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Workers' Liberty

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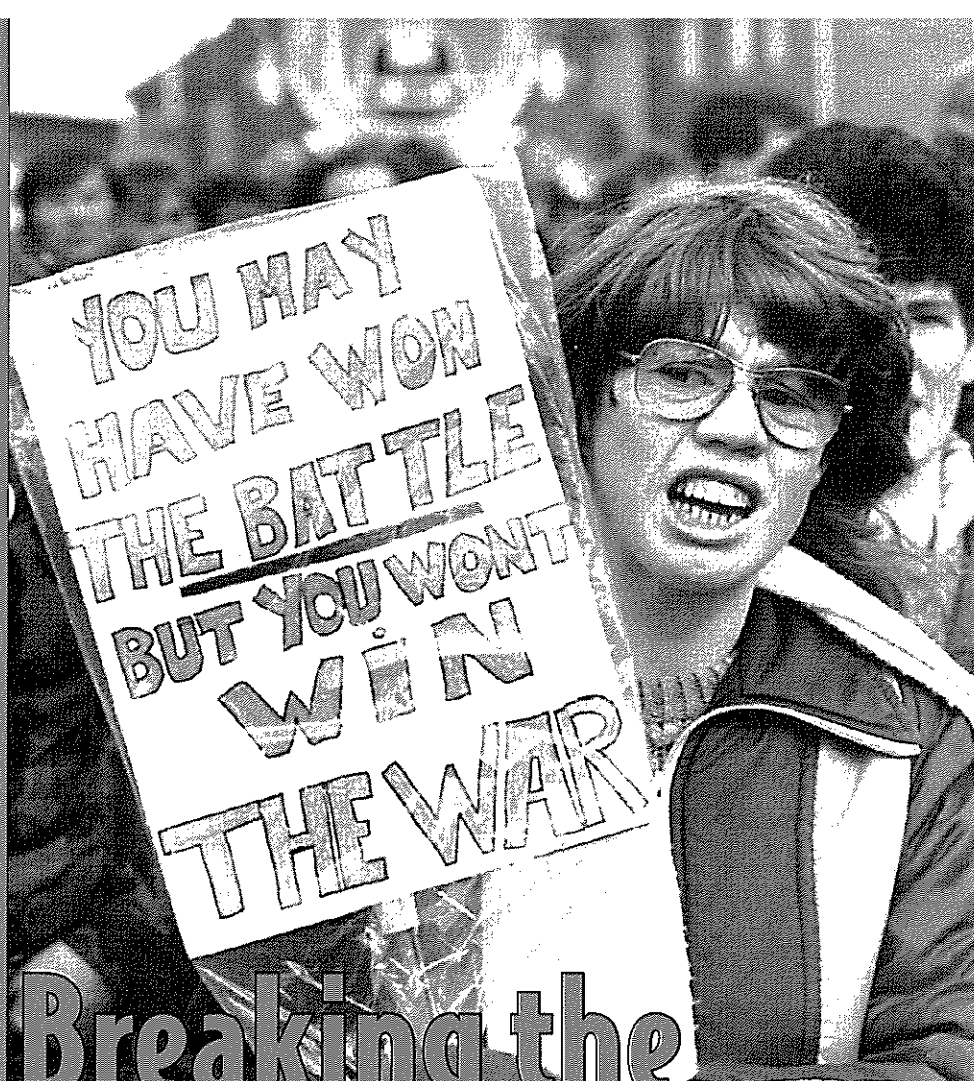
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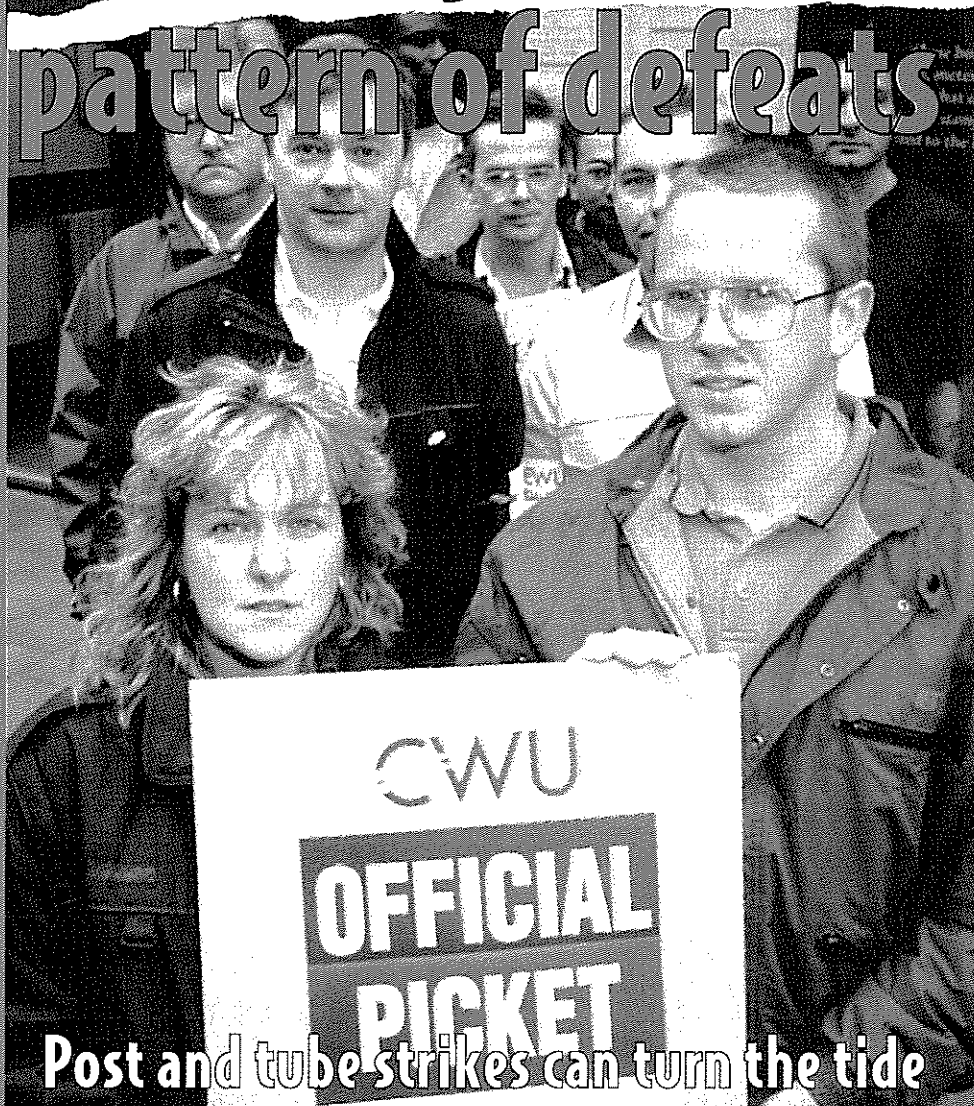
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Breaking the pattern of defeats



Post and tube strikes can turn the tide

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Front cover photos are by Jacky Chapman (CWU picket) and Paul Herrmann (1984-5 miners' strike)

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Making the most of the opportunities

OVER the weekend of 28-30 June *Workers' Liberty* magazine hosted our annual political school, Workers' Liberty '96.

Features of this year's conference were wide-ranging discussions about the politics of women's liberation, and debate about the socialist response to the intra-communal conflict in Ireland.

One controversial participant was Billy Hutchinson, a representative of the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP). A small picket of the British left briefly assembled to protest against Workers' Liberty discussing with Hutchinson, and then quietly dissolved...

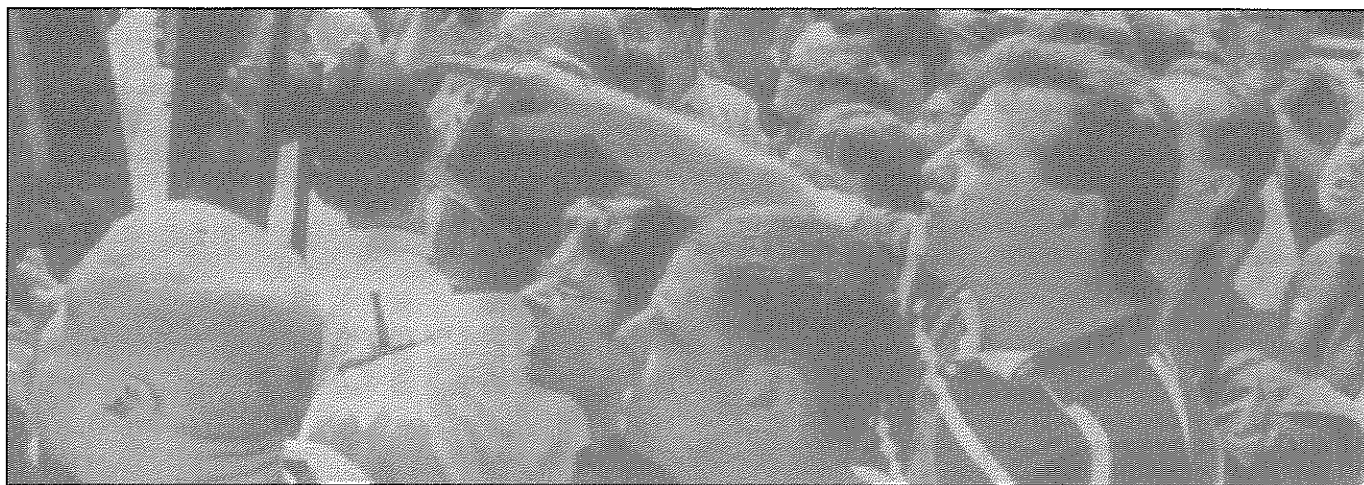
This was a ground-breaking meeting — the first time someone from this type of Protestant background has spoken on a Trotskyist platform in London.

Pete Keenlyside, a militant in the Post Office, Jill Mountford, Secretary of the Welfare State Network, and Sean Matgamna, editor of *Workers' Liberty*, made the key speeches at a plenary session, "The Way Forward." Pete Keenlyside reported on the significance of the postal dispute for the revival of the class struggle. Sean Matgamna said that "the increase in strike activity and the prospect of a Labour government means that big opportunities may be opening up. The AWL — active, campaigning, proudly socialist — will find a new, larger, labour movement audience for revolutionary socialist ideas."

Jill Mountford explained the centrality in the work of reviving the labour movement of what her organisation, the Welfare State Network, does in its campaigns to defend the welfare state. She poured scorn on the right wing's argument that there is not enough money to rebuild the welfare state. This is true, "only if a future Labour government is too scared to tax the rich to pay for the services working class people need!"

For more details of *Workers' Liberty's* activities over the summer, phone 0171-639 7965.

Mark Osborn



Postal workers will not accept defeat

Breaking the pattern of defeat

Editorial

FOR over a decade now the trade union movement has been shaped by the consequences of the defeat of the great miners' strike of 1984-5. The miners fought bravely but went down to an avoidable defeat courtesy of the timidity and cowardice of the short-sighted bureaucrats who sit at the top of the labour movement but fear its strength.

But now, at long last, it looks like the dark shadow cast by the outcome of that titanic battle may be fading. After a decade in which the cumulative effects of defeat and demoralisation, bureaucratic strangulation, savage anti-union laws and a hostile labour leadership have held back the industrial struggle, there are clear signs of a turn in the situation.

First, there is the postal dispute. Victory for our side will break the pattern of defeats and set the tone for a new industrial offensive. It looks set to develop into a full blown confrontation, between on one side a management determined to impose speed-up and undermine union shop floor power, and, on the other, postal workers who have not experienced defeat in the '80s and '90s. A section of this workforce has just emerged victorious from the largest unofficial, and illegal, strike since 1945 — the Scottish strike of '95, in which to defend just four full-time jobs tens of thousands walked out and spread the action with flying pickets.

Against solidarity like that, Royal Mail management have few weapons. They have no network of potential scabs to act as a fifth column in the way that the Nottingham miners scabbed on the other miners during their strike.

The biggest asset Royal Mail has is, paradoxically, the top leadership of the Communication Workers' Union, and in the first place Joint General Secretary Alan Johnson.

Johnson has opposed strike action all along. He has downplayed the key issue — "teamworking" — and done his best to demobilise the workers. Nonetheless, despite Johnson, the potential is there, if only the rank and file can seize control of the dispute, to inflict

a very serious defeat on Royal Mail, win a shorter working week and inspire other workers to fight back.

The other key dispute that may herald a new period of working-class revival is that on the London Underground. The drivers' union ASLEF is conducting a series of one day strikes to secure for its members the one hour off the working week which its leaders claimed they had won last year.

The other rail union, the RMT, is balloting on the same issue. Most encouraging has been the massive display of solidarity shown by RMT members who proudly refuse to cross ASLEF picket lines. This is doubly encouraging because for over fifteen years the unions on London Underground have been held back by the idiocies of inter-

union rivalry and the poison of sectionalism. Different unions have routinely crossed each other's picket lines.

Now, and not before time, the RMT rank and file train crews have taken matters into their own hands, refusing to cross ASLEF picket lines. Already this has brought immense strength to the action, increasing the pressure on ASLEF leader Lew Adams not to go for another dirty deal.

Only sectarian RMT chauvinists — who are, surprisingly, influenced by Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party: aren't you paying attention Arthur? — have argued against

"With empty sorting offices, sealed post boxes, grid-locked roads and most of the capital's Underground network intermittently shut down we are once again getting a glimpse of the power of our class when it fights back and refuses to accept ill-treatment or defeat."

respecting the ASLEF pickets.

With empty sorting offices, sealed post boxes, grid-locked roads and most of the capital's Underground network intermittently shut down, we are once again getting a glimpse of the power of our class when it fights back and refuses to accept ill-treatment or defeat.

The key to making sure that this isn't just another isolated episode of militancy in a general period of retreat, is for the rank and file on the Underground, in the post and in rail — where strike ballots are soon to start — to seize control of their disputes.

If the official leaders won't lead, then the rank and file must.

If they try to sell workers out then the workers must push them aside. The pattern of defeat can be broken! ■

Blair's Daleks are a weak base

THE outbreak of controversy surrounding Welsh Labour MP Paul Flynn's perfectly accurate description of Tony Blair's leadership style as "autocratic" is highly significant not just because of the light shed on the extent of opposition to Blair, even inside the Parliamentary Labour Party, but mainly as a portent for the future.

What Flynn says is perfectly factual, accurate and reasonable. Blair has moved Labour to the right of the Liberal Democrats in formal policy terms. The "modernisers" project is about seeking to remodel the Labour Party in order to replace the Tory Party and occupy its traditional ground.

It is "hypocritical and opportunist" for Labour's frontbenchers to attack Tory policies on welfare, health and education if they insist on portraying Labour as the party of low taxation and are definitely not going to spend any money to undo the damage done by systematic underfunding. And it is "soundbite politics" to go on and on about fat cats and corporate greed while preparing to do absolutely nothing about the £10 billion of tax cuts per year that the Tories have given to their super-rich friends.

All these changes are self-evidently true. What is remarkable behaviour is the outbreak of political honesty that seems to be developing inside the Parliamentary Labour Party. The hard left is being joined by all kinds of unlikely people.

As well as Flynn other MPs from the mainstream are sticking the boot in. Former Deputy Leader and right wing hatchet man Roy Hattersley now finds himself on the left of the PLP. Not because his politics have changed one iota — they have not — but because Blair *et al* are determined to move Labour away from even the most minimal pallid, but at least pro-working class, social democratic reformism.

Hattersley still believes in those old reformist goals. This is how he commented on the furore surrounding Flynn's remarks: "In the Labour Party autocracy is acceptable in a good cause. If Tony Blair were to announce that, whatever the policy forums may decide, he was going to increase the basic pension and insist on genuine non-selective secondary education throughout the country, there would be no problem of party morale."

Hattersley then went on to warn of the opposition Blair was building up in the party as a result of his "ideological provocations."

"Large scale revolt has been avoided up to now because the Labour Party wants to win. A party leader is like a bank robber who stands in front of the safe displaying the sticks of dynamite that are strapped to his chest. 'Shoot, even in my direction, and you may cause an explosion that destroys us all.' That tactic can work for a time. But — instead of stretching loyalty to breaking point — how much better to take the party with the leadership step by step. It is a slow and tedious process but it will give the next government the security that four years of ideological provocation cannot provide."

Not even Bill Jordan, that most stupid and right wing of union bureaucrats, has leapt to Blair's defence.

Only the Daleks have defended Blair.

The Daleks are that group of student politicians and pay roll MPs for whom the epithet "Blair's Babes" is too kind. Inexperienced, naive and juvenile they may be, but Labour's Daleks are deadly serious. They have been programmed to exterminate the Labour Party by their creator Davros Mandelson.

Unfortunately for Blair their base is another planet and not in the labour movement. To ordinary party activists their voices sound strange and alien.

Blair — for all his self-promotion and vain boasting — isn't really doing very well at winning the hearts and minds of Labour's rank and file. Blair is going to free massive opposition when he actually tries to carry out his reactionary policies in government.

And with millions of working-class people demanding some real material change not even all the Daleks in Islington will save him. ■



Daily Mirror comes to Blair's defence — but he protesteth too much...

"Everything holy is profaned"

THE Archbishop of Canterbury calling for a "new morality" amidst the landscape of Tory-blighted Britain is like someone calling for clean air in the vicinity of a nuclear disaster of Chernobyl dimensions!

The cynical old joke about "the 11th commandment" — "do unto others as they would do to you, only do it first" — sums up the governing moral principle of the Britain Mrs Thatcher and John Major and those they represent have created. The successful spiv, and bandits wearing corporate masks — these are its heroes. These are the 'role-models' for those who want to get on, who don't want to be mugs and victims, and who are taught by everything around them in society to believe that they must choose to be either one of the mugs or one of the clever, successful predators. Albert Einstein memorably said it long ago:

"[The] crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated in the student, who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career."

More than that. Legalised robbery and cheating is lodged inextricably in the DNA of capitalism. Only the degree of rampancy varies, according to the presence or absence of shame-making social disapproval, and according to whether they need — for themselves as well as others — to dress it up hypocritically, or feel free to flaunt it.

In Thatcher-Major Britain it has reached a rampancy previously unknown.

Ours is a society with little public decency or shame. The fat cats — the water boards for example — pay themselves vast amounts of money and

rip off the public with glee as well as with impunity: after all, the ripping off operation is set up for them by the government — the Central Committee of all the spivs, robbers and rip-off merchants who batten on the British people. The moral decay built into capitalism has now advanced so far that it seriously threatens social cohesion.

A society that will not care for its young, that provides for them neither decent education nor proper jobs, nor even fall-back social security; that lets so many of its young people sleep in the streets; which consigns its orphans to a care system known to be riddled with abusive practices — that society is already far gone in rot and disintegration. By any human standards it is a moral abomination.

The idea that the Haves can cordon themselves off indefinitely from the affects of creeping social decay is fond delusion. Some of them know that and fear it.

A very rich society like that of the USA that creates Third World slums in the most advanced cities on earth — and Britain is following not too far behind the USA — is not only immoral but radically sick.

Faced with the moral decay around us, the question is begged of those who talk of moral regeneration: whose moral regeneration? Moral decay comes from the bourgeoisie, and from the working out to the extremes of absurd individualism and social anatomisation of the basic principles of a market-worshipping and market-regulated society, where the primary rule is "the war of all against all".

Moral regeneration can only come from the working class and the labour movement.

Our movement is rooted in the idea of solidarity — class solidarity of the exploited and oppressed as the basis on which a general human solidarity can be reconstructed. Trade unionism is class solidarity organised on a day-to-day basis, counterposed to and at war with its opposite, dog-eat-dog capitalism. Its highest goal and destination is socialism. But that can be won only by the victory of the working class.

One of the elements in the decline of morality and moral solidarity in modern Britain is the weakening of the labour movement by Tory blows and Tory laws: the same government that has vastly increased the scope of social robbery and superior class spivery, has also legally tied the labour movement hand and foot, outlawing most of the things that make trade unionism effective.

It is symbolic and symptomatic that they have outlawed solidarity strike action, thus attempting to still the heart of the working-class alternative to what they represent — of the antidote to the moral gangrene rotting their own system.

One measure of the creeping spread of moral decay is the refusal of the Labour Party to commit itself to unblocking the well-springs of working class solidarity and morality: Tony Blair goes to Mass and takes Communion, but he also sips from the poisoned Tory trough. Blair too bemoans the moral decay in Britain!

Nevertheless, despite the Blairs, the labour movement is showing signs of reviving. If the Labour Party wins the next election we will be in a better position, despite the Labour leaders, to secure our own unshackling, and continue the fight for a solidarist society.

The socialists and our central principle of solidarity are the real answer, and in the long-term the only antidote, to the social decay and moral corruption that is endemic to a capitalist system that degrades human beings and elevates wealth. The labour movement is the potential seed and source of a positive human-centred morality, of a moral revival, of a rational morality free of the old religiosity. Socialism, the reorganisation of the world according to the principles of reason and solidarity is the proper name for the moral revival the Archbishops, the Tories and the Blairs vainly call for.

When the politicians of the other side go on about moral decline and moral revival they thereby, though they do not know it, tell the labour movement to step up its fight against them. ■

Postal workers can win

By a Manchester postal worker

AFTER two weeks of standing still it looks like the postal dispute is once more gathering pace after the CWU Postal Executive finally agreed to call more strike days.

The decision of the Postal Executive last month not to name any further days of strike action for the time being was a mistake. The decision was no doubt taken for the best of motives — the need to consult the Branches and to take stock of the progress of the negotiations.

Nevertheless, the effect was to give the impression to the members that the industrial action had been put on the back burner and that some deal was in the offing. Much of the momentum that had been built leading to the first 24 hour strike was lost and many branches are going to have build it up again.

What made things worse was that an explanation of the Executive's decision and the reasons for it didn't reach the members for two days. This allowed the media and management to peddle their propaganda. In many offices management circulated leaflets urging staff not to take further strike action as "the dispute is virtually over". It's probably just as well that no-one believes anything from management these days.

We call ourselves a Communications Union. No Executive meeting about the dispute should be allowed to finish without an agreed statement being drawn up and immediately faxed to Branches. That way our members will be the first to know what's going on instead of the last.

This stop/go strategy on strikes probably appeals to some of our negotiators. It also makes it a bit easier to persuade our more reluctant members to come out. But it's no way to win the dispute.

One day strikes virtually run themselves. Longer ones don't. Picket rotas, regular bulletins to members, mass meetings, speakers to other unions and Labour Parties — these don't happen on their own.

There is a huge amount of support for our stand among our members, the wider labour movement and the public. They are sick and tired of seeing working people pushed around by arrogant and bullying bosses who think they can do what they like. They want to see our side win for a change. With their help we will. ■

Thirty years of fighting for workers' liberty

OUR tendency will celebrate its 30th anniversary in October 1996. And to mark this milestone in our history we will be holding a conference in London on Saturday 26 October.

We have also republished *What We Are And What We Must Become*, the founding document of our tendency.

● *What We Are And What We Must Become* is available for £2.50 plus 36p postage from AWL, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA (cheques payable to "WL Publications").

New Labour is nothing new

THERE is absolutely nothing new in *New Labour, New Life for Britain*. Tony Blair's pre-manifesto election programme is a handful of concrete commitments and a mountain of waffle.

New Labour, New Life for Britain positively bristles with the banal. In 10,000 words we get a compendium of all the orthodoxies of mainstream capitalist economic thinking — save and invest not tax and spend, low inflation and interest rates, financial prudence, Ministers to save before they spend, etc. etc., all of these mantras reinforced by the desire to be "internationally competitive."

Now, apart from the Keynesian interreg-

num of World War Two and the post-war boom, these goals have underpinned the financial policies of British governments since the discovery of the Americas if not before. Nothing new here.

Nor is there anything new in *New Labour, New Life for Britain's* dream of an end to class conflict and struggle. The document opens with a set of pious wishes for social peace that belongs right at the ideological heart of "Old Labour."

"We should not be forced to choose between state control of the economy and letting the market do it all; between higher levels of tax and spend and dismantling the

welfare state; between a society that denies enterprise and one in which we step over bodies sleeping in the doorways..."

It's the kind of empty rhetoric trying to be all things to all people that Ramsay MacDonald would have loved.

The second aspect of *New Labour, New Life for Britain* is the programme for government. It will put Blair on a collision course with the labour movement.

The key policies are to be set out on a little postcard to be sent to every home that people are asked to keep and refer to in order to check the progress of the government.

"Keep this card and see we keep our promises. New Labour's first pledges are to:

- cut class size to 30 or under for 5, 6 and 7 year olds by using money from the Assisted Places Scheme;

- fast-track punishment for persistent young offenders by halving the time from arrest to sentencing;

- cut NHS waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients as a first step by releasing £100 million saved from NHS red tape;

- get 250,000 under 25 year olds off benefit and into work by using money from a windfall levy on privatised utilities;

- set tough rules for government spending and borrowing; ensure low inflation; strengthen the economy so that interest rates are as low as possible."

This is extremely limited and some of it is deeply reactionary.

It is surely utopian to believe that real inroads can be made into the NHS waiting lists without increased investment, or that £100 million can be saved from NHS bureaucracy if the next Labour government keeps the purchaser/provider split which is the lynchpin of the new health market bureaucracy.

The proposals on youth unemployment are deeply reactionary. No real jobs are to be created. Instead, youth will be forced onto either a revamped version of the old Community Programme, or sent to work in sweatshops and McJobs for very little money.

New Labour simply means tighter policing of the labour movement by the state regulating the reserve army of labour. The aim is to keep down everyone else's wages but boost profits and help achieve the much vaunted "international competitiveness."

This anti-working class drive of *New Labour, New Life for Britain* is further strengthened by Blair's proposals on the trade union laws: "The key elements of the trade union legislation of the 1980s — on ballots, picketing and industrial action — will stay." This is all perfectly logical. Thatcherite economics required a Thatcherite framework of union law to hold down its victims and stop them resisting.

And resist they will. The overarching commitment to keep public spending down means that Blair simply will not be able to meet any of the basic aspirations for homes, schools, hospitals and jobs which will bring him to office. Conflict with trade unions and public service users is inevitable. As it is with students who are going to face the imposition of a fully-blown loans system and the end of the last vestige of free higher education. ■

London Underground

Solidarity reborn

AT the end of June a very important discussion took place among RMT activists on the Underground. Faced with the prospect of the first one-day strike by the drivers' union ASLEF, militants in the RMT had to work out how to respond. Should they uphold working-class principles and respect the ASLEF picket lines, or should they go in to work and wait for the RMT strike ballot to finish (another three weeks)?

A minority in and around the Socialist Labour Party argued for crossing the picket lines, but the majority were for rank and file unity.

On the morning of the first strike the majority were proved right when hundreds of RMT train crew voted with their feet and refused to go into work.

An RMT activist and Hammersmith and City Line driver looks at the tube strikes.

SINCE the last edition of *Workers' Liberty* the situation on London Underground has changed dramatically — and for the better. We've seen the first days of strike action. This has shown two things: the depth of anger and resentment at the way we've been treated over last year's hour, and the willingness of tubeworkers to stand together and fight back together, irrespective of which union we belong to.

This first taste of unity on the picket line is fantastic. But it is just a start. There is a long way to go from where we are now to turn this unity into victory. We have to face up to some difficult questions. How do we make sure that the action we've had so far isn't shunted off to a dead end as has happened so many times in the past — strike called off, crappy deal, tubeworkers divided, and management laughing?

The first part of the answer to this is to look at the balance of forces.

Management are worried — the pay offer (for everyone except train staff!) has gone up to 3.2%. After pleading poverty they've found more money again — surprise, surprise! And there's plenty more where that came from! Management have made millions in profits off our backs and we deserve a share — they're not slow to vote *themselves* huge increases.

There's no question of productivity, no strings are acceptable to us. We've given productivity year after year. Management have only got away with what they have because we've been divided.

Who stands behind management? The Tories — they put all the senior management in their jobs. 55 Broadway is full of Tory puppets.

But whose hand is it manipulating them now? It's not Thatcher at the height of her power, sweeping all before her — its Major, barely holding on to the leadership of a divided and directionless party.

Their weakness is our strength. If we can act together we can win our hour from last year and a whole lot more.

That will require a determination to maintain the unity that has been created on the picket lines. For nearly two decades management has thrived on playing ASLEF off against RMT and vice-versa. On 27 June we started to put a stop to that with large numbers of RMT drivers and guards refusing to cross ASLEF picket lines. But what we need now is some proper co-ordination across the unions. We need to hammer out a strategy to win the 35 hour week — not in the next millennium, but now!

Next week, and till we've won, it doesn't matter what initials are on our union cards — we are all trade unionists. RMT, ASLEF — we have all got the same interests. When we fight together, we can win together. We've had a taste of how powerful we are, let's use that power!

RMT, ASLEF, respect all picket lines!

A "peace process" without the IRA?

Portrait

Billy Hutchinson

By Jack Cleary

SINN Fein got its best-ever vote (15.5%, 116,000 votes) in the recent Northern Ireland elections to select the negotiators for the "all-party talks" that began on 10 June. But Sinn Fein is not represented at the talks.

This is unfortunate, but it is not all that surprising: the Provisional IRA's refused to call a new cease-fire and thus — before the mid-June Manchester bomb upped the ante — gain admission to the talks. Provisional Sinn Fein/Provisional IRA campaigned incessantly for all-party talks during the cease-fire (August 1994-February 1996) and explained its breakdown in part by frustration at not getting "all-party talks".

In fact the PIRA has not resumed full-scale military action, yet when the talks were due to begin, it would not make the gesture of a new cease-fire to secure admission to the talks. How is this to be explained?

You have to understand what the PIRA/PSF meant by "all-party" talks. They meant that the British government should steamroller ahead with talks that would for certain be boycotted by most or all Unionists if Sinn Fein took part in them without prior PIRA "decommissioning" of some or all of its armoury — something that was unthinkable for the PIRA. The real demand was for Britain to proceed without the Unionists, and at the stage after that, coerce them.

The Unionists probably would — even after the elections — not be in these "all-party" talks if Sinn Fein was. Blowing Sinn Fein out of the "peace process" the PIRA's bombs were perhaps a prerequisite for the talks that are now going on. That they go on *with* the Unionists present means for Sinn Fein that they are a move in the wrong direction.

The cease-fire was for PIRA/Sinn Fein always based on the gross misunderstanding that the "pan-nationalist alliance" of all Irish-based nationalist parties, from Sinn Fein to Fine Gael, with Irish America could compel the British government to coerce the Unionists into accepting some variant of the United Ireland that the PIRA regards as its bottom line.

This was a fantasy. As long ago as February 1995 the London and Dublin governments publicly knocked it on the head by publishing proposals for progress in Northern Ireland based on a Council of Ireland, resting on the twin pillars of

Dublin and (Catholic-Protestant power-sharing) Belfast governments.

With their tokenistic resumption of military action in London's Dockland last February, the PIRA moved out from under this fantasy.

They have made no effort to get in on the current talks because they know that they cannot conceivably get even the minimum they want there. They know that they will split if some of them negotiate and settle for anything less.

They may split anyway, though it is impossible to know how much the Adams "peace faction" is really at odds with hard-line militarists, and how much of the ostensible division between "peace process" people and "militarists" is a mere charade, a theatrical division of labour, with Adams playing "soft cop" to the PIRA's "hard cop".

The whole recent practice of PSF/PIRA fits perfectly into the strategy of combining the "Armalite and the Ballot Box", which they have followed for a decade and a half now.

Their appeal for a Sinn Fein vote as a vote for peace paid off handsomely in the election: a percentage of those who voted for them for that reason must now feel betrayed. So do many of the mainstream bourgeois nationalists in the south, those who in the last two years have tried to seduce Sinn Fein away from militarism.

But outside the "peace process", where can PSF/PIRA go? The answer depends on what happens in the negotiations now going on. If enough of the representatives of both communities can agree on a basis for Catholic-Protestant power sharing, and proceed to set it up, then the political poles of both communities can be isolated.

Despite their big recent vote there is a great deal of Northern Irish Catholic hostility to the PIRA. Progress towards institutionalised power-sharing may be possible.

And the Protestants? When in 1973 the 'centre' of Northern Ireland proceeded to do what Britain wanted and set up a power-sharing executive, there was massive Protestant opposition and it fell before the Orange general strike of May 1974. Opposition is likely to be a great deal less now; Orange fear of a Council of Ireland is probably less.

Therefore there may be a chance of progress towards a power-sharing executive. Despite all the criticism socialists would have to make of it, that would indeed be progress. ■

A THIN working-class man of medium height with a sharp nose and face, Billy Hutchinson is only 40, but he has already served a life sentence in a Northern Irish jail for a sectarian murder.

He recently stood for election to the Northern Irish Assembly under the banner of the Progressive Unionist Party, but he was not elected. WZ interviewed him when he came to Islington to debate with us at Workers' Liberty '96, where his presence provoked a peaceful picket of protest by a coalition of "Trotskyist" groups.

He was 13 years old when "The Troubles" came to Northern Ireland in 1969, and eighteen months later the Provisional IRA launched their military campaign.

After 1972, when the Protestant-Unionist majority-rule Stormont Parliament in Belfast was abolished by Britain, there was a rash of protest strikes. It was then that Billy Hutchinson and many others like him got drawn into para-military activities, with the Ulster Volunteer Force.

In the three years after the abolition of Stormont there was a holocaust of over 300 killings of Catholics picked at random.

Hutchinson had a labour movement background, his father having been in the Northern Ireland Labour Party. But all such questions were pushed into the background by the eruption of the IRA's war, which was seen as an attempt to force the Northern Ireland Unionists to abandon their own identity and submerge in a Catholic-controlled all-Irish state.

Billy Hutchinson illustrated for us how wide the gap between Protestant and Catholic workers in Northern Ireland was, even for people with his labour movement background: as a child he went with his father on a visit to a Catholic home and was frightened at the sight of the numerous pictures of saints and gods on the walls, something typical of Irish Catholic homes. All he'd ever seen in Protestant homes were pictures of the Queen!

Ten years ago, he said, he might have considered himself a Marxist, influenced by "the Workers' Party". Now he's "Old Labour", in a Northern Irish context. The PUP has the now-jettisoned British Labour Party's socialist Clause Four in its constitution.

What was the sense in indiscriminate assassinations of Catholics? To generate pressure on the Catholic community to get them to extricate the IRA he replied. In fact it had the opposite effect as such things always do: it made Catholics feel dependent on the IRA, as the IRA campaign drove Protestants into reliance on groups like the UVF. He thinks that the Protestants/Unionists had a right to defend themselves in the best way they could and still have; however the violence of the '70s was too "unfocused" and indiscriminate. He said he hopes it will not come to violence again.

Why Yeltsin won

Bob Arnot examines the background to Yeltsin's victory in the Russian presidential elections

THE second round has seen Yeltsin achieve 53.7% of the vote against 40.4% for his challenger, Gennady Zyuganov. It is worth noting however, that with a turnout of just over 67%, only 36% of the population as a whole actually voted for Yeltsin. Far from being the dramatic endorsement of market reforms, as it has been described in the west, it is a rather weak endorsement of the changes introduced since 1992 and shows the narrow social base that supports the reforms.

Furthermore, while the western media has presented the elections as a direct struggle between "capitalism" and "communism", between "democracy" and "repression", between "continued reform" and "Communist revanche", this is essentially misleading. This line of argument has simply followed the media presentation of Yeltsin and his aides. While Yeltsin has a completely submissive domestic media, the media in the west is hardly more critical.

The reality of the election campaign and the platforms of the contenders, is that the battle lines were scarcely drawn on these terms at all. Both the contenders accept the market, both adopt a rhetoric that seeks to pander to nationalism and chauvinism and both are deeply resistant to the idea of democracy. Yeltsin's credentials on democracy include bombing a parliament building and effectively ruling by presidential decree, whilst Zyuganov's party (the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, KPRF) has virtually no internal democracy.

The lack of distance between the two candidates led a group of 13 powerful Russian businessmen to suggest a coalition prior to the elections rather than an electoral fight. The elections were essentially an intra-elite struggle between sections of the old nomenclature, as they vie for control over the criminalised economy that has been the result of the disintegration of the former Soviet Union.

Zyuganov's main support comes from the middle and lower levels of the old nomenclature and sectors of the economy where it has not been easy to transfer their old position into new wealth. For example, enterprise directors and apparatchiks in the uncompetitive manufacturing sectors, the military production sector and agriculture that cannot earn foreign currency as easily as their raw materials and energy counterparts. Both candidates reflect the interests of the old ruling group and their

desire to get to the market so that privilege can be enjoyed in a market form; so that privilege can be passed between generations; and so that the surplus extraction process can be rendered more secure, more guaranteed and more veiled in a market form. For Russian workers there was nothing to choose between the two candidates and even the FNPR refused to support either of them.

However, this raises two questions. Who does support Yeltsin and how did Yeltsin manage to increase his support from less than 5% in the opinion polls in December and January and win in July? The answers to these questions expose the hollowness of Yeltsin's victory, the contradictory and unstable nature of his regime and offer some hope for the future.

Who supports Yeltsin?

THE clearest constituency positively for Yeltsin are the "New Russians", perhaps best described as the "Old Soviets". These

*"The clearest
constituency
positively for Yeltsin
are the 'New
Russians', perhaps
best described as the
'Old Soviets', who
have benefited most
from disintegration."*

are the people who have benefited most from the disintegration process and include bankers, "businessmen", traders of a variety of kinds and the criminalised market sector. Recent sociological surveys have shown that one of the best indicators of current wealth and income in Russia was the position held in the old system. For example, more than 70% of the bankers are former members of the Komsomol. These beneficiaries of the reforms have been estimated at about 2 million people, heavily concentrated in Moscow and St Petersburg, but represented in smaller numbers in every region.

Furthermore, there are clear sectoral interests which have done well out of the reform process. This extends beyond the elite and includes workers in those sectors who receive well above average incomes. These sectors would include the raw materials and energy producers, communications and mass media, finance, services and trade. The army also has sup-

ported Yeltsin quite strongly and it has been estimated that more than 80% of the troops serving in Chechnya voted for Yeltsin. This is not unconnected to his pre-election promise that if he was re-elected the tour of duty would be reduced to 6 months and then they would be demobbed!

But perhaps the best explanation of Yeltsin's victory and a measure of its hollowness is the tactics adopted in the period in the run-up to the presidential election and in the period between the first and second rounds.

Yeltsin's tactics

DURING 1995, as a result of an attempted tight money policy, Yeltsin's government, at the behest of the IMF and in order to receive IMF funds, had been able to reduce inflation to 1-2% per month. However, the cost of this was an increase in wage debt to almost 30 trillion rubles and as a consequence an increase in strikes from 514 enterprises on strike in 1994 to 8,856 enterprises on strike in 1995. Furthermore, the non-payment crisis between enterprises, caused because government was neither making payments nor allowing the money supply to increase, meant that revenues to government were also contracting. On top of this, the decline in production, the decline in investment and the massive outflows of funds from the Russian economy meant that Yeltsin began 1996 and the approach to the presidential elections with the possibilities of a financial and budgetary crisis, continuing decline in production and living standards against a background of increasing worker militancy. It is on this unfavourable ground that Yeltsin had to choose his electoral tactics.

Throughout 1996 Yeltsin has used his position as president and the budget funds of the Russian Federation to ensure his re-election. He was quite open about this and when campaigning in Arkhangelsk said that he had "come with full pockets". He has made massive spending commitments almost regardless of the consequences. It may well be the case that many of these will be reneged upon after the elections but estimates have suggested that his spending commitments, at least those that were actually costed, were in excess of 50 trillion rubles. The most important of these included: spending to alleviate the wage arrears both in the budget sector and in the regions; doubling the minimum pension; compensation for those pensioners who had seen their savings eroded by the economic reform and consequent inflation; higher social benefits for single mothers and large families; increased wages for teachers and health workers plus higher pensions for education workers; increased student grants; assistance targeted to specific sectors and regions, for example the

defence industries, mining, private agriculture, the Far East and the Far North etc. This amounted to a massive bribe to the electorate, or at least to those sectors of the electorate that he thought may prove crucial.

Yeltsin also announced that compulsory military service will be phased out by the year 2000, in order to increase his appeal to the young, and presumably to many parents who fear for their children's lives once they enter the armed services. Yeltsin's cynicism is only matched by the contempt he must have felt towards an electorate which he believed he could buy so cheaply, particularly after four years of hardship.

Yeltsin has also ditched inconvenient advisors or members of government. Early in the year the remaining member of the Gaidar team of liberal reformers who was primarily responsible for the privatisation process, Chubais, was removed from office. Yeltsin graphically made a commitment not to return to the extreme liberal form of market reforms, although Chubais did play an important part in Yeltsin's re-election campaign.

Then in the interval between the two rounds of the presidential election, Yeltsin ousted the hard-liners in his immediate entourage, Kozhakov and Barsukov and removed from government the unpopular defence minister Grachev, who was most closely associated with the Chechen debacle, and the first deputy prime minister Oleg Soskovets. In this way Yeltsin has been able to distance himself from a whole series of unpopular decisions and actions for which he is undoubtedly ultimately responsible. He has also allowed Yeltsin to appeal to both nationalists and liberals simultaneously!

Yeltsin and his team had almost complete control of the media. The only other candidate who obtained reasonable access to the television during the run-up to the first round was General Lebed! The same General, of course, who Yeltsin absorbed into his group, after his third place in the first round of the elections. It is quite conceivable to argue that Lebed's access to the media was planned by the Yeltsin group as a method to draw the Nationalist vote away from Zyuganov (and to a lesser extent from Zhirinovskiy) safe in the knowledge that Lebed could not win but could stop others from winning. His absorption may be a smart short-term move but in the longer term Lebed may well pose problems for Yeltsin. Perhaps even more so for his Prime Minister Chernomyrdin.

Through his control of the media Yeltsin ran a massive anti-Communist campaign which dwelt extensively on the past experience of the Russian people. In the week running up to the election the main TV channel showed: an hour long video on the civil war, the famine, the purges, the camps, ending with scenes of starving children, the execution of "enemies of the people" and environmental degradation; a movie on the murder of the Tsar; a two part documentary on the secret police; and finally, the movie *Burnt by the Sun* which

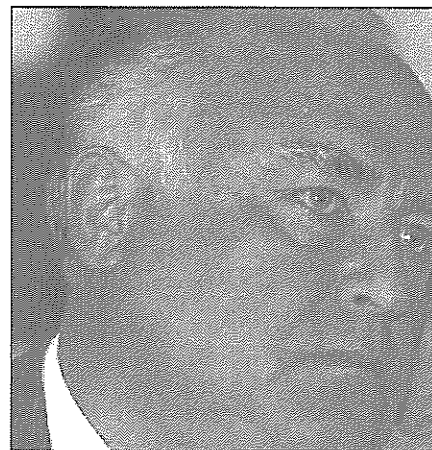
depicts a family in turmoil in the purges of the 1930s. To reinforce the anti-Zyuganov message, even the advertisements encouraging people to vote carried a pro-Yeltsin message.

It has been estimated that the 11 candidates in the first round, who were allowed by electoral law to spend up to \$3 million each on their campaigns, spent approximately \$400-500 million, the bulk of this being spent by Yeltsin. Against this background and coupled with the huge amounts of federal money committed by Yeltsin it is surprising that even though he did win he could only muster the support of 36% of the total electorate.

A future contradictory factor in Yeltsin's victory has been the part played by Zyuganov and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF). As Renfrey Clarke has pointed out, not only did the KPRF make organisational and tactical mistakes — for example not running extensive paid TV advertisements — but their problems were much more fundamental. To defeat Yeltsin would require a party that could appeal to the broad mass of the population that has lost out because of the reforms, and they would require to offer some positive alternative. The KPRF, however, remains very much the party of the old state apparatus, (as noted above), hierarchically structured with poor mechanisms for rank-and-file decision making and little presence in the struggles of Russian workers. Furthermore the KPRF, unlike its counterparts in other East European countries, did not distance itself from its Stalinist past and indeed Zyuganov explicitly praised Stalin. The KPRF did not develop a popular, democratic campaign and indeed could not. As a consequence Zyuganov, in the period between the two rounds, simply confirmed that he shared many positions with Yeltsin, by offering a coalition of National Unity. So there really was no choice and the third of the electorate who did not even bother to vote confirm this fact.

Will the election resolve anything?

NO matter who had won the election the fundamental contradiction of the reform process still remains. How do you impose the pain of the market on a populace who don't want it? The economic reform process is fundamentally flawed and the events of 1995 and early 1996 provide a stark warning for the Yeltsin government. Yeltsin's strategy through the campaign has simply delayed the harsh choices that have to be made. His re-election has not caused the budget crisis to disappear and in fact his promises have exacerbated it. A massive crisis in the financial sector has been long predicted for the late summer or autumn of this year, based upon the fundamental unsoundness of the financial system and the cavalier attitude of the government to increasing government debt. The non-payment crisis cannot be resolved in the framework of financial stringency imposed by the IMF and the net effect of this is the non-payment of wages and the



Zyuganov: not so far from Yeltsin

possibilities of even deeper social tension and conflict in coming months. Even the one apparent success, based on the curtailment of inflation is unlikely to last, and rapid inflation will quickly erode any temporary benefits any sections of the community may have derived from Yeltsin's electoral bribes. The economic and financial crisis has not been resolved by the elections, merely postponed and those who will suffer most will be those who have least to lose — the ordinary workers of the Russian Federation. The fact that western governments and the Russian stock market breathed a sigh of relief at Yeltsin's re-election is a measure of their incomprehension of the social processes taking place.

Has anything positive emerged?

THE best that can be said is that the role of the KPRF will have been clarified by the presidential elections. No one on the left, either in Russia or the West, can now harbour any illusions about the objectives or nature of the KPRF. Support for Stalin and the Stalinist past, no matter how bad the present might be, will provide no basis for a mass movement. Ultimately Zyuganov sought power, or at least a share of power, for himself and his supporters by taking a fundamentally reactionary and nationalist stance with no real alternative. It is ironic but in the west once you have made money you seek political power (for example, in the manner of Ross Perot or James Goldsmith) but in Russia the way to real wealth is to obtain political power!

Secondly, for all the talking up of the election results, Yeltsin only achieved a little over a third of the electorate's support and this is a testimony to the weakness of his social base and is likely to be temporary.

Thirdly, the combination of the workers' strikes of last year, which showed the willingness of people to act, and the lack of a credible alternative in these elections, highlights the necessity for an independent workers' party providing a real alternative. The probable trajectory of the reform process over coming months is likely to provide the objective conditions for more independent worker activity. The test for the Russian left is to meet these challenges and pose a credible alternative. This is a formidable task. ■

Britain's lost generation

Sue Hamilton is a Youth and Community Worker in North West England

LAST weekend I went to Hyde Park to see Bobby Dylan, Eric Clapton and The Who, where those icons of 60's English youth revolt gave the first live performance of *Quadrophenia*, their second rock opera.

Quadrophenia is the story of a young mod riding around on a scooter wearing a sharp suit, whose mum throws him out when she finds a box of blues. His revolt was stylistic with a bit of street-fighting to focus a wet Bank Holiday weekend in Brighton, and a diet of pills and alcohol. His adolescent angst was cushioned by a regular wage packet: this mod had a job. His mates had jobs too. Mods didn't like their jobs — but they paid for their petrol and haircuts.

They did not need to go out on the rob and they certainly did not need to rob their neighbours — which rather dates the story. It's a far cry from the lifestyles of some of the current generation of should-be-mods.

Excluded from commodity consumption, but subject to the same incitements and need to join in, so many of the young lads who live in the area I work in have got nothing to do, no-where to go and nothing to look forward to. It's not surprising that they hang around street corners, when in better times they would have been out in clubs or at the beach.

It's not surprising either that so many of them have taken up house-breaking and car crime as the most lucrative occupation they can find.

It's a vicious circle because they frighten the other residents on their street. Even when the gang who sit on the wall are not doing any harm — nor would they ever — it's still alarming to walk past them: they seem so hostile. As I know from experience, a couple of burglaries does make you jumpy and tense. It is bad for morale to turn the last corner on the way home looking to see if the front door has been kicked-in.

THIS week Labour came up with their pre-election statement about these lads and my mate Mickey. Mickey is a nice enough lad, once you get to know him. He has just finished his GCSE's. There is talk of him doing a training scheme to work in the building industry: his dad says, when he was young there would have been an apprenticeship for him. I guess Mickey is just a normal lad and it's normal for him to hang about with his mates and nick the odd thing. He is no pro, but he might be come Autumn if the training scheme he wants does not suit or does not exist.

I was hoping Labour would announce their intention to re-instate Income Support for 16-18 year olds to give Mickey a bit of

money to get by on. But Blair did not say that. It would have been a good starting point with Mickey and his mates: they hate what the Tories have done to their lives but do not see Labour as anything to do with them.

Not only did Blair not offer a legal way for Mickey to get some money, he has made it worse by threatening to take away his mother's Child Benefit. His silence was bad enough but now he is fuelling people's hatred and fears of Mickey. According to Blair, Mickey's problem is that he was not smacked.

Again, according to Blair, Mickey's other problem is that he was allowed to roam the streets until late into the evening when he was still at primary school. Mickey does not quite get the point Blair is making: he *was* smacked, especially if he was not home by 9pm.

LAST Sunday's tabloids carried a small story about another lad I used to work with. Alan made the papers because he cooked his ex-girlfriend's cat. When I knew him Alan had done a bunk from Social Services and ended up sleeping rough in the youth club. He would let himself in through a hole in the roof when everyone else had gone home.

I liked him too, but there was not much that could be done — the police were after him and picked him up the day he turned 15 and so became eligible for punishment.

It might have been possible to help Alan sort himself out earlier on when he had first been excluded from school. But there was not enough money, nor imagination, to set up some form of alternative schooling that he might have found more to his taste.

The best youth workers around the streets where Alan used to slide down terraced roofs on black plastic bags while doped out of his skull, were a couple of private landlords. They had grown up in children's homes themselves and had a good sense unbridled by the professionalism of the welfare services. The memory of these two is why today I promised to find the money to pay the fees for a local tenant's activist to take a youth work course.

It's unfortunate that I do not have a budget to meet this debt, and it's unfortunate too that the Council no longer pays college fees. But £80 a year seemed like a good investment to me, and my boss is a sensible bloke who is bound to see things my way. From where I stand, we need people like her to work with the youth and talk with them. They are all we have to combat the rising tide of youthphobia.

TWO or three times a week I go to public meetings where other residents are baying for young people's blood. I find it hard to work out why they do not make the connections. Everyone agrees the youths have got nothing and that neglect breeds retalia-

tion and contempt, but there seldom is a willingness to look for answers beyond the stock, 'move them on and fine the parents'. And that's the cue for the police to chime in.

For the last six or seven years I have watched the police agenda become the community agenda. With skill, or with a belligerence matched only by the most truculent 17 year old, the police wind up residents with tales of underfunding and of a 'soggy-liberal' criminal justice system which forbids the common sense solution to the problem of youth crime — a clip around the ear for a minor offence, followed by a secure unit for persistent offenders.

Within minutes of a copper taking the floor at these meetings the residents bond with the platform: they all agree — the Government is to blame for underfunding the police and being wet liberals. From where I stand, the residents have a point.

They would indeed benefit from more police on the beat to protect their cars and empty houses, and a spell in custody for the most persistent offenders would certainly ease the pressure on an area. I have yet to find a way to win the argument.

The youths who do all the robbing and taxing of younger kids are indeed anti-social and should be stopped, but there have to be better answers than seeing the youth as the source of the problem. They are as much victims as the people they rob. The woman I agreed to fund on the course knows the kids are victims and she has earned their respect by talking to them and running the playschemes they enjoyed when they were still little. She has never been robbed nor is she abused in the street.

WHEN Labour wins the next election there will be an expectation that something will be done about these disaffected young people. I think it's likely that there will be improvements in training and further education, but as for community safety, I am not so sure. In fact, I am sure that it's going to get a lot hotter.

A month ago Mandelson was on Radio 4's "Any Questions" arguing that Labour would do all it can to develop an alliance between 'the community' and the police. Such a force, said Mandelson, is the only way to drive out the problem of nuisance neighbours, and reclaim the streets for decent people. I bet this will go down very well with people whose lives are hurt by crime and the fear of crime.

It does not go down well with me — I cannot but shudder at the idea of an organised network of street informers who are the eyes and ears of the police. It echoes the Soviet Union and makes you long for socialism or even boom-time capitalism when youth cheerfully fought the police on the seafloor, and middle England had its nose rubbed in it by the healthy protest of three chord songs, parkas and Lambrettas. ■

An American Labor Party is launched

By Bruce Robinson

AS Blair tries to make the British Labour Party look more like the American Democratic Party and to break its union links, the American labour movement has taken an important step in the opposite direction — towards breaking with support for the Democrats and creating an independent working-class political organisation.

From 6-9 June, over 1,200 people attended the founding convention of the US Labor Party in Cleveland. The convention included delegations from eight national unions and several hundred local and regional union branches, representing around one million trade unionists. Delegations and individuals also attended representing the 10,000 members of local chapters (branches) of Labor Party Advocates (LPA).

LPA has been the organising force behind the new party, having campaigned over the last five years under the slogan: "The bosses have two parties. We need one of our own." The LPA leadership under Tony Mazzochi, of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union, decided to found a party as "the current political system has failed working people" and polls of their union members showed that more than half of them were sympathetic to LPA's aims.

Conditions in the USA now are in many ways favourable to the emergence of a new third party based on the unions. The traditional 'friends of Labor' in the Democratic Party have (yet again) failed to deliver on their promises. Clinton has failed to create a universal health care system, reform labour law or outlaw the replacement of striking workers with scabs. Half the respondents in a 1994 poll identified the Democrats as a 'party of the rich'. Voter abstention is high. In a period of 'downsizing' and attacks on union organisation, both of the main parties act as unashamed servants of the capitalist corporations.

In this context the foundation of an independent working class party must act as a beacon to those looking for a political alternative. However adherents of the Labor Party are still in a minority within the US trade unions, many of whom will support Clinton or individual Democrats as the 'lesser evil' against the rabid Republican Right. The 'New Voice' leadership of the AFL-CIO (the US TUC), which recently replaced the traditional right, will spend \$35 million on political education and organising, much of which will go to supporting Democratic candidates in November's elections. The fledgling Labor Party therefore faces an immense task in winning unions to independent action and also in speaking to the unorganised workers, who form the majority, after 15 years of attacks on unionisation and jobs.

Three major issues were debated at the Convention: the constitutional relationship between affiliated unions and individual



Detroit print workers fight the class struggle in the USA

members; whether and when to stand candidates; and the party's programme. On all these issues, the left in the Convention — mainly concentrated in the LPA chapters, though with support from the International Longshore (Dockers) Workers Union and some local union branches — opposed the proposals from the platform. They were defeated on all of them — once by the block vote of the major unions (numerically small by British standards). The Mazzochi leadership did make some — not very important — concessions to the left when they feared that not to do so would split the convention.

A resolution to ensure 30% representation for LPA chapters on the National Council was defeated, but it was made somewhat easier for chapters to get representation. While union dominance of the new party is not necessarily a bad thing — if representatives report back to and are accountable to their members — there is a danger that LPA activists, who will build the party at local level, will feel disenfranchised and drift off.

The issue of whether the Labor Party should stand candidates in elections has clear strategic implications for the party's development. Mazzochi had pre-empted the Convention by stating in the publicity that "the Labor Party will initially be a non-electoral body" and emphasising that it would not demand the unions drop their other political allegiances. Resolutions setting down the principle of electoral independence and specifying the conditions under which LP candidates might stand were defeated. The leadership position carried: "the Labor Party will not endorse candidates of any kind, at least until we prove capable of recruiting and organizing working people around a new agenda." This will not be reconsidered for at least another two years. The leadership's probably wants to avoid alienating the AFL-CIO and those unions which still support Democrats, though their position may be more ambiguous. For example, Jerry Brown, the Democrat ex-governor of California, was invited to speak to the Convention.

The total ban on electoral activity shuts the door on support for Democrats, but also means that the Labor Party will have little to say in the 1996 elections. In the longer term an electoral presence will be imperative if the party is to establish itself.

The programme proposed was largely uncontroversial, if couched in terms of the American Dream and the US Constitution, rather than the socialist rhetoric historically more common in the British Labour Party. It included demands for jobs at a living wage, a shorter working week, a charter of pro-union laws, free access to quality health care and education, opposition to all forms of discrimination and an overall response to the bosses' offensive.

The main argument focussed on the inclusion of explicit support for abortion rights and a woman's right to choose. The attack on abortion rights has been the main campaign of the religious right and is a central political issue in the USA. Opponents of inclusion were not themselves usually opposed to abortion, but felt that "explicit language" might scare people away from the party or divide unions; they ignored the fact that removing it might also make it more difficult to recruit women to the party. The amendment against a woman's right to choose narrowly passed on a show of hands, but lost 1723-629 on a card vote.

While the left was defeated on the major issues, this should not be used as an excuse to write the Labor Party off. Its programme provides a basis for campaigning and recruitment to a party, which is still flexible and open to influence. It took the British Labour Party 18 years from its foundation to a settled independent existence, constitution and politics. (Many of the issues debated there were very similar to those at the Cleveland convention!) The impatience and sectarianism of the Marxists ensured that control of the party was by then firmly in the hands of the right.

The creation of a Labor Party in the US, even if it is still weak, must be considered a major step forward in that there now exists an independent working class party, rooted in the unions, which can show that there is political life outside the Democrat-Republican pro-capitalist consensus. It is now up to the Marxist left to build it loyally and demonstrate in practice how their perspectives show the way forward.

● In the next issue of *Workers' Liberty* Bruce Robinson will look at the US Trotskyists response to the setting up of the Labor Party and suggest some lessons from the British Labour Party experience. ■

Tough on kids; tough on the causes of kids!

Labour's Shadow Home Secretary, Jack Straw, who recently proposed a curfew on children, opens his heart and mind to Patrick Avakuum

AS Tony Blair's team waits impatiently to cross the floor of the House of Commons and show that they can outdo the Tories, Jack Straw, Labour's Shadow Home Secretary has emerged as an unexpected Front Bench star in this brilliant company.

For a long time Straw — "straw in name, straw in his mouth, straw between his ears" as someone once unkindly said — was regarded as the village idiot of the Front Bench. Not any more. Straw has come into his own.

Like others, such as the ever-impressive Harriet Harman, Straw was a bit of a lefty in his time, when that was indicated. Times changed, however. The left divided. On one side stood the old incorrigible, prattle-festing unteachables such as Tony Benn and the late Eric Heffer. On the other re-grouped, the serious anti-Tories. Jack Straw took his place in their ranks. He knew where his priorities must be.

Unkind people still spoke of him as "dirty Straw", or as "that pompous, stupid little prick — comments attributed, no doubt falsely, to the envious Tony Benn. But they had got it wrong; Jack would soon prove just how wrong.

Jack knew that in the 1990s you get nowhere with "I don't want to win" fastidiousness and Old Labour scruples and residual decencies. He understood that Labour had to make itself distinct from the Tories even while in essence copying them; and he knew that it couldn't be done from the left: the Tories could only be defeated from the right. He grasped the essential point of modern British politics: that the country is irredeemably Tory; therefore those who lead it must be Tory also. More Tory than the Tories, where that is indicated. Jack was ready for Tony Blair's signal when it came.

Today he has the Tory's Tory, Home Secretary Michael Howard, on the run, with his relentless pursuit of the incisive ultra-Tory sound bite. Whatever Howard says, Jack Straw goes one better. His recent proposal to place children under curfew had lock-em-up-and-cut-their-hands-off Howard dazed with envy and chagrin. On Howard's face during the exchange in the House of Commons you could see creeping awareness that against Home Secretary Straw, there will be nothing for him to do in opposition! New Labour will be the natural party of Tory government!

I went to see Straw in the House of Commons and sat, not without awe, across a table from him in a tea room.

His specs gleamed with visionary blue light as he expounded his ideas. "You have to understand," Jack said to me, "that this business of kids goes to the heart of everything: kids are at the root of all evil... er, of all our problems..." adding mysteriously, "even of the beef crisis." He smiled suddenly and stroked himself on the back of the neck with the private pleasure of a man of ideas who has just seen a logical extension of an exciting seminal idea:

"Do you know, that if it were not for kids, Britain would not have an education problem? In fact Britain would have one of the best education systems in the world! It's not the Tories, it's the kids. And they grow up to become vandals, muggers, squeezy-whatsits, homeless vagrants, recipients of welfare benefits and social housing. They are both cause and victims of BSE," he added.

"Eh?" I interjected, hoping he'd stop and explain, but he didn't, swept along by the force of his own cleansing passion.

"Every one of these recreants and parasites, these pieces of human debris clogging up the natural workings of the social market — street sleepers, beggars,

"Children are everywhere! It's a self-multiplying nightmare that will grow worse, generation after generation, if it is not tackled now!"

buskers, single mothers — every one of them began as kids. Utterly unproductive and pre-post modern!" he muttered with sullen vehemence, biting his lip to control his anger.

The well-chewed yellow strand of straw, through which he'd been drooling spittle, had inadvertently fallen to the floor. Mastering himself, he bent down, picked up his trade mark piece of straw and put it back in the side of his mouth.

Opening his briefcase he took out a pamphlet, which from its type style and layout I could see was very old and probably precious. I caught a glimpse of part of the title "... Modest Proposal" before he flattened the cover on the table and began carefully turning the pages.

"Here," he said, "is the answer. One of the greatest thinkers in the history of political economy — and he has been ignored for 300 years! I can't understand why no one else has found this man before now. Here is the Copernicus of social science;

Malthus with a sexually liberating solution to the problem he propounds!" he said chuckling in fond appreciation.

"Back to Victorian values? Tory half-measures! Back to Queen Anne and George I, I say! This man" he said, indicating the pamphlet, "understood 300 years ago things we have not caught up with even now!" This is the antidote to the permissive society; the logical counterpart to the sexual revolution of the '60s!

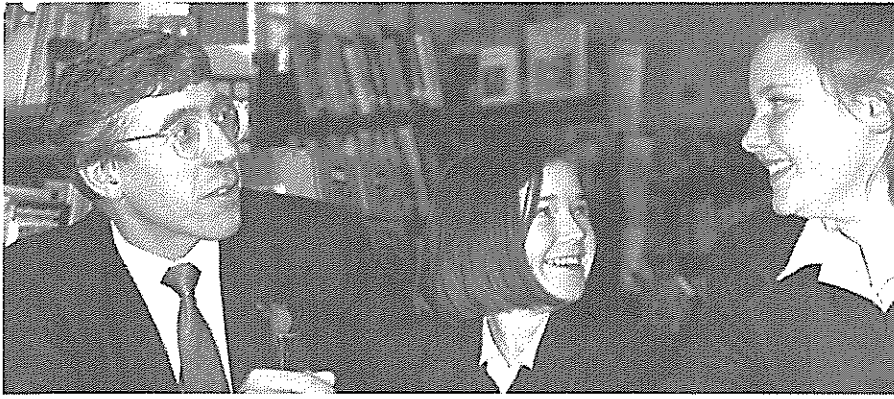
Straw looked up with an abstracted air and then, fixing me straight in the eye, said: "the truth is that there are *far too many* children. They are everywhere! It's a self-multiplying nightmare that will grow worse, generation after generation, if it is not tackled now!" He banged the table for emphasis. The straw in the side of his mouth bobbed up and down hypnotically as he talked. "If it had been tackled 300 years ago, we'd be in a better position now, I can tell you that. But, unfortunately there was no New Labour then.

What do I advocate? That we change our dietary and self-replicatory habits." He rolled the big words like gob-stoppers in his mouth. "What do I propose?" he asked again. "*Eat surplus children!* We should eat at least half our children! Poor people tend to have too many children anyway. And not enough proper food," he added, pausing to let it sink in.

"Under present conditions, children are an underused and therefore under-appreciated commodity. Yet they are a capital resource in almost every family if the market for them is allowed to develop. The time has come for rigour and logic. Old Labour sentimentality has so far held us back. Listen". He looked down and after a moment's pause read from the pamphlet.

"I have been assured by a very knowing American of my Acquaintance in London; that a young healthy Child, well nursed, is, as a Year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome Food; whether Stewed, Roasted, Baked, or Boiled; and, I make no doubt, that it will equally serve in a Fricasie, or Ragoust.

"I do therefore humbly offer it to publick Consideration, that of the Hundred and Twenty Thousand Children, already computed, Twenty thousand may be reserved for Breed;... the remaining Hundred thousand, may, at a Year old, be offered in Sale to the Persons of Quality and Fortune, through the Kingdom; always advising the Mother to let them suck plentifully in the last Month, so as to render them plump, and fat for a good Table. A Child will make two Dishes at an Entertainment for Friends; and when the Family dines alone, the fore or hind Quarter will make a reasonable Dish; and seasoned with a little Salt, will be very good Boiled on the fourth Day, especially in Winter.



"Turn a problem into a solution", says Straw, New Labour's deepest thinker

"I grant this Food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for Landlords; who, as they have already devoured most of the Parents, seem to have the best Title to the Children."

He stopped and looked at me again, eyes gleaming: "There, isn't that a tremendous, breathtaking idea? Such clarity! Poverty amidst overpopulation always carries its own solution! This is one of those ideas which, once conceived, hits you and transforms the way you see everything.

"What are the obstacles to it? Squeamishness! But that can be overcome: people get used to anything, as Mrs Thatcher proved when the cit-izen-ry" — sardonically smiling and drawing out the word in mockery — "quickly learned to accept homeless people sleeping in the streets. They were all young once too!" he said, mouth clenching. Somebody's kids — some idiot mother probably once cuddled each of these cruds now sleeping rough on London sidewalks."

I must have looked unconvinced, for now he put his hand on my arm and talked eloquently and earnestly. "Think of all the benefits, man! We would have a new, eternally self-replenishable source of cheap nourishing human food — the chicken of the new millennium. The slogan possibilities are breathtaking. Learn from the Americans! Roosevelt campaigned success-

fully with the slogan 'A chicken in every pot!' New Labour? 'A nice plump crowing baby in every pot', perhaps. What do you think?

"In any case, culling an unwanted nuisance, we would save immense sums in education. With less children we could concentrate on the things that really matter, like putting British schools at the top of the international league tables. With less unruly kids, we would have less crime, and policing bills would go down too, freeing scarce resources for other things. Or, again: think of the effect on youth unemployment.

"And think of it, think what it would do for school and home discipline! There would have to be an upper age limit of course — 10 maybe — but you could instil discipline for life long before that age if you laid it on the line for them early: behave or you go on the menu! School meals, especially in the slum areas would in part be generated within the schools. Think of the savings! We could perhaps avoid a return to corporal punishment in school and dispense with it in the home."

"Get to the root of it, eh?" I said.

"Exactly! Think of the beneficent effect on family life," he said, with renewed excitement, seeing another branch budding on the Big Idea: "Every family would value its children; a curfew might not prove necessary after all! Farmers don't let valuable sheep roam in city streets at night, do they?

It would go a long way towards solving the problem of single mothers. Each unmarried mother could, by signing a contract, secure a small assured income at no public cost in the crucial period! Credits could be extended on the basis of expected earning power calculated according to the projected weight and size of the baby: an Unmarried Mothers Loan System, so to speak. Some of them might like the work and get jobs on battery farms: once a market developed such things would come. That would dent the unemployment figures.

"There is a strong ecology vote out there and with such a policy it would keep Labour in power for a generation.

"Think of the effect on Third World poverty if Britain could go to the UN with such a proposal, or better still, example: it would have tremendous effect on the fight

against Third World poverty! A bit of judicious *modern*" — emphasising the word — "cannibalism would do no end of good over there. Again, think of the effect on the housing crisis — not in a generation, but now! Single mothers would not need to queue-jump.

"Or again," — his glasses glinted with jerky enthusiasm as he grinned suddenly — "think of the effect on football hooliganism: Britain could export it when young!" He chuckled at his own joke.

Somewhat dazed, but beginning to be infected by his enthusiasm, I asked: "You said earlier that it might be a solution to the beef crisis. You mean as a substitute meat?" He looked at me, smiling like a benign schoolteacher who has set you a favourite puzzle and is empathising with your attempts to work your way through it. "Well yes, but — No!"

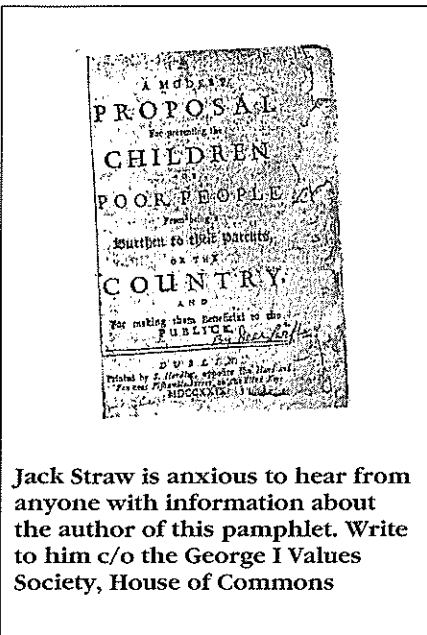
"Then I can't see it."

"Can't you man? Can't you?" Beaming and showing his teeth, he looked more than a little like the Joker in Batman. He paused waiting to see if I'd get it and then, like a maths teacher unfolding an inexorable bit of logic, he said "We could process the head, brain, heart, bones and guts for cattle food! Better than bits of sick sheep and pig! We wouldn't need to feed them diseased animals any more. The number of kids as yet with BSE is infinitesimal. There is no scientific evidence that cows can catch it from humans anyway — there'd be no problem. It would put British farming on a new basis — dish the Tories in the shires.

Suddenly the grin of the enthusiast keen to unfold for you the ramifications of his idea froze on Jack Straw's face. "But no, maybe not," he said, thoughtfully. "That might be taking it a good idea too far. It might make the basic notion harder to sell. Reversing the age-old relationship between humankind and kine might trigger a gut Old Conservatism, and play into the hands of the Tories. Look at how people misunderstood the Dunblane massacre. Bad public relations there!", Jack Straw said thoughtfully. "Shame," he mused, "Waste is a sin, you know?" Then he brightened. "Maybe later, when people have got used to the basic idea."

But now he looked at his watch pointedly and I realised that my exhilarating ride in tandem with Straw up and down the slopes of visionary social policy was over. "I must go". He stood up, took the trade mark piece of yellow straw — I noticed that it was artificial, plastic, fake straw — out of the ashtray where he had for a moment propped it, put it back in his mouth and was gone.

I had to make my own way out through a throng of uniformed primary school children who had come with their teachers on a school trip to see Parliament. One of them bumped into me — deliberately I thought — and grinned roguishly, not a bit sorry, thrilled and giddy to be there in the Mother of Parliaments. Smiling thinly to myself, I turned my back on him: "Just you wait!", I muttered, "Just you wait!"



Jack Straw is anxious to hear from anyone with information about the author of this pamphlet. Write to him c/o the George I Values Society, House of Commons

A secular-democratic state says Jim Higgins

It is always a pleasure to see Sean Matgamna in full spate and my enjoyment of his piece, "Paul Foot, philo-semitic" (WL 32), was abated only by the fear that the might do himself a serious mischief, carrying that immense weight of heavy irony. What a spiffing weeze, Sean must have thought, to belabour Footie with Hilaire Belloc, because one thing is sure, whatever Foot's prejudices may happen to be, Belloc was a brass-bound and copper-bottomed anti-semitic, the author of the lines: "How odd of God, to choose the Jews."

Now I have not read, and I hope I do not have to, the Paul Foot article that has so aroused Sean's rage, but I assume that it is anti-Zionist and that it sees the state of Israel as the single greatest barrier to socialism and peace in the region. If that is the case then Paul Foot has adopted, in this case if no other, the only tenable position for a Marxist.

There used to be a man, I do not know if he is still alive, called Pat Sloan. He was for many years the secretary of the British Soviet Friendship Society. If anyone suggested in the press that Joe Stalin had smelly feet or Molotov was "old stone bottom", Pat would write in to say that he personally owned two pairs of Stalin's socks, and they glowed in the dark, suffusing his bedroom with a perfumed aroma like Chanel No5. As to Molotov, his bum was in fact made of the finest Ferrara marble, which like aeroplanes, cars, radio, TV and the air conditioned pogo-stick had been invented in Russia. Sean on Israel puts me very much in mind of Pat Sloan in full apologia mode.

Let us take the question of the expulsion of a million Arabs from their homes. Sean says, "In fact Israel was proclaimed in May 1948, in territory allotted by the United Nations, without any Arabs being expelled. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs did flee — the great majority not expelled — after Arab states with the backing, naturally enough, of the Palestinian Arabs, invaded Israel." In this case Sean is guilty of exactly that of which he accuses Foot, distorting history.

As the result of a plan conceived in January 1948, the Zionists moved in April of that year. The Irgun Zvei Leumi bombarded Jaffa for three days, Haganah attacked the Arab community in Jerusalem, and on the 9th April the Irgun and the, fascist-trained, Stern Gang attacked the Arab village of Deir Yassin, killing in cold blood 254 men, women and children. It was the news of these massacres which set the Arab refugees on the move and it was their land expropriation that enabled the Zionists to increase their share of the partitioned state by 25% before the UN resolution was even passed. In 1948 the Arab armies, apart from a few Egyptian troops, all fought on Arab land.

In a sense, the detailing of who did what to whom is not very productive. What the Arabs did to Jews in 1929, and on several other occasions, or what Jews did to Arabs in

1948 and have done consistently ever since, suggests an equality between Arabs and Jews that does not exist. It suggests that they were acting as in a vacuum. It really was not like that.

From the very beginning of the Zionist movement, its leaders attempted to get the support of powerful backers. Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, tried unsuccessfully to approach the German Kaiser and the Sultan of Turkey. After his death, Weitzman had a first meeting with Arthur Balfour in 1906, that bore fruit in 1917 in the Balfour Declaration for a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Balfour was not only giving away a land already occupied by Palestinians, but also was effectively disposing of the spoils of a war that had yet to be won.

Weitzman, however, had chosen wisely, and a Jewish population that had stood at 130,000 in 1914 under the British increased by half a million by 1939. Naturally enough, this represented no great British sympathy for Jews — Balfour in fact was an anti-semitic — it *did* represent a useful counterbalance to the Arabs and made it easier to control Palestine which was important strategically for its proximity to the Suez Canal and as a vital link for the sea route and air routes to India and the East. Oil from Iraq flowed through the pipeline to Haifa, which was known as the Singapore of the Middle East.

Throughout the 1920s and 1930s British imperialism put on a virtuoso performance of divide and rule. They blew up Arab houses, they demolished villages to punish "collective guilt", established concentration camps, which they justified on the basis of protecting Jews and Jewish property. On the other hand the British would turn off the immigration tap to punish Jews and reward the Arabs. Any sign of Arab-Jewish rapprochement would be met by a sold alliance of Arab feudalists, Zionists and the British administration.

At the beginning of the war in 1939, the Zionists recognised that Britain was in decline and that America was a much more powerful patron. America in its turn sought to replace Britain as the power in the Middle East; Zionism was a useful weapon in this project.

The role that Israel has played in the Middle East was nicely summed up by the editor of the Israeli daily newspaper, *Ha'aretz*, when he explained in 1951: "Israel has been given a role not unlike a watchdog. One need not fear that it will exercise an aggressive policy toward the Arab states if their will contradicts the interest of the USA and Britain. But should the west prefer for one reason or another to close its eyes one can rely on Israel to punish severely those of the neighbouring states whose lack of manners towards the west has exceeded the proper limits."

Israel has certainly lived up to its promise to punish those failing to show proper respect and in the process has taken on more and

more of its neighbours' territory. Of course, they have learned, like other invaders before them, that it is not always easy to keep the natives quiet, even if you pursue a humanitarian Rabin policy and just break the arms of stone throwing children.

Sean makes much of Tony Cliff's 70th birthday statement: "I used to argue that poor Jewish refugees should be allowed to come to Palestine... That was an unjustified compromise..." To which Sean responds: "Think about it. What is he saying here but that, if countries like Britain and the US could not be persuaded to let Jews in, then it would have been better that they were left to the mercy of Hitler than that they should go to Palestine?"

There is, however, a slight problem here, because at the Bermuda Committee in 1943 Roosevelt suggested that all barriers be lifted for the immigration of Jews from Nazi persecution. To avoid offending British sensibilities Palestine was excluded from consideration. Zionist reaction was immediate and hostile, alleviation of Jewish misery was to be in Palestine or not at all. As Dr Silver told the 22nd World Zionist Congress: "Zionism is not an immigration or a refugee movement, but a movement to re-establish the Jewish state for a Jewish nation in the land of Israel. The classic textbook of Zionism is not how to fund a home for the refugees. The classic textbook of our movement is the Jewish state." You cannot get much clearer than that.

Hal Draper, a Marxist with some prestige in *Workers' Liberty* circles, records: "Morris Ernst, the famous civil rights lawyer, has told the story about how the Zionist leaders exerted their influence to make sure that the US did not open up immigration (into the US) to these Jews — for the simple reason that they wanted to herd these Jews to Palestine."

Sean, quite correctly it seems to me, says the answer is the unity of Arab and Jewish workers. He then goes on to spoil it by suggesting they then set up separate states. What kind of states are these? Is there a mini-Palestine on a bit of the West Bank, plus the Gaza Strip, and a bigger, much more prosperous Jewish state, or has Sean got some complicated scheme for population exchange? Surely, what is needed is a secular Arab-Jewish state based on socialism and democracy in all of Palestine.

Paul Foot, of course, can speak for himself, and why not, it is his favourite subject, but there is nothing manifestly anti-semitic in the points Sean attributes to him. Indeed what is strange about Sean's piece is the absence of any mention of the role of British and American imperialism in the Middle East. There is nothing Stalinist in a recognition of Israel's client status to US imperialism. Nor is there anything anti-semitic in recognising that a Zionist state smack in the middle of the region is the greatest enemy of peace and socialism for all Jews and Arabs in the Middle East. ■

Two states for two peoples by Sean Matgamna

IN the recently made Disney cartoon version of the "Hunchback of Notre Dame" — so I've read somewhere — Quasimodo — "Quassi" — is not seriously deformed, and he is not cripplingly deaf; the villain is no longer a priest; the chirpy, friendly characters sing to each other in American accents; and, for all I know, it ends with Esmerelda and Quasimodo — "Essie and Quassi" — going off together hand in hand into the sunset.

It explains quite a lot, though it does, I admit, surprise me, that Jim Higgins operates with a darker toned Disneyfied version of history.

When I read Jim's whimsy about smelly socks and marble backsides it did flit through my mind that he was, inappropriately, trying to be funny. I had to abandon that idea *because he never pulls out of it*. The supposedly serious stuff is all on the same level!

The feeble humour disappears, but his entire account is in the same mode, consisting of snippets of chewed up "history" concocted into a simple, albeit malevolent tale.

Highly complex questions of national conflict are reduced to children's tales of good guys and black-jowelled bad guys.

Let me tell you the grown-up story, Jim. You'd have done better to leave Stalinism and its spinners of malign fairy stories out of it, *for your politics on Israel come directly from Stalin*.

At the end of his life Stalin was running a raging campaign of paranoid anti-Jewish propaganda, complete with show trials, and seemingly getting ready for a wholesale rounding up of Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe — he died too soon — and possibly for large-scale massacres. (See Stan Crooke in *Workers' Liberty* No.10).

Following Kremlin propaganda, in support of Russia's post-'49 foreign policy in the Middle East, and Stalin's anti-Jewish — "anti-Zionist" — purges and trials in Eastern Europe, the Stalinists created in the early '50s and after a full-scale account of modern history, and of Jewish history, in which the "Zionists" were the great villains, possessed of a demonic power and malevolence. The Zionists in, for example, the Slansky trial in Prague in 1952 were revealed as being almost as tricky as the Trotskyists, who had been exposed and branded as allies of fascism in the Moscow Trials of '36, '37 and '38.

There, the Trotskyist left of Bolshevism was amalgamated with the Bukharinite right, old Bolsheviks were shown to be Fascists and the men who led and organised the October revolution were shown to have been secretly working for its defeat!

Things were never what they seemed: eternal vigilance was the price of Stalinist probity, and eternal paranoia was even better.

Like the Trotskyists, the Zionists too were not always what they seemed. The devil can change his form in a flash of light.

Zionists? Ha! In a world where Jews were

surrounded by anti-semitism, they worked with anti-semites, "implicitly accepting" their racist premises: the Zionist Herzl visited Von Plehve, the anti-semitic Tsarist minister, just as Trotsky had treacherously negotiated with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk. More: they worked closely with the Nazis: didn't some of them freely choose to negotiate with the mass murderers who held guns to the heads of millions of Jewish captives?

Jewish nationalists whose avowed mission was to redeem the Jewish people from the Diaspora and to recreate a Jewish nation in Palestine — why, these were in reality the arch-collaborators with the Nazis who set out to kill every Jew in Europe, and did kill two out of three of them.

This was propagated and believed from the early '50s by the world "communist" movement: the great irony is that it spread in the '70s to the Trotskyist current and is still a power there.

*"At the end of his life
Stalin was running a
raging campaign of
paranoid anti-Jewish
propaganda, complete
with show trials..."*

Against fairy-story history it is necessary to erect real history, and against Arab-chauvinist politics, working-class politics, and I will do that. But first we need to establish what the point of all this is. Can it be that those of us who defend the right of Israel to exist and propose as a solution to the conflict what the PLO now proposes — two states; and full and equal citizenship for Palestinian Jews and Arabs in each other's state — simply lack sympathy or empathy with the Palestinian Arabs?

Is our attitude the mirror image of the vicarious Arab chauvinism I would ascribe to Jim Higgins — and Tony Cliff and Paul Foot? Are we just native or adoptive Jewish nationalists? No, we're not!

Of course we sympathise with the losers so far in the Arab-Jewish conflict, the Palestinian Arabs and their descendants. *Of course* we supported their Intifada against intolerable conditions and Israeli occupation of the territories where they are the majority. *Of course* we support the PLO aspiration to have an independent Palestinian state — where the Palestinian Arabs are a majority.

They have our sympathy and in general our support. But then what? Then we adopt their viewpoint in its entirety? We do what kitsch Trotskyists and Jim Higgins, who has spent a lot of his life sneering at "Trots", do and propagate the old Stalinist paranoid myths about modern Middle Eastern history?

We express and elaborate and rationalise the Arab bourgeois and petty bourgeois account of their own history?

No, we don't, no we can't — if we aspire to be communists and not one or another sort of vicarious nationalist.

Let us look briefly at history, matching facts against fairy stories, and real history against Jim Higgins' Disneyisation of the story.

How did it happen that in the middle of the 20th century a Jewish state reappeared after 2,000 years? From where did the ideologists of Zionism suddenly derive such power over the minds of so many Jews, people of many classes scattered across many lands, as to induce hundreds of thousands of them to be pioneer settlers and workers in Palestine?

Zionism gripped Jewish minds as an urgent project of Jewish resettlement because of the alarming growth of anti-semitism in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century anti-semitism. There are recorded statements of astonishing accuracy predicting large-scale massacres of the Jews — Weitzman in 1919, for example. Judophobia would continue to grow until it produced the murderous crescendo of the Holocaust.

After 1881, there was the start of systematic pogroms in the Russian empire, including Poland, whence many of those who went to Palestine came. In France, where the great revolution had long ago raised the Jews to equal citizenship, anti-semitism became a powerful rallying cry for the right (and not only for the right; there was 'left' anti-semitism too: "the socialism of idiots").

Everywhere, there were stirrings of anti-semitism. Jews became the victims of the international plague of nationalism and chauvinism, and the widespread post-Darwin pseudo scientific racist nationalisms.

Zionism, initially a minority among Jews, gained force and strength from these events until, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the big majority of Jews were Zionists.

The gathering poison gas of Judophobia drove the Zionist enthusiasts of the first and second waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, from Tsarist Russia and Poland. Long before Hitler came to power, in the mid '20s, the third great wave of Jewish immigration to Palestine came from Poland, a direct result of anti-Jewish measures taken by the regime there. Already, the alternative escape routes were closing. The USA had ended its open doors policy for emigration in 1924. The next great wave in the '30s was a direct response to Hitler and of continuing Polish anti-semitism. The point here is that already, before the Holocaust, mass Zionism as an idea, and migration to Palestine as a refuge, as the best option in a world closing in on the Jews, were inextricably bound together and impossible to prise apart.▶

The same was true only much more so after the Holocaust. Tens of thousands of Jewish survivors of the death camps languished *for years* in Displaced Persons' Camps, some of them made-over former concentration camps.

Anti-semitic feeling did not hide its head for shame even then, as you might think it would.

There was widespread prejudice: in the USA at about the time the cinema newsreels were showing pictures of the Nazi death camps there was a spate of attacks on Jews and even on Jewish children in American city streets, in Minneapolis, to take an example reported in the US Trotskyist press of that time.

Another example from the same source: asked in 1945 by the US Department of Education in a questionnaire what they thought of educational provision and training for their profession, the official association of US dentists made the formal and official reply: everything is fine except that there are too many Jews in the dental colleges.

Deported Jews returning to Poland met with pogroms and murder. In an opinion poll taken amongst Jewish Displaced Persons in camps in Europe the big majority gave Palestine as their first choice of refuge: they wanted to be with their own; they couldn't trust strangers after their experience.

By that time there were half a million Jews in Palestine, about 1 in 3 of the population. Why, from a socialist as distinct from an Arab chauvinist point of view, did they not have national rights?

The Jewish national minority in Palestine was first offered partition by Britain in 1937 and then had it taken away: on the eve of the war Britain announced that Jewish immigration would be cut to a few thousand a year and after five years stopped. Effectively, Britain closed the ports of Palestine to Jews fleeing Nazi Europe.

Jewish "boat-people" crossed the sea in unseaworthy craft that sometimes sank; if they got to Palestine they were refused the right to land, or interned. In 1942, one unseaworthy boat, the *Struma*, driven out from a Turkish port and refused the right to land in Palestine, sank, killing 700 people, many of them children.

Leave the demonology aside here, for a moment, Jim, and what do you get? Jews threatened with annihilation — six million of whom would die — for whom it was a "world without a visa."

For example, on the eve of World War Two a shipload of Jewish refugees — the *St. Louis* — sailed around the coasts of the Americas and, refused the right to unload its human cargo anywhere, had to go back to Europe. Almost all these people perished.

The idea that "the Zionists", who indeed were, avowedly, in the business of getting Jews to Palestine, and whose leaders made statements — Jim Higgins quotes one — to that effect shaped and controlled this situation is ridiculous.

The idea that *because* Zionists wanted Jews in Palestine, therefore they would prefer them dead than have them elsewhere is

grotesque.*

Jim Higgins' malignant fairy tale level of anti-Zionist demonology is there in his tale about the 1943 Bermuda Conference. The good guy Roosevelt wanted to open the doors to Jewish refugees but was dissuaded by "the Zionists." No Jim, two things were specifically excluded from the agenda at Bermuda: Palestine, at Britain's behest, and US immigration policy, at the insistence of the USA. That was just "the Zionists"?

In relation to what other groups of people would the utterly monstrous charges that are so casually bandied about, be even given a hearing? As I understand it, in both Britain and the USA at that time, the authorities kept quiet about the systematic Nazi killing of Jews for fear that to make much of it publicly might provoke a backlash and the charge that this was "a Jewish war." The "Zionists" who, according to Higgins, could tell Roosevelt in 1943 what his policy was to be couldn't — and they tried — get the allies to bomb the railway lines to Auschwitz to stop the death trains bringing victims to the ovens.

There was, over the ages, continued Jewish focus on Jerusalem — and always a small Jewish element in Palestine. *The majority* of the population of Jerusalem was Jewish at the turn of the century. The Jewish population built up slowly.

Why exactly was it ruled out that large numbers of Jews should come in here, *even* if that meant that they would eventually be a majority?

It is not just Zionist myth that desert and swamp and uncultivated land made up the greater part of the areas settled by Jews under the League of Nations Mandate.

What did the Communist International say about Jewish migration to Palestine?

When it was a communist movement, it did not oppose Jewish immigration into Palestine, though they opposed the Zionist project and called on Jewish and Arab workers and farmers to unite. They were not concerned that if enough Jews went to Palestine they would be the majority, or that the steady influx of Jews was creating a national minority, with great implications for the future. These were seen as living processes, self-regulating. The shift to something like Jim Higgins' politics on the question came in the Communist International after 1929 [see the brief account of this in *Workers' Liberty* 31].

In the '30s, Trotskyists did not share the Stalinist's blinkered Arabism. The dominant line of the Trotskyists was not that Jews should not, for anti-imperialist principle or out of deference to Muslim-Arab chauvinism, flee to Palestine if they could get in, but that Palestine could not possibly take enough of them for Zionism to be any solution to the threat they faced.

In fact, the Arab-Jewish conflict and its vicissitudes, is very complex. In the 20s there was a sizeable Arab migration into Palestine from surrounding territories as a result of the increased economic life attendant on the Zionist colonisation. Conflict erupted for cultural and religious reasons as well as for reasons of Arab resentment that Britain and the League of Nations had designated

Palestine as a Jewish national home. In 1929 there were major elements in the pogroms of the backward Muslim countryside being raised against the urban heretical Jews. The aristocratic Muslim clans demagogically attacked the newcomers. These are recognisable processes and patterns in many countries.

I am not sure why this complex of animosity on the part of Muslim society, led by landlords and priests who were the oppressors of the Arab peasantry, is something sacred, to which all else has to be subordinated; I'm not sure why the growing Jewish national minority in Palestine, who were in the grip of their own nationalist egotism, should have bowed down to Arab or Muslim national, cultural and religious egotism. Or from what point of view socialists should ask them to — or damn them to the third and fourth generation for refusing to.

From the Palestinian Arabs, I can understand such an attitude. From socialists? These things are *generations back*. Whatever the past rights and wrongs, the Israelis are now largely people whose parents, and often their grand or great grandparents, were born there; and conversely the overwhelming majority of Palestinian "refugees" are not born in the territory that is now Israel.

Whatever it was in the past, this is a conflict of right against right: consistent democrats and socialists seek the best "compromise" solution, rather than a solution that crushes one side. From what point of view other than a narrowly Jewish or Arab one, can either side claim all the right? So, we might if we were gods *choose* — given a real choice, I would — a secular common Jewish-Arab state with Arab and Jew sharing equal citizenship? Unfortunately, it has no purchase on reality, nor did it in the 1940s when the idea of a bi-national state had some support as the alternative to partition. It presupposes mass willingness to dissolve existing entities and national identities.

That does not exist on *either side*. The call for it functions only to demonise Israel and to legitimise the objective of subduing and crushing it. The good and desirable solution changes imperceptibly into a sanction for conquest, subjugation and as much violence to the Jews as necessary.

From an Arab nationalist point of view I can see the sense: but why should international socialists take responsibility for advocating or supporting the inverting of the present Jewish-Arab position? There can be no *socialist* or democratic reason.

But imperialism... AJ Balfour somewhere talked of Jewish colonists creating a "little loyal Jewish Ulster" that would be England's outpost. The actual course of events however is far more complex. Pretty quickly Britain concluded that the little loyal Jewish Ulster was more trouble than it was worth. By 1930 after the riots and pogroms of 1929 Sydney Webb with the initial backing of Prime Minister JR MacDonald, tried to kill off the Jewish

* Jim Higgins' equation of the nationalist machinations of bourgeois Zionists during the war with the cold stance of the socialist Tony Cliff decades after the Holocaust that Jews should have been barred from Palestine before the war is very revealing.

National Home and retreated under fire.

After the Arab uprising of '36-'38 Britain first came out for Partition (1937) and then retreated under Arab pressure until in 1939 it turned sharply against the Jews, closing the doors to Jewish immigration. On the eve of the Holocaust, Britain's responsibility for the Jews, as Arabs saw it, had opened the possibility of an Arab-Nazi alliance in which Germany would use the Arabs against Britain as Britain had used them against the Turks in the First World War.

Britain maintained that hostile stance until it scuttled in 1947/8. The rigour and Arab-fawning fanaticism with which Britain policed Palestine against Jewish refugees from 1939 to 1948 is a very ugly story.

Jim Higgins is right that fighting, including the indefensible massacre at Deir Yassin, preceded the Declaration of Israel; it is of no consequence. Britain had effectively abdicated the state power after the United Nations declared for partition in November 1947 and there was sporadic fighting thereafter, with Jews and Arabs jockeying for position. Jewish Jerusalem suffered a long siege and the Jewish quarter of the old city fell to the Arabs. Deir Yassin is said to have been a link in the chain around Jerusalem, though nothing can excuse what happened there [it was immediately condemned by the mainstream Jewish forces].

The very next day, 60 Jewish medical personnel were ambushed and massacred...

In other words, it was a horrible, communal war, involving outside Arab volunteers and then after 14th May 1948 invasion and attempted invasion by the armies of Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Iraq and a task force of Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

Inevitably, Israel has relied on its US alliance: the Arabs too have made such alliances — with Russia and the USA.

The idea that American imperialism depends on Israel for "control of the Arabs" when it has friendly links with Egypt and Jordan and Saudi Arabia is so far from any reasonable picture of Middle-Eastern reality as to be risible. Conor Cruise O'Brien in his valuable book, *The Siege*, makes a convincing case that the USA's relationship to Israel a) owes more to the power of the Zionist lobby in US politics than to anything else, and b) has actually hindered the USA in pursuing its real interests in the area. Amongst other

things he shows that there have been many ups and downs in the relationship. Israel has pursued its own interests, playing states off against each other.

I will join Jim Higgins in morally condemning the whole system of world and regional power politics: I will take it as evidence of bias and prejudice when he condemns only, or especially, the Israelis.

But then he is awash with prejudice. The conflict from November 1947, when Britain began the process of withdrawal, in which perhaps 3/4 million Arabs fled or were driven out can only be blamed on the Jews alone if you deny them the right to defend themselves against armed attack — in May 1948 by five armies. Jim Higgins quotes Hal Draper.* The Trotskyists in 1948 did not support the Arabs! None of them, as far as I know, did. That sort of stuff came later.

Where in fact there was a war Jim has "Zionists" as the only aggressors: the "Zionists" though they were under attack from November 1947 and earlier, "moved" in April 1948 — when Jewish Jerusalem was already besieged...

Where Jewish Jerusalem was besieged and fell, Jim offers only tales of Haganah attacking the Arab community in Jerusalem... Israel alone is the enemy of peace and socialism in the Middle East!

This is not history, not even on the level of honest narrative! Tell me Jim: should the Jews in 1948 have surrendered? Let themselves be massacred? Driven out? Where, in a world where Jewish Displaced Persons were still languishing in European camps, should they have gone? That wasn't the Arabs' problem? No, but it was the Jews' problem: they resolved it by fighting and winning...

History is a messy business. Isaac Deutscher's image for Jewish-Arab relations of the Jews as a man jumping out of the window of a burning building and accidentally injuring an innocent civilian down below, captures it, I think.

A Palestinian Arab state would be economically much weaker than the Jewish state? States have unequal wealth. Higgins uses that as both an argument against the giant step forward for the Palestinians of having their own state and against the right of the Jewish nation not to be forced to dissolve itself!

It seems to me that in response to the tragic fate of the Palestinian Arabs, Jim Higgins and all his socialist and Arab nationalist co-thinkers in effect propose that we abandon a class interpretation of history in favour of an account in terms of good and bad peoples and the malignancy of demonic forces like "Zionism".

They abandon any attempt at an objective overall Marxist assessment of the history of the Arab-Jewish conflict, including factual accounts of what really happens and why. They settle uncritically into repeating the hurt account of the losers in a national conflict in which, had their side won in the '30s and '40s, they would have done to the other side everything that was done to them or worse. The underlying idea is that they would have had a right to...

Because Higgins and his co-thinkers are indignant at Israeli treatment of those they defeated, they demonise the Jews — "Zionists" — backwards in time for generations and forwards in time to the hoped-for day when the forces of progress, enlightenment, justice and righteousness — which just happen to include Saddam Hussein and the King of Saudi Arabia! — will triumph and conquer Israel.

They stigmatise Israel, surrounded by enemies, for its collaboration with imperialism, and ignore the connections of the Arab states with imperialism — right back to British-Arab collaboration during World War 2 to stop the Jewish national minority opening the gates of Palestine to Jews who otherwise faced annihilation.

They become vicarious Arab-nationalists who find unforgivable even after half a century the uneasy and conflict ridden Jewish-British collaboration in the late '30s and early '40s, and pardon with a benign shrug of complacent shoulders the collaboration of Palestinian Arabs and, in the first place their leader, Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, with the Nazis for the specific purposes of a common programme of wiping out the Jews. They demonise the Jewish leaders and forgive the Muftis, who tried to organise a Muslim brigade to fight for Hitler, and whose supporters organised a sizeable anti-Jewish pogrom in Baghdad in 1941 during the pro-Nazi Iraq coup of Raschid Ali.

Your viewpoint, Jim, is shaped and determined mechanically and comprehensively by the taking of sides with the defeated side — the "oppressed."

But suppose the other side had won: suppose, to tell the shortest version of the story, that the Nazis, and their despised Arab clients had won in Palestine — even temporarily, as they might in 1941-2 — and that the half million Palestinian Jews had gone the way of the six million in Europe? Why then our sympathy would now be on the other side — with "the poor, poor Jews."

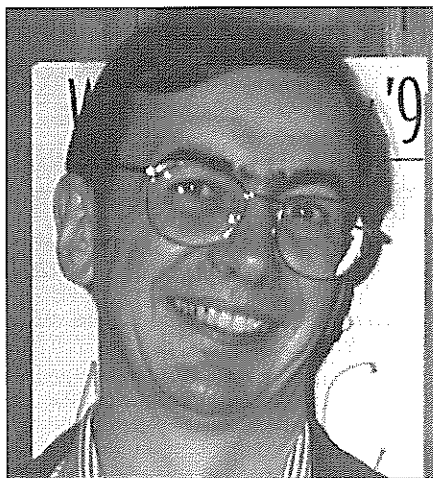
The Palestinian Jews are on the other side of your good people/bad people divide because they did not let themselves be crushed, because, in a limited sphere, they prevailed.

It seems to me that your standpoint has no point of contact with Marxism or even with an old-fashioned belief in the equality of peoples. For Marxists there are no bad peoples; conflicts between competing peoples contain more or less of a tragic element of right as against right. We look to working-class unity and reconciliation.

In brief, socialists support the Palestinian Arab demand for liberation and justice — that is, for self-determination in an independent state on the territory where they now constitute a majority — but we do not demonise one people, or erect Zionism into a demon-ex-machina force above history: we see it in history; that is, we look at the real history, recognising that this is the only basis on which to prepare the force — the minds of the Arab and Jewish working classes — for the fundamental solution to the conflict: consistent democracy and socialism. ■

* The quote from Hal Draper is misleading. Draper was a bitter critic of Israel; in the '50s he published very scathing and from anything other than a Jewish chauvinist point of view, unanswerable accounts of the systematic expropriation of Arab land within Israel. Draper continued to advocate the "de-Zionisation" of Israel. But he was not in favour of the subjugation and destruction of Israel. More to the point, the Workers' Party in the 40s was outspokenly in favour of the right of Jews to go to Palestine. They wrote it into the programme they printed each week in *Labor Action*! It was a bone of contention between themselves and the Cannon organisation. The truth is that Jim Higgins' politics and Tony Cliff's politics on this question come out of the degenerating "Fourth International" of Pablo and Cannon, which broke in the 40s with the old Communist International and Leon Trotsky's position on this question of Jewish migration. Tony Cliff, the honorary Arab nationalist, was one of the theorists of this break and descent into vicarious Arab chauvinism.

Abortion and the American right



By Martin Durham

IT IS important to be as accurate as possible about the anti-abortion or anti-gay groups in America. I think these groups are often misdescribed, in the *Guardian* for instance — which probably lots of us use to find out what's happening over there. If I wanted to be really provocative, I'd say a lot of left-wing writers "lift" the bourgeois press. Because of a lack of resources left-wing groups often rewrite a piece they see in the *Guardian* or the *Economist*, or whatever, and give it a left-wing conclusion.

But the bourgeois press is often unreliable about right-wing politics — especially if they're liberals. Conservatives may be more accurate but then they're diabolical when talking about left-wing or liberal people.

In six week's time the Republican Party will hold their convention, confirm their presidential candidate as Bob Dole, and pick a vice-presidential candidate. They'll decide on their platform, their manifesto. Unless their party managers are incredibly good, or incredibly fortunate, or both, it's going to be a bloodbath.

There are going to be three groups arguing that the Republican Party has got to be very, very, very hardline on abortion and that Bob Dole must not sell them out.

Although these three groups overlap and often co-operate, they are separate groups with different priorities.

The first group dates back to the late '60s and early '70s and calls itself the pro-life movement. We know it as the anti-abortion movement.

The second group dates back to the late '70s and they call themselves the pro-family movement. We know them as the Christian right.

The third is the most recent and dates back to the early '90s. These are the supporters of Pat Buchanan. I will deal with the history of the first two groups here.

The so-called pro-life movement dates back to the late '60s when people were trying to liberalise abortion law in some

states, like California and New York. In 1973 the Supreme Court liberalised abortion law substantially. In the first three months the law would not restrict abortion. Later on there could be some laws but not very restrictive ones — until the last minute of the pregnancy. This infuriated anti-abortionists.

Shortly after that decision the anti-abortionists came together to create the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) which they made formally separate from the Catholic church in order to appeal beyond the Catholic church's constituency. This is the dominant anti-abortion organisation in America.

How was the Christian right created? First, there are an incredible number of born-again evangelical Christians in America — as many as a quarter of all Americans. They created their own sub-culture which the secular media has not really noticed: their own magazines, their own radio stations, their own TV programmes, colleges, schools and universities. By and large they kept clear of politics — some of them on principle. They have also lost many of their churches to what they call moderate liberal Protestants.

They found their attempt to separate themselves off from secular America was not working, and this point was coming home to them with a vengeance. For instance they were worried sick about their kids' enthusiasm for rock music and for watching TV, about the availability of *Playboy* magazine. They get outraged about abortion, about the rise of a gay movement, and at the rise of feminism.

In the '70s some of them got involved in different political campaigns, for instance the *successful* campaign to defeat the Equal Rights Amendment.

Under Jimmy Carter, himself a born-again Christian but one that they often regarded as a moderate or a liberal, the American tax inspectorate, the IRS, got interested in so-called home schools, the Christian schools. They started looking into these schools. They were suspicious that these schools were an excuse for segregation, an attempt to escape racially mixed schools, as well as a way to avoid taxes. And so the evangelicals felt further threatened by the way the state was having a go at their Christian schools.

Finally, in the early '70s, what we then called the New Right was launched. Once called four men and two computers because they were a small group of conservatives, they were fed up about losing to the moderate wing of the Republican Party or to the Democrats.

They wanted to create a strong conservative movement in America. They pioneered very vicious adverts, direct mailing, to say, the members of the National Rifle Association. They said, if I write to everyone who loves guns and tell them lib-

eral politicians hate guns and if I write to everyone opposed to abortion and tell them liberal politicians hate babies, I'm in.

By this "scientific method" of direct mailing targeted audiences, they found that they could get people out voting, and get in donations! Of course they targeted the born-again Christian community and persuaded key figures in that community, like Gerry Falwell, a prominent TV evangelist, that they should launch political organisations. And so in the late '70s the new Christian right was created. It appeared most famously in groups like "Moral Majority", but also "Christian Voice".

The new right was a bit disappointed with the anti-abortion movement. They found it very difficult to get the anti-abortion movement on board for the full conservative argument. In the late '70s the new right tried to encourage a *right wing* of the anti-abortion movement. Such a group was the American Life lobby — now American Life League. The ALL was not only against abortion but also permissiveness, liberals and so on.

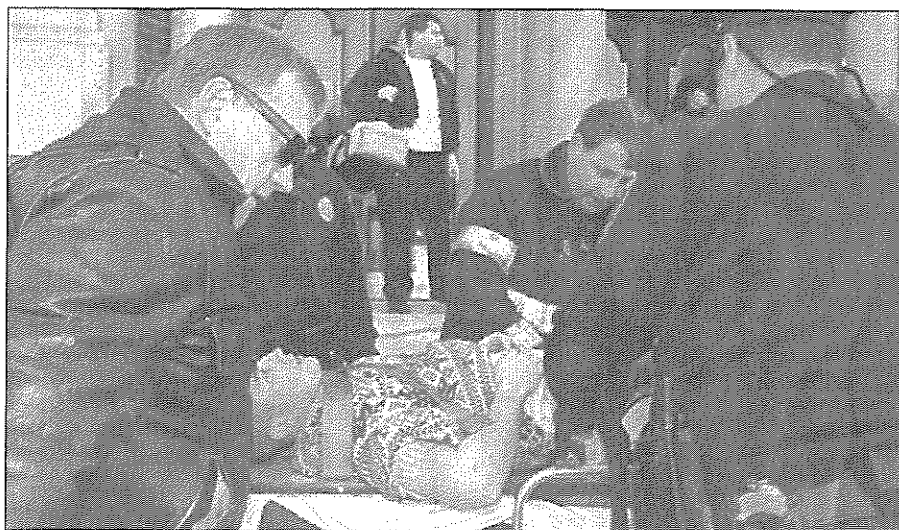
The new right had found a section of the anti-abortion movement that was closest to them but they still had different priorities from each other.

The two groups were by and large pleased that Reagan was elected in 1980 and they supported him. However, they were worried from early on that Reagan was not pursuing everything they wanted. Hard as it is to imagine now, the new right denounced Reagan as a "useful idiot for Marxism" in the late '80s because he believed in Gorbachev's reforms!

The anti-abortion movement felt Reagan did not prioritise their issues. But he was better than the Democrats, and they supported him in 1984. They also supported Bush in 1988 — even though they took the view that his conversion to a pro-life view was not shared by his wife and was politically judged rather than because of an inspiration from God or an ethical consideration.

The Christian right were also dissatisfied with Reagan. But contrary to what the left has suggested they *did not* get the things they wanted — on abortion, sex and so on. As Sarah Diamond, a left-wing writer who has written about the Christian right in America, argues that one reason the Christian right stayed on board in the 1980s is because of their foreign policy and *not* because of their no sex, no drugs and no rock and roll policy. They were anti-Sandinista but not because they found somewhere in the Bible a reference to support for Contras.

The Bush years were bad for these groups. He annoyed the Christian right because he invited gays to the White House. He worried the opponents of abortion because he was regarded as potentially soft on abortion not least because from 1989



Aftermath of attack on abortion clinic

onwards the Republican Party was worried that being anti-abortion cost it votes.

The argument had always been that if a small number of people felt strongly enough about your anti-abortion campaign, they could swing you the vote. This assumption was doubted by the Republicans from 1989 until about 1992 because some surveys suggested there may be enough feminist voters or pro-choice voters to swing the vote in the opposite way.

From 1989 until 1992 the Republicans talked about the "big tent": the Republican Party is opposed to abortion, but we're a "big tent" and we respect people with votes who aren't against abortion. They also employed "narrow casting". This is where you go to, say, an evangelical church and say "we are against abortion, support us"; and then you go to another arena and say "vote for us, we're open minded on abortion". You just hope no one spots you've been lying.

Also they try to finesse the abortion line. You'd say "I'm against abortion but the law isn't really the answer, changing people's minds is the answer." It's an attempt to find an abortion line which will not alienate the anti abortionists but will also win over pro-choice libertarian liberals with economic concerns and others who are not anti-abortion but whose votes the Republicans wanted.

But in 1992, the hardliners won. In 1992 Bush ran on a hardline anti-abortion programme — but lost the election. The hardliners said "without us you'd have done even worse". The moderates said "if you lot had kept your gobs shut we could have done better". After the 1992 result there was some ill-feeling between the Christian right and the Republican leadership.

The Clinton administration is by and large pro-choice. If you read anti-abortion literature, or conservative literature, they'll often say that the "Feminist Over Choice" group is the only one Clinton has ever kept his promises to! And that may be right. And so the calculation that you see again in the Republican Party is: is it going to damage our candidate in the 1996 election if we're seen as hardline on abortion?

You get this wonderful stuff. Bob Dole gives a series of speeches. Speech one: let's have a party platform that's against abortion but let's have a little bit up the front saying you don't have to agree with us. Speech Two: let's have it in the party platform next to the little bit. Speech Three: let's have it at the front, and say there's loads of things you don't have to agree with at all.

Dole is frantically trying to keep the Christian right and the anti-abortion movement with him, but can he keep the pro-choice and moderate voters with him? There *are* people who argue that Republicans should be pro-choice — like Republicans For Choice.

In the late '80s the Christian right was in trouble. One of its key TV channels — "Praise the Lord", or as it's brutally called, "Pass the Loot" — was found to be not completely good about the money it received from the saved. It was spending it in the wrong way, it was misleading them.

Then Jimmy Swaggart [gospel singer and cousin of Jerry Lee Lewis] who's like a caged tiger on stage, telling people they've sinned and making people cry, obviously heard the Lord's suggestion that he should go down among the prostitutes and took it fairly seriously. But he didn't get the gist of what the Lord meant by suggesting this, and poor old Jimmy Swaggart fell in a very public way and had to admit he'd sinned.

Pat Robertson, a prominent TV evangelist, fought against Bush in 1988, but lost. Finally "Moral Majority" was in such a financial crisis that it closed down.

It looked bad but after a couple of years they emerged again, in a new constellation. Pat Robertson organised a new group, "Christian Coalition". Christian Coalition in their training schools use admirable slogans: "think like Jesus, fight like David", "lead like Moses, run like Lincoln". Basically they trained Christians to take over the Republican Party and win elections. They now have 1.7 million members.

They are passionate to get out of the enclave of white born-again Christians. Recently they offered \$1 million to pay for black churches that have been burnt in America. Also they've now got a Catholic

auxiliary organisation — Catholic Alliance. For a long time in the born-again movement, they said Catholics were going to burn severely, Mormons were going to be turned into cinder, and mainline Protestants were going to be sent to Hell. Nowadays it's only liberals who are going to burn. As long as you're conservative, you're okay. They've been very successful within the Republican party. One estimate says that they control 13 state parties and are strong in 18.

That's the Christian right in general. They're not a united movement in every way. Above all, Christian Coalition is the moderate wing! The Christian Coalition drew from the 1992 Clinton victory the conclusion that being seen as obsessed with sexual issues was a loser, and instead you have to be a *broad* conservative movement.

They would campaign for Republicans who were against *some* abortions on the grounds that their opponent was for *all* of them. At least a Republican who was for restrictions on abortion was better than a Democrat who was for no restrictions on abortion. They also played down the anti-gay aspect but there has not been a good explanation in print for why this is the case.

So what on earth could be *less* moderate than the Christian Coalition? There are smaller groups in the Christian right who think that Christian Coalition is selling out. There is also a group, of equal importance to Christian Coalition, who think they are selling out. This is "Focus On the Family", a movement which has become very strong — by giving advice to Christian parents about MTV, about what do I do when they come home with the unsuitable boyfriend. "Focus on the Family" is run by James Dobson and advises parents on what to do to keep their family safe in modern America.

Dobson's built up a massive following amongst born-again Christians and part of his activity *has* been political. He has a mailing list, (but not members), of 2 million. Of those 2 million many of them will do what he tells. When he tells them to send a letter to Newt Gingrich saying "don't sell out" (exactly what he thinks of Newt Gingrich!) they write a letter to Newt Gingrich saying "don't sell out".

When he tells them that Bob Dole may be about to betray them on abortion and so they should perhaps go for a third party then quite a few of them will listen to him although. I don't think in the end he will form a third party however.

What we've got is a couple of movements which emerged in different situations: the anti-abortion movement of the early 1970s, the Christian right of the late 1970s, and they come from different developments. The Christian right is part of the Republican Party, a crucial part, and is supporting Dole but not with complete confidence. A significant minority of it may be willing to desert the Republicans thinking that it will betray them this year. ■

● Martin Durham was speaking at Workers' Liberty '96.

Remember Leon Trotsky!

IF there is one man to be singled out as the individual who was the main source of this insight, this understanding, this cleansing of the struggle for democracy and socialism from the corroding blight of totalitarianism, that man is Trotsky. No movement that I know of was ever so dependent on a single leader for its ideas, its guidance, and its inspiration, as was the Trotskyist movement. However that may be judged, it is a fact. He may have erred in many ways, as indeed he did — in more ways, I believe, than today's Trotskyists might grant. And not everything he said or did has endured the unmerciful test of time. But no matter how severely critics may rate him, objectivity and fairness would compel a recognition of his gifts. He was the captain of the Bolshevik Revolution. Without any professional training, he was the creator and leader, and often the field commander of the Red Army in the early days. The theory and politics of Marxism was the home in which he was an easy master. He was probably the greatest orator of his time, certainly the greatest in the revolutionary movement. The muscular elegance of his literary gift was not equalled by anyone else in the ranks of the Marxists, whatever their school. The purity and wholeness of his commitment to the socialist ideal was unsurpassed and he was as unflagging in adversity, of which he had an ample share, as he was unaffected in victory.

"Even after all his comrades had fallen or conceded to the enemy, even after he was driven from exile to exile on three continents, he did not waver in his chosen battle until his last day, and then only when a blow split open his skull."

Early in the days when the process began that transformed the liberating hopes of the revolution into the reality of the new tyranny, he took his stand against the recession without being asked, if it was popular or unpopular to do so, without making sure first of all that victory was guaranteed in advance, without concern for his personal fate. Against the rise of totalitarianism he planted his feet wide and stubbornly, never giving ground or bending his neck, fighting with open visor and with the weapons of his rich intellectual arsenal. Even after all his comrades had fallen or conceded to the enemy, even after he was driven from exile to exile on three continents he did not waver in his chosen battle until his last day, and then only when a blow split open his skull.

There have not been many figures like this in the political world



of our century. It is no wonder then that his ideas and his struggles opened the minds and lifted the hearts of many of the best of a whole generation, young and old. The Trotskyists did not succeed in the thirties, or afterward, in becoming a real political force, as the Communists for a while did. But while Trotskyism did not create a political party, it did create a political school. And many learned their politics and their ideals in it. In studying this school, in working in it, in fighting with it, there was much to learn. And

if in later years, many found that some of it had to be unlearned, much of it proved nonetheless to be fructifying and durable; and it remained.

It would not be easy to find many of those who went through this school and fought its fight in the thirties who would express resentments or regrets. Justice Holmes once wrote: "A man should have a part in the passions and the actions of his time, at the peril of being judged not to have lived." Those of use who went through the thirties would subscribe heartily to these handsome words. We know how true they were then. You will surely understand me if I add that they are no less true of the sixties.

Max Shachtman, 1967

Trotsky's Testament

I see the bright green strip of grass
Beneath the wall
And the clear blue sky
Above the wall
And sunlight everywhere
Life is beautiful
Let the future generations cleanse it
Of all evil
Oppression
And violence
And enjoy it to the full

1940



Trotsky and "Trotskyism"

BY the time he was struck down by Stalin's assassin on 20 August 1940, Leon Trotsky had for years insisted that the Stalinist USSR was socially, economically and politically an unstable formation, historically untenable. It could not last for long, he believed, and proclaimed. It must, and soon, in "a few months or years" be overturned and replaced by either a restored capitalism or by a new working class revolution [*In Defence of Marxism*].

Stalinism to Trotsky was a phenomenon of the destruction and decay of the October revolution: it was comprehensively reactionary. The "Transitional Programme" Trotsky drafted for the Fourth International in 1938 said in plain and true words, erring only in the direction of understatement, that the Stalin regime differed from [pre-Holocaust] Hitlerism "only by its more unbridled savagery."

Arguing that the USSR's nationalised property was "potentially progressive" (*IDM*) he said that the looming question was whether the bureaucracy would be overthrown by world capitalism or by the USSR's own working class: the first would greatly strengthen monopoly capitalism, the second would be a renewal of October. It was the task of the working class to bring socialism. In that sense, Trotsky remained an "unconditional defencist" for what he called the "degenerated workers' state."

The new working class revolution which Trotsky advocated would, he thought, "preserve collectivised property" and would, therefore, be "only" a "political revolution"; it would however overthrow the rule of the bureaucrats, smash their state, revive working class democracy, put the working class and not the "bureaucratic caste" in control of the economy, and liberate the oppressed nations of the USSR — in other words, the "political revolution" as conceived by Trotsky would be a thorough-going social revolution.

While reserving the term "imperialism" in the mid 20th century for predatory monopoly capitalism, he insisted that, nevertheless, in the foreign policy of the "potentially progressive" USSR there were already "elements of imperialism" (*IDM*).

Though he died never knowing the full extent of the horrors perpetrated by the regime which he compared unfavourably with Hitlerism, Trotsky knew how remote the Stalinist system was from socialism, how much of a regression it was even from bourgeois civilisation. But bourgeois civilisation too was descending into barbarism.

The historical and conceptual framework in which Trotsky saw the USSR was central here: fully collectivised property had emerged only because of the October revolution, and even in the epoch of Stalinist degeneration there remained something "proletarian" about it. Towards the collectivised economy the bureaucracy felt uneasy and antagonistic: it was not their form of property but the property form appropriate to the social rule of the working class. Yet in the last year of his life Trotsky effectively abandoned this conceptual framework.

When in September 1939 he admitted the theoretical possibility that a fully collectivised economy could form the basis of the rule of an exploiting minority class (*IDM — USSR in War*), he thus destroyed the theoretical framework according to which he had, while recording the horrors of Stalinism and working for a new proletarian revolution, continued to see it as residually a working class state. He did not, however, while taking the decisive intellectual step in that direction, jettison his old *political position*.

It was too early, he argued, to say that this was already so, that the USSR's collectivised property, which was functionally the property of the bureaucracy that controlled the state, was the basis of a new fully-formed exploiting class. The rule of the bureaucracy was too unstable, too far from consolidation, its prospect of survival for more than a few months or years too remote, to require the abandonment of the view that it was a transitional phenomenon of the decay of the October revolution, and the political attitudes that for Trotsky went with it.

II

WHAT Trotsky wrote in September 1939 was, however, a plain statement of how — unless he radically shifted his way of seeing things — he would have seen the Soviet Union had he lived three, five or ten years longer into the era when the bureaucratic Stalinist state, surviving the

Nazi invasion of June 1941, became one of the two world superpowers, surrounded with a cluster of conquered vassal states that stretched into the centre of Europe and dissected Germany.

On the basis of what he wrote and of the direction in which his thought was evolving, it is clear that Trotsky could not have been a latter-day "Trotskyist", subscribing to the politics encapsulated in that word from the late '40s to the collapse of the USSR in 1991, and into our own time. (His companion of 40 years Natalia Sedova, who lived until 1962, was not. She broke, after years of internal criticism, with the Pablo, Mandel, Cannon "Fourth International" in 1951).

Post-Trotsky "Trotskyism" revised and jettisoned almost every key idea of Trotsky's on Stalinism. It came to see the Stalinist USSR — that is the rule of the bureaucracy in a totalitarian property-collectivised state — as stable but still a "degenerated workers' state": turning Trotsky's ideas inside out, they saw the USSR — and inescapably, Stalinism — now as historically progressive and "post-capitalist". It was "in transition to socialism" by way of emulation and, maybe, warlike competition with advanced capitalism.

"Defence of the Soviet Union" became a primary and automatic identification with the atomic bomb-armed Stalinist bloc of states. The expansion of Stalinism, either by armed Russian conquest or by the victory of autonomous Stalinist formations in backward countries, such as Mao's, or Tito's, or Ho's, was, though its methods were not to be recommended, progressive, and therefore it had to be supported against the bourgeoisie and imperialism. The workers' revolution, which for Trotsky was a working-class movement for emancipation came — "critically" — to be identified with the survival and expansion of Stalinism. Criticism was very much secondary: for this was the — deformed — proletarian revolution. This, for now, was the unfolding world revolution.

In this way Leon Trotsky's basic, defining ideas were, though his terminology was retained, turned inside out and upside down. The great texts of Trotskyism, into which his "disciples" interpolated alien ideas, came in this era to have much in common with medieval palimpsests!

To take the strangest example: Stalin in October 1924 proclaimed the dogma of "Socialism In One Country", making it the world outlook of the new bureaucracy, and counterposing it to the ideas of October, which were anathemised as "Trotskyite" Permanent Revolution. What, to Trotsky, was wrong with Socialism In One Country? It subverted the basic Marxist idea that socialism necessarily grows out of advanced capitalism, because only here, for the first time in history, is there the possibility of escaping from the condition of social scarcity which throughout human history has generated and re-generated exploiting classes and class societies — as it did in Russia even after the workers had taken power there.

In its place the Stalinists put forward a crass variant of the old idea of the mid-19th century utopian socialists — Robert Owen, Etienne Cabet — that a socialist society — in backward Russia! — could be created outside of and parallel to capitalism, demonstrating its superiority, and finally overtaking and replacing advanced capitalism. The Bolsheviks of 1917 had no such idea, believing that though the Russian working class could take power in a backward country, they were ultimately doomed to defeat there unless the revolution spread to the advanced capitalist countries which were "ripe" for the building of a socialist society.

The post-Trotsky "Trotskyists" idea that the USSR and China and Russia's satellites in Eastern Europe, most of them very backward, were "in transition to socialism" was inescapably an acceptance of the fundamentals of "Socialism In One Country". The "utopian" colonies were totalitarian states which covered a third of the earth and were armed with immense armies and nuclear bombs, but, if they had anything to do with socialism they were, in terms of the Marxist theory of the relationship between capitalism and socialism, utopian colonies!

III

POST-TROTSKY "Trotskyism" tended to be, and on questions of international politics invariably became a political satellite, a political captive, of world Stalinism in its era of seemingly irreversible success.

This was in direct consequence of the movement's failure to continue along the lines Trotsky was on at the end of his life, and of its failure, in the light of the events of the Second World War and after, to draw for practical politics the conclusions he had already "theoretically" indicated: that the Stalinist system was a form of class society; that, moreover, far from being historically progressive and "proletarian", it was a historically regressive system, a historical blind alley, in which the workers

stood somewhere between the wage slaves of capitalism and earlier forms of slavery based on the forced physical control of the workers.

Worse: because they did not go forward, they went backward from Trotsky's position of 1940. For Stalinist states in which autonomous Stalinist forces, peasant armies led by declassed parties, cut their own road to power and created fully-fledged Stalinist systems — Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Cuba — the post-Trotsky Trotskyists, for a longer or shorter period, abandoned the revolutionary programme Trotsky had advocated for workers faced with full-fledged Stalinism in the USSR.

For Yugoslavia, China, Vietnam, Cuba, they — politically speaking — dropped Trotsky from "Trotskyism"! They had earlier dropped Marx and Lenin: their ideas about the ongoing "World Revolution" whose visible expression was the expansion of Stalinism meant a break with both Marx's ideas about the centrality of the working class and Lenin's development of this, the theory of the revolutionary party.

By advocating a policy of reform for totalitarian Stalinist states in which there had never been a working-class revolution, where the working class was atomised and the old labour movements pulverised by regimes which had from the start been fully bureaucratic high Stalinist regimes, they thus, though nobody acknowledged it, put in Trotsky's place in post-Trotsky "Trotskyism", Heinrich Brandler — the right-wing Communist of the '30s, loyal critic of Stalin, and leader of an international current of dissident communists, old associates of Bukharin — and Brandler's disciple Isaac Deutscher, Trotsky's influential biographer, and doyen of the palimpsestists.

They abandoned the ground of Trotsky, and amalgamated "Trotskyism" and "Brandlerism". Trotsky had denounced the Brandlerites in the last half of the '30s because, amongst other things, they refused to recognise either that the Stalin bureaucracy was a distinct social formation or that it needed to be overthrown by a new working-class revolution.

The Mandel-Pablo tendency did not come out for working-class revolution in China for 20 years after Mao took power! They have never declared for working-class revolution in Cuba!

The amalgamation in one incoherent political current of Trotsky's revolutionary working-class programme for Russian Stalinism with the politics of Brandler and Deutscher applied to China, Yugoslavia etc., generated an ever-mutating political instability in post-Trotsky "Trotskyism", faced as it was with the expansion of revolutionary, anti-capitalist Third World Stalinism. Many political variations, nuances and permutations grew up within "Trotskyist" terminology, generating a large archipelago of post-Trotsky "Trotskyist" groups.

Nevertheless, despite the fundamental falseness of the theories about Stalinism that they mutated out of Trotsky, throughout this long and, for socialism, bleak period of history, the "Trotskyists" — albeit ambivalently, incoherently and unreliably, and always subject to the exigencies of the need to "defend the Soviet Union" and the other Stalinist states — provided a radical, democratically-inclined, working class-centred, Marx-influenced critique of Stalinism. Their ambivalence and confusions may even have made their ideas accessible and acceptable to would-be revolutionaries influenced by the fact and politics of "actually existing Communism", that is Stalinism. That is one reason why this current survived and spread.

This relatively progressive role was possible, despite everything because on basic policy towards Stalinism's savagely exploited workers and oppressed nationalities, and on the concrete tasks of the working class in what he called the anti-Stalinist political revolution, Trotsky's position at the end of his life already anticipated and prefigured the programme appropriate to an analysis of Stalinism as the oppressive class society it was. Trotsky knew this: his quarrel in 1939/40 with those who wanted to declare the USSR to be a new form of class society did not lie here, in the realm of working class programme for the fight against Stalin.

Thus the core of Trotsky's critique of Stalin proved hard and durable even after the theoretical underpinning, wrong already in the last decade of Leon Trotsky's life, had come to be glaringly, absurdly, at odds with reality, and even though the flux of world politics worked constantly to attach the Trotskyists to the Stalinist bloc as mere loyal, "defencist" critics. Marx once wrote — in 1875 — a withering critique of the German social democracy's "Gotha Programme" but did not publish it

[Engels later did] because despite glaring theoretical inadequacies, the programme functioned roughly as a radical socialist manifesto against capitalism. Something like that could be said of the theoretically disorientated Trotskyists in their relationship to Stalinism, which they saw as both historical progress and murderous reaction. They provided a sometimes roughly adequate working-class critique of Stalinism in the USSR and, despite their reform-Stalinist Brandlerism for China, Yugoslavia, Vietnam, Cuba, sometimes for Stalinism elsewhere.

IV

THE following article by Max Shachtman tells the story of the 1939-40 dispute about revolutionary socialist policy for the Soviet Union from the point of view of Trotsky's opponents, of whom Shachtman was the most important. When it was published, in 1962, Shachtman was, for practical purposes, a reform socialist, but that has no bearing on the issues here.

In essence Trotsky said to his opponents in 1939-40 who tried — and not all that coherently, then — to draw conclusions from events and from his trajectory: "not yet." Given the semi-collapse of capitalism after 1929, Trotsky thought that to accept that the USSR was a society of "bureaucratic collectivism" was to accept that such a system and not working class socialism would replace capitalism on a world scale. With the post-World War II revival and expansion of capitalism — which eventually buried Russian Stalinism — no such implication could reasonably be drawn from it. (Though the fear of it seems to have governed Max Shachtman, who died in 1972, for the rest of his life).

Plainly Stalinism was a form to capitalism in backward countries.

"The collapse of the USSR has destroyed the entire basis on which the epigonic post-Trotsky 'Trotskyists' constructed their world view."

One of the tragedies of post-Trotsky "Trotskyism" was that the polemics he wrote then — collected in *In Defence of Marxism* — could for generations be presented as Trotsky's last word on the question of Stalinism and used to sustain politics which Trotsky — there is no reasonable ground to doubt it — would have condemned as treacherous "centrist" absurdity — as indeed he had condemned the politics of the Brandlerites in the '30s.

The collapse of the USSR has destroyed the entire basis on which the epigonic

post-Trotsky "Trotskyists" constructed their world view, their "perspectives" and their recycled utopian socialist, populist hopes for short or medium-term victory. That is progress! Young revolutionaries by studying the history of the movement will learn to distinguish between Trotskyism and kitsch-Trotskyism and between the real Trotskyist tradition and the tainted traditions accumulated during the long decades of kitsch-Trotskyist predominance. Thus they will equip themselves for the work of reconstructing a healthy socialist movement rooted in the politics of unfalsified Marxism which, in his time, Leon Trotsky personified.

After Trotsky's death the Shachtman current created a distinctive variant of Trotskyist politics, advocating responses to events radically different from those of the other "Trotskyists." Though not always right, these were usually more coherent and reality-grounded, and always unambivalently hostile to Stalinism. The politics of that current, which, most of it, sank slowly into a bleak, half-despairing reformism, can not be simply appropriated after so many years. Its literary remains, including its on-going criticism of "mainstream Trotskyism" in the '40s and '50s, constitute an important resource for the new generation of revolutionary socialists struggling to cleanse the living kernel of Trotskyist politics of the encrustations of the era of Stalinist hegemony and recreate a living revolutionary Marxist tradition.

* *In Defence of Marxism*, a selection of Leon Trotsky's writings on the USSR after September 1939, misrepresents Trotsky's position. As well as the polemics Trotsky was writing in defence of the degenerated workers' state thesis, there were many articles written at the same time damning Stalinism and linking Stalin and Hitler. Put out in 1943 by the SWP USA, which was then in a fever of pro-USSR patriotism, this one — selective — collection was kept continually in circulation while Trotsky's contemporaneous writings on Stalinism remained out of print for one third of a century. The pieces in *In Defence of Marxism*, read in proper sequence together with Trotsky's other articles of this time [which are in the 1940 volume of his work], add up to a very different picture of Trotsky's assessment of Stalinism at the end of his life.

1939, whither Russia?

Trotsky and his critics

By Max Shachtman

WHAT distinguished Trotsky from all other opponents of the Stalinist regime was his theory that it represented a bureaucratically-degenerated workers' state.

Why was it still a workers' state, even after the Opposition, representing the revolutionary proletariat, had in the late twenties been driven out of the ruling party and into prison and exile, even after the consolidation of an exclusive bureaucratic monopoly in the party and state? Because, first, there was still the possibility of defeating the bureaucracy by means of a vigorous but peaceful reform of the party. And, second, the principal means of production were still nationalised in the hands of the state, and not yet converted into private capitalist property. While the bureaucracy had betrayed the principles of the revolution, it had not yet surrendered this vital material achievement — nationalised property — to bourgeois counter-revolution. The latter was moving rapidly forward under the regime of the bureaucracy, but it had not yet triumphed. In no circumstances should it be allowed to triumph. Therefore, whenever and wherever there was an attack by bourgeois forces on the Stalinist regime, which for all its degeneration remained a workers' state, it was the duty of the Trotskyists and workers throughout the world to stand up for the *unconditional defence of the Soviet Union*.

In sum: the Stalinist bureaucracy was paving the way for a counter-revolution in Russia. A timely victory of the Opposition would restore the state to Soviet democracy and internationalism. The vacillating, parasitic bureaucracy was not a serious alternative. The alternative was the victory of the counter-revolution. Its social content was bound to be the restoration of private property following the destruction of nationalised property. Proletariat and bourgeoisie were the only two basic and decisive classes. The issue would be joined and determined in open conflict between them; and that conflict was imminent. Up to that moment, even the degenerated Stalinist state must be defended against bourgeois attack...

Banished from the territory of the Soviet Union by political decree at the end of 1928 Trotsky only intensified his war upon the Stalinists upon the basis of this doctrine, analysis and programme. He was now able for the first time to assemble and lead an international communist Opposition based entirely on his theory. But he soon found that he had to defend his theory almost as often and as vehemently from his partisans as from his enemies. From the time of his banishment until his tragic death, there was hardly a year in the existence of the Trotskyist movement abroad or of its counterpart inside Russia (so long as it retained any sort of coherent and articulate form) that did not see a crisis that rent its ranks in disputes over Trotsky's views of the 'Russian question'. There was hardly a year of his last exile when Trotsky did not find himself obliged, by new developments or by reconsideration, to modify his theory, sometimes drastically, while trying to preserve its essentials. The last year of his life saw another crisis, occurring at the outbreak of the world war. His position on Russia was again challenged by his followers. In this last controversy he allowed for an amendment to his conceptions so far-reaching in its implications as to shatter the very basis of his theory, in particular the theory of his opposition to Stalinism.

EVEN before Trotsky was banished to Turkey, the process of disintegration of the Russian Opposition had begun and it continued at an accelerated pace. The Democratic Centralists — residue of a faction in the controversies of the early twenties which had joined with Trotsky and Zinoviev in the United Opposition Bloc of 1926 — were the first to part with their allies. Led by old Bolshevik mil-

itants like Sapronov and Vladimir Smirnov, they took the view that the Thermidorian reaction — the counter-revolution — had already triumphed in Russia and that the workers' state was at an end. Relatively, this was a minor loss; graver ones soon followed.

In the middle of 1928, with all the Oppositionists already expelled, it became evident that a new struggle was developing among the anti-Trotskyist leaders, precipitated by a crisis in grain collections. Now the fight was between Stalin's followers and those led by Bukharin, Rykov, and Tomsky. It was the prelude to what was to be called the 'Great Change' or 'Russia's Second Revolution' — the programme of massive industrialisation and forced collectivisation which was to be the decisive feature of Russia's development for the next three decades.

Trotsky, then in Asian exile, treated Stalin's turn with the greatest scepticism and reserve. Indeed, he sounded the alarm against the impending counter-revolution more vigorously than ever. Stalin, he wrote repeatedly in those days and for a long time afterward, had not adopted and could not adopt a left course but only a 'left zig-zag'. He represented only the bureaucratic apparatus vacillating under the pressure of real and effective classes. Tomorrow, 'the right tail' would come crashing down on his head, because it represented the powerful restorationist and proprietor classes; and to them Stalin would capitulate. In a famous 1928 article, which was one of the pretexts for his expulsion from Russia, Trotsky insisted that the country was facing a 'dual power' situation, as it did in 1917 just before the Bolshevik victory, when Kerensky represented the state power of the bourgeoisie and the Soviets were the incipient socialist power. Only, this time, the "film of October is unwinding in reverse" — that is, it was not the bourgeois element of the dual power that was about to be overturned by the socialist element, but exactly the other way around. Voroshilov was even mentioned as the possible 'man on horseback' — a counter-revolutionary Bonaparte.

As late as April 1931, even though the right wing had already been crushed by Stalin, Trotsky still spoke of the 'dual power' in Russia and declared that the further degeneration of the party machine — Stalin's faction — "undoubtedly increases the chances of the Bonapartist form" of the overturn of the Soviet state, that is, "The form of the naked sabre which is raised in the name of bourgeois property." (To my knowledge, he never again referred to the 'dual power' in Stalinist Russia, or to the outcome of the contest between the two classes it was said to represent.)

This analysis was entirely in keeping with Trotsky's idea of expected developments, but it was almost equally out of keeping with the political and social reality. It could not and did not serve to retard the decline of the Opposition, upon which the Stalinist apparatus was in any case exerting an almost unbearable pressure. As it became clear that Stalin's course was not a 'zig-zag' but a sustained and resolute line, that the Bukharin faction was irretrievably defeated; that the propertied, semi-propertied and potentially-propertied people in the country were being economically (and even physically) annihilated; that a restorationist bourgeoisie was not within miles of a struggle for power (then or later) — the Zinoviev and then the Trotskyist Opposition collapsed. First, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and their friends capitulated to the regime. Then of the Trotskyists, came the capitulation of Radek, Preobrazhensky and Smilga. Then (this was an especially hard personal blow to Trotsky) Rakovsky; then dozens upon dozens and finally hundreds of others. A tiny, dwindling minority remained steadfast, and none of these survived the blood purges of the Moscow Trials period — nor indeed did the capitulators.

In virtually every case — if we set aside exhaustion, apparatus pressure and the like — the political reason given was at bottom the same: the perspective of a rising bourgeois counter-revolution had proved to be false. If anything, Stalin was smashing the economic



and political foundations of the bourgeois elements more ruthlessly than the Opposition had ever proposed to do. And his economic policy was not a momentary tactic but a durable line by which he was expanding and consolidating the basis of socialism. In this they had to work along with him.

This reasoning was not without its defects. It is true that even the soundest theoretical and political arguments would have been of little avail in holding together the Opposition in the extraordinary circumstances. It is true, too, that Trotsky's analysis, criticism, and predictions about the Stalinist course in a dozen vital fields of domestic and foreign policy were matchless and were confirmed by events.

But in the basic theory that the bourgeois counter-revolution and the restoration of capitalism were on the order of the day in Russia, that the destruction of the economic and political power of the workers under Stalin was bound to bring about the counter-revolution and this one alone, that the Stalinist bureaucracy could not effectively resist it but would only manure the soil from which it would surely arise — this theory found no confirmation at all.

Yet Trotsky reiterated the analysis and forecast in a dozen different ways in all his writings during the critical decade of the thirties, emphatically and without reservation. From a mind so luminous and penetrating, it is almost incomprehensible, unless we remember that it was a fixed point in Trotsky's doctrine: a workers' state can be destroyed and replaced only by a bourgeois state based on private property.

OUTSIDE Russia, the Trotskyist movement enjoyed far greater continuity and coherence, if only because it was free of the ruthless police pressures of the Kremlin. Trotsky never had to cope among his foreign supporters with the problem of capitulation to Stalinism or conciliation. Except for a few trivial individual cases, no such tendencies manifested themselves. But he was not free from the necessity of defending his views continually from doubts and challenges in his own ranks. It may be said that even those who accepted his theory, including the changes he introduced into it from time to time, did not always agree with the passionate enthusiasm and conviction they shared for his trenchant attacks upon the Stalinist regime and its policies. But Trotsky's prestige and authority in his movement were probably unequalled by the leader of any other branch of the radical movement. For most of his followers this sufficed to turn the balance against doubt, but not for all.

Barely settled in his Turkish exile, Trotsky was forced into a sharp struggle with a large part, if not the majority, of his adherents in Europe. In the Russo-Chinese conflict of 1929 over the Chinese Eastern Railway, in which Moscow held important rights inherited from Tsarist times, a military clash appeared possible. This raised the question, among the Trotskyists, of the validity of the policy of

"unconditional defence of the Soviet Union in wartime". Many of them held that Moscow was displaying an imperialist attitude towards China and the revolutionists should not support it. Trotsky attacked them furiously. Russia was to be defended in spite of Stalin because it was still a workers' state. The ensuing debate ended in the first big split in the Trotskyist movement. Most of the Germans followed their chief, Hugo Urbahns, in separating from Trotsky. In France, most of the communist-syndicalists, around Fernand Loriot and Pierre Monatte, founders of the French Communist Party and partisans of Trotsky as early as 1924, broke with him in the dispute. So did many who were in the Trotskyist group led by Maurice and Madeleine Paz. The split extended to Belgium, where Trotsky lost the allegiance of the group around Van Overstaeten, the former head of the Communist Party and then of the Trotskyist opposition.

This split was a stiff blow. But under Trotsky's tireless hammering, the oppositional groups in Europe and the Americas, though they never became a political force, were re-united around his views. The union did not endure. It was breached, at first in a minor way, during the period of the Moscow Trials and the Spanish Civil War. Up to that time, Trotsky had defended his theory that Russia was still a workers' state on the ground that the workers retained the possibility of turning the political helm in Russia and bringing the bureaucracy under their control, without resorting to a revolution, by means of an internal reform of the ruling party. By 1936 he could no longer maintain this view and abandoned it.

The bureaucracy had now, he argued, attained total political power. Indeed, in its *political* rule, it did not differ from the fascist bureaucracy in Germany. In fundamental distinction from the latter however, it rested upon different social foundations, defined as nationalised property, which the Stalinist bureaucracy preserved "in its own way", just as the Nazi bureaucracy preserved private property in its way. The Russian workers had been completely expropriated of all political rights and power. Because the 'way' in which the bureaucracy defended nationalised property was such as to bring closer the return of capitalism, the bureaucracy had to be removed from political dominance, which had reached such a totalitarian level that it could not be corrected by peaceful reforms. The bureaucracy could be overturned only by a revolution; but this revolution would not be a social revolution as it would not alter the prevailing property forms. It would be a "political revolution".

It is hardly necessary to dwell on the dimensions of the hole this thesis created in the wall of Trotsky's basic theory. Here it must suffice to refer to two reactions in the ranks of the Trotskyists. The vast majority in Europe and America accepted it out of hand, so to speak, with little reflection on its significance. Few recalled that only a little earlier Trotsky, both in exposition and in polemic, had insisted that Stalinist Russia was a workers' state precisely because, while the bourgeoisie need a revolution against the regime in its interests, the working class could realise its interests by means of peaceful reform.

The other reaction was shown by those Trotskyists, a very small and ineffectual minority, who rejected Trotsky's thesis. One of them was the young Frenchman Yvan Craipeau. In Russia, he wrote, the loss of all political power by the working class meant that it no longer ruled in any social sense, that Russia was no longer a workers' state, and that the bureaucracy had become a new exploiting and ruling class. Furthermore, this new class, by its military alliance with French imperialism (in the form of the Stalin-Laval Pact), and by its role in the Spanish Civil War (where the Stalinists opposed all steps towards a socialist revolution and proclaimed themselves defenders of private property) ruled out, for revolutionists, the policy of defence of Stalinist Russia in a war.

The other was an American Trotskyist leader, James Burnham, a somewhat unorthodox Marxist who was later to become more widely known in a different capacity. Leaning heavily on Trotsky's contention that the Russian working class had lost all trace of political power, Burnham argued that, though Russia was no longer a workers' state, it was not yet a bourgeois state. The bureaucracy was playing a reactionary role because it had "definitely entered the road of the destruction of the planned and nationalised economy." It expressed only the interests of those social groups that were "now in the process of transformation of a new bourgeois ruling class." However, since nationalised property still existed, the defence of

Russia in war was the "imperative and inescapable duty" of the proletariat. This was in 1937. It did not even foreshadow the altogether different position Burnham was to take later. Trotsky's response was moderate, for clearly Burnham did not differ too widely from his own view.

One element in Trotsky's reply is worth recalling, however, for the special light it throws on a later development. Although in a certain sense Hitler and Stalin both served the bourgeoisie, "between the functions of Stalin and Hitler there is a difference. Hitler defends the bourgeois forms of property. Stalin adapts the interests of the bureaucracy to the proletarian forms of property. The same Stalin in Spain, that is, on the soil of a bourgeois regime, executes the function of Hitler." It was thus shown again, concluded Trotsky, that the bureaucracy was not an independent class "but the tool of classes" — a tool (a bad one) of the workers in Russia where state property prevailed, and a tool of the bourgeoisie outside Russia where private property existed.

The 1937 dispute was allowed to lapse. Neither Craipeau nor Burnham pressed his views further, and Trotsky seemed content to let it go at that. The new doctrine of the political revolution became official, and in 1938 Trotsky added an amendment that the revolution which was to restore the democracy of the Soviets would exclude the bureaucracy from participating in them.

TWO years later the war broke out, and the conflict over the 'Russian question' flared up more intensely than ever before. It proved to be the most bitter and most wracking of the internecine struggles of the Trotskyist movement, and the last one in which Trotsky was able to participate.

The theory of "unconditional defence" of the 'workers' state' was given its crucial — indeed, its only concrete — political test with the firing of the first gun. The armies of Hitler and Stalin joined forces to conquer and subject Eastern Europe and to divide the spoils of victory. The annexation of the Baltic lands and parts of Poland and Finland was undoubtedly required for the defence of Stalinist Russia in much the same way as the subjugation of Korea and Manchuria were required by Imperial Japan. But what had such a course in common with socialist politics, asked a minority of the American Trotskyist leadership. Their answer to this question was: nothing! Russia was now an integral part of an imperialist war, allied with a reactionary imperialist power, and pursuing with its ally an imperialist policy of conquest and oppression. Russia's invasion of Poland and Finland must be condemned, and the slogan of defence of Russia discarded. They did not advocate support of the western coalition, which they characterised similarly as imperialist. The break with Trotsky's rational policy was unmistakable and portentous.

The minority leaders included Martin Abern and Max Shachtman, two of the founders of American communism, and two of the three communist leaders who launched the Trotskyist movement in the United States in 1928. Shachtman founded the theoretical journal of the American Trotskyists and edited Trotsky's works in English. The third, James Burnham, although a later adherent to Trotskyism, was widely respected in its ranks. The three could not easily be dismissed as casual figures. The American organisation was by far the most stable, steadfast, and important branch of the international Trotskyist movement, and Trotsky could not let it depart from his position by default or negligible interventions. From Mexico, he plunged into the debate.

Although differing on the sociological question, the 'class character of the Russian state' (Abern believed that it was still a degenerated workers' state, Burnham had abandoned that view in 1937, and Shachtman was uncertain), they agreed not to debate, the three were at one about the political question ('unconditional defence'). It was perfectly obvious that analysis of the theoretical question was in itself far from being decisive in determining policy towards the war.

Trotsky ignored the fact that it had only recently been just as obvious to him, and after starting out with a relatively mild article against the view of the minority, he launched a large-scale attack upon it. Drawing on his exceptional intellectual resources, which the minority could not match, and using his unrivalled gift for irony, he blanketed his opponents under a mounting drumfire of polemic. They stood firmly by their position even though Trotsky exploited its every weakness and gap, reassured by their conviction

that he had not answered what was sound and rational in their rejection of 'defencism'.

A few weeks later, Trotsky expanded the range of his assault. He confronted the minority with questions ranging from the class nature of Russia to the logic of Aristotle and Hegel; from dialectical materialism down to the most trivial of internal organisational matters. He called into question the revolutionary probity of the minority leaders, their personal characteristics, and their records in the movement. They were denounced as a "petty-bourgeois opposition" suffering from "gangrene". The political question, the only one posed by the minority, was all but lost in this universalised turbulence.

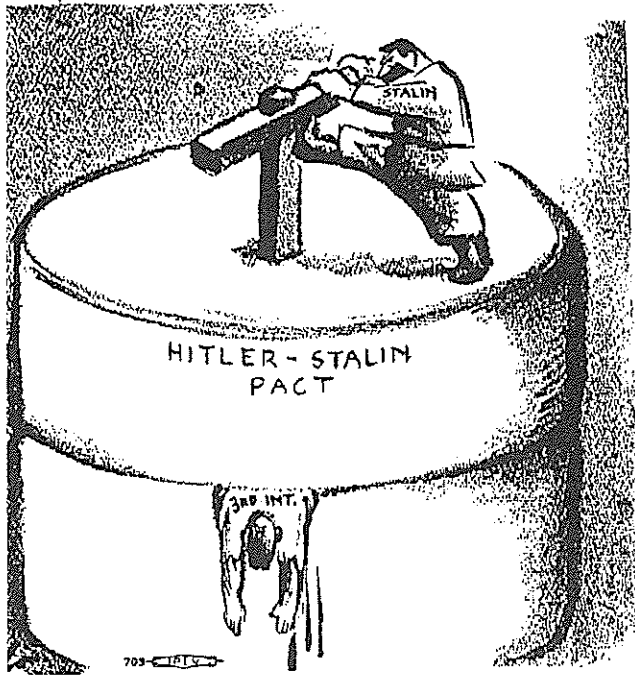
With this kind of intervention from Trotsky, his supporters retained control of the American organisation at the end of the dispute, but only by a narrow margin; the minority won the decisive majority of the young Trotskyists and almost half of the party membership as well. After the 1940 convention, the minority were expelled on bloc without trial, and the split was irrevocable. Abern, Shachtman, and their friends continued in a new organisation; Burnham, deeply shaken and repelled by the fight Trotsky had conducted, quit the movement entirely with a disavowal of Marxism in general, and soon moved to the position presented a year later in his *The Managerial Revolution*.

TROTSKY'S victory was as complete as it was dubious. From the vigour and intensity of his participation in the dispute, nobody could have imagined that he was at the same time in such despair about his personal condition that he was seriously contemplating taking his own life. Of this melancholy prospect there was not the slightest sign in his polemical writings.

Yet, oddly enough, it was neither the direct targets of these writings — his party opposition — nor the arguments levelled against them that were the most important aspect of the development of Trotsky's theory in this last period of his life. From this standpoint, the fight against his own opposition was of decidedly secondary, at most of auxiliary significance. Primary importance belongs instead to Trotsky's critical observations on a theory put forward by a non-participant in the dispute. This was a former Italian communist and ex-Trotskyist who, on the eve of the war, published a book in French, *La Bureaucratization du Monde*, under the name of Bruno R — Bruno Ricci.

Ricci rejected Trotsky's theory of the 'degenerated workers' state' and held that a new revolution was taking place throughout the world. It had brought, or was bringing, to power a new ruling class in a new social order, 'bureaucratic collectivism'. It was neither capitalist nor socialist in any significant sense. The working class is reduced to totalitarian slavery, exploited collectively by the new





bureaucracy. The Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia and the fascist bureaucracy are equally representative of the supremacy of this new class and new social order. So too is the New Deal of Roosevelt, even if in a not yet equally advanced form. Thus, Ricci. Thus also a little later *The Managerial Revolution*, in which Burnham adopted Ricci's thesis virtually *in toto* and with the addition of some extravagant predictions.

Up to the appearance of Ricci's work, Trotsky defended his theory from those critics in or around his movement (except in the case of Craipeau) who held that the Russian state stood above the contending classes, or that it had become a bourgeois state, usually called 'state capitalism'. Hugo Urbahns, for example, put this label upon Stalinist Russia as well as upon fascist Italy and Germany. In Marxist terms and in terms of social realities this label was an absurdity. Trotsky had little difficulty in ridiculing and riddling this point of view, and more generally, in rejecting the identification of the Stalinist and Hitlerian social regimes despite the similarities of their political rule. Rudolph Hilferding, the eminent Austro-German socialist theoretician and economist, who in 1940 linked fascism and Stalinism in the same social category of "totalitarian state economies", likewise gave short shrift to the theory of 'state capitalism'.

A social order in which there is no capitalist class, no capitalist private property, no capitalist profit, no production of commodities for the market, no working class more or less free to sell its labour power on the open market — can be described as capitalist, no matter how modified by adjectives, only by arbitrary and meaningless definition. In any case, there was no capitalist anywhere in the world who would accept such a definition.

In Ricci's case Trotsky had a different problem. He did not hesitate to acknowledge the merits of Ricci's work, or to criticise what he called its mistakes. But in acknowledgement and criticism he managed to subvert the foundations of his own theory:

"Bruno R in any case has the merit of seeking to transfer the question from the charmed circle of terminological copybook exercises to the plane of major historical generalisations. This makes it all the easier to disclose his mistake [he wrote on 25 September 1939]. Bruno R has caught on to the fact that the tendencies of collectivisation [operating in all modern economy, in Russia, Germany or the United States] assume, as a result of the political prostration of the working class, the form of 'bureaucratic collectivism'. The phenomenon in itself is incontestable. But where are the limits, and what is its historical weight?"

The answers given by Trotsky to these questions were little less than startling in view of the tenacity with which he had till then

clung to his own theory of Stalinism and the arguments he had mustered in support of it. Three weeks later (18 October 1939) he wrote:

"Some comrades evidently were surprised that I spoke in my article ('The USSR in the War') of the system of 'bureaucratic collectivism' as a theoretical possibility. They discovered in this even a complete revision of Marxism. This is an apparent misunderstanding. The Marxist comprehension of historical necessity has nothing in common with fatalism. Socialism is not realisable 'by itself' but as a result of the struggle of living forces, classes and their parties. The proletariat's decisive advantage in this struggle resides in the fact that it represents historical progress, while the bourgeoisie incarnates reaction and decline. Precisely in this is the source of our conviction in victory. But we have full right to ask ourselves: What character will society take if the forces of reaction conquer?"

"Marxists have formulated an incalculable number of times the alternative: either socialism or return to barbarism. After the Italian 'experience' we repeated thousands of times: either communism or fascism. The real passage to socialism cannot fail to appear incomparably more complicated, more heterogeneous, more contradictory than was foreseen in the general historical scheme. Marx spoke about the dictatorship of the proletariat and its future withering away but said nothing about bureaucratic degeneration of the dictatorship. We have observed and analysed for the first time in experience such a degeneration. Is this revision of Marxism? The march of events has succeeded in demonstrating that the delay of the socialist revolution engenders the indubitable phenomena of barbarism — chronic unemployment, pauperisation of the petty bourgeoisie, fascism, finally wars of extermination which do not open up any new road. What social and political forms can the new 'barbarism' take, if we admit theoretically that mankind should not be able to elevate itself to socialism? We have the possibility of expressing ourselves on this subject more concretely than Marx. Fascism on one hand, degeneration of the Soviet state on the other, outline the social and political forms of neo-barbarism. An alternative of this kind — socialism or totalitarian servitude — has not only theoretical interest, but also enormous importance in agitation, because in its light the necessity for socialist revolution appears most graphically."

What "some comrades evidently were surprised" at, and not without cause, was the view Trotsky had set down in his article of 25 September 1939. It is worth citing:

"Might we not place ourselves in a ludicrous position if we affixed to the Bonapartist oligarchy [the Stalinist regime] the nomenclature of a new ruling class just a few years or even a few months prior to its inglorious downfall?..."

"The second imperialist war poses the unsolved tasks on a higher historical state. It tests anew not only the stability of the existing regimes but also the ability of the proletariat to replace them. The results of this test will automatically have a decisive significance for our appraisal of the modern epoch as the epoch of proletarian revolution. If contrary to all probabilities the October revolution fails during the course of the present war, or immediately thereafter, to find its continuation in any of the advanced countries; and if, on the contrary, the proletariat is thrown back everywhere and on all fronts — then we shall have to pose the question of revising our conception of the present epoch and its driving forces. In that case it would be a question not of slapping a copybook label on the USSR or the Stalinist gang but of re-evaluating the world historical perspective for the new decades if not centuries: have we entered the epoch of social revolution and socialist society, or on the contrary the epoch of the declining society of totalitarian bureaucracy?"

"The twofold error of schematicists like Hugo Urbahns and Bruno R consists, first, in that they proclaim this latter regime as having been already finally installed; second, in that they declare it a prolonged transitional state of society between capitalism and socialism. Yet it is absolutely self-evident that if the international proletariat, as a result of the experience of our entire epoch and the current war, proves incapable of becoming the master of society, this would signify the foundering of all hope for socialist revolution, for it is impossible to expect

any more favourable conditions for it; in any case no one foresees them now, or is able to characterise them."

WITH these pronouncements, Trotsky turned a corner in his thinking so abruptly as to bring him into violent collision with the main pillars of the theory of Stalinism he had long and stoutly upheld:

1. The doctrine that Russia was still a workers' state because the bourgeoisie had not yet become the ruling class, was essentially exploded. It is possible for Russia (or other countries) to be ruled by a new exploiting class which is neither proletarian nor bourgeois.

2. The doctrine that the maintenance of nationalised property proved that the Stalinist regime was a workers' state, however degenerated, was similarly exploded. It is possible for nationalised property to be the economic foundation for the rule of a new class.

3. The conception of a new ruling class commanding a society which is neither capitalist nor socialist (a conception not long before derided by Trotsky) was not a revision of Marxism at all. "Marxists have formulated an incalculable number of times the alternative: either socialism or return to barbarism." And this conception does not of itself mean the end of socialism or the fight for it. "An alternative of this kind [has] enormous importance in agitation, because in its light the necessity for socialist revolution appears most graphically."

It is true, to be sure, that Trotsky endeavoured at the same time to reaffirm his old theory. It was no longer so easy. Having insisted that Russia remained a workers' state because the rule of the bourgeoisie had not been restored and nationalised property still prevailed, he now conceded that the workers' state could be utterly destroyed even if the bourgeoisie did not come to power and even if property remained nationalised.

The Russian state, he argued, remained proletarian because the Stalinist bureaucracy had no prospect of retaining control of it ("its inglorious downfall" might be a matter of "a few years or even a few months", he said in 1939, almost a quarter of a century ago), whereas Trotskyists had the perspective that in all probability the October Revolution would "find its continuation" in advanced countries "during the course of the present war, or immediately thereafter."

To determine the nature of a social order by appraising the prospects for political success of its upholders and its opponents, is extraordinary procedure for a Marxist. The two are closely related, but in exactly reverse order. The nature of cancer is not established by the success of medical science in finding the cure for it or the speed with which it is found. The nature of the atomic bomb is not determined by the use to which it is put, by the appalling consequences of its use, or by society's success in controlling or destroying it. Marx determined the class nature of capitalism by an analysis of its social anatomy, starting with the commodity. The validity (or invalidity) of this analysis is not to be determined by the conclusions he drew from it about the prospects for a socialist revolution in the Europe of 1848 or later.

By reducing the question of the nature of the Stalinist state to a matter of the prospects for success of the bureaucracy and of the socialist revolution in the period he indicated Trotsky effectively abandoned the essential elements of the theory of the "degenerated workers' state."

The course of the war undermined another of Trotsky's doctrines and drove him to another radical revision. Before the war, he had unremittently attacked Stalinism for its theory of "socialism in one country". This theory was, to him, the central axis of the bureaucracy's thought, from which it derived, or with which were inseparably connected, all its errors, crimes, and betrayals of the revolution. If, on the Russian soil, it might still play a positive role in

so far as it maintained or defended state property, abroad it played an unequivocally reactionary role in that it defended capitalist private property. In Spain, as has already been noted, "i.e. on the soil of a bourgeois regime, [Stalin] executes the function of Hitler," wrote Trotsky only two years before the war.

In the first months of the war, it should have been clear, this analysis of Stalinism proved completely indefensible. And it was clear enough to Trotsky to end any attempt to defend it. "On the soil of a bourgeois regime" — that is, the part of Poland which was occupied by the Russian army at the start of the war — Stalin did not "execute the function of Hitler" within the meaning of Trotsky's phrase. Instead, he destroyed the power of bourgeois and landowner, abolished private property, and set up the same economic-political-social regime as the Russian. It was an inconvenient turn of events. Given the theory he would not disavow, Trotsky had no choice but to acknowledge that Stalin's course in Poland (as later in the Baltic lands) was "revolutionary in character — 'the expropriation of the expropriators'... that the stratification of property in the occupied territories is in itself a progressive measure." This acknowledgement placed Trotsky squarely in the centre of a dilemma from which he was not allowed the time to extricate himself. A few weeks after acknowledging the basic social changes

introduced in Poland by Stalin, Trotsky introduced a new modification of his theory. "Some voices cry out: if we continue to recognise the USSR as a workers' state, we will have to establish a new category: the counter-revolutionary workers' state." Well, why not? he continued in an article on 19 October. The trade unions of France and Britain and the United States were counter-revolutionary since "they support completely the counter-revolutionary politics of their bourgeoisie... why is it impossible to employ the same method with the counter-revolutionary workers' state?"

The "new category" did alleviate his position. The term 'counter-revolution' had been applied to the reformist unions in the west precisely because they "defended private property" and refused

to "expropriate the expropriators". The "counter-revolutionary workers' state", however, was now acting in Poland in an exactly and fundamentally opposite sense by carrying out measures that were "revolutionary in character — 'the expropriation of the expropriators'." The dimensions of the "revolutionary expropriation" could not be known to Trotsky. Only after his death were they extended far beyond Poland, nowhere under the auspices of the proletariat, everywhere under the aegis, direction and control of the "counter-revolutionary workers' state."

Yet he saw enough in 1939, and wrote enough, to indicate that his central indictment of Stalinism for its theory of 'socialism in one country' was no longer relevant. The bureaucracy was showing that while it remained 'counter-revolutionary', it could and would carry out a fundamental revolution against the bourgeoisie abroad, but without the working class and against the workers; indeed, in Trotsky's own words, in order to convert them into its own semi-slaves.

The counter-revolutionary proletarian revolution against the bourgeoisie and the working class was a concept which not even the much-burdened dialectic could sustain. It was too much for the back of a theory which held that a regime under which workers and peasants enjoyed not a shred of economic or political power but were pitilessly exploited, was nevertheless a workers' state because it was not a bourgeois state.

The unique nature of Stalinist society, of its ruling class and of its social relations, and its true international significance both for capitalist society and for socialism — on these crucial problems of our time Trotsky found and offered promising clues to an understanding in the last polemical fight of his life. The assassin's axe soon ended all chance of his pursuing the clues to their end. ■

● All the cartoons printed here are taken from "Socialist Appeal".

"Some comrades evidently were surprised that I spoke in my article of the system of 'bureaucratic collectivism' as a theoretical possibility. They discovered in this even a complete revision of Marxism. This is an apparent misunderstanding. The Marxist comprehension of historical necessity has nothing in common with fatalism."

LD Trotsky

The peculiarities of Australian labour

By Martin Thomas

*"Generations of reformists pointed to this continent: Workers, look at Australia! See what can be done without revolution..."**

AND Australia has had exceptionally strong trade unions, entrenched through an elaborate system of arbitration of industrial disputes. This edifice, eroded by the last 13 years of Labor government, now faces a direct assault from the Liberal government elected on 2 March. What are its origins, and what does its history tell us about the prospects for resistance?

The Sydney stonemasons were probably the first workers anywhere in the world to win an eight-hour working day by strike action, in 1856. The eight-hours movement had developed in Melbourne and Sydney as Australian capitalism boomed following the discovery of gold.

The transportation of convicts from Britain to New South Wales had ceased in 1840 and Tasmania in 1853 (although it continued to Western Australia until 1867). Free settlers had been arriving in substantial numbers since the 1820s. Since the available land was monopolised by large owners, they mostly became wage-workers.

Chartists and rebels were numerous among the settlers. James Stephens, leader of the eight-hour day movement in Melbourne, had taken part in the Chartist uprising in Newport in 1839. When in 1854 gold miners at Ballarat, near Melbourne, formed the Reform League, they demanded, besides redress of local grievances, the same six points as the Chartist movement in Britain, centred round the right to vote — which was soon granted.

With labour constantly in short supply, a weak local bourgeoisie, and no entrenched traditions of authority, the early trade unions, mostly of craft workers in Melbourne and Sydney, piled up successes. From the 1870s union organisation developed among the miners, the seafarers, and the shearers. In 1884 women clothing workers in Melbourne organised what was perhaps the first strike and the first union of women workers in the world.

Several socialist and syndicalist groups became active between the 1880s and World War 1. Broader Labor parties grew in the 1890s. In 1899 Queensland got the world's first parliamentary labour government (for six days); after the six British colonies were federated into an almost-independent Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) took office in 1904, 1908, and 1910-13. By 1914 Australia had over half a million trade-unionists in a workforce of little over a million.

Reformists in Europe pointed to Australia as a "workers' paradise" achieved through

peaceful, parliamentary means. Lenin wrote a short comment in 1913; though Lenin explained in the article that he had cribbed it all from "an English correspondent of a German labour newspaper", the Australian Communist Party would later reprint it dozens of times as the authoritative Marxist statement on Australia.

According to the "English correspondent", the Australian Labor Party was really only "a liberal-bourgeois party" representing "purely the non-socialist trade-unionist workers", because, firstly, Australia was "populated by Liberal English workers", and, secondly, Australia being a young capitalist country, "the Labor Party has to concern itself with developing and strengthening the country... what in other countries was done by the Liberals".

What was *special* about the ALP, however, was nothing liberal. It was its stated primary objective — "(1) the cultivation of an Australian sentiment based upon the maintenance of racial purity..." — and the first points of its platform: "1. Maintenance of a White Australia; 2. Compulsory Arbitration..."

By 1901 the Australian liberals, too, supported such measures, and would legislate them, together with protective tariffs for industry and old age pensions. But Australian labour's racism did not come from its right-wing leaders' accommodation to the liberals — rather the contrary.

Most of the militant socialists and anarchists were also for a White Australia. The Australian Socialist League (ASL) (influenced by the American Marxist Daniel De Leon) made "exclusion of undesirable races" the *first point* of its electoral platform in 1901.

There were dissenting voices, although very few. The International Socialist Club split from the ASL when it adopted the exclusion demand, argued instead for an eight-hour day and a minimum wage for *all* workers, and was one of the forerunners of the Australian Communist Party. When the British Fabian Beatrice Webb visited Melbourne in 1898, the Australians were certainly not the worst racists: it was Webb who scorned the local socialists' "non-descript body of no particular class, and with a strong infusion of foreigners; a Polish Jew as secretary and various other nationalities (among them a Black) being scattered over the audience."

But on the whole White Australia had been a primarily working-class cause since the first faltering of the gold boom in the late 1850s. According to the Labor leader J C Watson, speaking in 1904, "a few years [actually, decades] ago business men looked upon the Chinese or other coloured undesirables as men who could be very well tolerated, because they took the place of labourers... not quite so cheap; but when it was found that these Orientals possessed

all the cunning and acumen necessary to fit them for conducting business affairs, a marked alteration of opinion took place among business men..."

Chinese immigration had been virtually banned since 1888, and in 1901 the new Commonwealth of Australia's first major law excluded all non-European immigrants. Another law decreed that the Pacific-Islander workers in Queensland, once numerous, must be deported by 1906.

This was something more than a carry-over of prejudices widespread in Britain at the time. In the early years of the gold rush, most diggers accepted equal rights for all races. Working-class racists did not equate the Chinese with the Aborigines — who had been dispossessed, slaughtered, in some areas exterminated, in the early years of British settlement, but by the 1850s were not seen as a threat. Excluding the Chinese was seen as a move parallel to stopping transportation of (*British*) convicts — as

Chronology

1788: First British settlement in Australia consisting of convicts and guards.

1820s: Free migration starts.

1840: Britain stops transportation to New South Wales (and to Tasmania in 1853; to Western Australia in 1867).

1850s: Gold discovered; Australia's white population increases from 400,000 to 1.2 million; Victoria and New South Wales get local elected governments.

Late 19th century: Wool boom.

Number of sheep in Australia increases from 21 million in 1861 to 107 million in 1891.

1870s onwards: Trade unions organised among shearers, miners, seafarers.

1890-4: Major strikes — all defeated.

Growth of Labor Parties.

1901: Federation.

1904: First federal Labor government.

1916: Labor Party splits — the Labor Prime Minister, W M Hughes, having failed to push through conscription for World War 1, joins the bourgeois parties.

1932: Slump, huge unemployment. Labor government in New South Wales sacked by the Governor when it proposes stopping debt payments to the London banks.

1949-72: Uninterrupted conservative government.

1972: Reforming Labor government — sacked in 1975 by the Governor General.

1983-96: Labor returns to office, pushes through tariff cuts, deregulation, privatisation, cuts.

another measure to build an equal society in Australia, without any slave class. It was taken as a fixed fact that Chinese workers would undercut European wages and conditions.

But this "trade-unionist" response fed a wider ideology, which eventually cut against the basic principles of the trade unionism that had generated it. The Australian Workers' Union (AWU) and other major unions barred Chinese and Pacific-Islander workers from membership (though the AWU offered free membership to Aborigines), and when Chinese and Pacific-Islander workers formed their own unions and conducted their own strikes — as they did sometimes — the "white" unions did not support them.

A racist nationalism tied Australia's supposedly socialist party, the ALP (it formally adopted socialism in 1921, in a parallel to British Labour's 1918 Clause Four), to submerge itself in "developing and strengthening the country", to an extent perhaps paralleled only by the Israeli Labour Party. It was "permanent non-revolution", so to speak, an inside-out version of the process whereby bourgeois tasks were subsumed into a socialist revolution by Lenin's Bolshevik Party in Russia in 1917.

Australian labour saw its cause as that of the Australian working class, or (interchangeably) the Australian nation, counterposed to the "Money Power" (in the British banks and their comrades in Melbourne and Sydney) and the "Yellow Peril". And to focus on the "Yellow Peril" was, of course, the line of least resistance.

Yet neither E W Campbell's *History of the Australian Labor Movement: A Marxist Interpretation*, nor Brian Fitzpatrick's *Short History of the Australian Labor Movement*, even mention the struggle for exclusion in more than a couple of non-committal words. For decades the Communist Party claimed Australian nationalism for its own. In 1963 its leader Lance Sharkey declared: "The Communist Party takes pride in saluting the 175th anniversary of Australia's foundation, because Australia has been built on 175 years of the untiring labour of the working people. First it was forced (convict) labour... then 'free' wage-labour under colonial rule... then labour as the leading force in the long struggle for an independent and democratic Australia". Not only Campbell (a CP hack), but also Fitzpatrick (never a CP member, and widely influential), had their views coloured by this ideology.

It paralleled the official ideology of the ALP, expressed in 1909 by W G Spence, founder of both the miners' and shearers' unions: "Unionism came to the Australian bushman as a religion. It had in it that feeling of mateship which he understood already, and which always characterised the action of one 'white man' to another".

In the 1970s these orthodoxies were challenged, notably by Humphrey McQueen in his book *A New Britannia*. He argued that Australian labour was dominated by an "inheritance of class passivity" before 1890; that "Australian nationalism is

the chauvinism of British imperialism, intensified by its geographic proximity to Asia"; that Australian radicalism in the 19th century was entirely petty-bourgeois; and that "the Labor Parties that emerged after 1890 were in every way the logical extension of the petty-bourgeois mentality and subordinated organisations that preceded them. There was no turning point".

Yet to claim that "the ALP was the highest expression of a peculiarly Australian petty bourgeoisie", is to write the Australian workers' strikes and socialist agitation out of history. And they existed! The Australian workers were not a petty bourgeoisie, but a *labour aristocracy*.

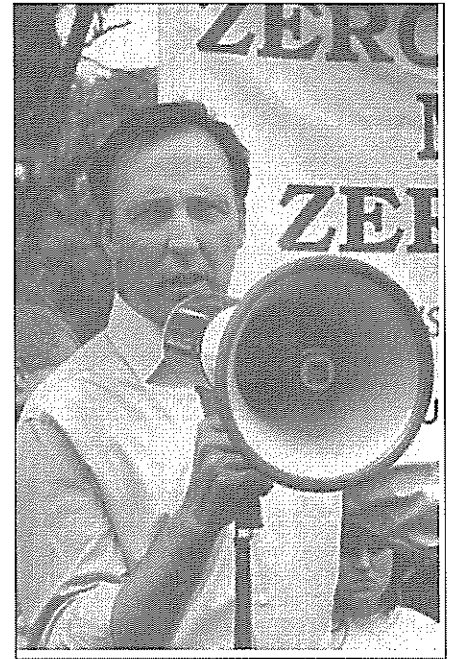
The term "labour aristocracy" generally denotes a *section* of a national working class — skilled, higher-paid workers. But over and above the differentiations in the Australian working class — which exist and existed, though perhaps smaller than in many other working classes — the whole working class was differentiated as a better-off "aristocracy" both from the working class from which it came (the British) and from the workers of Asia.

In *Wage Labour and Capital* Karl Marx argues that the poverty of the working class is always *relative* to the wealth of the bourgeoisie. "A house may be large or small... But let a palace arise beside the little house, and it shrinks from a little house to a hut... however high it may shoot up in the course of civilisation, if the neighbouring palace grows to an equal or even greater extent, the occupant of the relatively small house will feel more and more... cramped..."

"The whole working class was differentiated as a better-off 'aristocracy' both from the working class from which it came (the British) and from the workers of Asia."

Not all Australian workers, by any means, had the house and garden which later became standard for their class. But they had a chance of getting it; it did become standard. And they could compare it to the London slums of a hundred years ago, or the huts of Chinese and Pacific-Islander workers. The palaces were more remote, less familiar.

Despite the well-known and scathing polemics by Lenin on the "labour aristocracy" as the base for pro-war policies by the socialist parties in World War 1, there is no warrant in general Marxist theory to consider "labour aristocracies" as irredeemably



Keating's anti-working class policies in the '80s and '90s paved the way for Labor defeat

anti-socialist. Better-off, better-educated workers are, in most times and places, the mainstays of labour organisations both right-wing and left-wing. Their *tendency*, however, is towards a slogan popular with Australian trade unions in the 19th century, "Defence, not Defiance" — defence (sometimes militant) of their relatively satisfactory position, rather than battle to change the whole social system.

This tendency dominated among Australian workers for several reasons. One, indicated by Lenin's "English correspondent", was the poverty of socialist culture in the Britain from which they migrated. Another, noted by McQueen, was to do with Australia's extreme *distance* from Britain. The Australian workers felt at risk from Asia.

Distances within Australia have maybe also played a part. Australia's land area is almost as great as Europe or the United States, but in 1891 it had only three million people, and it still has only 17 million. It has always been a highly urbanised society: as early as 1911, 38 per cent of the population lived in the seven capital cities. But those cities are scattered round 12,000 miles of coastline — and the remainder of the population spread in small towns and settlements over a vast area. The cities themselves are now the most sprawling in the world, with working-class suburbs many miles from the city centre.

Australia's New Unionism of the 1870s and '80s — unlike its parallel in Britain — was bush, not city, unionism. The main "bush" union, the Australian Workers' Union, which grew out of the shearers' union, was Australia's biggest union for many years, is still one of the biggest, and has long had great weight in the ALP.

Other working classes have had their high points of struggle in their major cities — St Petersburg, Berlin, Paris... Australian

labour's heroic moments have been in more remote areas — Ballarat, Barcaldine, Broken Hill. The big strike movement of November 1995 hinged on a dispute in Weipa, two thousand miles from the nearest big city.

The huge distances cause difficulties even now: how much greater must they have been in the days before telephones, faxes, e-mail, and mass air travel! A direct working-class seizure of state power must necessarily appear remote and improbable to dispersed workforces and working-class communities. They can be extremely tough and combative in day-to-day struggles. For broader issues they must tend to depend on a remote labour officialdom, dealing with an equally remote bourgeoisie.

They will, as a result, be ill-placed for big set-piece class battles, where the bourgeoisie brings its centralised state power into play. In fact, *every one of the great class confrontations between 1890 and 1917* — the maritime strike of 1890 (which also involved miners and shearers), the Queensland shearers' strikes of 1891 and 1894, the Broken Hill miners' strike of 1892, the Broken Hill lock-out of 1909, the Brisbane General Strike of 1912 and the New South Wales General Strike of 1917 — *ended in total defeat for the workers*. That the workers emerged from all these defeats lacking in revolutionary exuberance, and ready to look for amelioration to a tradition of state economic intervention established well before the rise of the labour movement, should cause no wonder. The remarkable thing is the tenacity and toughness which kept the labour movement intact, and always ready to regain lost ground, through it all.

There was much left-wing agitation in the trade unions and the ALP between 1916

and the early 1920s, and the then-revolutionary Communist Party (only a few hundred strong) briefly won the right to affiliate to the ALP in 1923-4. Soon, however, the CP was isolated.

In the early 1930s, Australian workers' relative prosperity suddenly crashed. The CP grew rapidly, and, surely, would have grown more rapidly and solidly if it had not been pursuing the same "Third Period" policies, dictated by Stalin, which led to CPs losing members rapidly in many other countries. When the Labor premier of New South Wales, the populist demagogue J T Lang, was sacked by the Governor (the representative of the British Crown) in 1932 for proposing to stop debt payments to the London banks, the CP stood aside, dismissing the ALP as "social fascist".

After 1935 the CP turned the revolutionaries recruited in the early 1930s towards a new policy, also dictated by Stalin, of "unity against fascism and war". They supported World War 2, made racist anti-Japanese propaganda, and draped themselves in the colours of Australian nationalism. All the chances opened up in the 1930s for transforming the Australian labour movement were wrecked by the Stalinists.

After 1949 there were 23 years of conservative government, with relatively little resistance. But from about 1969 there were renewed industrial struggles and big protests against the Vietnam war.

In 1972 a Labor government was elected which withdrew Australian troops from Vietnam, introduced a state health insurance scheme, doubled public spending on education, made a small start on redress for the Aborigines, and unwound the White Australia policy. All this was, however, essentially middle-class radicalism: the

Labor government had no answer to the effects of the world-wide capitalist crisis of 1974-5 except to try to make the workers pay. There were mass protests when, in November 1975, the Governor-General, on the Queen's authority, sacked the Labor government; but, because of Labor's failures and the lack of a left alternative, they petered out.

The conservatives won the ensuing election and stayed in office until 1983, when Labor began the thirteen years of office which ended in March 1996. In those 13 years Labor did make a few reforms — it reinstated the state health insurance scheme started by the 1972-5 Labor government, then abolished by the conservatives — but mostly it drove for a drastic opening-up of Australia to the world market, with an accompanying sharp increase in unemployment and inequality.

The Australian working class that emerges, somewhat battered and dismayed, from those 13 years to face the Liberals, is different from the working class of a hundred years ago. Between 1947 and 1970, 800,000 migrants, 37 per cent of the total intake, entered Australia from southern and eastern Europe — Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia... Since the 1970s, increasing numbers have come from Asia. The working-class suburbs even of Brisbane, one of the most "white" of Australia's big cities, now have primary-school classes where almost every child is Asian or Aboriginal.

The south and eastern European migrants generally got worse jobs than "Anglo-Celtic" Australian workers, and the Asian migrants worse still. Yet racism is not a moral stain which continues through generations regardless of material circumstances. The roots of the racism of a hundred years ago have been somewhat eroded: Australia is no longer a precarious outpost of the British Empire, Asian workers are no longer on such a material level as to make the idea of workers' unity difficult to grasp from a trade-unionist point of view, the working class is less dependent on British culture and less scarred by defeats. And the racism, too, has been eroded. Despite great strains imposed by mass unemployment, multi-ethnic workers' unity remains a prize within the grasp of the Australian labour movement. That will be tremendously important in the battles which will come as Australia's rulers try to cut down the wages, job security, and public services of Australia to levels suitable for modern international capitalist competition on the Pacific Rim.

But Australian labour's political culture, too, has been eroded. The Communist Party, long by far the most influential force on the left, disintegrated bit by bit and then folded completely in the 1980s. Revolutionary socialists are a small minority. But some fundamental material conditions exist for them to advance — and make Australia a continent to which revolutionaries, not reformists, will look for inspiration. ■

* Egon Kisch, "Australian Landfall", p.195.

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News from ground zero — a personal view of the Manchester bombing

By Ray Boyle

FRIDAY 14 June was such an idyllic day in Manchester; Summer had finally smiled on Mancunians and I had taken a day off from work. By late afternoon I had decamped myself at an Italian Cafe Bar just over the road from Manchester Town Hall and I proceeded to eat, drink (rather too much, if I am frank) and talk with some German tourists about the prospects for "Euro '96". By the end of the evening I had a feeling of general well-being about "the dirty old town."

I awoke the following morning with a head like 'Krakatoa about to erupt'. The clock said 8.55. I debated whether to get up in order to go into town. Discretion being the last refuge of the "hung over", I took a raincheck and put my head under the blankets. An hour or so later the largest bomb to be exploded by the Provisional IRA in mainland Britain cut through the heart of Manchester's main shopping area like a knife through butter.

It turns out that the explosives-laden truck was about 20 yards away from where I get off my local bus when I go into the city centre. Have you ever had the feeling that you are truly favoured by the gods? I did when I calculated what could have happened to me on that fateful Saturday.

Moving from the personal to the political, my overall reaction to the bombing could be characterised as being a feeling of "enraged futility". Anger at the damage done to my city and the realisation that mass carnage was only avoided by sheer good luck.

The bombing as well as being a reactionary act was also intellectually bankrupt. Manchester has a sizeable Irish community which has been established in the city for over 150 years. Engels in his *Condition of the Working Class* makes specific reference to the prodigious appetite of the Manchester Irish for both work and play.

Rather than being "a brave strike at British Imperialism" as some unre-

constructed Provos will say, to rationalise this act, the attack struck directly at Manchester's Irish diaspora.

A vote for Peres would have saved the peace process!

By Richard Sutherland

I WONDER how Michel Warshawsky and Mark Osborn (*Workers' Liberty*, June 1996) feel now about the election result in Israel. Has the disastrous result made them reconsider their refusal to back the Labor candidate, Peres?

It seems to me that the election of Benjamin Netanyahu is very likely to lead to the destruction of the "Land for Peace" policy of the previous government. We will be taken back not to the status quo of the late '80s and early '90s — but to something worse.

Relations between the two peoples will be worsened. Hamas will be boosted. The mainstream PLO further discredited.

If this is true is it not irresponsible not to call for a Labor vote?

I think I can imagine the reply: Israeli Labor is no kind of workers' organisation; we must continue propaganda for an independent working class voice.

I think this is right! However we are so far away from that in Israel and politics is so dominated by the national question and the stakes are so high, that socialists should have voted for Peres as a much lesser evil.

Disenfranchising the footballing class

By Ian Taylor

I WAS intrigued by your June cover story "United for Profit" by Jane Ashworth. Crucially it misses the political dimension of the revolution that has taken place in the game.

Ashworth argues that the revolution in football is about safety and profit. Rather it is about the political disenfranchising of the working class from any autonomous organisation. In the earlier eighties, football and the football terrace were very much the bastions of the industrial working class. The red herring of safety and violence was used to destroy the culture of the terrace. I am sad that Jane Ashworth recounts the myths that were used by Thatcher and her class at the time.

Chief amongst these myths is that the grounds were manifestly old, unsafe and in need of refurbishment. By the early eighties all grounds in the 1st and 2nd Divisions (as such subject to the Safety at Sports Grounds Act 1975) had safe terracing, and in many cases recently refurbished terraces. I agree that facilities — toilets, catering — were in many cases poor; but the terrace was fundamentally safe.

It is worth remembering that no one died accidentally on an English football ground between 1948 and 1985. That is, during nearly one and a quarter billion individual attendances. I contend that a terrace is not fundamentally unsafe. However, fenced to the front and penned to the left and right, a terrace pen is only as safe as its capacity. Hence the tragedy at Hillsborough. However it was not the terrace that was unsafe; it was the fence. And the fence was there because when reactionary club owners and politicians faced the perceived threat of 'hooligans' they chose to fence them.

Indeed the fences helped generate knee jerk low-level hooliganism. The two sets of supporters drinking together outside could be as antagonistic as they liked with a fence between them. Without the fence they would have had to get on with it. And as we saw after Hillsborough, when the fences came down hooliganism reduced.

Jane Ashworth says: "These refurbished stadia may not be appreciated by those that once stood on the terrace but they are safer." Not true! Indeed if the old terraces were safe, then it is clear that had capital investment been available for new terraces they would have been equally safe. I accept a portion of Jane Ashworth's contention that the changes are about profit, but they are not and never were about safety.

For the answer we must look at what the terrace was. A full terrace was 30,000 standing together united in one cause. Singing and, if needed, fighting for what they believed in and wished to achieve together. The terrace organised itself as an entity, a living collective. Police 'control' was at the very best tenuous, external, and subject to the terrace's collective veto. No one who was part of that will ever forget it. And those that stood were by and large the industrial working class. Hooliganism, hyped and over-rated for 20 years, was never a serious political issue until Thatcher grabbed at it in 1985.

I recall 1984-85, the FA Cup Third Round on 5 January 1985. Fourth Division Port Vale were away at First Division West Ham. Port Vale took 5,000 fans to the match that day. As the away end filled up, the British Rail Special arrived (late) and the police marched 1,500 around to the ground to join the 3,500 in already. And the two groups out of sight of each other started chanting together: "The miners, united, will never be defeated!" For the ninety minutes we continued in a similar vein.

"That the political imperative to close the terraces was discovered just one month after the miners' strike was no accident."

Indeed, even after the strike had finished Port Vale's annual visit to 'scab country' (Mansfield Town FC on 13 March and 16 November 1985) was an opportunity for North Staffs NUM and Port Vale supporters to collect for sacked and victimised miners. And I recall, the home fans often dug deep; perhaps more from shame than solidarity.

Port Vale FC are a miners' club. In the 1880s a number of our players did a shift down the pit on the Saturday morning and then played or watched on the Saturday afternoon. The tradition that North Staffs miners supported the Vale continued. In The Strike that solidarity was repaid. The solidarity of the terrace with the miners was replicated around the industrial north. We should not be surprised then, that in April 1985 (in fake response to a pitch invasion at Luton) Thatcher called for the wholesale closure of the terraces. Indeed, she famously suggested to journalists at 10 Downing Street that all games be played behind closed doors and that clubs survive on sponsorship alone.

That the political imperative to close the terraces was discovered just one month after the miners' strike was no accident. It reflects the terror of Thatcher and her class. Their terror of any bastions of the empowered working class. We see therefore that the political decision to close the terrace was never about safety and only partly about profit. It was a ruthless and clearly thought out attack on the working class and their collective ability to express themselves. Only in that light, with a clear political dimension, can "the Revolution in English Football" be understood.

● The author is a supporter of Port Vale FC and an organiser for Sheffield Travelling Valiants, a group that combines travelling with political campaigning on issues affecting the game.

Starry-eyed about James

By Jane Ryan

JAMES D Young (*Workers' Liberty* 32) is too starry-eyed about CLR James. James wrote a few good books — *The Black Jacobins*, *World Revolution* and, so people who might know, tell me, *Beyond A Boundary*, the one about cricket. But as a political thinker or activist there is — aside perhaps from his work organising sharecroppers in the American Deep South — not much to be said for him and a lot to be said against him.

It is forgotten now, but in the '40s James and his faction — the so-called Johnson-Forest tendency, then part of the Shachtmanite Workers' Party — were trail-blazing pioneers in developing the irrationalism and personality cultism and mysticism that later came to dominate much of the so-called "orthodox Trotskyism".

In political terms the nearest parallel, though not an entire one, that I can think of to their way of seeing the world, would be the British Healyites of the late '60s. Not of course the savagely bureaucratic Healy 'party' regime which was special to itself and had no parallel anywhere in or near the Trotskyist movement. The manner of these mystical "state capitalists" rejoining the SWP USA in 1947 was very odd and the manner of their leaving it in 1951 after three years of virtual silence, downright loony. (There is much documentation about all this). They propounded the notion that socialism, the future, was somehow "invading" the present. James, mysteriously, then became a high dignitary in Eric Williams' movement, Trinidad's governing party, before going off on his travels once more. In London he developed a cult around himself as one of the venerable fathers of black nationalism. Some of it spread to the white media; he did not seem to take offense at the patronising manner and substance of much of it.

There was, I think, always — certainly from the '40s — a big element of the charlatan-prophet about CLR James. After Trotsky's death, his contribution to Trotskyism, the revolutionary Marxism of our epoch, was essentially poisonous. He should be soberly assessed, not romanticised. Almost everything James had to teach this, and future, generations of revolutionary socialists come to us in the form of things *not* to do.

The SWP and anti-Zionism

By Raymond Challinor

WELL before I ever met Tony Cliff or Paul Foot, I staunchly advanced the ideas that they propound on the Middle East and which Sean Matgamna now attacks. As a delegate to the ILP annual conference in 1946, I spoke against Zionism, this move to create an exclusively Jewish state, relegating Palestinians to the status of second-class citizens. Such could only succeed in an overwhelmingly Arab region, if the comparative handful of Jews received outside backing from a powerful imperialist country.

The arrival of Israel in 1948 proved my prediction correct. Dependent upon infusions of dollars for its well being, the new state became the unsinkable aircraft carrier of American imperialism, a powerful instrument to protect its oil interests.

Zionist atrocity followed Zionist atrocity. There was the murder of every man, woman and child in the Palestinian village of Deir Yassin, a crime comparable with the Nazi obliteration of Lidice. The arrival of Israeli death squads in Jaffa created panic. Palestinians fled for their lives or were killed. Once this process of ethnic cleansing had been accomplished, the conquerors triumphantly celebrated by even changing the town's name from Jaffa to Haifa. In 1956, in league with Britain and France, Israel joined the war against Egypt, a belligerent attempt to seize the Suez Canal, an act that received worldwide condemnation. And so one could go on, right down to the outrages that are happening in the Lebanon today.

Though Sean Matgamna will disagree, I think a vital litmus test to determine whether a person is a genuine socialist is their attitude to Zionism. Like fascism, by its very nature it tends to be aggressive and racist.

Admittedly, for many years there has been racism, to a fluctuating extent, in Britain, but this is qualitatively different to the position in Israel. Despite anti-semitism here, a Jew — Benjamin Disraeli — could become prime minister. But it is quite inconceivable that a Palestinian could ever head an Israeli government, any more than one could envisage the Third Reich ruled by a Jew.

Sean Matgamna appears to argue that to be anti the Israeli state makes one also anti-semitic. This is just nonsense. To want to see the collapse of the Third Reich did not make an individual anti-German. Indeed, it is arguable that it made him pro-German. The first victims of Nazism were Germans themselves — socialists, communists, trade unionists, etc — and that millions of German workers were subsequently slaughtered as a result of Hitler's territorial

ambitions.

Likewise it is becoming increasingly clear that the Jews are suffering more and more as a result of Zionism. It keeps a country permanently at war or in preparedness for war. Young people, conscripted into the army, lose the best years of their lives, enduring mind-rotting militarism. The enemy will never go away, can never be destroyed. Indefinitely, the economic and human resources are wasted.

It is to the eternal credit of Tony Cliff that he understood this fact from the outset. The future can only be made when Jewish and Arab workers unite. Towards the objective of peace, Zionism and the existence of Israel remain as formidable barriers.

Remarkably Tony Cliff originated from the higher reaches of Zionist society. Staying as his guest in the early 1950s, I recall seeing a letter signed "Golda" which I take it came from Golda Meir. He told me that he knew well the dashing General Moshe Dayan, remembering him celebrating victory over the Arabs by publicly peeing in the main square of Tel Aviv. Dayan married the young woman who had been Cliff's first love. The brother of Chanie — the woman ultimately to become Cliff's partner — was appointed the military commander of Jerusalem in 1948. Born in South Africa, he decided to change his not very distinguished surname, replacing it with one that had a Biblical resonance. In the King James version of the Old Testament, there is mention of the brook Kishon; in the Hebrew Bible it is Kidron. But during the 2,500 years since the Old Testament was written, things have changed. The brook has become heavily polluted. A shock awaited Kidron when he saw it for the first time: he discovered (as Cliff chortling later told me) that he was probably the only person in history to alter his name by deed poll so he could be called after a sewer!

Imprisoned under the British Mandate, Tony Cliff found his fellow inmates included terrorists of the Irgun and Stern gang. Menachem Begin and the rest detested Cliff's politics. Yet, they promised when they secured power they would provide him with a valuable personal service — at no cost to himself whatsoever, they would generously perform a surgical operation, removing Tony Cliff's testicles.

With an intimate knowledge of all aspects of Jewish politics, Tony Cliff's pamphlet, *The Middle East at the Crossroads*, represented an important contribution to knowledge. It revealed how Zionism had grown both in economic and political power. It showed how measures were deliberately taken to widen the gap between Jew and Arab. Imperialist interests backed this transformation.

Published after the Second World War by the British RCP, the pamphlet received a favourable reception. In the United States the *Fourth International*, theoretical journal of the American SWP, printed long extracts. Its rival, *New International*, carried a review by Albert Gates. He generally

though he pamphlet's analysis was excellent. His one reservation related to its failure to map out in sufficient detail what should be done next. With Zionism in full flood, perhaps Cliff could have replied, at the time the alternative had no prospect of immediate success.

But in the long-run things look entirely different. Now it has become quite clear Jewish workers must unite with their Arab brothers and sisters. To do this, they must unite to smash the capitalist states of Israel and all its discriminatory laws. The only alternative to that is backing successive governments that, like Nazi Germany, seek salvation through military strength. Their most prized weapons in their armoury — a pile of nuclear bombs — were manufactured under the aptly named Samson project. Perhaps they should recall that Samson was blind, pulled down the pillars of the temple, killing himself and everybody else. He never founded a stable state.

A death trap

HAL Draper in the *New International* (July 1948) wrote:

"And as this situation is created, we must remember:

- that in this splinter state of Israel, 30 or 40 per cent of the population consists of Arabs!
- that it is a splinter quivering in the side of the Arab world;
- that merely military victories (accompanied by Deir Yassins, threats of expansion and Haifa evacuations) can only result in a state of war and warlike menaces, guerrilla skirmishing, border tension and border incidents, permanent national chauvinism and permanent national hatred.

Under these conditions, with all its economic life intertwined with its Arab neighbours, with its supply lines and commercial routes interpenetrating, with its economic life economically dependent and helpless — what can be the future of a splinter country separated from the world on all sides and surrounded by a wall of hatred?

Only a chronic nightmare existence, a new horror of the twentieth century, a state-wide ghetto, a death trap for the Jews!

This is the direction in which the present rightist bourgeois government of Israel is heading."

How should Marxists organise?

By Jack Cleary

"It is necessary to find the particular link in the chain which must be grasped with all one's strength in

order to keep the whole chain in place and prepare to move on resolutely to the next link."

VI Lenin

TONY Dale (WI32) is right, I think, that the orientation towards helping the trade union movement in the US create a Labor Party was central to the evolution of the Shachtman movement. He is ridiculous when on the basis of a "prehistoric" 1946 quotation he suggests that the differences on the Stalinist state were not central to the final radical divergence of the Shachtmanites and the "Trotskyists". He is ridiculous to suggest — as I think he means to — that the Shachtmanites, in reaction to Cannon's autocratic style, consciously set out, from the start, to create a party of Marxists so loose that its job would be limited to involving itself in a "proletarian arena", building a Labor Party in preference to building a Marxist party. That didn't come until the Shachtmanites were getting ready to commit suicide as an organisation at the end of the 1950s. Tony Dale is equally ridiculous to, seemingly, approve of this conception of a Marxist Party.

The implied view is that the role of Marxists such as the supporters of *Workers' Liberty* is to develop the influence of Marxism in relation to the broad labour movement and not to build a revolutionary organisation — an organisation integrated in the broader labour movement, but nevertheless also a distinct entity already having some of the essential structures and activities of a fully fledged independent revolutionary party. Tony Dale's is a view more often expressed in the routine labour movement practice of ex-revolutionaries than in coherent argument, yet it is a very important current of thought in the labour movement: it is the "position" of vast numbers of ex-WRP and ex-SWP members who turn the sectarian fetish of "building the party" inside out.

This is an important question. On the broad political level, the question of "developing the influence of Marxism" versus "party-building" goes to the heart of left-wing politics now. The point is that you can't meaningfully develop the "influence of Marxism" as a revolutionary force without building a "revolutionary party."

Workers' Liberty's notion of revolutionary activity and organisation is rooted in the basic Marxist proposition that the class struggle takes place on three fronts, not one: the economic, the political, and the ideological. We work towards integrating the three fronts into a coherent strategy of class war and, ultimately, the struggle for working-class state power.

Certainly, the struggle for socialist ideas against bourgeois ideas, that is, the struggle on the "ideological front", conditions the other two; this struggle for ideas and programme is the unique and irreplaceable role of the revolutionary group or party. Yes. But if a group only conducts

"ideological battle", and organises itself as a group only to fight on that front, inside the existing labour movement, then it is no revolutionary organisation. Moreover, it will not be effective even on that front in spreading Marxist ideas.

The purpose of socialist organisation cannot possibly be defined as just diffusing "the influence of Marxism", cutting away from our distinct concerns the two — economic (trade-union) and political — "action" fronts of the class struggle. Nor — even if they were healthier and more vigorous than they are now — can the structures of the Labour Party and trade unions substitute for the specific structures required for all-round Marxist activity on the three fronts of the class struggle.

Those who counterpose "ideologically rearming the workers' movement" to "building the party" beg the question: what exactly do you think such general ideas as "rearming the labour movement" with socialist and Marxist ideas mean if not the creation over time of a powerful revolutionary party at the head of the broader labour movement, in the first place, of the trade unions? To counterpose "politically rearming the labour movement" to "building the party" is not to know the arse from the elbow of what serious socialist activity in the labour movement is. At the end of the day, both formulas mean one and the same thing. At the end of the process, both formulas will have matched up and merged into one: a mass revolutionary party at the head of the broader labour movement.

Beyond those generalisations, it is a matter of working out concretely at a given moment which is best of the possible ways the organised collective of Marxists, be they more or less numerous, can relate to an existing mass reformist labour movement so as to bring about its transformation, or the next step in its transformation. The growth of the Marxist organisation is both a measure of how the process of transformation is proceeding and progressing, and a necessary instrument for further transformation.

More: the Marxists must organise themselves so as to fight the class struggle on all fronts *now*, despite the dominance of the Labour Party right wing and the trade union bureaucrats. Or does someone think we can transform the labour movement apart from the class struggle? Or that Marxists must wait until the movement is transformed before immersing themselves in immediate class struggle? Or that an organised collective of Marxists able to act coherently as a combat organisation is useless in the class struggle here and now? Nobody, Tony, could be that stupid!

Developments in the Labour Party, for example, have greatly depended on affairs in industry. Think of recent labour movement history.

In 1984-5, the miners' strike could have been won by solidarity from dockers and other key workers, even though the TUC

leaders sold it out. A network of rank-and-file activists in key positions across industry, even if only a few thousand strong, might have won solidarity for the miners — that is, made the difference between victory and defeat. If the miners had won, things would have gone very differently in the Labour Party...

In future struggles a rank and file network of the revolutionary minority in industry may make the difference between victory and defeat in big struggles, and thus affect the whole mood and potential of the political movement. Who will build that rank-and-file movement if not the Marxists organised as a distinct, militant, "tightly knit" minority?

Tony, how can you as an individual, isolated Marxist in UNISON "develop the influence of Marxism" in the TGWU, or amongst shop workers? How can you "develop the influence of Marxism" amongst youth and women workers? How can you intervene in the student movement?

The organised revolutionary minority pursues all sorts of tactics, in part dependant on its own size and possibilities, in working towards reorganising the existing mass labour movement. But the *sine qua non* of being able to work out any tactics, and then put them into practice, is the existence of a revolutionary organisation. Without that we can only babble.

This is the answer to those who conclude from a bad experience with, for example, the SWP that everything a small Marxist organisation does, beyond what a group of vaguely propagandising supporters of a socialist paper might do, is futile and sectarian and, therefore, that instead of "building the party", we should just be a laid back, lazy group, desultorily promoting "the ideological rearmament of the labour movement". Revolutionary socialists must indeed be in the labour movement on pain of sterility. They must also on pain of a different sort of sterility be autonomous — retaining the will and the ability to promote workers' and young people's struggles which take place outside of, and outside the tempo of, the existing labour movement.

A "Marxist" group, not to speak of solo Marxist individuals, content to jog along within the tempo of the reformist labour movement, telling itself that it is promoting "ideological rearmament", and "the influence of Marxism" would at best develop only a vague, unstructured and diffuse influence for a blunted, abstract "Marxism". A "Marxism" lacking embodiment in a militant organisation which strives for leadership in economic and political struggles would be like the clock with no spring: a poor joke.

It seems to me that the tasks of socialists now are, by way of Marxist propaganda and agitation:

- to educate, multiply and group together the Marxists;
- to bind them together in a coherent organisation, capable of both collective political thought and united action; and

capable of knitting together the political and industrial fronts of the class struggle with a coherent battle on the "ideological" front for a consistently proletarian world outlook;

- to organise Marxist fractions in the trade unions and Labour Parties, and among unorganised groups of workers, youth, etc.;

- to work towards building a rank and file movement in the trade unions;

- to organise a class-struggle left in the Labour Party and trade unions;

- to promote the class struggle day to day;

- to work steadily towards the subversion of the structures and institutions of the existing labour movement, and towards the movement's reorganisation — augmented from the very large layers of workers presently unorganised — into a new movement, led by and grouped around a revolutionary Marxist programme and party.

The Marxist organisation needed to do those things has to be built now. They simply cannot happen without the continual interaction of the Marxist organisation with the class struggle and mass movement. If that interaction happens fruitfully then the Marxist organisation will grow — before the full transformation of the labour movement — by ones and twos, then dozens and hundreds, and then by thousands and tens of thousands. It is a key index of the maturation of the British labour movement and a prerequisite for its successful transformation. Ever watched water boil? All the bubbles don't cascade at once.

Serious socialists do not, like the sectarians, try to "build the party" irrespective of and wilfully apart from the labour movement and the working class, but, equally, we do not sink the revolutionary group into the rhythms and norms of a labour movement which is not revolutionary and which involves only a minority of the working class. That is as much a recipe for suicide as the antics of the sectarians — by an overdose of sleeping pills rather than an excess of 'acid', or some other sectarian hallucinogenic.

To deny that a militant Marxist organisation — and not just some Fabian-Marxist "think-tank" — must be built continuously, in the on-going class struggles and inside the very process of transforming the labour movement, is either to think that the transformation will happen 'of itself', spontaneously and mechanically, or else to believe that someone or something else will bring about and consolidate the transformation of the labour movement. Who, if not us, the Marxists, might they be? Marxists who deny this do not, when you come down to it, have much use for their own "Marxism".

Can that transformation happen spontaneously, as a result of economic class struggle? It will not. Unless the Marxists are strong enough to shape events you will probably get fiascos and muddle and

confusion like that experienced by the Bennite left of the 1980s.

The idea that revolutionary socialists relate to the Labour Party and trade unions like a farmer waiting for his crops to grow implies not only a vulgar-evolutionist ripening of the Labour Party, but fond belief in a stable, peaceful never-to-be-disrupted development for capitalism, too. And this old "Militant" idea that the Labour Party was organically ripening towards full Marxism, looks not too convincing today in the era of Blair: Lenin-weaned Marxists however know that as well as evolution there is devolution.

Serious socialists fight for the hegemony of Marxism in the labour movement, and to do that we must build, as slowly as necessary and as quickly as possible, a coherent three-front class-struggle Marxist organisation. If socialists don't build up now by way of the ones and twos and threes that can be won, we will never be big enough to win over the tens, hundreds, thousands and millions.

Spain in the 1930s illustrates the foolishness of counterposing the building of a revolutionary organisation now — even if it is no more than the rough draft of the mass party of the future — to reorganising the labour movement. There was a strong labour movement in Spain. Much of it was anarchist. The second most important current was reformism. How might the mass revolutionary party have emerged out of that labour movement? For sure not by the small group of Trotskyists burying themselves in the mass movement, eschewing autonomy and party initiatives, and waiting for History to do its work. Trotsky rightly criticised the quasi-Trotskyist POUM for political wooliness and lack of vigorous intervention directed towards the mass anarchist movement.

The tactical choices of the Marxists at crucial turning points were decisive. For example, in 1934 the Socialist Party youth — the youth of the reformist movement, whose leader, Largo Caballero, had been a state councillor of the recent dictator Primo de Rivera — came out for a Fourth International. The Trotskyists were too stiff and proud to do the entry work Trotsky advocated. The Stalinists got in there and hegemonised the youth, thus marginalising the Trotskyists.

And a few years later, in large part because of the strength of the Stalinist Party, fascist catastrophe engulfed the whole Spanish labour movement before it could be reorganised. We are not, in Britain or in Spain, guaranteed a happy ending to these affairs! Defeat, defeat for a whole long historical period, is possible. We are today still living out the consequences of the defeats of the working class in the 1920s and '30s.

The lesson of history is that even an initially small but competent revolutionary Marxist party can be decisive; that it can make the difference in the heat of mass

struggles between the labour movement being able to reorganise itself and win, and crushing defeat.

That is the truth taught to us positively by the victory of the Bolsheviks in 1917 and negatively by the tragedy of the Spanish working class in the 1930s. In Spain if they had been sharper and harder, more "sectarian" in the sense of politically intransigent and less sectarian in the sense of being passive and inert, then the small Trotskyist group of the early 1930s, out of which emerged both the centrist POUM and the Bolshevik-Leninists, could have secured the victory of the proletarian revolution.

That is why revolutionary politics is not something for the future — "on the barricades", as the old middle class cliché has it — but for here and now. There is an organic relationship — seed to luxuriant growth — between selling magazines and papers on a street corner now and victory or defeat in mass revolutionary struggles in the future.

If we do not build now, even when the mass political labour movement is in the doldrums, then we will not be able to seize chances when they come, as they will certainly come. We may not be able to avoid catastrophe.

What was wrong with the old WRP Healyites and what is wrong with the SWP now, is that they do not understand how the work of building the revolutionary party — which is the epochal task of those who accept the programme and tradition of Lenin and Trotsky — must be related to the already-existing mass labour movements. Where their mirror-image "Marxists" sink — often without trace — completely into the existing labour movement, the sectarians conceive of "building the party" as a process more or less fully autonomous from the existing movement and even, sometimes, from the working class.

The idea that we can be fully autonomous is absurd. Yet some autonomy of the Marxists is essential. You cannot do what we need to do and aim to persuade millions of workers to do by way of the existing structures of the British labour movement alone! Even if we led the labour movement, all the time we would strive to develop the existing structures and go beyond them. Would we not promote workers' councils during revolutionary struggles? What are workers' councils and soviets to Marxist theory except recognition that even the strongest labour movement under capitalism, even with the greatest "influence of Marxism", is limited and inadequate to the tasks of working class revolution?

Therefore, while socialists work in the labour movement structures and promote our politics, projects and perspectives within them, we do not voluntarily confine ourselves to them or depend on them. Right now, if we had enough people we would do things criminally neglected by the labour movement now like organising young people. We would

turn those young people towards the labour movement, but we would not give a damn for the "legality" of that movement if we could ignore it with impunity and still do our work with them.

We do not go quiet when the official structures go quiet. If some parts of the labour movement die — and that is what the Labour Party as a workers' party faces if the Blairites succeed — we will not die. We will work to build — better! — replacements.

Serious socialists have to reject both SWPish sectarianism towards the existing labour movement, and also the attitude of those "Marxists" who would become mere passengers, enunciating an occasional message to their fellow-passengers. Passengers are not builders of new tracks and better engines! The sectarians are sterile and impotent because they stand aside; the others are sterile because they cling self-distortingly to the existing structures and become parasitically dependent on them, incapable of independent initiative. They fail to develop the sinews and muscles of an independent organisation in relation to the class, the class struggle, and the existing reformist labour movement. They fail to be what socialists must be: the representatives of the movement's future, active in the here and now to carve out that future. James Connolly said it well: "The only true prophets are those who carve out the future they announce".

I repeat: the point is that, ultimately, both come to the same thing in relation to the existing labour movement. Both remove or minimise the creative activity of Marxists as an organised force in the future evolution of the mass labour movement.

If the above points are agreed, then we can agree that the Workers' Party USA of the '40s, rejecting JP Cannon's idea of a semi-monolithic party, presents us with one of the best models of how the Marxists should organise — the way in fact that Lenin's party organised.

Of course, the majority at a given moment has to set the politics and the organisational goals of the organisation, and democratically elected officials have to be given authority to direct work day-to-day. Within that framework, without which the organisation would be nothing but a talking shop, there has to be full democratic freedom of opinion and freedom to express that opinion.

The last *Workers' Liberty* conference (November 1995) wrote into our constitution the long existing right of people with dissenting views to publish these views in our press.

The alternatives are the SWP's replica of an autocratic cult or the loosely structured regime in, say, Tony Dales's group, *Briefing*, which is the private property of a small clique, organised for nothing more onerous or ambitious than publishing a few timid little "left consensus" articles without tang, substance or consequence.

Origins of the trade union bureaucracy

OFTEN in the labour movement the cry is heard: "If only our trade union and Labour Party leaders would fight for us the way the Tories fight for their side!" But they don't.

Most trade union leaders behave like house-trained tabby cats towards the government and the bosses. Why? The Marxist answer is that the full-time trade union leaders form a distinct social layer — a middle class layer in fact.

In the early years, workers who became union full-timers were, in time, declassed. A number of current trade union leaders never knew industrial life but went straight from college to a career in the trade union bureaucracy. It is one of the central elements in the present lack of trade union militancy. Only a democratic rank and file movement can mend this situation.

Brian Pearce explains the origins of the trade union bureaucracy.

IN 1892 the "civil service" of British trade unionism numbered between 600 and 700. After the Reform Act of 1867 and the Ballot Act of 1872 had created an important working class electorate largely immune to old forms of pressure, the ruling class began to pay special attention to trade union leaders.

Engels observed in 1874 that "the chairmen and secretaries of trade unions... had overnight become important people. They were visited by MPs, by lords and other well-born rabble, and sympathetic inquiry was suddenly made into the wishes and needs of the working class." On the advice of the Liberal politician Mundella, the Trades Union Congress held at Nottingham in 1872 was officially welcomed by the city corporation, the delegates were banqueted and invited to the homes of leading citizens, and so forth — the first time such things had happened.

Trade union leaders were pressed to accept seats on Royal Commissions, and in 1886 the general secretary of one of the most important unions stepped into a job in the Labour Bureau formed by Mundella as President of the Board of Trade, an organisation from which the Ministry of Labour later developed. During the 1880s outstanding trade union leaders were more than once entertained by the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) at Sandringham. In 1890 Broadhurst, secretary to the Trades Union Congress, was exposed as having accepted a gift of shares from Brunner, the chemicals industrialist, in return for political support at an election.

The years of comparative industrial peace, between the 1850s and 1880s, had seen "a shifting of leadership in the trade union world," as the Webbs put it, "from the casual enthusiast and irresponsible agitator to a class of permanent salaried officials expressly chosen from out of the rank and file of trade unionists for their superior business capacity."

To the epoch of "defence, not defiance", corresponded the emergence of a generation of trade union leaders of a different type from those who had laid the foundations in the bitter days of the Combination Acts and Tolpuddle. It was between these "sober, business-like" men and sections of the capitalist class "that the political alliance was forged which, in different forms and phases, has been with us ever since — 'the bourgeoisie cannot rule alone'."

These trade union leaders saw their task as essentially one of peaceful negotiation with the employers, and this gave rise to a whole network of social relations separating them off from their original class. Assured of a permanent position with a secure income, the trade union officials — "a closely combined and practically irresistible bureaucracy", as the Webbs called them in their book *Industrial Democracy* which Lenin translated while in exile in Siberia — soon found their different life-experience reflected in a different outlook on the class struggle. In the Webbs' *History of Trade Unionism* the account of the career of a typical official given to the authors in 1893 by a member of one of the great craft unions is quoted:

"Whilst the points at issue no longer affect his own earnings or conditions of employment, any disputes between his members and their employers increase his work and add to his worry. The former vivid sense of the privations and subjection of the artisan's life gradually fades from his mind; and he begins more and more to regard all complaints as perverse and unreasonable. With this intellectual change may come a more invidious transformation. Nowadays the salaried officer of a great union is courted and flattered by the middle class. He is asked to dine with them, and will admire their well-appointed houses, their fine carpets, the ease and luxury of their lives..."

"He goes to live in a little villa in a lower middle-class suburb. The move leads to dropping his workmen friends; and his wife changes her acquaintances. With the habits of his new neighbours he insensibly adopts more and more their ideas... His manner to his members... undergoes a change... A great strike threatens to involve the Society in desperate war. Unconsciously biased by distaste for the hard and unthankful work which a strike entails, he finds himself in small sympathy with the men's demands and eventually arranges a compromise on terms distasteful to a large section of his members."

Brought constantly into friendly intercourse with well-to-do businessmen, civil servants and capitalist politicians, trade union leaders, the Webbs observed, were tempted to bring their spending power up to the same level as that of their associates by making "unduly liberal charges" for their travelling expenses, and even "to accept

from employers or from the government those hidden bribes that are decorously veiled as allowances for expenses or temporary salaries for special posts."

This situation, thus already recognisable in the early 1890s, is still with us today.

Parallel with the rise of the corps of permanent officials was the weakening, during the years of "the servile generation", in trade union democracy. Such institutions as the referendum and the initiative "withered away." The shifting of the basis of the branch in many unions from the place of work to the place of residence helped to atomise the membership and increase their dependence on the officials. The Trades Union Congress of 1895 saw a conscious and open move by the officials to cut away a possible line of rank and file control over their doings, by excluding the representatives of the trades councils, the very bodies which, less than thirty years earlier, had summoned the TUC into existence.

"The trades councils were in fact shut out partly in order to exclude 'agitators' whom the trade union leaders regarded as irresponsible busybodies, and partly in pursuance of a definite policy of centralising industrial control in the hands of the national trade union executives. Obviously a Congress in which two or three million votes might have been cast by the delegates of local bodies would have been a great deal more difficult for the platform to manage than a Congress in which a very small number of national trade unions would cast, under a system of block voting, a majority of total votes. The TUC might have been a very different body if the trades councils had retained their original place in it. That, of course, is precisely why they were not allowed to retain it."

Round about 1909, when EJB Allen published his pamphlet *Revolutionary Unionism*, wide sections of the workers became aware that the militant policy their new circumstances urgently demanded was being sabotaged by their officials. Allen listed a number of examples of what he called the "treachery of officials" in preventing necessary strikes on various pretexts. He wrote:

"This kind of business is notably on the increase, particularly since the workers have been fools enough to pay this kind of official £200 and more per year [1909 money!] to do nothing in Parliament except betray their interests and run around after different capitalist politicians... in order to be remembered when there are some government jobs going."

Fred Kneeb, of the London Society of Compositors, remarked bitterly in 1910 that, "there are some trade union leaders who are so prosperous that they at any rate have in their own persons achieved the harmony of the classes." ■

● From *Some Past Rank and File Movements*

Contradiction as the cause of change

The final part of Edward Conze's explanation of dialectical materialism*

COMMONSENSE readily agrees to the first three laws of scientific method. [Studying things in their interrelations; studying things in their movements; the unity of opposites.] In the fourth law, however, the common-sense basis is less manifest and perceptible. The recognition of contradictions goes against the grain of practically everything that passed as scientific tradition during the last five centuries. During practically the whole of that time science suffered from having a mechanistic outlook and on the basis of that outlook tried to represent the world as though there were no contradictions in it. It blamed the stupidity of our minds for all those contradictions which it could not fail to notice. It refused to regard contradictions as a normal element of reality. Through thousands of channels this adverse tradition has moulded the mind of everybody and imbued us with a resistance against the scientific conception of the movement of things.

Intellectual and material contradictions
TWO different sorts of contradictions must be distinguished from the very outset, the one intellectual, i.e. in our mind, and the other material, i.e. in concrete reality.

Some ideas or statements are self-contradictory because they are ideas of things which are inherently impossible. Such is the idea of a Jewish Nazi, of a 6-carat diamond priced at 2d by a dealer, of a match which burns with a cold flame, of a sane employer who is prepared to pay wages of any amount. It is an intellectual contradiction to say that beefsteak is not meat, or wheat is not corn. If we say that, we deny to beefsteak and wheat one of their essential qualities and that is a contradiction. Intellectual contradictions should be avoided, being absurd and nonsensical. They are the result and the sign of false thinking.

We assume the presence of a *material* contradiction wherever we observe that something destroys itself, or moves itself, or hinders itself, stands in its own way. A boy should come to dinner. But he remains upstairs, having an outburst of temper. His brother describes his behaviour as follows: "He wants to come downstairs, but he won't let himself". The angry boy is in a state of contradiction; is torn and shaken by contradictory desires.

A material contradiction means that one concrete process contains two mutu-

ally incompatible and exclusive, but nevertheless equally essential and indispensable parts or aspects. The reader who finds this definition rather involved should skip over it and hurry to the examples which will make the thing clear.

Contradiction in nature

IN some instances we can observe that a thing moves and destroys itself. This is the case with radium and uranium which decompose themselves into other elements by a spontaneous radiation and disintegration. Since this disintegration is not due to external causes, but the constitution of radium itself, we would assume the presence of a contradiction in radium. At the moment, however, we are incapable of pointing out what the contradiction is.

We find clearer examples in the life of organisms. Engels pointed out that a living being is at any given moment the same and yet another. He further drew attention to the fact that a living cell continually decomposes and disintegrates itself. Its life consists in that it simultaneously performs two contradictory processes, breaks down and builds itself up again. Recent research has further shown that the chemical products of decomposition are the natural stimulus which keeps life, and the process of building up, going.

Capitalism

IT is, however, in society that the presence of contradictions is most marked. In all stages of history, contradictions have been the ultimate cause of changes in society. We can understand nothing at all of what happens in present-day society without tracing events back to the basic contradiction in capitalism.

The correct explanation of the recurrent economic crises is one of the triumphs of the dialectical method. Orthodox economists are as unable to explain the crises as their employers are to avoid it. They cannot admit the presence of a contradiction which, periodically, tears capitalism to pieces. For this would imply the admission that something is fundamentally wrong with capitalism. In their frantic search for an inoffensive cause of the economic crises they have sometimes suggested sun spots, sometimes they even dare to blame the monetary system, but never the system of production as such.

Capitalism often stands in its own way. In the 19th century, for example, the British capitalists acted without a common plan. Everyone felt compelled to outrun his competitors in profit-making. The British capitalists therefore exported machines abroad. In this way, they destroyed the British monopoly of the world market for industrial goods, and equipped their own competitors. The "depressed areas" are the result of this self-destruction which, however, was inevitable under the system.

Every seven or ten years or so, capitalism stands in its own way — it develops a crisis. In time of crisis, capitalist production is not impeded by any outside force, but by itself. The very development of production on capitalist lines produces a check to this production periodically and with disastrous results for the mass of the population. We thus have here a situation which suggests an underlying contradiction.

What is the basic contradiction in capitalism? What are the two essential but incompatible aspects of capitalist production? They are, co-operative production on the one hand, and private ownership of the means and fruits of production, on the other hand.

Modern production is based on an immense co-operation. Millions of people have to co-operate, in one way or other, in order to produce any commodity, say a piece of soap or of chocolate. On the other hand, the products of this co-operation are owned by a small minority. The work of the millions is carried on for the profit of the few.

It is the most obvious fact about the crisis that we have, on the one hand, large quantities of products which cannot be sold and, on the other hand, large masses of workers who are in need of these same products. The world crisis of 1929 to 1934 forced 25 to 30 million workers to become unemployed in the capitalist countries. The productive capacity of the factories could not be fully utilised. The following table shows the extent to which German factory productive capacity was utilised in recent years:

1929	67.4%
1930	52.2%
1931	44.5%
1932	35.7%

As a result of the contradictory nature of capitalism, production must necessarily, after some time, go beyond the limits of purchasing power. Everything conspires to extend production and to contract the market.

If production were expanded according to a plan, no harm would result. But production is extended by employers who fiercely compete for their share in the market; who, during prosperity, must rush with the products into the market if they do not want to be late. Each capitalist is at the heels of another capitalist. Everybody must take the opportunity as long as it is there. Everybody must produce at top speed, irrespective of the volume of purchasing power, which does not expand so quickly. Soon the market is flooded with products of all kinds and the crash comes.

The market, on the other hand, depends largely on the masses of the population. Of course, there is also a market for machines. But the machines, once bought, produce things to be consumed by the masses. Nobody buys a hot-water-bottle-machine for its beauty. It is bought in order to pro-

* This explanation of dialectical materialism was written in the mid-'30s.

duce hot water bottles, which must be sold to the masses. The purchasing power of the market thus depends mainly on wages and salaries. During prosperity, wages rise, but they are far from rising sufficiently to absorb the growing production. For the output per worker increases much faster than his wages do, even in times of prosperity. The increase in the rate of interest compels the employer to resist further wage demands. The relatively high wages and the fierce competition for the market compel him to introduce new machinery which saves labour and wages, but while it increases production it reduces purchasing power.

It is very nice to advise the employer to pay higher wages in order that he may avoid a crisis. No doubt he would listen to such exhortations, if he were interested in the production of shoes, cotton, machines, etc. But he is interested in the production of profit only. Higher wages are paid at the expense of his profit and thus diminish his interest in producing anything at all. During a crisis, the surplus goods which have been stored up must first be sold. Prices fall. Between 1929 and 1933, wholesale prices in the main industrial countries decreased annually by between 30 and 35 per cent. It took three years, from 1929 to 1932, for the stocks of agricultural produce and industrial raw materials to diminish seriously. After this has been achieved, we have the paradox that a crisis which was the result of low purchasing power can in the end be overcome only by raising prices and lowering wages. These two operations diminish purchasing power but they raise the rate of profit which provides an incentive for resuming production.

The art of politics consists in solving those contradictions with which reality presents us. To find a solution to the contradiction of capitalism is the great issue of today.

A permanent solution is possible only by destroying one of the two sides of the contradiction. The only permanent cure which keeps for the working class the fruits of technical progress consists in the abolition of private profit.

The private ownership of the means and fruits of production must be replaced by their common ownership and democratic control. ■

Class legacy

A dying socialist to his son

"Thy father is a poor man," mark well what that may mean,
On the tablets of thy memory that truth write bright and clean,
Thy father's lot it was to toil from earliest boyhood on,
And know his latent energies for a master's profit drawn;
Or else, ill-starred, to wander round and huxter-like to vend
His precious store of brain and brawn for all whom fate may send,
Across his path with gold enough to purchase Labour's power
To turn it into gold again, and fructify the hour
With sweat and blood of toiling slaves, like unto us my son;
Aye, through our veins since earliest days, 'tis poor man's blood has run.

Yes, son of mine, since History's dawn two classes stand revealed,
The Rich and Poor, in bitterest war, by deadliest hatred steeled,
The one, incarnate greed and crime, disdaining honest toil,
Had grasped man's common birthright and treasure house, the soil.

And issuing forth from walls of stone, high over cliff and pass,
With sword in hand would gather in the tribute for his class,
And grimmest emblems of their rule flaunting to human ken,
The pit to drown our women, the gibbet for our men.
Stood, aye, beside their fortresses; and underneath the moat
Tier under tier of noisome cells for those the tyrant smote.
Thumbscrew and rack and branding rod, and each device of Hell
Perverted genius could devise to torture men to sell
(For brief respite from anguish dire to end their wretched lives)
The secrets of their comradeship, the honour of their wives.

"The past?" Ah, boy, the method's past; the deed is still the same,
And robbery is robbery yet, though cloaked in gentler name.
Our means of life are still usurped, the rich man still is lord,
And prayers and cries for justice still meet one reply — the sword!
Though hypocrites for rich man's gold may tell us we are free,
And oft extoll in speech and print our vaunted liberty.
But freedom lies not in a name, and he who lacks for bread,
Must have that bread tho' he should give his soul for it instead.
And we, who live by Labour, know that while they rule we must
Sell Freedom, brain, and limb, to win for us and ours a crust.

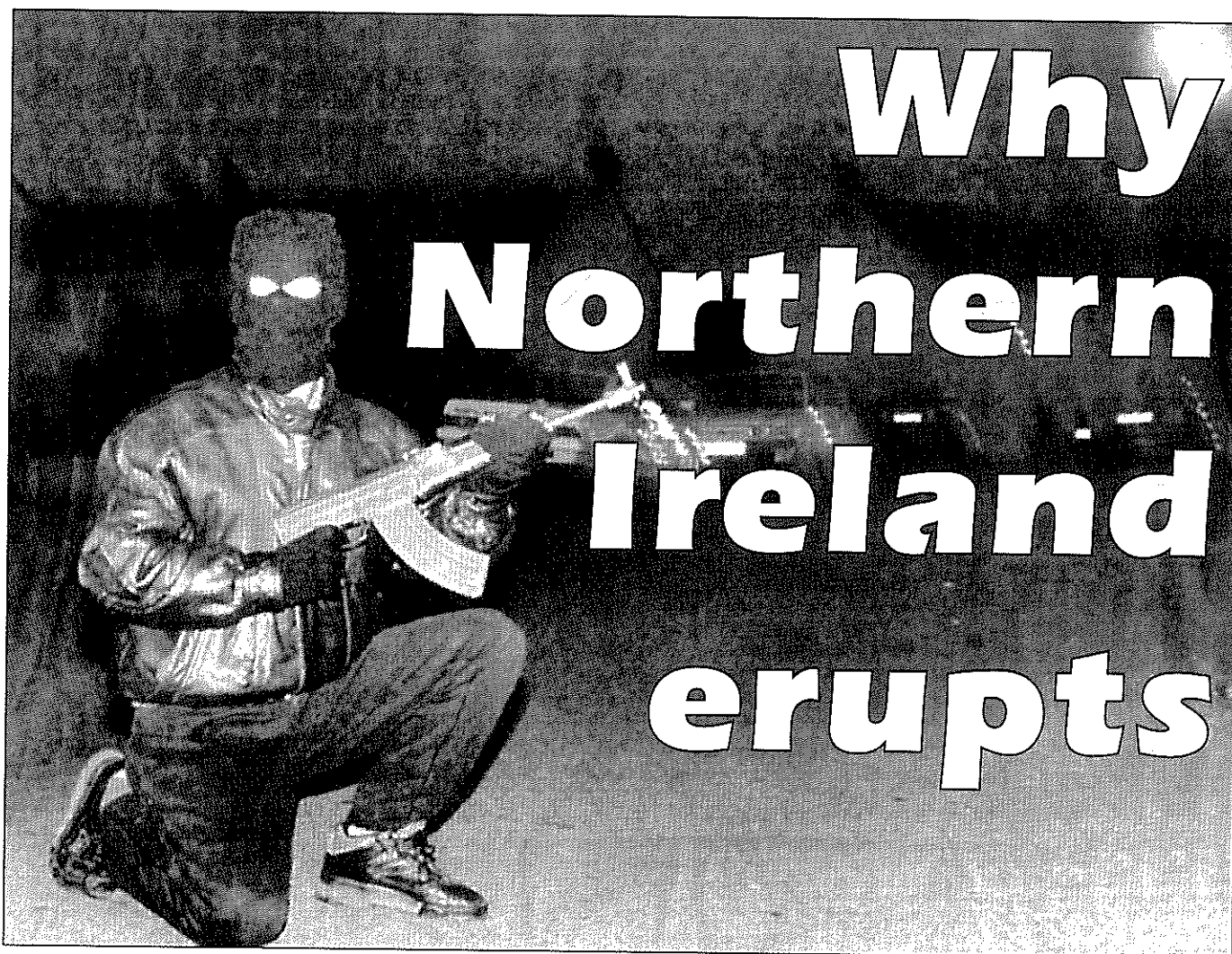
The robbers made our fathers slaves, then

chained them to the soil,
For a little longer chain — a wage — we must exchange our toil.
But open force gave way to fraud, and force again behind
Prepares to strike if fraud should fail to keep man deaf and blind.
Our mothers see their children's limbs they fondled as they grew,
And doted on, caught up to make for rich men profits new.
Whilst strong men die for lack of work, and cries of misery swell,
And women's souls in cities' streets creep shuddering to hell.
These things belong not to the past, but to the present day,
And they shall last till in our wrath we sweep them all away.

Treasure ye in your inmost heart this legacy of hate,
For those who on the poor man's back have climbed to high estate,
The lords of land and capital, the slave lords of our age,
Who of this smiling earth of ours have made for us a cage.
Where golden bars fetter men's souls, and noble thoughts do flame
To burn us with their vain desires, and virtue yields to shame.
Each is your foe, foe to your class, of human rights, the foe,
Be it your thought by day and night to work their overthrow;
And howsoe'er you earn your wage, and where-soe'er you go,
Be it beneath the tropic heat or mid the northern snow.
Or closely pent in factory walls or burrowing in the mine,
Or scorching in the furnace hell of steamers 'cross the brine.
Or on the railroad's shining track you guide the flying wheel,
Or clamouring up on buildings high to weld their frames of steel.
Or use the needle or the type, the hammer or the pen,
Have you one thought, one speech alone to all your fellow-men.
The men and women of your class, tell them their wrongs and yours,
Plant in their hearts that hatred deep that suffers and endures.
And treasuring up each deed of wrong, each scornful word and look,
Inscribe it in the memory, as others in a book.
And wait and watch through toiling years the ripening of time,
Yet deem to strike before that hour were worse than folly — crime.

This be your task, oh, son of mine, the rich man's hate to brave,
And consecrate your noblest part to rouse each fellow-slave,
To speed the day the world awaits when Labour long oppress,
Shall rise and strike for Freedom true, and from the tyrants wrest —
The power they have abused so long. Oh, ever glorious deed!
The crowning point of history, yet, child, of bitterest need.

James Connolly



Why Northern Ireland erupts

By Helen Rate

ONE CATHOLIC taxi driver — seemingly chosen at random — shot in the back of the head by Protestant sectarian gun men; Protestant-Unionist barricades erected all across Northern Ireland, blocking at least 80 main roads; Catholic families driven out of their homes in North Belfast; Catholic schools attacked; large Protestant-Unionist crowds in angry confrontations with the RUC and the British Army — 8 July 1996 was the day in which Northern Ireland showed once more how volatile it is.

Beneath the "peace process" and the "all party talks" communal resentments seethe in the neighbourhoods, housing estates and towns of Northern Ireland. As we go to press it is not possible to judge whether this eruption is a flash of sudden lightening in the days leading up to July 12, when the Orange Order marches, or a sign that serious violence is once again going to set Northern Ireland alight.

What fuels this sudden outbreak? Unionist fears that they will be the losers in the "peace process". Since the IRA declared a ceasefire in August 1994, Unionist relief at the cessation of violence has been tempered by fear of a looming "sell out" of their cause by the British government.

The "peace process" promoted by the pan-nationalist alliance — all Irish nationalist parties, including Sinn Féin, and Irish America — was, the PIRA believed, the best way to get what they had been fighting for — "war by other

means". That is what Unionists feared.

While PIRA have shown, by resuming military action, that they no longer believe this, the Unionists still feel themselves to be part of a "process" in which concessions are being offered to the "other side" as "reward" for PIRA violence, and as a result of Irish nationalist, including American, pressure. They do not trust the British government.

They know the contempt and derision in which their "traditions" are held by the British media. They see much more in these traditions than mere communal triumphalism. They fell pushed and crowded. Thus the ban on their march in Portadown became the focus for general anger and issue around which to mount general "resistance".

On July 8 Portadown sparked the biggest province-wide Orange mobilisation for years.

Last year, despite an initial RUC ban on their Portadown march, they won the right to march. This year the RUC and the army were better prepared.

There is an element in all this, of political leaders flexing muscle to show the others in the "all party talks" that the Unionists will not let themselves be pushed around. The question is whether they can control the forces they now unleash.

David Trimble MP was prominent in the confrontations around Portadown last year, and went on to win the leadership of his party partly as a result of that. Very soon afterwards, he went to Dublin, something Orange leaders do not do casually. Trimble shows every sign of wanting the "peace talks" to register progress. Trimble, now leader of the Official Unionist Party, is prominent in Portadown this year too... But the calculating political demagogues may not be able to control an increasingly volatile situation.

It is worth remembering that it was not the PIRA, but the much weightier forces of Ulster Unionism which destroyed the last great effort to build new political structures in Northern Ireland — by the way of a nine day general strike in 1974.

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