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# Workers' Liberty

# 1926

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## Marxism and "making socialists"

NEW subscriptions to *Workers' Liberty* are arriving at our office at a respectable rate. One subscriber tells us that even though he disagrees with us on almost all issues of controversy on the left, ours "is just about the only Marxist publication that tackles the real issues facing the thinking far left in the spirit of revolutionary pluralism"; another writes: "God knows why this publication had not come to my attention before."

How many more socialists must there be around the country who would subscribe, if only we can get out to them and bring the magazine to their attention?

One of the better-attended of our recent *Workers' Liberty* London forums was on William Morris. It was one of many dozens, if not hundreds, of events which will mark the hundredth anniversary, this year, of Morris's death (3 October 1896).

As we go to press, the next coming up are a meeting organised by Hammersmith Trades Council and a special exhibition opening at the Victoria and Albert Museum on 9 April. The majority of the centenary events are on the lines of the V&A exhibition — mainstream, focussing more on Morris's work as an immensely influential designer, typographer, artist and poet than on his politics. There is even one where Tory minister John Gummer is due to speak!

Yet there are a good few which will highlight the aspect of Morris which Morris himself considered most important — his heart-and-soul commitment, once convinced of socialism at the age of almost 50, to building a Marxist organisation in Britain. He was no mere sentimental utopian, and no sideline sympathiser of the workers' struggle, but an activist at every level, from speaking and selling socialist papers on the streets through leading demonstrations, to seeing through arguments and faction-fights in the pioneer socialist groups.

This issue of *Workers' Liberty* carries a short article by Morris on Ireland, and later issues this year will carry more from him and about him. Morris's ideals and basic ideas are our ideals and basic ideas, too. Let us hope that by circulating the magazine at the various commemorative events we can further the work which Morris saw as primary — "making socialists."

The *Workers' Liberty* summer school at the end of June will also, of course, include a session on Morris. In the run-up to that school, *Workers' Liberty* supporters across the country will be contacting a wide range of people to ask if they are interested in attending, and I hope they'll also take the opportunity to ask those people about subscribing to the magazine.

Martin Thomas

# Israel and the politics of the last atrocity



THE history of colonialism contains many scenes of half-naked men with spears charging machine guns — but even they could hope to see off some of their enemies. Israeli's April war in Lebanon — like the US-British-European Gulf war of 1991 — goes far beyond that.

This war was fought on one side from a position of military and technological superiority so overwhelmingly absolute that the other side was all but defenceless. There were no Israeli army casualties in the April war! It was as someone described at the end of the Gulf war, "like shooting fish in a barrel".

Israel, the regional super power enjoying overwhelming technical-military superiority, set out like an unfeeling giant to upend a large part of Lebanese society, wrecking its economy and trying thus to force the Lebanese government to suppress anti-Israeli guerrillas operating from its territory. Half a million people were overnight turned into refugees by systematic Israeli bombing. That was the intention.

Conducted by politicians who will have to answer to an electorate and therefore have to minimise their own casualties, Israel's war was a high-tech computer game affair. The universal horror when they blasted the UN refugee centre at Qana, killing dozens of civilians, seems to have given some in the government pause for thought. But Israel's display of the dementia of naked, unrestrained power has been as gross as it was out of all proportion to the events which allegedly triggered it.

Yet disgust and horror are not enough. It is necessary to keep the overall picture in mind. This April war and the Qana massacre do not stand alone, but in a long chain of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Politics extrapolated from the last atrocity are always one-sided politics. Two months ago, the atrocities were by Muslim fundamentalists against Israeli civilians, 56 of whom died in four bombings in Israel's cities. Extrapolate from that and, like many Israelis, you will wind up on the other sides. We need an all-sided view.

*"What Israel has done is watered the poisoned vines of Arab revanchism with the blood of its helpless victims."*

We say that the Palestinians should have full independence, without Israeli interference, in the areas where they are the majority — now!

Yet, there is no force strong enough to realise that. The peace accord that gave limited autonomy to Palestinian Arabs may, if it survives, develop into full self-government for the Palestinian Arabs. That is the best chance. That is why it is — despite its immense limitations and inadequacies — the most hopeful development in the Middle East since 1948.

If it is destroyed, it is likely to give place not to something better, but to something regressive and worse.

It is the goal both of the Muslim fundamentalists Hamas and the Iranian-financed Hizbullah and of their Jewish equivalents to destroy and abort the movement towards accord, thereby subverting the all too slow progress towards Palestinian autonomy. The Jewish chauvinists want to clear "Eretz Israel" of Arabs, the Muslim fundamentalists to destroy Arafat and clear 'Arab Palestinians' of Jews.

In so far as winning the late May Israeli elections determined the decision to launch "operation Grapes of Wrath", the Israeli government might — if it were candid — claim that it thereby acted to secure the real interests of both Jews and Arabs by ensuring that the Israeli government is not overthrown and the drive for normalisation of Israeli/Palestinian relations weakened or destroyed

along with it. That may even be electorally and politically true.

If it is, it is a terrible comment on the state of our world that in order to increase its chance of winning an election in the only democracy in the whole region, an election on which may depend so much, a government feels obliged to unleash the most savage destruction on a neighbouring country.

In fact, what Israel has done is watered the poisoned vines of Arab revanchism with the blood of its helpless victims.

Socialists must condemn Israel. We must back the Palestinian demand for full independence in the areas in which they are the majority. We must support those Israelis who oppose chauvinism and work for a just settlement with the Palestinian Arabs. ■

# Italy, 1996 and 1976

TWENTY years ago, in June 1976, the Italian Communist Party narrowly failed to beat Italy's Tory party — the Christian Democrats, who had ruled ever since World War 2 — in a general election.

It was a hectic moment. There was much talk of the CIA organising a military coup if the CP won. The CP leaders took it seriously. After the military coup against a Socialist Party government in Chile in 1973, they had dropped their call for a "left government" in Italy, and demanded no more than a coalition with the Christian Democrats. They declared support for NATO and for public spending cuts, and padded their list of candidates with non-CP figures like a former air force Chief of Staff.

Yet the ruling class still feared that the CP might encourage or unleash the militant workers who had shaken Italy again and again with great strikes since 1969. The Pope declared that to vote CP was a "sin". Italy's many-thousands-strong semi-Maoist, semi-anarchist revolutionary left foresaw (in the words of the British *Socialist Worker*, then close to them) "socialism or fascism within two or three years".

Twenty years later, on 21 April 1996, the Communist Party, renamed PDS, won office at the head of the Olive Tree coalition. Share prices soared on the Milan Stock Exchange. International financiers rushed to buy lira. The British bosses' paper the *Financial Times* hailed the Olive Tree's "prudent economic programme" and "the greatest opportunity for stable and responsible government that Italy has seen in years". It quoted Italian bankers as reckoning that the PDS's "strong links with the unions could be an advantage in pushing through austerity measures in sensitive areas such as healthcare".

The Olive Tree depends for its parliamentary majority on support from Rifondazione Comunista, a party which unites a fraction of the old CP with other left-wing groups including some revolutionaries, but to many bankers it seems more reliable than the right-wing Freedom Alliance, whose leader, Silvio Berlusconi, is heavily tainted with financial scandal and unwilling to push ahead with dismantling the elaborate networks of state patronage built up over decades by corrupt Christian Democrats.

So sometimes, after all, bourgeois virtue is rewarded. After decades of strenuous effort, the PDS/CP leaders have finally con-



Leader of the Olive Tree, Romano Prodi

vinced the Italian bosses and bankers that they have erased radicalism from their ranks. Probably, looking back on it, the bosses regret that they were so slow to be convinced. If they had given the CP the seats in a coalition government which it wanted in the 1970s, they might have got themselves valuable help in controlling the working-class militancy of those years.

But are they once again being slow to catch on? Are they once again prisoners of outdated perceptions? The bosses reckon on some working-class resistance to cuts, but assume that the PDS can control it. Militancy will not rise above the relatively modest levels seen since the mid-1970s; defiance will be as manageable as it was to the privatising, welfare-cutting "new social democratic" governments of Spain, France, Australia or New Zealand in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Italy's plutocrats may be wrong. In 1995 Italian workers blocked the planned cuts of the right-wing government then headed by Silvio Berlusconi with tremendous strikes and the biggest demonstrations in Italy since World War 2. Their combativity still lacks an adequate political voice and a leadership — but for how long? ■

## Why poverty grows

THERE is no poverty in Britain. So says Peter Lilley, who is a Tory government minister — in fact, the minister charged with social security measures to relieve poverty.

Asked by the United Nations what Britain was doing to mend poverty, Lilley replied: "The UK [already has] the infrastructure and social protection systems to prevent poverty and maintain living standards."

On the same day as Lilley's letter was released, the Child Poverty Action Group published a report arguing that one child in three is growing up in poverty (on or below income support), and one person in four overall is in poverty (it was 1 in 7 in 1979).

The Tories' reply is that this poverty is only relative, not absolute. In other words, so long as people do not directly starve or freeze to death, they are not poor.

In 1991 a survey found that hundreds of thousands of small children go without enough to eat at least once a month because their parents are short of cash; well over a million have "nutritionally poor" diets. Diseases of poverty such as rickets have reappeared.

Some hundreds of thousands — no-one knows exactly — are homeless.

Being homeless on the streets is reckoned to take about twenty years off your life. Being poor with a home shortens your life too. A recent survey found that relative poverty shortens life much more than lower absolute living standards combined with less inequality.

It was a translation into medical research of what William Morris declared over 100 years ago: "The most grinding poverty is a trifling evil compared with the inequality of classes".

Human beings are social animals. Human life is not just biological survival as individuals, but life in society. To get out of poverty means more than not starving or freezing to death; it means being able to take a normal and dignified part in society.

Capitalism does create poverty. Regularly and routinely, workers are paid no more than the value of their labour power, which is defined by a "living wage" adequate to keep the working class fit for work. Regularly and routinely workers are poor relative to the riches they produce for the capitalist class and its hangers-on. And, while the averagely-paid worker generally scrapes by in modest comfort, regularly and routinely capitalism throws millions out of their jobs. Capitalism cannot work without unemployed people, and without those unemployed people being unable to maintain even a working-class standard of living.

And for Peter Lilley, that's just fine. He thinks the system should work and the people should not complain. We think the people should live and the system should suffer.



# The dementia of power



A rescuer pulls the body of a child from a shelled building in Nabatiyeh

Adam Keller reports from  
Tel Aviv

IN the gloomy days of early March, Israeli President Ezer Weitzman, former dove turned hawk and infamous for his unpresidential tongue, called for a complete suspension of the peace process with all Arab partners. He proposed introducing a radical new principle of policy: "If you can't find a needle in a haystack, burn the whole stack." One and a half months later, it seems that Peres was driven to try taking his advice to heart.

Israel has been in control of South Lebanon ever since the "mini-invasion" of 1978. In all that time it has never been admitted that South Lebanon is an occupied territory; the Israeli general in charge is designated "chief liaison officer" rather than "military governor." Nevertheless, there is no longer any pretence that the area is in fact ruled by the "local militia" known as the "South Lebanon Army." The SLA mercenaries proved completely unable to fend for themselves; the constant presence of thousands of Israeli troops is needed to maintain control of the area. In contrast, the Hizbullah guerrillas — Syria's allies — are efficient,

highly motivated fighters who neither need nor desire the direct involvement of Syrian troops. Thus, the South Lebanon "war by proxy" turned out to have a built-in advantage for Syria.

In early 1996, Hizbullah made a series of daring ambushes and raids on Israeli military convoys, deep inside the "security zone." As a resistance movement struggling to liberate occupied Lebanese territory, Hizbullah gained support also from many Lebanese who do not share its militant Islamic ideology.

Among the Israeli-backed SLA troops, morale plummeted; there were reports of a high desertion rate, with some SLA deserters actually going over to the guerrillas. The Israeli army command ached "to get back" at the Hizbullah — but attacks on villages where the guerrillas hid inevitably resulted in civilian casualties in contravention of Israel's obligation under the July 1993 cease-fire; in such cases, Hizbullah retaliated by shooting Katyusha rockets at northern Israel — particularly at the long-suffering town of Kiryat Shmona.

The army command, which had so recently been given a free hand on the West Bank, started pressuring Peres to have the same freedom of action in Lebanon. They were aided by the right-wing oppo-

sition, which blamed Peres for "tying the army's hands." Local politicians in the northern towns agitated for "a big blow in Lebanon to get rid of the Katyushas once and for all"; when Peres intended to visit Kiryat Shmona, local Likud militants rioted at the town entrance, forcing him to cancel the visit.

There was little original in "Operation Grapes of Wrath" — the official name of the war started on April 11. Not only were the tactics very similar to those used (not very successfully) by Rabin in 1993, but the reactions of the peace movement and of Israeli society in general followed closely the pattern established in all the military adventures in Lebanon since 1982: the same spontaneous opposition by radical peace groups; the same hesitation, indecision and silence during the war's initial stages from more mainstream groups such as Peace Now; the same massive propaganda campaign centring on the plight of inhabitants in the north, creating a kind of emotional blackmail to support the war (though it was the war which forced the inhabitants of the north to flee or hide continuously in bomb shelters).

One thing, however, was a bit different: the number of critical articles which found their way into the opinion pages of the

mass-circulation papers — even with the news pages of the same papers looking like sheets of jingoist war propaganda. Nahum Barnea of *Yediot Abaronot*, Israel's biggest daily, voiced a note of caution on the very first day: "All Lebanon wars start well, with video films of enemy command centres being blown up — the problems begin later" (*Y.A.*, April 12).

Also on the 12th, the first protest vigils were held, at the call of the Hadash communists and the new, mostly Arab, Tadjamu group, with several dozen activists at each of the usual places: Defence Ministry in Tel Aviv, Prime Minister's Residence in Jerusalem, Nisnas Neighbourhood in Haifa... On the weekly Friday vigil of Women in Black and Yesh Gvul in Tel Aviv on that same day, ten-year old signs were dug out and put again into use, with the slogan: Bring the soldiers back from Lebanon!

During the 1982-1985 period, this had been an enormously powerful slogan, especially drawing the support of soldiers' parents. This memory clearly influenced the choice of the army's strategy in the present war: the option of ground operations further into Lebanon, with soldiers constantly exposed to guerrilla ambushes and suicide bombers, was ruled out. Proposals by Likud's Ariel Sharon and Rafael Eytan — to extend northward the Lebanese zone under Israeli rule — were not well received. Instead the operation aimed at maximising the use of Israel's enormous fire-power: air force, artillery and gunboats.

The inhabitants of 45 villages were told through the Israeli-controlled South Lebanon Radio "to leave immediately, on pain of being bombed and shelled." Later, this ultimatum was extended to 45 further villages, and then to the ancient city of Tyre with its 150,000 inhabitants. By then hundreds of thousands of panic-stricken people who had to flee from their homes started to crowd into Beirut, creating an enormous strain on its resources. (Ironically, it was Hizbullah, with its network of charity organisations, which was equipped to take care of the wave of refugees — and incidentally garner additional political influence.)

At the same time, the Israeli navy blockaded the Lebanese ports, and continuing air raids destroyed the Lebanese capital's power stations. Undermining the Lebanese economy and undoing the Hariri Government's efforts to rebuild the ruins of Lebanon was not just an incidental by-effect; it was the repeatedly and openly stated central part of the whole strategy — an economic war, aimed at forcing the Lebanese government to disarm Hizbullah, much as the closure of Israel's borders to Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip was aimed at forcing Arafat to move against Hamas.

In this strategy, direct fighting against the Katyushas was in fact secondary. Nevertheless, the army and air force had at least to be seen doing their best, since "stopping the Katyushas" was the only legitimate aim of the whole operation. The Katyusha rocket — an obsolete, short-range, inaccurate weapon by the standards of regular



**Hamas demonstration**

armies — is a perfect guerrilla weapon: small, light, easy to hide and transport; capable of being launched from among vegetation and without much preparation.

As the army once more found out, it is very difficult to prevent the shooting of Katyushas; the best which artillery and air-planes could do was to shoot back at the spot from which the Katyusha had been fired — and where, in most cases, the guerrillas were no longer present. The army's attempt at an answer to that problem, a new sophisticated radar system, failed to stop the Katyushas — and produced the war's worst calamity, the massacre of Kana.

On the evening of April 18, more than a hundred people answered the call of Gush Shalom to demonstrate in Tel Aviv. A long thin line spread along the defence ministry, standing in the pouring rain with the signs "There is a Solution: Get out of Lebanon!" The following day the artillery barrage tore into the refugee encampment improvised at the U.N. position in Kana Village, killing in two minutes many more civilians than were killed in all this year's Hamas bombings in Israel put together.

The exact circumstances leading to the Kana carnage, the apportioning of responsibility, will doubtlessly be debated for years. Did the Israeli military intelligence know the refugees were there? (And how could they not know, when they were day after day shown on international TV networks?) And if military intelligence knew, why was the Artillery Corps not warned? Did Hizbullah really shoot from the vicinity? And if they did, does it absolve Israel of responsibility for the grisly results?

The exact answers to such questions hardly make a difference to the men, women and children who were mangled, torn to bits, or burned to death at Kana. Nor did they make a big difference to the military and political results. Israeli wars in general — and this war in particular — are fought nearly as much on CNN News as on the battlefield. Western public opinion — and the effect upon it of the horror scenes

from Kana — were a factor which a mini-power like Israel could not ignore. Plans for further escalation were shelved, and the focus shifted to intense diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a cease-fire.

The pictures of horror had appeared also on Israeli TV — which hitherto showed very little of how the war looked from the Lebanese side. There were several protest actions. An already-scheduled Hadash rally in Tel Aviv, brought several hundreds, chanting slogans and listening to the emotional speeches of poets Dan Almagor and Yitzchak La'or. At Tel Aviv University, the students picketed the hall where Peres — as it happened, on precisely this day — delivered a speech. Peace Now broke its silence, calling for withdrawal from Lebanon and holding an improvised vigil in Jerusalem, near the place where the long-dormant Jerusalem Women in Black surged into renewed action. And Yesh Gvul published the most sharply worded ad in its history, denouncing Kana as a war crime and calling upon pilots and artillerymen to refuse participation "in surgical operation upon Lebanese villages."

Yet there was nothing resembling the explosion of anger and moral outrage which gripped Israel in September 1982. The people in general accepted Peres' position that "it was a tragic accident which we deeply regret, but for which the Hizbullah is to blame." What may have lamed the reaction in Israeli Jewish society is the concern with the impending elections: most of those who could have been expected to come out on the street did not want to harm Peres' chances for re-election.

Most of the protests in Israel occurred among the Arab citizens. In dozens of towns and villages there were demonstrations and rallies, with black flags of mourning and angry shouts: "Peres, Peres, hey hey hey — how many kids did you kill today?" The main street of Nazareth broke into hours of violent, Intifada-like riot; an angry youth told Israeli TV: "Now we are as angry as you were after the Tel Aviv bombing."

After Kana, commentators of different political shades were near-unanimous in defining the whole Lebanon operation as "failure" or "fiasco". There were confident expectations of an immediate ceasefire. In the event, it took a whole further week of agony on both sides of the border, with intensive diplomatic efforts centring upon Damascus and confirming President Assad's position as the power-broker of Lebanon.

Under the new "understandings," Israel and Hizbullah are both strictly forbidden to harm civilians or use civilian areas as "launching grounds" for attacks; and both sides reserve an undefined "right to self-defence." There is no explicit mention, either of the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon or Hizbullah actions against that occupation.

The most novel part of the "understandings" sets up a "monitoring committee" consisting of Israel, Syria, Lebanon, the United States and France; disputes are supposed to be resolved within this body, rather than in cycles of retribution and counter-retribution, as hitherto. Such a mechanism might work for some interim period, but would surely break down if there is no serious move towards Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon.

Hizbullah emerged unbroken from the seventeen days of fighting, continuing to shoot until the very last minute before the ceasefire and, unlike Hamas, demonstrating complete control over its men, none of whom continued to shoot after that moment. A featherweight boxer, emerging on his feet after seventeen bouts with a heavyweight, would certainly be accounted the victor — if the world of sport allowed such matches.

Hizbullah emerged politically strengthened, gaining popularity and legitimacy in its own Shiite constituency and in Lebanese society in general. The war seems to have united Muslim and Christian Lebanese to a degree long unthinkable. This new-found unity may eventually serve the Lebanese, not only towards Israel but towards their big "protector" as well.

The Israeli generals also claim to have won, to have restored the Israeli army's power of deterrence. They could hardly speak otherwise in public. Nevertheless, those forces which seek to solve Israel's problems by brute force seem somewhat chastened. And it is certainly a fact that many mainstream commentators now speak of Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon as a concrete political possibility.

On the night of the cease-fire, Prime Minister Peres told Israeli TV: "Hizbullah says we are occupying South Lebanon? Well, we told the Syrians and Lebanese that through the peace process the Israeli presence in South Lebanon could be totally eradicated!"

Though Israel always stated that in principle its presence in Lebanon is not permanent, it was never put in quite these words... ■

## Briefing

# Israel/Palestine

### Late 19th century:

Pogroms (anti-Jewish massacres) in the Russian Empire. Millions of Jews flee to Western Europe or the USA. The Zionist movement emerges, proposing a Jewish state be created. A small trickle of Jews emigrates to Palestine (then under Turkish rule) to start building a settler community there.

### After World War 1:

Britain takes Palestine from the collapsed Turkish empire. To help win the war it has promised support for a "Jewish homeland" in Palestine, and the trickle of settlers increases. The British colonial administration balances between the Jews and the Arabs, who become increasingly alarmed as Jewish settlement expands.

### After 1933:

Nazis take power in Germany. Increasing persecution of Jews; more Jews flee to Palestine; other countries close their doors to Jews.

### 1940s:

Nazis massacre six million Jews.

### 1945-7:

Jewish survivors of the Nazi massacre face pogroms in Poland and anti-Jewish demonstrations in Britain, US, Australia, etc. More flee to Palestine. The settler community there, now one-third of Palestine's population, launches an open fight for a Jewish state. The United Nations proposes partition.

### 1948:

Britain bails out. War between the Jewish community of Palestine and the surrounding Arab states, whose armies are commanded by British officers. Jews conquer three-quarters of Palestine and set up a new state, Israel. 800,000 Palestinian Arabs flee the war: Israel will not readmit them, the surrounding Arab states keep them in refugee camps. The Arabs remaining in Israel become second-class citizens there.

### 1956:

War between Israel, Britain and France, on the one side, and Egypt on the other, sparked by Egypt nationalising the Suez Canal. This is followed by increased pressure on Jews living in Arab countries, and hundreds of thousands flee to Israel.

### 1967:

New war between Israel and the Arab states. Israel seizes those parts of Palestine which it had not conquered in 1948, the West Bank and the Gaza strip; another 350,000 Palestinian Arabs become refugees.

### 1968-9:

The Palestinian nationalist movement Fatah takes over the Palestine Liberation Organisation, previously a front for the Arab governments, and replaces the old slogan "drive the Jews into the sea" with the call for a "democratic secular state" in all Palestine.

### 1970:

Jordanian government, seeing the radical Palestinian guerrilla groups as a threat, massacres and disperses Palestinian refugees in Jordan.

### 1973:

Renewed war between Israel and Arab states.

### 1975:

Lebanese state collapses in civil war, partly sparked by friction over Palestinian guerrillas using Lebanon as a base for actions against Israel.

### 1976:

Syria invades Lebanon, massacres many Palestinians.

### From 1978:

Repeated Israeli incursions into and attacks on Lebanon.

### 1979:

Peace deal between Israel and Egypt.

### 1987, December:

"Intifada" begins — mass rebellion in the West Bank and Gaza against the Israeli military occupation.

### 1988, December:

Palestine Liberation Organisation adopts policy of "two peoples, two states" — demanding an independent Palestinian state while recognising Israel's right to exist.

### 1993:

PLO and Israel negotiate deal under which Israel is to withdraw from the Gaza Strip and Jericho and allow some Palestinian authority in the West Bank.

# Royal Mail strike looms

By a north-west postal worker

WE appear to be on the verge of a national postal strike. Royal Mail management have threatened drastic attacks on terms and conditions, designed to increase exploitation and undermine union organisation. Workers face casualisation, part-time status and speed up, and customers a slower and less frequent service.

The leadership of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) have warned of a ballot for national strike action if management do not return to the negotiating table by the beginning of May.

Management's proposals were revealed by a reluctant General Secretary, Alan Johnson, after the union's postal executive forced him to pull out of any further talks

on the bosses' so-called "Employee Agenda."

Royal Mail bosses wanted:

- Teamworking, with all absences to be covered by members of the team.
- Day-to-day variation of attendance and break times at management's say-so.
- No rotation of duties.
- No more than two people on deliveries serving each customer over a year (this would prevent five-day weeks).

Management have now raised the prospect of imposing these proposals without agreement.

In response the postal executive has sent out a mixed message to management. Instead of proceeding immediately to a national ballot for all-out action to win the shorter working week and secure the second delivery — removal of which would turn most delivery jobs into part-time work

— the national leadership have pleaded for more talks.

Postal workers have immense industrial muscle and are not afraid to use it. At the end of 1995 Scottish postal workers staged the biggest illegal and unofficial strike seen in any industry since World War 2 to save just four full-time jobs. They were successful, despite the attempts of the CWU hierarchy to bludgeon them back to work, backed up by management's threats to use the anti-union laws.

Branches need to prepare for the coming confrontation. The rank and file must be armed with the arguments, and strike committees set up now to get out publicity and maximise the vote for action in any ballot.

And the national leadership need to be reined in. The biggest danger right now is that Johnson will try to get a package deal which he could present as a victory on some issues while giving away key concessions to management on team-working or deliveries.

## Glaisdale: Tories are to blame

By William Irons

"FORTY-FIVE reasons why a head has to ban this thug", shouted the *Daily Mirror* headline of 23 April. Among teachers, the main opener for conversations was: "What about this Glaisdale kid, then?"

After a catalogue of violent incidents and disruptive behaviour, 13 year old Richard Wilding was expelled from Glaisdale comprehensive, a school on the run-down Broxtowe estate in Nottingham. The exclusion itself was not newsworthy, nor the fact that his parents had successfully appealed against the decision to exclude. It was the resistance of the staff that turned it into a news item.

All the staff at the school agreed — he should no longer be taught at the school. This was backed up by the main teacher unions, the NUT, NAS/UWT and even the less militant ATL. None were happy with the compromise solution that was offered. This would have allowed Richard to come back on site, be taught by a supply teacher for part of the time, and have special needs teaching for the rest.

This solution, patched up by the Local Education Authority, was supported by Richard's parents, but the teachers rejected it because it meant he would be in the playground and corridors at break and other times.

The matter was brought to a head when the NAS/UWT threatened to go on indefinite strike from Friday 26 April. In the end, total exclusion of the boy from the school was achieved. But the question still remains: what to do with the increasing problem of pupils like Richard Wilding? There are tens of thousands of others like him throughout the country, a few in every school. We need short-term and long-term answers.

The *Mirror* and the *Express* saw Richard as a rogue child from a rogue family who deserve

very little sympathy. The *Guardian* had a photograph of him playing chess and was willing to allow that he might have been misjudged. The *Telegraph* implied that teachers had brought it on themselves by supporting the abolition of corporal punishment.

Only the *Independent* made some attempt to look at the underlying problem and the growing numbers of exclusions from schools. It suggested that more resources were needed in schools, special units and special schools.

For the Government, Gillian Shephard could only comment, in the hypocritical manner that is her trademark, that while she appreciated that the teachers might have a case she bitterly regretted their decision to go on strike and deprive children of their education. Stephen Byers, the Labour spokesperson, echoed her... of course.

Shephard was sidestepping any Government responsibility, claiming it was simply a matter between the school and her parents. However, the Government must take the major blame. It has fostered the general pressure and demoralisation in society and families in particular, then put damaged children into mainstream education, where it has put schools under pressure with inadequate funding, league tables, open enrolment, and SATs.

In the short term, schools have very little option but to exclude pupils prone to violent or disruptive behaviour. The teachers and the other pupils need some degree of protection. In the long term, society cannot simply wash its hands of children like Richard Wilding. It needs to provide care and resourcing.

In the meantime we are likely to have a "post-Glaisdale syndrome" where many views, reactionary and enlightened, will be expressed. Hopefully it will start a process to solve this problem. For the time being the action of the NAS/UWT has had a salutary effect. But without a fight for adequate funding there will be no adequate solution.

## The industrial front

CIVIL Service workers in the DSS are mounting a series of week-long strikes in opposition to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) pilot schemes in Peckham, South London and Brighton. The strikes follow successful action in West London earlier this month.

These local disputes could provide an important springboard for the sustained national action needed to beat the JSA.

**UNISON members working for Liverpool City Council have started their ballot for strike action to defeat plans for job cuts.**

**The council workers will be joining fire-fighters and others in a day of solidarity strike action in support of the sacked Liverpool dockers, who are entering the 8th month of the dispute.**

THE Merseyside fire-fighters — who are also now into the 8th month of their dispute over budget cuts — are set to be joined by crews in Essex and Derbyshire who are balloting for a series of 9 hour strikes over job cuts and station closures.

The need for a co-ordinated national jobs fight is set to be high on the agenda of this month's FBU conference in Bridlington.

**A FIVE day strike by GMB members at Johnston Shields textiles in Ayrshire has won a £4 minimum wage for the worst paid workers at the plant.**



## Train crew: strike together!

By a Scotrail driver

ON 17 May train crew grades organised by the RMT will be balloting to strike over Physical Needs Breaks (going to the toilet, eating etc.) for conductors, payments for past productivity, payment for extra duties taken by senior conductors in the past, and commission payments for assistant ticket examiners. Drivers may also be balloted over opposition to management's "Driver's Restructuring Initiative."

This is the situation train crews now face:

- Guards can be working for up to 9 hours without a break. They are not allowed to eat or drink on board trains or in front of passengers.

- Under the proposed "One Train Team" proposal, jobs will be lost and responsibility for safety put entirely in the hands of the driver.

A successful fight by conductors over payment for past extra duties will make management think twice about implementing "One Train Teams".

Management will try to use drivers organised by ASLEF to break any strikes, as they did in 1994 during the signal workers' strike. We cannot afford any more disunity on the rails. Co-ordinated strike action will maximise pressure on management.

# Rail strikes looming

# Organise the

# unorganised!

By a Yorkshire trackworker

PRIVATISATION of the railway network has had a shattering effect on union organisation, but some parts of the railworkers' union RMT are preparing to fight back.

Important decisions were made at the Signal and Telecommunications, Permanent Way and Overhead Traction Grades Conference of the RMT, meeting in Ayr on the 25-26 April. This conference represents the majority of trackworkers within the RMT.

Casual working is being introduced apace in a mad dash to cut costs and boost profits for the new "Infrastructure Maintenance Companies" (IMCos) and "Track Renewals Companies" (TRUs) which are bidding to win maintenance contracts from Railtrack.

Trackworkers have traditionally

opposed "contractors", and have done whatever was possible, openly or covertly, to resist. This has been seen, rightly, as the best method of retaining the conditions and jobs of established trackworkers. BR has had to employ full-time permanent workers on union negotiated rates of pay and conditions.

This week's conference recognised that, since many of the ex-BR IMCos and TRUs are now in private hands, the bulk of trackworkers are now employed by private firms. A lot of them are tin-pot concerns employing agency workers on short-term contracts.

It was agreed to actively recruit such workers and to establish a minimum set of demands — on wages, sick pay, holidays, health and safety.

The idea of turning the RMT back into a campaigning, agitational, organising force among the unorganised will have to be fought for throughout the union. This is a good start.

## Support the Chelfields catering workers

## Rail spivs' £10 a day pay insult

CHELFIELDS is one of the many companies now operating privatised trolley services on trains. £3 per hour is far too much to pay workers, according to their bosses.

Early in April, Chelfields suddenly required its employees to sign for a letter saying that from 28 April their pay was to be cut from £3 per hour to just £10 per day (about £1.10 per hour). Any further earnings were to come from commission, at the rate of 20p in the pound on takings above £50.00. Takings are rarely at this level. Often stocks are not available — something the workers have no control over.

Chelfields workers have refused to accept this cut. They will continue to work as normal but for the previously agreed rates of pay.

It is possible the company may now back off. However, despite a full complement of workers at all locations, the company has placed

vacancy adverts in Job Centres and student union buildings. Chelfields have summarily dismissed workers before and could be preparing to do so again.

With rail privatisation, hundreds of companies, old and new, are running around looking for a quick profit. If that means poverty wages for frightened workers, then so what?

- Write to Chelfields Limited at Crown House, 3B Airport Industrial Estate, Kingston Park, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 2EF, letting them know what you think of £10 a day.

- Write to your MP asking them to intervene.

- Write to the press. Let the workers on the trolleys know that they have your support.

- Finally, look out for further news of the company attempting to force its policy through. Your support may then be needed even more.

## Support the Craigentinny strikers

RMT members at Craigentinny inter-city maintenance workshops near Edinburgh are involved in a series of one-day strikes.

The dispute started over management's refusal to negotiate over rosters but has turned into a major battle which raises the question of the future of the workshops — part of the East Coast Mainline — which have just been bought by Sea Containers Ltd, a notorious US asset stripper and union buster.

The Craigentinny workers are appealing to workers at the other East Coast Mainline depots at Heaton and Bounds Green not to handle any re-directed work from Edinburgh.

# Russian workers are organising

By Bob Arnot and Kirill

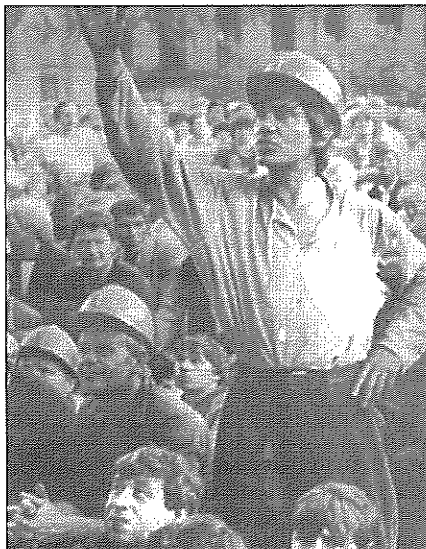
Buketov\*

THE Russian trade unions were denied the opportunity to participate in the 1993 elections for the Russian State Duma. After Yeltsin bombed the parliament building in October 1993, as part of the general repression, all forces that supported the parliament were excluded from participation in the elections. Therefore, for the traditional unions, which represent about 50 million workers, participation in the 1995 electoral race provided the first experience of independent struggle for parliamentary positions. This experience was not successful, but at the same time it was not a complete failure because it has been part of a process that has allowed the clarification of an independent political position for Russian trade unions.

The political self-determination of Russian trade unions had its first expression in the attempt to establish a Party of Labour. This project failed because the impetus for its establishment came from outside the experience and cadre of the trade unions. However, the need for a political voice for trade unions has increased as the economic situation has deteriorated.

The reasons cited by trade union leaders for the need to participate in the elections in 1995, were to develop and refine labour legislation; to implement real legislative initiatives through their representatives; and to increase the authority of the trade unions. According to the trade union officials, the aim of the trade union caucus in parliament was to establish a real system of laws regulating social and labour relations. Against the background of the development of a criminalised capitalism these regulations are a minimum requirement to protect workers' interests. However, the first objective for trade unions and their representatives was to solve the problem of the non-payment of wages.

Throughout 1995 the level of non-payment had risen from around 4 trillion roubles at the start of the year to almost 25 trillion by the end of the year. The non-payment of wages means that most workers are only paid a fraction of their entitlement and then many months late. Throughout 1995 trade unions organised a widespread series of collective actions at individual enterprises in an attempt to resolve these problems. However, after the biggest strike wave in Russia in the 1990s, trade unions recognised that the problem of non-payment could not be resolved at the level of the single enter-



Russian miners

prise. Only by increasing the pressure at the centre of state power could the problems be addressed.

Yeltsin also recognised, early in the election campaign, the potential power of the trade unions and sought to harness this by the creation of a "left" electoral bloc headed by Ivan Rybkin, the former speaker of the Duma. Yeltsin's initial idea was to create a left bloc as a "loyal opposition" to the government bloc led by Victor Chernomyrdin. The Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FITUR) was in the first instance willing to join this bloc but only on certain conditions. Firstly, they argued that it was necessary for Rybkin to openly declare that the bloc was in opposition to the economic and social policies of the Yeltsin government. Secondly, they argued that the Rybkin bloc should campaign for the minimum wage to be increased to at least the level of the officially determined poverty line. This would then have a series of knock-on effects, as a variety of wage, benefit and grant levels are directly related to the minimum wage and would have been beneficial for a broad sector of the Russian working population. Finally, the trade unions wanted a commitment to the solution of the non-payment problems.

As Rybkin refused to accept these points and, furthermore, refused to appear at the FITUR conference, the trade unions declined to join the bloc. This meant if they wanted to participate in the elections they had to find another route, either joining another bloc or standing independently. FITUR called for the creation of an oppositional bloc of democratic left forces but the existing parties and blocs were only interested in subsuming the trade unions into their organisations, not in joining a bloc on an equal basis. The only organisation that was interested in a bloc on an equal footing was the Russian United Industrial Party (ROPP) which

compromised the enterprise directors and managers from the old state sector — the so-called "Red Directors".

The common basis for this apparently strange combination is to be found in the contradictory political economy of the current period. The Yeltsin government, at the behest of the IMF, has sought to solve the problem of inflation by massive cuts in the money supply. This has meant that the state has been unable to provide enterprises with payment for state orders, as well as being unable to pay workers their wages. However, even if there was some limited common interest underlying this bloc, many people described it from the outset, as a union of "sheep and wolves". Nevertheless, in the summer of 1995, the Union of Labour was created. Many trade unions refused to participate in this union and some of them entered the electoral lists of other groups and blocs. For example, the agricultural workers joined the Agrarian Party lists. Unsurprisingly, in the course of the campaign the difference in perspective between the partners in the union became glaringly obvious but the mistake was recognised too late.

In the elections the Union of Labour polled over 1 million votes or 1.6% of the total vote. Their vote was highest in the industrial centres where the economic crisis has been deepest and reached almost 12% in Ivanovo region, where the textile industry has collapsed and where unemployment is amongst the highest in Russia. This result was better than many trade union activists had anticipated and recent sociological research suggests that without the industrialists the trade union vote would have been higher. The overall level of the trade union vote was consistent with the number of trade union activists who participate in collective actions, for example on May Day or when mass actions have been called against the government. The vote confirms that there is a sizeable constituency among rank and file workers who recognise the necessity for independent trade union politics. On the basis of their experience in the election campaign and in recognition of their basic support, the trade unions have eliminated the industrialists from the Union of Labour.

In the presidential campaign the Union of Labour has made a decision to support none of the presidential candidates, seeing little difference between them from the point of view of ordinary workers. Whilst the Party of Labour was essentially based upon a group of left intellectuals the Union of Labour has been established by trade unions. Its eventual success or failure will be determined by its ability to reflect the real interests of Russian workers in the continuing crisis. It may have a base upon which to grow but if it simply reflects the interests of the trade union bureaucracy it will be still-born. ■

\* Kirill Buketov is the editor of the Russian journal *Workers Politics (Rabochaya Politika)*. Bob Arnot is a member of the editorial board of the journal *Critique*.

# Social-democracy in the '90s

By Martin Thomas

THE social-democratic governments in Australia and Spain have lost office this year, after 14 years governing Spain and 13 years in Australia. France's 14 years of a Socialist Party president — ten of them with a Socialist prime minister, too — ended in 1995.

Tony Blair and his group see these social democracies, Australia's especially, as a model for their "New Labour". Yet in all these countries the working class and the labour movement are worse off than they were before the long period of social-democratic rule.

Social-democratic governments have always turned against militant workers. They have always subordinated working-class interests to "national" capitalist interests, in war and in crisis. Yet their long-term trend was always to increase welfare provision and public regulation of the economy, however slowly, however inadequately, however bureaucratically.

These new social-democratic governments of the 1980s and 1990s were different. They privatised, deregulated, cut taxes for the rich and for business, and systematically extended means-testing of welfare benefits. They explicitly supported the free market as the basic rule of the economy, with public intervention only to deal with pockets of "market failure". Their approach — called "economic rationalism" in Australia, "economic liberalism" in France, or "Rogernomics" under New Zealand's 1984-90 Labour government — paralleled Thatcherism.

In France (1981), Spain (1982), Australia (1983) and New Zealand (1984), the social-democratic governments took over in countries long dominated by right-wing governments with a state-interventionist, protectionist, nationalist economic regime including a measure of paternalistic welfare provision (greater in New Zealand, smaller in Spain). And they did so in a capitalist world radically changed from the 1930s and '40s, when those economic regimes were shaped.

In the 1930s and '40s, the world was divided into trading blocs, with tariff barriers. Transport and communications were relatively much more expensive than today, especially for countries like Australia and New Zealand, far distant from their main trade partner, Britain. Industrial development everywhere was based round the heavy industries of coal, iron and steel. Every government had an incentive, and during World War 2 a compulsion, to use state power to develop its own relatively self-contained industrial base. International flows of capital were small and tightly-controlled.

Over the 1950s and '60s, this international regime changed, bit by bit. Tariffs



Spanish workers fight Gonzalez

were cut. Colonial empires were dismantled. The European Community developed. The multinational corporations ranged more widely across the world, in manufacturing now as well as raw-materials industries (mining and agriculture).

Then in 1971 the USA abandoned the dollar's fixed exchange rate against gold, the cornerstone of the US-hegemonised, controlled, capitalist internationalism of the 1950s and '60s. It was pushed into this decision by the huge accumulation of dollars held overseas after being spent on the Vietnam war, and by the long-term decline of the US's industrial supremacy.

*"The social-democrats would say that they were doing essential 'modernisation' in a way that minimised damage to the poor."*

Two possible roads were open for world capitalism: a return to the trading blocs of the 1930s, or a much more anarchic and uncontrolled international free market. Falteringly, and not without deviations towards the trading-bloc regime, it has moved on the free-market road. Since the early 1980s, international capital movements have multiplied and speeded up by a factor of thousands.

Meanwhile, transport and communications had become relatively cheaper. A new industrial revolution based on microelectronics pushed the heavy industries of coal, iron and steel out of the centre of economic life.

The French government of 1981 was the last hurrah of the old social democracy. As Mitterrand won the presidency, workers danced in the streets and cracked open

bottles of champagne in the factories. He abolished the death penalty and the Gaullist state security court, called off plans to build a nuclear power station, and declared an amnesty for many categories of prisoners.

Thirty-six banks were nationalised, along with five large private companies. Public spending was increased by 27%, the minimum wage upped by 10%, the legal working week cut to 39 hours..

But capital fled. Unemployment grew to over two million by November 1981. Inflation reached 14%. France ran a big trade deficit. In June 1982, Mitterrand made a complete about-turn. Wages were frozen. The government embarked on austerity measures which, the Economist noted, "even Mrs Thatcher might appreciate." Public spending was cut, especially on health (but not on the military). By 1984, France had the highest youth unemployment in the industrialised world. It would soon be overtaken — by social-democratic Spain, which now has 23% jobless overall.

The Spanish Socialist Party had won the elections of 1982. It immediately set about holding down wages, reducing unemployment benefit, and cutting thousands of jobs in the steel industry. There was working class resistance — and mass action by students and school students — including short general strikes, but the government survived.

In New Zealand between 1984 and '90, Labour cut tariffs; privatised telecom, Air New Zealand, the State Insurance Office and the Post Office bank; halved top income tax rates, cut corporation tax, and introduced VAT; opened the financial system to the international markets; and made the central bank independent of elected control, with a mandate to cut inflation before all else.

Australian Labor has cut tariff protection from 24% in 1983 to less than 10% in 1995. The country's manufacturing jobs have been cut by one-quarter, and unemployment is now 8.5% (25% among youth). The Commonwealth Bank, Qantas, and other

enterprises have been privatised; air travel and other industries have been deregulated; private competition has been introduced into telecom. Top tax rates have been slashed, means-testing of welfare has been extended, and free university education replaced by loans, to be repaid by a graduate tax. Australia's exposure to international capital flows has increased dramatically. The stock of Australian direct investment abroad rose from \$5.5 billion in 1982 to \$106 billion in 1994; the country's gross foreign debt ballooned to \$202 billion.

The social-democrats would say that they were doing essential "modernisation" in a way that minimised the damage to the poor. Nowhere, it is true, did they introduce vicious anti-union laws like those of Britain's Tories. And they brought in some reforms. Spain's legislated autonomy for the Basque country and Catalonia. New Zealand's banned all ships with nuclear weapons from its waters. Australia's restored Medicare, introduced Aboriginal land rights, and defended multiculturalism and Asian immigration against the right. In fact, Hawke or Keating (from Australia), or Lange (from New Zealand), would probably be sacked for leftism if they sat in Blair's Shadow Cabinet.

Yet everywhere the social-democratic governments left the rich richer, the poor poorer, and masses unemployed. They cultivated friendships with big business and claimed to represent the "middle class". Everywhere they left the working class not only worse off, but in a worse condition of organisation and spirit. In Australia, trade-union membership has dropped from 50% to 33% of the workforce.

The social-democratic "lesser evil" has not avoided the Tory "greater evil", but opened the door for it. Since 1990 New Zealand's National (Tory) party has attacked union rights — reducing the level of unionisation from 45% to 20% in the space of four years — and cut welfare so that only the very poor receive free or subsidised health care or other benefits. What was once the world's first welfare state now depends on charity "food banks" to feed its poor.

Everywhere, workers resisted the new social democracy. Everywhere the resistance was piecemeal and defeated. And — what is worst from the point of view of Marxists who never expected much from social democracy — working-class disillusion with the social-democrats has flowed not into left-wing alternatives but into political disengagement, especially among youth. In New Zealand, Labour's right-wing policies led in 1989 to a split — Jim Anderton's New Labour — which took with it the majority of the Labour Party's active membership and the support of some trade unions. But that is only a partial exception to the rule. New Labour has gone into an alliance with middle-class splinter groups (the Democrats and the Liberals), and even negotiated with the right-wing New Zealand First party.

Part of the problem is that the new world regime of capitalism leaves little space for

reform politics short of an internationalist revolutionary assault on finance capital. It leaves more than the social-democratic leaders haunted by memories of the economic failures and the working-class militancy, believe, but it leaves little. *The Financial Times* aptly summed up the conversion in 1990 of the Swedish social democrats, previously the most confident champions of the "old" model, into "new" social democracy: "Under intense pressure from overseas financial opinion that forced up interest rates... and led to a huge outflow of capital from Sweden, the Swedish government is having to abandon a long-held commitment to full employment and the Welfare State. The international money-markets have become the arbiters of Sweden's future, not the Social Democratic ideologues". Social democracy, as long as it remains social democracy, has no choice but to collapse into old-fashioned "Liberal-Labour" politics.

The most obvious candidates to fill a gap to the left of social democracy, the Communist Parties, have dwindled. This is a crisis accelerated by the collapse of Stalinism in 1989, but it began long before. The Italian CP (renamed PDS), now finds itself in a strong position, but it was in favour of privatisation as early as the 1970s!

In fact, in France, in Spain, and in Portugal, the Socialist Parties owed their success in the late 1970s and early 1980s not to any deep, long-established roots in the working class, but to their ability to outflank the Communist Parties (and the smaller revolutionary groups) as the political follow-on from the big struggles and radicalisations of the late 1960s and early '70s.

## *"The new world regime of capitalism leaves very little space for reform politics."*

In France, the Socialist Party had got only 5% of the vote in the presidential poll of 1969, while the CP scored 21.5%. In Portugal, Spain and Greece, the Socialist Parties became big parliamentary parties in the 1970s in a period of big struggles and transitions from dictatorship to bourgeois democracy. In the preceding decades, these parties had been small illegal groups; and the main organised force in the clandestine anti-fascist (or anti-dictatorship) resistance had been the Stalinists, not the Socialists. In France and Italy the Stalinists had been the main working-class parties ever since the World War Two resistance.

Nor had the Socialist Parties the same links to the trade union movement as the Labour Party in Britain (or Australia). Although some union federations have loose alliances with the Socialist Parties (the UGT in Spain, the CFDT in France), they have no organisational link: the unions did not set up the Socialist Parties, nor do they have delegates to their various com-

mittees. And all these countries have other union federations, the largest usually CP-dominated.

The Socialist Parties outstripped the CPs with often radical rhetoric, free from the taint of Stalinism. But the revolutionary left, too, has declined or stagnated, and so has the militant working-class constituency on which the revolutionary left naturally bases itself. The biggest revolutionary groups in Italy and Portugal, which once numbered many thousands, have shrivelled and disappeared; in Spain there is hardly any far left at all now. In France, Lutte Ouvrière, despite winning a tremendous 1.6 million votes in the 1995 presidential election, says that its periphery has dwindled, and the other revolutionary groups are in worse shape.

Part of the reason is that all the revolutionary groups missed chances in the 1970s — thus making the revival of social democracy easier, or at least more unchallenged. All the groups were ultra-left, in one way or another; all grossly underestimated the political strength of social democracy. One of the main lessons of the 1970s is that even with an appalling record, and even without the historical and organisational links to the working class of the British Labour Party, social democracy is a much tougher force than many on the left believed in the 1970s. While it may not be appropriate for revolutionaries to work inside those parties, a united front approach to win workers away from them is vital: it won't happen automatically, or in the heat of the struggle alone. Even the "new" social-democracy, with its openly pro-market policies, cannot simply be by-passed. The New Zealand Labour Party, for example, has been explaining how it "went a bit too far to the right" in the 1980s, singing some old tunes again, and regaining some support.

A second reason is the working-class defeats in industrial struggle over the 1980s — none, in the countries of "new social-democratic" governments, as devastating as the British miners' defeat of 1984-5, but cumulatively substantial.

A third reason is a shift in the whole political culture. For a hundred years, from the origins of the modern socialist labour movement to the 1980s, there were manifest, mainstream political developments which signalled (or seemed to signal) to socialists that history was moving our way: the growth of trade unions and labour parties; the extension of state welfare; the expansion of state enterprise and economic control; the Russian revolution; the industrial success of the Soviet Union; the Stalinist revolutions in Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam and other countries after World War 2. There were Trotskyists who criticised social-democratic reforms, who argued that Stalinism was a negation of socialism, and who proposed a working-class, libertarian concept of socialism very different from a simple extrapolation of the mainstream "socialistic" trends. But the great majority of people who became socialists, even if they would move to Trotskyism, must have



started off with a vague, instinctive identification with the mainstream "socialistic" and "revolutionary" contestation of the established order, clarifying their ideas later. The Trotskyists had no choice but, one way or another, to swim in the streams of mainstream "socialism"; and many of them swallowed a lot of the stream they swam in.

Now those signals have gone. Young people becoming aware of politics see Stalinism in collapse and discredit, social-democratic parties proposing only packages of counter-reform slightly different from the open capitalist parties, and small revolutionary groups with what must seem to them to be obscure variants of the old socialism abandoned by the social-democrats and Stalinists. No wonder many of them conclude that politics offers no hope.

The turning point, perhaps, was 1975-6. The old social-democratic policies were shown to be unable even to soften modern capitalist crises. Revolutionaries triumphed in Cambodia and Vietnam — and launched mass terror and slaughter in Cambodia, repression in Vietnam which sent thousands risking their lives in frail little boats to escape across the seas. Then the Chinese government publicly opted for its current "capitalist road". The Maoist revolutionary groups — organisations many thousands strong, and some with a working-class following, in Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and France — collapsed ignominiously.

The pro-capitalist direction of the East European revolutions of 1989-91 was in part a product of the shift in political culture — over the 1980s, almost all the ideologues of the anti-Stalinist resistance had become pro-capitalist, where in the 1970s or earlier they would have been socialistic — and it also became a great factor pushing the shift further, discrediting the whole language of socialism for hundreds of millions of people.

Class struggle will revive, because it is built into the relations of wage-labour and capital. Socialist ideas will revive, because they are rooted in the logic of the class struggle. But for the present we are, in some respects, back in a period like that which Karl Marx had to deal with for his entire life after the revolutions of 1848 — when revolution was discredited, socialist ideas were eclipsed, workers everywhere were dominated by openly bourgeois politics, and even trade-union struggle was feeble. Marx used that period to lay the ideological basis for a new socialist political culture.

The revolutionary left must do the same now, going back to the original ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and others, clearing away the encrustations of the decades when socialist culture was dominated by Stalinism and social democracy, renewing and revising the ideas in the light of new conditions. The human need for hope for a better society, hope to escape the capitalist world of mass unemployment, poverty, and alienation, cannot be long suppressed. The new social democrats offer no hope. We must. ■

# Iran's sham elections

By Maryam

IN the months preceding the so-called elections to the fifth session of the Islamic Parliament, the people of Iran were subjected by the Islamic regime to an especially severe reign of religious despotism and civil oppression. Democratic elections are normally considered to be means of exercising the voters' political freedom to choose the government.

In the regime of the Islamic republic they are used only to extend, deepen and strengthen the existing dictatorship. They are almost entirely a sham and a fraud. The rival factions within the Islamic regime use tightly managed "elections" to work out their internal power struggles for prestige, position and dominance and to give a spurious stamp of legitimacy to their rule.

Elections demand maximum political freedom, yet in Iran the preparations for the elections of the fifth session of the Parliament have brought about such an atmosphere of repression, fear and terror that even the supporters of various factions of the regime (with the exception of the present dominant factions) found it impossible to participate in it. Arbitrary bans on candidates and the annulment of first round election results, have already caused major problems for those who tried to use the "elections".

For that reason, in early March, the political forces of Workers' Left Unity jointly called upon the Iranian people to boycott these "elections", reminding them that they have no interests in the battle between the two factions of the regime. The left opposition reminded the people that they have no future with the Islamic Republic regime, that freedom and free elections cannot be achieved without overthrowing this regime.

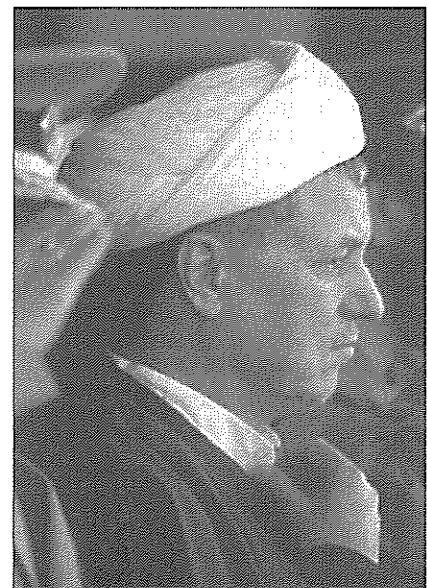
Subsequent events proved us to be right. The elections ended up as a mere contest between supporters of President Rafsanjani and his opponents in the "conservative" Council of Guardians, a religious body through which Iran's clergy maintains its grip on power.

In early April, the Council of Guardians annulled the voting in eight cities, including Isfahan, Iran's third largest city with five seats in the Parliament. The other cities were Malayer, Najafabad, Naeen, Mian-

doab, Meimeh, Borkhar and Khomeini Shahre. The Council of Guardians accused "some candidates" of using "anti-revolutionary" slogans, "making illusory promises", and "of buying off voters." Significantly, however, the council never specified the identity of the accused candidates.

In the first round of elections, over 30 members of the Majles were denied permission to stand for the new Parliament. Jamshid Mansourian, a candidate from Mashhad, a large city in north-eastern Iran, was denied permission to run because he had signed a public announcement for a memorial service for the late leader of the Freedom Movement, Mehdi Bazargan, the Islamic Republic's first Prime Minister! Newspapers critical of the government or the Council of Guardians' strict supervision of "candidates" were banned.

On 8 March, the day of the first-round elections, in the north-western city of Bonab, riot police opened fire on demonstrators protesting against governmental interference in the election. The weekly local newspaper, *Rassad*, published in the nearby town of Maragheh, was closed down and its publisher detained as punishment for its critical reporting of the unrest in Bonab. The newspaper had stated that at least six people were killed and 120 wounded when Revolutionary Guards opened fire on unarmed demonstrators. It is now believed that 29 people were killed in Bonab on 8 March.



Representing one faction of the ruling class: Rafsanjani

# General Strike, Britain 1926

# The revolution that might have been

By Stan Crooke

STRIKERS playing football against the police. Oxbridge undergraduates and retired army officers running the trains and trams. The Australian and English cricket teams carrying on the Test matches regardless. Dames and debutantes peeling potatoes in Hyde Park. The "stake-in-the-country" people mucking in to keep things moving.

This is the image of the British General Strike of 70 years ago this month which the establishment has passed down to posterity — a very British affair; one which was sensible enough to refrain from disrupting the hallowed British way of life.

And this image contains something of the truth.

## The idea of the general strike

AT the close of the nineteenth and opening of the twentieth centuries the international working class had added the weapon of the general strike to its arsenal in the war against capital. In the decades before the British General Strike, Belgium, Russia, Sweden and Germany had all experienced general strikes — Belgium more than once.

Drawing on the experience of such mass strikes, Trotsky wrote: "The general strike is one of the most acute forms of class war. It is one step from the general strike to armed insurrection... If carried through to the end, the general strike brings the revolutionary class up against the task of organising a new state power... A real victory for the general strike can only be found in the conquest of power by the proletariat."

But such understandings and interpretations of the general strike were alien to the traditions of the British labour movement.

The British labour movement had grown up and shaped itself politically and organisationally before Marxism became a mass current in the working class internationally. On the eve of the General Strike, the Communist Party of Great Britain numbered just 5,000, while the trade unions, even after the post-1920 periods of slump, had some 5.5 million members.

Successive union amalgamations had created a number of massed trade union battalions, especially in transport and engineering. And the Labour Party had been established at the turn of the century as the unions' political wing, to represent and advance their interests in the Parliamentary arena.

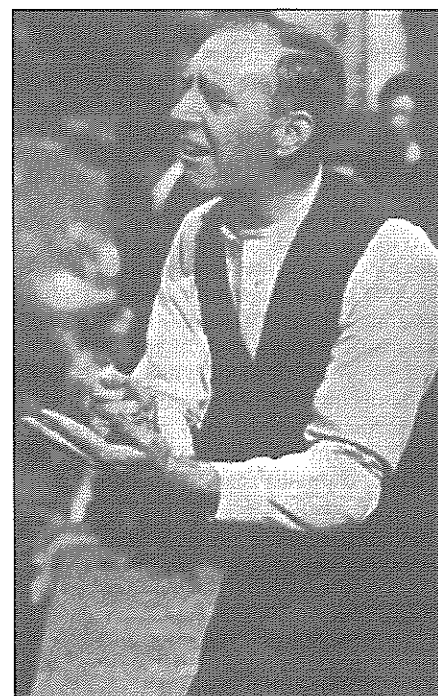
But the British labour movement operated within the confines of the capitalist system. Its politics were confined to the perspective of advance within capitalism. What Lenin termed the ideological front of the class struggle was neglected almost entirely. And the cumbersome, top-heavy labour movement bureaucracy consti-

tuted a conservative dead-weight bearing down on the working class.

Nowhere was this contradiction between massive organisational strength and debilitating political and intellectual weakness more clearly manifested than in the 1926 General Strike.

While the numbers involved surpassed earlier general strikes

in other countries, only the most modest of goals was set for it by a labour movement leadership which had not wanted the strike in the first place, and sought to end it as quickly as possible once it was underway.



Miners' leader AJ Cook

## The build-up

THE immediate post-war years saw a series of major, and generally successful, battles by the trade unions: the Clydeside General Strike of 1919 for a 40-hour week, the successful strike by 300,000 Lancashire cotton operatives for a 48-hour week and a 30% wage increase, the victory of railway workers in preventing wage-cuts, and the successful campaign of 1920 against British intervention against the recently victorious Bolshevik revolution in the Soviet Union: London dockers went on strike to stop the export of military hardware for use against the Bolsheviks.

But the end of the post-war boom at the close of 1920 heralded a series of reverses for the working class. By June 1921 unemployment had rocketed to two million. Between 1921 and 1923 union membership fell by over two million. Exploiting the opportunity, the bosses pressed home their offensive throughout industry.

The onset of a short-lived industrial recovery in 1923 once again tipped the balance of forces in the opposite direction, restoring working-class morale and halting the decline in union membership. The result was a series of strikes, many unofficial, some of them offensive rather than defensive in character.

The experiences of Ramsay MacDonald's disastrous Labour government of 1924 encouraged workers to rely on trade union industrial struggle to defend their interests. The first Labour government condemned the strikes which continued through 1924, and frequently played the role of strike-breaker. JR Clynes, one of its ministers, openly boasted that in its handling of strikes the government had "played the part of a national government and not a



class government."

In November 1924 Baldwin returned to power with the largest Tory majority for half a century. Under pressure from the Treasury and the Bank of England, and in the mistaken belief that the experiences of the Labour government had demoralised the working class, the new Tory government decided on a return to the gold standard (that is, to use gold as an index against which to measure the value of the pound sterling).

Given the international currency fluctuations which had occurred since Britain had come off the gold standard in 1914, a return to it could be achieved only through a massive attack on domestic wage rates. Consequently, by mid-1925 engineering employers were demanding wage cuts and longer working hours, textiles employers were demanding a 10% wage cut, and craftsmen in railway workshops were confronted with demands for wage cuts of 5%.

## The miners

NOT for the first time, miners found themselves bearing the brunt of the employers' renewed offensive.

In 1914, almost one in ten of the male labour force in Britain was employed in the coal industry, making mining the largest and most important industry in the country, and the miners' union (Miners' Federation of Great Britain, MFGB) a major force in the trade union movement.

During the war years, mining had been placed under government control and the MFGB successfully achieved an 8-hour working day, a minimum wage and national wage agreements. Despite the failure of the MFGB's attempt in the aftermath of the war to win a 30% wage increase, a 6-hour working day and full nationalisation of the mines, including a measure of workers' control, miners remained a prime target for the employers' offensive.

Exploiting the slump of 1921, the government worked hand-in-glove with the employers to attack the miners. The date of the ending of the government's war-time control of the mines was brought forward by five months (to 31 March 1921), and the mine-owners demanded abolition of national wage agreements and wage

cuts so severe that they meant a return to a level lower than pre-war earnings. When miners refused, the employers locked them out.

Deserted by the leaders of the transport and rail unions on "Black Friday" (15 April 1921) the miners battled on hopelessly against the mine-owners' lock-out for another three months, until they were forced back on terms worse than they might have had in April, though the owners did agree to continuation of a nationally agreed minimum percentage wage.

Between 1920 and 1924, real wages in mining fell more drastically than in most other trades, and by 1925 miners formed the single largest group amongst the unemployed. The return to the gold standard in April of the same year raised added difficulties to the export of coal and this intensified the crisis of the coal industry: by the early summer coal exports had slumped, 60% of output was being mined at a loss, and 400 pits had been forced to close.

The mineowners renewed their attack on pay and working conditions. A set of demands forwarded to the MFGB on 1 July called for savage wage-cuts, abolition of the residual minimum percentage wage, an end to national bargaining and a complete reversion to district agreements. The philosophy behind the renewed offensive had been spelt out in a speech by the Scottish mineowner Sir Adam Nimmo to the National Liberal Club in January:

"The wages of those engaged in the industry cannot permanently rest upon considerations of the cost of living, or what the men may call a living wage... British coal has to compete with the coal produced in other countries... It is of no avail to suggest that the wages received do not permit of the miners having a proper standard of living."

## "Red Friday"

THE MFGB appealed for support to the TUC General Council. The Council resolved to "give the miners their complete support... and to co-operate with them wholeheartedly in their resistance to the mineowners' proposals." A Special Industrial Committee and a Coal Embargo Committee were set up by the General Council, threatening an embargo on all movements of coal if the miners were



locked out for rejecting the employers' demands.

But the government and the employers were not ready for a fight, and the apparently imminent conflict was averted by government intervention. On 30 July ("Red Friday") the government announced a nine month subsidy to the coal industry, during which time a Royal Commission headed by Sir Herbert Samuel was to conduct an inquiry into the industry and draw up proposals for its future.

Yet "Red Friday" was not a straightforward example of the effectiveness of militant trade union solidarity. Pressure from a leftward shift in trade union organisation in the preceding years, and fears of an intensive industry-wide employers' offensive should the miners win certainly influenced the General Council. But the Council was also anxious to appear to be militant in order to avoid the possibility of having to act militantly. There was a big element of bluff in a situation where employers were not bluffing.

As National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) President, Marchbank, put it: "On Black Friday they nearly had the government on their knees. If they could bring the government into a similar position on this occasion, it might not only prevent a stoppage, but save the miners' position. But for this they wanted more support."

The threat of a boycott was seen as sufficient in itself to compel government intervention and a withdrawal of the mineowners' demands. This is underlined by the absence of any serious preparation to implement the threatened coal embargo.

Indeed, as the scheduled date of its intended implementation approached, leaders of the transport and rail unions became increasingly and openly sceptical about the viability of attempting to block all coal transportation.

Walter Citrine, soon to become TUC General Secretary, expressed concern after "Red Friday" that the General Council's posture might have appeared as a challenge to the "constitutional" government:

"If the challenge of the movement could have been given the appearance of a denial of the government's right to govern, and as the beginning of open war between society as at present constituted and the whole organised working-class movement, a very serious situation might have arisen."

Labour Party leader Ramsay MacDonald went one better. He condemned the Tories for giving in on "Red Friday": those who believed that "direct action against society offers great prospects for improvement in working class conditions naturally feel that they have won a fine triumph... The mishandling of the government handed over the honours of war to those who may be inclined to toy with revolution."

In reality though, the government had only climbed down for the purpose of preparing itself for confrontation in the future. While a minority of Baldwin's cabinet wanted a retreat to allow time for further negotiations, the more hawkish elements saw retreat as a tactic to guarantee victory in the future battle.

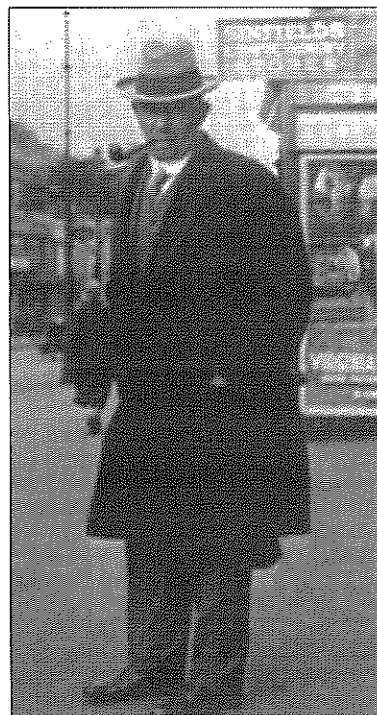
The government was not yet prepared for a full confrontation. The cabinet meeting of 30 July 1925 concluded: "Whilst the [strike-breaking] organisation was complete, it was only a skeleton and could not be put into operation until volunteers had come forward... There was general agreement that in the event of a strike on the scale now threatened, the maintenance of the essential public services could be effected, but only by a great and costly effort."

Churchill made the same point more bluntly five months later in the House of Commons: "We therefore decided to postpone the crisis in the hope of averting it, of coping with it effectually when the time came."

The government made a tactical retreat to prepare for conflict when the nine-month subsidy ran out.

## The government prepares

AS early as February 1919 the cabinet had set up a special committee on "industrial unrest" to prevent or undermine strikes. In the aftermath of "Black Friday" [1921] the organisation was allowed to collapse, but was subsequently revived in May 1923. The Labour government of 1924 maintained it in being and even discussed using it against striking dockers and tramwaymen. But, as Baldwin's climbdown in 1925 indicated, the strike-breaking apparatus had not been sufficiently developed to cope with a possible general strike.



**Jimmy Thomas, railwaymen's leader, called off on Black Friday, 15 April 1921, a sympathetic strike of rail and transport workers in support of the miners who had been locked out by the coal owners determined to drive down wages.**

From "Red Friday" onwards, the government began to speedily rectify, from their own point of view, this situation.

Within a week of "Red Friday" Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary, had drawn up plans for a complete overhaul of the government's strike-breaking machinery. Permanent headquarters were to be set up in each of the regions into which the country had been divided and key civil servants seconded to a central headquarters in London.

In post and railway centres, employers were recruited to work with the official apparatus. A communications network was built up between the London central headquarters and local authorities and police forces. £10,000 was allocated for spending on the stockpiling of resources.

A steel-helmet Civil Constabulary Reserve was formed, eventually numbering 200,000, with 40,000 in London alone. The navy was given responsibility for moving supplies and, if necessary, troops. Thus they could bypass the railways.

A nominally independent Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS) was set up in September 1925, for the purpose of recruiting and training "volunteer labour" to act as strike-breakers. But Joynson-Hicks had clearly been involved in the establishment of the OMS, and its claims to a spurious independence were further undermined by its co-operation with the government's official strike-breaking machinery in the run-up to the General Strike and its incorporation into that machinery on the outbreak of the strike itself.

At the beginning of October 1925 Joynson-Hicks reported to the cabinet: "Various unofficial [sic] organisations had been formed for this purpose (of recruiting 'volunteer labour') including the OMS, the Chambers of Commerce, the Fascisti and the Crusaders... (the volunteers) would, in case of emergency, be at the disposal of the government." Preparations by the government continued through 1925 and into 1926. Local food officers were appointed. Access to the media during the strike was organised. Scabs were enrolled from engineering colleges and electrical firms to run London power stations. Road commissions were appointed and ordered to organise schemes to train drivers for heavy lorries.

On the eve of the strike Joynson-Hicks reported to the cabinet that 98 volunteer service committees and 147 haulage committees had been set up, 331 local food officers had been appointed, and arrangements for food supplies and emergency electricity generation were virtually complete.

Despite this government preparation for all-out class war, the leadership of the labour movement, mesmerised by a fear of appearing to act contrary to the norms of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, made no comparable preparations for the General Strike.



## The TUC dawdles and squirms

At no point did the General Council or the Special Industrial Committee seriously draw up plans for a general strike. Instead, they pinned their hopes on the Samuel Commission coming up with a compromise formula they could accept and thereby avoid confrontation with the employers and their government.

The 1925 TUC Congress, despite much left rhetoric, rejected proposals advocating stronger powers for the General Council, empowering it to call strike action in order to assist "a union defending a vital trade union principle." Epitomising the mentality of the labour movement bureaucracy, General Council member Clynes, the recent ex-Minister, argued against the proposals on the grounds that "I am not in fear of the capitalist class. The only class that I fear is our own."

A month later the Labour Party conference likewise neglected the question of the general strike looming on the horizon. Instead, it stepped up the witch-hunt against the Communist Party and adopted a new "Labour and the Nation" programme. As Cramp, the then Party chairperson, put it: "We transcend the conflict of classes."

The Co-operative Society followed suit. Still owed £200,000 from credit dispensed during the 1921 miners' lock-out, it wrote to both the Special Industrial Committee and the General Council asking for the funds of the whole trade union movement to be offered as security for any credit offered to miners in the event of a strike or further lock-out. Both the Committee and the Council turned down the Co-op's request, leaving local union organisations to reach arrangements with local Co-ops as best they could.

Rather than prepare for the general strike, the union bureaucracy attacked those who urged such preparations. In February 1926 the Special Industrial Committee warned trade unionists not to be influenced by "unauthorised and unofficial suggestions which are being made in many quarters regarding the mining problem." Citrine, a month later, argued against "rank and file control" as incompatible with a co-ordinated policy in the hands of a "trade union general staff."

In both cases, the objects of attack were the Communist Party and the rank-and-file trade unionists organised by it in the National Minority Movement, both of which warned of the inevitability of the coming confrontation and advocated the establishment of local Councils of Action to prepare for it.

As the date of the ending of the subsidy approached, the lack of preparation became increasingly apparent. Citrine, TUC General Secretary after 1925, questioned the very viability of a general strike: "A general strike... is a literal impossibility... In some imperfect way services essential to life must be carried on."

This was true. And the socialist solution was for the working class to take over the running of such services. But this would have meant challenging capitalist power structures, and that Citrine and his fellow-bureaucrats were not prepared to do. Thus, instead of challenging those structures, the General Council ended up supinely offering to assist the Tories in maintaining vital services on the eve of the strike.

It was a proposal indicative of the nature of the incumbent leadership, failing to make any serious preparations in advance of the strike. Instead, it offered to help the government undermine its own projected strike!

At the beginning of March 1926, the Samuel Commission published its conclusions. Often vague and imprecise, and sometimes mutually contradictory, they amounted to reorganisation of the coal industry at some point in the future, under private ownership not through nationalisation (though nationalisation of Coal Royalties was proposed), and, more immediately, abolition of the government subsidy and wage cuts of up to 13%.

Neither the government, nor the mineowners, nor the MFGB were prepared to accept these proposals. The Labour Party leaders and the TUC General Council were!

According to Ramsay MacDonald, the Commission's report was "a conspicuous landmark in the history of political thought... the

stars in their courses are fighting for us." And the General Council regarded pay-cuts in exchange for re-organisation in the future as a fair enough exchange.

Dismissing the miners' response of "not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day" as a "mere slogan" which would "get them nowhere", members of the TUC General Council and Special Industrial Committee spent the six weeks before the General Strike in desperate negotiations to try to find a compromise. Thomas, the NUR General Secretary, described the TUC leaders' position as "almost grovelling", though there was little justification for the qualification "almost."

The General Council convened a meeting of union executives on 29 April. Even now, with a lock-out of miners only two days away, Pugh, chair of the TUC, appealed for negotiations between miners and mineowners on the basis of the Samuel Commission report; he expressed optimism about intervention by Baldwin.

The meeting authorised the Special Industrial Committee to continue its efforts to secure an "honourable settlement", and endorsed the view of Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) General Secretary Bevin that no mention should be made of a possible general strike, for fear that it would "place a weapon in the hands of our opponents."

After another round of abortive negotiations, the reconvened meeting of union executives voted on 1 May by over 3.5 million to less than 50,000 in favour of the General Council's "Proposals for Co-ordinated Action", that is, for a general strike. The MFGB also agreed to permit the General Council to assume primary responsibility for negotiations, provided that there was the "fullest consultation between the two bodies."

Using the latter agreement as justification, the General Council, despite having committed itself to a general strike from midnight on 3 May, resumed negotiations with the government, attempting to knit together a package involving a temporary extension of the subsidy, reorganisation of the coal industry, and wage cuts. Given the known opposition of miners to the wage cuts, this was treacherous.

But negotiations again broke down on 2 May, at the government's initiative, after members of the print union NATSOPA at the *Daily Mail* refused to typeset an editorial denouncing the imminent general strike. Prepared to sink to any depths to avert the strike, the General Council sent a message to Baldwin disowning the NATSOPA members, stressing that they were "entirely without responsibility" for the NATSOPA members' action, and deploring the "precipitous and calamitous" curtailment of negotiations.

Even now the General Council was not done with its grovelling. In the face of the government's demand that withdrawal of the general strike notices was a precondition of further negotiations, the General Council replied that this might be possible if they could be privately assured that the government accepted their latest "peace formula" "not in detail, but in principle."

With just two hours to go to midnight on 3 May, Labour Party leaders Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson, acting as intermediaries for the General Council, met Baldwin, Churchill and other members of the Tory cabinet in a last-minute bid to avert the General Strike. MacDonald and Henderson were infinitely more concerned to avert it than the members of the Tory government.

The attempt failed. At midnight the General Strike began.

## The strike is solid

"WE have from all over the country reports that have surpassed all our expectations. Not only the railwaymen and transport men, but all other trades came out in a manner we did not expect immediately. The difficulty of the General Council has been to keep men in what we might call the second line of defence rather than call them out."

This TUC statement on day one of the strike (4 May) is indicative of the General Council's overall attitude throughout: despite the breadth of support in the labour movement, the General Council saw the struggle as purely defensive. They expended considerable energy on stopping workers in the "second line" from immediately joining the strike. Their principal concern was ending the strike as quickly as possible.

They hoped that action by unions in the "first line" would be

enough to force a few concessions out of the government, and that these could then be sold to the membership as a basis for ending the strike.

The "first line" involved four main groups of unions: transport, print, metal and heavy chemical, and construction (save those employed in housing and hospital work). Electricity and gas workers were instructed to "co-operate" by ceasing the supply of power for industrial but not domestic purposes: technically this was impossible to carry out.

Confusion was caused by different unions choosing different definitions of "first line" industries. The leadership's lack of militancy led to differences of opinion between the bureaucracy and membership in individual unions as to whether or not they should be out on strike, notably in electricity and construction.

Given the General Council's lack of preparation for the strike, and its concern to prevent it, the TUC's running of the strike was inevitably ramshackle. Initially, the General Council set up six sub-committees. But the responsibilities assumed by the sub-committees overlapped, leading to conflicting instructions, the sub-committees were not always recognised by the unions, and nor did they show much success in fulfilling their intended functions.

On 5 May, therefore, the sub-committees were wound up and replaced by a Strike Organisation Committee (SOC), run by TGWU General Secretary Ernest Bevin and General Council member Arthur Purcell. But confusion resulting from the ambiguities of the TUC's instructions, and dissatisfaction with the two-stage nature of the strike continued to characterise the strike: the SOC complained of "unofficial" strike action, and union militants attacked the SOC for "appearing to be chiefly concerned with finding excuses for keeping men at work."

Considering the lack of TUC preparations, and of preparations on a local level, the response from the rank and file membership of the unions on the first day of the strike was a sign of their enthusiasm for a fight. The working class was raring to go! Up and down the country, the response was overwhelming.

In Manchester, for example, the tramway system was shut down completely, and other transport workers were also solid from the start. Work at the docks was at a standstill, and the ship canal was not working, while there was also widespread support from members of the "second-line" Electrical Trade Union.

Similarly, in Birmingham, 90% of workers employed in the tram, omnibus and waterways services struck from midnight on 3 May. Support from local railway workers was equally widespread. The local strike committee reported to the TUC: "The extent of the stoppage is much greater than anyone anticipated, and all road, passenger and carrying traffic has been stopped... on the railway the stoppage is complete... in the factories the difficulty now is to keep people at work. All are anxious to be out and in the fight."

In the surrounding towns, such as Walsall and Wolverhampton, it was a similar picture. In Wolverhampton the bus and tram services were shut down completely. The local strike committee, as too the West Bromwich strike committee, reported difficulties in keeping people in work who were not classified as "first line." Engineers in Walsall, where there was equally widespread support for the strike, solved the problem by deciding that they were really involved in transport work and consequently could strike.

There was strong support in the smaller towns too. According to TUC reports, support in Nottingham, for example, was "unexpectedly fine", while 6,000 walked out in Leicester on the strike's first day. Ironically though, some areas of traditional militancy, such as the "Red Clyde", were initially only partially drawn into the strike. Why? Engineering and shipbuilding workers, who formed the backbone of the local labour movement, were classified as "second line"!

## Scabs

WHILE workers rallied to the cause of the miners, the government sent into action the army of scabs it had recruited, organised and trained in the nine months between "Red Friday" and the start of the General Strike. Its scab army was a broad, cross-class alliance, stretching across society from aristocrats to lumpen proletarians.

Peers worked in Printing House Square, while the motor pool in Horse Guards Parade run by Lord Curzon was a popular rendezvous

for affluent Londoners. Running canteens for scab lorry drivers became a popular upper-class pastime. *The Sketch* of 12 May reported:

"The cook-house brigade at the Hyde Park canteens for food supply transport men included many well-known people. Lady Betty Butler is the younger daughter of the 7th Earl of Lanesborough and is the unmarried sister of the Duchess of Sutherland. Lady Askwith is the wife of Lord Askwith, and Sir George Arthur Bt., M.V.O., was secretary to Field Marshal Earl Kitchener."

Ex-colonial civil servants and retired military personnel were of particular importance in scabbing on the railways. As one of them reminisced: "I immediately volunteered for the Great Central Railway... sleeping happily on 3rd class carriage seats and jeered at by the bloody-minded mutineers... a Lieutenant Colonel as driver... Our driver carried a revolver which he said he would use if he were attacked."

Students were also an important source of recruitment to the government's scab army. At Edinburgh University, over 2,000 students, out of 3,953, enrolled as "volunteer workers" during the strike (in recognition of which a local ship-owner donated £10,000 to the university). At the neighbouring St. Andrew's University, virtually all 650 students signed up as scabs. This pattern was not repeated everywhere, however: at Glasgow University, where the Labour Club had campaigned against attempts to enrol strike breakers, only 300 out of 5,000 students scabbed.

But the strike-breaking organisation also managed to recruit some working-class support. The Newcastle Civil Commission, for example, reported problems in recruiting special constables, but none in recruiting scab dockworkers. In London, cargoes were kept on the move at the docks by Covent Garden porters. The extent of victimisation and of strikers being replaced by scabs after the General Strike is an indication of the government's success in recruiting a working-class contingent to break the strike.

Hand-in-hand with organising the scabs went the government's strengthening of the police force with police auxiliaries. On 6 May the Civil Constabulary Reserve was set up for the purposes of crowd control. Run by the War Office, it drew its membership from the Territorial Army and former soldiers.

To encourage recruitment to the Civil Constabulary, the War Office issued the encouraging statement "there is no objection to officers of the Reserve, or Officers, offering their services to local organisations for the maintenance of order and vital services." An appeal was made for more London special constables by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, who described the duties of the former as "one of the most important obligations on citizenship, and incumbent upon those who set a value on loyalty to their king and country, and to the cause of good and orderly government."

The number of special constables recruited in London in the course of the General Strike rose from 3,035 (4 May) to 51,807 (11 May). The Civil Constabulary Reserve grew to 9,000. And another 200,000 "second reserve" policemen were mobilised elsewhere in England and Wales.

## The armed forces

THE scabs, the police and the police auxiliaries were backed up by the armed forces. On the third day of the strike the government announced: "All ranks of the armed forces of the crown are hereby notified that any action which they may find necessary to take in an honest endeavour to aid the civil power will receive, both now and afterwards, the full support of his Majesty's government."

The following day two battalions of Guards, with supporting cavalry and backed up by armoured cars, occupied the London docks. Armed troops kept a round-the-clock guard on buses at transport depots. These, rather than scabs or police auxiliaries, were used for the transportation of food supplies. Cavalry regiments, such as the Royal Horse Guards stationed in Hyde Park, were also ready for action throughout the strike.

Equal in importance to the army in strike-breaking was the navy. Battleships and destroyers took up position in the Clyde, the Thames and the Mersey, and dropped anchor in the harbours of Cardiff, Newport, Hull, Harwich, Middlesbrough and Portsmouth. The navy took over Tilbury ferry and ran petrol from the Thameside depots into London. By the end of the General Strike, 33 of 61 electricity gen-



**Police and army protect scabs**

erating stations in and around London were being run or partly run by the navy.

Having prepared for the eventuality of a general strike since "Red Friday", the ruling class and its government were able to mobilise and put into action a scab army, backed up by the standing armed forces of the state. While members of the British "fascisti" distributed anti-strike propaganda in London, the scabs moved into action in the docks, transport networks and power stations, strike-breaking in the shadow of the deployment of the armed forces.

## Organising the strike: Councils of Action

THE running of the strike was, by contrast, more spontaneous. Though the small membership of the Communist Party had campaigned for the establishment of Councils of Action in preparation for the strike, only in a few areas had such campaigning made any impact. Not until the beginning of May did the labour movement really set about organising itself for battle.

Trades Councils played a central role in this. The TUC had placed upon Trades Councils "the responsibility of organising the trade unions in dispute in the most effective manner for the preservation of peace and order." From the TUC's point of view, this meant that Trades Councils should play a modest co-ordinating role in the localities. In practice, though, driven by the unfolding logic of the general strike, Trades Councils became a force and a power in their own right.

Moribund Trades Councils were revived. Existing ones were broadened out and drew in delegates from working-class organisations beyond just trade unions. Thus they effectively transformed themselves into Councils of Action: joint committees of delegates from unions, political parties, unemployed movements and other working-class bodies which ran the strike and took over many of the functions normally carried out by agencies of the bourgeois state.

Between 400 and 500 Councils of Action emerged in the course of the General Strike. The Councils and their individual sub-committees were responsible for the day-to-day running of the strike: finance, propaganda, communications, transport, entertainment, picketing, prisoners' support, relations with the police, arbitrating in inter-union disputes, etc., etc.

In areas where there was a strong right-wing control over the labour movement, the emergence of Councils of Action was often successfully blocked. Control kept in the hands of individual union sub-committees cut across the drive for local unity and subverted the development of the strike's potential for undermining the everyday

functioning of bourgeois society.

Attempts to link up the local Councils of Action on a broader regional and national scale met with only limited success. In Edinburgh a central strike committee existed as of 1-2 May, operating from the NUM headquarters in Hillside Crescent. In Glasgow, a central strike committee set up the seventeen local area strike committees.

Efforts to set up similar centralised organisations met with some success in London, on Merseyside and the Tyne, and in East Glamorgan and South Lancashire. Elsewhere the individual Councils of Action remained isolated from one another throughout the strike. But the establishment of such Councils was an achievement in itself, given the efforts of right-wing leaders to block involvement in them by union branches, local Co-ops, and Labour Party branches.

Of course, the ruling class opposed the Councils of Action. Thus, for example, the Welsh mining village of Mardy, where the local strike committee enjoyed virtually absolute powers, was denounced in the Welsh press as "Little Moscow", the scene of a "reign of terror and violence", of "the red reign of terror in lawless Mardy."

The labour movement bureaucracy and the ruling classes had good reason to fear and oppose the Councils of Action and Trades Councils or strike committees which functioned as Councils of Action. These bodies ran the strike. In the context of a general strike, that could only mean beginning to run society itself, by making inroads into the power exercised by the ruling classes and its agencies in the "ordinary" functioning of capitalist society.

For example, deciding who would be allowed to move, or paralysed, and organising food supplies to the workers. The logic of an escalating conflict was for the workers to go on expanding the range of such activities. Councils of Action would at a certain point grow over into soviets.

For the ruling classes, it was their power itself that was at stake.

A struggle for control over transportation and distribution, for example, continued throughout the strike, waged by the strikers' organisations against the state's strike-breakers.

Councils of Action or their transport sub-committees were, in many areas, the bodies which decided on the transportation or non-transportation of goods and people. In Airdrie and Coatbridge in Lanarkshire, the local Council of Action issued permits for transport through its transport sub-committee and organised pickets of up to 4,000 to shut down road and rail movements which it had not sanctioned.

In Arran in Ayrshire the same procedure was adopted, though here, unlike anywhere else in the west of Scotland, the transport committee granted permits for the local buses on the grounds that they served working-class people. But more elaborate procedures were fol-

lowed in other parts of the country: in Birmingham the Trade Union Emergency Committee, issued transport permits only where trade union labour was being used to load, unload and distribute the goods, and only if vehicles with permits carried notices saying that they were using union labour and moving with union consent.

Mass picketing was the chief means used to try to keep scab transport off the roads and rails. In Irvine and Auchinleck in Ayrshire, pickets of up to 500 stopped buses taking workers to the local docks and obstructed railway lines to hold up trains. In the East Midlands, strikers attacked and overturned buses, smashed the windows of trams which ventured out onto the streets, filled the seats of private buses and then refused to pay the fare, or, in some cases, removed the carburettors of buses to immobilise them.

But, given the TUC's lack of preparation for the strike and the Tories' detailed advance planning, full trade union control over transport was never achieved in the course of the strike. In fact, by 7 May the TUC Strike Organisation Committee ordered all local trade union organisations to cease issuing any transport permits at all, due to the effectiveness of the scab transport system set up by the government.

Given the widespread support for the strike, mass picketing was used rarely, and then primarily in an attempt to assert control over transportation, rather than to picket out workplaces: around the docks in south London, against attempts to run buses and trams in Glasgow, in Tyneside in an effort to close down the main Newcastle-Durham road, or in Lanarkshire as mentioned above.

Workers' Defence Corps were set up around the country: in Coatbridge just outside Glasgow, in various parts of London, and also in Cheltenham, Gloucester, Chatham, Aldershot and Colchester.

The largest such workers' defence corps, numbering some 700, was set up in Methil in Fife, run by former war-time army warrant officers and NCOs. Its establishment sufficed to end police interference in picketing.

Of course the police attributed the violent disturbances which occurred during the strike to Communist agitators, and the union bureaucracy fought to dampen down any potential conflict. A London police report concluded: "It is now perfectly clear that the hooligans, incited and helped by paid Communist agitators, are responsible for disturbances. Trade unionist leaders are now frightened by the storm they have created, and are urging strikers to wear war medals and refrain from violence."

Central to the work of the Councils of Action and the Trades Councils was the need to maintain strikers' morale. One means was the organisation of entertainment — in Swindon teams of married versus single men played each other at football, cricket, bowls and darts, and socials and literary readings were also well supported, while in the south Wales mining villages an alternative culture flourished around things such as comic bands, much to the annoyance of local vicars: "A most vulgar spectacle, indeed a most indecent spectacle. It was immoral and blasphemous. One band had the audacity to carry a card upon which was the writing: 'I am the bread of life.'"

More important as a factor in the maintaining of morale and countering the government's black propaganda was the production of local strike bulletins, many of them under the control of the local Communist Party branches. The TUC helped increase the circulation of such bulletins by delaying official sanction for Councils of Action to produce their own local newspapers, thus leaving the field open to "unofficial" strike bulletins.

In Edinburgh the print-run of the daily duplicated strike bulletin rose from some 6,000 at the start of the strike to over 12,000 by its close. The bulletin contained strike news only, plus a commentary on such news and a reply to government propaganda. Equally pop-

ular in Birmingham was the local "Central Strike Bulletin", which sold out as fast as it could be produced, whilst the Communist Party bulletin "Birmingham Worker" was suppressed after three days under the Emergency Powers Act. Similarly, in Glasgow, the Communist Party organised publication of *The Worker* and *Workers' Weekly* until an entire night shift was arrested by the police.

The Scottish TUC was even more hostile to local strike bulletins than the TUC itself and regularly attempted to prevent their production (along with attempting to prevent strike meetings being held on Sundays and to block the establishment of local area strike committees to run the strike).

In the second week of the strike the STUC began production of the *Scottish Worker*, in an attempt to provide a moderate "official" alternative to the local strike bulletins. Though consisting largely of reprints from the TUC's *British Worker* and being intensely conservative in tone, the first issue of the *Scottish Worker* nonetheless sold out its 25,000 copies in 40 minutes.

## Workers' bulletins

A *LABOUR Research* survey carried out in the immediate aftermath of the General Strike showed that half of the Trades Councils and Councils of Action which responded to its questionnaire had produced bulletins of their own during the strike. The need for such local bulletins was underlined by the contents of the TUC's strike newspaper *British Worker*.

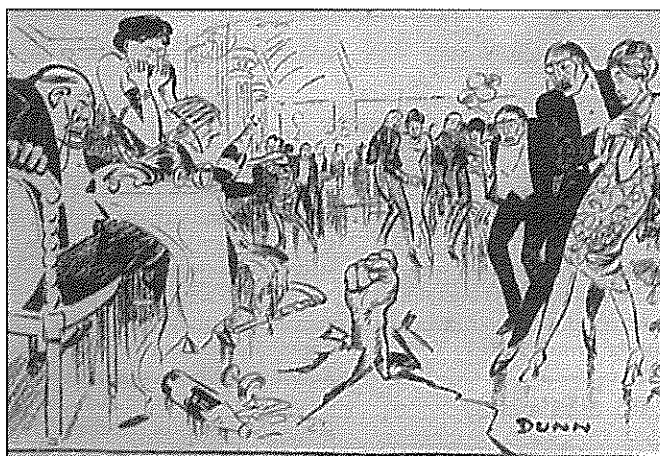
The paper did not seek to promote a more militant attitude on the part of the strikers. On the contrary, its purpose, according to the secretary of the TUC Publicity Committee responsible for its production, was "not to publish anything that will frighten or demoralise the public. It is the view of my Committee that the whole contents of the journal should be such as to convince the public that the General Council is in strong control of the strike situation and that everything that occurs is according to plan."

Hence the stress placed by the newspaper on the need for strikers to behave "responsibly" and to "avoid obstruction and to confine themselves strictly to their legitimate duties." The paper was not short on suggestions as to how strikers, all of whom were assumed to be male, could keep out of trouble: "Special football and cricket matches... indoor attractions... whist drives... keep smiling... get into the garden, look after the wife and kiddies. If you have not got a garden get into the country, the parks and playgrounds. Do not hang around the centre of the city. Get into the country, there is no more healthful occupation than walking."

Whilst the General Council of the TUC adopted the lowest of low-key approaches in its *British Worker*, the government showed no such restraint in the use it made of its own strike paper, the *British Gazette*, and of the supposedly neutral BBC.

Although Churchill had wanted to commandeer the BBC, it remained nominally independent, but only by doing voluntarily what the government required of it anyway. News which might encourage the strikers was suppressed, and not even TUC or Labour Party leaders were allowed to broadcast. And whilst the BBC ignored the appeal for a settlement by the Archbishop of Canterbury on 7 May, refusing to broadcast it after a request from the government, it reported in full the sermon by Cardinal Bourne in which he denounced the strike as "a sin against the obedience which we owe God."

The anti-strike paper *British Gazette* claimed the largest circulation in the world (over 2,200,000 by the end of the strike), but its circulation was extremely limited geographically. Bundles of them were dropped onto selected Durham mining villages by the RAF,



After the Bolshevik revolution the ruling class was petrified by the spectre of working-class power. Cartoon by Dunn from May Day issue of the *Communist*



but it never reached Scotland or South Wales at all.

The paper reported on usually fictional "returns to work", attacked the 1913 Trade Union Act for turning unions into "a vast political body, spending money to the end that the capitalist state may be overthrown", denounced the unions for calling the strike without first conducting a ballot of the membership, and acted as a recruiting agency for scabs and strike-breakers.

But the most consistent theme in the *British Gazette* was that the General Strike was a threat to the country's constitution. "Hold-up of a nation", "Government and the challenge", "The constitution of a soviet" read some of the headlines in its first issue, which explained:

"The general strike is in operation, expressing in no uncertain terms a direct challenge to ordered government. It would be futile to attempt to minimise the seriousness of such a challenge, constituting as it does an effort to force upon some 42 million British citizens the will of less than four million others engaged in the vital services of the country... Either the nation must be mistress in its own house, or suffer the existing constitution to be fatally injured and endure the erection of a Soviet of Trade Unions."

The same line of attack was maintained in subsequent issues. "The general strike is a challenge to Parliament and the road to anarchy," it emphasised on 6 May, and again on 7 May: "Either the country will break the General Strike or the General Strike will break the country."

Others joined in the attacks on the supposed illegality or unconstitutionality of the strike. In the Commons Sir John Simons, a former Liberal Attorney-General, attacked the strike as illegal, as too did Mr. Justice Astbury in the High Court. And the government began to give consideration to new anti-union legislation, declaring illegal any strike of a sympathetic character which was calculated to intimidate or coerce the government, and authorising the restraint of funds assigned to such strikes by unions.

But before the Tories were able to plan such anti-union legislation in more detail and bring it into effect the TUC leaders were on the verge of calling off the strike.

## The aftermath

IN line with instructions issued by the TUC General Council on 9 May, trade unionists in the "second line" (engineering, shipbuilding and chemicals and cement) joined in the general strike as of the first shift on 12 May.

Up to another 200,000 workers joined the strike, of which the organisation was becoming increasingly stronger and more effective. But at midday on the same day, the TUC General Council threw in the towel and called off the strike.

As the miners' leader AJ Cook later put it: "Sir Herbert [Samuel] was seen by the Rt Hon JH Thomas, and discussions began in private. Those who had been unwilling and hesitant to go into the strike were continually seeking some way out of it... These discussions were held simply with a view to creating some pretext to justify calling off the General Strike."

Initial proposals by Samuel for an end to the dispute made no headway with the mineowners, but were looked on favourably by the TUC General Council — including the proposals for pay-cuts. When the miners' union leaders protested at their exclusion from these discussions, they were told that only "preliminary discussions" had taken place.

The first "Samuel memorandum" was circulated to the General Council on the evening of 8 May and to members of the miners' union, the MFGB, the next day. The General Council proposed various amendments but the MFGB executive opposed the memorandum in principle because it included proposals for wage reductions.

In the afternoon of 10 May, the TUC Negotiating Committee met the miners' leaders to discuss the wage cuts. The miners refused to back down. The following day, the Negotiating Committee returned to meet Samuel to draw up a settlement which they and the General Council of the TUC could accept on their own authority. In other words: they abandoned the miners.

The final "settlement", which still included wage cuts, was drawn up between Samuel and the TUC Negotiating Committee during the afternoon of 11 May. In the evening the General Council pre-

sented the settlement as an ultimatum to the miners' leaders. They still refused to accept it but the following day a General Council deputation turned up at 10 Downing Street to announce their surrender.

Sir Horace Wilson, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, met them on the doorstep, to check before allowing them to enter that they had arrived to call off the strike and not to try to engage in negotiations.

"Peace with Honour" proclaimed the front-page headline in the following day's *British Worker*, which sought to excuse the betrayal on the grounds that, "the General Council called off the General Strike in confidence that the Prime Minister meant what he said when he asked for resumption of negotiations towards an honourable peace."

Up and down the country, however, trade unionists displayed a very different attitude. On the day after the TUC called off the strike, there were 100,000 more workers on strike than there had been on 12 May, due to the strikers' anger at the blatant betrayal, and the refusal of "second line" trade unionists to return to work so soon after being called out.

But, demoralised and disheartened by the decision of the TUC leadership, the workers had drifted back to work by the start of the following week (17 May). Appeals by the Communist Party for a continuation of the general strike were unsuccessful.

Victimisation was widespread, as employers exploited the opportunity to root out militants. An official statement of 12 May pointed out: "His Majesty's Government have no power to impel employers to take back every man who has been on strike, nor have they entered any obligation of any kind on this matter."

The government took a hard line towards its own employees: government industrial workers were to be re-instated only as work became available (i.e. scabs were to be kept on); one year's pension rights were to be forfeited; those guilty of "violence or intimidation" were to be sacked; and the "accredited representatives" of workers were to be compelled to declare the strike a "wrongful act".

Conservative controlled local authorities took an equally vindictive line (in many areas scabs were kept on in place of strikers on the trams), as did private bus firms and road-hauliers (nationally, 2,900 workers in these industries were not re-instated), printing industry employers, and railway companies. In other industries, especially those employing "second line" workers, the victimisation was less intense.

## Results of defeat

DESERTED by the TUC, the miners fought on for another seven months, faced by mineowners determined to make their isolation the occasion for breaking up their union organisation and pushing down rates of pay. By November they had been driven back to work on the worst possible terms: replacement of national settlements by district ones; wages cut back to 1921 levels, and in some areas to 1914 levels; abolition of the seven hour day.

The miners were further weakened by the emergence of non-political company unionism, especially in the Nottinghamshire coalfield, where the local Labour MP, George Spencer, initiated a breakaway company union. And in Scotland the right-wing old-guard broke away to form a rival union to that left under a mainly Communist leadership.

Given the central position which the miners occupied in the trade union movement, it was inevitable that their defeat, like the betrayal of the General Strike itself, would have a knock-on effect on the labour movement as a whole. Victimisation in the short term was followed by a slump in union membership in the longer term — from 5.5 million to well under 5 million by 1927, with accumulated union funds dropping from £12.5 million at the start of 1926 to less than £8.5 million by the close of the same year.

Those unions which suffered the heaviest losses in membership were in the industries most involved in the General Strike: coal, printing, railways and road-transport.

As union membership fell in the aftermath of the strike, so too did the number of strikes per year and their total duration. In 1924 and 1925 there had been over 1,300 strikes amounting to over 16 million working days, whereas in 1927 and 1928 there were 610

strikes adding up to just over 2.5 million working days. Wages also fell after the General Strike, though not as quickly as the cost of living, so there was an increase in real wages which played a part in reducing the frequency of strikes.

In the short term after the strike, unemployment remained around 10%, though it was much higher in certain trades and regions. By the Great Depression (1929-31), however, it had risen to an official figure of nearly 3 million. The employers' abilities to impose such major job losses were also a consequence of the TUC's failure to put up a consistent fight in 1926.

The plight of the unemployed was made worse by the punitive disbandment of the Poor Law Guardians by the then Minister of Health Neville Chamberlain. "The best and kindest thing to do now is strike quickly and hard," he had commented during the strike, and followed this up by disbanding the Guardians on the grounds that they had allegedly been too generous in relieving hunger and hardship.

The Tories also used the General Strike as the pretext to introduce new anti-union legislation: the Trades Disputes Act of 1927, of the eight clauses of which only three were directly related to banning general strikes, the supposed reason for the introduction of the punitive legislation.

The Act of 1927 made both general and sympathetic strikes illegal, with leadership of an "illegal" strike being liable to a fine or imprisonment of up to two years; removed immunity from trade union funds; forbade mass picketing; and extended the definition of "intimidation". It banned Civil Service unions from affiliating to the TUC or Labour Party, and replaced "contracting out" from the political levy with having to "contract in" to it.

Although a National Trade Union Defence Committee was set up by the TUC, the Labour Party and the Co-op to campaign against the legislation as it went through Parliament, the campaign was low-key and certainly did not involve strike action. Once the legislation had entered the statute books, the TUC General Council advised its affiliates to comply with it.

For all its faults, the Communist Party alone made anything approaching a serious effort to stem the tide of retreat. But its main membership found itself heavily under attack from the labour movement bureaucracy after the General Strike. In 1927 the TUC organised an enquiry into "Communist disruption" in trade unions, and a number of unions sought to ban Party members from holding offices. The impact of the witch-hunt was reflected in the fact that only nine Communist Party members were present at the 1927 TUC Congress as delegates.

## Learning the lessons?

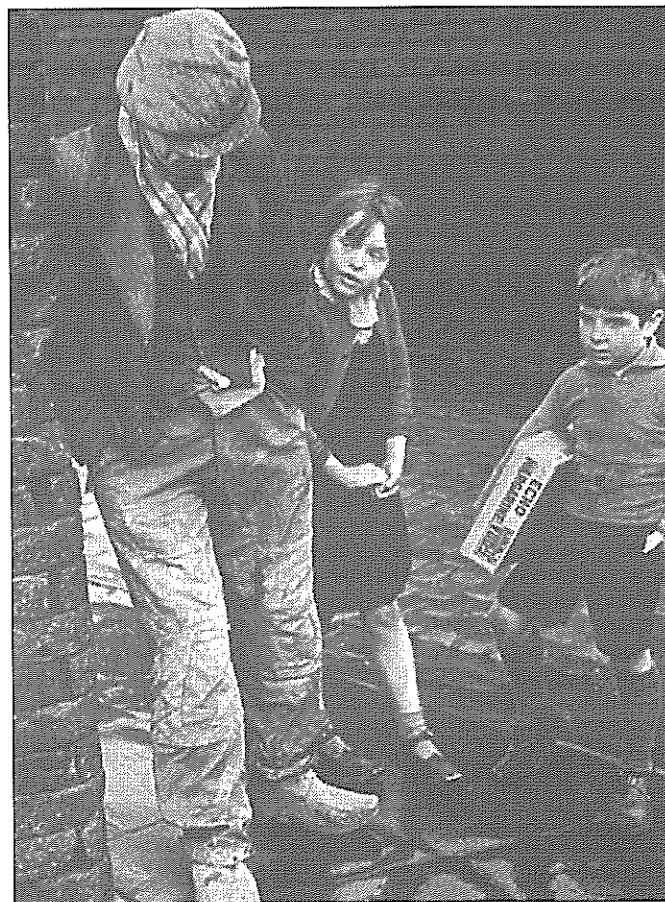
WHILST rank-and-file trade unionists were left to pay the price for the abrupt calling off of the General Strike, the General Council of the TUC suppressed debate on the question in order to avoid the danger of falling victim to a backlash.

Most individual trade union executives lined up with the General Council, in a shared desire to avoid being brought to account for deserting the miners. The only exceptions to this were the executives of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, the print union NATSOPA, and, ironically, the Electrical Trades Union, which passed resolutions stating "...grave concern at the instruction received from the TUC that the General Strike initiated by that body with the full approval of the affiliated unions had been called off without the consideration of the unions concerned," and calling for an immediate reconvening of the special conference of union executives which had issued the original general strike instruction.

By June, the General Council calculated that it had weathered the storm and wanted to go ahead with the holding of the union executives' conference. But now the MFGB opposed it, on the grounds that publication of the TUC's arguments might weaken the miners' case, at a time when they were still locked out.

In exchange for the General Council agreeing to further postponement of the conference, the MFGB agreed to withdraw from sale the pamphlet by its General Secretary AJ Cook attacking the TUC's record and to refrain from advocating an embargo on coal or financial levy without the consent of other unions.

Thus, when the 1926 TUC conference convened in September, the General Council was able to successfully argue that discussion



**The price of defeat: unemployment and demoralisation of the '30s.**

of the General Strike should be left to the postponed union executives' conference. An attempt to overturn this position, which the MFGB supported, was heavily defeated.

The repeatedly postponed executives' conference finally took place in January 1927. By this time the initial anger had fully abated, and the General Council had no problem in either answering or avoiding answering the accusations raised against its conduct by the MFGB. The MFGB's weak resolution that the General Council's report should be referred to the membership of TUC affiliates for further discussion was defeated by a margin of nearly 34%.

At the centre of the General Council argument was its claim that prolongation of the General Strike would not have led to victory but defeat as a result of "a process of attrition which would have disorganised the trade union movement... completely established the reactionary elements in the country and damned any possibility of getting a fair consideration of the miners' case."

In reality though, it was not simply a case of the leadership of the trade union movement fearing defeat which led them to end the General Strike — they feared just as much what the outcome of victory in the General Strike would be, just as they feared the increasingly obvious political nature of the General Strike as well.

At the outset of the strike, the TUC, through the *British Worker*, had made clear its concept of the event as a purely industrial dispute: "No political issue has ever been mentioned, or thought of, in connection with it [the strike]... the general strike is not a menace to Parliament. No attack is being made on the constitution. We beg Mr Baldwin to believe that."

As the strike continued, as more and more control over the day-to-day functioning of society passed into the hands of the strikers, the union leaders' claims — as they themselves recognised — about the "non-political" nature of the strike sounded increasingly hollow. From their own narrow, socially conservative point of view, the union bureaucracy had opened a Pandora's Box. After the event, the bureaucracy resolved that it would never be opened again, epitomised by the catch-phrase of NUR leader Cramp — "Never again!" — and the conclusion of TUC General Council member Bener Turner: "And I never want to see another."

The TUC report on the General Strike went so far as to attack the Tory government for seeking to bring politics into the strike, by "ingeniously obscuring their own position as a third party in the dispute, by raising constitutional issues, and treating a sympathetic strike on industrial issues as a political movement." And Cramp's colleague JH Thomas effectively accused the government of cheating: the fate of the stoppage had been determined by the "constitutional issues" being "falsely raised and unfairly used."

TUC chairperson Arthur Pugh took an even stronger line on the government's perfidy in being prepared to "introduce" politics into the general strike: "It was not the unions but the government which endeavoured to convert an industrial struggle into a political conflict, and sought to make party capital out of it. Nothing but the restraint, forbearance and good sense of our members prevented the agents of government fomenting a revolutionary temper and plunging the country into conditions of civil war."

## What the leaders feared

FROM the point of view of the union bureaucrats, it was not only the government that was "guilty" of seeking to "inject" politics into the General Strike. Shadowy figures at the base of the trade union movement were guilty of the same crime and were condemned in equally harsh terms. As General and Municipal Workers' Union (GMWU) leader Dukes put it at the 1927 special executives' conference: "Every day the strike proceeded, the control and authority was passing out of the hands of responsible executives into the hands of men who had no authority, no responsibility."

Clynes, a Labour MP as well as GMWU President, expressed the same fear in the House of Commons the day after the official end of the general strike: "What he dreaded about this struggle more than anything else was this: if by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened. I thank God it never did." Clynes' overall conclusion was that "we learned that a national strike could not be used as a weapon in a trade dispute... there is one way, and one only, to alter unfair conditions in Britain. It is through the ballot box, and not through violence or resistance."

The same hostility towards the very idea of a general strike was expressed by Clynes' colleague in the Parliamentary Labour Party, Ramsay MacDonald: "If fought to a finish as a strike, a general strike would ruin Trade Unionism, and the Government in the meantime could create a revolution... I hope that the result will be a thorough reconsideration of trade union tactics... if the wonderful unity in the strike which impressed the whole world with the solidarity of British labour would be shown in politics, labour could solve mining and similar difficulties through the ballot box."

The defeat of the General Strike did not lead to a "thorough reconsideration" of the tactics and underlying ideas of the trade union movement. What it did do, however, was to reinforce and accelerate tendencies already apparent in the trade unions' direction of development prior to 1926. There was an increased emphasis on collaboration with management, increasing productivity and improving efficiency.

As Citrine wrote in 1927: "The unions should actively participate in a concerted effort to raise industry to its highest efficiency by developing the most scientific methods of production, eliminating waste and harmful restrictions." Similarly, the following year's TUC General Council Report argued that the union movement should, "say boldly that not only is it concerned with the prosperity of industry, but that it is going to have a voice as to the way industry is carried on."

Such a "constructive" approach to industry, that is, to encouraging workers to improve the rates of their own exploitation, was the "modern" alternative to the outmoded tactic of strike action (though even before the General Strike the union bureaucracy was not over-enthusiastic about strikes). It was again Citrine who expressed the view held throughout the union bureaucracy: "We should not get rid of strikes and lockouts completely, but I believe that they will be fewer, that reason will play a greater part, and that the community itself will develop a keener interest and a greater sense of social justice."

Such a perspective soon found expression in "Mondism". In

November of 1928, Mond, the chairperson of ICI, along with 21 other major employers, wrote to the TUC General Council calling for "direct negotiations with the twin objects of restoration of industrial prosperity and the corresponding improvement in the standard of living of the population" by means of "increasing the competitive power of British industries in the world's markets."

The invitation was accepted, though not without some opposition from within the ranks of the TUC.

Although the conversations with Mond produced little in terms of immediate concrete results, their very occurrence indicated the growing collaborationist tendencies after the General Strike of the TUC General Council, which in July of 1928 had endorsed the resolution outlining the purpose of the talks: "This tendency towards a national organisation of industry and trade... is recognised and this tendency should be welcomed and encouraged, insofar as it leads to improvements in the efficiency of industrial production, services and distribution, and to the raising of the standard of living of the people."

Thus, for the TUC, and for the leadership of the Labour Party as well, the improvement of working class interests and standards of living was seen as dependent upon improving the efficiency and profitability of industry, rather than as a goal to be achieved by eating into the profitability of industry, irrespective of the impact on capitalist efficiency. This approach remains the hallmark of the leadership of the labour movement down to the present day.

On the eve of the General Strike, Trotsky had warned: "There is an unlimited supply of restraining elements in the apparatus of the British working class... All the traditions, the organisational customs, and the ideas of all existing groupings of the labour movement — in various forms and under various slogans — predispose them either to direct betrayal, or to compromise, or else to a policy of wait-and-see with reference to the compromisers and complaints about the traitors." Writing during the strike itself, Trotsky was equally clear as to the role being played by the leadership of the labour movement: "The General Council of the TUC started out with the ridiculous declaration that the present general strike was in no way a political struggle... We must face matters: the main efforts of the official leaders of the Labour Party and of a considerable number of the official trade union leaders will not be directed towards paralysing the bourgeois state by means of the strike, but towards paralysing the general strike with the aid of the bourgeois state."

The task of revolutionaries in such a situation was to organise against the efforts of the leadership to betray the strike, to combat the reformist illusions which existed in the British working class and which its leadership made a point of continuing to foster, and to point to and push forward the revolutionary logic of the general strike.

In the event, the revolutionaries and would-be revolutionaries proved too weak to do so. The small British Communist Party still suffered from the syndicalism of some of its constituent elements, now complicated by the growth of the negative influences of Stalin's bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.

The strike went down to defeat. The miners remained locked out and were defeated themselves seven months later. And the leaders of the trade unions and the Labour Party escaped being brought to account for their betrayal of 12 May. Despite the depth and iniquity of that betrayal, Trotsky, fully conscious of the deeply conservative and bureaucratic nature of the British labour movement, was clear in defining some basic tasks of revolutionaries in Britain after the General Strike. As he wrote in the resolution of July 1926, submitted to the plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union:

"The Communist International's tactics... ought to remain hard and fast. The following elements of these tactics are of special importance: (1) the necessity for Communists to work in the most reactionary trade unions in order to fight to win over the masses under conditions of all kinds; (2) the necessity for British Communists to enter the Labour Party and to fight against being expelled from that organisation...; (3) the necessity for a struggle against the right-opportunist deviation as well as against the ultra-left." ■

● A later issue of *Workers' Liberty* will carry a fuller account of the Communist Party and the General Strike.

# Ireland: is Home Rule enough?

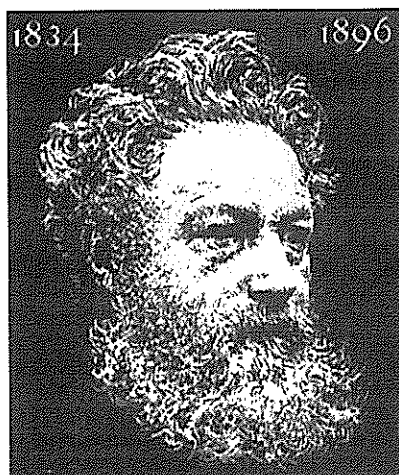
## As we were saying

The great pioneer socialist William Morris who died 100 years ago this year, was like all the other early British Marxists — in the first place HM Hyndman of the Social Democratic Federation — an ardent, active supporter of Irish self-government. In 1885, with the Liberal Party on the verge of coming out for Home Rule and the Tories negotiating with the Irish Home Rule leader, Charles Stuart Parnell, Irish self-government seemed imminent. In fact, nearly four decades would pass before Ireland achieved self-government. William Morris commented in *Commonweal* (October 1895).

MR Parnell will have his way, and, as he says, this coming Parliament will be the last in which the Irish representatives will sit at Westminster.

Well, this is revolutionary, and we revolutionists rejoice in it on those grounds, and in the blow which it will deal at the great Bourgeois Power — the British Empire: also it may well be that Ireland must become national before she can be international. Yet we must ask ourselves what is to come next; will Ireland ruling herself be progressive, revolutionary that is, or reactionary? Will socialists find their work easier in the Parnellite Ireland than now?

There is no doubt as to the answer to those questions if we are to go no further than Mr Parnell would have us; the fullest realisation of his programme would bring Ireland to pretty much the state of things which Liberal reformers want to realise in England as a bar to the march of socialism which they have at last heard of, and are beginning to fear. An improved landlordism founded on a wider basis and therefore consolidated; that would lead, it seems to me, to founding a nation fanatically attached to the rights of private property (so called), narrow-minded, retrogressive, con-



William Morris

tentious, and — unhappy.

I ask Irishmen to consider a somewhat parallel case, that of Italy. Italy as well as Ireland had an unconquerable yearning for national independence, which swallowed up all other aspirations; in the teeth of all difficulty she conquered her independence amidst the best wishes of generous-minded men of all parties. How our hearts burned within us as we heard of the exploits of her patriots; surely revolution for the world was drawing near, though some of us did not know what the new revolution was to be, as we followed the heroism of Garibaldi and the lofty morality of Mazzini.

Italy triumphed and became 'free' and united; those noble deeds accomplished that at least. What, then, has been the gain? I will not say nothing, but I will say something very small compared with all the energy, enthusiasm, and self-sacrifice that brought it about, very small compared with the high-wrought hopes that went before it. For whatever the gain was, it was confined to the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat did not share it, has not shared it.

In the midst of the richest gifts of nature and art, cradled by the history of the world, exists a population of which the following words can be said without contradiction: "According to some the average pay (of the labourers) runs from 3d to 4d a day, according to others to 7d, without making any allowance for loss of time either through bad weather or ill-health. For this pittance they have to work like galley-slaves, and out of it such of them as have families must provide food for their children and keep a roof of some sort over their heads... Such then are the free workmen of Italy while as a nation, under her Constitutional King and Liberal Parliament, she

ambitiously strives to snatch here and there some rag of stolen territory which may help her to get a share of the world-market from the older European firms, and keep on foot a goodly army of warlike idlers to that end. Italy is free and united, and is almost a 'great power' while the mass of her population is living to speak bluntly, in abject slavery."

Here then is a warning to Irishmen if they will take it; they can see what the barrenness of the programme of driving out the Teutons has led to in Italy; can they think that a similarly barren programme of driving out the Saxon will lead to anything better in Ireland?

If the sword of Garibaldi could have led the workers of Italy to a condition under which what they produced would have been their own to live upon, the Austrians and their kingly and grand-ducal deputies would have been suppressed as they are now, and no 'foreigner' could govern them against their will; but the places of the Austrian tyrants would not have been taken by the great collective tyrant Capital, who prevents poor people from eating, and murders them with 'pellagra' or famine-fever as it has been called in Ireland, a tyrant who has no heart to be softened, no soul to be moralised, in spite of Mazzini and the Positivists.

If only the Irish could take this lesson to heart, and make up their minds that even if they have to wait for it, their revolution shall be part of the great international movement; they will then be rid of all the foreigners that they want to be rid of. For my part I do not believe in the race-hatred of the Irish against the English; they hate their English masters, and well they may; and their English masters are now trying hard to stimulate the race-hatred among their English brethren, the workers, by all this loud talk of the integrity of the Empire and so forth. But when once the Irish people have got rid of their masters Irish and English both, there will, I repeat, be no foreigners to hate in Ireland, and she will look back at the present struggle for mere nationality as a nightmare of the charmed sleep in which landlordism and capitalism have held her so long, as they have other nations. To the Irish, therefore, as to all other nations, whatever their name and race, we socialists say, your revolutionary struggles will be abortive or lead to mere disappointment unless you accept as your watchword, wage-workers of all countries unite!

● This article, which has been slightly abridged, was printed under the title "Ireland and Italy — a warning."



## Legitimising Loyalism

By John McNulty\*

YOU advocate a position within the socialist movement which I believe seriously damages the interests of the working class. There are many obstacles to serious debate. A major one is consistent misrepresentation of my position in your columns. Nowhere do I argue that past connection with Loyalism carries an eternal taint. You run past and present together because your project is revisionist. You don't need a new Loyalism — which in any case does not exist — because your intention is to legitimise old Loyalism, red in tooth and claw. To do this you draw an equals sign between Loyalism and Republicanism. Finally, you assert a right to separation in the Unionist community.

But to be a successful revisionist you need to meet certain criteria. An honest revisionism needs to be based on the facts of the case, to indicate at what point it breaks from existing Marxist theory, and the theoretical basis of such a break.

You fail these tests. Your revision exists merely at the level of assertion, mixed in with slander. It defies the facts of the case and eviscerates Marxism.

You ask how we can talk to Republicans when there have been Republican atrocities. The answer is quite simple. Such atrocities fly in the face of the programme of the movement, which demands a secular democracy with equal rights for all faiths and opposes sectarianism. There is no such contradiction in the programme of Loyalism. Atrocity is the programme. They were the defenders of "A Protestant parliament for a Protestant people" who mourn its passing. Their battle was alongside the state forces against the most oppressed layers of society. Their weapon on every occasion was undiluted terror and the random killing of working people because of their religion — and let us not forget that the initial Loyalist mobilisation was not in reaction to a sudden Republican push for a united Ireland, but in response to demands for civil rights which implied a retreat from the goal of a united Ireland on the part of nationalists.

And of course the whole point was not to "talk" to Republicans but to work with them against a savage state repression and for a whole series of democratic rights. The question of working with Loyalists never arose because they supported the state repression and opposed the democratic rights!

This encapsulates much of the history of Marxism in relation to Ireland. Marxists have defended democratic rights in Ireland, including the right to self-determination. Their natural allies in this struggle have been the Republicans — the Loyalists have stood firmly on the other side of the barricade in alliance with imperialism.

This of course carries no weight with you because your most basic revision of Marxism — expressed simply as assertion — concerns

the "right" of the Unionist community to separation. This novel idea calls out for a great deal more explanation on your part. Do you assert a right of all national minorities to separate or is this a unique right of unionism? In practice a global assertion of this nature would be a denial to self-determination. All nations have minorities and if they all had the right of secession there would be no development of nations in the first place. Would this right of separation apply to nationalists within the North? Could we have a crazy patchwork of communities, all with the right of separation? Would you have any grounds for opposing, as you do, organisations such as the Nation of Islam? What happens to the unity of the working class during this fragmentation?

Of course, a much more logical and coherent argument on this question existed in the past — the two-nations theory. It has the fundamental flaw that no significant section of Unionism asserts a nationhood beyond a "Britishness" familiar to all students of colonial history that, even if accepted, would leave them with Irish ethnicity. That only leaves us where we began — with a state based on Protestantism. Marxists must oppose such sectarian formulations — especially when we have already seen them in action.

It's true that since the Downing Street Declaration Unionists have talked of their right to self-determination. What does this mean? It doesn't mean that they claim a new nationhood or a state of their own. They claim the right to a British state and thus the "democratic right" to license a British military occupation in Ireland.

We therefore move logically from the things you say to the things you leave unsaid. The dog that doesn't bark in the night is the central concept in the Marxist analysis of Ireland — the concept of imperialism. Any attempt to explain the history of the North in general or of the last 25 years in particular as essentially fuelled by sectarian conflict can only be achieved by doing a great deal of violence to the facts. All the signposts — internment, Bloody Sunday and so on — were played with the British state centre stage. What is the North if not a British colony? When did Britain stop being the imperialist power and become some sort of red cross organisation, pouring in billions and committing massive military resources to help the mad Irish?

You try to shift the ground of the debate to your own caricatures of our position. We have made many mistakes in the past 25 years, but not the mistakes that you accuse us of. We are willing to discuss and debate our history and correct mistakes — in fact our programme, now being readied for publication, attempts to do this, but we would rather do this with those who accept the reality of British imperialism in Ireland and the poisonous role of Loyalism as its vicious unofficial auxiliary.

\* John McNulty is a member of Socialist Democracy (formerly the Irish Committee for a Marxist Programme), Belfast.

Editor's note: the next issue of *Workers' Liberty* will carry a reply to this letter.

## X-Files feeds paranoia

By Ruah Carlyle

IN "reviewing" of the *X-Files* (WL29) my intention was not to criticise the *X-Files* as drama, as in this it is very good, but rather its wider message, which is very bad — as I said, "Tapping a real vein of paranoia."

So it's got good plots, the leads aren't jumping into bed together — so what?

Good programmes aren't rare. What's wrong with the *X-Files* is that it portrays fantasy on the verge of fact. People contracting Creutzfeld-Jacob Disease (CJD) — plausible, fact. People contracting CJD from eating the brains of other infected humans — not plausible, bullshit!

Now, in fiction there is nothing wrong with bullshit. That's why we don't say "bye-bye" *Brave New World*, 1984 and other such works of fiction.

But the *X-Files* often pretends to be fact. A factual episode about the "Jersey Devil" goes hand in hand with rampant paranoia — for example, about the government doing deals with aliens, or, yes, "New Age bullshit" such as the last episode of the series (which just stopped in mid story) with alien shenanigans and some mystical sub-plot about American "Indians."

OK, Mulder says: "Trust no one." Fine. That doesn't mean automatically assuming everyone is lying, or believing crap!

## Trainspotting: art not propaganda

By Brad Cleveland

FRANK J Higgins is not sure *Trainspotting* balances an account of the (ephemeral) pleasure of drug-taking with "the sure consequences of dependence on hard drugs". He wonders if it is not therefore "a criminal piece of proselytising", "a very talented, heartless, and maybe dangerous commercial exploitation piece."

I appreciate the tentativeness of Frank's argument (although I'm not sure how tentative you can be about a film being "dangerous" or "criminal": I suppose the point is that it's hard to gauge other people's reactions). A few points in response.

One: Frank says the cartoon-quality of the film off-sets the horrors it undoubtedly shows ("the very liveliness of the film works against it."). This is a matter of perception. To my mind, a story which shows one person (the

'cleanest' at the beginning) dying in utter squalor of AIDS, another losing her child, the main character almost dying from an overdose, et cetera, is hard to consider "proselytising", however surreal and energised its description of these events. (A 'drugs professional' I know complained that the film implies addicts can't look after children, which she found objectionable). Nor is it fair to say that all of this is played for laughs (indeed, much of it is the more horrifying because it's sudden tragedy in the midst of comedy).

It may be that some people watch it and go straight from the cinema to the nearest smack dealer.

But the issue of perception is vital here. Most people who work in this field consider it pointless merely to rail against the dangers of drugs, and prefer to focus on how to use drugs safely, or on less melodramatic methods of pointing out the dangers. The people who object to this approach, who see in it an encouragement of drug use, are generally people who have absolutely no intention of taking drugs. I suspect those who have taken most offence to *Trainspotting* are often people for whom the drug culture is utterly alien. *Trainspotting* is of course a film, not a health education manual, and I don't wish to suggest its makers intend it to be one, or are motivated by the same concerns as health educators (nor that they should be). But the central point holds, I think: that the more one perceives the film as glamorising drugs, the less likely one is to be affected.

Two: Frank doubts the 'artistic truth' of the film, if it is unbalanced. Artistic truth is a pretty tough nut to crack. To my mind, the truth of *Trainspotting* hangs on how true it is to its source material, both Irving Welsh's book, and more generally the society, sub-culture, or whatever, it is dramatising. I can't comment on the book, since I haven't read it. On the sub-culture, it seems to me that the film's lack of imposed, 'authorial' moralising is indeed its truth. These characters do not see drug-taking as immoral. It might be dangerous, even lethal — and we see that. But the film portrays the drug culture from the point of view of its participants, and reflects their attitudes towards it. Dramatically, artistically, to impose some alternative view on it, to force it to tell a different story, would be artificial, false — artistically false, if you will.

I suspect that the film makers do run too far with the argument that, as film makers, they have no social responsibility. Perhaps it would be possible to tell this story with more 'balance' without shattering its internal logic. I agree with Frank that Renton's ability to start shooting up without immediately becoming an addict again is implausible, and a violation of artistic or dramatic truth. But I can't agree that the absence of 'balance', the absence of a hard, unmissable moral that heroin screws you up, constitutes a lack of 'truth'.

Three: Frank seems to counterpose 'artistic truth' to 'commercial exploitation', which I take to mean that the attitude to drug-taking is a sensational device to make money: Hodges, Boyle, and MacDonald

counted on the controversy they knew *Trainspotting* would generate to bring in audiences. Clearly, a film that people are talking about is more likely to be successful, and a 'hot' subject is more commercial, than something utterly uninteresting. Sometimes Boyle et al seem to have defended their approach to the drug culture with the argument that they didn't expect large audiences anyway, which, while it is true that there are no guarantees of commercial success in film-making, is fundamentally spurious (no one aims to be unsuccessful).

But it does not follow from this that the film's viewpoint is cynical, 'exploitation', or 'heartless'. Heartlessness is fashionable in contemporary film, although partly in reaction to Hollywood schmaltz. But to me, the characters in *Trainspotting* are emotionally engaging. Its ultimate focus is less on drugs themselves than on the destruction of friendship caused by money (the theme also of *Shallow Grave*), and the emptiness of much contemporary life.

Four: "dangerous"? There is an enormous and growing problem of drug use in Britain. About a million people (I have heard the figure five million, but I find that hard to believe) take Ecstasy every weekend (I understand that the book of *Trainspotting* focuses less exclusively on heroin). Part of the problem is the effect on people's health. But even much of that problem is caused by the drugs' illegality, the consequent unpredictability of what people actually take, plus the whole culture of drug gangs and violence, the crime caused by people needing money to buy drugs, and so on.

Simple moralising has had no effect in preventing drug use or addiction. I would not claim that *Trainspotting* is an antidote to all of this. I doubt a film could be. But its success suggests to me that it has touched a nerve because huge numbers of young people identify with its characters. Because it does not merely moralise, because it shows the 'up' side of the drug culture, its portrayal of the 'down' side, I think, is the more effective, cartoonish or not. This is not to say that the film is an encoded *Christiane F.* But before people accuse it of "proselytising", or call it "dangerous", they should consider its context.

All this said, I accept that *Trainspotting* is not unambiguously anti-drugs. Good film, like all good art, does not necessarily have to deliver a clear 'message'. Good film treats its audience as adults who are capable of dissecting the ambiguities it presents them with, of making up their own minds. Too often the left is utterly insensitive to this aspect of creative activity: it expects the film-maker to be above all a propagandist. So directors and screenwriters who are to a degree propagandists (like Ken Loach and Jim Allen, for example), are lauded; others, who either don't have such a clear political viewpoint, or don't wish to inject it unambiguously into their work, are viewed more sceptically.

But art thrives on ambiguity, uncertainty, doubt. *Trainspotting* would have been diminished by a kind of 'authorial', injected moral clarity.

## Should "abolish all" be our slogan?

By Colin Foster

SHOULD "abolish all immigration controls" be our slogan? Mark Osborn ("Forum", WL30) is rightly concerned that we should defy racist prejudice, but I think he concedes, in effect, that "abolish all..." is not very good as a slogan. The slogan needs to be tied to socialist ideas for jobs, houses, public services, etc., ideas which most people other than revolutionary Marxists see as remote and difficult.

Surely, we make slogans not out of all our beliefs, but out of those where just a few words, on their own, make an idea clear to large numbers of people.

That the idea of freedom of movement has become a slogan for the British left, in the form of words "abolish all immigration controls" is, I think, a peculiarity of British imperial history rather than a matter of principle. I know of no other country where revolutionaries use such a slogan (except perhaps the US: overseas readers may be able to correct me). French revolutionaries, for example, in my experience, see the slogan as incomprehensibly abstract and maximalist.

We have it in Britain because until 1962 we had freedom of movement into Britain from the Empire and the Commonwealth; and we had that because before modern mass long-distance travel, the British ruling class never imagined that more than a tiny elite would ever want to come to Britain from India, Pakistan, the West Indies, or Africa. When Labour, in 1968, and the Tories, in 1971, shut the doors on most Commonwealth citizens, the left rightly protested — and, in the 1970s, the slogan had some immediacy and grip.

Does it have that now? In fact, despite what Brad Cleveland writes (WL29), I don't think the left uses the slogan much any more. Most campaigning is around individual deportation cases or particular measures like the Asylum Bill. Can we find slogans which are less abstruse than "abolish all...", more positive than just resisting deportations and new Tory measures, and bolder than the detailed list given by Brad Cleveland, which is more an agenda for a pressure-group than a banner to get masses on the streets?

# No quaint period piece

Clive Bradley reviews

*Richard III* (Dir: Richard Loncraine)

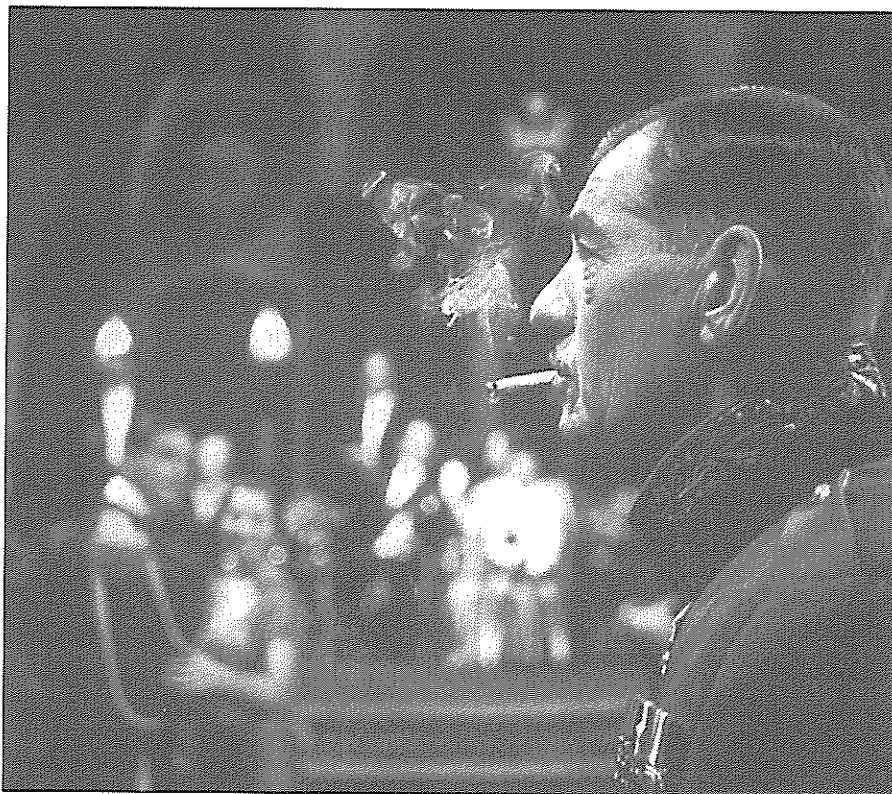
RICHARD Loncraine's *Richard III*, with Ian McKellen as the eponymous villain, is notably different from the most recent — if not all previous — efforts at this play. It does not try to play it straight. This is no quaint period piece. It transfers the play to a fictionalised fascistic 'thirties Britain, telling a story of political intrigue with contemporary, or at least twentieth century, relevance. Further, the screenplay by Loncraine and McKellen, has honed Shakespeare down to a minimum so that it borders on being a political thriller.

It is without doubt an extremely imaginative adaptation. When the opening scene is interrupted by a tank bursting through the walls, you know it's not just any old tired 'modernisation' of Shakespeare which sticks to the text, but uses twentieth century costumes.

Making Shakespeare 'relevant' in this way has for years been common on the stage, and on television. However to my knowledge it has never been tried before on the big screen. Cinematic updates are usually only based on the original plays (eg *West Side Story*, based on *Romeo and Juliet* or Kurosawa's *Ran*, which is based on *King Lear*). Derek Jarman's version of Marlowe's *Edward II* threw in incongruous contemporary elements — Annie Lennox singing Cole Porter, Outrage! demonstrators — to great effect.

This is altogether different — a fictional world without anachronisms and with no hint of surrealism. It avoids knowing winks to the audience and largely refrains from reminding us that it is an adaptation apart from some exceptional moments. (These are probably impossible to avoid — for instance when the film elects for knowing humour over the most famous lines. At one point Richard screams "My kingdom for a horse!" in an armoured truck and that doesn't quite work.)

In other words the film demands to be judged as a film and as a drama in its own right. It doesn't expect the audience to know the original. Indeed, part of the motivation for this kind of adaptation must be that it has to find a way to engage an audience likely to be suspicious of Shakespeare and unlikely to know the play. The audience may also be unused to the conventions of cinema, the most important of which is



Driven by a lust for power

that cinema is primarily more visual than theatre, it relies on the camera to tell its story and on powerful images more than words.

*Richard III* is not short of powerful images, especially of violent death. Long speeches (uncommon in film) have been divided between scenes, to liven up their visual setting. The only concession to Shakespearean tradition is that Richard occasionally speaks directly to us, to camera. That's a feature of some films — Spike Lee's, for example — but rare.

The result is a grisly tale of the corruption of power. Richard is driven by his lust for power to murder more and more of his family, until even his friends largely desert him. This is strong stuff but there is a glaring missing factor.

Richard is depicted as a kind of fascist dictator who only *calls* himself King. He was brought to power because of the victory of one side in a civil war, and has no clear hereditary claim to the throne. The power struggle therefore is between *factions of the ruling class*. One faction wins, and then disintegrates under the weight of its own moral corruption. The morality of the opposing faction seems pretty questionable, too. There is no sense whatsoever of an alternative, mass force, even one moved by demands for democracy.

Shakespeare is hardly to be blamed for this, of course, but this is the problem of modernising a sixteenth century playwright. If you take a story which can be interpreted universally, as an account of the corruption of power, it is very difficult to make it work in a setting which implies other, absent factors. If we are to believe that this is the Europe of the dictators in the 1930s and '40s, we are entitled to ask where the passions are of the people who fought those dictators, fascist or Stalinist. The armies of Richmond, who defeat Richard, are merely passive cannon-fodder for a new dictator. In history, the combined armies which defeated fascism, the people who made up those armies, were never just cannon-fodder.

The danger is to take a story which was universal and about power in general, a story which said something profound about the human condition, and reduce it to a mere tale of kings. That's the problem with this interpretation of *Richard III*.

It is a visually stunning film, dominated by a magnificent performance by Ian McKellen (and not-bad goes at it by Annette Bening and Robert Downey Jr., though he seems slightly uncomfortable with the language). It's gripping and completely watchable. But as a film 'sort of' about fascism it is a failure. ■

# Bringing it all back home

By Jimmy Roberts

IT was a seminal moment. In between songs, the band on stage are tuning up. The slow handclapping and booing suddenly stop and the silence is shattered by a clear voice in the audience screaming out one word at the singer: "Judas!" "I don't believe you," replies the singer, "you're a liar." And then turning to the band he mutters angrily: "Play it fucking loud", and launches into a venomous version of the now classic "Like a Rolling Stone" to drown out the catcalls.

It is 30 years this month since this famous confrontation between Bob Dylan and disgruntled English fans, which has been immortalised on numerous bootleg albums. In the present political and musical atmosphere, it is difficult to understand why a crowd would react so violently to a performer, accustomed as we now are to designer changes in career and style in which artists can be repackaged and their 'product' successfully marketed for increased profits. This can be nowadays seen in everything from the cynical re-releasing of albums on 'new' formats to Manchester United changing their football strip for no other reason than pure profit. Back in 1966 though, the fact that Bob Dylan was performing his new songs with the electric backing of a rock 'n roll band was tantamount to treason.

Dylan had made his name with a series of folk protest songs, such as "The Times They Are A-Changin'", "Blowin' in the Wind" and "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" which for the first time in pop history articulated a political consciousness to a mass audience. Dylan, of course, was drawing on a rich vein of protest within American culture which included both ardent Communists such as Pete Seeger, Paul Robeson and Woody Guthrie and the voice of the disempowered black poor which found expression in the work of blues singers like Robert Johnson and Leadbelly. Dylan's genius was in synthesising these traditions and updating them to the political situation in America in the 1960s. Dylan became "the voice of his generation" and his songs became the anthems of the emerging Civil Rights and anti-war movements.

In August 1963 Dylan performed in front of over a hundred thousand demonstrators at the Washington Civil Rights march led by Martin Luther King. This march was the event which the anti-semitic, sexist and homophobic Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan was copying with his recent "Million Man March."

Dylan's own political position at the time was complex. His hatred of racism, oppression and exploitation was clear but he was not prepared to offer simplistic solutions.

In a key transitional song "My Back Pages" Dylan

rejected the role of spokesman that he had been cast in and suggested that political realities were not reducible to facile slogans. His songs criticised either by vicious polemic or in a more abstract and impressionistic way, influenced by the techniques of symbolism and surrealism. Dylan's rejection of the folk ballad form and his adoption of radical avant garde poetics in 1965-66 coincided with his change from an

acoustic to an electric style of music, resulting in arguably his greatest albums, *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*. It was this shift within Dylan's songs from traditional models to a complex, abstruse and radically original style which was resented by Dylan's so-called fans who thought that he had 'sold-out' his politics.

*"Dylan's work of this period was very influential on radicals from the Black Panthers to the left-wing terrorists, The Weathermen."*

However, Dylan was several steps ahead of his audience. His work from this period is profoundly political and contains some of his most stinging critiques of capitalist exploitation, petit-bourgeois values and the psychological effects of alienation, in songs such as "Maggie's Farm", "Ballad of a Thin Man" and "Desolation Row." With considerable wit and linguistic verve Dylan depicted America as an absurd hell where institutionalised oppression and dominant power structures had chaotic and catastrophic effects which atomised society and destroyed the individual and personal



Bob Dylan, Isle of Wight Festival, 1969

relationships. This was a major new language within the popular song, as Dylan's songs vividly delineated the fragmentation of the self within the context of a wider social and political crisis.

In 1938 the surrealist poet André Breton visited Trotsky and the painter Diego Rivera in Mexico. Their meeting is described in Maurice Nadeau's *History of Surrealism* and is extremely relevant to Dylan's own artistic credo at this time:

*"Breton found in Trotsky an open and understanding mind, aware that art in order to keep a revolutionary character, must be independent of all forms of government... 'The struggle for artistic truth', in the sense of 'the artist's unshakeable loyalty to the inner self' was the only valid watchword, Trotsky believed."*

Many of Dylan's songs at this time portray the difficulties of the individual trying to grasp and sustain this inner belief when faced with the obscenity of an American society which sought to repress dissent. Ironically the bewildered response of Dylan's English fans to his innovations mirrored the response of the entrenched establishment to the rise of youth militancy and the emergence of the new left. Dylan's work of this period was to be very influential on numerous radicals from the Black Panthers to the left-wing terrorists, The Weathermen (named after a line in a Dylan song).

What path Dylan's work would have taken next is unclear, for he was forced to retire for eighteen months following a serious motorcycle accident in July 1966. Dylan re-emerged with a series of country-influenced albums which again bucked the



prevailing trend of psychedelia and lyrical and musical excess which had been influenced by Dylan in the first place. His next major work, *Blood on the Tracks* (1975), was a work of considerable maturity and insight in which Dylan caustically and painfully dissected broken relationships. Once again, the exploration of a personal crisis was depicted against a wider social backdrop which reflected the profound self-doubt, introspection and confusion of American society in the wake of the Water-

gate affair.

Dylan deconstructed classical linear narrative structures in these songs so that they became fragmented stories held together by linked images of pain, loss and anger. This allowed Dylan to dramatise the relationship between self and persona and the effects of emotional and social collapse. In writing himself, Dylan also seemed to be writing the history of his time. On succeeding albums, such as *Desire* and *Street Legal*, Dylan mixed polemical social com-

mentary, such as "Hurricane", which is a withering attack on the racism and prejudice of the American criminal justice system, with songs influenced by religious and mythological sources. Dylan reworked the mythological narrative structure of the quest as a metaphor of his own search for the inner self.

However, Dylan's own "struggle for artistic truth" culminated in his adoption of fundamentalist Christianity in 1979 and the release of three profoundly Christian albums. This was an enormous surprise and seemed sadly indicative of the growing support for fundamentalist Christianity under Ronald Reagan which has been seen most recently with the worrying success of the extreme right Christian Pat Buchanan within the Republican Presidential primaries.

Dylan's most interesting work had appeared when he had cast off the old dogmatic assumptions of the traditional left and followed his own artistic vision but in embracing fundamentalist Christianity he adopted the dogmatic certainties of the far-right, which are far more unpleasant and objectionable.

Typically, Dylan eventually rejected Christianity as an all-encompassing ideology, though religious imagery continues to be a feature of his work, as it always has been. In the eighties, his output was very inconsistent, with the highpoints being the post-Christian album, *Infidels* (1983) and *Oh Mercy* (1989). On *Infidels* Dylan re-examined his own religious identity and returned to an exploration of his own Jewish roots. *Oh Mercy* can be seen as a summation of many of the major themes and interests of Dylan's work featuring the unsettling psychological alienation of "Political World" and "What Good Am I?", the reinterpretation of American and religious mythology in "Man in the Long Black Coat" and the world-weary contemplation of "Shooting Star." The release of a boxed set of previously unreleased material, *The Bootleg Series*, in 1991 provided an excellent overview from the original acoustic protest songs to the dark turbulent visions of later material. Most recently, Dylan's career has come full circle with the release of a number of albums of traditional folk songs.

Like any great artist, Dylan's career is extremely varied, encompassing a plethora of different musical and lyrical forms. In pursuing his own "artistic truth" Bob Dylan has had an incalculable influence on the development and form of pop music. Most importantly perhaps he has demonstrated that acute social commentary in a popular cultural form can have a significant impact on wider political struggles. This legacy can be seen everywhere from The Clash, Elvis Costello and Billy Bragg to the more political rap bands.

Music from folk songs and the blues to rap and reggae has always powerfully articulated the voice of the oppressed. It is essential that this tradition continues and is constantly revived in popular culture so that artists nowadays carry on the fight against poverty, injustice and bigotry. ■

## Forgotten Sounds

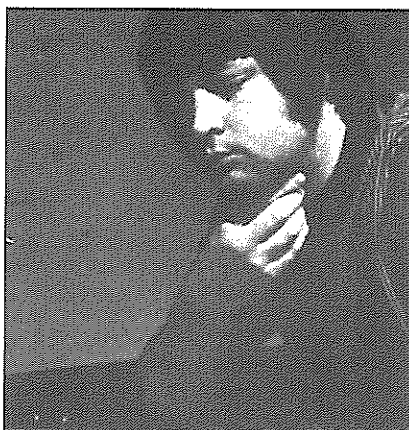
By Maurice Dunstan

THIS month is the thirtieth anniversary of the release of the album which is now widely acclaimed by pop music critics as the best album of all time. *Vox* writers voted it their all-time favourite, in a poll last year. *New Musical Express* have put it in their top two albums of all time consistently over the last 10 years. *Q* magazine made it their re-release of the year in 1990. Paul McCartney says it's the best album ever and has bought a copy for all his children. Yet when it was released *Pet Sounds* by The Beach Boys was met with public disinterest and it remains, to a large extent, a hidden treasure.

Its title does not trip off people's tongues like *Sgt. Pepper*, *Abbey Road* or *Blood on the Tracks*. Unlike *Never Mind The Bollocks* or *Sticky Fingers*, it isn't trendy to mention *Pet Sounds* in conversation.

Why does it remain relatively unknown? Firstly, because it doesn't fit in with either the marketing or the public image of The Beach Boys — sun, sea and surf aren't mentioned. Secondly, a music industry interested in lowest common denominator sales would rather re-package The Beach Boys' hits in "Best of" packages than attempt to market a more complex piece of work. (A "best of" album was released by Capitol Records less than a month after the initial release of *Pet Sounds*. They threw their weight behind marketing the "best of".)

It has also been passed over because Brian Wilson, the genius behind The Beach Boys whose project *Pet Sounds* was, collapsed into serious mental illness. He developed a huge drug problem. After losing the race with The Beatles (then in their *Sgt. Pepper* period) to produce an experimental album that would alter the conception of albums and pop music. He had met with opposition from within the band to his new directions for The Beach Boys — pri-



Brian Wilson

marily from Mike "Don't-fuck-with-the-formula" Love.

Without Brian's musical guidance The Beach Boys floundered. They became perennially unhip. The fact that Brian had been seen as one of the great creative artists in the late '60s was quickly forgotten.

*Pet Sounds* falls between the public perception of The Beach Boys and the potential of what the band may have become and thus it became something of an obscurity.

*Pet Sounds*, however, remains a masterpiece. Brian, at the time only twenty three, managed to combine songs of massive emotional strength with beguilingly beautiful and powerful melodies. Thirty years on it doesn't sound dated and is as fresh and moving as anything produced recently. This is a truly great album!

The thirtieth anniversary will see the release of a box set containing sessions and out-takes from the album plus the original mono version and a stereo version.

The anniversary will also hopefully see an increase in interest in the album and in The Beach Boys. It is high time it got the recognition it deserved. Meanwhile, Brian Wilson is in the best health he has been in for a while and, apparently, working on new material with a number of different artists. It may be that the world is about to remember Brian Wilson.

# Trotskyism and the Jews\*

By John O'Mahony

**"THE socialist revolution is the only realistic solution of the Jewish question. If the Jewish workers and peasants asked for an independent state, good — but they didn't get it under Great Britain. But if they want it, the proletariat will give it. We are not in favour, but only the victorious working class can give it to them".**

**Leon Trotsky, 15 June 1940  
(Writings 1939-40, p.287)**

IT is one of the strangest ironies of politics. Trotskyism, in most of its post-Trotsky mutations, embraces an "anti-Zionism" that in practice is nothing less than a comprehensive hostility to most Jews alive; yet Trotskyism in Trotsky's time and after was a movement in which people of Jewish origin played — and play — a massive part.

It is not right-wing myth, but plain truth, that Jews have always played a very large part in the socialist and communist movement. Lenin once commented on the splendid vanguard role of Jews. Karl Kautsky, ceremoniously addressing a small Yiddish socialist journal in Britain early this century, urged Jewish socialists to work at bringing overall socialist theory, revolutionary determination, and an internationalist outlook to the British labour movement — to be the leaven that they, indeed, often were. The role Jews played had nothing to do with innate Jewish characteristics, but with the historical and social experiences of the Jews.

In the first half of this century, Jewish workers lived in a world that stigmatised, scapegoated, and persecuted Jews. The pervasive Christian culture branded them in age-old sectarian terms as the accursed people, the God-killers who had rejected and then crucified Christ; the newer nationalist culture that increasingly gripped Europe's sundered nations before and after the First World War branded them as "aliens"; its racist sub-culture saw them as human vermin fit only for extirpation.

For decades the hounding and harrying would continue, now abating, now rising to a crescendo, until it would attain the mad paroxysm of the Holocaust, in which six million Jews, two-thirds of European Jewry, were systematically slaughtered in factories specially designed for the mass extermination of human beings.

In these conditions many Jews had the dearly-paid-for privilege of being able to see capitalism whole, in all its raw cannibalistic savagery, without the layered masks of conventional civilisation. So, naturally they came to make up a large part of the socialist army gathering its forces for an attempt to remake

the world and create a civilisation in which there would no longer be class, or race, or national oppression.

But while some Jews became revolutionary socialists, other Jews became nationalists, committed to building up a Jewish nation in Palestine, where at the turn of the century resident Jews were still only a small community. Some nationalists — the most effective ones, in fact — were also socialists. Rivalry between "assimilationist" Jewish socialists and Zionists was often bitter, but the demonisation of Zionism that characterises much of modern Trotskyism was unknown. Zionists fought alongside the Red Army to defend the workers' republic after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

In Palestine, the tiny Communist Party emerged from the left-Zionist Poale Zion. Arguing for international socialist revolution as the road to salvation for the Jews, and against the Zionist project, the communists nevertheless had an approach very different from the latter-day left demonisation of Zionism. Should as many Jews as wanted to go there be allowed into Palestine? Of course they should, answered the Communist International and the Communist Party of Palestine, advocating Jewish-Arab unity within Palestine.

The shift to modern left "anti-Zionism" emerged as part of the Stalinisation of the Communist International. When in 1929 Palestinian Arab chauvinists mounted widespread attacks on Jews — the teachers and students at a religious college in Hebron, for example, were massacred — the Communist Party of Palestine at first called the attacks by their proper name, pogrom, as did the Russian and Comintern press. Then the international Stalinist leaders decided that it was an anti-imperialist uprising, and that became the Comintern "line".

In fact, one of the Arabs' mobilising slogans was "The British are with us" (Britain then ruled Palestine, and British forces had clashed with Jews). But this was the "Third Period" of Stalinism. Everything — even a pogrom — could be and was construed as evidence for imminent revolution.

After 1930, a Comintern drive "Arabised" the heavily-Jewish CP. The leaders of the party had to be Arab, and the Jewish majority were thus second-class members. Breaking with the old Communist International policy, the CP became bitter enemies of Jewish immigration. German refugees from Hitler were met off the boat by Jewish CPers with leaflets telling them to go back home.

By 1936, when a serious Arab movement began in Syria and Palestine, this time having some anti-imperialist content, but in Palestine being essentially a pogrom movement against Jewish civilians, the CP was an active part of the campaign. Jewish CPers were assigned to plant bombs among Jews. For example, young Jewish CPers were assigned to blow up the headquarters of the Jewish trade union movement, the Histadrut.

Refusal to go with Stalinism on this question was one of the characteristics of Trotskyism while Trotsky lived. Trotskyists rejected the malignant fantasies of 1929 (for example, in an article by Max Shachtman in the US *Militant*, October 1929). Their comments on 1936 did not pretend that it was purely an anti-imperialist movement, or that there could be anything "progressive" about Arab-Muslim chauvinism against Palestinian Jews.

In this they reflected Trotsky himself. Throughout the 1930s Trotsky stood as the representative of the old attitude — support for Jewish rights, including the right to migrate to Palestine, while rejecting the Zionist project — and of sympathetic awareness that the world was closing in murderously on the Jews.

Born in October 1879, and murdered by a Stalinist agent in August 1940, Trotsky lived a life which almost exactly spanned the period from the beginning of systematic pogroms in Russia (1881) to the eve of the Holocaust. A Ukrainian Jew, he saw the westward migration of millions of Jews, stirred up by the Russian pogroms, across Europe and to the USA. He saw the growth of Jewish self-awareness in Europe in the later 19th and early 20th centuries.

Always an opponent of the Zionist movement, he warned in the '30s that Palestine could turn out to be a giant ghetto in which the Jews who had fled there might be trapped and massacred.

Yet it is plain from the writings in this small collection, recently republished after 25 years by Pathfinder Press, that the experience of anti-semitism in the 20th century, not only in Nazi Germany and Poland, but also in the USSR under Stalin, radically changed Trotsky's views.

By the end of his life he believed that the persecution of the Jews and the effect of that persecution on the consciousness of the Jewish people had made the creation of some sort of Jewish state an inescapable necessity. Rightly, he rejected the idea that the Palestine programme of the Zionists could provide an immediate refuge for Jews facing the Hitlerites. The immediate solution was socialist revolution. But he viewed the demand for a separate Jewish state with growing sympathy. He asserted more than once that after a socialist revolution the Jews would have a state of their own if they still wanted it. This collection records his progress on this question through the 1930s, though it unaccountably omits his last comment on the question, the text at the head of this article.

## II

IN 1932-3, Trotsky discussed the "Jewish problem" with "Class Struggle", an American publication. He was asked: "What is your attitude to Palestine as a possible Jewish 'homeland' and about a land for the Jews generally? Don't you believe that the anti-

\* Leon Trotsky on the Jewish Question, Pathfinder Press, £2



These cartoons portrayed Jews in traditional anti-semitic images, down to the bags of money decorated with the star of David blazoned with dollar signs. They were not in the Nazi but the Stalinist press — and, astonishingly, the *Jewish* Stalinist press! Drawn by William Gropper, they appeared in the Communist Party of the USA's Yiddish daily, the *Morning Freiheit* of New York, on 4 September and 3 October 1929. This was the time of the anti-semitic pogroms in Palestine, which the Stalinists insisted were an upsurge of revolutionary anti-imperialism. It was a major turning point for the left on this question (see text of article). The words on one read "He isn't a cripple — he only makes believe — he is an Arab — Jews beat him up!"; and the other: "The mask behind which he shoots"

*semitism of German fascism compels a different attitude to the Jewish question on the part of Communists?"*

Trotsky replied: "I do not know whether Jewry will be built up again as a nation. However, there can be no doubt that the material conditions for the existence of Jewry as an independent nation could be brought about only by the proletarian revolution. There is no such thing on this planet as the idea that one has more claim to land than another."

The establishment of a territorial base for Jewry in Palestine or any other country is conceivable only with the migration of large human masses. Only a triumphant socialism can take upon itself such tasks. It can be foreseen that it may take place either on the basis of a mutual understanding, or with the aid of a kind of international proletarian tribunal which should take up this question and solve it."

In the context of the debates of that time, Trotsky's statement "... there is no such thing... as the idea that one has more claim to land than another" was, I think, plain support for the old Communist International policy for the right of Jews to enter Palestine, in opposition to the new line which the Comintern pushed after 1929.

In a January 1937 interview, Trotsky explained: "During my youth I rather leaned towards the prognosis that the Jews of different countries would be assimilated and that the Jewish question would thus disappear in a quasi-automatic fashion."

The historical development of the last quarter of a century has not confirmed this perspective. Decaying capitalism has

everywhere swung over to and exacerbated nationalism, one part of which is anti-semitism. The Jewish question has loomed largest in the mostly highly developed capitalist country of Europe, in Germany.

On the other hand the Jews of different countries have created their press and developed the Yiddish language as an instrument adapted to modern culture. One must therefore reckon with the fact that the Jewish nation will maintain itself for an entire epoch to come.

Now the nation cannot normally exist without a common territory. Zionism springs from this very idea. But the facts of every passing day demonstrate to us that Zionism is incapable of resolving the Jewish question. The conflict between the Jews and Arabs in Palestine acquires a more and more tragic and more and more menacing character.

I do not at all believe that the Jewish question can be resolved within the framework of rotting capitalism and under the control of British imperialism.

And how, you ask me, can socialism solve this question? On this point I can but offer hypotheses.

Once socialism has become master of our planet or at least of its most important sections, it will have unimaginable resources in all domains. Human history has witnessed the epoch of great migrations on the basis of barbarism. Socialism will open the possibility of great migrations on the basis of the most developed technique and culture.

It goes without saying that what is here involved is not compulsory displace-

ments, that is, the creation of new ghettos for certain nationalities, but displacements freely consented to, or rather demanded by, certain nationalities or parts of nationalities.

The dispersed Jews who would want to be reassembled in the same community will find a sufficiently extensive and rich spot under the sun. The same possibility will be opened for the Arabs, as for all other scattered nations."

In subsequent history, the tragic conflict between Arabs and Jews in Palestine would not be adjudicated by a benign proletarian tribunal but by the United Nations set up by the victors of World War 2.

In an article on anti-semitism in Stalin's USSR (22 February 1937) Trotsky developed his reappraisal of the Jewish question in the light of early 20th century experience. He speaks of a future socialist version of the Zionist "methods of solving the Jewish question", methods "which under decaying capitalism have a utopian and reactionary character".

"Are we not correct in saying that a world socialist federation would have to make possible the creation of a 'Birobidjan' [an equivalent of the (in fact token) autonomous Jewish republic within the USSR] for Jews who wish to have their own autonomous republic as the arena for their own culture?"

Of course it is impossible to know in detail what Trotsky would have said once the Jewish state was established in 1948. It is plain however that there would have been no place in his thought for the anti-Zionist demonology and international conspiracy theories which dominate much of the left today.

Trotsky's very loose use of the term nation to describe the Jews of the world may perhaps be explained as an unconscious by-product of his acceptance of the need for a territorial solution to the problem of the people "without a land" — the very idea he had scoffed at and fought against for most of his life as a reactionary utopia. He still says it is a reactionary utopia and a mirage in its bourgeois Zionist form. But now he counterposes to it not assimilation but a *socialist* version of the Zionist territorial state-creating solution.

What, for Trotsky, makes the Zionist project utopian and reactionary? The methods which flow inescapably from pursuing that project under capitalism and British rule in Palestine. The unpostponable task, for Trotsky, is the overthrow of capitalism, not a project for a tranquil corner in which to gather in the Jews and build a nation. With tragic accuracy, he says that such a search cannot save the Jews in the time available. After the socialist revolution, however, the Jewish people will need and be entitled to "a Birobidjan" because it is no longer reasonable to look to assimilation alone as the solution, or to have anything other than a supportive sympathy for Jews who cannot believe in assimilation. Trotsky finishes the February 1937 article: "How could any Marxist, or even any consistent democrat, object to that?"

## III

THE revolutionary workers were defeated time after time throughout the 1930s — in Germany, Austria, France, Spain. The socialist revolution did not happen — not in time to save Europe's massacred Jews, to save the sixty million people who died in the Second World War, or to prevent Germany being pulverised and partitioned and having 13 million of its people driven out of East Prussia and Czechoslovakia. Not in time to stop the atom-bombing of Japan, or the expansion of Stalinist totalitarianism over ninety million people in Eastern Europe.

And history did not stop. The Zionists continued with their project and carved out the state of Israel in tragic conflict with the Palestinian Arabs.

The "reactionary utopian" solution to the Jewish question received an immense boost from the events of the world war. The need which Trotsky reluctantly came to realise for a Jewish national territory as part of the solution to the Jewish question was now felt with immense urgency by the majority of Jews. And it was made reality not in a benign socialist world after a workers' revolution, but in a world dominated by imperialism and Stalinism, realised by way of bitter communal and national conflict and within the framework of a Zionist-Kremlin, and then Zionist-US, alliance.

The Jewish state was established in a world which was not socialist but still dog-eat-dog. It was not mainly the Palestinian Jews who decreed that. In 1948, the territory allotted to the Jews by the United Nations was attacked by the armies of the surrounding Arab states, armies under the control of seconded officers of the British imperialist army. If the Jews had lost, they would have been massacred or driven out. The Jews won, and three-quarters of a million Palestinian Arabs fled or were driven out. Not many fewer Jews were driven out of Arab countries in the 1950s, though they would be assimilated in Israel, not, like the Palestinian Arabs, allowed to languish in refugee camps.

That is how things worked in a world still dominated by capitalism and Stalinism.

## IV

ON this, as on so many other questions, Trotsky's would-be followers did not after his death pursue his line of thought. In the 1940s, they were caught up in a world view akin to the Stalinism of the "Third Period" (1929-33) — the world socialist revolution was bubbling over, and everything had to be interpreted as part of it. Among the forces seen as part of the great sweep of Revolution and anti-imperialism was the "Arab Revolution".

Trotskyists stated plainly in documents of the 1940s (by Tony Cliff, for example) that anything other than support for the "Arab Revolution" against the Jews of Palestine/Israel would make it impossible for them to "integrate" into that "sector of the world revolution". There was dissent. Some French Trotskyists backed the Zionist guerrillas against Britain. The Shachtman group resisted the "Third Period" delusions, including the delusion that the expansion of

Stalinism was a deformed variant of working-class revolution, and rejected the vicarious Arab chauvinism of the "orthodox Trotskyists".

The Mandel-Pablo core group of "orthodox Trotskyism" came out for rights for Jews within a Middle East federation.

But the overall drift was towards the operation of gross double standards as between Jews and Arabs, and a comprehensive demonisation of Israel and of Zionism. As a rule, "Trotskyists" were vicarious Arab nationalists.

In the 1940s the "orthodox Trotskyists" were not entirely unabashed in their "Arabism" — they did not back the Arabs in the 1948 war — but for most of them it was altogether different after the Six Day War of June 1967. For the previous 19 years the Trotskyist attitude had generally included a de-facto acceptance of Israel's right to exist. After the Six Day War Israel became an often very brutal colonial power ruling a large Arab population in the West Bank and Gaza. It was the time of the great anti-imperialist

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movement against the Vietnam war. Most of the "orthodox Trotskyists" drifted towards a root-and-branch "anti-Zionism" — that is towards the politics of post-1929 Stalinism on this question.

And worse. Now anti-Zionism meant not advocacy of Jewish-Arab working-class unity and opposition to the Zionist project of a Jewish state, but support for the destruction of the existing Jewish state in the name of Arab or Palestinian "liberation". It meant siding with murderous repressive Arab states against Israel. The Trotskyist movement had moved a long way from what it had been even in the 1940s. As someone observed of religious denominations: sects change their doctrines more readily than their names.

"Zionism" — meaning anything other than support for the destruction of Israel — came to carry the same odium as "racism" and almost as much as "fascism". Israel ("Zion-



Trotsky's writings are "a blast of clean air through the swamps of hysteria"

ism") came to be seen as the arch-representative of imperialism. Real history was faded out. Anti-Zionism was used as a bludgeon to intimidate and stigmatise and prevent thought about the issue.

The horrors of Nazism had driven the great majority of surviving Jews behind the Zionist project, but views came to be established on the left which pictured the Zionists as powerful conspirators pulling strings in the era of Hitler, and sharing in responsibility for the Holocaust. The idea of a Zionist-Nazi conspiracy originated in the Soviet Union in Stalin's last years, but in the '70s acceptance of it came to be a hallmark of most of those who thought they were disciples of Trotsky.

You cannot get a more crazy version of the "world Jewish conspiracy" beloved of the old anti-semites than the one which sees "the Zionists" manipulating the Holocaust, that is, manipulating Hitler and the Nazis even as they killed six million Jews. A clear and logical version of these ideas would have to characterise Hitler as a blind tool of the "Jewish conspiracy". Yet such ideas, half-hidden often but implicit, are articles of faith in wide layers of the Trotskyist left. They are expounded in erudite, albeit crazy, books by Lenni Brenner and in the original version of Jim Allen's play *Perdition* (the book version has been bowdlerised).

The German socialist leader August Bebel once memorably defined left-wing anti-semitism as "the socialism of idiots". Much of the Trotskyist movement has fallen into an anti-Zionism — in fact, since it means comprehensive hostility to most Jews alive, anti-semitism — which is "the anti-imperialism of idiots".

All of this has nothing to do with Trotsky's politics, or with his developing position on the question. It is "the Trotskyism of idiots"! Bits and pieces of Trotskyist politics are deployed one-sidedly and used in the service of vicarious Arab chauvinism.

Internationalism is essential to socialism. It goes without saying that socialists are against Israeli nationalism, and that we condemn Jewish chauvinism and all its manifestations. But Israeli nationalism does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of a network of interlocking nationalisms and national antagonisms. It is confronted by Arab nation-



alist and Muslim chauvinisms which for decades took (and some still take) as their goal the destruction of the Israeli state and nation. Any fair account of Israeli nationalism would therefore put it in its framework. The demurrals and condemnations would take account of the counter-nationalisms and condemn them also.

Yet the typical post-Trotsky Trotskyist's conclusion, from justified complaints about Israeli nationalism and chauvinism, is that the national organism itself does not have a right to exist. No such conclusions are made from the facts of Arab or Palestinian nationalism and chauvinism.

The "internationalism" is unequal because the condemnation of Israel is absolute and mortal, while condemnation of Arab chauvinism is only a moral stricture, and a series of admonitions. Support for Arab (or Palestinian) rights is not made conditional on them not being nationalists or chauvinists. They are the legitimate nation. The Jewish is the illegitimate nation. One lot of nationalists have positive rights; the other, only the right to surrender and submit.

For a long time, the PLO's old commitment to a "secular democratic Palestine", was used as a mechanism for disguising the double standards involved here: the Trotskyists accepted the *disguise* of one of the competing nationalisms. For in fact the call for a "secular democratic Palestine" could only be a disguised and mystified version of a demand for an Arab Palestine and for Israelis to disarm and surrender to their enemies. Internationalism became a vehicle for expressing an Arab-nationalist ultimatum against the Israeli Jews: be "internationalist", accept being a *religious* minority in an Arab Palestine, dismantle your national state, or deserve to be conquered!

That is not working-class internationalism, but pseudo-internationalism in the service of nationalism. A mystified political programme which implied the bloody subjugation or destruction of an entire nation, dressed up and presented in terms of anti-nationalism and anti-racism: such is the measure of the political decay of post-Trotsky Trotskyism!

And for what reason were Israeli Jews to be denied the rights of a nation? Because, as a national minority in Palestine in the 1940s, they fought and won, rather than bowing down to Arab nationalism, which would have subjugated them and driven them out if it could? No Trotskyist supports the mass "return" of the 13 million Germans driven out of Eastern Europe after World War 2...

The only Trotskyist programme for the Israel/Palestine conflict is one that advocates Jewish-Arab working-class unity, accepts the right of Israel to exist, and proposes the right of the Palestinian Arabs to have an independent state in the area where they are the majority — two states for the two peoples.

These writings of Trotsky's are a blast of clean air through the swamps of hysteria, ultra-left fantasy, vicarious Arab chauvinism — and, I think, elements of anti-semitism, recycled as "anti-Zionism" — into which much of post-Trotsky Trotskyism has disintegrated on this question. ■

# The red flag in history

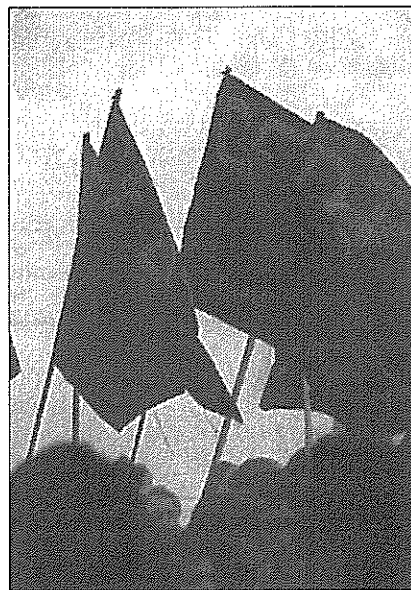
THE red flag was not always the symbol of revolutionary socialism. It was first introduced in Paris through the Riot Law of the 21 October 1791. A National Guard was armed for the purpose of suppressing any disturbances or rioting that might occur. That Guard had to display at such times a red flag as a signal that the authorities wanted the rebels to cease rioting otherwise blood would be shed. Only once was the red flag used in such a sense.

When the *sans culottes* (who were the revolutionists of that period) became more powerful, then, naturally, the riot law with the red flag was abolished.

But the significance of the red flag has entirely changed through a little incident in 1832. [French] General Lamark, one of the opponents of the kingdom, died, and the Republicans, who had then a great desire to fight, wished to make at his funeral a great demonstration against monarchy. That was on 15 June 1832. The spirit of revolt was ripe at the time and a great number of people followed the funeral procession. Suddenly a Republican horseman arrived carrying in his right hand a red flag, which was the spark that lit the flames of passion of the mass of the people. Immediately a struggle began in the streets, and for the first time the red flag was seen on the barricades in the hands of the rebels. From that time the red flag became the signal of protest against tyranny.

But the red flag had not yet become the symbol of revolt against the capitalist class. At the risings of the silk weavers in Lyons in 1831 and 1834 they carried a black flag as a sign of the hunger and need from which they so keenly suffered. Only in that great insurrection in France in 1848, which is known by the name of "the February Revolution" and in which the socialists played a great part — then only did the red flag become the symbol of revolutionary socialism all over the world.

The red flag means war and no peace with the present injustice and state of things! The red flag is stained with the blood of the workers! The red flag is the symbol of activity, life and progress. The different coloured flags of every national tyrannical Government are a parade of the powers that oppress, or for ridiculous national pride. The single colour of the red flag means solidarity, the brotherhood of the human race who desire to



usher in socialism, wherein peace on earth and goodwill to all may be possible.

Therefore, salute the red flag.

## To the red flag!

Here's to the flag that's honest and clean,

Off with your hats and cheer;  
It has braved for many a dismal year  
The idiot jibe and sneer:  
The only banner in the world  
That floats o'er a cause that's just —  
The Reign of Right, the end of Might,  
The doom of the Gold-god's lust.

It has no stripe of blue for funk,  
Or cowardly streak of white:  
Its folds are red — all red as the blood  
Of a heart that beats for Right.  
The emblem true of a virile few  
Who laugh in the face of scorn,  
And brave despite in a selfless fight  
For the good of a race unborn.

It brings the hate to the tyrant's eye,  
It makes the bigot scowl,  
It heeds no cant from sycophant,  
Nor cares for the Jingo's howl:  
'Tis the harbinger of a precious day,  
That shall with its light dispel  
The shades that blind, and chains  
that bind  
Our race to an earthly hell.

What! Wear a tricolour, Union Jack? —  
The symbols of greed and stealth!  
And haul from the mast of brotherhood  
The flag of the Commonwealth?  
I'd as lief help weeds in a garden  
Where sweet flow'rets cannot grow,  
As turn my back on the old red flag  
For the tawdry rag of the foe.

John S. Clark

● The account of the red flag, a translation from the *Jewish Social Democrat*, appeared in the British De Leonist monthly, *The Socialist*, in January 1916.

# Lenin got it right!

By D.R. O'Connor Lysaght

IN three articles Sean Matgamna has made it very clear that he does not consider Lenin to be a satisfactory guide to the Irish question. From this it follows that he disapproves of my collecting Lenin's and other contemporary writings on the Irish revolution\*. Please allow me space to defend myself and, as far as possible, Lenin.

Firstly, however, I must state that Matgamna and I are agreed on one point. The time is long overdue for all Lenin's writings on the right of nations to self-determination to be collected in a single volume. Every attempt made by Moscow and Beijing has excluded one or more of the key texts, and, for obvious reasons, Moscow is unlikely to do better. This should be rectified. It is time, too, for all Trotsky's much-maligned writings on the same question to be published in one volume.

This leads to the first justification for my collection. Despite a clear inference in Matgamna's attack, it is not aimed at supplanting Lenin or Trotsky's overall teachings on national issues. Rather, it is aimed at leading Irish people and supporters of the Irish cause into looking more closely at these general teachings. As these are currently less popular than they should be, this can do no more than good.

This leads to the second justification. The great weakness in Marxist (and alleged Marxist) teaching on Ireland has not been the easy availability of Lenin's and/or Trotsky's collected works on that country. It has been, rather, the existence of out of context quotations by such as BICO<sup>1</sup>, by the Armchair Socialists, Bew and Patterson (before they dumped their alleged Marxism in the grave with their guru, Althusser) and by the 26 County Irish Workers' Party (now part of the all-Ireland Communist Party of Ireland) which produced in 1970 the centennial collection, *Lenin on Ireland*, including only the main articles of 1913-16 and an introduction suggesting that Lenin's article on the Easter Rising was in reply to Trotsky rather than Radek. *Communists and the Irish Revolution* provides a full, inclusive and accessible collection for reference against such text-ripping as the above. Indeed the Irish question needs more. It needs all the texts of Marx and Engels (the present collection covers about half of their Irish writings) and all Connolly's works (the official *Collected Works* include less than half the total). It might also be therapeutic for Matgamna to have republished all the *New Internationalist's* Irish articles from the 1940s.

Furthermore, this collection is valuable

because (though Matgamna may deny this) it shows how a group of Marxist revolutionaries revised their views from experience. So far from Lenin parroting the line given by Marx and Engels, he begins by assuming that in Ireland "the land has, after all, passed to the hands of the farmers", and that, accordingly, the Irish national demands had shrunk to 'Home Rule' and no protective tariffs. (In his polemic with Rosa Luxemburg, he quotes Marx's 1867 programme for Irish nationalists without its demand for such tariffs.)

Even in 1916 he does not challenge Trotsky's assertion that "the experiment of an Irish national revolution... is over", although elsewhere in the same pamphlet as that in which he defends the Easter Rising, he does not hesitate to attack Trotsky for less. Only after 1916 do both he and Trotsky (and implicitly Radek) come to recognise the continuing potency of Irish national revolution. To carp about the 'scraps' reprinted here, as does Matgamna, is to ignore the fact of the cumulative effect of these 'scraps' in revealing the development of the Irish policy of what was then the leading body of revolutionary Marxists in the world.

Finally, and in the circumstances most extensively, it must be said that this collection shows Lenin to have, for all his flaws, a far better understanding of the Irish question than does Matgamna with his benefit of hindsight.

Matgamna is handicapped by his dogmatic denial of the relevance of Permanent Revolution in Ireland. He reinforces his position with disingenuousness, denying that it has ever been presented to him — several times — that in Ireland the process and strategy of Permanent Revolution involves the nationalist struggle of the minority in the Six Counties spreading into the Republic as a revolutionary struggle of the industrially disaffected working class (the only way it can spread) and then, in strength, with a programme of secular socialism, winning the mass of Ulster Protestant workers, not just to socialism but to democracy. Matgamna has stated several times that he will controvert this. In practice, he sneers.

Of course, he can state that the present situation is a far more eloquent rebuttal than any he can make. The trouble is that the defeat of the IRA's campaign was not the defeat of a Permanent Revolution strategy, but of the same old armed struggle that had its greatest success in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Nor has defeat stimulated thought towards anything superior to Permanent Revolution. Rather, there is Sinn Féin's alliance with established bourgeois nationalism to negotiate a settlement, the Socialist Workers' Movement's — Irish affiliate of the British SWP — principled refusal to formulate any sort of perspective, Militant's abandoning its lip-service to

Irish union to try to attract the most lumpen elements in Unionism, and, of course, Matgamna himself learning to stop worrying and love the British Army.

One last point must be added to this section. Matgamna has discovered a significant omission. This printer's error (caused, I think, by the repetition of the word 'nations' six times in the sentence concerned) is indeed more significant than most printer's errors, but it has less weight than Matgamna imagines. In calling for "workers of the oppressed nations" to merge "with those of the oppressor nations" (the six missing words), Lenin was only signalling an approach which did not equate (despite Matgamna) the struggle against oppression within the oppressor nation with a struggle against "chauvinism on the part of the workers of the oppressed nation." Had Lenin made such an equation, he would not have written other passages in this book and others of his writings on the right of nations to self-determination. It is necessary only to cite his *Remarks on the Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions* passed by the Comintern in 1920. His support for alliances with revolutionary nationalist movements is compatible with a broader outlook than Matgamna's simple anti-chauvinism (revolutionary nationalism tends to be more chauvinist than reformist nationalism), but it can be compatible with democracy. Lenin's approach fits the strategy of Connolly (and that of Trotsky). Matgamna's is more like that of labour leader Thomas Johnson, who, during Ireland's war of independence (1919/21) kept the organised Irish working class as such out of the national struggle (all in the name of workers' unity) with results that have remained to this day. This is where closer historical examination is needed.

## II

MATGAMNA'S bias leads him to a distorted version of history. Elsewhere, he denounces very properly the charlatanism of BICO, yet his historical analysis of Irish nationalism and unionism has more rather than less in common with that sect's.

In both cases, Irish uneven development, as instanced by the success of Ulster industry under the parliamentary union compared to the industrial weakness of the rest of Ireland, is held to justify Ulster's Protestant majority rejecting the aims of Irish nationalism. Why the Catholics of Ulster were nationalists is not examined but ascribed implicitly thereby to their religious bigotry. Indeed, the reason for Ulster industry doing so well is neglected, also. Britain's reason for occupying all or part of Ireland is to be accepted as a fact, like the rain that falls on the smaller island. Three

\* *The Communists and the Irish Revolution*, Littercirc, Killybegs, Co. Dublin, 1993. Sean Matgamna's review of along with an examination of Lenin's writings on Ireland appeared in *WZ* nos. 22 and 23.

1. British and Irish Communist Organisation, a Maoist sect that became ardently unionist, championing the Six Counties as a democratic entity [Editorial note].

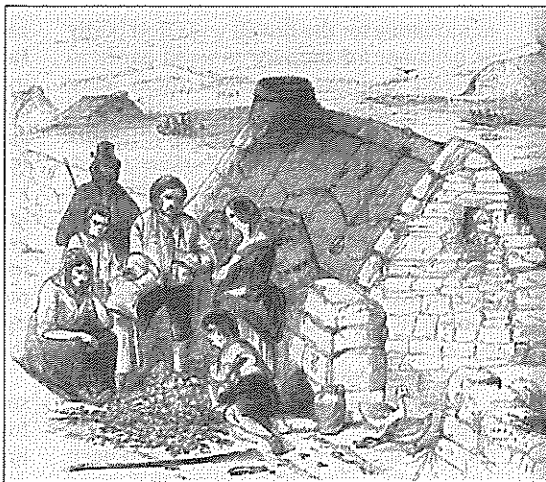
core questions are airbrushed out of consideration. It is necessary to paint a picture that includes them.

To answer the last of these questions first; Britain held Ireland, as Trotsky remarked in 1916, to keep anyone else from holding it. The occupation has lasted eight centuries. It established vested interests, royal, feudal and commercial, in rifling the country and stunting its economic growth, in keeping it divided against itself, eventually on the religious lines that have produced partition.

Before this, in the nineteenth century Britain had Ireland united and united to itself as an integral part (colonialism's most sophisticated formula) of the parliamentary union of these islands. This provided a mask of equality over a reality of Irish oppression. Rackrent and absentee landlordism continued until after their greatest achievement, the Great Famine, began a process of land reform that ended, helped by declining food prices, in the elimination of the rural landlords altogether. The fate of industry was less immediately catastrophic but more decisive. Free trade between Britain and Ireland was introduced in such a way as to maintain for as long as possible the restrictions that it was supposed to kill. One of the last commodities freed of customs duties was British coal in 1841. Yet coal was vital for industry and Ireland had few native reserves. Industry declined. After a major slump at the time of the famine, the Irish population declined steadily, too. Irish nationalism continued to grow in fertile soil.

Although united in opposition to British domination, that nationalism was divided in its aims. By 1913 the traditional programme of nationalism, full independence and tariffs, came to be upheld only by the smaller bourgeoisie and artisans, the "Men of No Property" ("Property" = Real Estate), whose livelihoods were most endangered by Irish economic stagnation. The larger ("properly") national capitalists and professionals had reconciled themselves to free trade. They sought to improve their position by interpreting the vague formula of 'Home Rule' as a demand for an Irish parliament which would not have powers to impose protective tariffs, but which would be able to liquidate the system of patronage that sustained Unionism outside Ulster, as the landlord interest declined. From the top of the civil service to suppliers of the British Army in the garrison towns a mainly Protestant interest depended on the grace and favour of the colonial power. To end this was the aim of the main party of constitutional nationalism. Those who wanted more either went along with it or became revolutionary nationalists, Republicans.

That the main issue between constitutional nationalism and Unionism was a sordid dispute about patronage should not fog the political issues. The boycott (developed from English trade union practice) was used mainly against landlords and their creatures. The nationalists were fighting



**Oppression in Ireland: a poor family is evicted**

for a level playing field and the traditional demand of the career open to the talents. The Unionist interest depended on positive discrimination in favour of the privileged.

Of course, Ulster was different. It has a working class with a sizeable Protestant majority. As Sean Matgamna emphasises, it was an industrial working class: Ireland's largest. Based on industries that had survived and prospered under the union, it was understandable that a majority should defend the connection with Britain. This did not make this opposition the equivalent of the national agnosticism of the workers of Poland's "Warsaw-Lodz-Dombrowski" region whose position influenced Luxemburg and Radek. The Unionist workers' consciousness was under-, rather than over-developed. Its industries had been maintained at the price of a divided community. Linen was revived by impoverishing the Ulster textile workers more than their comrades elsewhere in these islands, and relying on religion to divide the workers who might oppose this otherwise. From the 1850s, Belfast shipbuilding kept these divisions in the workplace. Successive riots, most notably those of 1864, 1886, 1912 and later, of course, 1920 involved demands to purge the growing industry of Catholics. The resultant practice of 'Protestant trades' has been ascribed to the unions, but they upheld positions established by extra-union (and originally anti-working class) forces. The industrial working class that emerged from this process was not as hostile to socialist ideas as it was to democratic ones, let alone ideas of revolution that threatened the state that protected it from its Catholic rivals. The difference between Irish and Ulster Unionism was that in Ulster the state patronage that nurtured Unionism elsewhere was privatised and self-maintained. It was nonetheless real.

This is not to say that the Catholic Church was not an issue. It had been growing in power since the Emancipation Act of 1829. From 1890, this power could be seen increasingly to be abused. This appeared in the fall of Parnell, the Limerick anti-Jewish pogrom, the increasingly inadequate education system, the application to Ireland of the Ne Temere decree on mixed marriages

and the restriction on the Irish clauses of the 1912 Insurance Act. What its conservative opponents ignored was the fact that his strength arose in part from the need of the men of property to keep in check those of no property. What is more, although Unionist propagandists were able and willing to use incidents listed except the Insurance Act as arguments, they tended to use the centuries-old atrocities of the counter-reformation just as readily. They worked to keep their own support united rather than to broaden it. In the last resort, they looked to the colonial state to impose any necessary reform on the Irish majority.

Most Irish constitutional nationalists ignored the problems posed by Unionism, particularly the Ulster variety.

They tended to believe that it would wither away with the passing of the Home Rule Act. A breakaway was realistic. The All for Ireland League recognised the desirability of winning Unionists. For this reason, Sean Matgamna has described two of its leading figures, William O'Brien and William Martin Murphy as 'progressive nationalists'.

How they sought to win Unionists requires examination. Their main plank was opposition to mainstream nationalism's concentration on patronage; this did not win them enough support to be a credible alternative. There was, however, a further strategy that, if no more popular, would have had the virtue of being democratic. This would have involved a firm secular vision of the prospective Irish Home Rule entity. This was not unthinkable. Michael Davitt had demanded democratic control of schools and James Connolly maintained the same position consistently. It would have lost clerical support, but it could have won backing from the teachers.

All for Ireland could not do this. O'Brien, Murphy and their ally Timothy Healy had supported the Catholic hierarchy against Parnell; the two latter had campaigned particularly for what James Joyce summarised as "God and the Bishops over Ireland". Instead of religious pluralism, they supplemented their attacks on nationalist patronage aims with demands for new talks to end landlordism and the policy that led to the 1913 Dublin lockout.

Matgamna regards Lenin's *Class War in Dublin* as his best work on Ireland. Like CD Greaves, he ignores the fundamental weakness that makes it more misleading than Lenin's other Irish writings. This goes beyond ascribing a non-existent peerage and landed estate to Carson or making James Larkin the grandson of a Manchester martyr.

Basically, the 1913 lock-out was not "the Irish nationalist bourgeoisie... declaring a war to the death against the Irish labour movement". It was, rather the bigger Dublin capitalists, nationalist and unionist, attacking their organised, unskilled employees: All for Ireland, Nationalist and Unionist capital allied in labour relations behind Murphy. This nationalist employer had been inspired by the Belfast Unionist employers' suc-

cessful opposition to Larkin in 1907 and by the founding of the Cork Employers' Federation by another Unionist, Sir Alfred Dobbyn, to do the same in 1909. Indeed, though Murphy himself was founder and first Chairman of the Dublin Employers' Federation, the Chairman during the lock-out was Maurice Dockerell, later Sir Maurice and Unionist MP for Rathmines.

The Ulster Unionist Press was similarly supportive. In just one of many such editorials, the *Northern Whig* declared:

"A propaganda like Larkin's may catch the imagination and fire the energies of ignorant and foolish men for a time, but such leadership can never have any useful result or do any good to its victims and the Dublin working men are finding this out, just as the Belfast men did a few years ago." [29 October 1913.]

The nationalists were less united. The constitutionalist majority was unenthusiastic until Larkin's attempt to evacuate strikers' children was denounced by the Catholic hierarchy and provided an excuse to attack Larkin without supporting Murphy. Most of the (then few) Republicans opposed the employers. (Arthur Griffith supported them, but he was not, then, for a Republic.)

Unionist solidarity with the Dublin employers may have influenced Lenin to amend his analysis of Irish class forces as he did in his articles on the Curragh crisis in 1914. Believing as he does in the prime need to reconcile the one unionist body, Matgamna considers this change as being for the worse. In particular, he denounces Lenin's comparison of Unionism and the Black Hundreds in Russia. As far as their class base goes, Matgamna is correct, but it would be correct, too, to attack Lenin's comparison of the same Black Hundreds with Italian fascism some years later from the same standpoint. In each case, Lenin is talking programme rather than class base, and he is accurate. Since the first Home Rule Bill of 1886, the Unionists had represented the intertwined nature of the two. These forces had suffered a major defeat in 1909-12 when the Liberals succeeded by constitutional means in ending the absolute veto of the House of Lords. Now that body could only delay the passage of such terrifying reforms as a land tax and Home Rule by a parliament itself threatened by a wave of labour unrest, which the Liberals seemed unable to end.

It was these fears and doubts about their ability to overcome the dangers electorally that led the Unionists into moving away from constitutionalism, strengthening their links with the army officer caste and stirring up extra-parliamentary support on a greater British chauvinist programme. These islands were saved from a reactionary coup only by a greater evil that enlisted together all Unionists and most Liberals and Labourites in its maintenance. This was, of course, the First World War.

In Ireland, the sop of the enactment of Home Rule, although postponed until one year after any peace treaty, allowed the majority nationalists to join All for Ireland

in recruiting for the British war effort partly as payment for the new act and partly to appease Unionism. Against them were organised Labour, still weak after 1913, and the Republicans. In 1916, a group of Republicans with 'a section of the workers' struck the biggest blow against the war in these islands: the Easter Rising. Then, despite doubts by Radek, Trotsky and perhaps even Lenin, but with their full support, the surviving Republicans pushed aside the constitutionalists and won an overall majority of Irish Parliamentary seats in the post-war election of December 1918.

With this mandate, they began to build in opposition to the colonial administration the most democratic regime that had been seen in these islands. They made a move towards the Irish Unionists in the only democratic direction possible. The automatic right of Catholic priests to attend constitutional nationalist conventions did not exist in the new ruling party.\*

By now, organised labour had recovered from 1913 and grown threefold. In 1919, the Irish strike rate exceeded Britain's, even excluding political stoppages mainly against the colonial state. Had it sought to win lead-

*"Northern Ireland was produced by straight counter-revolution... a breakaway province justified by continuing Protestant privileges and its potential threat to renewed revolution in the south."*

ership of the national struggle, proletarian revolution could have united workers from both traditions in a non-sectarian workers' state. Instead, with Connolly dead and Larkin in the USA, that single syndicalist identity of the Irish Labour Party and TUC encouraged its leadership, with Thomas Johnson as ideologist, to seek immediate working class unity rather than use the opportunities for it to take state power.

Without the political stiffening provided by organised labour, the government of the Republic drifted towards seeking support from the lukewarm bourgeoisie and Catholic hierarchy. It had not gone far this way before the colonial power counter-attacked. By the end of 1920, the Black and Tans and British Army allied to Ulster Protestant pogromites (Johnson's strategy had failed to win Unionist Labour) had reduced the Republic to its armed force.

The result was partition, treaty and civil war. By 1924, Ireland was divided between two reactionary state powers. The nature of their reactions differ. The 'southern' twenty-six county state is 'Thermidorean', established by revolutionaries who feared to continue the revolution and won to them their former constitutionalist rivals and defenders of the union. Though the Treaty

had provided for protective tariffs (unlike Home Rule), the new front postponed using them until the 1930s depression and a new government. Catholic teaching was given state backing, particularly a new intensive literary censorship. (The divorce ban, now a major grievance, did but consolidate the union position; Ireland has had no divorce courts since the destruction of the old native laws.) Against this the state remained radical enough to give women equal voting rights to men six years before the rest of these islands.

Northern Ireland was produced by straight counter-revolution. It is a successful Irish Vendee: a breakaway province justified by continuing Protestant privileges and its potential threat to renewed revolution in the south. Formally secular (even there, it had to bow to Catholic as well as Protestant clerical demands), it compensated by discriminating against all opponents of its one party regime. Though Britain had provided safeguards against this, including Proportional Representation, it allowed them to be eliminated. Later, though the government moved 'step by step' with Britain on welfare reforms, it moved the other way to British moves towards greater political democracy.

The 1960s exposed the decisive difference between the state powers. The Republic ended permanent literary bans in 1966. Meanwhile, as the demand grew for civil rights, the Northern Irish government discussed plans to reform local government by abolishing it and placing Unionist and non-Unionist areas under total Unionist control. The reactionary Republic is being reformed; Northern Ireland could not be reformed without provoking revolutionary struggle. It is still an open question whether it can be reformed at all.

There is one further point. The Republic is economically weaker for the loss of Northern Ireland. That province's continuing link to Britain has been politically even more effective. At Westminster, the Ulster Unionist MPs have been a consistently poisonous influence. Wooed by successive Labour ministers, from Clynes to Morrison to Foot, the Ulster Protestants have elected MPs who have used their pro-union credentials to block their suitors' aims, with, at times, decisive effect. Those who want independence for the six county area are at least halfway correct in that the British workers would benefit: British Labour should consider moving for the British peoples to exercise their right of self-determination.

### III

SO it is time to ask the question that matters now. Even if the Bolsheviks got Ireland correct, have matters changed so much in the seventy-odd years since Lenin's and the fifty-five since Trotsky's deaths that their analysis is obsolete. There has been more time for matters to change than there was between 1916 and the death of Engels,

\*Arthur Mitchell, *Revolutionary Government in Ireland*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin 1995 gives a valuable account of the Republican administration.



after all.

It might be argued that little has changed precisely because Sean Matgamna does not argue that anything much has. Against this is the fact that Matgamna has made too many mistakes to be taken as correct even in his evasion.

Indeed, much has changed. Britain is no longer the major power it was in Lenin's time. Its economic interests in Ireland are not tied to any military presence and its real military interest has been weakened during the last decade, with the closing of the west Scottish submarine bases, Bishopscoart radar station and the Ballykelly naval base. It has equal status with Ireland in the European Union. Both islands are pluralist bourgeois democracies. While more of the people of the Republic are employed now in industry than in agriculture, the decline of Northern Ireland's staples has tended to weaken the base for Protestant sectarianism. Overall, too, Northern Ireland Protestant job prospects are now better than Catholic ones by just under 2:1 after being 2.5:1 and the ratio could be further reduced if the British military presence (and its employment) falls after a settlement. Such a settlement seems possible because the IRA has failed sufficiently to maximise or extend its support.

None of this is enough. Since the ceasefire, it has been clear that, even assuming sophisticated manoeuvring, the British are not preparing to leave, let alone unite Ireland and certainly not unite the workers of Ulster or of Ireland as a whole. The British government is not going to abandon a 900,000 strong garrison on the far shore of the North Channel, the narrowest, shallowest stretch of water between these islands. (In addition, a disproportionately large section of Britain's rulers favour Unionism, precisely because of its undemocratic nature.) This would not be so bad if Britain could or would extend or guarantee a fully democratic Northern Irish policy, except under pressure. Yet the peace process is aimed at negating this pressure. Britain cannot uphold a fully democratic six county province that might use that democracy to break the connection. Moreover, to create such a society means ending the disparity in jobs and making up for the fall in employment due to the decline in security. With the ending of the EU's gravy train in three years, the lion's share of the costs would fall on the British economy. It is not accidental that the Downing Street Declaration avoids any guarantees for a democratic Northern Ireland pending unity, and that the guarantees of the Framework Document are subject only to qualifications that negate them.

From the opposing point of view, it remains true that there are no other Irish political flashpoints that have the mobilising power of the cause of ending partition.

Compared to other world problems, the partition of Ireland seems small. Yet it is intractable enough to require more consideration (and reconsideration) than appears in the prolix but superficial analysis of Sean Matgamna. ■

## The ABCs: 3

# Was Stalinism progressive?

By Jackie Cleary

IN the 19th century European capitalism developed industry, cleared away feudal restrictions, and also developed the working class. Marx and Engels argued for a recognition of the progressive role of capitalism and an alliance between the working class and middle-class revolutionaries.

By analogy many would-be Marxists — Trotsky's biographer Isaac Deutscher, for example, and, most crudely and shamelessly in Britain, "Militant" — have argued that Stalinist forces (that is, bureaucracies like the one that ruled in Russia from the 1930s, or the one that rules in China still) developed industry, developed the working class, cleared away old restrictions of landlord or colonial rule, and were therefore progressive.

When the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979, for example, Militant and many other "Trotskyists" argued that we should critically support the Stalinists' efforts to drag Afghanistan into the 20th century.

After that stage, so Militant believed, would come the "political revolution" — a revolution in which the working class would oust the Stalinists and create socialist democracy. But in the meantime, for them, the "totalitarian deformations" were a secondary aspect of a fundamentally progressive phenomenon.

Why was this approach wrong?

Under Stalinism the working class is bound hand and foot, deprived of all rights by a highly conscious and militantly anti-working class state apparatus which concentrates the means of production in its own hands, together with immense powers of oppression and terror. The workers have no freedom to discuss, speak, publish, or organise. Instead of having their own trade unions and political parties, the workers are forced into state-controlled "fronts" called "unions" and "workers' parties".

It was possible, within developing capitalism, for Marxists to look to a capitalist evolution and still relate to the working class, support its struggles, and organise it independently. The prospect was not that if the bourgeoisie established their regime, then the working class would be held in a totalitarian vice. On the contrary, even in the worst and most repressive capitalist hell-holes, the working class retained individual rights and could take advantage of loopholes to organise itself.

Bourgeois society offered the possibility of the workers organising

themselves and developing politically and culturally. This did not happen without struggle and setbacks — but it could happen and it did happen even under very repressive regimes like Russia before 1917. And otherwise the Marxist policy would have been a nonsense.

A specific repressive and terribly reactionary regime is inseparable from Stalinism. Economic development was separable from the often repressive early capitalist regimes because the exploitation of the working class did not rest on its legal status but on economic (market) transactions and the bourgeois ownership of the means of production.

Stalinist economic development is inseparable from totalitarian oppression of the working class: the economics are not separable from the regime, and to opt for one is necessarily to opt for both. For this reason, the analogy with the capitalist development of industry is nonsense.

But in the broad sweep of history is it not true that the development of industry lays the basis for progress? In the broad sweep, yes — on condition that the working class liberates itself and seizes the control of the means of production from the hands of the bureaucracy.

But politics is necessarily concerned with a more immediate, sharper focus. In that focus the idea that the suppression (and slaughter, deportation, etc which has been the stock-in-trade of the Stalinist bureaucracies ruling the ex-USSR and other countries) is a detail in the broad sweep of history, is a nonsense.

It loses the viewpoint of the militant who stands with the working class and with the oppressed peoples, trying to organise them to make themselves the subjects of history, not its passive objects. Indeed it adopts the viewpoint of the historian, the man in the ivory tower.

Militants must have an entirely different set of values, priorities, concerns and considerations from people who content themselves with general perspectives as seen, so to speak, from a watchtower above the struggle. Of course Marxist militants inform their work with the general historical considerations. They do not allow them to override their goal of mobilising, organising and rousing up the oppressed. They do not allow the goal of industrial development on the back of the masses to replace that goal. If they do, they break with the real traditions of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

# The unity of opposites

Part four of Edward  
Conze's explanation of  
dialectical materialism\*

THE third law or rule of scientific method is that opposites are always united, that they are in "unity" or in "union", whichever word we may prefer. For some time this statement remains a puzzle, even for the assiduous and intelligent student. He either fails to find any opposites at all, or he regards the attempt to state their unity as some kind of intellectual trickery. It is only quite gradually that he sees how fertile the idea is. It takes some practice to be able to discern the many opposites which we encounter in practically any event or process of the world which surrounds us.

The most important reason for this delay is the lack of a general definition of the word "opposites". The forms and manifestations of opposition are so many and so varied that it has so far been impossible to give a really satisfactory definition. All normally intelligent persons, however, recognise opposites when they meet them.

Everybody who tries to give a generally valid definition of a chair will meet with the same difficulties of definition. In spite of that, we generally recognise a chair as soon as we see it.

The "unity" of opposites has a positive and a negative significance. Negatively, we must not see opposites in a rigid, dead and unconnected opposition. The mere recognition of each of two opposites as separate things is insufficient for the understanding of concrete reality. We lay stress upon their being connected — of their belonging together.

Positively, the term "unity" or "union" can mean quite a number of relations between opposites. We cannot discuss all of them here. We shall restrict our discussion to the most important and frequent form of unity between opposites. In a general form it can be stated thus: A and B are two opposites. Therefore, whenever we find A we must also meet B in the same process or event. In other words, opposites are inseparably linked together.

This statement is the result of a great number of observations, or "inductions". I know of no general reason why opposites always must be united. The study of scientific method is not yet advanced enough to give us a proof of this kind. We can, however, say that opposites have always been

found to be united in all those cases which have so far been studied. This law is only a guide for concrete investigations. The main point is that it works. But the reader must be warned against using the law as a mystical formula. It tells us something about reality only when its use is combined with an exact knowledge of the facts.

## Mahomet and the mountain

SCIENCE abounds in instances of a "unity of opposites". If they do not want to be regarded as victims of the state of mind which produced Madame Blavatsky and Mary Baker Eddy, dialectical materialists are faced with the urgent task of connecting their theories with the findings of science. Some of them have so long been absorbed in quoting their classical texts, that they have had but little time left to apply the dialectical method to researches into the laws and phenomena of nature. Nevertheless, they may rejoice that science, the more it proceeds the more it stumbles across just that behaviour of things which dialectical materialism might lead us to

*"If we want to abolish  
capitalism, we have just  
as much to take into  
account its forces which  
make for no change, as  
the forces which make  
for its movement,  
development and  
change."*

expect. By the mere observation of facts, without any knowledge of the dialectical method, scientists in many cases discovered a "unity of opposites". In this case Mahomet did not come to the mountain. But the mountain actually came to the (dialectical) prophet.

Let us make that clear, first, by some simple examples. The most simple examples are the opposites which are called "polar" opposites. The negative electrical pole, for example, cannot exist without the simultaneous presence of the positive electrical pole. Where we have a positive nucleus and negative electrons; the mutual attraction between the opposing charges holds them together. This "unity of opposites" is therefore found in the core of all material things and events.

We should, however, be aware of the fact that, during recent years, things have been shown to be more complicated than was ever thought. Apart from the negatively charged electrons which revolve

around a positively charged nucleus at the centre of the atom, physicists have discovered two more ultimate particles in the atom. In 1931, they discovered the "neutron" which has no electrical charge, which is electrically neutral. Somewhat later they found the "positive electron" or "positron". At the time when these lines are written the relationship between these four constituents of atomic structure is still being investigated.

I have had some "dialecticians" assure me that they did not know what the structure of the atom would turn out to be, but that they had not the shadow of a doubt that it would be found to be "dialectical". This is not the language of science, but of religion. The revelations of God are beyond correction by later scientific discoveries. We should beware of putting the dialectical method on the same level with the revelations of God. There is nothing ultimate about scientific theories, although so many people are inclined to become the dupes of the latest fashion. Science is changing, and it must be studied in its historical change. Too frequently do we petrify the science of yesterday into the dogma of tomorrow. Science demands an elastic and critical spirit.

## Further examples

BOTH attraction and repulsion are necessary properties of matter. Each attraction in one place is necessarily compensated for by a corresponding repulsion in another place. Movement is the interaction and matter is the union of both.

The sex differences in organic nature are not so clear-cut as they appear at first sight. An animal or a person appears to be either male or female. But the distinction between the two is not at all rigid. No organism can be male without having also female characteristics and vice versa. Both are simultaneously present. Scientists speak of "bisexuality". Each individual is a union of male and female, although one of the two opposites is in most cases (except hermaphrodites) the more strongly developed. A "pure" male or a pure female exists only in our ideas. Reality knows of nothing but intermediate stages between them.

The anatomical study of the sex organs has revealed the fact that in each human being both genital systems, male and female, are always found together. But in most cases the one is developed, the other rudimentary and only in traces. The male sex organs show rudimentary vestiges of the female ones and vice versa.

Darwin remarks that "in many, probably in all cases, the secondary characters of each sex lie dormant or latent in the opposite sex, ready to be evolved under peculiar circumstances." If the ovary of hens is extirpated or degenerates owing to tuberculosis or old age, the hens often develop into

\* This explanation of dialectical materialism was written in the mid-'30s. We have left in Conze's illustrations from what was then the latest science — the references to the "neutron" and "positron" for example — because they still serve his purpose of expounding and discussing scientific method.

cocks and acquire a spur and male plumage. Recently, similar observations have been made concerning turkeys, pheasants, ducks etc.

Some scientists, like Havelock Ellis, use the facts of bisexuality to explain the homosexual behaviour of human beings. From the psychological angle, D Bryan defines bisexuality as "the existence in every human being of two sexual attitudes, namely, a masculine one and a feminine one, and under certain conditions he or she can utilise either the one or the other attitude towards the sexual object." Common-sense recognises the possibility of male and female features being united in one person when we speak of an "effeminate man" or of a "masculine woman."

But common-sense recognises only the more striking cases, whereas science has found a general law and pays attention to all the various degrees of mixture and proportion between the two sex characters in the different individuals.

Some persons exhibit what one might call a "superiority complex". They are happy only if they can boss somebody around — in reality or at least in their imaginations — or if they can find some point in which they are better than their companions or colleagues. The psychologist Adler has shown that this sort of attitude is the result of an "inferiority complex". People who feel inferior in some respect try to compensate for this inferiority by their efforts to prove superiority in some other respect. Some physical deformity or disability, for instance, makes people feel inferior. So we find hunchbacks sometimes try to prove their superiority by indulging in biting comments on their fellows and by engaging in "wire-pulling" which gives them a sense of power. Parents, again, frequently create a sense of inferiority in children's minds. If a father always tells his son that he is good for nothing except acting as a circus clown the result in some cases may be that the son will do everything to prove the contrary — to his father and to himself. If we observe a person, we know that in his heart of hearts he feels the opposite way, that he is still "chewing on" the inferiority he felt in his childhood or perhaps even in his early manhood.

Freud has shown that we can have no feeling of love towards anyone without simultaneously having a more or less suppressed feeling of hatred for the same person, and vice versa. This phenomenon is called ambivalence. No hatred can exist without containing some love. Love is the regular companion of hatred, even if the quantity of love is sometimes microscopic.

In the light of the law of the unity of opposites we must also qualify law 2 [everything is in movement].

It is only a half-truth to say that everything is in movement. "Movement" is the opposite of "stillness". It is a fact that our houses remain still in their places, so that we know where to find them when we go home at night. We must also study things in the lack of movement and development, in their relative "stillness". If we want to abolish

capitalism, we have just as much to take into account its forces which make for no change, as the forces which make for its movement, development and change. The whole point of law 2 is not to exclude stillness from our picture of the world, but to draw special attention to those aspects of change and development which usually we are more apt to overlook than the more permanent features of a situation.

### Feud and help among animals

WE violate this law of scientific method when of two opposites, which in fact belong to each other, we take only one into consideration and overlook the presence of the other.

In his analysis of the causes of evolution, Darwin stresses the part which competition between the different animals plays in nature. He reads the "struggle for life" as the axis on which the wheel of evolution turns. He takes little notice of the opposite factor, of the mutual help between animals, which is of equal importance. In the *Descent of Man*, Darwin gave, in fact, as Kropotkin says, "some powerful pages" which illustrate the facts of co-operation between animals. But Kropotkin adds that these remarks were "overshadowed by the masses of facts gathered for the purpose of illustrating the consequences of a real competition for life." Even "on the very pages just mentioned, amidst data disproving the narrower Malthusian conception of struggle, the old Malthusian heaven reappeared." The Darwinians accentuated Darwin's oversight. By insisting on the facts of mutual struggle in nature, they pushed the facts of mutual help into the background, in this way arriving at an incomplete, one-sided and false view of life in nature.

What was it that blinded the Darwinians to the real facts of nature? The reason appears to be that the extent of their understanding, like that of everybody else, was limited by the range of understanding of which their class was capable, the class to which they belonged and for which they stood. Darwin, himself a stout Liberal, had received a strong impulse for this theory from Malthus. Malthus was one of the most shameless defenders of the capitalist system. Darwin read into nature the description which Malthus had given of capitalist society. In this description, the typical description of a member of the ruling class of the 19th century, be he Liberal or Conservative, only the element of ruthless competition in modern society found a place. The opposite element, the solidarity found especially among the members of the working class, always an unintelligible and disturbing thing to the bourgeois mind, was overlooked in society. Consequently it was also missing in the bourgeois picture of nature, which was understood after the model of capitalist society. It remained for a theoretician of the working class — the Russian anarchist, Peter Kropotkin — to give to solidarity and mutual help their place in the theory of nature and society.

### Are facts enough?

MANY well-meaning persons imagine themselves to be on a very safe and firm ground if they demand that scientific research and thought should be based exclusively upon facts. Among the opponents of an investigation into scientific method, among the opponents of dialectical materialism, we repeatedly find those who assert that the scientific method is superfluous, for science deals only with facts. They write big books against the philosophy of Marxism, in the interests of "empirical scientific findings" which, they claim, need no philosophy to be understood. But if you read their big books you will find that they never refer to any concrete "empirical scientific finding". Actually these opponents of any philosophy merely repeat the slogans of a special branch of philosophy — a philosophy which was worked out by the English "empiricists" such as Locke, Hume and other representatives of bourgeois thought. They forget that theory is the necessary complement of fact. They forget that facts are dumb before a theory makes them speak.

Socialists who talk about monopoly capitalism and competitive capitalism should be well aware of the union between them. Lenin has made that quite clear in his study of imperialism. Some monopolies already existed under competitive capitalism. Competition was not the only fact, but was the predominant fact. Monopoly capitalism does not exclude competition. Under it a fierce competition is going on between the trusts and the outsiders, between the different monopoly trusts of one country for a greater share in the total purchasing power of the community and between the different nations for a greater share of the market and of the sources of raw material. Those who overlook the element of competition in monopoly capitalism easily underestimate the necessity of wars in this stage of capitalism and easily overestimate the possibility of avoiding depressions.

On the surface, we may imagine that planning and anarchy are rigidly opposed to one another. In actual fact, we find elements of planning in anarchic societies and elements of anarchy in a planned society. In a planned socialist society, not everything will go smoothly. Quite a number of factors will be beyond the capacity of human calculation. The variations of the weather, with their influence on the harvest, the miscalculations of sleepy and inefficient officials, the sudden changes in public taste and in the demand for goods, and to a certain extent the rate of growth of the population, and the difference in ideals between the generations are some of the incalculable factors in a planned society. Anarchic society, on the other hand, is an anarchy of planned units. Planning in the factory, in the combine, in the monopoly trust, and recently in the entire nation, is at the basis of the anarchy of the world-wide capitalism system as a whole. ■

● The second part of Conze's account of the "unity of opposites" will appear next month.

# Ideas for freedom

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