts to express their own ideas on the defence of their interests, remain caged, canalised or simply suppressed.

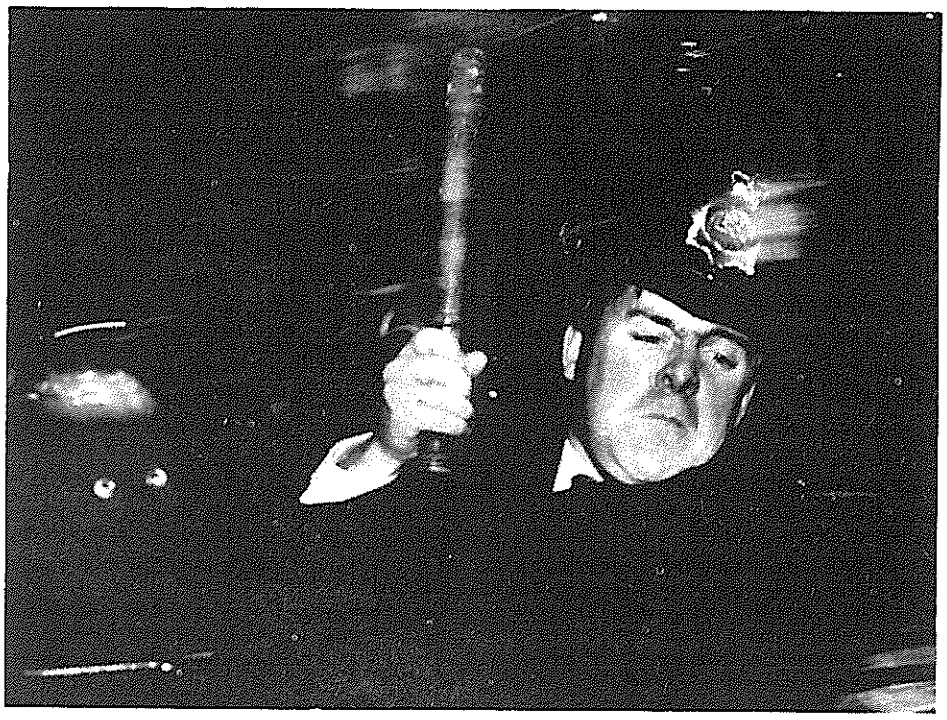
Trade unions are essentially instruments of the working class. The value of their organisational structure can be measured only in relation to how that structure serves the interests of the working class. Of course no serious trade union militant will lightly propose a break with even the most bureaucratic workers' organisation. He will seriously consider the worker's traditional loyalty to his union and the extreme difficulty of setting up new trade union organisations. But the mass walk-out of the 'blue union' cannot be regarded as in any sense artificial. It corresponded to long-acting processes deep within the TGWU. In 1954-55 these long-active forces burst out, an explosion of working-class struggle parallel to the explosion of the Hungarian workers against 'their' bureaucracy.

1. Dock Workers' (Regulation of Employment) Scheme, 1947. The scheme is administered by a National Dock Labour Board and local boards consisting of equal numbers of 'persons representing dock workers in the port and of persons representing the employers of such dock workers'. The boards are responsible for keeping registers of employers and men; as agents of the employers they pay wages due and are responsible for disciplining workers. Dock employers pay a levy to cover the cost of operating the scheme.

2. The Dock Worker. An analysis of conditions in the Port of Manchester. (University of Liverpool Department of Social Science, 1954).

Rearming the State

Bob Fine surveys the Tories' assault on civil liberties



Since the rise to power of the current Tory administration, there has been a steady and marked drift toward a more authoritarian state.

There have been moves toward a more centralised policing (remember the role played by the Association of Chief Police Officers, ACPO, and the National Reporting Centre, NRC, during the miners' strike); more militarised policing (more extensive use of guns, shields, riot formations, cavalry charges, etc., and the development of specialised riot police units); an increasing emphasis on what is usually called "public order" rather than individual criminality; a diminution in police accountability whether to local authorities, parliament or the courts; more overt right-wing politics from the police at the level of Chief Constables and the Police Federation; and the growth of police powers through statutory changes like the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (extending police powers of detention, stop and search, search of premises, etc.), the 1986 Public Order Act (extending police powers to ban and impose conditions on marches, demonstrations and pickets) and the 1984 Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act (which extended the original 1974 Act to include members and supporters of any organisation in the world which uses "violence for political ends" and made the legislation semi-permanent).

Police powers have also grown through administrative changes within the police itself, like the extensive use of roadblocks in the course of the miners' strike or broad interpretations of what counts as "threatening behaviour", supported after the event by the courts.

In the courts, we have seen magistrates extend their power to grant bail conditions as auxiliary forms of social control, in effect imposing forms of preventive detention on selected groups and individuals like striking miners or West Country peace convoys. This is not unprecedented, but appears to be more institutionalised, and has been supported with dubious legality in the higher courts.

In the crown courts we have seen more cases tried without juries, and the curtailment of rights of peremptory challenge to jurors. The steady judicial erosion of the right to silence and the curtailment of the "exclusionary rule" of evidence, that is, the exclusion from the trial process of evidence improperly acquired, has been buttressed by the Royal Commission into Criminal Procedure and now by statute.

The government's decisions to prosecute Sarah Tisdall, Clive Ponting and then Spycatcher on grounds of "national security", its attempts to censor the media over widely defined matters of "national security" (for example preventing information appearing about the Zircon spy satellite programme) and its gagging of Sinn Fein on radio and television have encroached upon rights of free speech and widened the arena of "national security" considerations.

The decision not to prosecute policemen in Northern Ireland "shoot-to-kill" cases, together with the suppression of the Stalker inquiry, the rejection of the appeal of the Birmingham Six, the acquittal of police officers in connection with the death or serious injury of John Shorthouse, Stephen Waldorf and Cherry Groce, the failure to take action against the police following the death of Cynthia Jarrett — all these cases have demonstrated the lack of independence of the judiciary from the executive.

There are more people in prison, more custodial sentences, more prison buildings to house convicts. We have had restriction of parole for violent offenders and drug traffickers serving over five years as well as for certain categories of those serving life sentences for murder, an increased emphasis on security at the expense of rehabilitation and a heightened repression of protest against prison regimes. The Criminal Justice Act of 1982 also introduced a tougher framework of custodial sentences for offenders under 21.

The greatest prize for a law and order government, the restoration of capital punishment, has eluded Thatcher in spite of her own personal support for it. In both of two free votes in the House of Commons in 1979 and 1983, the move to restore hanging was defeated by a large majority. Recently Douglas Hurd announced a programme to abolish the barbaric practice of "slopping out" by putting toilets and washbasins in all prison cells — a much-needed move to introduce some measure of civilisation into the running of the prisons, and one which the Labour Party to its shame found impossible to make in five years of government in the 1970s.

The second major front of "authoritarianisation" has been against the trade unions. Here we have seen major incursions on the right of free association, the right to strike or take other forms of industrial action, the right of free collective bargaining and the right to organise independently of state interference. The measures contained in the 1979 orders in council, the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts, the 1984 Trade Union Act, the 1986 Wages Act and other ancillary measures have imposed a wide array of controls over trade unions and their members (ably summarised in John McIlroy's book, 'Trade Unions in Britain Today').

The qualification for bringing a case of unfair dismissal was increased from six

months' to one year's continuous employment in 1979, and then to two years' in 1985. The onus of proof in tribunal cases, which used to favour the employees, was neutralised and the tribunal could now take into account the employer's financial resources. The basic award for compensation was reduced and arrangements for maternity leave and pay were weakened. The 1980 legislation weakened trade union rights to demand recognition, in 1983 the Fair Wages resolution was rescinded and in 1986 young workers were removed from the protection of wages councils. Restrictions on women's hours of work were repealed and legislation supporting collective bargaining were dismantled. There were contrary pressures, however, coming from the EEC, which impelled the government to introduce Protection of Employment and Equal Pay Regulations in 1981 and 1983 and the Sex Discrimination Act in 1986.

The definition of a "trade dispute" — the key to trade union protection — has been restricted to disputes *wholly or mainly* between employers and *their workers.* Lawful picketing has been limited to workers picketing their own place of work and a restrictive Code of Practice, limiting the number of pickets normally to six, passed to "guide" the courts. Protection for trade unionists taking secondary or sympathetic action has been severely restricted and the definition of "secondary action" opened up to wide judicial discretion. Lawful industrial action, that is action protected against civil damages, has been restricted to the workers' own immediate employer — even, as the seamen's strike revealed, action taken by other seafarers against the same employer in a separate workplace has been construed by the courts as "secondary" — and solidarity action has been minimised.

Employers' protection when dismissing striking workers has been extended and unions now lose their immunities if they support or fail to repudiate industrial action taken without a secret ballot. After the seamen's strike, it seems that even holding a secret ballot to strike may be against the law if the courts deem that the strike being balloted for would not be protected under the law. Social security has been used as a further weapon against industrial action: a sum deemed to have been paid by the union as strike pay may be deducted from the social security benefits of strikers whether or not such payment actually exists.

The 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts legislated that closed shops were only protected if approved in a ballot by 85% of those voting or 80% of those covered by the arrangement. It has also deemed it "unfair" for employers to dismiss employees who refused to join the union on grounds of conscience after a successful closed shop ballot. Trade unionists exerting pressure on management for the dismissal of non-members were opened up to legal action. Legislation has sought to remould the internal practices of unions by demanding secret ballots in the election of executive members and in the setting up or continuation of a political fund.

In the courts many legal actions have now been taken against unions both by employers and by dissident members of the unions often supported by right-wing pressure groups. These actions have been taken both under the new Tory legislation and under pre-existing laws of contract and trust. In the miners' strike, for example, so-called "rule book" actions were followed by injunctions, sequestration of union funds, the placing of union assets under receivership and threats to imprison union leaders. The Employment Acts were used by the police to limit the numbers of lawful pickets.

During the miners' strike any picket who attempted to halt a working miner for a couple of minutes to put the union case was liable to be convicted for obstructing the highway or some other breach of the criminal law. A miner who succeeded in peacefully convincing workers at a neighbouring pit not to work could attract an injunction against the NUM. The Coal Board used its rights under the law of contract and unfair dismissal to sack striking miners. Court orders were successfully used against individual miners occupying a colliery and parts of a steelworks.

The courts placed the entire union assets under receivership — at that time an unprecented use of a procedure normally applied to cases of debt and bankruptcy.

Employers have used the protection of the law to sack strikers — Eddie Shah against the NGA, Aire Valley Yarns against the T&G, Mercury Communications against the POEU, Dimbleby against the NUJ and Austin Rover against the T&G. Since then, the courts have been used ruthlessly and effectively in the cases taken by Rupert Murdoch against the NGA and SOGAT at Wapping and by P&O against the National Union of Seamen. In the latter cases, the offices as well as the funds of the NUS were sequestrated, and the courts made it clear that for the union to escape penalty for an unprotected industrial action it must actively and publicly repudiate the action — no nods and winks behind the scenes. If it wanted its assets to be returned, it had to make a full and public apology for its actions and a firm commitment never again to follow the same road.

Some Tories have argued that "life without immunities offers unions an honourable and responsible role as voluntary associations active within the limits of the ordinary law of the land" (quoted in McIlroy). The implication is that all immunities for industrial action should be removed. The government has now announced plans to ban unions from disciplining workers who refuse to take industrial action called after a successful ballot under the 1984 Trade Union Act.

According to the Guardian (4/11/88), the new Code of Conduct being considered by the government suggests that unions should consider not taking industrial action unless they receive a "very substantial" majority or a turnout in secret balloting of at least 70%. The code would not be law, but could be used as evidence in the courts. Unions are to be advised that all disputes procedures should be exhausted before a vote on industrial action is taken and that the services of a third party, like ACAS, should be sought before a ballot is launched. Unions are also to be instructed that a strike ballot is only to be used if it has first been established that there is sufficient demand for it from members and only if "official" industrial action is in prospect. Unions will be required to give employers prior notice before conducting a secret ballot and to seek their assistance in a workplace ballot if a postal home ballot is not possible.

The code further suggests that the unions should give an employer "sufficient" notice of industrial action to allow any necessary arrangements to be made to "ensure that there is no risk to the health and safety of employees or the general public". According to Norman Fowler, "British trade unions have all too often seen industrial action as a weapon of first resort. This is no longer acceptable — neither to the public at large nor to the members" — and certainly not to a government which claims to speak on behalf of both.

As with the criminal justice system, the Tory government has not on the whole undertaken sudden dramatic measures of right-wing reform (unlike the Industrial Relations Act of Ted Heath), but has moved in a piecemeal, step-by-step fashion — without, I think, a grand design, despite the plans sketched by Nicholas Ridley in the 1970s. I think the Tories have been rather surprised by their success in containing the unions and their confidence has grown with every victory. There seem to be ever fewer boundaries in the control of unions which the government is unwilling to cross.

The general strategy of the government has been to take measures which purport to extend trade union democracy and the rights of individual members against their collective bureaucracies — some of which are merely notional and some real in their effects — and to link them with further measures curtailing the sphere of operation of the union as a whole and exposing the union as a whole to a combination of crippling financial penalties for crossing the boundaries of legally approved action and tough police restraints on picketing and demonstrations.

I have focused on two aspects of the drift towards an authoritarian state: the criminal justice system and trade union regulation. The first points especially to the increasingly undemocratic character of the state machinery itself and the second to the diminishing space accorded to working class democracy outside the state. Both dimensions, democracy within the state and working class democracy outside the state, have been attacked together. There are, of course, other arenas in which the drift toward an authoritarian state has been equally revealed: arguably the most important has

been the attack on local democracy through the dismantling of the metropolitan authorities and the GLC and through restrictions on the financial powers and spheres of authority available to local authorities.

If the attack on trade unions represents an attack on one bastion of the labour movement, the attack on local democracy represents the other key element of this strategy. Already Labour's local base has been severely hit by rate-capping and the enforced sale of council houses and flats to tenants at cut-rate prices. Now new laws will allow whole council estates to be sold off (by a method which treats abstention in ballots as if they represented agreement with the sale — "democracy" is a flexible concept), permit parents and governors of schools to opt out of the local education authority and come under direct central government finance and control, impose a national curriculum on schools which excludes many of the progressive education measures introduced by Labour Local Education Authorities, and force local authorities to put services out to competitive tender, and so forth. The imposition of the poll tax, a regressive and almost feudal form of taxation, in place of rates, and the legal obligation placed on local authorities to collect the poll tax and seek the punishment of defaulters, is another step.

Probably the most significant development at the national level has been the restructuring of the civil service and public administration under Thatcherite directors, and the toughening of the managements of nationalised industries prior to their privatisation. This has included the tearing up of tripartite agreements (like the Plan for Coal in the mines) and negotiating frameworks (like the Burnham conditions in education). Major changes are likely in the bargaining structures of the civil service, British Rail workers, coalminers. etc. as privatisation and fragmentation take their toll.

Meanwhile we have the further tightening of immigration controls under the British Nationality Act of 1981 and subsequent directives.

When we look more closely at the "drift toward an authoritarian state", we see that it cannot be understood in isolation from its economic content. The substance of authoritarianism is an attack on the social foundations of the labour movement; the trade unions, local government in the large cities and the capacity of workers to use their vast numbers to control the streets. Thus the focus of the government's strategy: on criminal justice, labour regulation and local democracy. I think that the general idea behind the government's approach has been to take measures which weaken the labour movement from within before imposing on it major constitutional changes from without. In this regard the backdrop of mass unemployment has been vital in securing the defeat of particular labour movement struggles — the miners' strike, the Fares Fair and Save the GLC campaigns, the anti-rate-capping movement, the seafarers' strike, Wapping, etc. — to resist the onslaught.

It would be wrong to conclude, as some left commmentators seem to have suggested, that what we have is just a movement of the state from "consent to coercion". The new authoritarianism has been coupled with an ideological offensive designed to mobilise popular support for a new form of consensus, significantly breaking from the accommodation between labour and capital which has characterised post-war Britain. Consent has now been charged with a new content: anti-union, anti-left, individualistic, asocial and crassly materialist. The drive for consent is directed no longer at the "corporations" of the old labour movement — the unions, the Labour Party and local government — as was the case in what was termed the age of corporatism, but rather over the heads of the leadership of the labour movement to the atomised and self-interested citizen.

Structures of consent have been slowly emptied of what democratic content they had in the post-war period, with individuals increasingly being asked to identify with executive decisions taken independently of them. It is not, however, the case that the more coercive the state becomes, the less legitimacy it will retain in the eyes of the people. Delegitimising the state requires a battle of ideas waged by our own movement and not a fond expectation that the state will delegitimise itself through the nakedness of its own coercion.

> "The power of Thatcherism lies less in the ruthless intelligence of its designers than in our inability to link socialism and democracy..."

One of the lynchpins of the Thatcherite programme has been its self-presentation as a defence and protection of individual rights. It is the neo-classical tune of 19th century liberalism — or even 18th century liberalism — that the government has played. The government has sought to appropriate the discourse of individual rights, against the collectivist discourse of state welfarism, trade union power and city hall patronage ascribed to "socialism".

On the trade union front we hear of "returning power to the people": the right of the individual member to have a remedy guaranteed in law against the decisions of the collectivity, especially when that collectivity is bureaucratically organised, and the right of members more generally to hold their leaders democratically accountable for their actions. On the policing front we hear of the rights of citizens to "walk the streets without fear" in the context of worsening crime rates, or the "right to work" of non-striking workers when attempts are made to prevent them crossing a picket line, or indeed the "right to manage" of the owners and controllers of capital when workers demand a say in decision-making.

On the state front, we are told of the rights of workers and other citizens to "own their own houses" rather than be tenants of the local authority or to "share in the ownership of companies" rather than work for a state bureaucracy or "choose a schooling for their children" rather than have to accept the schooling on offer from the LEA or to "choose their own health care" rather than be forced to wait in the long queues for NHS treatment.

This language of rights contains no magic ingredient capable of hypnotising the collective consciousness of the nation. Some of these rights on further investigation turn out to be so much baloney, offering little more than illusion and camouflage. But others have significantly affected the lives of the individuals who have chosen to exercise them and appeal to workers who desire the same room to express their individuality, the same arena of free will and caprice, as the middle classes have long enjoyed.

The basic equation, theorised by Von Hayek and popularised by the Thatcher administration, is that the protection of individual right against the might of the collectivity (the unions, the welfare bureaucracies, the criminal classes) requires a strong state to enforce. The appeal to a market-based individualism is placed in gleaming colours against the dark backdrop of collectivism. Like the authoritarian programme of the government itself, the neo-classical language of rights within which it is packaged was less of a Grand Design of Thatcherism than a product of trial and error and debate within the New Right. What was discovered was a discourse which gnaws at the underbelly of the labour movement's whole ideological edifice.

I shall reserve my critical analysis of how the labour movement has responded to the gathering clouds of state authoritarianism and how it might respond in the future, to another day. But I think that the power of Thatcherism lies less in the ruthless intelligence of its designers, its alleged capacity to resonate with popular discontents, or its symbiosis with the realities of a "Post-Fordist" era, than in our own, the labour movement's inability to re-forge the link between socialism and democracy. It is above all the uncoupling of this connection that has weakened the labour movement from within in the face of the storm and allowed the new realists of Marxism Today, the Labour Party and the trade unions to restrict their vision of a future to no more than an adaptation of the Thatcherite present.

The books which I have consulted for this article are:
John McIlroy, *Trade Unions in Britain Today.*
Phil Scraton: *Law, Order and the Authoritarian State.*
Paddy Hillyard: *The Coercive State.*
Bob Fine and Robert Millar: *Policing the Miners' Strike.*

From Ford to computers

Chris Reynolds disputes *Marxism Today*'s arguments about "post-Fordism"

Capitalism has changed and is changing. Vast new areas in the Third World have industrialised. The introduction of small, cheap, flexible computers is revolutionising finance, administration, retailing, manufacturing. The majority of the workforce in many capitalist countries is now "white-collar" — but white-collar work is becoming more industrial.

Dozens of other shifts and changes are underway. Which of them are basic? How are they connected? What implications do they have for socialists?

Into this debate has marched the Communist Party's magazine "Marxism Today", bearing a banner with a strange device — "post-Fordism". "At the heart of New Times", they write, "is the shift from the old mass-production Fordist economy to a new, more flexible, post-Fordist order based on computers, information technology and robotics"[1]. These New Times call for a new politics: in place of the old class struggle, diverse alliances.

There are several issues here. Do the political conclusions really follow from the economic analysis? Is the economic analysis sound? Where does the economic analysis come from? What do the terms "Fordism" and "post-Fordism" mean?

First: why is Henry Ford such a notable figure in the history of capitalism? In 1908 the Ford Motor Company launched the Model T. By the end of World War 1 almost half the cars on earth were Model Ts. The Model T had become the first car produced in millions and bought by millions.

In 1911 FW Taylor published his book "Scientific Management", arguing that managers should study, plan, and regulate work routines in minute detail. Two years later Ford introduced the world's first moving assembly line. Each worker on the line had a few stereotyped tasks to do, over and over again, at a pace governed by the speed of the line.

This method of production increased productivity. And it turned the Ford factory into a hell-hole for the workers. In December 1913, Henry Ford found that only 640 of his 15,000 employees had been with the company for three years or more. Workers stayed on average a little more than three months.

The rapid turnover of labour reduced productivity. And trade unionists from the Industrial Workers of the World were organising in Detroit. Ford responded by proclaiming the "Five Dollar Day". On top of their basic pay of $2.34, Ford workers would be paid bonuses bringing them up to the hitherto-unknown wage of $5 a day. The bonuses were conditional. To get them you had to have been with the company at least six months, and you had to convince Ford that you were sober, moral and thrifty. Company agents, the 'Ford Sociological Department', visited all the workers' homes to check their suitability for bonus payments.

Ford also organised evening classes, sports facilities, a company band, and cheap loans. He strongly supported Prohibition of alcohol, which was US law from 1919 to 1933.

The factory remained, as one worker put it, "a form of hell on earth that turned human beings into driven robots"[2]. Ford "made an old man out of a young worker in five years"[3].

Henry Ford was vehemently anti-union, and sympathetic to fascism. He created a Service Department of anti-union thugs, eight thousand strong by 1941. It patrolled the factories, spied on workers in work and outside, and attacked union organisers at the factory gates. Such methods kept Ford non-union longer than any other car company.

> "The Ford factory... a hell-hole for the workers..."

That was Ford: a new sort of capitalist employer. In the notebooks he wrote in a fascist jail in the early 1930s, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci tried to assess the significance of "Fordism". "Americanism and Fordism", he wrote, "derive from an inherent necessity to achieve the organisation of a planned economy". It was a matter of "making the whole life of the nation revolve around production" and creating a stable, skilled, reliable, mechanically disciplined workforce.

Gramsci's notes were fragmentary and incomplete. In 1976 a French Marxist economist, Michel Aglietta, developed a new theory of "Fordism".

Gramsci saw "Fordism" as the cultural counterpart of new methods of production, with their intense drive for productivity. Aglietta's angle was a bit different. He argued that capitalism, in its different phases, needed to find different "modes of regulation", and Fordism was one of those.

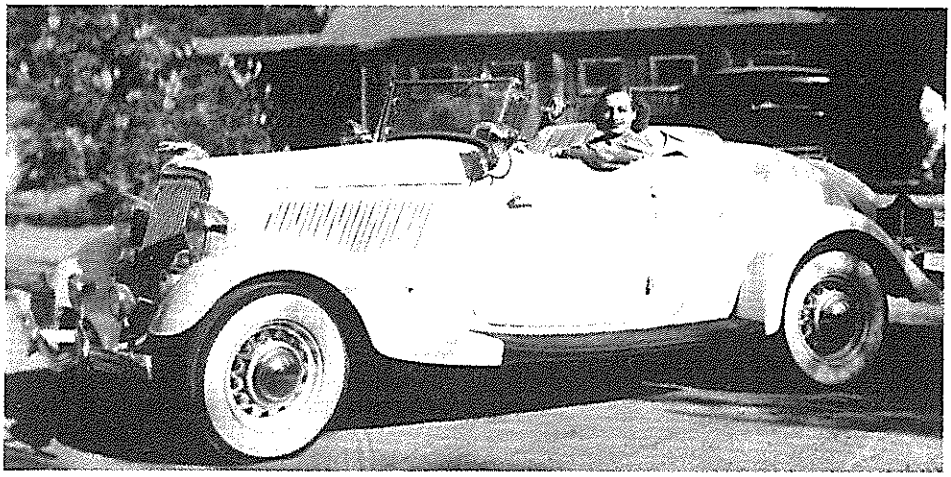
Mechanisation and mass production of standardised consumer goods led to a great rise in productivity — and in the 1930s, to a great crisis of overproduction. Capitalism surmounted that crisis after 1945 by developing rigid forms of wage determination, through collective bargaining, which let wages rise in line with productivity and thus created a predictable mass market for the mass-produced consumer goods. The constant rise in productivity allowed the rate of exploitation to increase even while wages were rising. Inflation also protected the rate of exploitation, by eroding wages. Social security protected the consumer market from drastic slumps. The whole "mode of regulation" was organised under the dominance of big monopolies, closely linked to the state, and allowed capitalism to expand in a relatively balanced, steady way.[4].

For both Gramsci and Aglietta, the technology of the assembly line was the basis of "Fordism". Beyond that, what they said was different. Gramsci was concerned with Ford's organised drive to impose industrial culture and discipline on his workers, and his selective high wages and anti-union repression, in the years following World War 1; Aglietta, with the anatomy of the trade union collective bargaining, consumer society and welfare state which developed after 1945.

Lots of other writers, mostly French, have followed up Aglietta's ideas. The foremost of these writers is Alain Lipietz, who was the Green Party candidate in the French presidential election in 1988, after serving as an economic planner for the Mitterrand government[5].

Marxism Today gets its exposition of Fordism from Robin Murray, who was the chief economist of the Labour Greater London Council. Murray is crisper, but more sweeping, in his arguments than Aglietta or Lipietz. For him, Henry Ford's method of production were the "secret" of a whole "industrial era". And more: Fordism's impact "can be felt not just in the economy, but in politics (in the mass party) and in much broader cultural fields — whether American football, or classical ballet (Diaghilev was a Taylorist in dance), industrial design or modern architecture"[6].

Aglietta, in 1976, argued that Fordism had begun to break down in the late 1960s for two reasons. First, the capitalists were no longer able to increase productivity adequately on the assembly line. Workers resisted both individually, by absenteeism, sickness, and shoddy work, and through



A Fordist Joan Crawford

collective struggles.

Second, the cost of the welfare state underpinning Fordism became too great. Labour in education, health care and so on had not been "Fordised", and its productivity had not increased much. Governments ran into budget crises[7].

The capitalists would try to overcome their disarray through what Aglietta called not "post-Fordism" but "neo-Fordism"[8]. This would be based on automation and computer-controlled machines. "The principle of mechanisation is subordinated to the principle of information"[9]. The new technology would allow employers to restructure work, with job flexibility and the creation of "semi-autonomous groups" of workers, "disciplined by the direct constraint of production itself"[10].

Workers would need less supervision, and "capitalist management...therefore hopes to be better able to isolate and attenuate conflicts that arise at the point of production, and to paralyse the functioning of the trade unions..."[11]. The new technology and work methods would allow a big rise in productivity in services, and thus reduce the cost to capitalism of the social wage. However, "Such productive forces imply a far greater degree of unification of the proletariat...all these forces point in the direction of a gathering threat to capitalism as a whole. This is why the wage relation, the very principle of class domination, can probably only be maintained by way of an ever more totalitarian system of ideological controls and mechanisms of repression...The future will tell whether the development is such that we may speak of a transformation of state monopoly capitalism into state capitalism..."[12]. State-imposed wage controls would be essential to neo-Fordism.

Aglietta was generalising from the tendencies visible in the mid-70s; and reading his book now warns us usefully against the danger of tying tendencies too neatly together into a pattern, or generalising too glibly from short-term trends.

But the warning has been lost on the present-day theorists of "post-Fordism". They generalise even more glibly — but from different short-term trends.

Now new technology is supposed to lead to the dividing-up of the working class, not to its unification; to the fading away of class struggle in favour of ill-defined new politics, not to an offensive against trade unions and a gathering threat to capitalism; to a revival of free enterprise, not to state capitalism[13].

In its progress from Gramsci's first tentative comments, the concept of "Fordism" has had far too much stuck on to it. It becomes a parody of dogmatic Marxism — everything from wage bargaining to ballet is a reflection of technology. It can hardly matter that the class struggle is dead, since technology shapes everything anyway!

> "The concept of 'Fordism' becomes a parody of dogmatic Marxism..."

Stuart Hall defines post-Fordism as follows: "a shift to the new 'information technologies'; more flexible, decentralised forms of labour process and work organisation; decline of the old manufacturing base and the growth of the 'sunrise' computer-based industries; the hiving-off or contracting-out of functions and services; a greater emphasis on choice and product differentiation, on marketing, packaging and design..."[14].

Some real developments of today are crammed under the label of "post-Fordism" here without really belonging there — the current employers' drive for "flexible" workforces, for example. Ford's "Five Dollar Day" policy was very similar. He aimed to get a stable and relatively well-paid workforce in his factories — but contracted out a lot of work to other factories which paid much lower wages. Such was also the "Fordist" policy in Japanese industry.

That post-Fordism divides workers while Fordism united them is central to the argument. But read Gramsci! Ford's labour policy was a deliberate attempt, and for a long time a successful one. to separate off a higher paid and more reliable group of workers from the rest of the working class.

The big factories became strongholds of union organisation, not because their work organisation made them specially suitable, but because trade unionists fought to organise them. And the new armies of white-collar workers — who, as new technology advances, work under increasingly industrial conditions — can be organised in the same way[15].

Fordism is probably still expanding.[16] Mass production of standardised goods on assembly lines is probably becoming *more*, not less, widespread. The "pre-Fordist" service industries are becoming more "Fordist" rather than "post-Fordist". Lipietz has written a lot about the spread of Fordism in recent decades from the US and north-west Europe to many other countries.

And what about the alleged new importance of the design of consumer goods? Aglietta's book cited "systematic diversification" of consumer goods and the development of a design industry as hallmarks of Fordism[17]. In the housing boom of the 1930s in Britain, builders advertised new houses as 'all different and individual' with an emphasis unmatched by any advertiser today.

Both terms, "Fordism" and "post-Fordism", jam together too many diverse trends under a single label.

Ideas from Gramsci and Aglietta certainly deserve to be studied and integrated into an overall assessment of capitalist development. But it is difficult to see how they can lead **directly** to political conclusions. The principles of trade unionism which had to be applied to organise the Ford factories were, after all, no different from those applied in organising non-"Fordist" industries.

So what is going on? *Marxism Today* declares a new epoch of "post-Fordism". But on examination both "Fordism" and "post-Fordism" turn out to be vague and ill-defined concepts, and the proclamation of the new era amounts to no more than a dubious assertion that various social and cultural trends (or supposed trends) are expressions or reflections of the increased use of computer technology.

Large conclusions are drawn. Robin Murray: "We need a new model of the public economy made up of a honeycomb of decentralised, yet synthetic institutions, integrated by a common strategy, and intervening in the economy at the level of production rather than trying vainly to plan all from on high...There is an alternative. It has grown up in the new movements, in the trade unions, and in local government over the past 20 years."

Charlie Leadbeater: "The Left should start with an idea of social citizenship, a democratic individualism..." The

"assumption that you can link the achievement of individual...aspirations to...state services or the progress of class has come in for a great knocking. So you have to have some new agenda for collectivism, and that should...involve 'intermediate' collectives."

Stuart Hall: "This insistence on 'positioning' [*ie. speaking 'as a..' black, woman lesbian, etc.*] provides people with coordinates, which are specially important in the face of the enormous globalisation and transnational character of many of the processes which now shape their lives. The 'new times' seem to have gone 'global' and 'local' at the same moment... A politics which neglects that moment [*ie. aspect*] is not likely to be able to command the 'new times'."

John Urry: "Although some of the features of such [*class*] struggle remain, they are now overlain by a variety of alternative bases of organisation, of new social movements"[18].

The language is often baffling and obscure, but the gist is fairly clear. Class struggle is out. Diverse citizens' protest groups are in. No *economic* trend goes anywhere near justifying these political conclusions. Nor, for that matter, are they new; they are a direct copy of traditional citizens' pressure-group politics from the good old Fordist USA.

The term "post-Fordism" is part of a whole fashion of post-this-and-that-ism, post-Marxism, post-feminism, post-structuralism, post-modernism...

The fashion was launched in 1975 when Charles Jencks coined the term "post-modernism" to describe a trend in architecture. "Modern" architecture was bare buildings in steel, glass and concrete; "post-modern" architecture is modern architecture with twiddly bits stuck on. The term "post-modern" indicates something beyond modern architecture, without any definite commitment as to what. "Post-feminists" claim to have gone beyond feminism. Similarly "post-Marxists" claim to have gone beyond Marxism rather than simply rejecting it, though in fact their ideas are no more new than the New Politics of *Marxism Today*.[19]

The operative word in "post-Fordism" is not "Fordism" but "post", or, in plain English, **after.** It does not very much matter what "Fordism" was; the important thing is that we have put those times of class struggle and factories behind us. We are into a new fun-filled consumer society — or at least *Marxism Today* assumes all its readers are. It offers only token concern to the millions of low-paid, unemployed, homeless and hungry people for whom Thatcherite New Times mean just the opposite, and spares little thought for the idea that the Thatcherite candy may soon be snatched away by an economic slump.

No lessons are drawn from the past. Stalinism is out of favour; but then it was probably the right Old Politics for the dour collectivist Old Times. No serious perspectives are sketched for the future, either: none of the contributors to *Marxism Today* even raises the question of how and by whom the diverse scattering of protest which they advocate could ever be drawn together to create **socialism.** The idea of socialism as a new form of society to replace capitalism has gone down the same black hole as "Fordism". All we can do is to make the best we can of the "good sides" of Thatcherism — the supposed expansion of individual choice and the boom in consumer goodies.

"Facing Up to the Future" is what *Marxism Today* call it in their new manifesto. Collapsing into the present would be more accurate.

Antonio Gramsci on 'Fordism'

Taylor is in fact expressing with brutal cynicism the purpose of American society — developing in the worker to the highest degree automatic and mechanical attitudes, breaking up the old psycho-physical nexus of qualified professional work, which demands a certain active participation of intelligence, fantasy and initiative on the part of the worker, and reducing productive operations exclusively to the mechanical, physical aspect. But these things, in reality, are not original or novel: they represent simply the most recent phase of a long process which began with industrialism itself. This phase is more intense than preceding phases, and manifests itself in more brutal forms...

It is from this point of view that one should study the "puritanical" initiative of American industrialists like Ford. It is certain that they are not concerned with the "humanity" or the "spirituality" of the worker, which are immediately smashed. This "humanity and spirituality" cannot be realised except in the world of production and work and in productive "creation". They exist most in the artisan, in the "demiurge", when the worker's personality was reflected whole in the object created and when the link between art and labour was still very strong. But it is precisely against this "humanism" that the new industrialism is fighting.

"Puritanical" initiatives simply have the purpose of preserving, outside of work, a certain psycho-physical equilibrium which prevents the physiological collapse of the worker, exhausted by the new method of production. This equilibrium can only be something purely external and mechanical, but it can become internalised if it is proposed by the worker himself, and not imposed from the outside, if it is proposed by a new form of society, with appropriate and original methods. American industrialists are concerned to maintain the continuity of the physical and muscular-nervous efficiency of the worker. It is in their interests to have a stable, skilled labour force, a permanently well-adjusted complex, because the human complex (the collective worker) of an enterprise is also a machine which cannot, without considerable loss, be taken to pieces too often and renewed with single new parts.

The element of so-called high wages also depends on this necessity. It is the instrument used to select and maintain in stability a skilled labour force suited to the system of production and work...

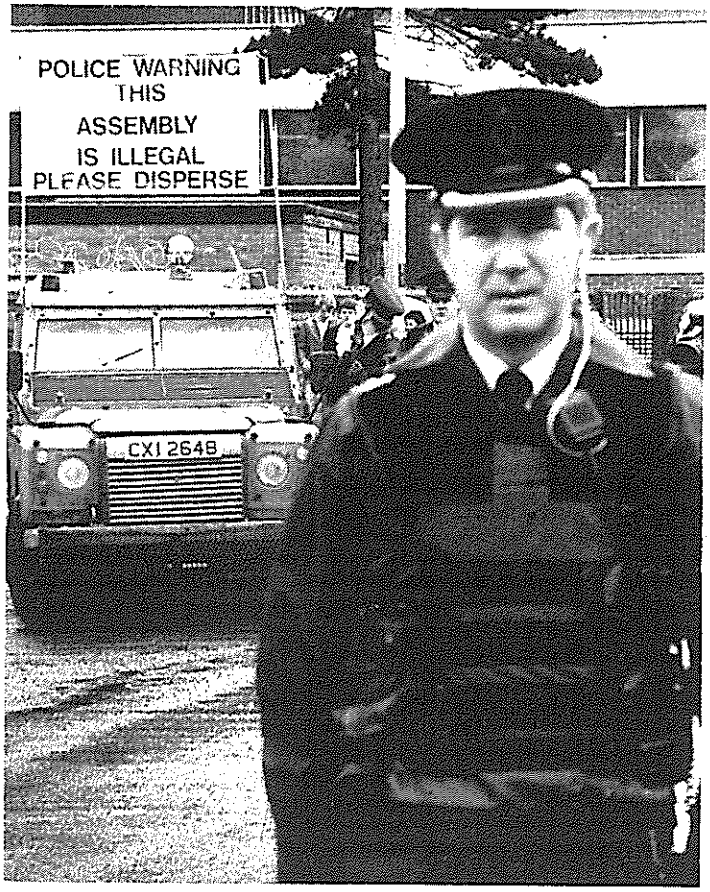
American industrialists have understood all too well the dialectic inherent in the new industrial methods. They have understood that "trained gorilla" is just a phrase, that "unfortunately" the worker remains a man and even that during his work he thinks more, or at least has greater opportunities for thinking, once he has overcome the crisis of adaptation without being eliminated: and not only does the worker think, but the fact that he gets no immediate satisfaction from his work and realises that they are trying to reduce him to a trained gorilla, can lead him into a train of thought that is far from conformist. That the industrialists are concerned about such things is made clear from a whole series of cautionary measures and "educative" initiatives...

From Antonio Gramsci, 'Prison Notebooks', p.302-3 and 309-10.

"Fordism" (Gramsci)	"Fordism" (Aglietta)	"Neo-Fordism" (Aglietta)	"Post-Fordism" (Marxism Today)
Mechanised assembly lines	Mechanised assembly lines	Automation and computers	Automation and computers
Drive to separate off a reliable and high-paid workforce from rest of working class; bonuses a large part of wages	Working class more or less unified by national collective bargaining and welfare state	State wage controls: trend to unify working class even more	Flexible pay systems using bonuses: working class fragmented
Union-busting	Collective bargaining	Union-busting	Unions become irrelevant
Regulated capitalism	Regulated capitalism	State capitalism	Thatcherite free enterprise
		Increased class struggle	Decreased class struggle

1. *Marxism Today*, October 1988.
2. Robert Lacey, *Ford*, p.128
3. Art Preis, *Labor's Giant Step*, p.101.
4. Michel Aglietta, *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation*, especially p.117ff, p.158ff, and p.381ff.
5. Alain Lipietz, *Mirages and Miracles.*
6. *Marxism Today*, October 1988.
7. Aglietta p.162ff.
8. Aglietta attributes the term to Christian Palloix.
9. Aglietta p.385
10. Aglietta p.167.
11. Aglietta p.130
12. Aglietta p.173-4, p.368.
13. Aglietta does stress that neo-Fordist state capitalism would not mean suppression of market mechanisms. But he equally asserts that the coming era would "destroy free enterprise as the pillar of liberal ideology" (p.385).
14. *Marxism Today* October 1988.
15. See *Workers' Liberty* no. 6 — editorial "No, we are not beaten", and article "The new working class in the Third World" — for a study of the current changes in the working class.
16. On the question of whether world capitalism is in a new er, or an old era which is still decaying, see David Gordon, "The Global Economy", in *New Left Review* no.168.
17. Aglietta p.160
18. All these quotes from *Marxism Today*, October 1988.
19. See Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat from Class.*

Ireland: time to rethink



It is difficult, perhaps even unfair, to judge the substance of any new campaign by the speeches made at its launch conference.

The recent Time To Go conference on Ireland attracted a large audience on the basis that 20 years after the first Civil Rights marches in Northern Ireland, it was time to build a broader, more open movement for British withdrawal. It doesn't matter that the vast bulk of speakers from the floor seemed unaware that anything new needed to be said on Ireland. It is disappointing, however, that the keynote speakers invited to set the tone for the new initiative sounded like they had been asleep for the last 20 years.

The best we can hope for, it appears, is yet another campaign to assemble a bigger audience for the very familiar arguments about British withdrawal.

Now British withdrawal from Ireland is a basic democratic demand worth fighting for. Any attempt to swim against the tide of hysteria in Britain which dominates discussion of Ireland is valuable. So why the need to be critical of Time To Go?

To be blunt, it's the concentration on withdrawal as the solution to the Irish question which is in need of review.

The Labour Party leadership and the left are both disorientated and without any strategy on Ireland — but at least the Labour Party proposes (in words) a positive solution, a united Ireland, while the cardinal principle for the left is the negative one of withdrawal. It's hard, when examining yet again the case put by the Troops Out current, to avoid the conclusion that what is wrong is their refusal to discuss any political solution in Ireland.

One of the main speakers at the Time To Go event was expected to give the withdrawal case a new, more serious and thought-out edge. Bob Rowthorn, co-author of a recent book on the Northern Ireland economy, has tried to tackle head on the argument that there would be a bloodbath in Northern Ireland if Britain withdrew. Rowthorn nodded in the direction of reality, but only, in the end, to duck and evade some of the real problems.

The central obstacle to British withdrawal has been the fear of a sectarian bloodbath. If Britain withdraws abruptly, with no political or economic arrangement then, says Rowthorn, yes, a bloodbath would ensue. But if withdrawal was negotiated and certain other conditions were met then the fear of civil war would be "rubbish".

What are these other conditions? In his speech at Time To Go, Rowthorn summarised the argument of his recent book.

Essentially, he is concerned to remind British governments that they have an important power over Northern Ireland which they have never properly used — their control of the economy. The economy of Northern Ireland is heavily dependent on government aid. The government is the biggest single employer, the major industries are subsidised or rely on government contracts, the locally based security forces are a significant employer of Protestants and dependency on welfare benefits is greater than anywhere else in the UK.

The British government should withdraw from Northern Ireland in favour of a united Ireland. Should the Protestants resist, as they certainly would, Britain should withdraw its economic aid to concentrate their minds on the need to come to terms. Britain has the economic power to make Protestant survival impossible, to break up the cross-class alliance of Loyalism, and reduce resistance to a minimum.

There is a second condition. According to Rowthorn, we would need a very "strong" government to deal with resistance, or deter it. "Nothing would encourage Protestant resistance more than a weak government."

For these proposals to be welcomed at a gathering of socialists is strange indeed. What Rowthorn's argument amounts to is a conquest of the Protestants (dressed up thinly in academic guise). What's more, the conquest is to be carried out by a "strong" British government.

What does withdrawal of economic aid mean? First, it means demanding that capitalists relocate to areas where the people are more agreeable. Second, it means the government imposing huge cuts in spending and impoverishing tens of thousands of workers, with the support of socialists — all in the name of anti-imperialism. Withdrawal of economic aid means throwing people out of work, redundancies, wage reductions and, in Northern Ireland, severe cuts in welfare benefits.

What's more, it isn't clear how such a policy would be imposed on the resisters, but no others. Either it would be imposed on all the people of Northern Ireland, in which case it would be counter-productive, or it would be used selectively against Protestants and would be blatantly sectarian.

Bob Rowthorn's proposals are not democratic, let alone socialist. The agency he looks to is anti-socialist par excellence, and the whole approach displays a tragic misunderstanding of what it is that motivates nationalist feeling and resistance.

In fact nothing would encourage more widespread Protestant violence than this collective punishment or deterrence. The whole strategy rests, absurdly, on a strong-arm British state to impose a democratic or just settlement on Ireland, specifically on the Unionists.

The argument was peppered with assertions that the Protestants would not fight seriously in any case — they are realistic rational people, "no group fights for demands which are unrealisable — ordinary Protestants would see this and there would be no fight." If Britain had the will then it could deal with the Protestants' "bluff".

All of this is dangerous light-minded nonsense. History proves that many national groups fight for apparently unrealistic demands. The current bloody fight of the Sri Lankan Tamils bears witness to the strength of national and communal politics even where the old colonial or occupying power has left.

Bob Rowthorn's strategy, shared by many on the British left, is one of a limited civil war — which can be faced down and won by a strong state willing to launch an economic and military war on Protestants.

This is not a good basis for building a withdrawal movement, or any movement which can bring us closer to a democratic settlement in Ireland. Some socialists in Britain are beginning to realise what the major problem is, but they haven't yet been prepared to recognise the scale of its importance.

When Bob Rowthorn and others talk about the "bloodbath problem", they mean the technicalities of how a British withdrawal can be made more peaceful and clean. But the "bloodbath argument" is in fact code for the fundamentals of the Irish question — i.e. the minority problem, how will the Irish majority relate to the natural Irish minority in a future united Ireland?

Eventually socialists, even those active in Britain, will have to seriously discuss that problem and produce some general proposals to deal with it, or we will make no real progress. As long as it is seen as a question of crushing or liquidating Protestant resistance, with the force of the British state (which is the only force which could remotely do it), then we will go nowhere and the Irish working-class will have been abandoned again.

Patrick Murphy

* *Bob Rowthorn and Naomi Wayne, 'The Political Economy of Northern Ireland'. Polity Press, £8.95.*

Debate on new Toryism

I agree with Jack Frain (Workers' Liberty No.10) **that 1945 socialism is in severe decline. That socialism was a mix of Fabianism and Stalinism: a bureaucratically statised economy plus parliamentary democracy. It was never *working class* socialism. I agree that we have to restate and argue for the socialism of working class self-liberation.**

But I disagree with Jack Frain's assessment of the Tory government. I think he overestimates our enemy.

Jack Frain argues that Thatcherism is a "coherent project" for modernising Britain and creating a "new order". It is not only establishing a "new framework for thinking", but also in reality it is posing "new individual market-based solutions" on many issues.

To generate a serious economic renaissance, a government has to do more than bash the unions and make speeches about enterprise. It has to promote new technologies. It has to build or modernise roads, railways, public transport, education and training. With its penny-pinching zeal for cuts, the Tory government has performed miserably in this area.

Jack Frain cites housing as an area where the "new individual market-based solutions" are gaining ground. True, the Tory government has forced councils to sell a lot of houses cut-price. It has also generated a huge growth of homelessness and a big increase in the number of dwellings in disrepair. Many of the new homeless are former owner-occupiers who could not keep up their mortgage repayments.

The high-rise blocks of the '60s are discredited, and that high-rise design can be traced back to the Modern Movement in architecture in the 1920s. But 1945 socialism cannot really be identified with high-rise blocks. Under the 1945-51 Labour government councils built houses, not flats; and no-one is denouncing those houses as symbols of the old bureaucratic order. The drive for high-rise blocks in the 1960s was not primarily the work of "bureaucratic Labour". The Tory government of 1959-64 also favoured high-rise blocks. Keenest of all on high-rise building were the very Tory and "market-based" big construction companies.

Now some Labour councils are building houses with gardens, or renovating blocks of flats to minimise or eliminate their design faults. The Tory government is starving them of money for this work. Meanwhile, private house-building has done nothing at all comparable to the great speculative building boom of the 1930s which initiated mass owner-occupation in Britain.

Does the Tory government at least have a coherent new ideology, even if it has not yet reshaped society according to that ideology? No again.

For sure the Tories are not coherent. Remember monetarism? In 1979-81 everything was sacrificed to the principle of keeping the growth of the money supply slow and steady. Then the principle was quietly forgotten. The money supply has gyrated crazily.

Privatisation has been a success for the Tories. But that is not an example of coherent ideology. Privatisation scarcely figured at all in their 1979 manifesto. They have fumbled their way into the policy empirically.

Yes, the Tories have been consistent about their basic ideology of free enterprise and the free market. But it is not new! It has been the basic prejudice of the Right for a very long time. Today's Tories promote the same old rubbish with more confidence and flair, that's all.

Privatisation seems to be, as the Financial Times put it, "an idea whose time has come". But why? After 1945 many countries nationalised a lot of basic heavy industry. Coal mines, railways, steelworks and so on had been run under government control during the war, with only minimal investment and repairs. They needed much new investment to get them in normal working order. Yet they were fundamental to the economy. Only the state had the resources to guarantee this basic infrastructure for the rest of industry.

Likewise in the Third World countries just beginning to construct their own more or less integrated industrial base: the state took responsibility for the heavy industrial infrastructure.

40 years later the needs of capitalism are different. The world has tremendous excess capacity in steel production. Energy consumption per unit of industrial output is being heavily reduced. The big nationalised industries are a burden; and, what's worse, they are often strongholds of trade unionism .

The leading technologies of today, like microelectronics, generally operate in smaller units and smaller enterprises.

That is why capitalist governments want to cut down and chop up their nationalised sectors. As for the brave "new order" this will create, it already exists — in the US, where there was never large-scale nationalised industry. We have seen this future, and it doesn't work.

Despite all this, the Tories might have won ideological victories, converting workers to their 'enterprise culture'. But there is little evidence even of that. Of course, workers who have gained a few hundred or a few thousand pounds through British Telecom shares or by buying their council house cheap are pleased about it. But the working class Tory vote has not increased dramatically.

According to Gallup, the Tories lost 8% of the unemployed vote, 1% of the semi-skilled and unskilled manual worker vote, 2% of the skilled manual vote and 6% of the office worker vote between 1979 and 1987. Labour lost working class votes — but to the Alliance.

Opinion surveys, for what they're worth, show a small but clear shift to the left in average opinion since 1979. Even among Tory voters, a very high percentage say that Mrs Thatcher has no sympathy or concern for the lives of ordinary people. Public support for the National Health Service and its anti-Thatcherite principles is high. A recent poll asked people whether they would prefer a "basically socialist" or a "basically capitalist" society: the pro-socialist replies outnumbered the pro-capitalist 55-45. There is a 53%-30% majority against privatising profitable state industries.

Morale and confidence is low in the working class. That is where the Tories have won their victory. But we should not overestimate our enemy. The Tories seem mighty only because we are on our knees. Let's stand and fight!

Martin Thomas

Reply: they have changed!

I agree with good parts of Martin's argument, but not all of it, and not the general framework he uses to discuss Thatcherism.

I agree with Martin that Thatcherism has not established a stable basis for capitalist expansion. Just to take one indicator, as North Sea oil runs out, the Treasury forecasts an accumulated deficit of £26,000 million by 1989. The "boom" is very shaky indeed.

I agree that avoidable failures by the labour movement and the left have been important to Thatcher's successes. As my review said: "Our side is saddled with a leadership that refuses to fight." Neil Kinnock and Norman Willis have probably been as important

to Thatcher as the Adam Smith Institute or the Centre for Policy Studies.

I agree that Thatcher has not yet achieved a 'New Order' or new consensus. But beyond that, I think Martin underestimates our enemy.

Thatcherism may not have *achieved* a new hegemony, but Martin seems indifferent to the fact that its strategic goal is to *create* a new hegemony, in a way that no other post-war Conservative government has done. Martin throws all Tories into one bag: some might have "more flair" than others, but it's "the same old rubbish" *really*.

Now rubbish it certainly all is from the standpoint of the interests of the working class. But the *same* rubbish? I think not. Thatcher is plainly not Harold Macmillan with "more flair". Thatcherism differs *radically* from the conservatism of the past in its objectives, its practice and its effects.

As a response to the exhaustion and collapse of the Social Democratic state, and its rule in the 1970s, Thatcherism has not only shifted the balance of class forces massively from labour to capital, disorganising every centre of opposition it has faced during a decade of government, but has been central in the creation of a quite new political terrain on which, in 1988, the class struggle is fought.

Gramsci argued that within continuity there was *difference*, that revolutionaries must attend *violently* to the *"discipline of the conjuncture"*, to what was *specific* to it. The fact that it is Stuart Hall who has insisted upon this is irrelevant.

Marxism Today's relationship to Gramsci is, I think, well understood. As Norman Geras argues: "It is the politics that dare not speak its own genuine name and pedigree, wanting the political benefit of something less discredited."

For sure we must resist the breathless iconclasts who rush to the "New Times", jettisoning every important political idea like excess baggage in their haste. But we cannot allow them to define

us negatively. We can't just say no where they say yes.

In this respect Clive Bradley's review of New Times politics (*Socialist Organiser No.377*) was excellent, beginning the work of developing an analysis of the new conjuncture from our political standpoint.

But Clive's article, correctly, raises many *questions* to which the left, including ourselves, only has the beginnings, albeit very important beginnings, of answers. I don't think it's enough to say, as Martin does, that "the Tories are mighty only because we are on our knees, let's stand and fight!"

Yes, without a fight nothing is possible, but I can't help feeling the undercurrent of Martin's reply is that the fight will take place on a terrain that isn't *really* any different to that of the recent past, against a Tory government that isn't *really* any different to Tory governments going back "a very long time."

It's like saying warfare is warfare, whether it's fought with tanks or nuclear weapons. True, but hardly the point.

Martin says the Tories have no coherent ideology. There are many contradictory theories bound up in Thatcherism: the neo-liberal "individual freedom" theme; the authoritarian/strong state/discipline theme; the deregulation and the clamping down, side by side, by the Rupert Murdoch-William Rees Mogg axis we are threatened with as broadcasting's future.

But is there no merit at all, for Martin, in Stuart Hall's observation? "In fact, the whole purpose of what Gramsci called an organic (ie. historically effective) ideology is that it articulates into a configuration, different subjects, different identities, different projects, different aspirations. It does not reflect, it *constructs* a 'unity' out of difference."

Martin says it's the "same old rubbish with more flair and confidence." Is that really enough to describe a political project which, beginning in 1975 out of office and continuing from 1979, has led a sustained assault, and introduced deeply radical changes into the trade union movement, housing, the nationalised industry, the benefits system, taxation, local government, civil liberties, the judicial system, the civil service and broadcasting?

And, moreover, unlike the Labour government of 1945, which exhausted its agenda by 1950, the Thatcherites plainly see themselves in the early stages of an "unfinished revolution".

It's not at all clear that Thatcher "fumbled" her way into her privatisation policy empirically. Remember in 1979 she was surrounded by a cabinet vastly more experienced than her, Heathite in large part, or, as she would put it, collectively "not one of us". But the John the Baptist figure of Keith Joseph certainly was whispering "privatisation" in Thatcher's ear as early as 1975.

Martin's points about the Tories' failure, so far, to create an "enterprise culture" are well made. Thatcherism remains a hegemonic project without hegemony. It dominates but it doesn't, yet, direct. The Tories have never enjoyed mass support. The problem, of course, is that they didn't need mass support to stay in office.

With a split opposition it can retain power endlessly by its lock on 42% of the electorate, given the electoral system. Labour must win the old Alliance vote, or many working class Tories, if it is to form a government.

There are two routes to this — the leadership's softly-softly claim the middle ground approach, or the project of building a tidal wave of collective opposition to Thatcher, in and out of parliament, galvanising the opposition that exists, and presenting a clear socialist alternative *future* to Thatcherism's "tale of two cities" future.

Only the second route has any connection to socialism, and as the fortunes of Dukakis proved, any chance of electoral success.

But building such a movement requires a left political practice and politics that is in tune with British society of the 1990s and beyond, sensible of the profound differences in the structure and culture of the contemporary working class, compared to the 1950s or 1930s, sensible of the scale of Thatcher's reversals and the specific nature of Thatcherism as a political project.

Martin, perhaps, runs the risk of reacting against the "everything-has-changed" thinkers (who now want to reinvent the wheel) so sharply that he ends up thinking nothing important has changed at all.

Jack Frain

A left Zionist view

As the Palestinian intifada in the occupied territories nudges Israel's political and moral capital ever closer to the perilous freefall zone, old assessments arise anew as to the origin and character of the Zionist-Palestinian conflict.

Echoes of the French-Algerian war can be expected to mix somewhat incoherently with

analogies to Rhodesia and South Africa as Israel becomes ever more convincingly depicted as a colonialist, settler phenomenon. So, while the Israeli establishment fevers with might and main to deny the authenticity of Palestinian nationalism it can, paradoxically, only succeed in further undermining the legitimacy of the Zionist enterprise itself in the eyes of democratic opinion. Where is Israel headed and is it too late to shape a different future?

Of course to the anti-Zionist demonologist, the current regressive policies of Israel are genetically coded, the inevitable process by which a European people encroach upon and continuously dispossess a native people. What is different in today's political complexion — this argument continues — is that the Western world is no longer so consumed by its guilt for the holocaust that it is ready to extend in perpetuity carte blanche support to the holocaust's remnants and descendants. It is unsentimentally prepared to pose the difficult questions, previously injudicious to ask. This demonology is the flip-side of the eschatology which now animates growing numbers in the ranks of Zionism, ie. that the Jewish people possess a divine deed to the biblical lands of Israel.

But unlike the Zionist messianics, with whom rational disquisition is precluded from the outset, the contemporary anti-Zionists at least bring to their argument a set of propositions which can be examined and weighed. First among these is the axiomatic contention that the Jews of Europe were a European people and that their penetration of Palestine constituted a form of settler-expansionism.

However straightforward this may appear, it is not a conclusion which can be drawn from the political culture of the West any more than the formation of Liberia, Israel's closest analogue, can be dismissed as a mere settler state phenomenon. The Jews were dispersed within the interstices of European society much as, say, the Turkish gastarbeiter of today is employed in the margins of the Germany economy. And just as the Turk does not become a German by virtue of his contribution to the German commonwealth, so too did the Jew remain an eternal foreigner to his European hosts despite the enormity of his social contributions.

But unlike the gastarbeiter who at least has a homeland to return to when his services are no longer demanded and a state to intercede if physically threatened, the 'European' Jew remained at the mercy of forces he could not control or in large measure even influence. Thus if Jewry belonged to Europe, it belonged as an internal colony: as 'equal' to the other nations of Europe as a doormat is to the muddy shoes which rest on it. This was the existential condition of Jewry not only in Europe, but among the Arab and Muslim nations as well, where oppression differed in degree but not in kind. And it is, strictly speaking, this surfeit of national powerlessness — and not anti-Semitism or national hatred per se — which Zionism seeks to remedy.

A Zionist is therefore a Jew who no longer wishes to be ruled by other nations. And insofar as most Jews at least understand the Zionist impulse regardless of whether they personally undertake practical measures to realise it, they remain a reservoir of Zionist support. It is in answer to the call for national self-preservation that the modern Jewish migrations to Palestine began about 100 years ago. "A land without a people for a people without a land," may have been the rallying cry of those woefully ignorant of anything beyond their ghetto walls. But it had little to do with the practical realities of the Jewish national birthplace long occupied by another people.

Be that as it may, it serves little purpose to moralise over the situation. To the Palestinian the Jewish immigrant was the Zionist 'invader'; while the Zionist considered himself a drowning man who imposed himself on an already occupied lifeboat. The existing occupant may protest that his rickety craft had belonged to his family for generations. He may have pleaded that there are larger and better equipped lifeboats that his unwelcome passenger could have chosen and that he, in any case, could hardly be held to bear the lion's share of the burden for the drowning man's plight. However, neither the drowning man nor the Jewish refugee could realistically be expected to feel much remorse for saving their necks, although it is undeniably true that the social standing of the boat's proprietor, modest to begin with — as was the Palestinian's — had been diminished in the process.

Neither Palestinian nor Jew seemed consistently capable of sizing up the situation as it actually was prior to partition and,

for that matter, is. Both appealed to the 'civilized' world's basest instincts for its approval and assistance. Zionist 'statesmen' bombastically offered to extend the boundaries of British civilisation or to hold the line against encroaching Asia in return for Western support of a Jewish homeland. Palestinian leaders demanded in turn that the West put a halt to the 'bolshevik', ie. Jewish, immigration, compared the Jews to death-dealing microbes, demagogically asked why they should be saddled with Europe's scum and usurers, and ultimately allied themselves to the Nazis. To be sure there were other voices such as the League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and Cooperation, Brit-Shalom, Ihud and Falastin al-Jadida, but these were all too often drowned out.

Imperialist policy has always been successful in playing both sides against the middle, while pursuing antagonistic ends. So too do Zionists and Arabs continue to be complicit in their own political exploitation, by renting out their services in return for imperialist support. Russian imperialism, with its old-style colonial empire that includes vast areas of Muslim inhabitation, provides itself with an Arab imprimatur through its sponsorship of Palestinian nationalism.

What is so tragic is that the objective conditions for peace have never been more abundant. Between 1948 and 1967 the Arab world demonstrated virtually no authentic desire for peace. Their demands could be reduced to the call for Israel to dismantle itself by relinquishing the Negev and repatriating hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees. This was often cynically coupled with some expressed willingness to resettle Oriental Jewry to the Arab lands of their origin, thereby 'assisting' Israel to depopulate itself.

Since the late 1970s an important series of changes have transpired. The Egyptian-Israeli peace accord weakened the prospects for a decisive Arab military victory and injected an element of sobriety into the mainstream Arab stance. The 1982 Fez document, endorsed by the PLO, calls in effect for a two-state solution to the Palestine problem with Security Council guarantees for "peace for all states of the region". Peres has furthermore admitted — although not by way of endorsement — that negotiations with the PLO could take place immediately, while Israeli military strategist Y Harkab as well as Palestinian historian W Khaladi have repeatedly emphasised how the PLO has systematically retreated from the maximalist demands embodied in its Covenant.

Equally striking is the recent result of a Jaffee Centre poll which finds that a full one-third of the Israeli electorate favours negotiations with the PLO.

Finally, the intifada has forced increasing sections of the Labour Party to shed its ideological baggage, and concede the obvious, namely that the process of Palestinian national differentiation is long complete. It can no longer suffice even as self-delusion to repeat the shopworn contention that the Palestinians are not a distinct Arab nation.

There is only one progressive and durable solution to the Israeli-Arab conflict and that is self-determination within the framework of peaceful coexistence. The Zionist left has explicitly moved in that direction which is in advance of the Labour Party's stated programme of trading land for peace. Such a solution does not require Palestinian acquiesence in the judgement that the creation of Israel is an act of historical justice. Nor does it demand of the Jewish nation that it apologise for avoiding Auschwitz by creating the political space for a new and sovereign life for itself. It requires direct negotiations between Israel and the PLO as a prelude to a comprehensive solution.

Unfortunately, the international left has all too often felt itself compelled to reject the Zionist left for Palestinian self-determination, as if the two were mutually exclusive. The argument for this can be reduced to the contention that Israel embodies a form of apartheid. As such, any attempt to square the political circle by combining apartheid with self-determination for the oppressed can only lead to a fraudulent self-determination, a Palestinian Bantustan.

This line of reasoning is based on a serious misconception about apartheid. The crucial element of apartheid — that which distinguishes it from all other forms of colonial, national and racial oppression — is that the class struggle also breaks down along racial (or national) lines. Since blacks and whites in South Africa have not evolved two parallel and separate economies, but belong instead to two different classes within a common economic structure their fates are nationally fused. The relationship between Jews and Palestinians in the occupied territories does not conform in any significant degree to this pattern.

The Israeli occupation may have distorted the direction of economic activity in the territories, siphoned off surplus value from Palestinian capitalists and exploited Palestinian workers. But Israel has its own predominantly Jewish working class and no sector within Israel other than construction is crucially dependent on the employment of Palestinians. These policies have served, at best, to defray some of the costs of occupations. The rest are borne by Israeli and American taxpayers convinced, however misguidedly, that it represents a necessary overhead premium for survival: apartheid pays for itself many times over.

Those among the radical left who abuse the apartheid analogy to call for a mass, popular uprising to sweep away Israel and create a "democratic, secular Arab state where Muslim, Christian and Jew will enjoy equal civil rights" may think of themselves as upholding the original ideals of the Palestinian 'revolution'. They are in fact upholding the view of the Palestinian rejection front. Habash, the head of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who once held and, may for that matter still hold, this perspective, had soberly spelt out its implications: "total war of annihilation against Israel and Israelis and Judaism and Jews wherever they (are)". Those who reject a two-state solution in the name of socialism might reflect on this.

Barry Finger

Why culture stagnates

I agree with Edward Ellis' reply to Belinda Weaver's article "Big Screen Blues". But there's another angle which hasn't been looked at. Artistic expression, in whatever medium, goes through periods of inventiveness, imagination and having something to say, versus periods of stagnation, boredom and repetition.

These productive and exciting periods have more to do with social and political developments, than with how the artist's work is turned into a commodity. Far from being an expert in the cultural history of the 20th century, I can nevertheless illustrate this with a couple of examples.

John Bérger's writings on Picasso and Cubism described the conditions out of which emerged the "moment of Cubism". The work of Einstein, scientific and industrial breakthroughs and the international development of imperialism were dynamic forces, and there was massive change in the world. A small group of painters were gripped by the excitement of this change, and produced the Cubist revolution in painting, and their most impressive works between 1910 and 1920. Berger pointed out that Picasso's later works were disappointing, had nothing much to say, but were widely accepted because the artist's reputation had been made.

During the pre-Stalinist years of the Russian Revolution, all forms of artistic expression flourished, and some of Russia's most famous artists produced their main works then — Kandinsky, the painter; Malevich, the constructivist sculptor and designer; Eisenstein, the film-maker.

The Cold War of the 1950s, with the US House Un-American Activities Committee, were years of artistic repression and boredom for the US cinema. Then in the 1960s and 1970s the wave of radicalism which swept the world also swept the arts. Music, cinema and writing particularly developed, and had lots to say about the Vietnam War, militarism, racism, sexism and changing the world.

The last period of western popular music innovation was the 'New Wave' of punk, mainly from Britain, in the resistance to the decay of capitalism and the rise of Thatcher.

Now it is not only film-makers who seem to have little to say, there is a general cultural stagnation. What movements in music, novels, paintings, architecture in the 1980s have been stimulating and compelling? There are individuals producing interesting work, but no movements to speak of.

This is not surprising considering the crisis of capitalism, and the weakness of the working class in fighting back in so many countries. Neither the ruling class nor its opponents is a popular source of inspiration in the major capitalist countries.

Belinda's lament is valid. There isn't much in the way of really excellent films, which are satisfying, intellectually stimulating and memorable. But there are some, and there are plenty of good, but not excellent, films around.

The lack isn't so much because of junk film commodity production (which Edward Ellis correctly points out has always been part of the film industry), but because the wider social and political conditions to which artists respond in their works are not very inspiring in the main English language film-making countries today.

Janet Burstall

Oscar Wilde, gay martyr

Ray Ferris reviews 'Oscar Wilde', by Richard Ellman. Penguin, £6.99.

Oscar Wilde was born in 1853 into an Irish middle-class family — Protestant and Republican. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, then Oxford, Wilde quickly developed the ideas and characteristics that would make him famous.

The charges of plagiarism, insincerity and indecency — ones that would become more familiar — levelled by the critics at Wilde's 'Poems' thrust him into the limelight and prompted an American lecture tour. Wilde, having already made a reputation for himself as a well read and witty conversationalist, would champion his ideas of an aesthetic renaissance, against American materialism. He would fight for an appreciation of "the beautiful".

Wilde was also very grateful for the tour's income — his generosity and his capacity to spend more than he earned haunted him till his deathbed.

Wilde in America declared art as both the secret and the future to life. His ideas were to change and develop, culminating in the two essays 'Pen, Pencil and Poison' and 'The Decay of Lying' at the end of the 1880s. He asserts "no essential incongruity between crime and culture". In 'The Decay' he presents his finished views on art in his typical style of deliberate paradox.

"As a method Realism is a complete failure." For Wilde "Life imitates Art, Life in fact is the mirror, and Art the reality....As long as a thing is useful or necessary to use, or affects us in any way...it is outside the proper sphere of Art". An age does not shape art; rather, art gives an age its character.

These bold idealistic assertions became a pole of attraction. As Ellman says, "Wilde restored art to the power that the romantic poets had claimed for it, able once again to legislate for the world."

Wilde was also a socialist. In 'The Soul of Man Under Socialism' he declared socialism to be a means to an end, that end being a new individualism. In 'Dorian Grey' (1891) Wilde's clear theme is that, "To become a work of art is the object of living." As Ellman notes, "'Dorian Grey', besides being about aestheticism, is also one of the first attempts to bring homosexuality into the English novel." The enthusiastic response of Lord Alfred Douglas to 'Dorian Grey' led to his relationship with Wilde.

Wilde declared himself an anarchist and avowed a horror of democracy. In 'The Soul of Man' he wrote: "There are three kinds of despots. There is the despot who tyrannises over the body. There is the despot who tyrannises over the soul. There is the despot who tyrannises over the body and soul alike. The first is called the Prince. The second is called the Pope. The third is called the People."

The vision Wilde outlined is a utopia. Though he sincerely sympathised with the sufferings of the working class, he argued largely from the point of view of his own class. There must be no authority, or no government, since absence of government is "most suitable to the artist".

Wilde's sexuality became both a creative driving force and the source of his downfall. After his marriage to Constance Lloyd in 1884, Wilde's interest in men increased.

In 1892 Wilde met up with Lord Alfred Douglas, son of the eccentric Marquess of Queensbury and a young student at Oxford, who arranged to meet Wilde after reading 'Dorian Grey'.

Wilde was introduced to a circle of high society male prostitution — what he later was to call "feasting with panthers". Both Wilde and Douglas ('Bosie' in Wilde's letters) slept with the boys. Their relationship became more intense.

Douglas would have fits of temper and spent Wilde's money at a frightening rate. He insisted on being wined and dined and kept in luxurious hotels. Wilde made several attempts to end their relationship, even going abroad and leaving a false address, but each time succumbed to Douglas' will. Wilde began to lose close friends over the affair.

Ellman notes: "It says much for Wilde's seriousness as an artist that under such pressure he worked at his best." Indeed, in the 15 months before suing Queensbury, Wilde wrote most of four plays and completed a fifth — his last and greatest play, 'The Importance of Being Earnest'. One of the charges he would later level at Douglas was that being with Douglas stalled his creativity.

Douglas failed his exams at Oxford, infuriating his father who blamed Wilde and who was determined to take action against him. Wilde became caught between father and son. His fate became increasingly clear. Ironically, Wilde made the first move.

Goaded by Douglas, he sued Queensbury for libel in 1885 — it was legal suicide. Not only did Wilde lose the case, incurring costs, but his defence was forced to concede that his being called a sodomite was in the public interest. His arrest was certain. But Wilde hesitated. Instead of taking off to France, he was led off to Bow Street Police Station.

Most of Wilde's friends peeled away after his arrest. Some fellow homosexuals fled the country; others chose to ignore him. 'Bosie' Douglas, for his part, visited Wilde daily and obviously still captivated him.

It took two trials to convict Wilde. In between he was granted bail and again urged to flee, but refused. He later wrote to Douglas: "I decided that it was nobler and more beautiful to stay...I did not want to be called a coward or deserter. A false name, a disguise, a hunted life, all that is not for me."

Ellman suggests "he submitted to the society he had criticised, and so earned the right to criticise it further." His mother's impassioned plea adds another dimension: "If you can stay, even if you go to prison, you will always be my son. It will make no difference to my affection. But if you go, I will never speak to you again."

Wilde faced a hostile judge, and a public scandal — his plays were cancelled during the trials. He was given the maximum sentence for indecency: two years hard labour. The costs of the trial were later to bankrupt him. Wilde's life had been ruined by Douglas and his obsessive father.

Wilde was scapegoated. Public schools in England were rife with male love. One of the reasons Wilde was sent to a second trial, after the first failed to convict, was to protect Lord Rosebery, Foreign Minister under Gladstone, who had a reputation for homosexual affairs. High society closed its ranks and could not have hoped for an easier victim.

The late 19th century was the era when sex first began to be discussed seriously as a social and psychological fact, producing a mass of literature and the new discipline of sexology. Wilde's trial laid down an important marker, forbidding the love that "dare not speak its name". It would take another seven decades before the positive assertion of gayness.

Paradoxically the persecution of Wilde helped consolidate and cohere a homosexual identity that fed into the gay movement of 70 years later.

Wilde survived for only three years after prison. Wilde's last years were sad and lonely — staying in downmarket Parisian hotels, cadging money, and shuffling from bar to bar. Ellman believes Wilde died of syphilis contracted in his youth. Whatever the physical cause, prison and ignominy killed his creative spirit: "My life is like a work of art. An artist never starts the same thing twice."

Ellman's book is thoroughly researched and well written, peppered with Wilde's epigrams and quotes from his work. He presents a tragic affair. My only regret — in the nature of a biography — as I neared the end, was that the story was true.

From Fatal Shore to Bondi Beach

Belinda Weaver reviews 'The Fatal Shore', by Robert Hughes. Collins and Harvill.

The publication of Robert Hughes' 'The Fatal Shore' has coincided rather neatly with the celebration of Australia's Bicentennial. The hype of the two hundred years 'celebration' has helped sales of the book. And the book provides an antidote to the distortions and jingoism of the Bicentennial 'party'.

It's chic now in Australia to claim convict descent. Everyone wants to get in on the act. Tracing family history is now a national obsession. The convict past, no longer the shameful stigma it was, seems just another lovable aspect of Australia's history. Aussies are supposed to be ruggedly independent, jovial, anti-authoritarian, loyal to their mates, fond of the outdoor life. The popular image of the convict — a republican outcast in British society, or an early trade unionist — chimes in with this 'typical Aussie' image.

Hughes' book answers many questions — the who, what, why and how of Australia's founding. It's a timely and necessary book. For too long, Australian children learned only British history. Our own past was taboo, dealing as it did with the convicts, the suppression of the Aborigines, the bushrangers and the split from Britain's rule. The Australian past was too close for comfort. Better the recital of far away kings and queens than an investigation of the fatal shore. The current tide of nationalism in Australia bends the stick too far the other way. Far from being shamed or worried by the past, Australians want to celebrate it, get drunk on it. Both approaches end up hiding the truth.

Hughes has ripped open the past. This is no anodyne history aimed at pleasing the world. It is raw truth and history, bloody, violent and savage. It gets at the real beginnings, not simply with the first white foot on Australian soil in 1788. It tells us where that foot came from and why. It also describes Australia before the white man. No Garden of Eden, peopled with noble savages but a harsh, dry land peopled with a stone-age race with little culture, living a hand-to-mouth existence with no agriculture, no domestic animals, no permanent structures. Hughes romanticises nothing.

The British convict experiment was a desperate solution to a desperate problem. A whole continent would become a jail. Georgian Britain was a cruel society. Those with money and position clung grimly to them, with the law firmly on their side. Crimes against property were punished more severely than any other, often ending with hanging. The ruling class believed in the existence of a criminal 'class' — a set of bad apples who would turn the rest rotten. The need was to punish them, and if possible, to segregate them for the sake of the 'good'. Can anything have seemed more futile than this experiment?

Attacking the symptoms of extreme poverty couldn't cure the cause. People stole to stay alive in a world which denied them a living. Laws and punishment could not deter the starving from stealing food or money to survive. In many cases, the amounts stolen were pitifully small, but the punishments were heavy — long imprisonment or death.

Yet Georgian Britain lacked the prisons or the police to manage its criminal problem. Many convicts had previously been sent off to America at the expense of colonists for whom they were forced to work on arrival. This form of slavery was closed after the American War of Independence. A new solution was needed. Many prisoners were locked up on rotting hulks, but this was only temporary. The hulks themselves were overcrowded and were so unsafe that many sank with all aboard. They were filthy and hotbeds of crime. They provided no real answer.

So the Australian experiment was tried. Luckily, this new venture was so far away that few convicts would ever return. 14,000 miles — the end of the world. To many convicts, the mere thought of it evoked death. It was simply unimaginable. Not only the convicts worried. The Marines who sailed with the First Fleet were also anxious. They were sailing into a complete unknown. Letters and supplies could take six months or longer to arrive. Many would not see families and friends for many years, if ever. Australia seemed worse than death. Death could be imagined, Australia could not.

The First Fleet were lucky to survive. Their journey was horrendous. The victualling of the ship had been done by crooked merchants, so many supplies were rotten. The rigours of the journey killed many. The Fleet sailed with no special precautions against scurvy; the weather was bad; convict insubordination was rife; and morale was low in the crew. Their arrival at Botany Bay was a letdown. Though glad that the journey was finally ended, they were appalled to discover the Bay unsuitable for settlement. A further search found Port Jackson just a few miles north; a natural harbour, teeming with fish and with rich soil and abundant water. The site of modern Sydney was eagerly settled.

But it didn't live up to its early promise. The soil was poorer than expected, seeds failed to thrive, the rain came down in buckets or not at all. The Fleet faced starvation years until the Second Fleet could arrive to succour them. Bad beginnings.

Convicts were fed 'on the store'. The government were the main supplier of all food and goods. Convicts were set to work building shelters and tilling the soil. No need for a prison here; the whole country was one. No convict could escape and hope to

survive. The Australian bush was inhospitable to all but the Aborigines who could find waterholes and live off the native animals and insects. Totally ignorant of geography, many convicts fled, hoping to find China or some other hospitable land. All they found was a lonely death.

After the starvation years, the convicts could hope for a better lot. Instead of being stuck in prison, they were assigned to work for free settlers. In time, they could hope to get tickets-of-leave, and become free settlers themselves, though they could not leave the colony. For many, this was the road to a respectable living, the living that 'old England' couldn't provide. But many convicts met a harsher fate. Assigned to brutal masters who worked them to the bones and flogged them at will, many convicts preferred death itself.

Many convicts, usually the 'hardened criminals', were not assigned, but worked in government chain gangs doing the hardest work, such as road building. Life on the gangs was grim. Heavy irons weighed them down. The legs of many were open sores from the incessant chafing. The work was punishing, their overseers were cruel and arbitrary, often stealing the food meant for the convicts.

There was no thought of rehabilitation for criminals. The system had to be cruel if it was to deter the criminal back 'home'. Thus punishment and work was the never ending round, with special places of punishment created for persistent offenders.

In places like Macquarie Harbour, men often worked knee deep all day in freezing water, building pylons for a bridge, and spent cheerless nights on a windswept, rocky island with no blankets and with empty bellies. For whistling, smiling, singing or loafing, endless lashings were given.Men had little enough to be cheerful about, anyway. Talking was frowned upon, as all convicts were suspected of plotting some crime. The system brutalised because it denied any humanity to the convict. He had to be crushed absolutely so that he could never commit a crime again. Such was the system on the fatal shore.

The special hells created included Norfolk Island, Moreton Bay and Port Arthur, as well as the frightful Macquarie Harbour. Run by sadistic men who were beyond the control of any government, they were precursors of the 20th century gulags. They aimed to break men utterly, by consistent hard work, by flogging and by crushing discipline. Men were given thousands of lashes. The faces of spectators would be splashed with flesh and blood. The cat o'nine tails frequently wore out. Blood would slop in the shoes of the lashed man. One man had so little skin left on his back from incessant floggings that his shoulder blades showed through.

In creating these special hells, the system was fulfilling its deterrent role. Men would rather die than go there; many killed themselves or killed others in suicide pacts to escape.

'The Fatal Shore' is living history. It could have been just a catalogue of horrors, or a list of numbing statistics. But Hughes has found the language to touch our hearts and minds. He has made the unimaginable imaginable.

He has also touched on three taboo areas in some detail — the treatment of women, the existence of homosexuality and the fate of the Aborigines.

The 'popular' view of convict women is that they were all prostitutes. This is shown to be false. Many, like men, simply stole to survive. Many had been seduced and abandoned, but not all had turned to prostitution as a result. Some had been Irish nationalists or agitators of one kind or another. The colony's treatment of them was shameful. In the Female Factory at Parramatta, men could come to feel the merchandise before choosing a wife. When a new ship arrived, men turned up to take their pick of the women; the rest were sent to

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the Female Factory. Most needed a man's help to get on.

The 'curse' of homosexuality was decried by all managers of the convict system. The jailers were surprised that locking men up together, far from the sight of women, should result in homosexuality. It was rife throughout the colony, especially in the hell holes like Norfolk Island. No wonder that prisoners took what solace they could from each other. Yet the official reports drip with loathing and contempt for these 'unnatural practices'. It had to be stamped out. But floggings had no effect, though the punishment was severe.

The official policy towards the Aborigines was always one of peaceful coexistence. All the same, the advent of the white man was an unmitigated disaster for the Aborigines. In Tasmania, they were completely wiped out; their numbers today on the mainland are still small. They could never defeat the white man militarily, and they succumbed in huge numbers to two imported evils, disease and liquor.

The spread of white settlement forced tribes out of their natural hunting grounds and into conflicts with other tribes. The convicts hated them. Themselves the lowest on the white ladder, they longed for someone they could beat down. The Aborigines became their victims. When convicts became free and got some land for themselves, they kept their mistrust of the Aborigines, who had often helped to track down escaped convicts for the government. As more of the country became settled, white settlers killed off Aborigines rather than live in fear of attack. Poisoned flour was given out, along with tobacco and rum.

Aborigines had no settled religion or gods, but they did have an almost mystical attachment to their land. Certain sites were sacred to them. In driving them off, settling on these sacred sites, and barring them from their traditional grounds, white settlers destroyed the Aborigines' relationship with the land, and thus their whole way of life. This fact must stand with the other facts of disease and drunkenness as one of the destroyers of Aboriginal life.

For many convicts, arrival on the fatal shore had been utter misery. But others had prospered, had made a living, and could call themselves free. This fact led many criminals in Britain to petition for the chance to be transported. They too hoped to finally reach a better life. Even free settlers were becoming more numerous. Some settlers talked of independence from Britain and the end to transportation. Free, waged workers would be better value than convicts. The colony was developing its own life and politics different from that of England. England wanted things to be tightened up, with more Moreton Bays and Port Arthurs to deter the criminals at home; many colonists wanted a free Australian society, rid of the convict stain. By 1840 transportation to New South Wales had officially ended.

With all the hype of the Bicentennial promoting a healthy outdoor life in a sunny climate, thousands of Britons are now queuing up to emigrate to Australia, which has changed its image from fatal shore to the land of sunshine and opportunity. But the Bicentennial advertising hides the truth about the present as much as it does the truth about the past. You'll find the real story in the pages of 'The Fatal Shore'.

State of the unions

Alan Gilbert reviews 'Trade Unions in Britain Today' by John McIlroy. Manchester University Press, £5.95.

"In the past management couldn't shift you without the agreement of the union; now it's done without consultation..."

"It means you never get to know any of the blokes, it breaks up any unity..."

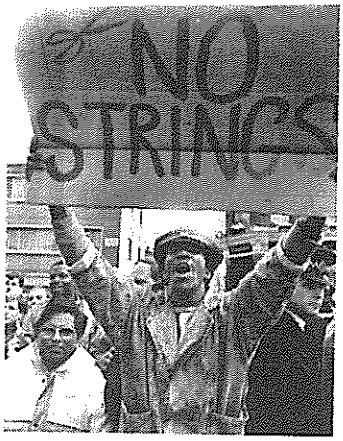
"In the old days the target was set by timing the operator; now the target is based on the gross potential of the machine. That means they set the machine as fast as possible and you have to keep up with it..."

That's the reality of modern 'flexible working', as described by a worker at the Longbridge BL/Austin Rover car factory. Much of the picture of trade unions in Britain today is a grim one: legal attacks, battered organisation, demoralised leaders, speed-up.

John McIlroy paints the picture soberly and in detail, without any false optimism. But he also notes carefully the counter-tendencies, the reservoirs of strength, the potential for a fight back.

"The changes taking place (in the workplace) are real, not superficial or temporary, but they are, on the whole, changes *within* the working class. What we are observing is not a withering away, but a *reconstitution* of the working class...The working class is *expanding not shrinking*...

"There is no iron law which dictates that unions cannot recruit



women, part-time employees... There is nothing intrinsic in possessing a mortgage, owning a video or purchasing shares which is antagonistic to holding a union card. A recent MORI poll found, for example, that 80% of union members own their own home, 9% more than the public generally...(Another) survey found a massive 88% believing that trade unions are essential to protect workers' interests.

"While the unions have suffered important reverses compared with the previous two decades, we are still witnessing national industrial action — absent in the dog-days of the twenties and thirties. And the resilience of the unions is illustrated by the spate of disputes in the mines, the civil service, the schools, the car industry and the Post Office in 1986-87".

Gay fiction best sellers

Clive Bradley reviews 'The Beautiful Room is Empty', by Edmund White (Picador); and 'The Lost Language of Cranes', by David Leavitt (Penguin).

Edmund White is probably the world's top gay writer, at least in English. You can find his 'A Boy's Own Story' on railway station bestsellers' stands. 'The Beautiful Room is Empty' is his latest, and best, novel.

I have not generally enjoyed his previous work. He tends to write about desperately sophisticated people who bitch subliminally at each other. His last novel, 'Caracole', was an excruciatingly poised examination of a decadently suave society on the verge of revolution.

On one level 'The Beautiful Room' is similar — the characters are all Greenwich Village-type young artists who flirt with communism because it is fashionable. The unnamed central character, who is an aspirant genius, has beautifully artistic traumas.

Yet here there is a great deal more genuine self-mockery than in previous books. It is, in fact, the sequel to 'A Boy's Own Story' in which our hero goes to college, discovers anonymous sex in university toilets and eventually gets caught up in the 1969 Stonewall Riot, the protest which initiated the modern gay movement.

White's subject matter is homosexuality and homosexuals in middle class 1960s America. It is a novel about the change that took place in homosexuals' self-perception in this period — the transformation from immense guilt and self-contempt, to the feeling that came later to be called 'Pride'. Stonewall is here only the end of a story, the first pangs of a new sense of riotousness, still very embryonic, but White captures that feeling well.

None of his characters are happy being gay. They go to shrinks, try to date girls or attempt doomed marriages. Aggressively camping it up is often no more than an expression of self-hatred. Yet there is a new consciousness of sexuality on the way, and the scourge of AIDS is two decades in the future.

'The Beautiful Room' is both politically and artistically more satisfying than White's previous novels. I actually felt that I liked the characters for once.

If White's subject is gay America in the 1960s, Leavitt's is gay America in the early 1980s. His first, extraordinary novel, 'The Lost Language of Cranes' is nevertheless different to White in more than chronology.

At its centre is a family in which a gay son, Philip, comes out to his parents as a result of a failed relationship. This acts as a catalyst to the very belated coming out of his father. So there is an intricate web of relationships — husband and wife with a marriage slowly decaying, father and son finally getting to know each other, mother and son failing to do so.

It is a remarkably believable story, with absolutely believable characters, depicted so vividly that you have to read on to know what happens to them. Leavitt captures everything with poignant accuracy: the traumatic decline of Philip's first love affair, the tension between guilt and release in his father's gradual coming to terms with himself, his mother's impatient indifference. It is a very human book.

Philip's father is one of the closet-cases of White's generation, finding satisfaction after a lifetime of self-oppression. Philip

is a child of the gay movement itself, or at least a product of the social change it brought about: when he decides he is gay he goes up to very vague friends at college to inform them; he moves in a world where there is an open gay scene as well as sordid porno shows.

Moreover, whereas all White's characters are eccentric or exotic or even slightly mad, Leavitt's are 'normal', down-to-earth, lower middle class people. Philip's parents worry about losing their apartment; they are glad their son has gone to college.

The two novels together could hardly be said to give a 'picture of gay America'; what they do suggest is the extent to which 'gay fiction' has come out of its ghetto. Both books are published by major publishing houses, although neither author has a 'reputation' independently of their writing about homosexuality.

Others may see this as unwanted respectability; to me it seems a good sign, especially in these times of Section 28. The more libraries that stock them, the better.

The USSR's ruling class

Chris Reynolds reviews 'The Soviet Union Demystified', by Frank Furedi. Junius, £5.95.

Frank Furedi argues that the Soviet bureaucracy is not a ruling class, and is not imperialist. His arguments don't convince me.

It is not a ruling class because its role in production has to be imposed by political power, rather than flowing from automatic economic mechanisms; and because the individual bureaucrats' competitive striving for personal advantage disunites it.

Criteria of this sort can be used to define out of existence almost every class in history. What about the bureaucratic ruling classes of ancient Eastern despotisms, who intervened in the basic process of production (agriculture) only to despoil the peasants? What about the feudal landlords, constantly warring with each other, and unifiable only by an absolute monarchy?

The ruling bureaucracies in the Eastern bloc have a distinctive relation to the means of production: they control and effectively own them. They seize, control, and live from the surplus product. They are relatively stable; individual bureaucrats get purged, but less frequently than individual capitalists in the West are ruined.

They reproduce themselves: through educational privilege and patronage, they make sure that the next generation of bureaucrats is recruited from the sons and daughters of this generation. The chances for a Soviet working-class child of becoming a manager are smaller than those for an American working-class child.

Their cohesion and community of interest, though not unlimited, has been quite sufficient to see many bureaucracies — in the USSR, in China, in Yugoslavia, in Hungary, in Poland — through enormous shifts in policy without big internal splits. *And every year, every month, every day, they are counterposed in class struggle to the working class.*

The bureaucracies are not alien organs somehow attached to socialistic planned economies. Everywhere but in the USSR, the bureaucracies created and shaped the planned economies.

In the USSR, industry was nationalised by the working class rather than by the bureaucracy. But the Stalinist economic system — of detailed administrative regulation on the basis of scarcity and the ruthless squeezing-out and centralisation of the surplus product — was never even proposed, much less instituted, while the workers still held political power in the USSR. The sort of planned economy that has existed in the USSR since the 1930s — in all its many variants — is bureaucratic in its very essence.

The USSR is not imperialist, so Furedi argues, because its foreign policy is fundamentally conservative and defensive, and is not propelled by a drive to export capital. This argument is no less pettifogging than the ones used to deny that the bureaucracy is a ruling class.

After World War 2 the Kremlin seized Eastern Europe and staked claims over parts of Iran, China, and Libya. In 1979 it invaded Afghanistan. It has consistently sought to expand its sphere of influence and its circle of friendly states.

Aware of its economic and military inferiority to the US, the Kremlin is indeed cautious. In a sense its policy is indeed consistently defensive. But then *all* the imperialist states have been more or less on the defensive since World War 2. Britain and France waged losing wars to try to preserve their empires; the US fought in Vietnam to try to 'defend' its existing sphere of influence.

Lenin wrote a pamphlet in 1916 focused on the particular sort of 'imperialism' which had developed since 1898-1902. Even then, he never used pedantry to argue that Russia and Turkey, for example, were not imperialist because they lacked such features as export of capital. To use such pedantry today is to turn theory into a shield from reality. Especially so, since the USSR does in fact export capital, albeit modestly.

Despite rejecting the idea that the state-monopoly systems are new systems of class exploitation, parallel to capitalism or special forms of capitalism, Furedi equally rejects the mainstream Trotskyist thesis that they are 'degenerated and deformed workers' states. Indeed, he is haughtily contemptuous of the whole debate on the left over these issues.

True, that debate sometimes seems like futile playing with words. Yet, in substance, no debate is more important for modern socialism.

Furedi loftily distances himself from the war of labels — and loftily evades the substantive issues underlying that war.

The core of his book is a description of the USSR based on the work of Hillel Ticktin and the magazine 'Critique'.

Capitalism, argues Furedi, decides who produces what, how, through the mechanisms of supply and demand — the market. (At one point he notes that in the Third World today capitalism relies "primarily upon state intervention rather than upon the market" — however, he never allows this observation to disturb his generalisations). The capitalist market is inhuman and crisis-prone; but within limits it works.

Workers' democracy allows an alternative way of deciding who produces what, how — through conscious planning. But, Furedi says, the bureaucratic system existing in the USSR since the '30s has neither effective markets nor conscious planning.

So the statised economy has "no developmental dynamic". In the jungle of bureaucratic blundering, everyone just looks after themselves. Despite its collectivist pretences, the USSR's economic and social life is more privatised, more un-cooperative, than life in avowed private-enterprise societies.

To my mind Furedi's picture is not so much false as partial. The USSR proceeds chaotically and wastefully — but where does it proceed? If it is only wasteful, then it is a society which, in terms of the historical evolution of modes of production, ranks far behind capitalism and indeed behind feudalism.

Furedi's basic picture is that the USSR is irreformably stagnant. This thesis may be very anti-Stalinist, but it is also very nonsensical. Why did Stalinism manage to industrialise the USSR? Why has the model of the USSR been followed by many post-war revolutions which have led to similarly spectacular industrialisation, for example in China?

Furedi offers no discussion at all of the revolutions which have copied the USSR's type of society, nor of the undeniable dynamism of societies like post-1949 China.

Indeed he seems to argue that replication of the USSR is practically impossible, because it arose through peculiar accident. "The emergence and survival of a new social formation, one without any developmental dynamic, was a result of special historical circumstances. The worldwide defeats of the working class ... the weakness of the world capitalist system... A tremendous reservoir of resources and labour... If any one of these accidental factors had been missing, the survival of the new social formation would have been jeopardised". And "accident" is about as far as he gets in explaining Stalinist industrialisation, too.

Worse: if Furedi drew appropriate political conclusions from his picture of the USSR as a return to the pre-feudal Dark Ages, then at least he would be consistent. In fact he concludes only that the USSR "can claim no superiority over capitalism". And, as we've seen, on some key issues he chimes in with those who insist that the USSR is progressive compared to capitalism.

Furedi is a leader of the 'Revolutionary Communist Party', a group notorious for decking out primitive sectarian politics with a pompous pretence of being the first and only Marxist theorists since Marx himself. This book is in the same mould.

Butter, guns and power

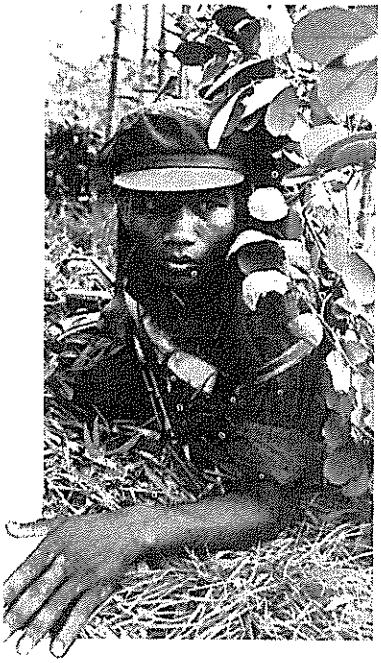
Martin Thomas reviews Paul Kennedy's 'The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers'. Unwin Hyman.

"Nothing is more dependent on economic conditions" — Paul Kennedy quotes Engels — "than precisely the army and the navy."

Paul Kennedy's book expounds this theme and adds another in counterpoint: economic might leads to military over-extension, which leads to economic eclipse.

The book is a bestseller because of what it says about the US today. The US, Kennedy argues, has arrived at the stage when a big drain of resources to military spending brings relative economic decline. But, he suggests, a careful military scaling-down could make the decline slow and comfortable. Since the domination of the world by the two superpowers, the US and the USSR, is breaking down with the rise of Japan, the EEC and China as comparable powers — and the US can get these three new powers more or less on its side — the US need not fear any dramatic eclipse.

Paul Kennedy offers no solid backing for his belief that the



world's main groupings of capitalists and bureaucrats can be trusted to readjust their relations smoothly, without violent tests of strength. And the historical part of the book — it is, after all, supposed to be a history book, surveying world power politics from 1500 to today — is desultory and slackly written. It is a pity, because Kennedy's chosen themes are important ones.

High military spending can slow down an economy. That was certainly true of the feudal Hapsburg Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries. It is also true of the advanced industrial economies today. Britain, the US and the USSR have all spent heavily on arms, and grown sluggishly; Japan, West Germany, and Italy have spent much less on arms, and grown faster. Careful statistical studies have confirmed this picture.

The reason is obvious: the resources (in Marxian terms, the surplus value) pumped into the military are wasted from the point of view of production. They are a deduction from the investment, research, and mobilisation of skilled person-power making for economic growth.

Yet the rule has very big exceptions. Britain's huge military spending during the Napoleonic Wars of 1799-1815 — up to 24% of national income — did not stop the Industrial Revolution, and may indeed have stimulated it. In the late 1930s both Japan and the USSR were spending more of their national income on the military than even Hitler's furiously-rearming Germany; yet they were by far the fastest-growing industrial powers of the time. From 1945 through to the early '60s, the USSR continued to combine heavy military spending with rapid industrial growth.

In the Third World today — as against the advanced industrial countries — heavy military spending does not seem to hinder growth. On average, countries with heavy military spending, like South Korea, Pakistan, Egypt, Malaysia and China, have indeed grown *faster* than low-spending ones like Mexico, Brazil, the Philippines, India and Indonesia.

The Third World figures are not straightforward. Many countries with heavy military spending also receive a lot of aid from the US, so that the military spending is effectively not a drain.

But it does seem that in countries which are still mostly agricultural, and where an industrial base is being built, heavy military spending can pull industrial development forward. It can mobilise resources for building railways, roads, steelworks, power stations and engineering factories whose profit prospects are doubtful and at best long term, but which are now justified as essential underpinning to the state's military strength. It may even help to mobilise resources for the health and education to the mass of the people — those who have to form the rank and file of the army.

Once an industrial base is established, things change. Economic development is no longer a matter of building more steelworks, railways and power stations, but of replacing old industrial technology with new. It is no longer a matter of pulling millions of people from the countryside to labour in industry, but of increasing the productivity of a more-or-less stable workforce. In Marxian terms, relative surplus value is now central rather than absolute.

At that stage, heavy military spending becomes a brake.

The jitters on Wall Street

Colin Foster reviews "Boom and Bust", by Christopher Wood. Sidgwick and Jackson, £15

This is a weird book. The author is New York correspondent of the big business magazine *The Economist* and was educated at Eton.

Although the jacket photo shows him looking more like a hippy than a yuppie, he is no sceptic about the virtues of capitalism.

Yet he is utterly convinced that a huge slump is coming in the wake of the October 1987 stock market crash. The slump is not just likely (as I would argue) , it is *certain*. And it will be worse than the 1930s.

Wood earnestly advises his readers to put all their assets into gold, Swiss francs, and maybe a few government bonds.

His basic argument is simple, and not enough to prove his conclusion. Debt, internationally and within economies like the US, is ballooning. It can't go on ballooning forever. The confidence trick will collapse some day. And when it does, the bigger the bubble of debt, the bigger the collapse.

There is a debt bubble and it could burst; but there is no fixed rule that says *when* it will burst, or that it is impossible to deflate it more gradually.

Maybe the most interesting thing about the book is that a leading financial journalist could write it, and could find a sizeable number of leading money men to quote who say roughly the same as he does. Wall Street has got the jitters.

Liberty, equality, fraternity

Paul Vizard reviews "The French Revolution", by George Rude. Weidenfeld £14.95.

According to the dust jacket, "1989 marks the Revolution's 200th Anniversary. *The French Revolution* by George Rude is the one book for those who want to know what the celebrations and arguments are all about".

The book is written from a broadly Marxist viewpoint. It gives a clear story and well-informed judgements. Instead of halting at 1799 or 1793 as too many histories do, it devotes almost half its pages to tracing the repercussions of the revolution across Europe during the Napoleonic Wars.

But as a basic guide to the Revolution, I think it is inferior to the same author's brief *Revolutionary Europe*, or Soboul's classic *The French Revolution*.

The narrative is intertwined with a discussion of different historians' theories and debates on each development. The discussion is interesting, and in some ways makes the book more valuable, but it does spoil the sweep, grandeur and excitement of the story.

Read *Revolutionary Europe* or Soboul first, and this book afterwards.

The Greens show the way?

from back cover

left.

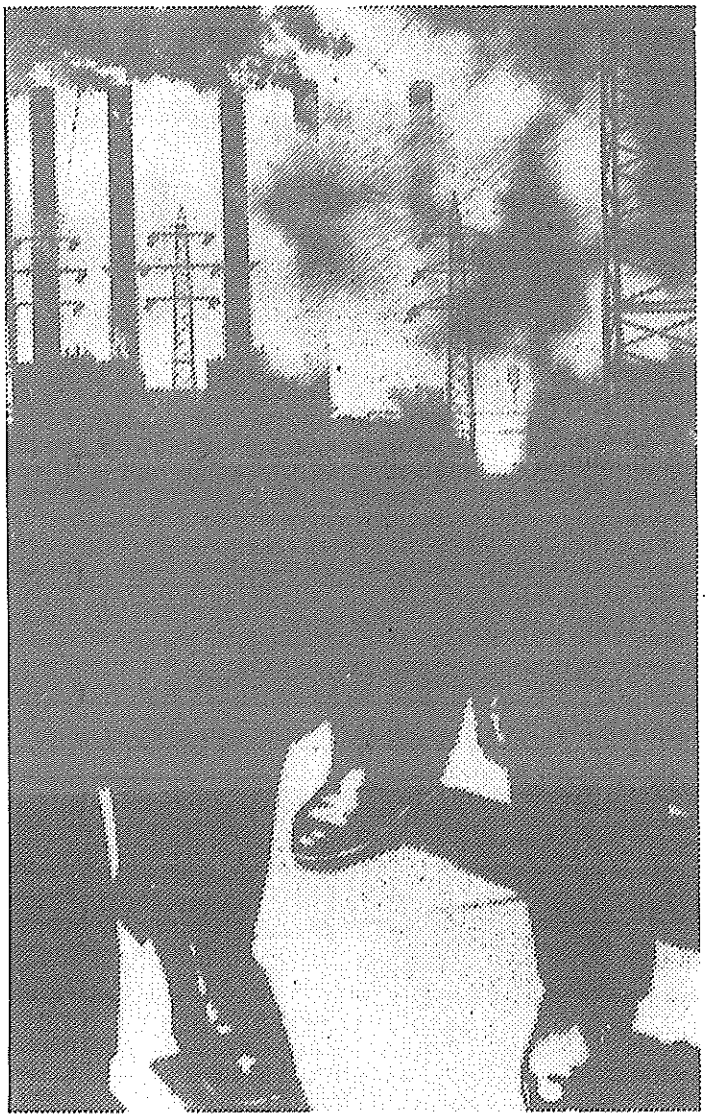
The Greens now face the same problem as the far-left of the '70s — how to move from a protest movement to challenging the hold of the right-wing social democracy. None of the factions has proposed a plausible strategy to do this. Huelsberg suggests (with an implicit comparison of the Greens to the Communist Party of the '20s!) that the Greens should make a united front with the SPD against the conservatives, support an SPD government against the right, while maintaining Green independence. Such a tactic presupposes, however, that the Greens can put forward a programme that would form a basis for the real defence of the SPD's base against the government. In the Greens' present state, any move to a programme unambiguously based on working class interests would be likely to split the party.

Huelsberg's book is full of optimistic prognostications about the Greens and their continued development to the left. He tends to blur the differences between the working class and a rainbow coalition of the 'new social movements', between vague statements about the need for an alternative to the present society and an anti-capitalist programme, between the Greens and the German Communist Party of the 1920s in their relation to social democracy, between ecology and Marxism. The Greens' move to the left in the early '80s is attributed to the "logic of development asserting itself behind the backs of the participants," rather than the far-left deciding that the Greens were the place to be. In short, this book is marred by Huelsberg's wishful thinking, which seems to have come from his time in the Mandelite Fourth International, with its years of searching for the 'new mass vanguard'.

However, for anyone interested in the West German left there is a lot of useful information in this book, particularly on the pre-Green history of the far-left. Much of the statement of the Greens' problems is also perceptive. Where the book fails is in its perspectives for the left. Ultimately, hitching the wagon of the revolutionary left to the Greens will prove as arid as the strident proclamations of revolution in the '60s and '70s.

The Greens show the way?

Bruce Robinson reviews 'The German Greens', by Werner Huelsberg. Verso, £9.95.



The West German Green Party is the envy of much of the West European left — to the left of the mainstream labour movement, yet regularly polling between 5 and 10% in elections. Few of their admirers have looked closely at the causes of this success. Huelsberg's book is an attempt to explain where the Greens came from, who they are and where they are going.

It is impossible to understand the rise of the Greens without understanding the terminal decline of the post-'68 left that preceded it. When in 1977 the far left was completely ghettoised and facing the repression ostensibly aimed at the Red Army Fraction, and large sections of the left had retreated into 'alternative lifestyles', the anti-nuclear movement seemed to be the only mass movement around. As Huelsberg puts it, "It really was a fantastic feeling to be in a demonstration not totally isolated from the public, to be part of a new turn in public attitudes." The far left's subsequent collapse into the ecological movement can be summed up as a bad case of 'never mind the quality, feel the width'. It explains the apparent paradox of someone like Daniel Cohn-Bendit describing himself as a "member of the Green Party who cannot stand the countryside."

The isolation of the West German left that emerged from the massive student radicalisation of 1968 was caused by a number of factors: institutionalised anti-Communism bolstered by the division of Germany, the conformity of the generation brought up under fascism and the relative prosperity of the '50s and '60s. But the left itself was also to blame: there was a tendency to write off the labour movement and to see the working class as totally integrated into capitalist society, an inability to find allies in the working class.

Huelsberg sees the development of the Greens as a radical break with this tradition, a party with a mass base in the 'new social movements' and the 'new working class'. Huelsberg provides a mass of evidence about who the Greens are, who votes for them and why. It may not be surprising to learn that the Greens are "under-represented among workers" and "over-represented" among academics. The Greens in their social composition "are certainly not a party of the traditional labour movement. But they are disproportionately represented among the new wage earners that are the product of the structural changes occurring in the West German economy." These people share a series of values often inherited from the post-'68 left (many of them *were* the post-'68 left!) and often take part in single-issue campaigns.

This is not particular to West Germany. As Huelsberg points out, similar groups have gravitated to the left in many countries in Western Europe. In Britain, they have "an orientation towards the traditional labour movement," where they have formed the core of the local government/rainbow coalition left in the Labour Party. In other countries such as Italy or Demark they have gone directly to parties to the left of the traditional labour movement, but with no particular ecological orientation. Why then did this movement take on an ecological hue in West Germany?

West Germany has very serious environmental problems, inherited both from its geographical position in the centre of Europe and from the fast growth of its capitalism. Movements from below on environmental issues began to draw in 'ordinary people'. To some extent the popularity of the ecological and anti-nuclear issues was precisely because they were not identified with socialism and thus were able to circumvent the anti-communism so prevalent in West Germany. Much of the politics of the anti-nuclear weapons movement was also concerned with a "Germany outside the blocs".

Ecology gelled with the common far-left view that one of the problems with capitalism was its concern with consumption and economic growth. This was far from the concerns of most industrial workers, more concerned with protecting jobs which they often saw threatened by the environmentalists' concerns. Though some common ground has now been found with the Greens' echoing the trade unions' demands for a shorter working week, in the early phase of the ecological movement it often played into the hands of the right-wing union leaders by seeking to confront working class interests rather than find a way to accommodate them. One 'eco-socialist' is quoted by Huelsberg as saying, "The great majority of SPD (social democratic) voters wanted to see the harshest contradictions somehow made more bearable. To destroy those illusions...represented a tremendous attack on the day-to-day consciousness of ordinary people."

The attitude of the Greens towards the existing labour movement and in particular the question of electoral pacts and coalitions has been a major issue of debate in the party. By the mid-80s the Greens had become established as an electoral force with seats in state and national parliaments, sometimes holding the balance of power, but were no longer increasing their support. The tactical and strategic questions led to the Greens dividing into a number of highly antagonistic factions: primarily, the 'realists' who were effectively reformists, saying the important thing was to deliver something from government and who rejected 'utopias'; and the 'fundamentalists' who were against concessions from principle and wanted to remain pure oppositionists uncorrupted by power. There are also smaller factions: the 'eco-socialist' left wing and the 'eco-libertarian' right.

The Greens have held together because successive conferences have balanced between different factions (a sort of Bonapartism of the rank and file), fearing that the total victory of one group would lead to a split. For similar reasons, the Greens have never worked out a fundamental programmatic platform that goes beyond general issues all can agree on.

Huelsberg points out in detail that the Greens' attitude to the SPD became increasingly important in determining their electoral success once they had to go beyond their hard-core voters. Many Green voters split their votes between the Greens and the SPD and saw a Green vote as a way of forcing the SPD to the

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