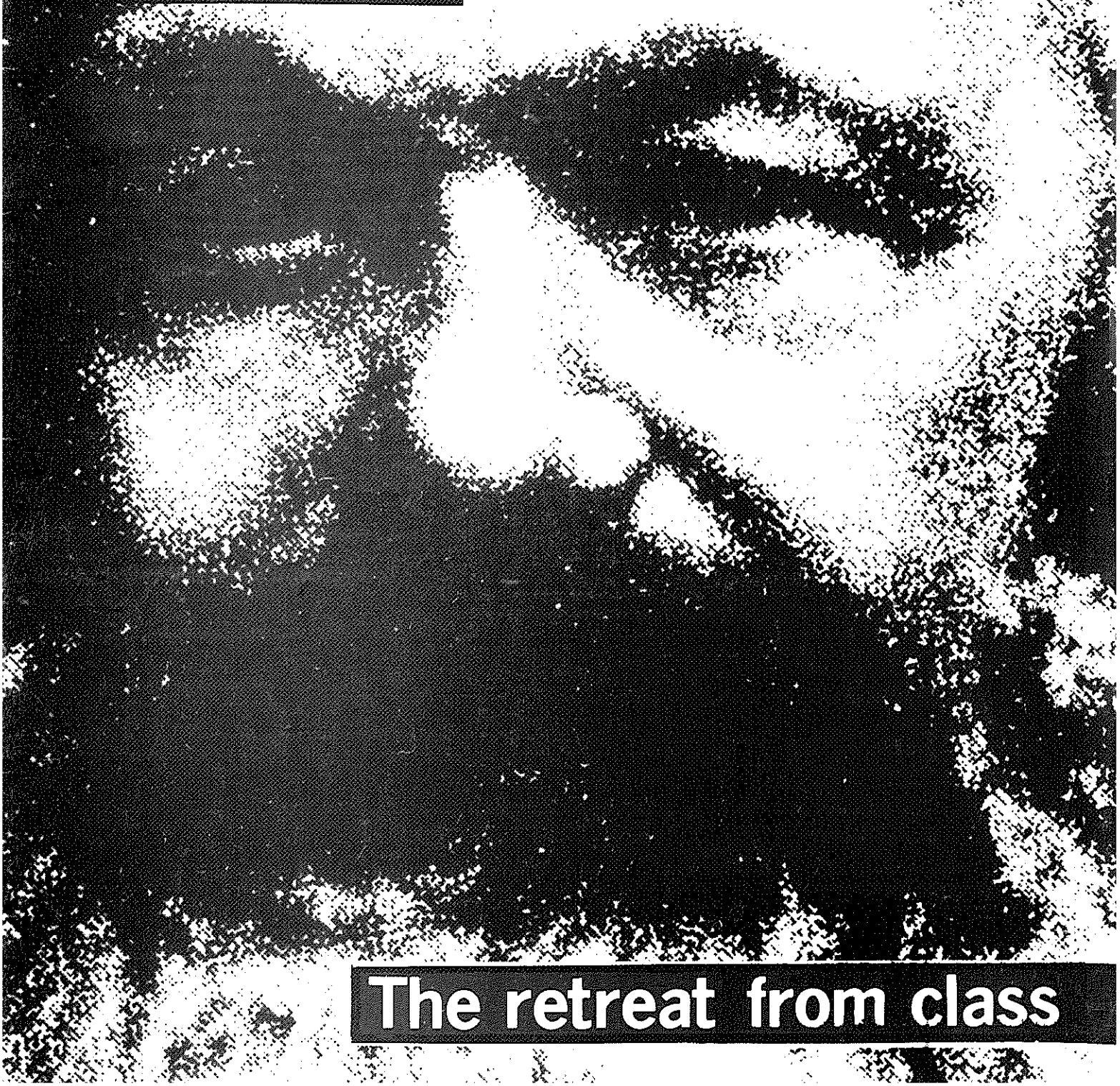
WORKERS' LIBERTY

No.6 April/May '87. 90p

"For almost forty years we have stressed the class struggle as the most immediate driving power in history and, in particular, the class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat as the great lever of the modern social upheaval; therefore it is impossible for us to ally ourselves with people who want to eliminate this class struggle from the movement... The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself."

Marx and Engels to Bebel, September 1879.



The retreat from class

WORKERS' LIBERTY

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

Karl Marx

THE FIRST five issues of Workers' Liberty were pamphlet editions. With no.6 we start producing Workers' Liberty as a magazine carrying articles on a wide variety of subjects.

We aim to bring out the next issue for the beginning of June, to run for June-July-August, and then from September to go on to a bimonthly schedule of production.

Workers' Liberty's outlook is that of Trotskyism. But that will not tell the reader familiar with the state of things on the left very much. 'Trotskyists' nowadays come in all sorts of grades, shapes, shades and sizes, and alloyed with everything 'radical' from Irish Catholic nationalism to Khomeini-ism to Castroism.

There are now many individuals and groupings who set out to respond to political events on the basis of Trotskyism, and yet arrive at different conclusions, sometimes vastly different conclusions. So it must be with any living movement that exists over decades during which groupings, trends, and traditions are created by the different responses to events and the different answers made to the problems posed by, for example, the survival and expansion of Stalinism.

For this reason we will try to make Workers' Liberty a forum for discussion of principles and issues, and a vehicle for dialogue and interaction with the Marxist left.

A letter to our readers

The main theme of this issue is a reassertion of the centrality of working-class struggle to socialist politics. The central task of Workers' Liberty will be to analyse the world around us in a Marxist way. One of the root ideas of revolutionary Marxism is the recognition that the class struggle takes place on three fronts, the economic, the political, and the ideological, and that if the working class does not win the battle with the ruling class on the ideological front then it will never emancipate itself. If Marxists do not analyse and understand the world, then they lose that ideological battle by default.

And if Marxists indulge in romantic populist fantasies, and in wishful thinking about the 'socialist' Stalinist states, then we lose the battle by running away from reality. That is what — in our view — most of the Trotskyist left has been doing for a long time; and the result is a terrible mess. It needs to be cleared up.

Workers' Liberty needs your help — practical and financial. Sell the magazine, write for it, send us a donation.

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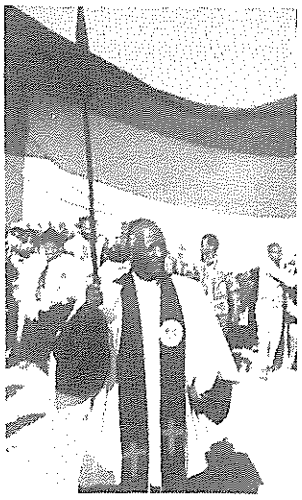

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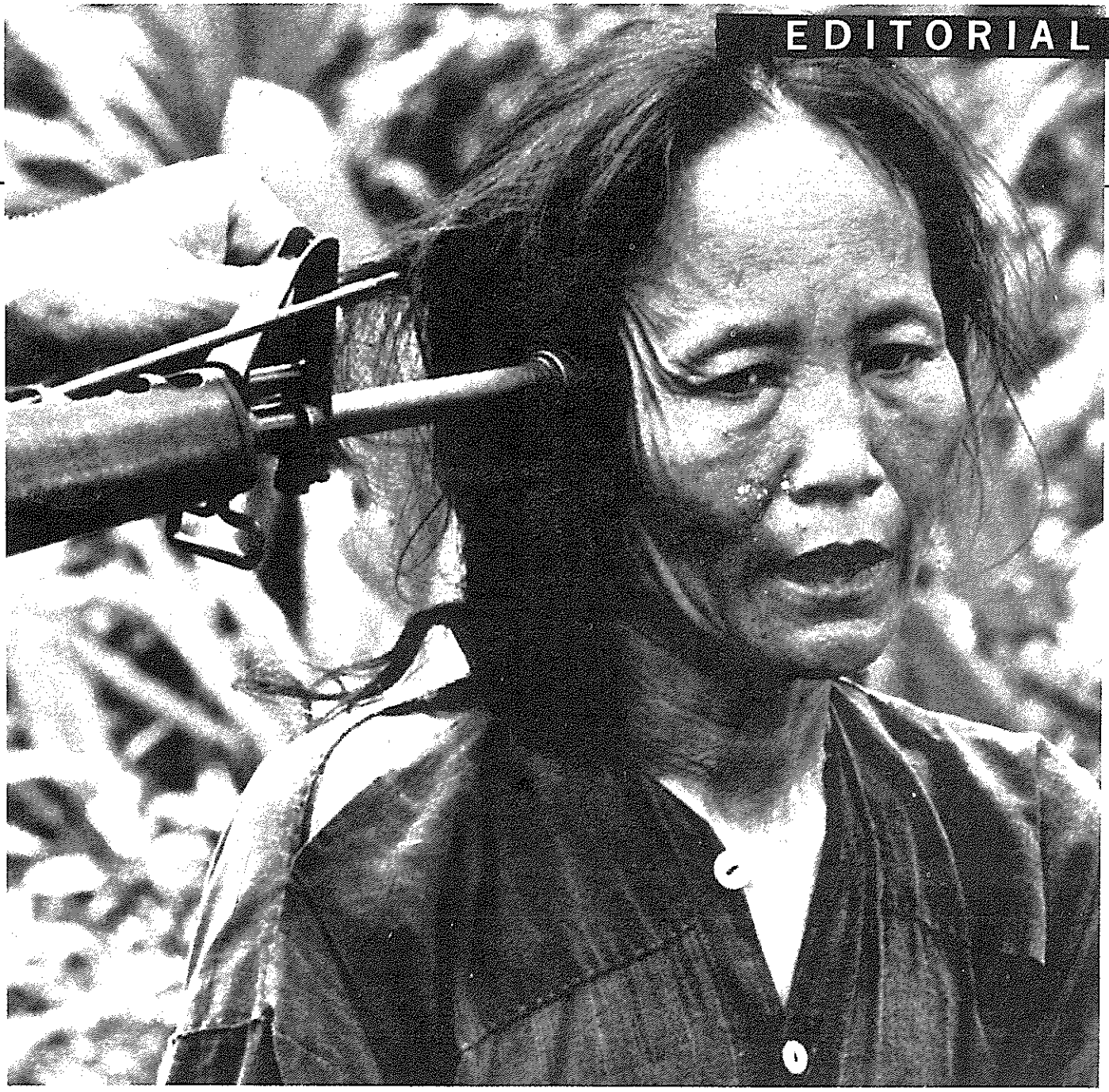


Imperialism in Vietman.....

The road to peace

NEGOTIATIONS are once more under way on arms control. Anything that lessens the danger of nuclear conflict is to be welcomed. But nothing agreed between the superpowers merits the trust and confidence of socialists.

The US is a brutal imperialist power. This scarcely needs to be said on the left. But many on the left think that we should align ourselves with the USSR and with its gambits in arms diplomacy. They believe that condemnation of the USSR implies cold-war bigotry and jingoism, like that expressed in the memorable phrase of one of Reagan's scriptwriters about 'The Evil Empire'.

Socialists have no time for this chauvinism. But we should have no time for dishonest cant either. Or for the ignoble thought that we should not bother too much about the evils of the Russian system because we want peace with that system at all costs. Socialists want peace; but socialists who make political and ideological peace with the vile oppression of the working class and of subject nationalities which is Stalinism are selling their socialist birthright. We should be as bigoted against oppression in the USSR and by the USSR as we are bigoted and irreconcilable against the oppressions of capitalism at home and abroad.

For what is the superpower conflict about? Our world is dominated by two power blocks — one led and loosely dominated by the US, and the other tightly dominated by the USSR. Nothing less than the future of humanity depends on the prevention of all-out nuclear war between these blocks.

Nuclear peace has been preserved for four decades on the basis of a balance of nuclear terror. Wars between the blocks have been confined to Korea and Vietnam, and have involved not the USSR but North Korea and China, and North Vietnam. Conflict has otherwise been confined to the struggle for influence and dominance in the Third World.

The US's typical ally in this competition has been the right-wing military-based regime linked to archaic and corrupt local oligarchies and ruling classes. The USSR's best allies have been the local — usually peasant-based — Communist Parties and their military formations. Those Stalinist movements have channelled, and organised into powerful forces for social change, nationalist grievances as well as the social discontent of workers, peasants and urban petty bourgeois.

But the superpower conflict is not a contest between progress

and reaction. The international Stalinist movement, linked to the USSR, has shown itself to have a dual character. It is sometimes capable of being revolutionary against capitalism and pre-capitalist systems — but always it is simultaneously counter-revolutionary against the working class. Mobilising peasants and, sometimes, workers to gain power, it imprisons the working class in a totalitarian vice once it has succeeded in gaining and stabilising control.

During and after the Second World War, the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy demonstrated first that it could survive, then that it could expand, and finally that it could replicate itself in countries as distant and as different as China and Cuba. The bureaucracy has shown itself to be more stable and durable than Trotsky, who saw it as a transitory and aberrant freak, believed possible. The pattern of the bureaucracy's rise is perfectly plain in retrospect.

In the decade between the final crushing of the working class Left Opposition in 1927 and the Moscow Trials of the mid '30s, the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy took to itself all the worst characteristics of a ruling class. In 1928 it faced down the revolt of resurgent capitalist forces — the kulaks and the NEP-bourgeoisie — and, as Trotsky later (1940) put it, made itself the sole master of the surplus product. Slave-driving the working class, and converting many millions of workers and peasants literally into slaves in labour camps, the USSR rapidly industrialised. Surrounded by hostile imperialist powers, the bureaucracy manoeuvred and fought for advantage, and began to compete with those powers on something like equal terms.

In mid 1939 it signed a pact with Hitler's Germany which freed the hands of the Nazi regime to unleash the Second World War, and gained for the USSR partnership with Hitler in the partition of Poland and Nazi acceptance of Russian annexation of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, the three Baltic states since incorporated into the USSR. Various other spheres of joint activity were discussed between the Nazis and Stalin, including invasion of then British-controlled India. One of the reasons why they fell out was a dispute over whose sphere of influence Bulgaria was in.

The sudden Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941 came close to toppling the Stalin regime, but by 1943 the tide had turned and Stalin's armies began a relentless march west, to the very heart of Germany. At Yalta in 1944, Russia's control of Eastern Europe was acknowledged by the big capitalist powers. There followed two or three years of interregnum during which Stalin's armies, allied to largely (though not entirely) manufactured local CPs, established iron totalitarian control in occupied Eastern Europe and Germany. Stalin had been forced by US pressure in 1946 to evacuate the northern part of Iran, which the USSR had invaded in 1941; and his plea to the UN that the USSR should be given 'the Mandate' over former 'Italian' North Africa (Libya) was unsuccessful. But by 1948 Stalin's system had extended itself to incorporate vast areas of Europe and about 90 million people.

That is where it is today, acting as a brutal occupying power. It used military force to repress the German workers in 1953, the Hungarian people in 1956, and the Czechs in 1968. It used the threat of it to limit and ultimately destroy Poland's Solidarnosc in 1980-1.

This, too, is an imperialist system, and one which today holds far more people in direct subjugation than any other imperialist power now existing. Even within the USSR's own frontiers a majority of the people belong to oppressed nationalities — like the 50 million Ukrainians, for example, who are subject to a relentless 'Russification' policy.

The argument used by most Marxists against defining the USSR as imperialist goes something like this. Imperialism in the 20th century means monopoly capitalism and its drive to expansion. Russia is not monopoly capitalist, therefore it cannot be imperialist. But this is using categories, definitions and labels not to facilitate thought but to prevent it; not to make sense of the facts, but effectively to deny them. If this approach is pursued consistently, it must result in the denial that there has ever been in history an imperialism other than monopoly-capitalist imperialism; and that would still leave the Stalinist USSR to be linked in history with a vast number of imperialisms which were not based on monopoly capitalism, thereby defining monopoly-capitalist expansionism as some sort of aberration. That is decadent logic-chopping, not Marxism.

This nonsense passes for Trotskyism, or even 'orthodox' Trotskyism, on this question. But in fact Trotsky himself had a different position. In 1939 he recognised the 'element' of imperialism in Stalin's policy, and he did so in words that leave little doubt about what he would have made of the gigantic fact of the USSR's post-war expansion.

Writing when the USSR's expansion was as yet insignificant, Trotsky insisted that in Marxist literature imperialism meant monopoly capitalism. Even in 1939, however, he indicated the Russian bureaucracy's place within the overall historic picture of imperialism:

"The driving force behind the Moscow bureaucracy is indubitably the tendency to expand its power, its prestige, its revenues. This is the element of 'imperialism' in the wider sense of the word which was the property in the past of all monarchies, oligarchies, ruling classes, medieval estates and classes".

The USSR did expand, and for over 40 years it has managed to hold on to what it got, in the face of every pressure from capitalist imperialism short of all-out war. After the defeat of Hitler's Germany the USSR was the second strongest military power in the world, overshadowing Europe and matched only by the US. In response to the USSR's settled control of Eastern Europe the US and its allies resorted to cold war and preparations for a third world war. The USSR's power neutralised the early US monopoly of the atom bomb, balancing the threat of the A-bomb's use with the threat to take Western Europe should it come to war. By the time Western Europe had been built up economically and militarily so as to have some chance of standing up to Stalin's armies, or at least for long enough for the US A-bombs to tip the balance, the USSR had broken the US monopoly and had its own nuclear bombs. Instead of world war 3 there was prolonged cold war, supplemented by the Korean

and Vietnam wars.

On the other side, the old colonial powers, France and Britain, came out of the war enfeebled and weak. Powerful nationalist movements confronted them in the colonies, some Stalinist-influenced or controlled. The Chinese Stalinists won power in the biggest semi-colony on earth in 1949, and the Vietnamese in the north of their country in the mid-'50s. The US aspired not to set up its own colonial block, displacing France and Britain, but to win hegemony in the non-Stalinist world on the basis of its great economic strength. It prised open the old exclusive trading blocks and nudged Britain and France towards the dissolution of their colonial empires. A powerful wave of rationalisation and integration of the capitalist world developed, and a growth of almost free trade under the economic hegemony of the US giant. The cold war unfroze in the '50s, and not even the Vietnam war brought it back to the icy level of the late '40s and early '50s.

Then, in the 1970s, the US's unchallenged hegemony in the capitalist world came to an end. It was defeated in the Vietnam war, and faced with intense and vigorous competition from Europe and Japan. The USSR expanded its influence in Africa, and at Christmas 1979 it invaded Afghanistan to stop the defeat of its client regime there. The invasion alarmed the capitalist world and simultaneously allowed it to justify a renewed military drive to US and international public opinion. Seven years of renewed intense cold war have followed, accompanied by hot wars in Afghanistan — 'the USSR's Vietnam' — and in Central America.

Peace will not be helped by pretending that either of the two bloody superpowers is other than what it is. The real road to peace lies not in negotiations between capitalist and bureaucratic imperialists, but in a different direction — the direction of consistent democracy in international affairs and the overthrow of the imperialists by the working class, East and West.

That road to peace was mapped out in a magnificent document addressed to the peoples of the world — and in the first place to the working class of every country — by the Russian Bolsheviks on 8 November 1917, the day after the Russian working class took power. Naturally some of the specific conditions have changed, but in its fundamentals this programme is as fresh and as adequate today as it was when the Congress of Soviets — that most democratic, and at the same time most revolutionary, of representative assemblies — proclaimed it to a blood-drenched and war-weary world 70 years ago. Excerpts:

"The Workers' and Peasants' government created by the revolution of 6-7 November and backed by the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers', and Peasants' Deputies calls upon all the belligerent peoples and their governments to start immediate negotiations for a just and democratic peace.

By a just, or democratic, peace... the government means an immediate peace without annexations (i.e., the seizure of foreign lands, or the forcible incorporation of foreign nations) and indemnities...

In accordance with the sense of justice of the democracy in general, and of the toiling classes in particular, the government interprets the annexation, or seizure, of foreign lands as meaning the incorporation into a large and powerful state of a small or feeble nation without the definitely, clearly and voluntarily expressed consent and wish of that nation, irrespective of the time such forcible incorporation took place, irrespective of the degree of development or backwardness of the nation forcibly annexed to, or forcibly retained within, the frontiers of the given state, and finally, irrespective of whether the nation inhabits Europe or distant, overseas countries.

If any nation whatsoever is forcibly retained within the boundaries of a given state, if, in spite of its expressed desire -- no matter whether that desire is expressed in the press, at popular meetings, in party decisions, or in protests and revolts against national oppression — it is not permitted the right to decide the forms of its state existence by a free vote, taken after the complete evacuation of the troops of the incorporating or, generally, of the stronger nation, without the least pressure being brought to bear upon it, such incorporation is annexation, i.e., seizure and coercion.

The government considers that it would be the greatest of crimes against humanity to continue this war for the purpose of dividing up among the strong and rich nations the feeble nationalities seized by them, and solemnly declares its determination to sign immediately conditions of peace terminating this war on the conditions indicated, which are equally just for all peoples without exception...

While addressing this proposal for peace to the governments and peoples of all the belligerent countries, the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government of Russia appeals in particular to the class conscious workers of the three most advanced nations of mankind, the largest states participating in the present war, namely, Great Britain, France and Germany.

For these workers, by comprehensive, determined and supremely energetic action, can help us to bring to a successful conclusion the cause of peace, and at the same time the cause of the emancipation of the toiling and exploited masses of the population from all forms of slavery and all forms of exploitation.

The Workers' and Peasants' Government created by the revolution of 6-7 November and backed by the Soviets of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies, must begin immediate negotiations for peace.

Our appeal must be directed both to the governments and to the peoples. We cannot ignore the governments, for that would delay the possibility of concluding peace, and the people's government dare not do that; but we have no right not to appeal to the peoples at the same time. Everywhere there are differences between the governments and the peoples, and we must therefore help the peoples to interfere in the question of war and peace. We will, of course, insist upon the whole of our programme for a peace without annexations and indemnities. We shall not retreat from our programme; but we must deprive our enemies of the opportunity of declaring that their conditions are different from ours and that therefore it is useless to start negotiations with us. No, we must deprive them of that advantageous position and not advance our terms in the form of an ultimatum. Therefore the point is included that we are ready to consider all terms of peace and all proposals. We shall consider them, but that does not necessarily mean that we shall accept them...

We are combatting the duplicity of governments which in words talk of peace and justice, but in fact wage annexationist and predatory wars. There is not a single government that will say all it thinks. We, however, are opposed to secret diplomacy and will act openly in the eyes of the whole people. We do not, and never did, close our eyes to the difficulties. War cannot be ended by refusal, it cannot be ended by one side only...

In proposing the conclusion of an immediate armistice, we appeal to the class consious workers of the countries that have done so much for the development of the proletarian movement. We appeal to the workers of England, where there was the Chartist movement, to the workers of France, who have in repeated insurrections displayed the strength of their class consciousness, and to the workers of Germany, who waged the fight against the Anti-Socialist Law and have created powerful organisations.

The government and the bourgeoisie will make every effort to unite their forces and drown the workers' and peasants' revolution in blood. But the three years of war have been a good lesson to the masses; Soviet movements in other countries, the mutiny of the German fleet, which was crushed by the Junkers of the hangman Wilhelm... The workers' movement will triumph and will lay the path to peace and socialism".

EDITORIAL

No, we are not beaten!

Have the Tories seen off the British working class? They think so; and they can make an impressive case. Two of the strongest battalions, the miners and the Fleet Street printers, have been heavily defeated. Trade union membership has declined from 12 million in 1979 to some 9.2 million today. Strikes have declined even more. In no year since 1980 have there been many more than half the number of strikes in 1974; last year, 1986, there were fewer than one-third as many. Since the 1983 print dispute at Warrington, and the miners' strike, the Tories' array of anti-union laws has taken a firm grip.

'Flexible' working — part-time, temporary, sub-contracted — has steadily increased. Today a full third of the workforce are 'flexible' workers.

Profits have risen steadily since 1981. In 1985 the net rate of return on capital (excluding North Sea oil) was higher than in any year since 1973; and this year "Each week has brought announcements of company profits well above even the City's expectations" (Sunday Times, 15 March). The percentage of national income taken by wages and salaries has dropped from 60% in 1980 to 55% in 1985. Output per worker in manufacturing industry rose 29% between 1981 and 1986: three workers in 1986 were producing nearly as much as four in 1981.

Some sectors, at least, of industry have been growing fairly briskly since the big slump of the early '80s. Consumer goods output increased by a respectable 3.3% from late 1985 to late 1986.

Labour's vote dwindled to 28% of the electorate in 1983; and its recovery since then has been feeble.

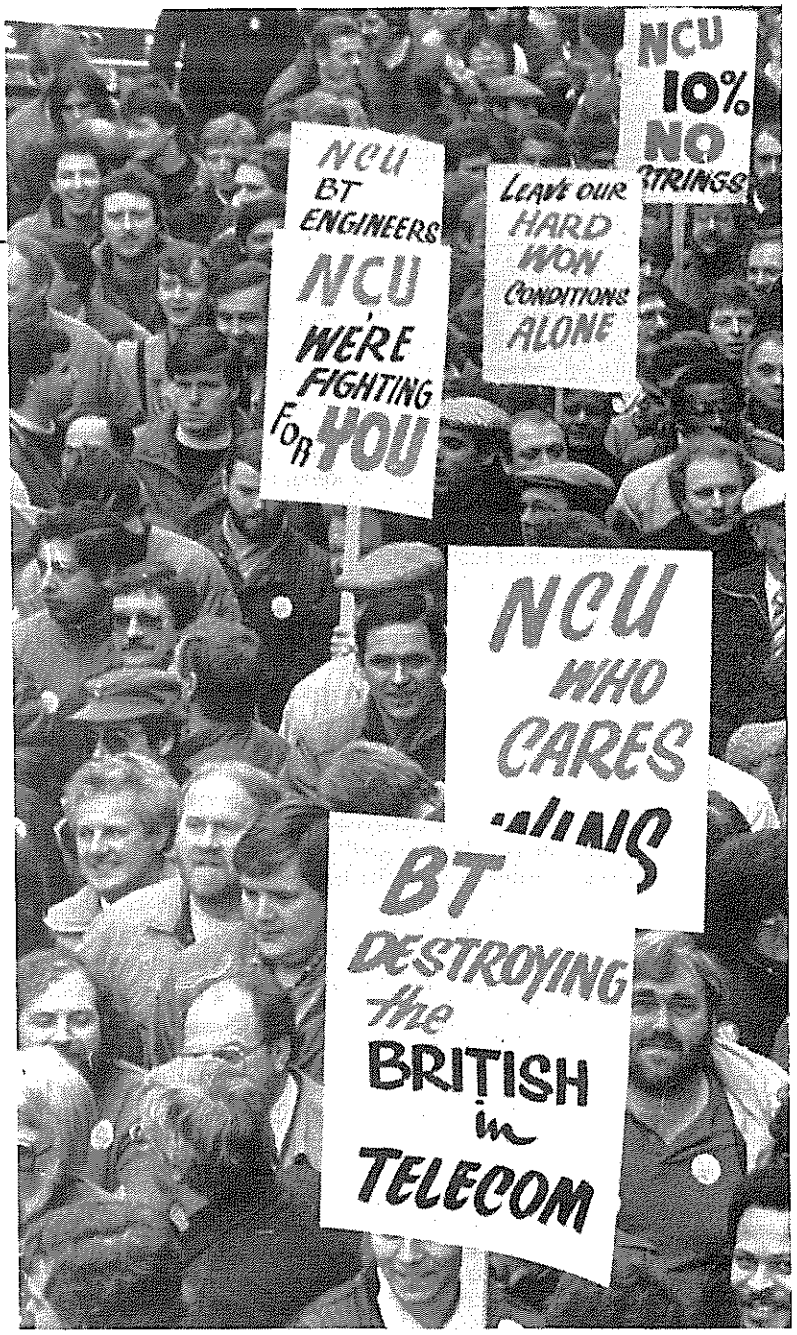
Undeniably the working class has suffered severe defeats. These defeats have come together with changes in the structure of the working class — sharp declines in traditional bastions — which have doubled their effect.

But it is premature for the Tories to cry victory. It is certainly premature for socialists to give up on working-class struggle and to suppose that any hope for the future lies in a coalition of peace protests, youth street-rioting, and municipal reform!

Many times, in other countries, the working class has recovered from defeats far more severe than those we have had recently in Britain. Since 1973 the Chilean working class has had its militants massacred or forced to flee, its organisations battered, and its base undermined by terrible slumps; yet now the Chilean workers are on the streets again, and the Pinochet dictatorship is tottering.

Besides, the defeats in Britain may not be as total as they seem. Consider the dockers. By 1984 they looked like a spent force: their numbers had dwindled, and traditionally well-organised ports like Liverpool had lost out to new ones like Felixstowe. Yet the dockers' strike in 1984, alongside the miners, was a serious threat to the Tories. And to this day nothing has come of the Tories' talk of scrapping the National Dock Labour Scheme.

The dockers, admittedly, had never been heavily defeated in a full-scale confrontation. But the telecom engineers had been —



Telecom strikers. Photo: Ian Swindale.

over Project Mercury and privatisation. Still they were able to mount a powerful strike this year.

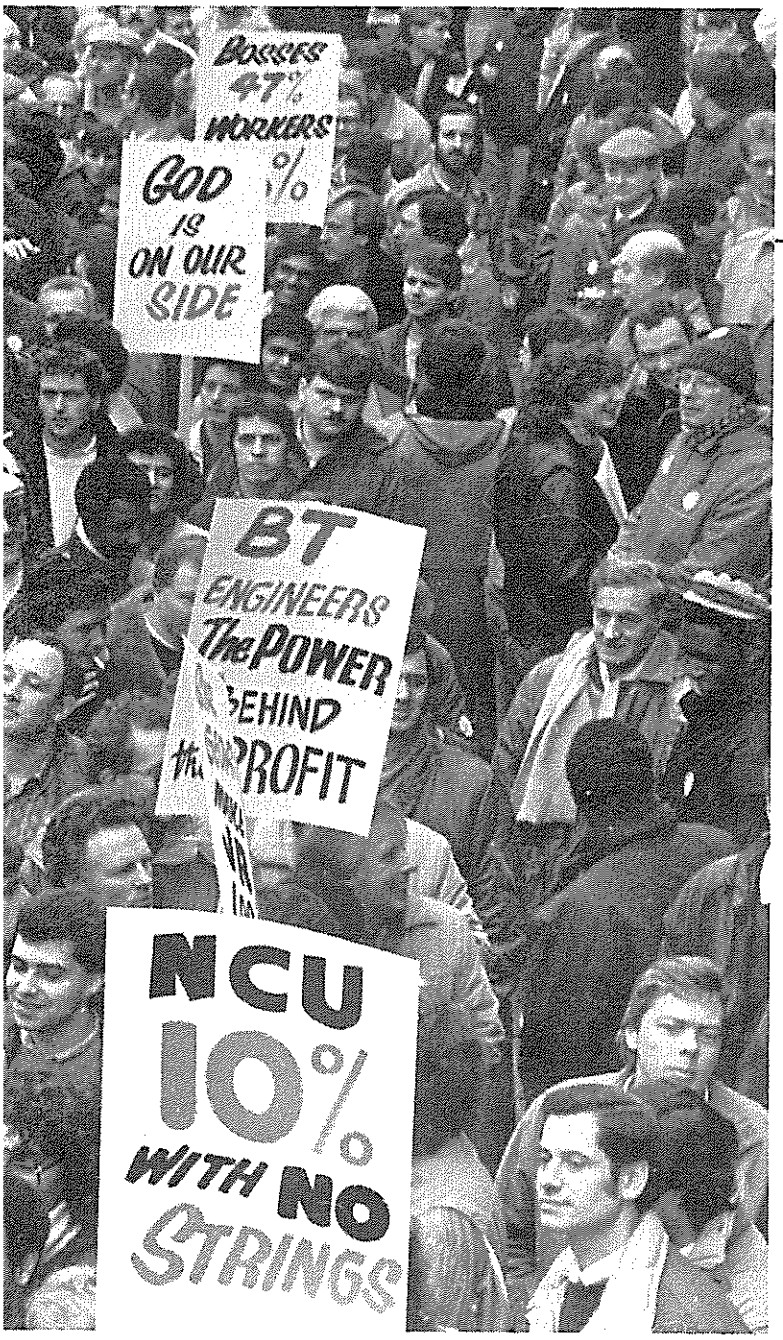
Another index is pay. Although profits have risen faster than pay, major pay settlements have been regularly 2 or 3% above the rate of inflation. The Financial Times reckons that the biggest factor here is shortages of skilled labour, but warns its readers that the unions are not a "busted flush".

The structural changes in the workforce have weakened the labour movement. But a closer examination shows that this weakening may be temporary.

Employment in manufacturing — which was the core of militant trade unionism — has declined drastically. At the peak, in 1965, over nine million people worked in manufacturing. The workforce has declined to 7.26 million in 1979 and 5.15 million in 1986.

This decline in manufacturing accounts for much of the decline in strikes and in trade unionism. From 1974 to 1980, inclusive, 75% of all striker-days in Britain were in manufacturing. Then strike activity in manufacturing went down from an average of 9,100,000 striker-days per year in 1974-80 to an average of 2,100,000 striker-days per year in 1981-86. Strike activity outside manufacturing actually went *up* from an average of 3,000,000 striker-days per year in 1974-80 to 7,600,000 striker-days per year in 1981-86.

The averages here are very artificial because the strike figures for non-manufacturing are so much dominated by the great miners' strike of 1984-5. But if that, and the miners' strike of 1974, are taken out of the calculation, then strike activity out-



side manufacturing seems to have been level — an average of 2,200,000 striker-days per year both in 1974-80 and 1981-86.

This picture is confirmed by the latest Workplace Industrial Relations Survey ('British Workplace Industrial Relations 1980-84: the DE/ESRC/PSI/ACAS surveys', by Neil Millward and Mark Stevens). Millward and Stevens surveyed a sample of over 2000 workplaces. They found that more workplaces in public services had strikes in 1984 than did in 1980: for example, 50% of workplaces in public administration had strikes in 1984, but only 17% in 1980. But in manufacturing fewer workplaces had strikes in 1984. For example, only 23% of vehicles factories had strikes in 1984, whereas in 1980 67% had strikes.

Millward and Stevens also found that the percentage of manufacturing workplaces where manual workers were unionised fell from 76% in 1980 to 66% in 1984. They reckon that this is because of the closure of larger and more unionised plants. In contrast, the percentage of public service workplaces where manual workers were unionised *rose* from 80% to 94%.

In short, a large part of the 2.89 million decline in trade union numbers since 1979 must be accounted for by the 2.1 million decline in the manufacturing workforce. Shop stewards' organisation is also weaker in what remains of manufacturing, whereas in many sectors outside manufacturing it has held its own or even increased.

Amidst the huge general decline in manufacturing there has been some specialised growth. While manufacturing employment declined 25% in Greater London between 1981 and 1986, and 35% in Yorkshire and Humberside between 1979 and 1986, in East Anglia it went *up* 15% between 1983 and 1986.

Capital is moving to new geographical areas where union organisation is weak, and also, to some extent, into new product sectors. The use of microelectronics is spreading fairly rapidly, though the microelectronics industry itself in Britain is quite small. Job losses directly due to microelectronic technology (and job gains directly due to it) have been small compared to the vast overall shifts in the workforce.

The new factories are usually smaller than the old ones — partly because microelectronics makes it easier to work with smaller factories, and partly for political reasons (employers know that smaller workplaces are more difficult to unionise). Different surveys have produced different results, but most researchers reckon that new technology has a low rate of union organisation.

The picture of the typical modern factory as a gleaming semi-automatic plant staffed only by yuppie technicians is, however, false. The proportion of administrative, technical and clerical workers in manufacturing industry actually went *down* from 29.3% in 1981 to 27.34% in 1985. The new factories present a challenge to the labour movement, but so did the old factories in their day. The car industry, for example, now figures as a declining traditional bastion of trade unionism: but it took a long, hard struggle to unionise the car factories. The new factories can be unionised too.

Mostly, however, British capital has moved not from old manufacturing to new manufacturing, but to services or to manufacturing outside Britain. A National Economic Development Office report in October 1986 calculated that net fixed investment in British manufacturing industry had been below zero continuously since 1980. According to government figures, fixed capital expenditure in manufacturing industry in 1985 was still 10% below its 1980 figure. One of the reasons why there are shortages of skilled workers in British manufacturing, driving wages up, is that companies are not prepared to invest in training. The capitalists are still not convinced that the Tories have made Britain safe for exploitation. And the big increase in manufacturing productivity in the '80s is mostly due to closure of more inefficient plants and to speed-up rather than to new technology.

Since 1979 British capital has vastly expanded its stock of overseas investment, and British capitalists now have more net foreign assets than any other capitalist class except Japan's. Over the same period the long-term tendency for a bigger proportion of workers to be employed in services has accelerated.

This drift to services needs closer examination, for 'services' is a catch-all label for everything which is not manufacturing, agriculture, mining, construction or utilities. An analysis by the Bank of England shows that the increase is almost entirely in *social* services (health, education, etc.) and in *producer* services (consultancy, contracting, banking, etc.).

Consumer services (catering, transport, etc.) have expanded only modestly in the UK, from 8% of the workforce in 1950 to 11% in 1980; in the US they have *declined* from 12% to 10% of the workforce. The Bank of England researchers note that "the private car has tended to replace bus and railway travel, washing machines have replaced laundries, and television has replaced the cinema." *Distributive* services (retail, wholesale, and freight transport) took a smaller proportion of the workforce in 1980 than in 1960 both in the UK and in the US.

Even in *producer* services the increased share of the total workforce is partly a quirk of the statistics. "It is probable that purchases of services such as telecommunications, advertising, accountancy, consultancy, etc., by other sectors have risen...- Part of the increasing share of producer services in total output may, however, be attributable to the contracting-out of services previously performed within firms, and is thus the result of a reclassification...rather than an increase in the activity itself."

Probably more basic than the drift to services is the drift to 'white-collar' work. The two trends are closely connected,

because service jobs are more white-collar than industrial, and the proportion of white-collar workers within manufacturing is falling.

By 1985, about 55% of all workers in Britain were white-collar workers. In 1911, the white-collar share of the workforce was only 19%; in 1971, 43%. The increase in white-collar work has gone together with an increase in women's wage-work. From the 1850s through to the 1950s, women were about 30% of the waged workforce, or a little more; now they are 45% of employees in employment. (The impression of a sudden recent influx of women into public labour is however a bit exaggerated; in the 19th century a big proportion of waged women were domestic servants, and all through the 20th century there has been a shift of waged women out of domestic service and into public labour).

White-collar trade unionism has increased relative to blue-collar. In 1911, 13% of trade unionists were white-collar; in 1978, 39%. But white-collar workers are still less unionised than manual workers; and they strike less.

A detailed survey was done by the Department of Employment on relative strike rates of manual and non-manual workers in 1966-73. Non-manual workers had about ten times less strike activity than manual workers. When the figures are broken down further, some categories of white-collar workers are shown to have had higher strike rates than some categories of manual workers: 'clerical and related' had a higher strike rate than 'processing, making, repairing (metal and electrical)', and 'professional — science, engineering and technology' had a higher rate than 'painting, assembling, packaging, inspecting'. Also, white-collar workers use forms of industrial action other than strikes (work-to-rules, boycotts, etc.) more than manual workers; and such slight evidence as there is suggests that white-collar strikes are increasing relative to manual strikes.

White-collar workers have become more unionised and more militant, and more similar in their forms of industrial organisation (shop stewards, etc.) and action to manual workers. On average, however, they are still considerably less organised and less militant. And while NALGO and the NUT have affiliated to the TUC, neither they nor the CPSA have affiliated to the Labour Party, or are likely to affiliate soon. White-collar unions which are affiliated to the Labour Party, like ASTMS, have very high rates of opting-out from the political levy.

As the workforce has become more white-collar, the average strength and militancy of union organisation, and the strength of class identification and solid Labour voting, has declined: that has been the main trend of recent decades, accelerated in the Thatcher years.

Will the trend continue? Will the class-conscious working class end up as a small, desperate minority in a population which regards itself as middle-class and cares nothing for ideals of solidarity and cooperation? Do socialists therefore have no realistic alternative but to turn to the new middle-class majority on its own terms, junking the old collectivist politics and appealing to whatever progressive attitudes can still be found?

Those who push that message today are often the same people who used to say, as recently as during the big battles of the early '80s in the Labour Party, that socialism is something foisted on the working class by middle-class semi-intellectuals, and manual workers care nothing for such ideals. Now we get the opposite story: socialism was admittedly deep-rooted in the traditional manual working class, but all the new white-collar workers care for is mortgages, video recorders, and wine bars.

The new story romanticises traditional manual working-class organisation as much as the old story underestimated it. Manual workers have 'middle-class' aspirations too! The drive to form unions is so universal in the working class as to be almost automatic: but the political coloration of trade unionism depends on more specific political and ideological factors. In roughly similar economic situations, trade unions can be explicitly pro-capitalist (US 'business unionism'), religious (Italy, France, Belgium, etc.), syndicalist, Labour-reformist, or revolutionary. It depends on the 'vanguard', the active minority who shape the semi-automatic drive of the working class into specific channels. Economic militancy creates better chances for a socialist active minority, but no guarantees.

The Labour affiliation of the manual unions in Britain was not an automatic product of economic evolution. It was a product of huge struggles. It will take equally huge struggles to shape a conscious political road for the rising white-collar unions.

A socialist road *is* possible. 'White-collar' covers a vast range of people, some of whom, enjoying high living standards and considerable autonomy in their work, are closer to the old petty bourgeoisie (small shopkeepers, self-employed craft workers, etc.) than to the working class. Partly because of real differences in work situation, partly because of employers' policy, white-collar/manual has been one of the biggest divisions in the working class. But the real basis for that division, and the division itself, are declining. The mass of white-collar workers are *workers*, divorced from the means of production and having to sell their labour-power, in a situation not very different from manual workers. With the introduction of the word processor and other microelectronic office technology, the office worker is increasingly a slave of the machine no less than the factory worker.

About 55% of white-collar workers are women. Up to now women have generally been less militant and less left-wing than men. But that is changing, and there is plenty of evidence that once they get moving women workers can be more militant and more radical than men.

As long ago as the 1860s Marx wrote: **"One works as a manager, engineer, technologist, etc., the other as overseer, the third as manual labourer or even drudge. An ever-increasing number of types of labour are included in the immediate concept of *productive labour*... And here it is quite immaterial whether the job of a particular worker, who is merely a limb of this aggregate worker, is at a greater or smaller distance from the actual manual labour"** (Capital vol.1 p.1040. It seems here that Marx regarded even managers as part of the working class, so long as they were salaried employees rather than owners. But elsewhere [Capital vol.3 p.338] Marx describes the manager in a joint-stock company as 'the functioning capitalist').

What about workers who are unproductive in the capitalist sense — i.e. do not produce surplus value — like public service workers? About workers in commerce, the main category of 'unproductive' workers in his day, Marx wrote: **"The commercial worker produces no surplus value directly. But... what he costs the capitalist and what he brings in for him, are two different things. He... adds to the capitalist's income by helping him to reduce the cost of realising surplus-value... (His) wage tends to fall, even in relation to average labour, with the advance of the capitalist mode of production. This is due partly to the division of labour in the office... Secondly... the progress of science and public education..."** (Capital vol.3 p.300).

The labour movement needs to look for new, additional methods of struggle in public services, where straightforward strikes save the employer money rather than costing; we need to campaign to unionise the new factories and the new army of part-time workers; we need to strengthen white-collar union organisation; we need to make the movement more accessible for women.

But this does not mean rejecting strikes, or replacing the red flag by pastel shades. The new sections of the working class have the same bread-and-butter needs for militancy as the old sections; they too need bold leadership to galvanise them and are demoralised by timidity. They are potentially a new battalion of gravediggers for capitalism. If we do not take our revenge on the Tories for the recent defeats, it will not be the working class that has been wanting, but the left.

A wave of student militancy

The last few months have seen the biggest wave of militancy among student youth across the world since the mid-1970s. From France to China to Spain to Mexico to Kazakhstan in the USSR, students have held mass demonstrations and have met with the violent resistance of the police.

In France and Spain in particular this student movement has helped fire working class action. Over the new year, a powerful strike wave, centred on the rail industry, seriously damaged the Chirac government in France. Following the militant action by Spanish school students, the Spanish working class has moved into struggle against the government of 'Socialist' Felipe Gonzalez.

France

The example of France focused our memories quite sharply. In 1968, student demonstrations and clashes with riot police provided the spark that ignited a marvellous general strike of ten million workers. Students were at the core of the movement for democracy in Czechoslovakia that year — before it was crushed by Russian tanks. Across the world there was a growth of revolutionary ideas among students — movements in solidarity with the struggle in Vietnam were one factor, albeit not the main one, in the eventual defeat of the US.

Could 1987 see a re-run of 1968? Are we witnessing a new generation of student revolutionaries coming into being?

There are important *differences* between then and now. But that there *is* a wave of student struggles is undeniable.

The movement in France was provoked by the Devaquet Bill, which proposed to change the system of entrance to university. At the moment, every French student who passes the Baccalaureat — the equivalent of A levels — has an automatic university place. Devaquet proposed to do away with this, and proposed an increase in fees, which in France students pay themselves.

Youth unemployment in France is very high. So the effect of the Bill would have been to condemn many school leavers to unemployment.

The law had been passed by the Senate but was due to be discussed in the National Assembly on November 27 1986. Action had already started in some universities when a strike was called at the Paris XIII-Villetaneuse University on November 17. It was called by one of the two student unions — UNEF-Independent et Democratique (UNEF-ID), led by a current in the Socialist Party. The other union UNEF-Solidarite Etudiante (UNEF-SE) is run by the Communist Party.

On November 22, mass meetings throughout France voted for a general student strike from the 24th, and a national day of demonstrations on the 27th — when the National Assembly was to discuss the Bill. By now students at the 'lycees' (secondary schools) were joining in the action.

On November 23, students joined a march in Paris organised by the teachers' union. By the 25th, 50 out of 78 universities were on strike. On the 27th, half a million students joined demonstrations, including 200,000 in Paris. The big Communist Party-dominated trade union federation, the CGT, declared support for the students.

The next day, 10,000 high school students demonstrated in Paris. By the beginning of December the Chirac/Mitterrand government was in retreat. Chirac offered to discuss the Bill with students — but the students held firm to their demand for its *complete* withdrawal, and would not accept mere modification. One million marched in Paris alone on December 4, when violent clashes with the riot police, the CRS, took place. The next day there were demonstrations against police tactics.

Then on the morning of December 6, student Malik Oussekine was beaten to death by the CRS. Now they had gone too far. More demonstrations followed, and on December 8 tens of thousands marched in memory of Malik.

Chirac withdrew the Bill. Two days later, another demonstration commemorated Malik's death and celebrated the students' victory.

The student movement showed that militant *action* could be successful. French workers soon followed their example.

But there were contradictions in the movement politically. On the one hand leftists, and even self-proclaimed Trotskyists, were prominent in the leadership of the movement.*

Yet the student movement as a whole had a 'non-political' streak running through it. Disillusionment with the 'Socialist' government that preceded Chirac had had a big effect. Many students identified 'politics' with *politicians* — and opposed left-wing paper sellers.

Spain

The Spanish movement was similar in many respects to the French, and for certain it must have been inspired by events across the border. Again the issue was a change in university entrance requirements, and again underlying the youth revolt are the deteriorating social conditions of 'socialist' Spain. but the Spanish movement was *younger*, focused on school students, drawing university students behind them.

The first school students' demonstration, on December 4, was called by the small school students' union (SEM) — and amazed everyone by its size and militancy. The SEM's second one-day 'general strike', on December 17, affected schools throughout Spain. *Two million* school students participated. A mass movement was underway that was to galvanise a powerful working class movement of strikes and demonstrations.

A four day strike by school students followed on 20-23 January, by which time the working class was already beginning to move: dockers came out in pursuit of their own demands.

By early February, seasonal farm workers (jornaleros) were taking action, private school teachers, Seat car workers, coal and copper miners were all involved in strikes. February 9-13 saw a 'week of action'. Both the big trade union federations — the UGT and the Communist Party-run Workers' Commissions (CC OO) called a 48-hour strike by Asturian coalminers. 15,000 students marched in Madrid on February 11, and 200,000 on Friday 13th. Workers also joined the march.

The government was forced to back

down. The Minister of Culture, Javier Solana, described the students' struggle as "a state of mind, rather than a movement." He added: "It's difficult to negotiate with a state of mind".

So the school students' victory sparked new working class struggles. University students too have moved into action. Mass action has spread across Spanish universities in protest at new plans for education — a 'process of reform' to adapt the education system to 'modern requirements' — i.e. capitalism. Many universities have been affected in a week of strikes, starting on Monday March 23.

In Salamanca 17,000 students took action in two universities. Teachers are to decide on action next week. In Oviedo, 75% of students were involved in the stoppage; in Valladolid 20,000 students in almost all university faculties and high schools.

50% of the 40,000 students in Valencia have taken action; in Alicante 7,000 out of 12,000 students. Teachers struck in support of students, paralysing the Polytechnic of Catalonia. And in Andalucia (Grenada and Seville universities) the student strikes were solid (El Pais, March 24).

The SEM was only one organisation involved in the school students' action, though it seems to have organised the biggest events. It is run by a group, 'Nuevo Claridad', linked to the British Militant.

Broader-based was the Coordination of Secondary and University Students (Coordinaciones), which involved supporters of the Communist and Socialist Parties, and — prominently — of the Spanish LCR and JCR, the equivalents of the French groups. There was clearly rivalry between the SEM and the Coordinaciones — and so, to this extent, the movement was less united than the French (though this does not seem to have proved damaging).

The Coordinaciones were based on general assemblies in the schools, and favoured localised action. According to the JCR, real *national* coordination was more apparent than real. for example, *separate* negotiation took place with the government: the school students' union and the Madrid Coordinacion had separate demands.

The school students' union, they say, is less significant than the Coordinaciones, but has been boosted by the press and the government "who would prefer to negotiate with them rather than with coordinations mandated by general assemblies." (Rouge, paper of the French LCR, Feb12-18).

Militant, for their part, claim that the coordinaciones either collapsed or joined the union, and in any case were adventurist. Neither side is entirely trustworthy — especially Militant; but the rather more sober claims of the LCR are more plausible.

After the big strikes on the 13th, the SEM issued a call to "return to class and await the results of negotiations". Militant comment knowingly: "Privately, the leaders knew that the movement would go no further. But did the government realise it?" Apparently not.

But this style of politics looks familiar. The Coordinaciones had democratic structures, whatever their other failures may have been. What structures did the union have? Who decided its policy? Calling for the students to 'cool off' while the union's leaders negotiated with the government — from a position of secretly acknowledged weakness — implies a rather high-handed attitude towards the students. On this occasion, fortunately, it did not lead to a setback.

China

On the other side of the world, was the movement for democracy in China, spearheaded by demonstrating students.

The general background to the Chinese students' struggle is the attempt by one faction of the country's bureaucratic rulers to 'modernise' China — by opening the country up to foreign capital and the world market. Indeed, the original impetus to the students' calls for democracy came from the 'modernising' ruling group of Deng Xiaoping.

This opening up of China has involved some intellectual liberalisation. As the memory of the bizarre dogmas of Mao's 'cultural revolution' recedes, there has even been a tentative rehabilitation of Trotsky. China, in other words, is going through a similar kind of crisis to its prototype model, the USSR: unclogging the Stalinist machine means more 'openness', politically as well as economically. And it entails the same problems: 'openness' can get out of hand.

It got out of hand in China over the new year, with tens of thousands of students demonstrating for democratic reform, behind placards carrying quotations from, among others, Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburgh address (government of the people, by the people, for the people).

This movement from below sent ripples up into the senior levels of the Party, with dismissals and expulsions ensuing. And — like France and Spain, though on a smaller scale — the student militancy spread into the ranks of the working class.

The student protests, demanding democracy and press freedom, began at the elite Qinghua University, but despite state bans on further demonstrations, soon spread to other universities in other cities.

By 22 December, demonstrations of 40,000 and 70,000 had been witnessed in China's biggest city, Shanghai. On December 29, several thousand protestors braved sub-zero temperatures and a police ban in Peking's Tienanmen Square — which had been flooded deliberately, turning it into a huge block of ice to deter demonstrators. In Shanghai, arrests were reported.

By now the student movement was causing the Chinese rulers alarm. Demands raised included for a multi-party democratic system, and old-fashioned bourgeois-democratic slogans like "government of the people, by the people, for the people". Reports suggest some hostility to the ideologies of official 'communism'. And, of course, the authorities denounced the students' 'bourgeois deviationism'. The covert approval of Deng was fading.

By early January, the Communist Party paper People's Daily was calling for a 'clear cut stand' against Western influence 'poisoning' the students. The sharpest criticisms came from the anti-Deng faction — but the sight of thousands of students demonstrating must have frightened all the ruling bureaucrats.

And the movement did spill over from the campuses onto the factory floor. The Financial Times (January 29) commented "a circular, issued by the Party's Central Committee, detailed strike activity in Chinese industry (as well as) the spate of student protests."

In the short term, the Chinese student movement wound down. It did not achieve its demands. But it was a clear illustration of the crisis of China's 'modernisation' — its transition from the old Maoism to a new equilibrium. It is one example of the *general* crisis experienced by the Stalinist systems. The gathering storm in Yugoslavia, where the working class is moving into action against their bureaucratic rulers, promises to be an even sharper expression.

The USSR

In the USSR itself, students demonstrated in Kazakhstan. In December, riots followed the imposition of a new Russian party chief and the dismissal of the Kazakh leader Kunayev. Slogans included "Autonomy! And a separate seat for Kazakhstan in the United Nations", "Kolbin go back to Russia", and the more off-beam "We want to join China" and "America is with us, the Russians are against us". 200 people were hospitalised after the riots in the Kazakh capital, Alma Ata.

Mexico

In Mexico, at the beginning of 1987, a series of student strikes hit the National Autonomous University (UNAM) — the biggest educational establishment in the world. 200,000 students halted traffic in the centre of Mexico City.

Again, the protest was against government proposals to raise fees and 'improve standards'.

Though it is smaller in scope than the great movement following 1968, when many on the left developed all sorts of illusions in students as the 'new revolutionary vanguard' — substituting either for a revolutionary party, or even for the working class itself — the importance of the wave of student militancy should be recognised.

1987 is not 1968. Capitalism and Stalinism are in deep crisis. The working class is and will be central to any movement for change. The basic question for Marxists internationally is whether we can turn the revolutionary students towards the working class.

Why didn't this student movement spread in Britain? Oddly, while just over the Channel there was a powerful militancy, British students seemed singularly uninterested.

For certain a chance to mobilise students was missed. NUS conference voted against an all-round policy for a fight against the Tories last December; and the policy that *was* passed — on grants, benefits and housing — was quickly shelved by the NUS leadership. The sluggishness and time-serving timerity of the leadership of NUS helped dampen any movement there might have been.

In Britain, the class struggle remains at a low level. There are no deep stirrings affecting the confidence of students. Indeed, throughout NUS, there has been a shift *rightwards.*

Things can change very quickly. The task for socialist students is to prepare the ground for movements in the near future, and strengthen the organistion of students at rank and file and national level.

By Simon Pottinger

***A split from the biggest of France's would-be Trotskyist groups, (the Lambert PCI) were part of the leadership of UNEF-ID. The healthier Ligue Communist Revolutionaire (LCR) were prominent in the national coordination committees and among students at a rank and file level. The LCR's youth group, the JCR, produced 50,000 copies of a daily bulletin. The other main would-be Trotskyist group, Lutte Ouvriere (LO), was also involved -- and played an important role in the ensuing rail strike.**

South Africa: unions and the Emergency

The period from September 1984 to the present has been one of mushrooming growth for trade unionism in South Africa. Roughly twice as many black workers are now involved in the workers' movement compared to the figures before the explosion of black militancy in the townships of late 1984.

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) now has in excess of 700,000 members, with the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), COSATU's largest single affiliate, organising 360,000 workers.

CUSA/AZACTU, the rival independent federation, now claims a membership in excess of 400,000. However the number of trade unionists is still a small fraction of the black working class.

The months immediately after the formation of COSATU inNovember/ December 1985 saw many previous strike records broken. This shows what a boost to working confidence the formation of the giant federation was.

1986 was a record year for strikes according to official statistics. There were 643 major labour disputes. These Department of Manpower figures do not include "stayaways" which, when taken into account using the figures produced by the Independent Labour Monitoring Group, suggest that there were in excess of five million strike days in 1986.

Already, January and February 1987 have seen 750,000 strike days — more than the total for any *one* of the years 1980-4.

This pattern of rising militancy was only partially reversed, and only for a short time, by the declaration of the second State of Emergency in June last year.

For instance, in the autumn of 1986, at least 58,000 miners were involved in small scale 'guerrilla action' — not to mention the 300,000 or more who stayed away on November 1 to protest at poor safety standards in the wake of the Kinross mine disaster. The retail sector has seen a ten month long strike wave since the Pick'n'Pay strike in May of last year.

Strikes are tending to get longer, to involve larger groups of workers, and to take on a *national* character.

1985 and 1986 saw the increasing use of the occupation or 'sleep in', as a method of struggle.

The challenge to capitalist power in the workplace that this tactic represented has led to it becoming more difficult to employ under the State of Emergency. There is plenty of evidence of direct collusion between 'liberal' employers and the security forces to break occupations. Despite initial successes — like the Communal Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA) occupations against the detention of trade unionists — this tactic has become more and more risky. It became virtually impossible during the recent OK Bazaars wages strike, when even picketing became very difficult.

The overall number of occupations appears to be on the decline.

COSATU's policy of 'one industry, one union' has not yet been fully carried out. So far, only three industrial unions have been established since COSATU's formation — in the transport, food and construction industries.

A merger between the metal union, MAWU, the car union NAAWU and the Motor Industry Component Workers' Union (MiCWU) is pending It will forge a giant steel and engineering union out of the already existing industrial unions.

COSATU has now set a deadline, saying that unions who do not comply will be denied a vote at the next congress of the federation in July.

There was much talk last year of a united living wage campaign from the COSATU unions but it never materialised. The reasons for this were repression, making inter-union coordination difficult, and the convoluted nature of South Africa's "industrial relations" system. For instance the metal workers' and miners' timescales never really fitted together.

The fact that the management at OK Bazaars failed to defeat the wages fight of CCAWUSA last month, in what was widely regarded as a 'test case', means that the conditions for a united living wage campaign in 1987 are much better than they were last year.

As the federation's leadership argued in a recent report, COSATU can't really afford many more flops like the poor response to the July 1986 stayaway against the State of Emergency. It can only lead management and the state to become more confident in their attitude to the unions.

However, that 'flop' was mainly an expression of the extent to which, in the short run, the State of Emergency reduced militancy and disorganised the unions. Only the shopworkers and chemical workers responded with major industrial action.

The Kinross stayaway on November 1 seems to have marked the end of this chapter. It was the largest ever miners' strike, the largest ever strike over a health and safety issue, and the largest ever strike in a single industry in South African history.

The Kinross stayaway was also a further step in the consolidation of the NUM. However, *neither the NUM nor the Chamber of Mines have yet squared up for an all-out confrontation.*

To a certain extent such a confrontation would not be in the interests of the NUM or the mine bosses. Anglo-American, for instance, is anxious to maintain its 'liberal' and 'anti-apartheid' image, while the NUM has built itself through sectional, guerrilla action, utilising at times the already existing tribal/communal structures in the compound.

This pattern can't go on forever. During the Second World War there were numerous, small-scale, isolated and sectional battles in the mines. This revolt was partly contained by the Communist Party, which had a pro-war line and argued against strikes in the name of 'the struggle against fascism' and 'the defence of the Soviet Union'.

After the war the CPSA was no longer able to hold back this militancy. It erupted, but was defeated in the 1946 mineworkers' strike.

No matter how cautious the NUM leadership is, it is difficult to see how, at a certain point, it will be able to avoid a full scale confrontation, spurred by the appalling conditions that mineworkers face.

In order to face such a confrontation the NUM will have to learn the lessons of the major defeat of the African Mineworkers' Union in 1946.

And the central lesson is that *an all-out confrontation in the mines poses, at least implicitly, the question of who rules South Africa.* The NUM has to prepare for such a confrontation.

The new CUSA/AZACTU federation is an important force. Though its affiliates have been involved in a lot less industrial action than COSATU, it still has considerable forces, especially in the building and mining sectors. And CUSA/AZACTU members have participated in the big stayaways.

It is difficult to see why the differences that exist between CUSA/AZACTU's 'anti-racism' and COSATU's 'non-racism' add up to a sufficient case for separate federations. Both agree that whites *can* be involved in the struggle and *both agree that workers should control.* However it would seem to us that COSATU's position is a much clearer class standpoint.

It would be wrong to characterise CUSA/AZACTU as the left of the trade unions as some people, such as the Cape Action League's Neville Alexander have done.

The collapse of TUCSA (the Trade Union Council of South Africa) is very important. The disintegration of "parallel", acquiescent "African" and "Coloured" trade unionism at federation level could well open up the possibility of winning large numbers of workers at present trapped in bureaucratic unions to the progressive trade union movement.

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi's Inkatha movement and its Zulu trade union front, the United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA) poses a mortal threat to independent trade unionism in Natal.

Even the most 'populist' (i.e. pro-African National Congress and United Democratic Front) forces in COSATU now believe that the federation's early, unprepared attacks on the Inkatha were a mistake. For instance, the NUM has taken a series of blows in Natal as a result of UWUSA activities. The NUM had no delegates from Natal at its recent congress after Inkatha's Zulu membership had succeeded in driving the NUM's mainly Sotho members into retreat and in many cases off the mines.

In northern natal, UWUSA attempted to benefit from the detention of a large number of COSATU militants under the State of Emergency to strengthen its position on the shopfloor in collusion with management. However, COSATU appears to have been successful in checking this development.

UWUSA must be confronted both industrially and politically. It's weaknesses as a "trade union" have already been exposed to a certain extent by COSATU. To undermine UWUSA politically requires a combination of approaches including physical defence and initiatives to draw its 'rank and file' into progressive campaigns.

The workers' movement should also not rule out the possibility of taking on Inkatha and UWUSA on their 'home ground'. The strength of Inkatha rests on its control of the homeland state machine — a control which has never been challenged from the left.

Such a step, (contesting elections), however would mark a radical breach from the established approach of the liberation movement which would carry with it many problems and potential dangers, not least the fact that KwaZulu is a "one party state". It would be a much bolder move than the tactically correct decision to 'register' under apartheid's new labour dispensation taken by the FOSATU unions in the early 1980s.

Working class militancy has held up exceedingly well in the face of recession and industrial restructuring. In the car industry, for instance, the unions have moved to the new areas of production often in Bantustans like Bophutatswana, exceedingly difficult places to organise in, as the car industry has declined in areas like the Eastern Cape.

It is not yet clear whether the reverses suffered in the township struggle — the dislocation of street committees, large scale detentions and the rise of black vigilantism — will reflect themselves back into a decline in industrial militancy, in the same way that the two struggles fed off each other over the last two years.

So far, the signs are that this has not happened.

The trade unions have not suffered any setback that could be characterised as a major defeat. This is not because the trade unions were not in the forefront of the political struggle. Rather the unions have survived repression better than township-based organisations because of their democratic structures.

By Tom Rigby

The 'Perdition' Affair

WHEN THE Royal Court Theatre decided at the last minute not to go ahead with its scheduled production of Jim Allen's play about the massacre of the Jews of Hungary in 1944, 'Perdition', a flood of discussion, polemic and recrimination was unleashed in the press. It had already been the subject of protests by various prominent Jews and of publicity in the press.

There are at least two issues involved in the 'Perdition' affair: artistic freedom and its limits; and whether or not 'Perdition' is anti-Jewish.

Allen and the director, Ken Loach, immediately raised an outcry against 'censorship', alleging that they were victims of a coordinated Zionist conspiracy. 'Perdition' was being crushed under the 'Zionist juggernaut', as Jim Allen put it when he told his side of the story to the Irish Times.

They have received immense publicity for their assertions about the 'Zionist campaign to kill 'Perdition'.' Predictably the anti-Zionist left, eager for evidence of Zionist conspiracy and Zionist power, rushed to defend 'Perdition' and echoed the charges.

Now, according to the Jewish Chronicle, the Board of Deputies of British Jews did decide to try where possible to prevent the play from being performed. There was an outcry, and no doubt private lobbying too.

But, given the subject of 'Perdition' and the nature of Allen's treatment of it, that is not surprising, nor necessarily very sinister. The charge of being anti-semitic is still one that inhibits, and Allen's script does not (as we'll see) offer the honest reader who is not wearing blinkers much ground on which to build a convincing case that it is not anti-Jewish.

Allen, in that vainglorious, boastful tone which also infects some of his work, told *Time Out*:

"Without any undue humility I'm saying that this is the most lethal attack on Zionism ever written, because it touches at the heart of the most abiding myth of modern history, the Holocaust. Because it says quite plainly that privileged Jewish leaders collaborated in the extermination of their own kind in order to help bring about a Zionist state, Israel, a state which is itself racist.

I know what I'm doing and I stand by my research and my analysis. I've had to get this right because I know how serious a subject it is".

Now I think 'Perdition' *should* be produced. Those Jews who have campaigned against its being produced are wrong in principle and shortsighted in practice. Ultimately their campaign, which has already boosted 'Perdition', will prove self-defeating and even self-wounding.

That said, the ballyhoo about the 'suppression' of 'Perdition' is disingenuous and no more than a 'smart' political campaign. It has not been banned or 'censored' — in fact it has been assured a greater audience when it is produced, as it surely will be, and not only in Britain*.

There is a corollary to the idea of freedom of artistic expression and to the idea that censorship is to be rejected and opposed: the corollary is that those who disagree with the work also have the right to free speech — that they have the right to protest, denounce, clamour against it and picket it. At a certain point such an outcry may convince some of those involved in the enterprise to abandon it.

The 'freedom' to produce 'Perdition' does not include the right to demand that those who feel badly stung by it should be quiet and passive.

I have read a late draft of the play**. It takes the form of a libel case brought by a surviving Hungarian Jewish leader, Yaron, against the author of a pamphlet accusing him of collaborating in the destruction of the nearly one million strong Hungarian Jewish community in 1944. By virtue of the libel-case mechanism, the usual not-guilty-until-proven rule is reversed. Yaron has to prove his innocence.

The play alleges that 'Zionism', with something like 5 million Jews already dead, needed the corpses of a million more Jews in Hungary to help it strengthen the moral case for setting up Israel after the war. Allen argues that Zionism shared the racist assumptions for Nazism from 'its own' side, and that that was the basis of a collaboration even to the extent of sacrificing the Jewish millions in Europe. Zionism was concerned only with saving the notables and the rich. Basing himself on the well-known 1950s Kastner libel case in Israel, Allen depicts the Jewish leaders as saving their own skins and the skins of a few rich people at the cost of agreeing to the killing of 800,000. Somehow the picture of events in Hungary is also part of the Zionist conspiracy, though it is not clear how it all fits together (at least to this reader).

Yaron is an agent of Zionism, and his 'collaboration' is said to be Zionist collaboration. Yet most references to his motives in the play put it down to the desire to save his own skin.

Allen's play is admittedly 'based on', or mainly based on, the work of Lenni Brenner, 'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators'. This book is a narrow-visioned and narrow-minded polemic aimed at laying part of the blame for the Nazi massacre of the Jews on the international Zionist movement of the time and by extension on Israel now. Grotes-

*** It comes out in paperback in April under the imprint of Al Saqi books and reportedly with an introduction by Maxine Rodinson, the scholar and anti-Zionist polemicist (who in fact does not support the 'destroy Israel' camp, believing in the right of the Palestinian Jews to maintain a Jewish state there).**

**** The play has received a wide circulation in manuscript form. The Royal Court sent copies of it to all the London theatre critics.**

quely unfair, narrow and tendentious readings are made of every incident that can be construed against Zionism — and Israel. The argument is developed as if Zionism were something that developed completely outside the Jewish communities, or at most through the machinations of a small and alien minority. This alien force then 'betrayed the Jews'. It is a lawyer's-brief style indictment, intent not on 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth', but on indicting Zionism and Israel.

Allen is far more incoherent than Brenner because Allen is far less in control of his material. His 'aim' strays far more often than Brenner's from the 'Zionist' demon to non-Zionist Jews caught up in the horror of the Nazi ghettoes. Allen is Brenner's epigone.

Brenner argues his theme seriously though very unconvincingly. Allen does not argue anything seriously, and this diminishes the quality of the play. You could have an intellectually serious debate, a discussion of the issues, and you could have a dramatic representation of the experience of the Jewish victims of Nazism. Allen gives neither.

As a discussion, the play suffers from utter one-sidedness, from the *rigging* of the element of discussion by the author in favour of his own case. The case against his own thesis is simply not put, beyond a rudimentary comment here and there. The demonology of present-day Israel, read backwards into history as the demonology of Zionism, wipes out everything else.

At first I could not understand why, but the script reminded me of the transcripts of the Moscow Trials of the '30s, those stage-managed affairs in which the old Bolsheviks, broken and morally destroyed, mouthed the scripts that had been prepared for them. I eventually understood why: the heavy hand of the author of the script is always obtrusive. You can see the strings being pulled. The dialogue does not develop naturally, but according to the needs of a one-sided polemic. Yaron breaks down at the end and 'confesses', for himself and for Zionism, but not because of anything the author in his guise as provider of arguments for his opponents has done to him.

Did Jewish leaders in Hungary do 'deals' with the Nazis? Yes, they did. Did those, as it turned out, help the Nazis to massacre the Jews? Perhaps, probably. If in the conditions after the Nazis took over Hungary in 1944, the Jews en masse had refused all compliance, and gone on the run, then tens of thousands would certainly have been killed immediately, but probably a far greater number would have survived.

Did the Jewish leaders intend to help the Nazis? No, they intended the opposite: to salvage something, or to delay until the advancing Russian armies arrived. Did the Jewish leaders offer the Nazis to help them kill off the rest of the Jews if they let the leaders go? It is a grotesque libel to say so. The Nazis tricked the leaders into thinking that they could save *all* Hungary's Jews if the Allies could be persuaded to trade a certain number of trucks for their lives.

Did the Jewish leaders, at this point in history, do anything with the Nazis, or fail to do anything against them, because they were Zionists? There is no reason to think so: assimilationist Jewish leaders responded in much the same way as Zionists. One of the blatant pieces of historical falsification by the Brenner/Allen school is the way that they link hopes and delusions of certain Zionists in the 1930s, when they had no idea what the Nazis would do, that they could do deals with the Nazis to their advantage, with events in the war when certain Zionist (and non-Zionist) leaders 'collaborated' literally at gunpoint. Allen's entire picture of events is a vicious travesty.

There is no real history in Allen, and very little in Brenner. Nor is there any sympathetic consideration of what was done by men and women living in almost unimaginable conditions and confined to terrible and limited choices.

Because 'Perdition' is not a serious exercise in discussing whether or not the behaviour of the Jewish leaders, including the Zionists, needlessly made things worse for the victims of Nazism, Allen's play is also very bad drama — as stiff and wooden a thing as you would find in a TV Edgar Lustgarten reconstruction of a 'famous crime'.

One of the most striking and classically tragic things about the history of the Zionist movement is the way the Zionists misunderstood the nature of Nazism. They thought they were dealing with a worse but basically similar version of the age-old anti-semitism, and that they could perhaps get some accommodation, terrible but liveable, with it. Maybe they could even use it to the advantage of their project of setting up a Jewish state. As we now know, in fact they were in the grip of men committed to a lethal strain of anti-semitism and intent on reducing them all, those millions of human beings, to dust and ashes. None of this registers with Allen, who has knowledge of the massacre and has had over 40 years to reflect on it — there is nothing but the anti-Zionist demonology. And, as I've said, he does not even make a coherent case for that.

In both Brenner and Allen the whole way they see, depict and understand the issue they concern themselves with is simply anachronistic. They take the ideas and assumptions of a certain sort of Trotskyism — or vulgar-Trotskyism — and apply it to the Jews under Nazism. The idea that the crucial problem is the 'crisis of leadership' is applied to the Jewish community, with the implication that 'the masses' needed only the signal to revolt. Allen interprets the events in Hungary in terms of 'the leaders' keeping secret the fact that the Nazis were planning to kill the Jews. If only they had blown the whistle... But Lucy Dawidowicz's description of the political life of the Warsaw ghetto chronicles the experience of the socialist Bund and others who *could not get themselves believed* — in that hell-hole — when they told the truth about the Nazis.

Many other examples of the same sort of vulgar-Trotskyist political fantasy read backwards into history could be culled from the play. This is not a serious way to deal with history. But of course neither Allen nor Brenner are really concerned with history. They are concerned with politics now.

I think it is a pretty vile play, and a bad one too. Writing in defence of the play in the *New Statesman*, Ken Loach and Andrew Horning describe Allen as the 'best socialist playwright of his generation'.

Perhaps the key word is generation, and even then it depends on what generation you place writers like Arnold Wesker and David Edgar in, to mention only two others. What is unique about Allen's work is that he writes usually from the viewpoint of a strain of Trotskyism. He glorifies the class struggle and direct action and working-class people involved in it. This is what makes him important and worthy of special respect. Plays like 'The Big Flame' (about a stay-in strike at Liverpool docks) are extremely good, and wonderful — though limited — revolutionary socialist propaganda.

But the basic political content of everything Allen has done (everything I know anyway) is pretty primitive, root-basic syndicalist 'Trotskyism'. Beyond that he is as good as his 'storylines'. Thus, 'Days of Hope', about the years from World War 1 to the defeat of the General Strike, plainly draws on the Trotskyist analysis of that period of British history, and on the memoirs of pacifist war resisters like Fenner Brockway — and it is very good indeed.

Allen's problem in 'Perdition' is precisely his 'storyline' — derived from Brenner and the present-day public opinion on the would-be Trotskyist left, on whose fringes he has remained for the last 25 or so years. In a way Allen can be used as a symbol of that Trotskyist left. For what has happened to mainstream Trotskyism over the decades has been the loss of its own class politics and the absorption of quite alien politics, especially Third World nationalism of various sorts.

Whereas at the time of the Arab-Israeli war in 1948 the Trotskyist movement did not take sides, calling on Arab and Jewish workers to unite, today the Trotskyist movement is typically Arab nationalist and bigotedly against the Jews of Palestine. Allen's best work glorifies and promotes the bedrock ideas of Trotskyism; this wretched play glorifies and promotes the anti-Jewish (and 'anti-Zionist') accretions to those politics over the years.

It is highly improbable that Jim Allen is himself hostile to Jews, but that is not the issue here. He embraces politics which by demonologising Israel are in their logic inescapably hostile to Jews, most of whom identify with Israel. The theme Allen puts forward — and disclaimers here and there in the play do not counterbalance it as he wants them to — is that Zionists, i.e. Jews, and today the dominant political current among Jews, share responsibility with the Nazis and their East European collaborators for the massacre of the Jews.

This is a vastly enlarged version of the blood-libel of Christian anti-semitism against the Jews. In the old version the Jews were accused of murdering Christian children and using them in religious ceremonies to ingratiate themselves with their God. In this version the Zionists are accused of helping to murder millions of Jews to ingratiate themselves with the Nazis and thus — mysteriously — to gain the state of Israel. Only the abandonment by the people who live in that state and their sympathisers outside of the original sin of 'Zionism' can save them; and if they do not do that, then their defeat and the 'smashing of the Zionist state' is a legitimate and a holy political cause.

Both Allen and Brenner (in 'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators') deny that they are indulging in the obscenity of blaming some of the victims of Nazism for the killing of the European Jews, for what religious Jews have named the Holocaust. But listen to Brenner himself when he recounts a controversy he was recently in. Someone in the US reported that Izvestia, the USSR daily, had favourably reviewed 'Zionism in the Age of the Dictators' under the headline 'Zionist collaboration: a journalist unmasks dirty deals with Nazi chiefs'. A special summary of the book was placed in libraries all over the USSR. (Remember that the thesis that Zionism is a twin of Nazism originates in the USSR, where Jews have been for decades and are still today in various ways penalised.) Brenner explains that he sent a copy of the article to the historian Lucy Dawidowicz, **"remarking that I saw nothing improper about it. [The reviewer] had said, among other things, that 'during the world war, Brenner points out, Zionism showed its real meaning: for the sake of its ambitions, it sacrificed the blood of millions of Jews'. Kiliko had taken the book very seriously..."**. ('Jews in America', p.172).

Neither the poisoned politics, nor the history, nor the drama of these 'anti-Zionists' are of any use or help to socialists who want to champion the cause of the Palestinian Arabs and to advocate their right to an independent state alongside Israel.

John O'Mahony

The Labour left today

Vladimir Derer of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy talks to Workers' Liberty about how he sees the situation on the Labour Left today. Vladimir argues that the main problem for the left is its unwillingness to come to terms with the existing political realities.

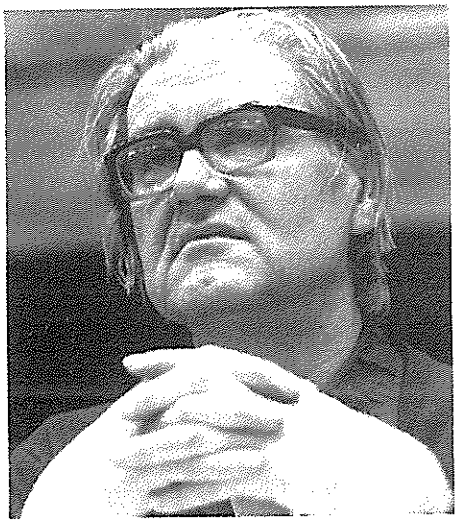
Has reselection been co-opted by the establishment?
Not yet, but the establishment is certainly trying hard. Those Social Democrats who remained in the Labour Party do not regard reselection as any the less of a danger than those who left the Party to set up the SDP. Only the method of "our" social democrats is different. They hope that the Labour Party can by transformed from within into an SDP Mark II. And they have not been all that unsuccessful. They now have a majority on the NEC — a precondition for doing away with the democratic reforms of 1979-81 which give the rank and file an effective say in policy determination.

But counter-reformation or counter-revolution has never been easy. The position on the Right is that if the clock cannot be put right back, at least reforms should be neutralised. That is what lies behind the clamour for 'one person one vote'. What they intend to do is to raise MPs above the Party by freeing then from any need to be accountable to those who are the real link between Labour voters and the Party leadership. Once accountability to Party activists is replaced by a purely nominal accountability, albeit to a body which is larger than the GC but one which does not meet the MP on a regular month by month basis, then accountability in any meaningful sense ceases to exist.

The Party's Right-wing understands the importance of this far better than most self proclaimed Left wingers. This is why the Right raises the issue every year without fail and why currently it is willing to go against a Conference decision which expressly forbade it to do so.

But was not the PLP's fear of reselection exaggerated and due to the PLP's paranoia?
It is true that the new reselection procedures had little effect on the composition of the PLP, and only very few MPs were deselected.

It is also true that paranoia within the PLP is rampant. The MPs may have overreacted but this does not mean that they have not grounds for concern.



Vladimir Derer

The number of MPs who were actually deselected is small. But this is partly because those who feared deselection joined the SDP; or opted for early retirement, or in several cases they simply left Parliament to take other jobs. What the abolition of automatic reselection did was to undermine the MPs' security of tenure. It made their continued presence in Parliament dependent on their readoption by a rank and file body. This was something many MPs were not willing to accept. The Burkean conception of the role of an MP is quite incompatible with accountability to a rank and file body.

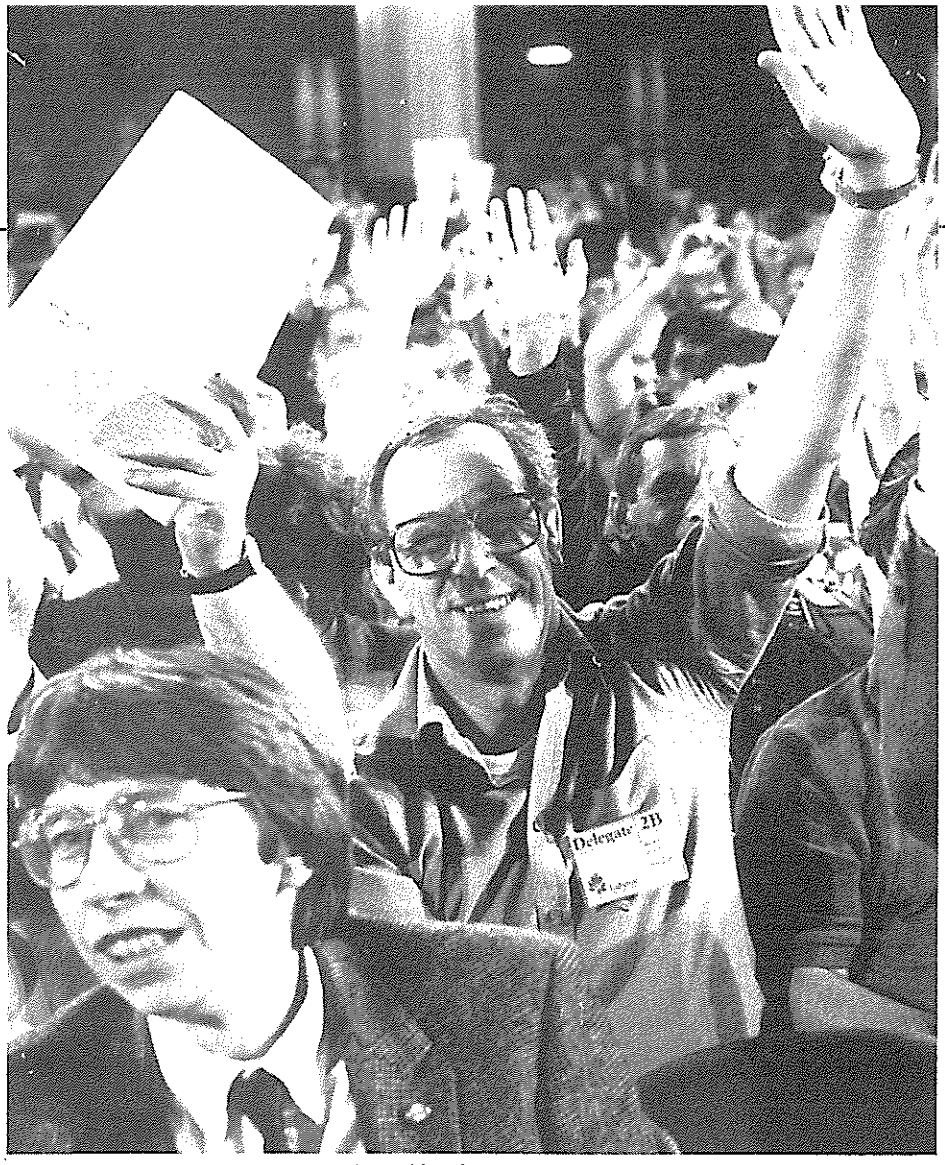
In any case, CLPD never intended to bring about a mass exodus of Right wing MPs. Even if this were possible, as it was not, it would merely have increased tensions within the Party and put off the majority of Labour Party members from going on with the process of democratisation. To be lasting, the introduction of accountability has to be unspectacular. Only then can the reformers keep the majority support they need. To retain — or regain — its political credibility the Labour Party must remain united. Those unwilling to go along with democratisation must be prevented from engineering a split. They should be put into a position where they have a straight choice between acceptance of accountability or dropping out singly.

It is naive to assume that mere change of the composition of the personnel of the PLP would lead to a radical break with existing traditions. The kind of human material on which constituencies selecting future MPs can draw at present imposes considerable limitations on what can be achieved. Whatever the past record of a PPC, and whatever may be said at selection conferences, what a newly elected MP is going to be like cannot be anticipated. Too many have undergone remarkable transformation after entering the House of Commons and almost all seem to have acquired to some degree the feeling that they are part of an elite. This may be less evident among MPs who belong to the Campaign Group, but it is nevertheless there. The only way to check this tendency is to increase the MP's link with a rank and file body which, of course, is the point of accountability.

But if institutional changes, can merely influence not effect changes, are not constitutional reforms bound to remain merely of marginal significance?
It is true that they can never in themselves produce a socialist leadership. The fact that the introduction of accountability by itself is not sufficient, does not mean that its significance is marginal. In the present political context it is a necessary condition for producing a socialist leadership, though, of course, not the only one. Differences about policy and programme (etc.) will not be resolved by making elected representatives more accountable. Democratic procedures can do no more than facilitate certain processes. By involving more rank and file members in policy determination, a milieu can be created in which socialist ideas and socialist strategy have a better chance of being accepted than, for example, mere lecturing to Labour MPs about the benefits of socialism.

Of course the interaction between MPs and the rank and file does not take place in a vacuum. The Labour Party, because of its close link with the mass organisations of the working class, the trade unions, reflects, albeit in a distorted form, the class conflicts within society. Within the Party there are contradictory pressures — one set of factors seeks to make it a vehicle of social change, another seeks to consolidate it as an agency for accommodation to the status quo. Thus internal Labour Party politics to some extent articulate these conflicting pressures. Under the present political conditions the Labour Party is the arena in which these conflicts are fought out. Just how conclusive the outcome is depends on the effectiveness of socialist intervention. This in turn depends on how well socialists understand the conditions they have to work under, viz the opportunities and limitations possible under these conditions. Greater involvement of rank and file members clearly is conceived by the Party's Right wing as a threat to its political dominance, and in turn to its promotion/acceptance of a mixed economy in the country.

We have to bear in mind that the ruling class has always regarded the Labour Party as a safety valve within the existing



Labour Conference '86. Photo John Harris.

order. However, reselection was also seen by it as a threat — a threat to is dominance. The existing (and past) Labour parliamentary leadership suited them. It could be relied on not to go beyond the confines of the capitalist order — when dissatisfaction with the Tories was reflected in the election of a Labour government.

Undermining the security of Labour MPs meant that the Labour Party was opened to the intervention of forces hitherto neutralised by the Labour Party Conference remaining merely a talking shop. Hence the hysterical campaign in the Tory-dominated media against those who where suspected of having the potential to change the Labour Party into an agency of social change.

The candidature of Tony Benn for the office of Deputy Leader in 1981 was perceived as the realisation of this potential. What placed him into this real or apparent role were the democratic reforms. If the ruling class was clear about the threat that democratic reforms within the Labour Party posed to the stability of its own political dominance, sections of the Left were oblivious to it. Set in their ways, instead of acknowledging the central role of the constitutional issues in the Labour Party for the undermining of the stability of the bourgeois order, they gave these issues at best marginal significance, and at worst treated them as sterile and irrelevant. In this way they merely demonstated their role as a safety valve of the system they claim to oppose.

But if involvement of ever larger numbers of members in the policy determining processes of the Labour Party undermines the position not just of Labour MPs but of the stability of bourgeois rule itself, why is CLPD opposed to the introduction of one member, one vote (OMOV)? Surely OMOV would make for involvement of even greater numbers of people than the present system?

The problem here is not the availability of institutions for larger participation, but availability of people prepared actually to participate. In fact, OMOV — no matter which of the options in the NEC's 'consultative document' is taken — does not actually provide for wider participation. What is envisaged is a one-off involvement of all Party members in the selection conference or in a postal ballot to be held every four or five years. At the same time any effective process of monitoring of an MP's performance by a rank and file body is done away with. This is the reason why these schemes are so attractive to those who fought tooth and nail against both mandatory reselection and the electoral college.

However, it may be possible to devise institutional structures which would allow for much wider and genuine paricipation. For example, branches could elect delegates to a body which would have no other business than to regularly discuss the MP's report and his/her work in Parliament and the PLP. This would clearly be a better arrangement than the present one where the MP's report is somehow squeezed into an already overcrowded GC agenda. The question is whether enough members would be prepared to attend and to make this a viable proposition. It means setting up another body — parallel with GCs and more numerous than GCs. However, while it is possible to make institutional provisions for wider participation, it is not possible to decree it. For example, universal franchise provides for the participation of all citizens. This does not mean that all citizens actually take an active part in the affairs of the state. In fact such choice as they really have is limited and only made available by intermediaries, ie. the minority of citizens who are organised in political parties.

It is not possible to escape the burden of our cultural inheritance simply by devising new institutions. The fact is that the great majority of people in our society are generally passive. They have been conditioned by their whole life to passivity by the family, the school, the regime in factories or offices, and generally all the institutional structures of class society. Experience shows that large numbers of people are capable of bursts of activity but these last only for brief periods of time. This is why mass organisations are generally run by relatively small minorities and paricipation in political structures is limited to a mere fraction of those who have the right to participate. To create organisational structures for mass participation when those prepared to participate are relatively few, merly means that mass organisations are run by small committees which make decisions on behalf of mass membership.

To come back to OMOV: To seek involvement of all members in the choice of parliamentary candidates may sound democratic until it is realised that because of the absence of continuous involvement by mass membership in the MP's political work, the mass membership can make no informed judgement on the MP's political performance and such judgement the membership can make is based primarily on the MP's PR skills.

What conclusions can the left draw if, as you imply, the masses have been conditioned to passivity and the political involvement of the Labour Party membership is only marginal.

The main problem for the Left is its unwillingness to come to terms with the existing political realities. To do this does not, of course, mean their uncritical acceptance. But before we can effectively change something, we must acknowledge that it exists. Once we begin to substitute fantasy for reality, or mistake reality for a distorted image of it, the task of changing reality becomes more difficult and gross

errors are likely to occur.

As Marx sums it up at the beginning of his 18th Brumaire:

"Men make their own history, but they do not make it first as they please; they do not choose the circumstances for themselves but have to work upon circumstances as they find them, have to fashion the material handed down by the past."

To misconstrue the environment in which one operates may easily result in producing results opposite to what was intended. Let us take the existing political structures. Following the Russian revolution of 1917 it became part of the conventional wisdom of the Left that capitalism is on its last legs and that the material base for most developing bourgeois political structures — above all bourgeois democracy — is fast disappearing. Whilst the experiences between 1918 and 1945 seemed to confirm this diagnosis, subsequent events failed to do so. The existing political structures exhibited unexpected stability. Clearly a Left strategy based on the expectation of their fast disappearance should have been revised.

However, those who went for revision generally ended up by abandoning the socialist 'perspective' altogether. Those who remained 'faithful' stuck with their original, now completely untenable, positions, or created new theories explaining how capitalism had unexpectedly managed to develop a new lease of life — an eventuality that socialists of the 1940-45 period had never anticipated. The two latter positions freed the left from the need to seek in its own political practice an explanation for the continued existence of capitalism. It had to fall back on the view that change would come with the emergence of new forces originating outside the existing political framework. Whether these forces were detected in every current extra-parliamentary movement, or delegated to an indefinite future, makes little difference in practice. The result of both positions is that no use is made of opportunities offered by the existing political structures.

But if a frontal attack on bourgeois-democratic states in a situation of dual power is highly unlikely, by what mechanism will the dismantlement of the bourgeois state be achieved?

Engels, whilst describing a democratic republic as the form of bourgeois state most advantageous to the working class, at the same time characterises it as 'a state in which wealth wields its power indirectly, but all the more effectively'. The bourgeoisie's indirect rule depends on the ability of a bourgeois party to maintain political credibility for its dominance.

The emergence of mass working-class parties provided the ruling class with a further safeguard. This, however, applies only so long as the leadership of these parties is not prepared to move beyond the limits of the bourgeois status quo.

However, the more democratic the structure of these parties, and the greater the opportunities for the rank and file to influence party policy, the less reliable these parties become from the point of view of the ruling class.

The stability of bourgeois-democratic institutions is, of course, not accidental. The relative passivity of the masses means that bourgeois representative institutions provide a mechanism which diverts their dissatisfaction into 'safe' channels. Meagre though the opportunities are that these mechanisms may offer, they have proved effective in stopping the masses exploring other political avenues through which to express their dissatisfaction.

Nevertheless, the hold of bourgeois ideology on the masses has been steadily weakening. In Britain, all the agencies of indoctrination failed to prevent the electorate from voting in majority Labour governments. It would be a mistake to try to explain this by treating the Labour Party as just another bourgeois party and therefore quite 'safe' from the point of view of the ruling class. This overlooks the fact that the 1945 Labour government, for example, was elected despite a concerted and vitriolic campaign by the bourgeois-controlled media.

The political credibility of the Labour Party, therefore, is not governed by the requirements of the ruling class. A Labour government can be returned even when the ruling class may no longer be certain it will act merely as a safety valve. This in turn depends on the Labour Party's internal politics: balance between the Party's right and left wings.

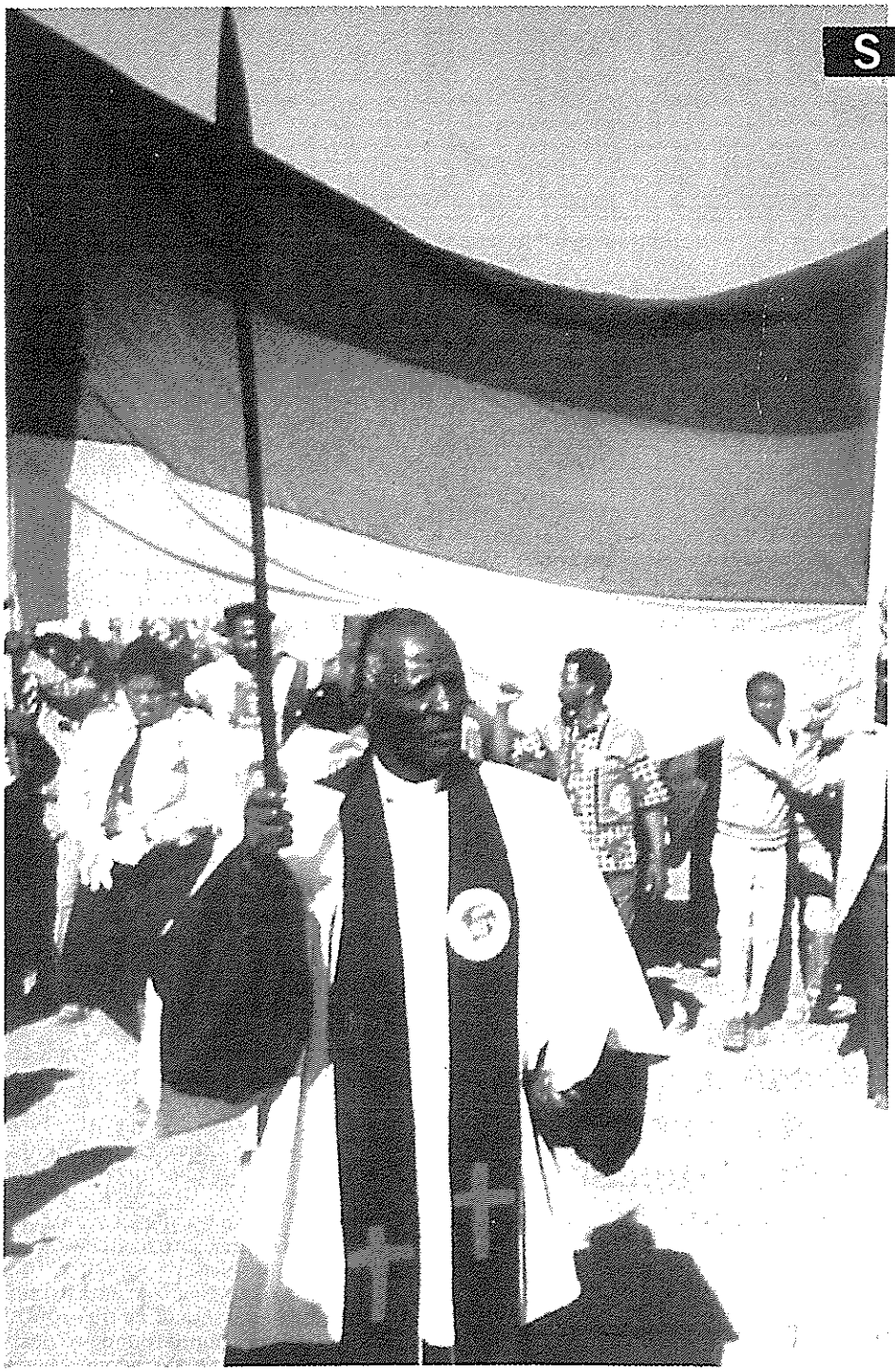
The experience of 1979-81 has demonstrated that the left can gain majority support within the party. How then do we account for the fact that as a rule the party's right wing is in command? This is to a large extent due to the strategy that the Labour left and the left in general adopt — that is, if 'strategy' is the appropriate description of what the left is doing. Were the Labour left to gain a dominant position within the party, and were a Labour government to make significant inroads into capitalist property relations, bourgeois democracy would cease to be a state in which 'wealth wields its power more effectively'.

The contradiction inherent in a bourgeois democratic structure between its representative institutions and its 'special bodies of armed men, prisons, etc' trained and organised to defend the existing property relations, would assume crucial political significance. The chronic social crisis of the capitalist system would find expression in the crisis of its political regime. The crisis of the political regime is, of course, a necessary condition, if the latent crisis of the social regime is to become manifest.

The fact that the hold of bourgeois ideology over the masses has been steadily weakening does not mean that it has disappeared. At their present level of consciousness the masses are only prepared to accept partial solutions of problems produced by the contradictions of the capitalist system. It follows that the programme on which a Labour government is able to get elected must reflect this. Measures beyond the framework of capitalism will inevitably be limited. It is only the experience of the inadequacy of these measures from which the masses can learn and Labour voters appreciate the need to go further.

The Labour left, let alone the left in general, is not only slow to appreciate the importance of 'constitutional issues'. The left also completely disregards the need to give high priority to 'a significant extension of public ownership' — the single most important item that would take Labour's programme beyond the capitalist status quo.

Equally serious is the left's failure to appreciate the need for a concerted and continuous campaign within the party for the adoption of these priorities. Only the pursuit of a radical reforming programme by a Labour government, as against fantasies about extra-parliamentary forces, will succeed in triggering off a crisis of the bourgeois political regime.



The flag of the ANC

The Freedom Charter: myth and reality

Over the last few years the African National Congress has started to play a more open role in the struggle in South Africa than it has done for decades. Central to this development has been the increased prominence of the ANC's historic document, the Freedom Charter. In this article BOB FINE takes issue with those, like a recent writer in the 'African Communist', who seek to idealise the Charter and its history.

With the rise of the independent trade union movement and the more general growth of political consciousness among black workers, the question of what political programme the working class needs and wants to carry forward its struggles has come to the fore.

The African National Congress and the Communist Party have stood firmly by the Freedom Charter as their political manifesto, and no one can doubt that the Freedom Charter has won considerable popular support as a vision of a democratic alternative to apartheid. In a context in which thoroughly undemocratic alternatives to apartheid are being proposed by some 'reforming' elements of big business and the state, the Freedom Charter retains its significance as a democratic manifesto demanding one person, one vote in a unitary South African state.

Within the workers' movement, however, there has been criticism from various quarters that the Freedom Charter fails to provide an adequate direction for the struggle. The political content of the Charter has been criticised both for ambiguities running through it and for its omissions on various critical issues.

While it supports 'one person, one vote', it makes no mention of rights of political organisation or of inter-party democracy. While it supports the deracialisation of the state apparatus, it makes no mention of terminating the vast powers of the executive and army over social and political life. While it supports the right of trade union organisation, it says nothing of the right to strike. While it supports the transfer of the wealth of the mines and monopoly industries to the people, it says nothing about what form this transfer is to take. It commits itself to the redivision of the land, but offers no clue about what direction this will take. It advocates equal pay for equal work for women, but is silent on other aspects of women's oppression.

None of these criticisms provide a fundamental objection to the Charter. They point to the vagueness of the Charter in that, in the words of one critic, Duncan Innes, it 'does not specify precisely what political-economic system should be established in South Africa'. The exclusion of issues like workers' control, the right to strike, democratic accountability and the right to political organisation means that 'it falls short of goals which are fundamental to the workers' movement'. For a liberation movement which formally asserts the leading role of the working class, these ambiguities and absences must surely appear as a problem in need of resolving.

To do so, either the Charter needs to be revised or it needs to be supplemented or it needs to be scrapped in favour of a more adequate programme. The advocacy of a Workers' Charter by some intellec-

tuals and trade unionists has represented one attempt to deal with this problem, whether it is conceived as a substitute or a supplement — along the lines of the Women's Charter — to the Freedom Charter.

It would appear that the advantages to be gained in terms of winning and mobilising working class support from introducing such clarity would, as Innes has argued, 'far outweigh the disadvantages which the loss of a few opportunists involves'.

So why not embark on programmatic reform within the liberation movement to make it clear that the struggle is not simply to replace white bosses and policemen with blacks, but to transform the social and economic conditions of life of black people, including its vast majority, the working class? The CP is totally opposed to any tinkering with the Charter and one contributor to African Communist under the name of 'Observer' does his best to justify the Party's position. He is to be congratulated for taking the critics seriously and not falling into the use of vitriol which has characterised the manner in which the CP has handled most people with whom it disagreed in the past. Unfortunately 'Observer's' best is pathetically weak. There may be good reasons for the CP's resistance to the development of a more clearly socialist programme for South Africa, but whatever they are 'Observer' does not seem to know them. Let us consider just one of his arguments.

He says that 'sadly, most of the academic (sic) debate on the Freedom Charter has taken place in a kind of historical vacuum with the history of the liberation movement largely ignored'. But his own 'history' consists of a scattering of unsubstantiated assertions, among which is the old orthodoxy that 'the Charter was adopted at the most democratic gathering in the history of South Africa' and that this gives it a special legitimacy. Was it? Where's the evidence? Let us explore this throw-away line.

The organisation of the Freedom Charter campaign in 1955 was under the control of a National Action Council consisting of representatives of four 'nationally' defined groups: Africans, Asians, Coloureds and Whites. The idea was to recruit 'freedom volunteers' to publicise the Congress of the People and collect demands for the Charter. These demands were to be composited into a Charter by a sub-committee of the NAC and the finished product was then to be put for approval to elected representatives of the people at the Congress. The purpose, as Walter Sisulu put it, was to 'get the people themselves to say how they should be governed in the new democratic South Africa'. It was a good idea in terms of involving people in political discussion, but its idealisation both at the time and particularly now, thirty years later, as the 'most representative gathering there has ever been in South Africa' (Suttner and Cronin), is historically untenable and politically dangerous.

In its own terms, the campaign was fraught with problems. New Age, the CP newspaper of the time, conceded that 'it would be foolish to deny that the plans for the Congress of the People had not suffered as a result of the government's attacks. They have'. Lutuli, the President-General of the ANC, complained that preparations for the Charter were made 'at a very late hour — too late in fact for the statements to be properly boiled down into one comprehensive statement. It was not even possible for the NAC to circularise the draft Charter fully'. Neither Lutuli nor ZK Matthews saw the Charter before the Congress. A directive issued by the NAC in May 1955 complained that 'not enough demands are flowing in' and later the NAC offered a thoroughly self-critical report on the Congress:

"We failed to set up an effective organisational machinery to make proper use of the Volunteers...After the initial period, there was a lapse of time during which very little work was done...The core of the leadership of the campaign was immobilised as a result of government bans...Your NAC and the four sponsoring bodies at no stage managed successfully to link COP with the day-to-day struggles of the people...Only a negligible number of local committees was set up. Our failure to do so resulted in the Congress of the People not being as representative as it might otherwise have been...-The overwhelming majority of the delegates came from the main urban centres...where the Congress branch had been operating for many years ...It was a concern that the movement had not taken strong enough roots in the smaller towns and the vast and thickly populated countryside...Only a minute proportion came from the factories and the mines. This fact illustrates the low level of trade union organisation amongst the workers."

"For a liberation movement which formally asserts the leading role of the working class, these ambiguities and absences must surely appear as a problem"

A tiny drafting committee eventually produced the Charter, which was presented to seven members of the ANC's National Executive but excluded Lutuli and Matthews. Little is known about the drafting committee, though Jo Slovo has claimed to be one of the people responsible for drafting the Charter. At the Congress itself, which was a compelling occasion, 2844 delegates attended. The various clauses of the Charter were introduced, there was an opportunity for impromptu speeches from various delegates, and then the clauses were acclaimed by a show of hands. There were no rival resolutions in spite of passionate opposition to aspects of the Charter from Africanists, Liberals, some members of the women's movement and some socialists.

ZK Matthews' original proposal was that a common voters' roll of everyone over 21 be prepared and that a general election for representatives to the Congress then be held. The scheme was dropped due the impracticalities of organising such a venture and the danger that the state would read this as an attempt to establish an alternative organ of government. In its place a loose form of representation was introduced, allowing any group of any size to send one or more delegates. The result was something more like a rally than a delegates' conference.

Various Liberals protested that the Congress was a 'classical Communist frame-up' in which their role was 'merely to endorse pre-arranged decisions'. Africanists protested that the very organisation of the Congress was undemocratic in that in the NAC 'each (national) congress, irrespective of its membership, is represented by an equal number of delegates...An aggressive invasion of majority rule'.

These critics had their own axes to grind and their evidence should be treated with caution. But even Lutuli found problems. In discussions of the Freedom Charter after the Congress, the Natal Provincial Congress of the ANC, under Lutuli's influence, criticised the section on equal rights for all 'national groups' (i.e. races) for tending to over-emphasise racial distinctions and suggested instead a focus on building of one united nation. Like the Africanists, though for different reasons, Lutuli and the Natal branch wanted revision and full discussion of the Charter prior to its acceptance by the ANC. Concern was expressed about safeguarding the autonomy of the ANC against attempts to bulldoze the Charter and the multi-racial Alliance structure through, particularly as an abortive campaign to collect a million signatures for the Charter was initiated in advance of the ANC's endorsement. In the face of continuing divisions, no decision was made at the December 1955 national conference of the ANC; it was finally accepted at a special conference designed to discuss a quite different matter: the tactics of the women's anti-pass campaign.

Africanists charged that the meeting

Lenin and the Bolsheviks

Forging the weapon

Where the socialist parties of Western Europe either betrayed socialism, or led the workers to defeat, Lenin's party stood out against the wave of chauvinism which engulfed socialism at the outbreak of the 1914 war. In 1917 it led the Russian workers to the conquest of power. Without the Bolshevik party there would have been no Russian revolution. 70 years later, Bolshevism is shrouded in myth and controversy, claimed as political model and guide by vastly divergent political movements. Here we print the first part of an account of the history of the Bolshevik party by Brian Pearce. It was first published at the beginning of 1960 in the journal 'Labour Review'. The second part will appear in the next issue of Workers' Liberty.

In discussions about the best form of organisation for a Marxist workers' party reference is often made, in one spirit or another, to the experience of Russia. Sometimes such reference is made confusedly. Three distinct entities are mixed up; the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party of 1903-11, within which various factions strove for ascendancy; the Bolshevik faction in that 'Party'; and the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (Bolsheviks) formed in 1912. Often misunderstood, also are the two fundamental presuppositions made by Bolsheviks in their approach to organistional problems.

The first of these was that the working class would have to undertake a struggle for power in which both legal and illegal activity would be involved, a struggle in which all kinds of persecution by the ruling class would have to be faced, a struggle which must culminate in the forcible seizure of power and the forcible defence of the power thus seized against counter-attack. In a word, the Bolsheviks saw before them, and before the workers of *every* country the prospect of *revolution*, and therefore the need for a party capable of preparing the carrying through of a revolution. The *special* features of Tsarist Russia in the early twentieth century were not decisive in relation to *this* point; in any case, these features fluctuated and changed, and the Bolsheviks' concrete ideas about party organisation in Russia were modified accordingly, but without the fundamental principle being affected.

The second presupposition was that the working class everywhere needs not less but *much more* 'party organisation' in order to conquer power than was needed by the bourgeoisie in its great revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries. Trotsky (who arrived late at an understanding of this point but thereafter defended the Bolshevik position most staunchly) put it thus in his *Lessons of October* (1924): 'the part played in bourgeois revolutions by the economic power of the bourgeoisie, by its education, by its municipalities and universities, is a part which can be filled in a proletarian revolution only by the party of the proletariat'. That is to say, the bourgeoisie while still an oppressed class acquires wealth, and important footholds in the institutions of the old regime, but the working class lacks these advantages and has to compensate by intense organisation of those forces which it does possess. In Lenin's words, 'in its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation'.

When the Russian Marxists were still operating through the rudimentary forms of study-circles living separate lives in the principal cities, and just begininng to apply themselves to study of the detailed problems of their actual setting and to intervention through leaflets in the current

struggles of the Russian workers, Lenin raised (in 1894) the question of working towards the formation of a 'socialist workers' party'. The first coming together of representatives of local 'Leagues of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class', at Minsk in 1898, the so-called First Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, achieved nothing in the organisational sphere and was followed by arrests and police repressions of a devastating character. Preparations for another, similar gathering, led to further arrests, and drew from Lenin in 1900 the observation that 'congresses inside autocratic Russia are a luxury we can't afford'. Instead, he and his associates got down to the publication outside Russia of a newspaper, *Iskra*, to be smuggled into the country and serve as the means to prepare for another congress. Around the work for this paper, cadres of revolutionaries organised themselves in an all-Russia network, and through this paper a clarifying discussion was carried on for two years about the political tasks and functions of the party to be created.

Already before the Second Congress met, Lenin had outlined, particularly in *Letter to a Comrade on Our Organisational Tasks* (1902), as well as in the more famous *What Is To Be Done?* his conception of what a revolutionary party must be like. Its dominant characteristic should be *centralism*, the concentration in the hands of a stable, continuing leadership of all the resources of the Marxist movement, so that the most rational and expedient use might be made of these resources. Party membership must be strictly defined so that the leadership knew exactly who was who and what forces they possessed at any given moment. In the *then* existing conditions there could be little *democracy* in the party, desirable as this was, without oversimplifying the task of the police. The local 'committees' of the party would have to be appointed from above and consist entirely of professional revolutionaries, and each of the party organisations in the factories and elsewhere ('every facory must be our fortress') would operate under the instructions of the local committee, conveyed thorugh one of the committee members who would be the organisation's only contact, for security reasons.

When at last the Second Congress met, in 1903 (at first in Brussels, later moving to London), and got down to settling organisational as well as political problems, the political differences among the Russian Marxists arising from their different estimates of the course of development and relationship of class forces at once found reflexion in the sphere of organisation, though not in a clear-cut way, there being at this stage much cross-voting. Lenin and Martov confronted each other with their opposing formulae for Rule One, defining what constituted Party membership. Lenin wanted a tight definition obliging members not merely to acceptance of the Party programme and the giving of financial support, but also to 'personal participation in one of the Party's organisations', whereas the Congress agreed with Martov that the rendering of 'personal assistance under the direction of one of the Party's organs' was sufficient.

In Lenin's difference with Martov on this point was expressed Lenin's conviction that 'the party, as the vanguard of the class, should be as *organised* as possible, should admit to its ranks only such elements as lend themselves to at least a minimum of organisation', because, 'the stronger the party organs consisting of real Social-Democrats are, the less instability there is within the party, the greater will be its influence on the masses around it'. Connected with the divergence of views about what should constitute Party membership was a more fundamen-

tal difference — which was to emerge more and more clearly in subsequent years — about the character of the party structure. Lenin's conception was one of 'building the party from the top downwards, starting from the party congress and the bodies set up by it', which should be possessed of full powers, with 'subordination of lower party bodies to higher party bodies'. Martov revealed already at this stage a conception of each party organisation as being 'autonomous'. On the internal political life of the party Lenin's view was that 'a struggle of *shades* is *inevitable and essential* as long as it does not lead to anarchy and splits, as long as it is confined *within bounds* approved by the common consent of all party members' *(One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,* 1904).

In spite of the defeat of Rule One, Lenin and his associates carried the majority with them in the voting on the main *political questions* (as a result of which they thereafter enjoyed the advantage in the party of the nickname of *Bolsheviks* 'majority-ites'), but the deep divergences which had revealed themselves were reflected in the Congress decisions on the central party bodies. A sort of dual power was set up, equal authority being accorded to the editorial board of the paper *Iskra*, residing abroad, and to the Central Committee, operating 'underground' inside Russia. A Party Council empowered to arbitrate in any disputes that might arise between these two centres of authority, was to consist of two members representing the editorial board, two from the Central Committee, and one elected directly by the party congress.

At first the Bolsheviks appeared to dominate both editorial board and Central Committee, but very soon after the Second Congress a shift of allegiance by a few of the leaders of what was then a very small group of people enabled the *Mensheviks* ('minority-ites') to turn the tables. The Bolsheviks mustered their forces into a faction, set up a 'Bureau of the Committees of the Majority' to lead it, produced a faction paper, *Vperyod*, and conducted a campaign within the party for the convening of a fresh, Third Congress. By early 1905 they had the majority of the local Committees on record in favour of such a congress, and according to the party rules adopted in 1903 the Party Council should thereupon have convened the congress, but the Mensheviks in control of that body found pretexts not to do so. Accordingly the 'Bureau of the Committees of the Majority' went ahead and convened the Third Congress on its own initiative.

This purely Bolshevik gathering decided to abolish the 'bi-centrism' established in 1903. The editorial board of the party paper had proved to be unstable, while the party organisations inside Russia had grown and become strong. A central committee with full, exclusive powers, including the power to appoint the editorial board, was elected. All party organisations wre instructed henceforth to submit fortnightly reports to the central committee: 'later on it will be seen how enormously important it is to acquire the habit of regular organisational communication'. As regards the Mensheviks, their right and that of all minorities to publish their own literature within the party was recognised, but they must submit to the discipline of the Congress and the Central Committee elected by it. A special resolution charged all party members to 'wage an energetic ideological struggle' against Menshevism, while at the same time acknowledging that the latter's adherents could 'participate in party organisations provided they recognize party congresses and the party rules and submit to party discipline'. Party organisations where Mensheviks were predominant were to be expelled *only* if they were 'unwilling to submit to party discipline'.

The Mensheviks refused to recognise the authenticity of the Third Congress and held a parallel congress of their own, which set up a rival leading body called the Organisational Committee. To this they accorded only vague and limited powers, and they introduced some ultra-democratic provisions into party life, such as that every member of a local organisation was to be asked to express an opinion on every decision of the appropriate local committee before this could be put into force.

'As regards the Mensheviks, their right and that of all minorities to publish their own literature within the party was recognised..."

With the revolutionary events of 1905 the situation in and around the party changed very rapidly. Great numbers of workers joined its ranks, the opportunities for party work became greater and more diverse, and *de facto* civil liberty expanded, enabling the party to show itself more openly. Lenin led the way in carrying through a reorganisation of the party on more democratic lines, so as to meet and profit by the new situation. Larger and looser party organisations were to be created, and the elective principle introduced in place of the old tutelage by committees of professionals.

Such changes were possible, Lenin stressed, only because of the work done in the preceding phase. 'The working class is instinctively, spontaneously, social-democratic, and the more than ten years of work put in by the social-democrats has done a greal deal to transform this spontaneity into class consciousness.' (The latter part of this sentence from Lenin's article on *The Reorganisation of the Party*, November 1905, is sometimes omitted when it is quoted by unscrupulous anti-Leninists). There need be no fear that the mass of new members would dilute the party, *because* they would find themselves under the influence of the 'steadfast, solid core' of party members forged in those previous ten years. At the same time there could be no question of liquidating the secret apparatus the party prepared for illegality; and in general, Lenin warned, it was necessary to 'reckon with the possibility of new attempts on the part of the expiring autocracy to withdraw the promised liberties, to attack the revolutionary workers and especially their leaders'. It was to the important but carefully-considered changes made at this time that Lenin was mainly referring when he wrote in 1913 *(How Vera Zasulich Slays Liquidationism)* that, organisationally, the party, 'while retaining its fundamental character, has known how to adapt its *form* to changing conditions, to change this *form* in accordance with the demands of the moment'.

The newly-recruited worker-members showed themselves somewhat more resistant to the guiding influence of the old cadres than Lenin had hoped, and, unable to grasp what all the 'fuss' was about between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, brought strong pressure to bear for immediate reunification of the party. The very successes achieved by the revolution, with such comparative ease, caused many workers to see the Bolsheviks as gloomy, pecular folk obsessed with non-existent problems. Zinoviev recalls in his lectures on party history how there was a period in those days when Bolshevik speakers found it hard to get a hearing in the Petersburg factory district called 'the Vyborg side' of the River Neva — which was to become a Bolshevik stronghold in 1917. It proved impossible not to yield to the pressure from below for 'unity', in spite of prophetic misgivings. A joint central committee was set up, composed of both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks, and proceeded to convene a new party congress.

This congress — the Fourth, or 'Unity' congress, held at Stockholm — was elected more democratically than its predecessors, full advantage being taken of the easier conditions for open activity. Thirty-six thousand members took part in the election of the delegates, and one delegate was elected for every 250-300 members — really elected, by the rank and file, not, as on previous occasions, chosen by the local committees of professionals.

As a result, the Mensheviks found themselves with a majority on the most important political questions — though they were obliged to accept Lenin's formulation of the rule regarding party membership which they had successfully voted down in 1903! A central committee consisting of six Mensheviks and three Bolsheviks was elected.

An FSLN women's militia

Is Nicaragu

JANET BURSTALL takes a look at Nicaragua seven and a half years after the overthrow of the hated Somoza dictatorship

The debate among revolutionary socialists about Nicaragua is not a debate over whether or not the Sandinistas have brought progressive change to Nicaragua,

Clearly there have been significant and remarkable gains over the days of Somoza — routine state killings are ended, civil liberties are high by Latin American, and even world standards, literacy and health campaigns have been far reaching, and there has been a considerable land reform.

But is Nicaragua socialist? Have the Sandinistas carved out a new strategy for socialism? Or are they radical nationalists? Is it necessary for the working class in Nicaragua to organise itself independently of the FSLN government and to be prepared for government opposition to a fight for its interests, for power to its own organisations, and for socialist measures against the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie?

Let's look at the facts.

1. 60% of the Nicaraguan economy is privately owned. There is a state monopoly on banking. The bourgeoisie does not participate in the central organs of state, but is represented on various economic planning bodies.

2. Extensive assistance is given to the private sector by the government, and profits have recovered much more rapidly than wages. War, blockade, and natural disasters have pushed down standards of living. However government policies have also caused real wages to fall since the abolition of subsidies on the prices of certain basic necessities, in February 1985. 'Profitability' is also the accepted basis of the state-owned sector. About one-quarter of land has been redistributed. Rights of ownership are only challenged if productive capacity of property is not utilised, or if assistance is given to the Contras.

3. The national political structures are bourgeois democratic. The National Assembly delegates serve for set terms and are not subject to immediate recall. There are no workers' councils. In fact, "The real centre of political power, both legislative and executive, has always been the National Directorate of the FSLN" (Weber, p.66); "the National Directorate...function(s) more or less as the effective government of the country, as do the Politbureaus in Eastern Europe" (Henri Weber, 'The Sandinista Revolution', p.78). "In a telling gesture... Junta members were introduced on their arrival in Leon on 18 July by Tomas Borge, thereby underlining the fact that the National Directorate of the FSLN was the ultimate authority of the Revolution" (George Black, 'Triumph of the People', p.171).

Symbolically, the members of the FSLN National Directorate have been given the title 'Commander (Comandante) of the Revolution'.

The FSLN is not so much a party as the central core of the state: the army is a *Sandinista* army (and it "has been constantly alert to the dangers of infiltration both by right-wing Somocistas and cadres from the ultra-left..." — Black, p.225).

The Militias were disbanded soon after July 1979 and re-formed under Sandinista control. The police are Sandinista. The CDSs are 'Sandinista' Defence Committees. The municipal juntas (local govenrment) are unelected coalition bodies nominated by the Sandinistas. When the right-wing in Nicaragua go on about the FSLN confusing party and state, they have their own axes to grind, but the observation is true.

4. The FSLN has never been a working-class party, but a multi-class coalition which has developed its programme around a combination of interests — peasant, small business, anti-Somoza and nationalist bourgeoise and working class.

It is a militarised, top-down movement. "So far, the party has been created from the top down, with little sign of internal life below the level of the National Directorate itself" (Weber, p.79).

The National Directorate is not elected. The way it conducted the struggle against Somoza is well summed up by Humberto Ortega: "The truth is that we always thought of the masses, seeing them, however, as a prop for the guerrilla campaign that would enable it to deal some blows at the National Guard. Reality was quite different: guerrilla activity served as a prop for the masses..." (Quoted in Weber, p.49-50).

"The facts allow only one class in Nicaragua neither through its main mass org a political party...built on t class programme."

The FSLN recruited mainly, in fact almost exclusively, from students: it was the majority force among Nicaraguan students from the late '60s (Black, p.85), but for the majority of the working people it was 'the hand of the avenger' from outside.

It did begin to organise the Association

a socialist?

of Rural Workers (ATC), but only from March 1978, and the ATC had committees in only four of Nicaragua's 16 departments by 1979 (Black, p.144, p.272). "Taken together, all three Sandinista tendencies numbered barely 200 in 1977, and no more than 500 when they entered Managua on 19 July 1979" (Weber, p.55).

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5. The main mass organisations are the CDS (Sandinista Defence Committees), the women's organisation (AMNLAE), the Sandinista Youth and the Sandinista trade unions. 'Face the People' sessions are consultative, but have no power. The main role of AMNLAE and Sandinista Youth is to support the decisions of the FSLN leadership. The CDS are directed from above.

The mass organisations have been mostly created since the Sandinista seizure of power. The major mass working class organisations of before July 1979 — the trade unions — were bypassed.

The Sandinista trade union federation has been created entirely since July 1979. It does do some things in pursuit of workers' interests against the capitalists, and it is not 100% controlled by the state, but its whole bias is towards mobilising the workers behind the Sandinistas. Other trade unions (i.e. those existing before July 1979) have not been banned, but the Sandinistas have tried to squeeze them to the advantage of the CST.

George Black's comments on this are very revealing: "Somoza's brutal repression of the trade union movement ultimately works to the Frente's advantage. The low level of previous unionisation means that more than 90% of workers have no experience of trade unionism within a bourgeois state, and although formidable weaknesses in class consciousness may partly benefit organisations like the CTN (the Christian unions) in the short term, there is no question of Sandinista hegemony over the workers' movement or the concept of worker control of production being seriously challenged from a position of strength". (p.279). What Black thinks he is saying is that the revolutionaries are free from obstruction by conservative, reformist and economistic trade unionists. What in fact he is saying is that independent working class organisation is too weak to act as an effective restraint on the middle class nationalist revolutionaries.

6. Workers' self-organisation existed for a time in the form of some workers' control of factories when owners were leaving the country or decapitalising. However all enterprises now have managers who are firmly in control. The workers' participation which does exist is essentially directed at increasing productivity.

The facts allow only one conclusion: the working class in Nicaragua neither holds state power through its mass organisations, nor through a political party which has been build on the basis of a working class programme and working class struggle, and which provides a forum for the political debates of the vanguard of the class. The FSLN is not such a party.

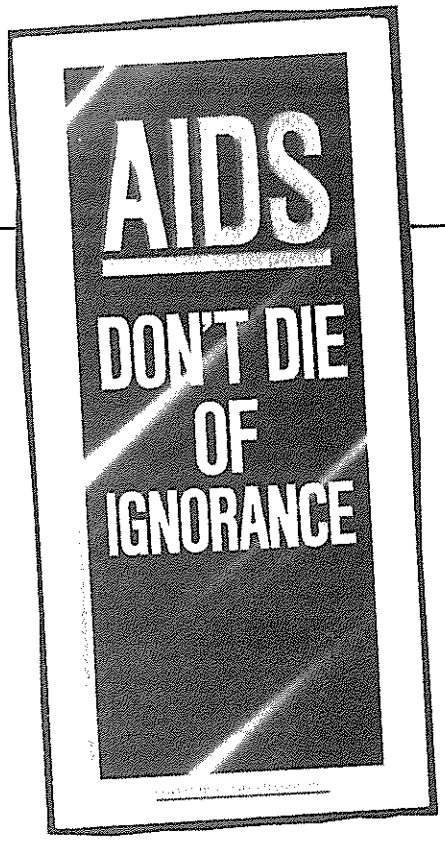
The Sandinistas' programme for the foreseeable future, is for the maintenance of a controlled form of capitalism, under the name 'mixed economy'.

The standard of living of the Nicaraguan workers and peasants can only be ameliorated within Nicaragua's own borders. But the *fundamental* causes of poverty and all-round economic backwardness cannot be overcome except on an *international* basis. But the Sandinistas subordinate their international policy to domestic economic development. Their international policy seems to be carried out just as the government's foreign policy — rather than as international political organising by the FSLN, independent of diplomatic considerations.

Nicaragua is a small, weak country. Socialists in such a country need to link up with more powerful working classes in Guatemala, El Salvador, and above all Mexico. Yet the Sandinistas' main efforts have been to secure diplomatic friendships with the Mexican capitalist class (not a wrong effort in principle, so far as it goes), rather than linking with the Mexican workers.

But arguments are advanced that the Sandinistas are on the road to power in the hands of the self-organised working class, and socialism.

Nicaragua is quite possibly on the 'Cuban road'. The bourgeois state of Somoza was smashed by the Sandinistas and Nicaraguan masses in 1979. However, the Sandinistas are following a typically Stalinist policy of pursuing a period of the 'progressive' development of capitalism and bourgeois democracy. It is not at all inevitable that the Sandinistas will carry over to the nationalisation of the bulk of the economy, even though they will probably defeat the Contras. If and when the Sandinistas do move against private property, it is likely to be done bureaucratically, to minimise the role of the working class and keep it under control. We advocate independent working class politics, so that the working class can expropriate the bourgeoisie in Nicaragua and commence the construction of socialism and its spread throughout Central America.



A socialist response?

By Clive Bradley

The spectre haunting Britain today — and haunting the dreams especially of the youth — is AIDS. Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome has sent panic throughout society. Caused by a — so far — indestructible virus, HIV, and transmitted through sexual intercourse (or from blood), AIDS is indeed a terrifying threat to us all.

Is it possible to have a distinctly *socialist* response to AIDS? After all, as the government ads say, the disease is not prejudiced — it can kill anybody, of whatever class, colour, sex or sexuality. Stopping AIDS is a *medical*, not a political question. How can you bring politics into it?

Unfortunately it is not only possible but necessary to approach the AIDS issue politically. Unfortunately — because in a sane society it *would* be a purely medical question, and the question would be: how can we cure it, or find a vaccine? But AIDS has become an issue in a distinctly political context.

It was launched on an unsuspecting public as 'the gay plague'. And central to media coverage has been an explicit attack on lesbian and gay rights. One Tory councillor even declared that "90% of homosexuals should be gassed" to put a stop to the spread of AIDS.

Much of the government's propaganda, stressing 'single partners' and low-level moralising has implied forthcoming problems not only for gay men in particular, but for the whole 'sixties-generation view of sexual liberation. Judging by recent murmurings in the Commons, worse is to come — more explicitly anti-gay propaganda.

The BBC's youth-oriented extravaganza even proclaimed that uncontrolable sexual appetites are 'natural' for boys — so girls had better take charge of the condom supply.

Moreover, government spending on AIDS research has remained low. *Total* spending, including on publicity, is a lot less than on advertising the sale of British Gas.

For socialists, therefore, there are a number of priorities. First we have to dispel myths about AIDS, while recognising that we cannot substitute for informed medical information.

Second, we have to counter the reactionary backlash accompanying the AIDS hysteria, and in particular defend gay rights. In this context we need to argue for more *explicit* information on 'safe' or 'safer' sex: homosexual visibility is one guarantee against further attacks, and explicit discussion of, for example, anal sex, helps keep homosexuals visible.

Third, we need to formulate demands for campaigning on the issue. Opposition to health cuts and more spending on AIDS research is important; free and easily available condoms should be fought for — and, perhaps, non-water soluble lubricants and spermicides (some of which can help in resisting HIV) should be available on the NHS.

How has the left measured up to this? The biggest would-be Trotskyist group, Militant, have kept a fairly low profile. They have carried a few factual articles and readers' letters. Militant-inspired resolutions to LPYS conference predictably propose that the drugs industry be nationalised in the fight against AIDS. They also propose: "nationalise...condom manufacturing companies under workers' control and management". In other words, AIDS is just one more problem of capitalist society and is a useful starting point on which to motivate Militant's perennial, all-purpose answer to everything: "nationalise".

Militant have said very little on the question of gay rights — an issue that for many years they refused to discuss at LPYS conference. Though Militant now has a number of openly gay supporters, changes in 'the line' are not very visible in the pages of their paper. And it is an issue that really must not be — and *cannot* be — ducked in resisting the AIDS backlash. The call to nationalise the drugs industry won't help here, and at best it is an irrelevance; at worst it will be a cop-out for Militant which traditionally is more backward on this question than very large sectors of British society, including very many Tories, have been.

As one would expect, the Socialist Workers' Party has been more up-front in defending gay rights. Their pamphlet 'AIDS — the socialist view' covers a wide range of issues, from gay rights to the argument that AIDS is a 'natural disaster.

But their answers are weak, and typify the SWP's approach. Socialists "have to fight to defend any section of society used as scapegoats", and "explain the hypocrisy of the government's AIDS campaign". "We must also spell out how the government's cuts in health and social services can be fought."

But predictably, they go on: "the Labour Party can't be relied upon to do any of these things". So "socialists must challenge the very basis of capitalist society." "Ultimately, the answer to this...does not lie either with great scientific breakthroughs or with attempts at reform...It lies in the struggle of the working class."

A scientific breakthrough would be a help though, wouldn't it? And "class struggle" in the abstract is no answer to the questions posed *now*. The SWP provide no link between the here and now and 'socialism' in the future. They propose no specific demands to be fought for now. Their response is cut from the path of "Socialism the only road" argument which militant also use. Is there an urgent problem, a felt condition of, for example, racist oppression? Well, comrade, nothing can be done about it under capitalism. Socialism is the answer. If you want to fight your oppression or solve the problem fight for socialism. The problem is that it isn't necessarily true and this type of argument won't win many thinking people to the battle for socialism.

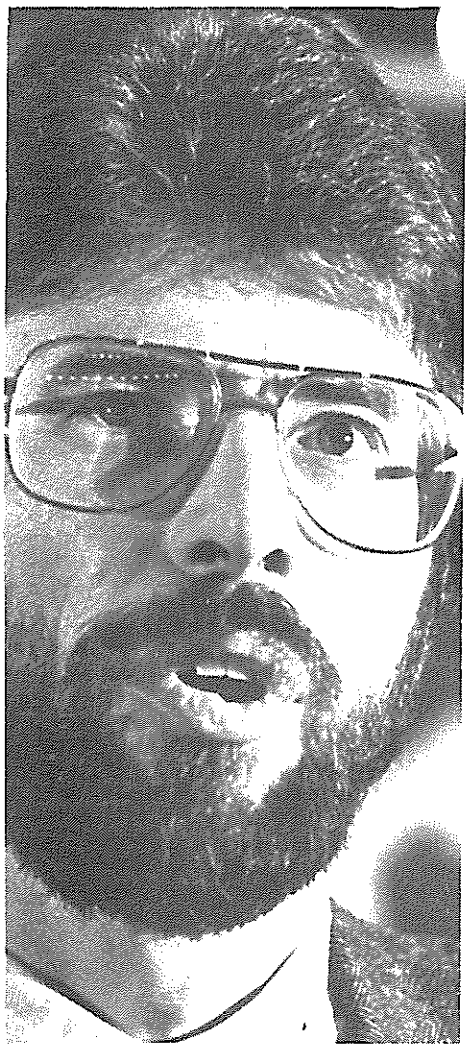
But by far the zaniest response has come from the grotesquely misnamed Revolutionary Communist Party, whose pamphlet explaining their 'Red Front' election stunt proclaims sagely: "The principal threat to homosexuals in Britain today is not from AIDS, but from the safe sex campaign".

What they presumably mean is that there are reactionary overtones to much discussion of 'safe sex', and that the government's campaign forms part of a reactionary 'moral majority' climate.

But their claim is mad. They say "By emphasising the virtues of heterosexuality and monogamy, it (the safe sex campaign) promotes the family values that help to atomise the working class and sap the will to collective action." But this simply ignores all the contradictions even in the government's campaign — never mind contradictions in the family. And in any case, there is no *direct*relationship between 'promoting family values' and 'sapping the will to take action'.

Moreover, the government's campaign is *not* a safe sex campaign anyway. The sort of 'safe sex' promoted in the gay community by the Terence Higgins Trust, for example, carries with it the idea that you can have sex with more than one partner, depending on what you do. Surely we need to know about the options.

And an explicit campaign can help fight 'moral reaction'. What seems to motivate the RCP, in this as in everything else, is the desire to be as offensive and outrageous as possible, to build support. It is the opposite of working class politics



Leaders of the Ulster People

Between them Ian Paisley and Gerry Adams are the leaders of something between one third and one half of the million-and-a-half people, Protestant and Catholic, who live in the Six Counties of north-east Ulster. Adams is the shogun of the Catholic Provisional IRA/Sinn Fein, Paisley the tribune of a large part of the Orange, Protestant working-class and leader of the Democratic Unionist Party.

Paisley is politically a hard 'law and order' man, subscribing to the icons and shibboleths of British nationalism and to the Protestant tradition; Adams is a physical-force-on-principle Irish Catholic revolutionary, who loathes Paisley's revered icons. The irreconcilable conflict between the two communities whose extremes are now given voice (and gun) by Adams and Paisley may well tip Northern Ireland over the edge and into civil war.

Yet Paisley and Adams have much in common. Though one is right-wing and the other tinctured left, both are populists, who mesh into their politics the social discontents of their respective working-class supporters.

The tragedy is that there is no possible political common ground between Adams and Paisley within the Six County bearpit. On the one side there is a just revolt against oppression and against being an artificial minority within the Six Counties; on the other there is fear of being an oppressed minority in a united Ireland combined with the desire to regain Protestant majority rule in the Six Counties, expressed as a belief that it is their inalienable god-given British Protestant birthright. Using a new biography of Paisley and a new book by Adams, Stan Crooke examines the politics of the two men.

God's careerist

■ Paisley by Ed Molony and Andy Pollak, Poolbey, £5.95.

On the eve of the 1986 mini-general election in Northern Ireland, used by the Unionists as a referendum in the Hillsborough Agreement, Ian Paisley led a protest against the Roman Catholic Cardinal Suenens preaching in a Protestant Cathedral in Belfast during a visit from his native Belgium.

He accused Suenens of having presided over a theological congress in Brussels which began with dancing and a feast of wine and cigarettes, and ended with phallic worship, mass sexual intercourse, and the officiating priests smearing their bodies with the ejaculated semen, having offered it up for approval to Yahweh (Jehovah).

Within 48 hours, 34,000 voters in Paisley's North Antrim constituency were to cast their votes for him, the largest Unionist turn-out of the day. Why the author of such extravagant accusations should enjoy such mass support is the question addressed by Ed Moloney and Andy Pollak in their book "Paisley", the length of which is in stark contrast to the brevity of its title.

Paisley's own answer to such a question is that he is God's Man, one of God's elect sent to save Ulster in its hour of need. Son of the leader of a breakaway fundamentalist sect, and "born-again" Christian since the age of six, this belief in a divinely ordained mission has been a constant refrain in Paisley's preaching and political speeches (insofar as any distinction can be made between them).

Moloney and Pollak, however, do not share Paisley's high opinion of himself, nor his belief that he is playing a God-given role in Northern Ireland. Their answer is both more mundane and more accurate!

"Paisley's religious appeal, like his political appeal, is to the traditional obsession of Northern Protestants: their history of being an embattled religious minority in Ireland...He always saw theological and political liberalism as the major, twin, threats to traditional Protestant values...a manifesto that was to become increasingly attractive to Northern Ireland Unionists as the movement towards religious and political ecumenism slowly gathered speed."

over the brink. God's Man has feet of clay.

Paisley's language is characterised by the violent metaphor. His speeches have undeniably helped raise the political temperature in the Six Counties and encouraged violence up to and including sectarian murder. / his links with the Loyalist paramilitaries date back to the Ulster Volunteer force of the 1960s: "A long thread...associated him and his campaigns with the climate within which Loyalist violence flourished...No evidence was ever produced to associate Paisley with any of those violent events but all of those who carried them out were, in one way or another, inspired by him."

At the same time, though, Paisley has always been careful to keep a safe distance away from direct involvement in the acts of violence which his demagogy has done so much to encourage.

Though Paisley had consistently attacked the civil rights movement throughout the 1960s as a Trojan Horse for the IRA, the infamous attack on a civil rights march in January of 1969 at Burntollet bridge was organised and led by his then side-kick Ronald Bunting, whose son Ronnie went on to become "chief of Staff" of the so-called Irish National Liberation Army. He was assassinated five years ago. Paisley was "safely distant — politically as well as physically...It was Bunting who the ambushers looked to for leadership. Of Paisley there was no sign at all." As Bunting later wrote to Paisley: "Dear Ian, you are my spiritual father...-but politically you stink."

It was the same story again later in the year, when violent clashes resulted in the despatch of the British Army to the Six Counties: "Another disciple, John McKeague, played the role of Major Bunting, marshalling the troops of the Shankhill Defence Association...During the height of the riot Paisley was rarely seen...His fleeting appearances were to do him a lot of harm among the Loylists who expected more from a leader who claimed to embody a renewal of the spirit of Carson."

In 1974 at the start of the strike which was to bring down the Sunningdale power-sharing agreement Paisley flew off to Canada to attend a funeral — "There were conflicting versions at the time of whose funeral it was. Some were told an aunt, others an old fundamentalist family friend" — and returned only when it had become clear that the strike would win. But the contemptuous Loyalist paramilitaries spiked his bid to take over the strike.

Paisley's launching of a series of rallies (the "Carson Trail") and his "Third Force" of gun-license waving followers in 1981 was another exercise in showmanship and brinkmanship. The Carson Trail petered out into a poorly attended closing rally and an appeal to vote for the DUP in the forthcoming elections,while the Third Force quickly disappeared from view. Hardline loyalists were in any case already sneering at "what they called the "Third Force" and at the calibre of its self-styled "county commanders" — the Rev. Ivan Foster in his dark sunglasses, and Rev. William McCrea with his gospel records."

Paisley's more recent campaign of opposition to the Hillsborough Agreement has likewise seen him keep a safe distance from its more violent side. Paisley pulled out of speaking at a violent rally at the close of a Derry-Belfast youth march in the New Year of 1986 on the grounds that he was officiating at the wedding of a close friend. On the violence-torn Day of Action of March 3, Paisley retired to play a marginal role in his home constituency. Two days before violence swept through the North on the occasion of the annual July 12 marches, Paisley left for a fortnight's holiday in America. And it was significantly Robinson rather than Paisley who led the foray into Southern Ireland in protest at the Accord.

Thus, contrary to popular imagery, a deep abyss of contempt lies between the Loyalist paramilitaries and Paisley. Alienated by what one of his former church officials described as Paisley's readiness to "fight till the last drop of everyone else's blood" without putting his own on the line, the paramilitaries view him as "a man of straw, who one day threatens civil war and the next day quickly retracts it."

As one member of the UDA commented on Paisley's condemnation of violence during the 1977 strike: "The rank and file didn't like it at all. We were being led by a man with no balls and from then on he was the Grand Old Duke of York to us." His words echoed those of leading UDA man Freddy Parkinson, spoken three years earlier in the luxurious surrounding of a Dublin jail: "He uses words to create violent situations, but never follows the violence through himself."

The Paisley portrayed by Maloney and Pollak — and, indeed, the real-life Paisley — is a figure riven by contradictions.

He aspires to defend the traditional tenets of Unionism and Presbyterianism, and yet has irrevocably split the traditional Northern Irish Protestant party and church. He encourages acts of violence but takes care to keep his own hands clean. He seeks to deny Southern Ireland any say in the affairs of the North, while working closely with Southern Irish Euro MPs in the European Parliament.

If Paisley is God's Man sent to help Northern Ireland Protestants in their hour of need, then God must be a poor judge of character, or have a refined sense of humour and little concern for Northern Irish Protestants.

The Green above the red

The Politics of Irish Freedom by Gerry Adams, Brandon, £3.95.

At first sight, Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams's book "The Politics of Irish Freedom" ("dedicated to the men, women and children who struggle for Irish freedom, and to freedom fighters everywhere") is an easy read. As publisher Steve MacDonogh points out in his introduction: "This book is neither an autobiography nor a statement of Sinn Fein's political programme. It is an expression by Gerry Adams of his politics."

Given the rather obvious overlap between the politics of the President of Sinn Fein and the politics of Sinn Fein as an organisation, what one ends up with is a mixture of descriptions of some of the recent major events in Ireland, analysis of developments in the Republican movement over the last two decades, and personal comments and annecdotes from Gerry Adams.

Despite the range of issues covered in this modestly sized book, Adams managed to portray the horrors of life for the Catholic community in Northern Ireland, both before 1969 — when it was victim to systematic discrimination, electoral gerrymandering and the draconian power of the Special Powers Act — and after 1969, when its plight was further exacerbated by the intervention of the British Army, new repressive legislation, the activities of the Special Air Service and Loyalist terror gangs, and a worsening economic crisis. It is within this context that Adams takes up developments in the Republican movement.

Adams does not write much of himself. Through his commentaries and judgements on events and people, he comes across as modest and willing to recognise mistakes committed by himself and Sinn Fein. Only in the opening chapter of the book does Adams describe his own political history

At the same time, though, the book, at a deeper level, reveals a variety of contradictions and inadequacies in the politics of both Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein. The book reveals the extent to which Adams' own politics have been moulded — not to say scarred — by his

reading and experiences in the mid to late 1960s, at the time of his initial involvement in politics.

"I read those history books which were not on our school curriculum," recalls Adams. "I became increasingly aware of the relationship between Ireland and Britain (and) reached the conclusion that this relationship was a colonial one." Twenty years later, Adams clings to the same notion: he talks of a "puppet state subservient to the British government" and of the "colonial power in London". He refers to the "colonial nature" and the "colonial situation" in the Six Counties.

But the Northern Irish-British relationship cannot be reduced to some traditional colonial relationship.

In any case, Adams contradicts himself on this. He also refers to Northern Ireland as "an administrative sub-section of one of the most prominent states in developed, modern Europe" and as "a dependent enclave within the UK economy". In doing so, Adams comes much closer to the truth: notwithstanding its own 'peculiarities' (i.e. in-built discrimination and sectarianism), Northern Ireland has developed as an integral part of the British state since it was carved out of the rest of Ireland.

And just to add to the confusion, Adams also makes the point that "the amount of Northern Ireland capital held outside Northern Ireland exceeded the amount of external capital held in Northern Ireland." A "colony" whose ruling class is itself an exporter of indigenous capital is assuredly a strange beast.

Pursuing the same logic, Adams runs into the same problems in attempting to characterise the nature of Southern Ireland. "In the 26 Counties we have a neo-colonial state," he declares, and talks of the "neo-colonial character of the 26 counties" which is rooted in its "dependency on Britain".

But, in reality, Southern Ireland has repeatedly shown that it enjoys full independence, insofar as the latter can be achieved within a world capitalist order — its neutrality in the Second World War, its clashes with Britain in the Common Market, its refusal to support Britain in the South Atlantic war, etc., etc.

In any case, Adams confuses *political* independence with the reactionary and utopian goal of *economic* independence. Because Southern Ireland does not have the latter he argues, it cannot have the former.

And again Adams contradicts himself. While referring to Southern Ireland as a neo-colony, he also describes it as "a small, divided and powerless part of a new kind of collective imperialism in Europe, an economic arm of NATO, and part of a common front of ex-colonial powers against the Third World".

In the mid-1960s Adams also drew the conclusion that no Catholic-Protestant unity was possible as long as partition remained. (Given that his formative political years occurred at a time when the Catholics faced first the threat and then the reality of Loyalist pogromist attack, this is perhaps readily understandable, but not thereby excusable). He writes of his experiences in those early years:

"I felt that the analysis of the ways to unite the Protestant and Catholic working class ignored the very nature of the state and my own occasional personalised and parochial encounters with Loyalism...What we were saying to the Dublin (Republican) visitors was: 'Look, you can talk about all this coming together of Protestant and Catholic working class but...your notions just don't square with reality'."

Adams continues to argue in the same vein today, claiming that the ideas of unity which he rejects fly in the face of "James Connolly's analysis of the loyalist workers as the 'aristocracy of labour'." But Connolly never developed any such analysis. Though he once likened the mentality of Loyalist workers to that of skilled British workers in the past, he certainly never developed any rounded-out analysis based on notions of an "aristocracy of labour"

Running true to form, Adams contradicts himself on this point too. For despite his unthought-out reference to a loyalist "aristocracy of labour", he also writes that "the conditions I knew in the Falls were similar to those I saw in the Shankhill Road...conditions in the Six Counties for working class people were pitiable, irrespective of whether they were Protestant or Catholic...At the level of the working class, privilege may be more perceived than real and to the extent that it is real it may be marginal."

Adams is correct to point out that marginal privileges are often the ones which are most fiercely fought for. But Adams' recognition of the similarity of conditions in the Falls Road and the Shankhill Road, and of the limited nature of Loyalist privilege runs contrary to any notion of an "aristocracy of labour" as a Marxist-scientific historical concept.

And Adams' recognition of these points — just to add yet a further element of confusion to his arguments — flies in the face of his repeated comparisons of Northern Ireland and South Africa, with the Catholics cast in the role of the blacks, and Protestants in the role of the whites. Whites in South Africa are a small minority, not an artificial majority, and insofar as a white working class exists, it is massively privileged as against black workers — it exists on a qualitatively different level.

Moreover, Adams himself seems to recognise that notions of an "aristocracy of labour" do not suffice to explain the communal divisions in Ireland. He points out that in the aftermath of partition "the Irish identity was allowed to become synonymous with Catholicism, disloyalty, republicanism" and refers to "the Protestant people", "the Protestant community", and "the Protestant national minority"

This reference to a Protestant national minority could be denounced by many of Adams' sycophants on the British left as "reactionary two-nations-ism". Strangely enough, Adams the Republican does not reflect upon the question that immediately arises if it is agreed that the Protestants are a national minority, namely: what rights do democrats and consistent republicans accord to such a minority? In fact Adams accords them no minority community or "national minority" rights, None at all.

Here Adams only adds to his own problems. On the one hand he writes of the recognition that "we (Republicans) could not free the Irish people. We could only, with their support, create conditions in which they would free themselves." But on the other hand, he argues that one in five of the Irish people ("...the Loyalists are Irish...they are Irish people who wish to be subjects of the British Crown...") can play no part in that liberation because of their support for the "British crown (which) protects the Orange ascendancy".

Adams attempts to escape the contradictory nature of the dilemma he has created for himself by simply asserting that British withdrawal (to be achieved how, and by what agency?) will solve everything. He recalls his youthful insight that "all we had to do was to get rid of the British", and is clearly still of the same opinion today.

"Violence in Ireland has its roots in the conquest of Ireland by Britain...the British government is the major obstacle and the most consistent barrier to peace in Ireland," he writes. If Britain is the problem, then its removal is the solution: "When the root cause of violence in Ireland is removed, then and only then will the violence cease."

And the Protestants? Adams consoles himself with the thought that they did not fight in the past, and therefore will not fight in the future: "The Unionists were opposed to Home Rule — they accepted Home Rule; they were opposed to partition — they accepted a Six County state; they would not allow the disbanding of the 'B' Specials — they accepted the disbanding of the 'B' Specials; Stormont was to be fiercely maintained — it was prorogued."

Indeed, British withdrawal will bring the Protestants to their senses: "The 'pro-British' elements will face up to the reality of the situation only when the British prop and the system which uses them as its tools and its stormtroopers is removed...Once their corner is no longer defined by the British presence, then I think that it becomes a matter of businesslike negotiation."

Adams' line of reasoning is less than impressive. Surely the point is that the Protestants did *not* accept Home Rule and mobilised *for* partition and the creation of a Six County statelet as their — fall back — defence against it? They stopped the

all-Ireland Home Rule the Liberals tried to bring in before World War I.

Given that the 'B' Specials were replaced by the UDR — the Specials under another name — the Protestants hardly had anything to lose by their disbandment. Abolition of Stormont certainly was a blow — but since it was replaced by Direct Rule from London, it hardly amounted to a fatal weakening of "the Union".

In any case — and this is the irreducible central issue — none of these things which the Protestants reluctantly came to accept put them under the power of the Irish Catholic majority. Even today, despite the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which they detest, they still think that the British state is their state. But threaten to put them as a permanent minority in an all-Ireland Catholic-controlled state and they would certainly resist, guns in hand. It is impossible to doubt it, in the year 1987.

Adams' reassuring noises about the Protetants sitting down to the negotiating table after British withdrawal are utterly hollow. It is questionable whether Adams himself really believes what he writes — why else would he call for the Army to disarm the RUC and UDR before it withdraws (although he does not mention this demand in this particular book) if not because he recognises that those weapons would be used to prevent attempted forced incorporation into a "united" Ireland? And even if the Army could achieve such a feat — in fact, it could not — what of the 100,000 plus guns in Protestant hands outside of the ranks of the RUC and UDR?

Adams' arguments are weakened yet further by his failure to draw any conclusions from the Protestants' response to the Hillsborough Agreement. How can he describe them as Britain's "tools" when it is they, the Protestants, who are to the fore in opposing the agreement? And given their reaction to the modest tinkering of the agreement, what does this suggest about their response to full British withdrawal?

Thus, despite his frequent and undoubtedly sincerely intended pleading of the case for anti-sectarianism ("Republicanism is nothing if it is not resolutely anti-sectarian...What republicanism has to offer loyalists is equality...We must remain totally opposed to the cult of sectarianism."), Adams' own politics, like those of Sinn Fein, are a form of sectarian politics, in that they are based on one of the two communities in the North and contain nothing capable of overcoming the sectarian relationship between the two communities.

Instead, unity between the people of Ireland is regarded as something which will conveniently and spontaneously come about once "the cause of sectarianism, the British prop which sustains it" is removed. And British withdrawal, Adams continues, will open the road not just to unification of the Irish people but also to socialism.

But Adams' ruminations on the question of socialism are no less problematic than many other aspects of his book's contents. Again, one cannot doubt the sincerity of Adams' claims to be both a socialist and a republican ("...because I am a socialist I continue to be a republican..."). The problems begin when one attempts to come to grips with this concept of socialism.

The notion of class struggle certainly does not loom large in it. In the course of his book Adams bemoans the fact that partition has "stunted the development of class politics" and occasionally refers to the "class nature of the struggle" or "class differences between ourselves and the SDLP". But his definition of socialism, in the abstract, is akin to the wooliness of the Labour Party's clause four:

"Socialism is a definite form of society in which the main means of production, distribution and exchange are socially owned and controlled and in which production is based on human need rather than private profit. Socialism is based on the most thorough-going democratisation of the economic system, side-by-side with the most thorough-going democracy in politics and public affairs."

At a more concrete level, however, his concept of socialism becomes infused with, and overshadowed by, Irish nationalism. Socialism means "the estabilshment of a real Irish republic and the organisation of the economy so that all its resources are under Irish control and organised to bring maximum benefit to all our people in a 32 county state in which Irish culture and national identity are strong and confident."

What is required is a "distinctly Irish form of socialism", in which "the economy is based on the needs of the Irish people" and in which "the people themselves (are) the Sovereign authority. We want Ireland for the Irish. We want an Irish democracy in Ireland." But this specifically Irish socialism is not something for the here and now: "Real national independence is the pre-requisite of socialism...Socialism includes and is a stage in advance of republicanism."

To be a socialist in Ireland today is thus reduced to being for British withdrawal. "The acid test of commitment to socialism in Ireland (and Britain as well) is to be found in one's attitude to the issue of Irish national self-determination...Until a united Ireland is established, being genuinely left wing is to be an out-and-out republican." Indeed, Adams goes on to condemn as "ultra-left" those who "break up the unity of the national independence movement by putting forward "socialist" demands that have no chance of being realised until real independence is won."

Adams, in fact, goes even further and complains about the fact that "the emergence of Sinn Fein (as an electoral force) may have unnecessarily brought out some of the class differences between ourselves and the SDLP leadership," and because of this the SDLP "has consistently refused to examine the potential for pan-nationalist unity on even a limited basis." (Adams could have more accurately written: "on no basis at all", given Sinn Fein's offer of an electoral pact to the SDLP in last year's quasi-referendum on the Hillsborough Agreement, despite Sinn Fein being against the agreement, and the SDLP for it).

Adams bemoans such phenomena because his concern is not the creation of a socialist party (how could such a party be built without sharpening class differences, and in opposition to the big majority of the working class in Northern Ireland?) He wants instead to try to create that hoary old Stalinist chestnut — the "mass anti-imperialist movement."

Such a movement would not be a class movement — it cannot be "built around the slogan of socialism until socialism comes on the historical agenda," explains Adams. Instead it would appeal to "all major sections of Irish society...whose interests are adversely affected by imperialism." Such a movement would be "a new Irish-Ireland movement" of which the programme would "appeal to all those capable of taking a national stand and would require a multi-sided campaign of national regeneration." And what of the "British-Irish" minority? They are necessarily excluded from this "anti-imperialist" movement. In the final analysis, therefore, Adams rejects socialism in favour of tilting at Catholic Nationalist windmills. Having falsely attributed a colonial and semi-colonial status to Northern and Southern Ireland (though he contradicts himself throughout the book), Adams skips over the problem of communal divisions by pretending that British withdrawal will solve everything, and concludes by advocating the development of a "mass anti-imperialist movement" capable of realising the panacea of British withdrawal and of ending the hypothetical colonial and neo-colonial status of the two Irish states.

Adams' obvious sincerity and — however political critical of him one might be — the seriousness of his commitment to fighting oppression both in Ireland and internationally cannot compensate for his utter political confusion. It is a tragic confusion. Adams' political activity is rooted in a basic series of blinkered misunderstandings of the nature of the problem confronting the Catholic people of Northern Ireland, and because this is so the activities of Adams and his movement are more likely to lead to Catholic-Protestant civil war and to the repartition of Ireland, than to the united, independent 32 county Irish Republic they believe they are fighting for.

Brazilian metalworkers on strike 1980: no populism here, the banner reads: "The workers, united will never be defeated."

The new working class in the Third World

The flipside of a turn away from working-class politics in the advanced capitalist countries is often a romantic identification with nationalist struggles in the Third World. But this is often, at best, anachronistic, imposing the political formulas and patterns of the colonial era on a quite different era. There has been a new industrial revolution, and a big expansion of the working class, in the Third World over the last 25-30 years. Martin Thomas reviews the basic facts that all socialist strategy must start from.

'An industrial revolution'

"The colour of the revolution which I have seen in one area after another of India in the 1960s is steel-grey. I call it an industrial revolution", wrote Daniel Thorner. (1)

Since World War 2 capitalist industry in the Third World has been growing very fast, by comparison with previous capitalist development — in many Third World countries, much faster than in India. (2)

Manufacturing output in the Third World has grown around 6% per year, and output per head at around 3 to 4% per year, since 1950. This is twice as fast as the growth of British manfacturing industry in the 19th century, and about the same speed as the growth of US manufacturing in its greatest boom period during and after the Civil War.

Industry in general — including mining, construction, electricity, water and gas — has grown slightly faster still. Growth has been especially marked in heavy industry: "the almost total absence of heavy industry in these countries before the war and generally before their political independence" (3) has been replaced by rapid development.

Steelmaking did start in China, India, Mexico, Brazil and South Africa after World War 1, but as late as 1960 the Third World made only 5% of the capitalist world's steel. By 1980 it produced 15%. (4)

In 1955 the Third World *consumed* 4% of the capitalist world's steel; in 1982, 23%.

The rail networks in most Third World countries were begun in the second half of the 19th century and completed by the 1930s. More recent years have seen a tremendous growth in road-building and the use of motor vehicles. In Africa, South America and India, the number of commercial motor vehicles in use increased at over 7% per year between 1970 and 1980. (6)

Economic autonomy

There has been not only a quantitative change in Third World capitalism, but a structural change following decolonisation. Large sections of Third World economies have been nationalised.

Akinsanya summarises the record world-wide as follows:

"Most of the expropriations have been in...raw materials, agriculture, power and telecommunications...The banking and insurance industries are also targets for nationalisation...Alien investment in the manufacturing sector has rarely been a target of nationalisation...

"It is by no means true to say that most nationalisation measures are taken by left wing regimes...Both left-wing and right-wing regimes have exprcpriated alien-owned enterprises". (7)

In addition to nationalisations, restrictive conditions on foreign investment and protective tariffs on imports are also standard in the Third World today.

Over the last few years there have been moves in several Third World countries towards denationalisations and relaxation of the conditions on foreign investment. The dominant role of the local state, however, remains.

The World Bank (8) estimates that across the Third World the local state, on average, accounts for some 50% to 60% of total investment. External finance accounts for about 10% to 20% (9) of which — up to the debt crisis of 1982 — about 15 to 20% would be direct investment, up to 50% commercial bank loans, and the rest aid.

Utilities, infrastructure, basic industry and natural resources are generally owned by the local state. Agriculture, commerce, services, and small manufacturing are generally the province of local private capital (though multinational agribusiness is becoming increasingly important). Large-scale manufacturing industry is the province of the multinationals, often associated in joint ventures with the local state and/or — in those few Third World countries where it exists, notably India, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, South Korea — local big private capital.

In sum, the level of foreign ownership in Third World economies is considerably less than in the earlier part of this century. In the least-developed Third World countries it is usually very low indeed; in the more developed ones foreign capital owns a bigger share, but it is concentrated in large-scale manufacturing.

In Mexico, for example, foreign investment and reinvestment accounted for about 5% of total investment in 1960-70. By contrast the local state accounted for a share of the investment flow increasing from one-third in the 1960s to nearly 50% by 1975. (10). The foreign share of the

total capital stock in 1983 was estimated at 4%. (11)

But 52% of the capital of the 300 biggest manufacturing firms was (in 1972) foreign owned. (12)

Before World War 1, by contrast, nearly half the total capital invested in Mexico is said to have been US-owned. (13)

In Brazil, net foreign direct investment has been running at about 3% of total investment (14), which indicates a foreign share (including reinvested profits) in total capital of maybe 6%. But "the multinational or transnational monopolies control a very substantial part of Brazilian industry through mixed enterprises with national and state capital — 90% in motor vehicles, 80% in rubber, 70% in machinery, 60% in electrical and communications equipment". (15)

In Argentina, foreign capital accounts for probably not much more than 5% of the total capital stock, but 60% of the sales of the country's largest 100 industrial firms are of foreign-owned businesses. Before World War 1 nearly half the total capital stock was foreign-owned. (16)

In India, the share of foreign capital today is very low. But before World War 2 foreign capital not only dominated the economic infrastructure but also held a controlling position in all major industries except cotton and sugar. The share of foreign ownership (by number of employees) in sectors such as jute, wool, dockyards, leather, and engineering ranged from 70% to 93%. (17)

Accumulated foreign direct investment in South Korea is $1.5 billion (18), which cannot be more than about 2% of total capital. In all Korea before World War 2, 82% or (another estimate) 89% of industry was Japanese-owned. (19)

An outdated conventional wisdom

These facts raise several questions for socialists. Most socialists have seen Third World capitalism as radically different from US, West European, and Japanese capitalism. They have believed that the world system generates, simultaneously and inseparably, development for the metropolitan centres, and its converse, under-development, for the Third World. Marxists have considered that Marx was wrong when he wrote: "The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future". (20)

In arguing thus, socialists have been concerned — and rightly so — to pin the blame on capitalism for the misery of the Third World; to refute the notion that the wretched of the earth should wait patiently for the blessings of capitalist civilisation, brought to them by the West, to trickle through; to stress that the misery in the Third World is part of a single integrated world system together with the metropolitan centres' relative prosperity.

So far, so good. But the facts compel us to see the misery as a component of capitalist *development* in the Third World, not (or not only) as a product of *lack of such development.*

Radicals have generally argued that the capitalist world system prevents or drastically limits industrialisation in the Third World; that openings for industrialisation in fact only existed in exceptional periods of relative isolation from the world system, like World War 2; and (implicitly) that the misery in the Third World is a product of that lack of industrialisation. (21) But demonstrably large chunks of the Third World are *industrialising.*

Countries like Mexico or South Korea are at the very least in the same league of industrial development as Portugal or Greece.

Now from the notion that the capitalist world system blocks industrial development in the Third World, socialists have drawn deductions for political tactics. They have concluded that in Third World countries imperialism is the first-line opponent. They have made it their first point of indictment against the local bourgeoisie that, because of their links with imperialism, they are unable to sustain even bourgeois development in the country. They have said that the progressive measures of bourgeois development must be the first items in the programme of a working class movement, and argued that, because of the abdication of the bourgeoisie, only a socialist revolution can carry through those measures.

And they conclude, often, that any sort of national self-assertion by Third World states is a first stage of that socialist revolution.

The political conclusions are false — because the whole picture of the world is false and outdated. Any political reorientation has to start from a recognition of the real facts. Let us look at those facts in more detail.

Changing patterns of trade

Patterns of trade have changed. In the colonial era the Third World was tied into a very restricted pattern of trade. Each Third World country would supply a limited range of raw materials to its metropolitan power and — generally — very few other customers, receiving manufactured consumer goods in return.

Some features of this pattern are very difficult to change — for example, the low level of Third World/Third World trade is now partly determined by the accomplished fact of where railways, roads, etc. run. Attempts at regional Common Markets in the Third World have had meagre success. But the pattern is changing.

The percentage share of former colonial powers in Third World countries' trade has declined sharply.

See table below.

A new international division of labour

'Share in trade' is the average between the share of the colony/ex-colony's exports taken by the particular metropolis, and the share of its imports coming from that metropolis. (22)

Third World countries still trade mostly with advanced capitalist countries rather than with each other. But there has been a shift. From 1970 to 1981 Third World/Third World trade rose from 20% to 27% of all Third World trade. (23)

The make-up of Third World trade has also changed. In 1965 manufactured goods were only 19% of Third World exports. In 1981 they were 33%. (24, 25)

Changing patterns of trade

Country	Former colonial power	Previous share in trade	Recent share in trade
Nigeria	Britain	59% (1955)	12% (1979)
India	Britain	33% (1938)	9% (1979)
Algeria	France	75% (1955)	18% (1980)
Philippines	USA	73% (1938)	27% (1981)

The Third World states are no longer just producers of raw materials. They are major manufacturing producers for the world market. The most dramatic illustration of this is the figures of the USA's international trade. In 1983 the US imported slightly more manufactured goods from the Third World than it exported to the Third World.

28% of US imports of manufactures came from the Third World — more than from Europe (24%), Canada (19%), or Japan (26%).

In a brilliant study of 'The New International Division of Labour', F. Frobel, J. Heinrichs and O. Kreye write:

"Industrial production in developing countries for the world market, especially production by foreign firms, did not exist until the middle of the 1960s. World market oriented industrialisation, more specifically, the industrial utilisation of the labour-force of developing countries for world market production which is recorded in the figures here, became established in a matter of a very few years. Whereas scarcely any industrial production for the world market existed in Asia, Africa and Latin America in the mid-1960s, by the middle of the 1970s world market factories were in operation in seventy-nine free production zones in thirty-nine countries and in many sites outside the zones..." (26)

Today there are reported to be 350 to 400 free trade zones (or free production zones, as Frobel et al. call them) worldwide — though this estimate may be an exaggeration. They employ 120,000 workers in South Korea, 70,000 in Taiwan, 20,000 in Malaysia, and 70,000 in Mexico. (27)

In these fenced-off zones in Third World countries multinationals can use cheap labour to produce for export free from taxes, duties, restrictions on imports or on remittance of profits, or local participation requirements. Usually labour protection laws and trade union rights also stop at the fence of the zone.

The free trade zones are however a small part of manufacturing, and even of manufacturing for export, in the Third World. Goods like trousers and electronic components *flown* round the world for different parts of their production process are not entirely typical. Another very different sphere of manfacturing in which the Third World has taken a sizeable share of the world market is, for example, shipbuilding.

And manufacturing for export in the Third World is not necessarily tied to low-tech items. States like Singapore, South Korea, and Hong Kong are deliberately moving into higher-tech areas.

The growth of manufacturing for export in the Third World is not completely dissociated from a growth of manufacturing generally. On the contrary. Manufacturing in the Third World generally began for the home market, and continues to be mostly for the home market — with an expansion of the range supplied from (initially) consumer goods only to (increasingly, in recent years) machinery and equipment too.

And manufactured *exports* from the Third World do not all by any means go to the advanced capitalist countries, as the picture painted by Frobel, Heinrichs and Kreye might suggest. In fact the percentage of manufactured exports *from* the Third World going *to* the Third World increased between 1970 and 1979 from 29% to 36%.

Generally Frobel, Heinrichs and Kreye see the new international division of labour too much as something done to a supposedly inert and passive Third World by the multinational corporations. A more accurate description of the free trade zones would be that they represent a major way in which the multinationals *cash in on* the capitalist development of the Third World.

Free trade zones do exist in a wide variety of countries. But Frobel, Heinrichs and Kreye are wrong to say that they can be established just anywhere: that "the preconditions for industrial production for the world market are not a function of the level of economic development in any individual country but rather exist, or can be brought into existence in any part of the world" (28).

As Frobel, Heinrichs and Kreye themselves show, host governments advertising these free trade zones to the multinationals stress such facilities as roads, telecommuncations, port or airport facilities, repair services, efficient administration, a literate workforce used to wage labour — and state power strong and stable enough to repress workers' resistance. Those conditions are not available, or easily established, just anywhere. In fact most free trade zones are found in a relatively small selection of more developed Third World countries. These are not necessarily the countries where labour is cheapest: for example, Hong Kong is essentially one big free trade zone, and in capitalist terms a highly successful one, yet by East Asian standards Hong Kong wages are relatively high

A few areas of fast growth

The rapid capitalist development in the Third World does not mean that the gap between the advanced capitalist countries and the Third World is closing. On the contrary; more-developed Third World countries have tended to close the gap between themselves and the US/Western Europe, while the gap between the more developed and the poorest Third World countries has grown dramatically.

National income per head is an unreliable index, but the best available to measure overall development. Between 1960 and 1981 it grew about 60% in the US; about 110% in what the World Bank calls 'middle income' countries (Latin America, Middle East/North Africa, East Asia); and scarcely at all in the 'low income' countries other than India (Pakistan, Bangladesh, South Asia, Africa). (29)

There are big inequalities from country to country in the Third World. (30) The most rapid growth in the Third World is localised in two groups of countries: the big oil exporters and a few big manufacturing exporters.

With the oil price rises of 1973, a huge shift took place in the international distribution of surplus value. A great deal of the money simply flowed back into bank accounts or bond holdings for the oil-state ruling elites in the US. But some has gone into broader economic development.

The oil states have increased their stake in the various phases of the oil industry. See table below.

The proportions in every case are of capitalist world totals.

Kuwait has spread its involvement in the oil industry most, buying up a US drilling firm (in 1982) and Gulf Oil's chain of petrol stations in Europe (in 1983).

Saudi Arabia has taken furthest the development of industries other than oil. In many lines of machinery it was until recently the biggest importer in the world.

The development of these states is clearly exceptional. Attempts to construct OPEC-type cartels in other products have failed, and OPEC itself is currently a declining force in the world oil market.

But there is little chance of the oil states returning to their position of before 1973. And that their development is exceptional does not mean that it has no general significance. That even a few exceptional Third World states can have the sort of development they have had signifies a shift in the world economy.

Likewise for the other group of fastest-growing Third World capitalisms: they are exceptions, but significant exceptions.

They are marked out from the rest of the Third World by three features: a high level of manufacturing exports, a large amount of foreign direct investment into them, and (up to 1982) a big flow of loans to them from commercial banks. Almost all of them also show a very high rate of growth of manufacturing industry. (32)

These manufacturing centres made their first impact on the world market in particular sectors — first textiles, then

Proportion of various phases of the oil industry controlled by the big Western multinationals (the 'seven sisters') (31)

	1972	1982
Reserves	**over half**	**less than one tenth**
Crude oil supply	**two-thirds**	**less than one fifth**
Refined petroleum products	**three-fifths**	**two-fifths**

electronics. But their range is increasing.

The Third World already had 21% of capitalist world exports in 'outerwear, non-knitted' by 1971. It raised its share to 37% in 1979. (33)

In certain branches of electronics the Third World already had a strong foothold in 1971 — radio receivers (13% of capitalist world exports) and transistors/valves (8%). By 1979 the Third World shares had increased to 35% and 34% respectively in those two branches.

But a strong Third World stake had been established in branches where there was none in 1971: office machines (8% of the capitalist world exports), telecom equipment (10%), food processing machinery (11%) — and shipbuilding (11%).

By June 1983 South Korea, Brazil and Taiwan between them had 20% of total world shipbuilding orders by tonnage. (34)

The figures for South Korea give an idea of how the composition of the trade of the Third World's leading exporters is changing. Between 1978 and 1983, the share of light manufactures — textiles, etc. — in South Korea's exports went down from 54% to 40%, and the share of heavy manufactures (ships, iron, steel, chemicals, machinery...) went up from 25% to 42%. (35)

India — to give a less dramatic example — has shifted its exports more slowly from jute goods and textiles towards engineering.

Other industries have developed substantially for the home market in these countries and are just beginning to export.

Car production, for example, has been mostly for the home market, but Brazil — despite a drastic slump in this industry since 1980 — is now a serious exporter of tractors.

Singapore, South Korea, India, and Hong Kong are developing serious machine tools industries and beginning to export.

India was 80% self-sufficient in capital goods by the early 1970s, and so was Argentina. Between 1965 and 1980 Brazil imported only about 10% of its capital equipment. (36)

Direct investment flows originating in Third World countries are a new development since the 1970s, and still small, but developing fast. In 1982 the total flow from Third World countries was just over $1,000 million, or about 6% of the world total flow.

The two biggest investing countries, by far, were Kuwait and Brazil. Other sizeable flows have come from the Philippines, South Africa, India, South Korea (only since 1981), Israel, Argentina, Hong Kong, Mexico, and Singapore.

India's biggest private corporations, mainy the Tata and Bird groups, have palm oil plantations in Malaysia: textile mills in Indonesia and Thailand; paper mills in Kenya and Thailand; electronics firms in Singapore; construction interests in Saudi Arabia; management contracts for industries in Nigeria; and hotels in many areas.

Mostly, however, direct investment originating from Third World capitalisms has been within regions: from Brazil, Argentina, or Mexico to other Latin American countries, and from India, Hong Kong, Singapore etc. to other Asian Countries. (37)

For example: "The really big Argentine money heads for the US" (38); but, "according to direct estimates based on the balances of Brazilian companies, the amount of Argentinian capital invested in Brazil easily surpassed $400 million in 1974 (a figure which must have at least doubled since then). At about the same time, Argentinian finance capital controlled two of Paraguay's most important corporations and had equally large investments in Bolivia, Uruguay and Peru. Argentinian banks were also very active abroad, especially in Panama...More recently, Argentinian banks have participated in syndicated loans on the eurodollar market, lending to such countries as Peru, Brazil, Chile and Nigeria". (39)

Debt and dependence

The increased economic elbow-room gained by the capitalist classes of the Third World is very limited. It is the elbow-room of weak powers in an increasingly interdependent and integrated world — and a capitalist world where the strong grab what they can and the devil takes the hindmost.

Third World countries' capitalist development cannot be described as 'independent' or 'autonomous' development. Such a thing is impossible in the modern capitalist world, and none of the advanced capitalist countries except conceivably Britain and Japan could be said to have developed 'independently'.

Most Third World countries are very much tied down by *foreign debt* problems.

Since Mexico announced in summer 1982 that it was unable to meet its payments to the international banks, a long string of Third World states have been forced to accept strict conditions imposed by the IMF in return for an extension of credit. The world recession after 1979, the decline in primary product prices, the drying up of the outward flow of credit from the big oil-exporting states, and the rise in interest rates, made their foreign debt burden impossible.

The IMF has required these states to depress wages, to cut subsidies on basic necessities, and to reduce imports (thus sending their industry into a slump and increasing unemployment).

The horrors of the way in which children are starved to feed bankers' profits should not, however, lead us to think that this negates or cancels out the economic changes since the colonial era already documented.

The negotiations between the bigger Third World Capitalism and the metropolitan banks and governments are *negotiations* in which both sides have cards to play and a lot to lose.

Moreover, it is largely misleading to see the debt problem as a national issue of Argentina or Mexico (for example) on the one hand versus the US on the other. The issue is at least as much one of the capitalists of different nations on one hand versus the workers and peasants on the other.

The relations between Argentine or Mexican debtor capitalists and their US creditors are normal business relations, the sort of relations which capitalism cannot live without. They are essentially not different from those between industrialists and bankers in a single state. There are conflicts between these sections of capitalists, but those are secondary to their common antagonism to the working class: "capitalists form a veritable freemason society vis-a-vis the whole working class, while there is little love lost between them in competition among themselves". (40)

For who pays? Many of these debtor capitalist classes actually have sizeable foreign assets. "Even as the government in Buenos Aires was announcing it could not pay its foreign debts in the middle of 1982, one of Argentina's leading property developers, the Macri group, was busy developing a $1 billion luxury apartment complex at Lincoln West, on Manhattan Island". (41)

They could pay. But they don't. They make the workers and peasants pay.

To see the fundamental issue as the 'national' one between debtor and creditor is a translation into international economics of the populist notion that within a single state the essential conflict is between "the producing masses", "the broader classes of business men" — the industrial classes, both capitalist and workers — on one side, and "the few financial magnates" on the other. (42)

To massive foreign ownership of a country's economic assets; a huge flow abroad of property income to the owners of those assets; difficult conditions for infant domestic industries because there is no local power to raise protective tariffs against more developed foreign industry — in short, the typical situation of Third World countries in the colonial era — an answer within capitalism is clear. Win political independence, nationalise the assets, impose conditions on foreign investment including limits on repatriation of profits, introduce protective tariffs, etc. But what, short of the overthrow of capitalism, is the alternative to debt problems?

Repudiate the debt? It is not impossible that some Third World capitalist governments could do that within the next few years. Of course they should be supported against attempts to whip them into line for the bankers. But repudiation is not an answer to the problem. It is a choice for economic isolation, 'capitalism in one

country' — and there is nothing progressive about that.

Cancel the debt? Yes, at least for the poorest countries. But then what? A one-off cancellation of debts would only modify or postpone the crisis, and there is no sense in demanding that capitalism run on a non-capitalist basis, with free credit. (43)

The limits of development

The problem in most Third World capitalisms is not external domination but *capitalism itself.* It is a hideous problem.

Some 800 million people live in "absolute poverty" — in or on the brink of starvation — and the number is increasing. The growth of capitalism does not ease the suffering through a 'trickle-down' of the gains. It makes it worse.

Underpinning mass poverty throughout the Third World is the stagnation of agriculture.

Growth of food production per head, average per cent per year (46)

	1960-70	1970-80
Africa	**0.1**	**-1.1**
Middle East	**0.1**	**0.2**
Latin America	**0.1**	**0.6**
South Asia	**0.1**	**0.0**

The stagnation of agricultural productivity in the Third World is not decreed by nature. Since World War 2 agricultural productivity has expanded faster than manufacturing productivity in the advanced capitalist countries. Social, not natural, obstacles stand in the way of a similar expansion in the Third World: investment has not gone into agriculture or it has been wasteful, or it has benefited only very limited sectors.

The poorest nations get poorer or at best stagnate. The more developed Third World countries generally have huge geographical areas of stark poverty within them. And in the cities of those more developed countries — the centres of the industrial growth — inequality increases.

Frobel, Heinrichs and Kreye summarise the conditions in the free zones: (44)

"Working conditions which represent a synthesis of Manchester capitalism and the forms of the capitalist organisation of work in the last quarter of the 20th century compel the labour force...on the one hand, to achieve levels of productivity and intensity of labour which correspond to the most advanced current levels in the world, and on the other hand, to tolerate wage levels which are not much higher than those which prevailed in Manchester capitalism's heyday."

The workers — mostly young women, aged 14 to 25 — are paid at rates as low as £5 a week (in Sri Lanka). (45) There are few fringe benefits, welfare provisions, etc. Hours are long. Safety precautions are minimal.

It remains only to add that wages and conditions in the free trade zones are often better than outside; and that those who have a regular job of any sort are much better off than those who have none. Unemployment figures for Third World countries are generally notional, but in many countries, including the most developed, it is estimated that perhaps 40% of the work force lack a regular job.

Characteristic of the Third World, then — even the more developed countries within it — are vast hinterlands of backward agriculture and crushing poverty. Peasants with tiny plots; landless agricultural labourers; people who have fled to the towns and scrape a living from petty trade, casual employment, prostitution or crime — the exact composition and size of the mass of misery, and its place on the spectrum between ill-nourishment and absolute starvation, vary from country to country. But its existence, on a much larger scale than in the advanced capitalist countries, is a constant.

West European capitalism in the 19th century generated similar masses of misery, on a smaller scale. But it had a safety-valve: millions emigrated to lands like North America, Australia, and Argentina, where they could seize rich natural resources by force from the sparse indigenous population.

Millions have emigrated from Third World countries, too: to more developed Third World countries or to the advanced capitalist countries. But increasingly they find the doors slammed in their faces. Capitalism no longer has a safety valve.

And worse. Most Third World capitalisms are ruled by vile, savage dictatorships. Where the forms of bourgeois democracy exist, as in India and Mexico, they have a very feeble content.

The rising capitalist classes of the Third World demand the same suppression of trade union challenges as the British capitalists of the time of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the German of the Anti-Socialist Laws, or the US of the Haymarket Martyrs. They need a high rate of exploitation to establish themselves in world competition.

But in countries where trade unions and socialist movements had grown up *before* their industrial revolutions; where much of industry is large-scale; and where the state is central in economic life, such suppression and such exploitation are not to be had by the relatively free-wheeling methods of class rule used by the 19th century US/Western European capitalists. Only a heavily-equipped dictatorship will do.

What are the prospects? Is there a chance that the development of capitalism will gradually — as it moves to more sophisticated methods of exploitation — raise the working classes of the Third World to conditions comparable to those of present-day West European workers? (47)

It is not impossible in principle. Maybe some decades in the future it could happen in some Third World countries. There are a few today, like South Africa and Hong Kong, where real wages have risen seriously, though even the raised levels are miserable.

But that vague chance is not much to set against the present-day fact of increasing poverty and inequality. Especially so since the prospect for the foreseeable future is of crises for Third World capitalisms, with the debt problem continuing and the advanced capitalist countries erecting new tariffs and quotas against their exports.

The improvement in workers' conditions in Western Europe did not happen through some easy, almost automatic process. The trade union strength that made it possible was established in convulsive leaps, in the midst of wars and great class battles. Only in a few exceptional periods — like the 1950s and 1960s — was that strength able to win continuous improvements with relatively little effort.

In those periods capitalism in Western Europe was given room for flexibility by booms, by the advantages of its technical lead over other capitalisms, and by imperial tribute flowing in from the Third World. Third World capitalisms do not have that padding.

There is no reason to believe that the development of Third World capitalism will automatically or easily lead to an improvement in the conditions of the mass of workers and peasants. It certainly is not doing so at present.

But no service is done to the workers' struggle by denying the capitalist development that exists.

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3. Bairoch, p.72.
4. British Iron and Steel Federation statistics.
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6. B.R. Mitchell, *International Historical Statistics: Africa and Asia*, p.496. UN Statistical Yearbook.
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19. Sarkar and Chattopadhyay, *op cit.*, p.36; FEER May 14 1982.
20. *Capital* vol. 1, p.91. (Penguin edition).
21. See the brief survey of the literature by Bob Sutcliffe in Roger Owen and Bob Sutcliffe (eds), *Studies in the theory of imperialism*, p.171ff.
22. Figures from Oxford Economic Atlas of the World, 4th edition, and UN Yearbook of International Trade Statistics.
23. Bairoch, *op cit.* p.101-2, UNCTAD.
24. World Bank World Development Report 1984: figures include China.
25. See table opposite.
26. Frobel *et al, op cit.* p.316.
27. Financial Times, March 16 1983. An Economist Intelligence report of June 1979, 'Investment: the growing role of Export Processing Zones', gives a lower estimate for the number of zones (it counts only 52), but some higher estimates for numbers of workers — 56,000 in Malaysia, 27,000 in Brazil, etc. 'International Labour Reports', Jan-Feb 1984, estimates 20,000 free trade zone workers in the Philippines and 22,000 in Sri Lanka.
28. p.316.
29. World Bank.
30. See table opposite.
31. *Economist*, October 15 1983.
32. See table opposite.
33. UN Yearbook of International Trade Statistics.
34. Financial Times, October 4 1983.
35. Financial Times, July 2 1984.
36. Angus Maddison, *Class Structure and Economic Growth: India and Pakistan since the Moghuls*, p.128; Bairoch, *op cit*, p.176. *Economist*, March 12 1983.
37. Facts above summarised from: United Nations, *Salient features and trends in foreign direct investment*, 1983; IMF Balance of Payments Yearbook; *Economist*, January 8 1983 and April 7 1984 (on India).
38. *Economist*, June 23 1984.
39. Alejandro Dabat and Luis Lorenzano, *Argentina, the Malvinas and the end of military rule*, p.28-9.
40. K. Marx, *Capital*, vol 3, p.198.
41. *Economist*, June 23 1984.
42. Phrases from William Jennings Bryan speaking at the US Democratic Party convention of 1890.
43. See Marx's discussion of the 'free credit' demand, *Grundrisse*, p.123; letter to J.B. Schweitzer of January 24 1865; and *Theories of Surplus Value*, part 3, p.523-7. Also Engels' letter to Bernstein, August 9 1882.
44. *op cit.* p.360.
45. Diane Elson in *International Labour Reports*, Jan-Feb 1984.
46. World Bank.
47. Statisticians reckon that crude figures exaggerate the difference in real wages between Western Europe and the Third World. But a conservative estimate would put the wage inequality between Britain and the Third World as ranging from 2:1 or 3:1 to 10:1 or 20:1. Also, West European workers get more non-wage welfare benefits than Third World workers.

2. Rates of growth of manufacturing output (per cent per year)

			Per head
Third World			
	1938-50	3.8%	2.1%
	1950-60	6.9%	4.5%
	1960-70	6.3%	3.6%
India	1960-70	4.7%	2.4%
Other 'low income' states	1960-70	5.9%	3.4%
'Middle income states'	1960-70	6.7%	4.2%
India	1970-80	5.0%	2.9%
Low income	1970-81	2.8%	0.2%
Middle income	1970-81	5.9%	3.5%
Advanced capitalist countries	1938-50	4.5%	3.8%
	1950-60	5.0%	3.8%
	1960-70	5.6%	4.4%
	1970-81	3.1%	2.4%
Britain	1800/4-1850/4	3.6%	2.2%
	1850/4-1900/4	2.2%	1.4%
US (The fastest major period of industrial growth in any country in the 19th century).	1860/4-1900/4	6.9%	4.2%

(From P. Bairoch, 'The Economic Development of the Third World since 1900', p.67-9, and World Bank World Development Report).

25. Proportion of exports accounted for by:

Country	All manufactures		Machinery & equipment	
India	45%	59%*	1%	7%*
South Korea	14%	90%	--	20%
Malaysia	6%	19%	--	11%
Singapore	26%	54%	7%	26%
Brazil	3%	39%	--	17%
Mexico	12%	39%*	1%	19%
'Low income' countries other than India	9%	29%	--	2%
'Middle income' oil importers	17%	54%	2%	14%

(* = 1979 figure).

30. Differences within the Third World

	US	Singapore	Venezuela	Ethiopia	Chad
Infant mortality per 1000	12	12	40	145	146
Urbanisation	77%	100%	84%	14%	19%
Agriculture % of labour force	2%	2%	18%	80%	85%
Literacy (% of over-15s)	99%	83%	82%	15%	15%
Primary education (% of age group)	98%	121%	104%	43%	35%
Radio sets per 1000 pop.	2100	192	403	8	22
National income per head ($)	12,820	5,240	4,220	140	110
Population per physician	520	1150	950	58,500	47,500

(World Bank, UNESCO Figures for 1980).

32. Major exporters of manufactured goods, 1980*

	Rate of growth of output in manufacturing, 1960-82 (% per year)	Stock of foreign direct investment end 1978 ($ million)	Flow of net foreign direct investment, 1980 ($ million)	Gross liabilities to banks in BIS reporting area, June 1982 ($ million)
Taiwan	16%*	1,850	n.a.	6,156
Hong Kong	9%*	2,100	n.a.	33,646
South Korea	16%	1,500	-5	16,627
Singapore	11%	1,900	1,454	35,539
Brazil	8%*	13,520	1,568	52,240
South Africa	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	12,424
Israel	n.a.	1,000	-85	5,825
India	5%	2,500	n.a.	1,346
Mexico	8%	6,000	1,852	61,814
Malaysia	11%*	2,680	928	3,803
Argentina	2%	3,340	741	22,904
Philippines	7%	1,820	40	8,041
Thailand	11%	445	186	2,826
Total, 13 countries		38,655		263,191
13 as % of Third World total		64%		65%
Other major recipients of foreign capital				
Nigeria		1,130		5,421
Indonesia		5,760		4,967
Colombia		1,510		4,925
Chile		1,440		10,584
Venezuela		3,620		22,483

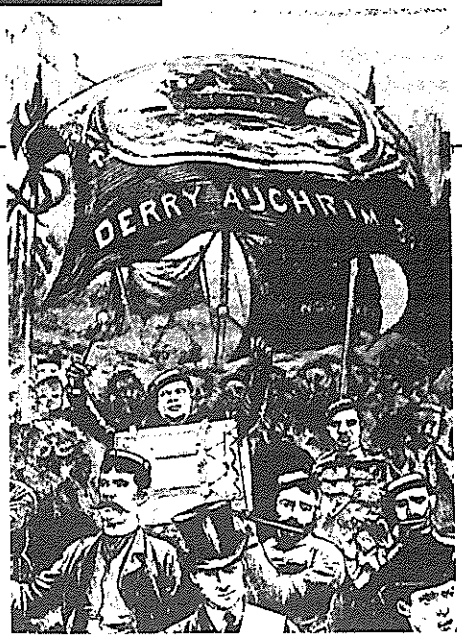
*Growth figures for Taiwan are 1960-77; for Hong Kong 1970-80; for Brazil 1970-81; for Malaysia 1970-82.

The 'Third World' total for investment stock and for liabilities to banks is calculated excluding tax havens such as the Caymen Islands, Bahamas, etc.

(World Bank; OECD, 'International Investment and Multinational Enterprises'; Bank of England Quarterly Bulletin).

A column about the left

By P. Avakuum



1688 and all that

ANTI-FASCIST activists are picketing every meeting of Exeter City Council in protest at the council's decision to celebrate William of Orange's landing in Devon in 1688 on his way to London to become King.

The council, say the activists, is pandering to the Orange Order and to the National Front. *Briefing* and *Workers Press* have voiced their opposition to any celebration of 1688. There has been a long debate in the columns of *Workers Press* on the issue, focusing on what William's landing meant for the Catholics of Ireland.

This is all very strange, but highly symptomatic. The left should celebrate the 300th anniversary of the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, and we can do it without in any way adopting the viewpoint or the politics of the Orange Order. In fact it is the anti-Williamites who part company with Marxism, certainly with any attempt to maintain a Marxist view of history.

The revolution of 1688 saw off James II's attempt to restore Catholicism and absolute monarchy in Britain and Ireland. It finally settled the issue which had dominated the previous 50 years — who rules, Parliament or the King? Thereafter, Parliament ruled. James fled, to be replaced by Parliament's choice — the joint rule of Queen Mary, James's Protestant daughter, and her husband, the Dutch prince, King William of Orange. James's support melted away, and even those 'Tories' who in principle supported him as the legitimate monarch by hereditary right remained passive.

Apart from some bloodletting and the settling of old scores in Scotland, it was virtually a bloodless revolution in Britain. In Ireland it was different. Backed by French money from the absolute monarch Louis XIV, the bigoted Catholic 'Sun King', James had been building up an army in Ireland for use against Parliament. Ireland became the theatre of war between Parliament, whose chief general was William of Orange, and James's Irish army, to which were added contingents of Louis's French troops.

Catholic Ireland had, of course, much reason for hating the Protestant establishment which James was trying to subvert and overthrow. Protestant Ireland, on the other hand, was militant for Parliament. The Apprentice Boys in what was then the Protestant city of Londonderry stopped the governor, Lundy, surrendering the city to James's troops by closing the gates; and Derry withstood a long siege.

In the 17th century there was a succession of land confiscations as one faction or another got on top in Ireland, and James's Catholic Parliament in Dublin now continued the tradition by widespread confiscation or reclamation of Protestant land. But, in a series of famous battles and sieges, 'Aughrim, Derry and the Boyne', and Limerick, Parliament defeated James's Irish army and his French allies. The last stand of James's Irish army occurred in the besieged city of Limerick, under the leadership of Patrick Sarsfield, one of James's generals.

Sarsfield surrendered on terms which included the right of the Irish soldiers to emigrate and enlist in the French Catholic army, which they did, and promises that Catholics could freely practise their religion. As the nationalist poem puts it, Sarsfield went off to fight and die in Louis's wars, "but 'ere he yielded the Saxon swore, to spoil our homes and our shrines no more". But they did, and with a vengeance. William of Orange, who by the standards of the time was far from being a bigot, was inclined to honour the 'Treaty of Limerick', but the new Protestant Parliament in Dublin had other ideas. They reversed the measures of James's Catholic Parliament, and they brought in a series of savagely oppressive measures against the Catholic majority, the 'Penal Laws', many of which bear a striking resemblance to the laws of apartheid. (The difference was that Catholics could convert; many of those with property did).

Protestants who dissented from the established Anglican Church were also discriminated against, though not so much. Until the last quarter of the 18th century, when the Penal Laws began to be relaxed, this system held the Catholics in helotry, without the right to certain property, education, religion, or professions like the law. "They bribed the son to rob the sire" — a Catholic son could take over his father's property if he converted. "Their dogs were taught alike to run upon the scent of wolf or friar"... The Catholics were "Forbid to read, forbid to plead, disarmed, disenfranchised imbeciles".

As late as the 1840s, the Protestant Irish nationalist Thomas Davis could write those bitter lines and add: "What wonder if our step betrays the freedman born in Penal days". Catholic Ireland would find it difficult to be enthusiastic about Britain's 'Glorious Revolution'.

Yet despite what followed in Ireland, and despite its obvious inbuilt class limitations as a revolution led by, and immediately and primarily benefitting, the English and Scots landed political oligarchy — despite the fact that the common people of England and Scotland had immediately to begin a prolonged struggle with that oligarchy to establish their own rights — the 1688 revolution remains one of the turning points in human history. Essentially, 1688 only consolidated, and for 144 years finalised, the work of Cromwell's revolution of the 1640s, when James's father Charles had lost his head. In its course or as a direct result of it habeas corpus was won, and freedom from previous censorship, responsible democratic government (if on a very narrow property franchise), and many other things still unknown in most parts of the world to this day. Its effects were felt throughout the following century, in America, where those who won independence from Britain in the 1770s looked to it for inspiration, and in France, where opponents of absolutism looked to the 'Glorious Revolution' and the liberties it had secured in the way we look back on the Russian or the French revolution.

Like all the other similar historical events — the English Commonwealth of the 1640s, the American and French revolutions and so on — which increased human liberty, took humankind forward, and helped create the present possibility of socialism, 1688 is *ours*. It belongs to the socialists and the consistent democrats everywhere, even in Ireland.

True, it took an unconscionably long time for the Catholic people of Ireland to experience its benefits. But it did bring benefits, directly and indirectly. That Irish Republicanism which took shape in the 1780s and '90s under the influence of first the American and then the French Revolutions owed much to it — indirectly and directly too, for the first Republicans were Protestants who identified with the "Glorious Revolution". Today's vigorous and stable Bourgeois Democracy in Ireland is of great benefit to Ireland's workers: it has some of its most important roots in 1688.

That socialists — and Marxists! — should surrender this part of our heritage to the National Front and the Orange Order is extraordinary, but, as I've already said, symptomatic. It is symptomatic of the state of historical materialism in our movement, and of the substitution of a-historical moralism for Marxism or even an attempt at Marxism. It also expresses a profound alienation from our own history. Britain is imperialist, therefore the entire history of the centuries of struggle of the common people of Britain is tainted — that is the underlying feeling and the real logic of it.

A cynical Stalinist historian once described history as current politics extrapolated backwards. That should not be the approach of Marxists! Yet plainly in this case it is. It is all the more inappropriate, because what happened in Ireland at the end of the 17th century was part of a European conflict.

On James's side (and as his paymaster) was Louis XIV, who ended the previous toleration of Protestants in France in 1685 by revoking the Edict of Nantes. Louis's laws against the Protestants had much in common with Ireland's Penal Laws — except that Louis's savage and sustained oppression led to the enforced mass 'conversion' of the sizeable French Protestant community, or to their exile (some of them to Ireland), until the community was all but wiped out. That does not excuse the oppression of the Irish Catholics; it should put it in its historical perspective.

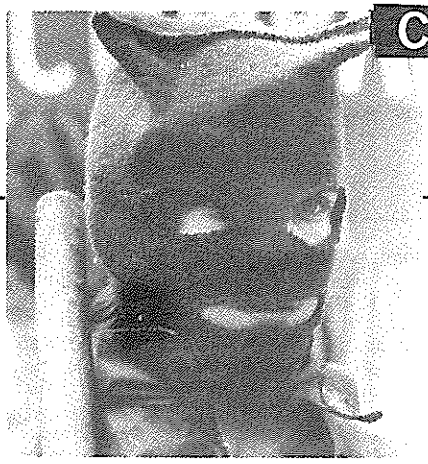
In European terms William and Britain stood for relative tolerance, against the expansionary absolutism of the vile 'Sun King', whose system oppressed the people of France for 100 years more.

As on most questions like this, James Connolly was far in advance of both the Irish Republicans and the Irish and British Marxists.

In the chaper on 'The Jacobites and the Irish People' in 'Labour in Irish History', confining himself severely within an Irish nationalist perspective, Connolly dismisses William as a mere self-serving adventurer and truly says that **"neither army had the slightest claim to be considered as a patriot army combating for the freedom of the Irish race"**. Then he pens the following denunciation of Sarsfield and his associates: **"So far from the paeans of praises lavished upon Sarsfield and the Jacobite army being justified, it is questionable whether a more enlightened or patriotic age than our own will not condemn them as little better than traitors for their action in seducing the Irish people from their allegiance to the cause of their country's freedom to plunge them into a war on behalf of a foreign tyrant..."**

Connolly was surely thinking of the attempt by James to build up an Irish army for use against Parliament and the British people when he wrote in November 1913 this denunciation of Irish nationalist grudge-bearing, a plea for British-Irish reconciliation:

"We are told that the English people contributed their help to our enslavement. It is true. It is also true that the Irish people contributed soldiers to crush every democratic movement of the English people... Slaves themselves, the English helped to enslave others; slaves themselves, the Irish helped to enslave others. There is no room for recrimination".



UDA

The confessions of Donal R

A reply to Workers' Liberty no.5

To stimulate discussion on Ireland, particularly on the British Left, *Workers' Liberty 5*, gave over most of the second half of its issue to a Platonic (that is, fictional) discussion of a variety of northern Irish Socialists, representatives of two former wings of Socialist Organiser, and in the latter part, myself.

The most basic criticism that has to be made of this exercise is that the energy put to inventing this mythical discussion would have been spent better in setting up a real one. Apart from 'Mick', the staunch supporter of Socialist Organiser's current line (and I think there are some points on which he could feel misrepresented), none of the participants come across as more than gramophone records repeating lines which, I accept, Workers' Liberty regards as fair summaries of their positions but which cannot really do them justice.

On this point, I can say only that had I been invited, I would have tried hard not to arrive two-thirds of the way through the talks, I would have said more and tried to avoid or answer briefly extraneous matters like John O'Mahony's nationality (pp.44-45), or the question of what happened at Ballinahinch or in Workers' Fight in 1969 (pp.52-55). I would also have asked questions particuarly of the Protestants. I am sure that the real 'Jackie' would not have run a discussion group with the former UWC leader 'Jimmie' without discovering pretty soon what the latter felt about what must have been, for better or worse, the most momentous political event of his life (p.29).

This confusion is enlightened somewhat by the fact that, to a certain extent, positions given in the discussion can be checked in the articles reproduced in the first part of the magazine. From my own contributions, readers will be able to see that my doppelganger's summary of my position is gravely flawed. 'Mick' may be correct in saying that my historical statements were 'taken up' in Socialist Organiser (p.54), it does not appear in the first part: still less that they were refuted. Nor did I describe the Ulster Protestant community either as a 'national minority' or as 'colons'. I would not have used the latter term myself (p.452) and I would have corrected 'Mick' when he ascribed the former to me (pp.45, 46, 48). As to the first, I don't see how you can be a national minority without being a full nation or a separated part thereof. On the second, I disagree with John O'Mahony ten years ago when he described the Ulster Protestants simply as 'colons' (and not, as 'Jackie' claims, merely four centuries ago).

On page 19, John O'Mahony gives a rule of thumb description of the Protestants as being 'a distinct community', and I agree with him on this. We separate, in part, because of his analysis (or, rather, lack of analysis) as to what distinguishes that community from its neighbours, particularly the Irish majority.

I would have challenged 'Jackie', too, when he claimed (p.54) that I argued 'at the beginning of the 1970s...that the Ulster Volunteer Force of 1912-14 was just an army of scabs'. My actual statement was rather different. In Workers' Republic 26, I wrote 'In the north east, the Ulster Volunteers had *as their hard core*, (italics added now, for 'Jackie's benefit), the armed scabs that had been sent out against the unskilled workers' organisations since the arrival of Larkin in Belfast in 1907'. 'Jackie's' misrepresentation is just one example of a tendency given him by his creator to overproject assumptions from what has been said, well beyond any normal logical projection from A to B. (It might be said: he goes straight from A to C, or D). My doppelganger was correct to protest against this, unfortunately, not being me, he could not answer it.

But though I may improve the details, the overall judging of my analysis of the Irish question remains. The summary on Page 45 (middle column) is alright as far as it goes in stating the *process*. The trouble is that it is not (and would not have claimed on page 55, nor anywhere else that it was) 'striding ahead'. Its potential has to be realised by the correct strategy and a more correct organisation.

So had I been at a real discussion in July 1983 I would have said something like the following, if not at once then drawing out through the discussion process:

Historically partition was imposed on Ireland by Britain because it could not trust the Irish to govern themselves in its interests. It has worked quite well; while British imperialism had a base in the Six Counties, it could allow the twenty-six a larger run (for example, the 1930s economic war and neutrality) than it could have otherwise.

The world has not changed so much since 1921 that the rulers of Britain can abdicate, that they can or will surrender their control over a sizable part of Ireland. Their interference began eight centuries ago with its need to secure its western shore and, even more, if modern technology has weakened its need to maintain its base it still needs to deny that base to anyone else. It still does not trust the twenty-six county governments, particularly those of Fianna Fail, the territory's largest party. In the past twelve (by now sixteen) years the Irish have burnt the British embassy and have been the only EEC government not to support its neighbour's "crusade" to the Malvinas.

'On this matter, the bulk of the evidence does not suppport 'Jackie's suggestion (pp.47-48) that "Britain was moving towards trying to shed responsibility for Northern Ireland in the '60s". Of his examples, the Anglo-Irish Free Trade agreement and the O'Neill-Lemass talks are purely circumstantial; they prove nothing more than that Britain and its client government wanted better relations with the Republic after the strains of the '30s and the '40s to say nothing of the positive neutrality of the late fifties. This had a long term logic that eventually Britain would move, if successful to end partition; it does not seem to have planned such a daunting task. As for the promise to agree to a united Ireland if the Northern Irish majority does, it does not belong to the sixties but to the Sunningdale period. In any case, it is agreed; partition itself gives a reason for the majority to vote against unity. And while that exhausts 'Jackie's' evidence, the case against is far stronger. Neither Terence O'Neill's memoirs, not the memoirs or diaries of any Minister of the '64 Wilson government (and more of its ministers than perhaps of any other British government published such) mentions any sort of pressure to democratise, let alone liquidate the six county territory before the balloon went up in October '68. Nor is there much sign of 'piecemeal democratisation' in O'Neill's record up to that date. In this period, his only democratic move was to abolish the Queens University Constituency and give his own party one or two extra seats as a result. His government's plan for local government reform would save money on its and the British exchequer. it would have done so by abolishing all six county local government placing under full Unionist rule even the Newry Nationalists whose local autonomy could not be gerrymandered out of existence. Those who describe me as fantasising from the standpoint of belief in a British democratic strategy are pots calling the kettle black.

'This fact has been masked by first the apathy and then the opposition of most Unionists to any democratic reform of their territory, and fact that this opposition has had to take more impressive forms (most obviously the 1974 strike) than the pressing for change, let alone Irish unity. I am surprised 'Jackie' did not use this as an argument for his case; it is certainly more impressive than his actual points. However, it is, on examination, equally incorrect.

'Indeed, the failure of the mass of Ulster Protestants to use their 60% of the Northern Irish population to reverse the gains made by the Provos with their 15% base is due to weaknesses inherent in the Loyalist community. The relatively advanced industrial base which gave Loyalism's colon ideology its new base of life contracted. The native bourgeoise has long been comprised of merely agents for foreign capital. The landed gentry survive but have been shunted aside politically. At the other end of the scale, the territory's unemployed rate is higher than that of the Republic. The Loyalist community and its politics are now overwhelmingly petty-bourgeios: with the exception of the remaining shipyard workers, they are a right wing mirror image of Sinn Fein's. The point is that they are a right wing image and are bound to be so as long as they act as a community politically. Though the decline of the industries that revived the colon ideology, the long term logic of economic decline and reduction of resources kept it as strong as ever. Today Ulster Protestantism is bonded by an outlook composed negatively of the urge to defend colon privilege, pride in an historic industrial supremacy and the industrial centre's (Belfast's) traditional mistrust of the governing centre (Dublin). More positively, it includes the idea that it is for individual liberty. Its overall synthetic bent is one less of Protestantism than of anti-Catholicism (identified as Orangeism). This gives it for strategic options: even UDI would mean narrowing its territorial borders. If Northern Ireland is to survive as an Orange entity it has to stick with Britain, depending, as in 1974 and, to a certain extent in 1977-1979 on the weakness of that country's government to gain concessions. On the whole, Britain's rulers know this as well as its own leaders. (By 1987, this lesson would be reinforced by the aftermath of the Hillsborough Agreement — D.R.O'C.L.)

'It is not hindered by the capitalists of the twenty-six counties. Not only are they uninterested in completing the bourgeios revolution's classic territorial claim (Irish Unity) but also in its traditional secularising

role (Unmentioned by 'Jackie' in his assumption that the revolution is completed (p.38), this is what Tone meant by replacing the old divisions with the common name of Irish). Though moderately successful in building their own industries, they do not have the confidence to invest in the six county area. Nor do they look forward to integrating into their rule some 200,000 revolutionary nationalists and 1,000,000 reluctant (to say the least) Protestants. In particular, the latter would threaten the cozy Catholic ethos that has helped keep the twenty six counties quiet since 1922.

'The twenty six county working class is less hostile to Irish Unity than its bosses. Still, it does not connect this aim to its members' material needs. In fact a link does exist. Positively, successive capitalist governments through the '70s have found it necessary to restrain any revitallising of profit levels through welfare cuts in order to forstall the southwards spread to revolution. This is no longer economically possible. Whether new austerity politics can be aided by the trade union bureaucracy against the rank and file is an open question. On the other hand, the economic mess has been worsened further by the requirements of border security. Security, too, has helped the area to move towards a police state.

'The question is whether these obvious opportunities, and ones linked less obviously to the national issue can be taken by Sinn Fein. This is the only mass revolutionary body in Ireland, perhaps in the British Isles, tho' its strength is spread unevenly. Not revolutionary Socialist, but revolutionary nationalist (tho' with a vaguely socialist programme), its base is a classic petty bourgeios one, centred mainly on areas around both sides of the border, but also in Nationalist Belfast (courtesy of Gerry Fitt's organisational incompetance) among small farmers, some (decreasing) small businesspeople and permanent unemployed. It is is to win, this base must be expanded in one of three ways: 1) It can attempt to parallel the Workers' Party, postpone Irish unity to the never-never and woo the Unionists with an economistic line. Without a clearer Socialist line, this is a revival of the policy of the first Dail which had much backing, but collapsed in 1920. Even with Socialism, it would do no more than parallel the Workers' Party and probably lose ,its existing. 2) It could try to expand itself within its present class backing, appealing to the followers of the constitutional Republican, Neil Blaney and even to within Haughey's Fianna Fail. At most, this would consolidate but not quantitively improve its strength; any Irish national bourgeoisie is happy enough with Haughey's symbolic Republican gestures. 3) It can seek, even despite itself, to operate a strategy of Permenant Revolution, to complete the tasks of the bourgeois revolution over and above that of Irish unity by combining then with Transitional Demands. The first involves taking a leading role in the struggle to achieve a fullv secular State (again nobody else mentioned this task, but it was what Wolf Tone meant when he talked of uniting Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter); there is probably not a majority for it, but it's a larger minority than the revolutionary nationalists. The second involved an appeal to the working class, as a revolutionary socialist body.

'Of course this would mean a real change for the Republican movement. Moreover, though similar moves have been attempted before (most recently with what has become the Workers' Party) they have succeeded only in turning revolutionaries into reformists. The central problem seems to be the traditional idea (for 'Patrick's' (p.52)) benefit the real "neo-Republican" idea vis-a-vis the United Irishman, if it does go back now, a century and a quarter) that armed struggle is the sole principled criterion of revolutionary action rather than a necessary weapon to be used sparingly and decisively. It may avoid this yet; the example of the stickies is close enough to be an obvious warning. On the other hand, while it is starting to take elections seriously (a lesson from People's Democracy, by the way), this move towards politics will also be one towards reformism unless supported by active agitation for democratic and Socialist aims. Seeing itself as the rightful government of the Irish Republic, the Movement has always been slow to lower itself to do this. It remains true that if it doesn't, it will abandon any revolutionary perspective. If that happens, either the struggle will be defeated or it will find a better leadership to give it victory. Whatever does so will do this by mobilising the Irish Workers and oppressed on a secular socialist basis, not just for a few strikes in sympathy with the six county minority as 'Mick' sugests, but as a revolutionary force striking to build a new Ireland in its image and with the aid of Ireland's Protestant minority.

(Four years since I would have made this scenario it has not been confounded, though it is developing more slowly than is desirable. The amount of support for the Republican Movement can be quantified at 6% of the whole population (15% in the Six; 2% in the twenty six counties). Though the 1986 Ard Fheis diluted its predecessor's policy of Free Abortion on demand, it left Sinn Fein's line on this issue more democratic than any other mass Irish party. In a number of constituencies, its members worked to amend the twenty-six county constitution to allow the right of divorce, despite politically sectarian hostility from the liberals and two nationalists who dominated the campaign. In 1985, Sinn Fein won a corporation seat in working class Dublin: its first since 1924. But the Movement remains wedded to the principle of armed struggle, merely downgrading it slightly in favour of electoralism; it has still to see the revolutionary role of mass agitation).

'At this point it is, perhaps necessary to ask: what if the Republicans fail without being replaced by something better, so that the struggle is defeated? Clearly 'Jackie', almost certainly 'Jimmy' and 'Robert' and, I suspect 'Patrick' would seem to see such a prospect as a merciful release. I have some sympathy with 'Jackie's' fears. I do agree that, up to now, the prolonging of the "armed struggle" has not helped unite, has, indeed, probably helped drive further apart, the two Ulster communities, as it has also, more importantly in the short run, helped reduce twenty six county working-class enthusiasm for Irish unity. Yet if it is ended and not replaced by a political revoltionary strategy, the partitioned capitalist state power in Ireland will be strengthened. At first the British imperialists and their allies of the former national bourgeoisie will have a picnic. But with pressure gone from the revolutionary left, the Loyalists will be able to make a more powerful claim to change conditions in their favour, a far more careful leadership than that have could not prevent triumphalism or attempts to restore Loyalist hegemony. After all, the objective cause of Northern Ireland's continuing divisions is the allocation of inadequate resources, and these are less adequate now than they were before 1968. Though the majority may rise again, it will be hampered by its previous failure. 'Jackie's' fear will by realised; there will be 'sectarian civil war, the massacring and driving out of populations and the terrorisation of those not driven out' (pp.46-47). Only it won't end in any sort of united Ireland, but in repartition, and it will have been caused not be the armed struggle, but be its failure.

So, if the way is by secularism and Permanant Revolution where does this leave Federalism? The answer is in tactics rather than principle. By elevating it to the latter, John O'Mahony and *Socialist Organiser* have counterposed it in effect to the true democratic principle of secularism. This means that the Catholic sectarian (but federalist) Republicans of the 1970s are portrayed as more democratic than their secular dispossessors. This gives weight to the idea that any revolutinary attempt to unite Ireland is probable regressive and helps justify the rationale that it is only an attempt to do, crudely, and brutally, what British imperialism would like to see done. In Britain, this reduces *Socialist Organiser's* call for "Troops Out" to one of symbolic rather than practical validity. In Ireland, it makes a possible appeal to the northern Protestants a priority over winning the 26 county workers.

'Nor is it backed by Marx, Engels or Lenin. The first two were scathing, in the 1850 First Address to the Communist League ,about the result of federalism between nationalities in Switzerland, tho' Engels, later correctly, praised the purely geographical autonomous local units of the French Revolution. Lenin denounced the national autonomy proposals of Rosa Luxembourg. These attacks concerned **bona fide** nationalalities. There can be no doubt that they would have been even more dismissive of special autonomy being given to a "distinct community" defined by a common religious attitude and a rather negative religious attitude at that.

'These errors are made possible by the denial of Permanent Revolution as a process relevant to Ireland that will guide the country's revolutionary strategists.

'However nobody really knows how Ulster Protestant consciousness will respond to an Irish Socialist Revolution. One can say that it may be necessary to bargain, to allow the community some form of autonomy for their territory over and above the local councils allowed everyone. The point is that a secular state is probably a better guarantee of equal rights to all religious communites.'

So I would have argued. There remain, however, some loose ends that cannot be tied into the above. Firstly, I do not consider John O'Mahony "British" purely and simply. I do consider him a British revolutionary. He has chosen to make his priority revolution in Britain before that of Ireland. I have chosen the opposite. Our repective choices inhibit each of us in our approaches to each other's chosen country.

I was surprised, too, that neither myself nor the *Socialist Organiser* comrades challenged, as distinct from expostulating at 'Jackie's' casual, almost frivelous, linkage of Kim Il Sung and Mobutu (p.51), and worse still, of Castro with Khomeini (p.52).

It was surprising also to see *Socialist Organiser* supporters, however internally opposed, being allowed to bicker with such personal rancour in front of at least one former Stalinite ('Jimmie') and one open Social Democrat ('Robert').

And to end on a personal note, it is at least six years since I wore the long overcoat described, and, certainly never wore one in July (pp. 29,44). Nor did I ever see (p.52) the film **Never on a Sunday.**

Salman Rushdie's Nicaragua

Jim Denham reviews "The Jaguar Smile" by Salman Rushdie Published by Picador £2.95

A book about post-revolutionary Nicaragua, written on the basis of a brief visit organised, in effect, by the FSLN government, would not seem to promise a very objective source of information or analysis for socialists attempting to reach an understanding of what's going on in that country.

In their (correct) eagerness to solidarise with Nicaragua against US aggression, many radicals have adopted a completely uncritical attitude towards the Sandinista leadership and all sorts of romantic nonsense about a "new road to socialism" opening up in Nicaragua is now widely peddled on the left.

Salman Rushdie, to his credit, makes no secret of the limitations of his personal experience, and thus of the book itself: "I was in Nicaragua for three weeks in July (1986). What follows, therefore is a portrait of a moment, no more, in the life of that beautiful, volcanic country."

Rushdie was invited over as a guest of the Sandinista Association of Cultural Workers, the umbrella organisation of artists and writers organised by the government. Indeed, the Sandinista leadership seems to be made up largely of poets and novelists — something that undoubtedly helped establish a warm rapport between Rushdie and his hosts. The country's most famous poet, Father Ernesto Cardenal is Minister of Culture; Vice-President Sergio Ramirez is a novelist; and President Daniel Ortega is another poet. "In Nicaragua", Ortega tells Rushdie, "everyone is considered a poet until he (sic) proves to the contrary".

Despite all the chumminess, Rushdie retains his critical faculties. He does not like the government's policy of censorship (the oppositional La Prensa newspaper had been closed down shortly before his visit) and he cannot go along with the official line that censorship would stop when US aggression stopped.

Salman Rushdie

Rushdie is also unhappy about what he describes as "a kind of innocence abroad in Nicaragua. One of the problems with the romance of the word 'revolution' is that it can carry with it a sort of blanket approval of all self-professed revolutonary movements."

A good point, although without any further explanations, Rushdie goes on to criticise the failure "to make distinctions, for example, between the PLO and the IRA" as an example of this.

More tellingly, Rushdie describes his astonishment when one of his interpreters found it difficult to believe that there are labour camps in the USSR: "But how can it be?" she asked in obvious distress. "The USSR is so helpful to Third World countries. How can it be doing things like this?"

Elsewhere, Rushdie describes trying to raise criticism of Cuba with Minister of Culture Cardenal:

"What about Armando Valladore's book, 'Against All Hope' which speaks of over two decades in Cuban prisons, two decades of being made to eat shit and drink soup containing bits of glass? But it was like hitting a wall...I went away feeling depressed."

But overwhelmingly, Rushdie's impressions are positive. He continually stresses that the threat from the Reagan administration and its Honduras-based Contras overshadows whatever mistakes the Sandinistas have made. A vivid account of a meeting between Foreign Minister Miguel d'Escoto ("another formidable priest") and a White House emissary, "Rocky", brutally sums up the reality of US foreign policy:

"D'Escoto, an excellent raconteur, performed Rocky's reply. 'These Contras on your frontier, padre. They give you lots of trouble, don't they?' Yes, d'Escoto had replied, but they wouldn't if you stopped funding them. 'There you go again,' Rocky said. 'More philosophy. You're hopeless, Father. The reality is that these people have to be funded. And they give you trouble. *Those* are facts...'

"So what did he suggest, d'Escoto asked. 'It's easy,' came the reply. 'Just do as we say. Just do as we say, and you'll see how this trouble you've got will disappear. Overnight. As if by magic. It just won't be there anymore. You'll be astonished. *Just do as we say.*' "

Politically, the most interesting part of the book is the section in which Rushdie describes his visit to Zelaga, on Nicaragua's Atlantic coast. Here, the revolution had never been widely supported, and the inhabitants had been further alienated by a series of disastrous mistakes, including the forcible evacuation of the Miskito Indians from their old territories. Many Miskitos had been driven into the hands of the Contras. The Sandinistas now recognised their mistakes in the region and were setting about convincing Zelayans that their best interests lay with the revolution. Central to this project is "Autonomy": Rushdie describes how it is intended to work:

"The autonomy scheme guaranteed the cultural rights of all minority communities in Zelaya. But it was an attempt to do more than simply compensate for previous blunders. Under the scheme, Zelaya would be given a large measure of self-government. The structure of the nation would be altered into a form of federation between the two wings with Managua retaining responsibility for defence, internal security, foreign policy and overall budgetary and economic strategy. most other functions would pass to regional executive and regional assembly."

The project had not been without its opponents, who had argued that it would lead to the break up of the country, but, "the counter-argument, which had carried the day was that the project was not dividing the country but recognising the division that actually existed. By giving the Atlantic Coast this degree of independence, the chances were that the bonds between the coasts would actually be strengthened. That paradoxical assessment was bourne out by what I saw."

Rushdie makes no pretence of presenting a scientific analysis of the Nicaraguan revolution. This is a book of personal, subjective impressions. At times Rushdie admits to profound doubts and confusion about the FSLN government and their plans for the country. But Rushdie knows which side he is on when it comes to the Sandinistas vs. US aggression: "For the first time in my life, I realised with surprise, I had come across a government I could support, not *faute de mieux*, but because I wanted its efforts (at survival, at building the nation, and at transforming it) to succeed." He is more clear-headed about the Sandinistas' shortcomings than many erstwhile Trotskyists, but in the end his conclusions are positive and generous: "...to oppose a government's policy was not to oppose the government. Not for me, anyway; not this government; not yet."

The left in Solidarnosc

Martin Thomas reviews 'Rendez-nous nos usines' by Zbigniew Kowalewski, editions La Breche, Paris.

Zbigniew Kowalewski was one of the leaders of the left wing in Solidarnosc in 1980-1, and a member of the regional leadership in Lodz. He was outside Poland when martial law was imposed in December 1981, and has lived in France since.

He is a sympathiser of the Trotskyist current represented by Ernest Mandel and by the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League) in France (and 'International' in Britain), and he is also associated with the new left-wing alliance within Solidarnosc formed last year, the Workers'

Opposition. The majority in the Workers' Opposition regards Poland as state-capitalist. Kowalewski himself subscribes to the orthodox Trotskyist idea that the Stalinist states are a bureaucratically twisted variant of post-capitalist society, but believes that these Stalinist states have a systematic tendency to the super-exploitation of labour and criticises Ernest Mandel and his co-thinkers for failing to grasp this and for suggesting that the Stalinist bureaucracies are somehow part of the labour movement.

You can see what Kowalewski is getting at when you consider the Mandel tendency's reluctance to support Solidarnosc's call for a trade-union boycott of Poland after the imposition of martial law or to demand that the western labour movements break links with the government-controlled 'unions' in Eastern Europe. Kowalewski does, however, fully support the Mandel tendency's Sandinista line on Nicaragua.

In this book, Kowalewski presents a record of and a reflection on the struggle carried out by the Lodz Solidarnosc leadership in 1980-1. Lodz's main idea was the 'active strike' — the mass strike which would develop by workers taking over their own factories and running them under workers' control, and building up from that to wider social control. Kowalewski now believes that Lodz's strategy failed to tackle adequately the question of central political power, but he still reckons that it was on the right path.

He presents a particularly interesting account of how Solidarnosc in Lodz — an industrial city with a working class made up mostly of women textile workers — fought for and briefly won workers' control over food distribution.

Kowalewski refers back to the writings of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci on the struggle of the factory councils in Turin after World War 1, and believes that Solidarnosc's struggle for workers' control sketched out a model for revolutions in all industrially developed countries. "In its future revolutions...before installing workers' and citizens' democracy in the state, the working class will construct solid bases of workers' democracy in work time..."

Kowalewski identifies his argument here with the criticism of the Bolsheviks developed by small groups of semi-anarchist 'council communists' in the 1920s. "The modern workers' revolution will never follow the Bolshevik attempt to bolster workers' democracy in the state at the price of introducing a bureaucratic regime at the very heart of the process of production."

This seems to me at best anachronistic: in the Bolshevik USSR of 1917-23, schemes for the most perfect workers' democracy in the half-ruined factories were just mockeries unless productivity could be raised to levels sufficient to feed and clothe the people decently and allow workers free time from drudgery. But that is another debate. Kowalewski's is a very important book on the most important workers' revolution of modern times, and the sooner there is an English translation the better.

Heffer's way forward

Stan Crooke reviews 'Labour's Future — Socialism or SDP Mark II', by Eric Heffer. Verso, £4.95.

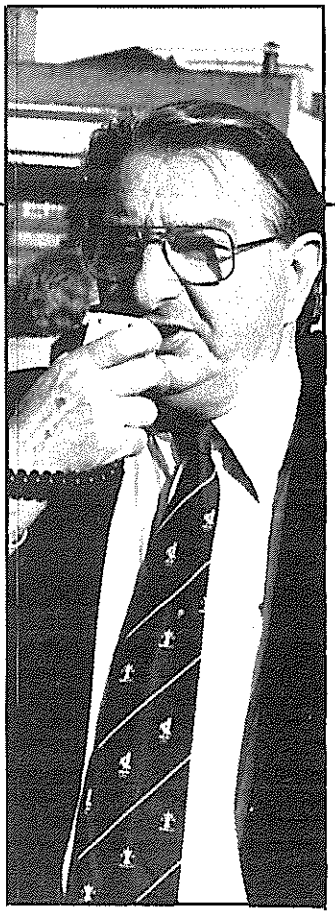
Eric Heffer's 'Labour's Future — Socialism or SDP Mark II' has many important things to say. Eric Heffer has been a central figure on the Labour left, and one of the few who has remained firm on many socialist principles.

One of the most sickening things on the Left these days is the regrowth of sympathy with and illusions in the Stalinist states — like the USSR. Respectworthy socialists like Tony Benn and the officers of Chesterfield Labour Party write letters to the dictator Gorbachev as though the labour movement had something in common with him.

Many British trade unions continue to have links with the police-state pseudo-unions of the Stalinist states. Lots of left-wingers half-approve of the suppression of Poland's labour movement, Solidarnosc.

But Eric Heffer is clear and unambiguous in his support for Solidarnosc and opposition to Stalinist tyranny.

But there are contradictions in his view of the world. He is a 'Christian Socialist', attempting to reconcile socialism and religion. And he is convinced, on balance, that socialism can be introduced peacefully in Britain — although he is aware that the ruling class is capable of violent resistance.



Eric Heffer

But even where his views are incoherent, his book is a useful contribution to the discussion on the way forward for Labour.

History or hindsight?

Bruce Robinson reviews 'War and the International', by Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, published by Socialist Platform at £5.95.

The second volume of Sam Bornstein's and Al Richardson's history of British Trotskyism, 'War and the International', covers the period from 1937 to the collapse of the Revolutionary Communist Party in 1949.

The authors have used the documents of the movement to compile their history, and also drawn on personal interviews with Trotskyist militants of the period. These interviews give a vivid picture of how the British Trotskyists met the challenge of the war and its aftermath.

The small groups of Trotskyists were the only international political grouping to come through the war with an independent working class position. The Stalinist Communist Parties began with a semi-pacifist position in the period of the Hitler-Stalin pact. After the invasion of Russia in June 1941, after which the USSR switched from its failed alliance with Hitler and entered into partnership with democratic imperialism, they went over to wholesale scabbing and class collaboration in the interests of the war effort. The British Labour Party was part of the war-time coalition from June 1940 onwards. In Britain, this opened up big opportunities for the Trotskyists.

At the outbreak of war there were two main Trotskyist groups in Britain. The Revolutionary Socialist League had been created from a fusion of three previous groups, under pressure from the American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon and the Fourth International, in 1938. Its main field of work was the Labour Party. The Workers' International League had refused to join the fusion because they correctly felt that it was an artificial and unstable 'unity', and that agreement on general principles was not adequate to unite groups with widely divergent tactics and approaches to work in the labour movement.

The WIL was proved correct in practice. The absence of activity in the Labour Party under the coalition, and extravagant factional blood-letting by the RSL leadership led to the organisation's fragmentation and decline.

The WIL, on the other hand, intervened in the wave of industrial struggle unleashed by the full employment and bad working conditions brought about by the war. In a number of important areas the WIL were able to win influence by giving support and a political pespective to trade union disputes. In one factory where Trotskyists were prominent, the Royal Ordnance Factory in Nottingham, workers' control of production was even introduced for a short time.

After the foundation of the RCP from a fusion between the WIL and the pieces of the RSL in 1944, the RCP faced state repression because of its action in support of the Tyneside Apprentices' strike. Four leading members of the RCP were charged under the 1927 Trade Disputes Act — an anti-union measure put through after the 1926 general strike.

The Labour leaders were passing new anti-strike legislation and the CP was calling on workers to "treat Trotskyists as you would an open Nazi", but nevertheless there was solidarity from rank and file trade unionists, the then still sizable ILP and from Labour MPs such as Aneurin Bevan. Though the accused spent some weeks in jail, the sentences were quashed on appeal and govern-

ment use of the 1927 Act was thereafter discredited.

The book also provides fascinating information on the international activity of Trotskyists within the British army in areas as far apart as Egypt, Italy and India, and also accounts of the party's work with German refugees and prisoners of war.

But by 1945 a whole range of new problems had begun to confront the Trotskyists; and ultimately they would engulf the organisation.

Firstly, the analysis bequeathed to the Fourth International by Trotsky — in particular the view that Stalinism would not long survive the war — needed critical reassessment in light of the newly-emerging post-war reality. Secondly, the RCP had to analyse the working class shift back to Labour around the time of the 1945 election and draw conclusions from their own activity. These were life and death questions for the organisation: it never succeeded in answering them.

Throughout the war the WIL and RCP had called for "Break the coalition — Labour to power". But by 1945, this was happening anyway, and the wave of industrial militancy was receding and giving way to working class expectations of radical policies from a Labour government.

At its foundation the RCP had committed itself to a policy of "building the independent party of the working class" and opposing work in the Labour Party, though a minority favoured such work. This policy was disastrously carried over into the post-1945 period.

The RCP's incapacity to solve these problems and its incapacity to reorient itself to the post-war world, were — together with factionalism within the party and the RCP's relationship to the Fourth International — to determine the future of the RCP and leave a legacy which is still a potent force within British Trotskyism to this day.

Comrades Bornstein and Richardson have their own view on these matters, and it colours the way the history of the RCP is presented in the book. It can be summed up — I hope without caricature — as follows. The Fourth International ceased to exist during the war because of the organisational destruction (the Trotskyists in Hitler-occupied Europe were cut off until 1944) and an inability to analyse what was going on and became "a post-box attached to the American SWP". The RCP majority — together for a time with Felix Morrow and Albert Goldman in the USA — provided a fundamentally correct theoretical analysis from 1946 onwards.

For example, in 1946 they said Stalinism had emerged stronger from the war, that there would be a post-war boom; in 1947 they analysed the states of Eastern Europe as workers' states, while the Fourth International still described them as capitalist.

The RCP made the mistake of not joining the Labour Party in 1944 and collapsed partly because of an absence of perspective, partly because of a general decline in working class activity and partly because of the unprincipled factionalism of the RCP minority led by Healy and supported by the International Secretariat. (The minority argued for Labour Party work with a perspective of an immediate slump leading to radicalisation of the workers inside the Labour Party).

The authors' view of the virtue of the RCP majority in contrast to the 'worthlessness' of most of the rest of the world Trotskyist movement leads them to an almost demonological view of the events. The villains of the piece are Healy, James P. Cannon and Michel Pablo, the new secretary of the organisationally reconstructed Fourth International.

While their manoeuvrings certainly did not help the RCP, its main problem was the failure of the Party's war-time perspective that "the revolutionary party" could be built outside the Labour Party by a linear building up by way of recruiting individuals from industrial struggle (the line of the SWP today). In this respect the RCP majority proved just as incapable of analysing the post-war world as the other Trotskyists who attract the authors' vituperation. While comrades Bornstein and Richardson agree with what was wrong with the RCP's perspective, the book seems to downplay its importance in the eventual collapse of the RCP.

In the end, in 1949, when the RCP was shrinking and this perspective could no longer be maintained, some of the leaders such as Haston abandoned Trotskyism altogether. Others, such as Grant, abdicated any leadership role and collapsed into the Labour Party to vegetate and degenerate politically for the next 15 or 20 years.

In their description of the theoretical analysis of the RCP, there is a tendency to have the gift of hindsight. While it is certainly true that the rest of the Fourth International was not fully or quickly able to readjust to the failure of Trotsky's perspective after the war, there is a danger in believing that tendencies that now appear — in retrospect — cut and dried historical fact were so at the time.

It is possible now, in retrospect, to deny the revolutionary possibilities that existed in mid-'40s Europe, for, after all, they were not realised. The Trotskyists were defeated but serious people cannot assume their own defeat in advance or admit it prematurely, without losing the capacity to struggle.

One can also telescope events. For example, it was by no means clear prior to 1947-8 that the whole of Eastern Europe would become states on the model of the USSR. Stalin made repeated offers to the US and Britain of a 'neutral' Germany and this type of solution did later, in 1955, occur in Austria. While the Fourth Internaitonal was slow to adjust to events, their po ition was not as lunatic as it is presented.

Similarly comrades Bornstein and Richardson fail to draw any link between the positions of the RCP majority and the policies of Militant and the SWP today. In the final chapter, Militant is attacked for its equation of nationalisation with socialism and its theory of "proletarian bonapartism". Yet Grant developed this position in the '40s as part of the RCP's analysis of the USSR — one of the theoretical positions the book mentions favourably. In reply to Cliff's theory of state capitalism (1947) Grant wrote: "*...where we have complete statification, quantity changes into quality, capitalism changes into its opposite*...complete statification marks the extreme limit of capital...The elements of the new society which were growing up within the old, *now to become dominant*" (Reply to Tony Cliff: emphasis in the original).

This continuity, which also applies to Cliff's and Healy's organisations, makes a nonsense of the last chapter's claim that there has been a fundamental political break in British Trotskyism and that the solution is somehow a return to the tradition of the 1940s. While nobody can deny that subsequent generations have added some idiocies all their own (e.g. student power, rainbow coalitions, and various new mass vanguards), we have all had to deal also with problems going back through the whole post-war period.

These disagreements with the political line of "War and the International" are not meant to diminish its value as the only history that puts different points of view and lets the participants speak for themselves. The massive amount of work comrades Bornstein and Richardson have put into it will serve as a basis for any discussion of the history of British Trotskyism in the future. Such an open discussion would help define the remaining unresolved problems and provide a way to develop not only Trotskyist theory but also Trotskyist practice.

A history of the Condom

Jane Ashworth reviews 'Johnny Come Lately', by Jeanette Parisot. Journeyman, £4.95.

BEFORE the Aids panic every one said Durex. Now the word is condom and to promote safer sex condoms in a variety of shapes, colours and sizes are given away at parties (and have even been *stapled* to the inside of Leeds Student Union newspaper!)

When they were marketed as small, medium and large no-one bought the small size. But changed to medium, large and extra large, medium — small that is — sold well.

Perhaps the Communist Party didn't have the same problem when they marketed the Marxism Today Red Stripe condom but certainly they had a different problem — Red Stripe condoms aren't safe — especially when clipped into other CP paraphanalia — the MT Filofax.

None of these stories are in 'Johny come lately a short history of the condom'

Marxists, and Parliament

Jack Cleary reviews 'Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma', by A Y Badayev with an introduction by Tony Cliff, published by Bookmarks.

TSARIST RUSSIA did not have parliamentary democracy. One of the basic political demands around which the workers' movement in Russia — perhaps the most consistently revolutionary

workers' movement that has ever existed — organised was the demand for a democratic parliament on the model of the British or French parliaments.

After the defeat of the 1905 revolution, a feeble mockery of a bourgeois parliament, the Duma, was set up. It had no real power and was not democratically elected. For example, the workers elected their deputies in a special group (curia), and a worker's vote was worth only a fraction of the vote of various other social classes.

This Duma bore all the marks of its origin as a reactionary substitute for the democratic parliament demanded by workers and middle class alike, of something imposed by the vicious Tsarist reaction.

What should the attitude of the Russian workers be to this Duma? When it was first imposed the Bolsheviks boycotted it: there was still a chance to fight for something better, and not to boycott it would be to lend it authority and thus help the Tsar to set it up. But the revolution continued to ebb. Nothing better was likely in the period ahead.

So Lenin concluded that the working class should use the Duma as a platform from which to agitate and make propaganda which would help drum up the forces that could eventually go beyond the Tsar's feeble and hobbled parliament. Most Bolsheviks, however, did not agree. Lenin was virtually isolated in the Bolsheviks ranks, and in uncomfortable agreement with the less revolutionary wing of the workers' movement, the Mensheviks.

But events — the continued decline of the workers' movement itself among them — converted most Bolsheviks to Lenin's view. And thus you got the paradox that the most consistently revolutionary party in history participated as fully as it legally could in the Tsar's reactionary and counter-revolutionary counterfeit of a parliament, and put it to good use as a labour movement platform. Lenin later commented that if the Bolsheviks had not known how to do such things there would have been no Russian workers' revolution in 1917.

Six Bolshevik deputies were elected to the Duma in 1912, and Badayev was one of them, and his book is an account of their work until 1915, when they were tried and sentenced to Siberian exile for life. It is a day-by-day account of the parliamentary fraction of the Bolshevik party as it immersed itself in the newly-revived Russian labour movement. Acting as one of a number of party bodies, subordinate to the party, the parliamentary fraction used the Duma platform to support workers in struggle and to give workers a political lead.

Badayev's account is an inspiring report from one part of the political front of the many-fronted class war waged by the Bolshevik party, on the economic and ideological fronts as well as the political front.

This combination of different fronts of struggle was the essence of the Bolshevik party as a revolutionary workers' party — this, and not any formal organisational rules, for Lenin's organisation changed frequently, in line with changing conditions of legality and illegality, etc. It allowed the party to link flexibly with the spontaneous workers' movement in all its phases, whether of flow or ebb, militancy or exhaustion.

The struggle in the Duma was the main political front at that time and in that place. The Bolsheviks knew that it was necessary to be able to function on every front of the class struggle, and that otherwise the less revolutionary wing of the labour movement, or the bourgeoisie, would occupy the political space. And thus the Bolsheviks went into, worked within, and told the workers to orient politically to, the bloody-handed Tsar's reactionary Duma.

Almost as arresting as the self-linkage of the Bolsheviks to the reactionary Duma is the incongruous publication of this book by the British Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). The SWP thereby commits a dangerously self-exposing act of piety or commercial calculation (or both). It is as if Alexinsky or Bogdanov, Lenin's leading Bolshevik opponents on using the Duma, had published a pamphlet in favour of it!

Most of the time the SWP fights shy of propounding basic principles of any sort and of binding itself by them. It makes no dogmatic principle of anti-parliamentarism such as certain syndicalists and ultra-left 'council communists' do. Nevertheless, in what it writes and says about current politics there is a sub-text of dogmatic anti-parliamentarism.

It goes far beyond the necessary revolutionary socialist stress on direct action, on the primacy over parliamentary jousting of activities which involve workers directly in struggle for their own economic and other interests; it *counterposes* such direct action to parliament.

Parliament, concern for parliament, involvement in parliament, wish to win parliamentary elections — these are bad, these are necessarily and properly the terrain of the right wing and the soft left. Left-wing politics cannot win elections, at least in normal times, therefore concern for elections drags you irresistibly to the right.

Propaganda against parliament is central to the SWP, and even though it is never rigorously codified or even consistently expounded, they are in practical politics unconditionally hostile to parliament. For example, much that they say about the Labour Party, and the condemnation they make of socialists who are in the Labour Party for being there, is grounded on denunciations of the Labour Party for its involvement in parliament. They even explain the dirty dealings of Militant in Liverpool by the Labour Party's involvement in parliament.

If you focus on parliament — so the argument goes — then you must subordinate the class struggle to electoral considerations. So fight parliamentarism!

But in practice this means leaving politics — and effectively, most of current politics — to the Labour Party right wing and the soft left. That point is central and I will have to repeat it again, more than once, as I go through the arguement.

The SWP focuses on industrial struggles and socialist propaganda about a desirable future world. But how is the world to get from where it is now to socialism? Revolution? But how will the working class prepare itself, change itself, to be able to make a revolution? What can socialists do to help it change? The SWP's answer is not that of the Bolsheviks, or of Leon Trotsky, at any period of his life.

In the proper place of **politics**, the place filled for traditional Marxist parties and for the Bolsheviks by **limited political objectives** — including transitional demands — which allow the working class to develop by immediate political struggles and activities — in their place Tony Cliff's SWP puts the demand: 'Build the SWP, Build the Revolutionary Party'. 'The Party' — and socialist propaganda — must be the link between now and socialism. This is what Cliff, in better days, used to dismiss as 'toy-town Bolshevism'. It leaves — to repeat — the right and soft left with a virtual monopoly of the here-and-now politics which concern the mass of workers, separating their political concerns from the struggle for socialism — and usually even from the industrial struggles.

It seems revolutionary and radical, but it isn't at all. It means abandoning the broad labour movement to others. The workers, perforce, will wind up accepting the answers that 'the others' give to the immediate political questions — like what to do about the Tories and what to replace them by, *now*.

This is a version of 'economism' (one of the one-sided predecessors of the Bolsheviks in the Russian labour movement) superficially 'Leninised' by the focus on 'the revolutionary party'.

The 'Economists' wanted to organise the workers, make socialist propaganda, organise a socialist party — and leave the political struggle against the Tsar and his system to the rising Russian bourgeoisie. They had the theoretical excuse that they expected the replacement of the Tsar to be not workers' power (because the working-class was too small and industry was too weak) but a bourgeois-democratic regime.

If the SWP would accept the analogy they would say: yes — and we expect the Labourites once more to be the government and each time to expose themselves, until they fall apart.

The problem is that you cannot separate out the Labour Party from the labour movement like that. The labour movement has to be revolutionised from within, and because the 'politics' of the SWP means leaving that movement to the right and soft left it is no politics at all as far as the labour movement is concerned. Throughout the years of bitter struggle by the left in the Labour Party, the SWP sat on the sidelines, sourly commenting. If the Bolsheviks had done the analogous thing in Russia, then there would have been no workers' revolution. There would have been a liberal or socialist-reformist labour movement at one pole, and a small 'maximalist' Marxist sect at the other, impotent and irresponsible, though very self-gratifyingly irreconcilable and r...r...revolutionary.

The SWP's contradictions are shown up in the introduction by Tony Cliff, which takes as its task to square the SWP's practice with the radically different practice which Badayev records. From paragraph one Cliff sets out to show that for the Bolsheviks "Parliament was never the central focus on political activity", and stresses that Badayev "shows the role the Bolshevik deputies played in the industrial struggle of the workers". True as it stands, but the *deflation* of the work of the deputies to that of auxiliary to the industrial struggle is a deflation of politics.

Industrial struggle alone *could not* be a central focus of 'political activity'. Whereas the job of Marxists, of those who want to build a revolutionary party according to Lenin's real model, is to link and combine the different fronts of the class struggle and integrate them into a strategy, Cliff is no less restrictively one-sided than the one-sided parliamentarians of the British labour movement.

Cliff says that the British labour movement, with its parliamentarism, is the pure antithesis of Bolshevism. Not so, or not quite. One-sided, a-political or pretend-political, syndicalism is the real opposite of British parliamentarism, both in logic and in the history of our move-

St Mary's hospital occupation

Going out of fashion?

Martin Thomas reviews 'The Retreat from Class: A New "True" Socialism' by Ellen Meiksins Wood. Verso, £6.95.

The working class is not in fashion on the left. *It* has been replaced as the touchstone of radicalism by the 'new social movements'.

Last week I sat in a local Labour Party meeting as one of a rather small opposition to a budget for the local left-Labour council which included 7 per cent rent rises, £6 million of unspecified 'savings', and a declaration that there would be nothing, or almost nothing, to offer in response to demands from the council workers' unions. At the top table was a comrade whom I had last crossed political swords with some 17 years ago, when he was an anarchist, someone who considered Trotskyism not revolutionary enough.

His political trajectory is not exceptional. In West Germany the Maoists and anarcho-Maoists of the '60s and early '70s now form the backbone of the Green Party. Danny Cohn-Bendit, a student leader in France in 1968 who then promised a 'left-wing alternative' to 'obsolete communism' is one of them.

In Australia the Communist Party, once a left breakaway from Kremlin orthodoxy, has practically dissolved itself into a patchwork of ecological, anti-nuclear and feminist campaigning. The once-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party wants a new left party which will be for democracy but not explicitly for socialism or nationalisations.

Ellen Meiksins Wood deals with those of the leftists 'retreating from class' who go in for "theoretical elaboration and complexity, not to mention pretension and obscurity". They are also the most right wing, at least of those who have remained broadly around the left and the labour movement (in France, as she notes, many ex-Maoists have simply gone over to the right).

She examines the ideas of Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Paul Hirst, Barry Hindess, Gareth Stedman Jones, Gavin Kitching, and Samuel Bowles — all situated politically on Labour's right wing but with the peculiarity that they claim to be Marxists of a sort.

Ellen Meiksins Wood challenges these new reformists' dismissal of the working class directly:

"It is one of the many paradoxes of (their) position that, while (they) vehemently reject revolutionary violence as a viable option in advanced capitalist democracies, they tend, at least implicitly, to recognise as genuine challenges to capitalism on the part of the working class only those which take this form.

"Equally paradoxical is the fact that the very people who decry what they take to be demands for instant socialism, and who envisage the transition (to socialism) in the most gradualist terms, also seem to dismiss as inconsequential any working-class challenge to capitalism that does not issue in the immediate establishment of socialism. At the same time, social movements that are far from attacking the foundations of capitalism, either in their aims or in their consequences, are hailed as the stuff of which socialism will be made...

"No one can seriously maintain that any other social movement has ever challenged the power of capital as has the working class...(And) for all its limitations and institutional conservatism, the labour movement has more consistently than any other social collectivity stood on the side of the various causes which the left regards as valuable and progressive...

"If working class movements still have much to learn about the full dimensions of human emancipation, and if they have yet to create forms of organisation adequate to their task, there has been no historically identifiable social force that has even come close to their record of emancipatory struggles, either in the breadth of their visions, the comprehensiveness of the liberation they have sought, or in their degree of success".

This downgrading of the working class has both a right-wing version (which Ellen Meiksins Wood demolishes well) and a left-wing version (Socialist Action in Britain, for example). In the left-wing version, the centrality of the working class is still proclaimed in words, but the sectional struggles of the oppressed are romanticised and elevated far above direct class struggle. The riots in Britain's cities, for example, and the constitutional reform movements within the Labour Party of the women's sections and black sections, are incongruously coupled together and depicted as much more revolutionary than any strike.

Both in the right-wing version and in the left-wing version, the retreat from class is justified by a polemic against 'economism'.

The argument, so Ellen Meiksins Wood shows, starts by constructing a caricature of Marxism. In this caricature the 'economic base' grinds along like some automatic machine. It assembles classes and dictates their class interests; and those class interests are directly reflected in political parties and political struggles. Every social conflict is a battle between the assembled workers and the assembled capitalists on the issue of socialism versus capitalism.

The theorists reject this caricature — and class politics with it. Parties, ideologies, etc. do not reflect class interests — in fact the whole notion of class interests is empty metaphysics. Politics is politics is politics — it is not concentrated economics. There is no necessary correspondence between socialism and the working class. Socialist politics is about constructing alliances of different movements and forces around socialist ideas,

Turn to inside back page