WORKERS' LIBERTY

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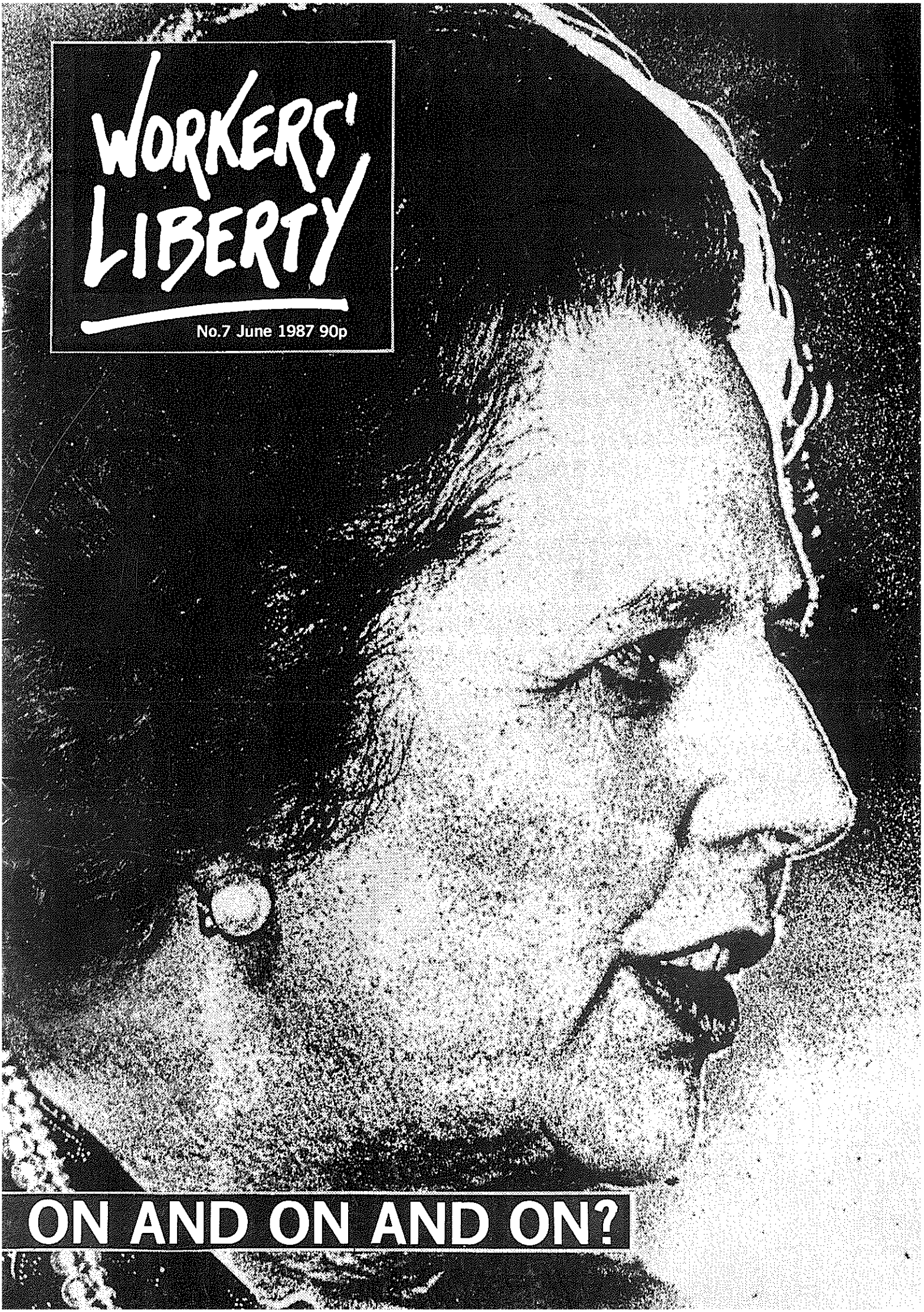

ON AND ON AND ON?

WORKERS' LIBERTY

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

Karl Marx

Letter to readers

THIS ISSUE of Workers' Liberty is concerned, inevitably, with the 11 June British general election. Where does the British labour movement, and the serious left, go from here?

Socialism — the abolition of wage slavery and state oppression — was not an issue in the 11 June election. Nevertheless, for the first time in living memory, *class* was unmistakeably an issue. We discuss the possibilities of reviving positive working-class politics: it is a theme to which we will return in future issues of *Workers' Liberty*.

We altered the production schedule announced in the last issue to allow this one to come out after the election. The next issue will be out according to the announced schedule, at the beginning of September, and *Workers' Liberty* will be bi-monthly thereafter.

The response to *Workers' Liberty* 6 has been enormously encouraging. All copies had gone within four or five weeks of publication. We have increased the print order this time by 500. To readers who liked no.6, we suggest that they take six copies of each issue in future, to sell in their trade union, Labour Party, or LPYS.

This issue carries a long report on the City scandals by Paul Demuth, who works as a financial journalist. Paddy Dollard probes the roots of the Irish National Liberation Army, which recently blew apart in bloody civil war on the streets of Belfast. We have a new section, 'Forum', for feedback from readers and for debate. This time we have an attack by Tony Greenstein on our coverage of the 'Perdition' affair, and a reply by John O'Mahony; and Geoff Bell replies to *Workers' Liberty* 5 on Ireland.

Zbigniew Kowalewski was a leader of the left wing in Solidarnosc, based in Lodz. In an interview with Martin Thomas he analyses the liberalising dictator Gorbachev's intentions towards the workers of the USSR. We also carry a regrettably brief extract from a long interview by Al Richardson with the veteran West Indian Marxist CLR James. The full text of the interview is to be published by 'Socialist Platform'.

***Workers' Liberty* no.8 will carry Zbigniew Kowalewski's account, as a participant, of the struggle for workers' control in Lodz in 1980-1. This is the first of a series of translated excerpts from his book 'Rendez-nous nos usines' ('Give us back our factories'). No.8 will also feature a long article by *Socialist Organiser*'s film critic Belinda Weaver, trying to answer the question: why is so much of modern cinema so bad?**

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EDITORIAL

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No, socialism is not dying!

Labour gained ground slightly during the 1987 British general election campaign — the first time it had done so since 1959. But the Tories still won. The central lesson — Neil Kinnock said it, and he was right — is that you don't win an election in four weeks.

The failure of the Labour leaders to campaign (except against Labour's own left wing) over the last four years, their terrible political timidity, and their efforts to pull Labour back from its leftism of the early 1980s to bourgeois respectability, meant that Labour started at a disadvantage and on the defensive.

But between 1945 and 1970 Labour always got at least 43% of the vote, even when it lost elections. This time we got only 30.8% — the lowest share, apart from 1983, since 1931. Since 1974 Labour has never scored above 39%. Obviously there are longer-term problems.

The vainglorious Tory press says that socialism is dying, and that Thatcher's third term will see it off. They are wrong. There is a political decay in the labour movement — but it is a decay not of working-class socialism, but of something else which has passed for socialism for too long.

In creating the Labour Party, the British working class went beyond pure and simple trade unionism; but not far beyond it. The Labour Party, in its fundamental politics, has always been no more than trade unionism extended to parliamentary politics. But the trade unions bargain within capitalism on the basis of market relations. They start from the existing relations of labour and capital, and do deals on that basis. They are bourgeois organisations. In periods of depression they may well collude in cuts in workers' living standards. Essentially the same is true of the Labour Party.

The 1945 Labour government was not a break from that capitalist framework: the fundamentals of the policy of nationalisations and the welfare state were part of a national consensus created under the wartime coalition government. The Labour government left capitalism healthier than it found it.

When Labour returned to office in 1964 it presented itself as the party that would modernise Britain. The big-business magazine 'The Economist', which today is Thatcherite, backed Labour. But Labour's modernisation effort failed — primarily because of the strength of the working class, which saw off Wilson's anti-union legislation. Labour turned against its own working-class base. This marked a basic point of decline in Labour's history.

Prosperity for few

According to Tory minister Lord Young, "We've never had it so good for the 87% of us who are working".

Even on the left, some say that the Tories have successfully bought off the top layers of the working class, leaving Labour support increasingly confined to an 'underclass'.

Neither claim is true.

On average, the pay of those in work has risen faster than inflation. But averages can be misleading. The high-paid have done much better than the low-paid; and the low-paid pay higher taxes and national insurance now than in 1979, while the high-paid have had £3.6 billion a year in tax cuts.

Besides, only 60% of adults are in waged work. Young's figure of 87% counts out pensioners, students, YTS trainees, and married women at home. A very big proportion of working-class families has some member unemployed or dependent on the welfare state.

Adding up all these factors, the writer John Rentoul calculates that 42% of people are better off than in 1979, 45% are worse off, and 13% have seen no change.

The better-off 42% does include a lot of working-class people. Quite a few working-class people have bought their council homes, and some have gained a few hundred pounds from the Tories' cut-price selling-off of public enterprises. And — it's true — a high proportion of home-owners and shareholders vote Tory.

But that does not prove that home-buying makes people Tory. On the contrary: such evidence as there is indicates that council tenants who bought their homes were more likely to have been Tory in the first place.

Tory support has actually fallen among skilled manual workers since 1979. Labour did lose ground among skilled manual workers to the Tories between 1974 and 1979, but Labour's losses since 1979 among skilled workers have been to the Alliance; and opinion surveys indicate that mass opinion on social issues (welfare state, equality, women's rights, etc.) has moved slightly to the left in recent years.

Remember: the great example of workers who had been supposedly reconciled to capitalism by high wages, mortgages, and incentive schemes used to be the miners, Britain's highest-paid manual workers. But that was before 1984...

Four black MPs

Britain now has black MPs, for the first time since the Communist Saklatvala sat as a Labour MP in the 1920s.

Four black MPs were elected for Labour. Bernie Grant in Tottenham, and Diane Abbott in Hackney North, in particular, had faced a vile racist campaign from the Tories, and lost votes.

But overall analysis of all the votes for black candidates showed no strong and consistent pattern of racist bias against them.

By the 1960s the long boom which had underpinned a relatively easy consensus in British politics was visibly decaying. Britain's growth was grievously lagging behind other big capitalist countries. British capitalism needed to reorganise itself, to adjust to the loss of its empire, to replace old and stagnant industries by more modern enterprise, and to deal with its special problem — a too-mighty trade union movement.

The history of the last quarter-century is one of repeated attempts by governments, Tory and Labour, to carry out that restructuring of British capitalism; great struggles by the working class which thwarted them; but — *and this is fundamental* — a failure by the working class to create its own *political* alternative; and thus, finally, the victory (to an extent, and for now) of a radical ruling-class alternative, Thatcherism.

British capitalism's stalemate

The British ruling class has been forced by circumstances to grant a great deal to 'the political economy of the working class' (to use Karl Marx's phrase for the Factory Acts restricting child labour). Between 1945 and the 1960s, especially, the labour movement was strong and powerful — but not politically and ideologically strong enough to challenge the rule of the bourgeoisie.

The result was a 'historical compromise' — the consolidation of Labour reformism as a transitory historical stop-gap. That is what the Labour Party is historically — a stop-gap. But reformism is not an alternative to capitalism. It is an aspect of it. The reformist labour movement which builds its welfare state on the foundation of consent from capitalism is building on shifting sands. If the ruling class survives — and by definition it does — then it will strike back. It is striking back.

The historical stalemate — and the Labour Party in its great days was part of the historical stalemate, the modus vivendi — could not last. Capitalism is not benign. The profit mainspring is inhuman and merciless.

The compromise could not and did not remain stable indefinitely. Not only did he capitalists grudge the expenditure on he welfare state and the costs of trade union power. The British working class did not just impose the welfare state in the 1940s and then lapse into silence. From the mid-'50s, the rank and file of the British labour movement were in revolt. There was a series of waves of self-asserting industrial militancy, through to the mid-'70s. After 1970-1 there was a rash of sit-in strikes, and a powerful revolt of the working class that made the Tory government of that day unable to rule.

After Labour returned to office in February 1974, many shop stewards wrote to Labour's Industry minister Tony Benn, asking him to take over their companies. Those workers wanted a basic change. The British workers' revolt of the early '70s was a long-drawn-out equivalent of the general strike by ten million French workers in 1968.

But just as the 1968 general strike, having failed to press forward to workers' power, was inevitably followed by a reflux and a landslide right-wing election victory, so also the workers' struggles in Britain were bound to end in the capitalists getting their own back — unless the labour movement was able to *replace* capitalism.

In this whole period British capitalism was in trouble. The ruling class could not do what it wanted because of the strength of the working class. But the working class did not have its own political alternative. Reformism had reached an impasse. Eventually the ruling class offered its own 'radical' alternative — Thatcherism.

The immense class struggles of the '60s and '70s ended in defeat, crucially because revolutionaries failed to take the chances to build a revolutionary party in the '60s, and the militant trade unionists had no *political* alternative to the Tories except a bourgeois Labour Party. Labour's decline represents the bill the working class has to pay for the historical crimes of Labourism.

Why Labour couldn't solve the stalemate

The tragedy of modern British history is that the working class had great strength and power but was politically headless. Workers turned away from the Labour Party in the '60s and early '70s, and to in-

dustrial action. But such action — short of general strike — couldn't even hope to provide an alternative to the system. Workers continued to think of trade unionism as the immediate answer to their problems. They still looked to the Labour Party for their political representation, only with decreasing conviction. By the February 1974 election — the point at which the Liberal and Scottish and Welsh nationalist middle ground swelled to seven million votes — working-class electoral support for Labour was increasingly grudging. Especially among striking workers, there was real hatred of the trade union leaders — a hatred Thatcher was to build on.

The tremendous wave of working-class militancy of the early '70s led to a government of Harold Wilson and his cronies. Organised labour's greatest victory led to a Labour government which suppressed rank and file militancy, cut living standards, and under the direction of the IMF began the series of cuts and moves towards privatisation which became known after '79 as Thatcherism. Labour in power was not even seriously trying to reform capitalism. Industrial militancy declined after mid-1975, with workers perplexed and intimidated by the slump; and political disillusionment grew.

Crisis of socialism

There is a political crisis of Labour ideology — a crisis of post-1945 socialism.

After World War 2 there were millions of workers radicalised, with a vague perception that they wanted some sort of socialism. But the thread of working-class socialist politics, of Marxism, had been substantially broken by Stalinism and fascism in the '30s. The radicalised workers were channelled by social-democratic and Stalinist parties into a bureaucratic, statist, nationalist version of socialism.

This ideology decayed during the long capitalist boom and in today's changed capitalist world no longer has much grip even as a reform ideology. The reformist workers' parties appear aimless and ineffectual. Workers obviously seek an alternative; and in Britain and many other countries they have mostly sought alternatives to the right of '1945 socialism'.

This crisis of '1945 socialism' is in some ways like the crisis of democracy that followed the full working-out of the French Revolution's programme of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' in the 19th century. Equality before the law was not equality. Unequal property gutted legal equality. Market equality did not lead to social equality when the formal equality of the wage labourer and the capitalist led the wage labourer to sell labour power to the capitalist, who then pocketed the surplus between the cost of maintaining the working class — wages — and the creative increment given to the process of production by the living labour of the worker.

In the socialist movement the assumption was that nationalised property would free the producers from exploitation. That has been shown to be untrue not only in the Stalinist states, where a bureaucracy 'owns' the state and therefore the means of production, but also with the insipid 'nationalisations' in Britain.

Wholesale statification has not liberated the working class from wage-slavery — not in Russia, not in the Third World, nor in post-1945 Britain.

Now the Marxist, working-class socialist tradition always said explicitly that nationalisation was not by itself socialism, or liberation from wage slavery.

"State ownership and control", wrote James Connolly, "is not necessarily socialist — if it were, then the army and the navy, the police, the judges, the gaolers, the informers and the hangmen would all be socialist functionaries as they are all state officials — but the ownership by the state of all the lands and material for labour, combined with the cooperative control by the workers of such land and materials, would be socialist... To the cry of the middle-class reformers, 'Make this or that the property of the government', we reply — 'yes, in proportion as the workers are ready to make the government their property'."

Wallasey shows how

Labour won the national campaign, but lost the election.

On the ground Labour was not strong enough to follow through the TV lead, win arguments on the doorstep and create a local momentum to translate the good TV presence into votes and seats. In some constituencies that translation did happen — for instance in Wallasey.

Wallasey was the 104th marginal — Labour's 81st marginal. The candidate was Lol Duffy, a regular contributor to Socialist Organiser, who had been sent to jail for his part in the occupation of Cammell Lairds shipbuilders. The now "Right Honourable" Lynda Chalker was the Tory candidate — and had been since 1974. Wallasey has not had a Labour MP since 1911.

According to the national figures, Labour should not have had a chance of making up the 6,300 votes needed to unseat Chalker. But despite that, Labour were only 279 votes short of winning. And that was in spite of neighbouring Labour MP Frank Field's call on Labour voters not to vote for Duffy and the local press with its "Marxist to fight Chalker" headline.

Labour nearly won that seat by persuading working class people to vote; of the 6,000 or so votes that Labour made up, only 2,000 came from the SDP. The other 4,000 came from people who did not vote in the last election.

Wallasey Labour Party increased its vote by more than any other constituency in England without a sitting Labour MP.

And it was done not by importing a 'respectable', middle-of-the-road, family man but by running a campaign which set out from the start to involve people and to convince others.

Every day hordes of young people went out leafleting the dole, the shopping centres, health centres and the parents who collected their children from primary schools.

Each ward was able to do more than three canvasses and some committee rooms did six knock-ups on voting day. The constituency was well enough supplied with party workers that real canvassing was done — enough time was available to argue against the effects of the press and Frank Field.

There is no reason to think that Wallasey, as a constituency, is unique, although the CLP was not as demoralised as some and there has not been the history of a local Labour council putting up the rates by huge amounts. Had other local parties been able to develop the same profile then more seats would have been won for Labour.

Building that profile needs to start now. A four-week dash to the polls, even with a good campaign run by the national leadership, is not adequate to win. Strength on the ground is the key. Immediately each constituency needs to organise an open meeting to recruit Labour voters to the Party and to plan future campaigns. There needs to be basic political work done — on the estates, around workplaces and around the Further Education Colleges, building support for the Party, raising its profile, arguing and convincing people not only that socialism is viable but also that they are needed to join the Party.

A simple stall at a shopping centre every Saturday morning would be an advance on the present situation — but raising the Party's profile need not be so limited.

A ward party should become a campaign centre, making itself relevant to working class people within its boundaries. Organising solidarity action with unions in dispute, organising housing campaigns and welfare rights stalls and running discos with the YS are all simple initiatives which will build the Party and re-establish the Labour Party in the lives of many people.

Votes in Scotland

The Tories lost 11 seats in Scotland. Labour got 42% of the vote there, as against 24% for the Tories, 19% for the Alliance, and 14% for the Scottish Nationalists.

That means a 76-24 majority for parties supporting a Scottish Assembly. A referendum in Scotland under the last Labour government also produced a majority for an Assembly, but devolution was successfully blocked by maverick Labour MP George Cunningham (who is now in the SDP).

The democratic case for devolution seems strong, and socialists can have no opposition in principle. However, agitation for the Assembly is likely to be used to divert Scottish workers' struggles into a framework of Scotland versus England, rather than workers versus bosses.

A test for the left

The Left was broadly divided between those who did, and those who did not call for a Labour vote. But even amongst those who understood the importance of voting Labour, there were big differences.

Most of the Left tried to find some sugar with which to coat the 'vote Labour' pill.

The SWP ran around putting up posters saying, 'Vote Labour...but build a fighting socialist alternative', and insisting that although the election dominated their propaganda they didn't think it was really all that important. As Duncan Hallas had put it in 1979: "This [the election] is an issue we shouldn't get very excited about. In terms of the national alternatives we have to say, 'grit your teeth and vote accordingly'."

The SWP came up against the same problem they always face. Come an election they have nothing to say except 'vote Labour but join the SWP'. Despite their endless appeals to everyone to leave the Labour Party, they are forced to recognise that in reality there is no other alternative working class party. So all they can do about the domination of right-wing reformists is bemoan it.

Militant, as usual, inveighed 'Labour to power on a socialist programme' — the slogan emblazoned on their front page. Large banners bearing this slogan were even spotted hanging from windows in tower blocks. It is, of course, wildly out of this world. Labour wasn't standing on a 'socialist programme', or anything like it. So Militant's slogan either meant pretending that Labour's programme was socialist; or it meant nothing much. Certainly it did not help to orient anyone in the labour movement.

Militant supporters who stood as Labour candidates did well, though. Terry Fields in Liverpool, Broad Green, doubled his majority with a 12.4% swing from the Tories; Dave Nellist in Coventry South East almost trebled his majority, with a 5.3% swing. Pat Wall took Bradford North for Labour with a 9.9% swing from the SDP. And John Bryan in ill-fated Bermondsey cut the Liberal majority.

Briefing hit the election campaign with an 'alternative manifesto', saying, literally, 'wouldn't it be nice if...'.

'How much better it would be', they declared almost flippantly, 'if Labour stood for the same class against class approach as the Tories'. This was saner than Militant, but rather inept propaganda — it was seized on by the Tory press to bash Labour with.

Socialist Action complained that Labour had not sufficiently taken note of their editor's advice. This advice, incidentally, has included a long-standing insistence that the SDP is a permanent fixture in British politics — and that Labour should have faced up to the fact that it was going to lose long ago.

The Communist Party managed to combine a call for a tactical vote with standing its own candidates. They stood some of them in marginals — like Bermondsey, where they got 108 votes.

By far the most incredibly stupid prank of all was the so-called Red Front of the **Revolutionary Communist Party**. More consistent than the SWP, they opposed a Labour vote. They stood 14 candidates (which must have cost a lot of money), most of whom got around 200 votes — except in Knowsley North where they got 538.

When you bear in mind that the 'RABIES' joke lefty candidate in Norwood got 171, this doesn't suggest a budding alternative to Labour.

Defeat for Alliance

The Alliance got 7.3 million votes (23%), as against 7.8 million (25%) in 1983.

Since 1979 the Alliance has taken a sizeable chunk of the Tory middle-class vote (it now leads the Tories among university graduates) and of the Labour working-class vote (the Liberals' profile of electoral support, though not the SDP's, is now almost as heavily working class as Labour's). Between 1983 and 1987 Labour has recouped a part of what it lost, at least among the worse-off sections of the working class.

The Alliance lost 8% of the semi-skilled/unskilled manual vote, and 9% of the unemployed vote.

The Alliance can certainly continue, though whether the SDP can avoid being eaten up by the much stronger Liberals is another question. The Alliance now have some 2500 councillors — two-thirds Liberal, one-third SDP — where in 1972 the Liberals had only 400 or so. The Liberal vote, down to 2.5% in 1951, was up to 19.3% by February 1974 and has stayed in that region since then.

Party	Votes (million)	%	+/-	MPs	+/-
Conservative	13.8	42	-	375	-17
Labour	10.0	31	+3	229	+21
Alliance	7.3	23	-3	22	-5
Other	1.4	4	-1	24	+1

'Tactics' flop

Tactical voting was a resounding flop.

In several constituencies where the 'tactical' experts recommended Labour supporters to vote Alliance, Labour ended up ahead of the Alliance — Birmingham Yardley, Calder Valley, Pendle, Stockport, Watford.

In Richmond and Barnes, where the Liberals hoped to topple a 74-vote Tory majority, the Labour vote went up; in the Isle of Wight, a Liberal seat which the Tories took this time, Labour's score increased 153%! The Alliance's hopes in Chelmsford, Crosby, Milton Keynes and Twickenham were dashed by increases in the Labour vote of 45%, 81%, 24% and 18%. In only one constituency does the Alliance seem to have made serious gains from tactical voting — in Bath, where Labour's vote went down 24%.

In 1983 there must have been a great deal of 'spontaneous' tactical voting, for Labour's vote in the South-East went down 40% from 1979. There was a danger of a domino effect — in constituency after constituency, Labour would go into third place and then collapse to a fringe vote. That hasn't happened.

Leon Trotsky wrote: "State property becomes the property of 'the whole people' only to the degree that social privilege and differentiation disappear, and therewith the necessity of the state. In other words: state property is converted into socialist property in proportion as it ceases to be state property". And in the 'Transitional Programme': "The difference between [our] demands and the muddle-headed reformist slogan of 'nationalisation' lies in the following: (1) we reject indemnification; (2) we warn the masses against demagogues of the People's Front who, giving lip-service to nationalisation, remain in reality agents of capital; (3) we call upon the masses to rely only upon their own revolutionary strength; (4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of the seizure of power by the workers and farmers".

Nevertheless, for a long time, socialism meant nationalisation. For socialists nationalisation should not be the end, but one means to an end. It came to embody socialism. What is worst — as we shall see — is that socialism was chopped down to a bureaucratic, statist, nationalist programme in this way not only for the reformists and the Stalinists, but also for many revolutionaries. They distinguished themselves from the mainstream labour leaders mostly by attacking them for not being hard or militant enough in their pursuit of '1945 socialism'.

Crisis of Trotskyism

There were, after all, socialists who knew the ideas of Connolly and Trotsky. Why did they not enable the British labour movement to overcome the crisis? Why wasn't the bureaucratic, statist, nationalist '1945 socialism', replaced by genuine working-class socialism, rather than by cynicism, confusion, and numbers of workers shifting support from Labour to the Alliance?

Part of the problem is that many of the Trotskyists had let such ideas as Connolly's and Trotsky's grow dusty on the shelves, while in day-to-day politics they distinguished themselves merely as the most militant fighters for the goals of '1945 socialism'. Such an approach meant sectarianism in the form of rigid organisational self-demarcation (or even self-isolation) and a routine of denunciation, combined with lack of the necessary fundamental *ideological* self-demarcation.

One of the main ideas in the political lexicon of Trotskyism is that of the crisis of leadership — the corruption of the established mass Social Democratic and Stalinist parties as the key to the failure of the working class to make a revolution. For Trotsky this thesis was the alternative to concluding from the defeats of the working class in the 1920s and 1930s that

there was something fundamentally lacking in the working class as a revolutionary class. What was needed, he argued, was a truly revolutionary party to fight bourgeois ideas and help the working class establish its political independence as the prelude to the working-class conquest of power.

The arresting fact about modern British history is that the crisis of leadership in Britain has been essentially a crisis of the 'Trotskyist' movement.

The Stalinist movement was small and, after 1956, discredited. The social democracy was in power after 1964, and decaying. Trotskyism had been weak when the working class upsurge first got underway in the mid-'50s. Yet Britain offered Trotskyism immense opportunities once the Communist Party began to lose its verve and political certainty — better, perhaps, than in any other country.

The old forces of Trotskyism failed. In 1958 the main Trotskyist group — the SLL, led by Gerry Healy — could get 500 British workers, a majority of them shop stewards, to an 'assembly of labour'. The SLL was then, and until the mid-'60s, a serious and more or less rational movement. In the 1960s they could have built a militant Trotskyist leadership with substantial roots in the trade unions and the Labour Party. Combining the two fronts of the labour movement, they could have recruited the best and most serious shop stewards in the subsequent period and helped organise the left in the Labour Party.

Instead of the left in the Labour Party collapsing and fading away between 1966 and 1970, a serious fight could have been mounted against the Wilson government. At the very least, Harold Wilson in 1974 would have faced a big challenge from a substantial and respected left wing embedded in the labour movement. Instead of the disillusion and demoralisation that actually took place, the late '70s could have seen that left wing grow. The left revolt in the Labour Party from 1979 to 1981 could have taken place at a vastly higher political level, and with much deeper roots in the trade unions and the working class.

It didn't happen. The 'Trotskyist' movement went off after 1964 to build a 'revolutionary party' in the wilderness, organisationally counterposed to the labour movement but with little real ideological independence from the mainstream. Other Trotskyists, like the SWP, later repeated the SLL's errors.

That failure shaped the starting point for Thatcherism. Combined with eight years of slump and many working-class defeats — especially the defeat of the miners' strike of 1984-5 — it set the background for the 1987 election.

Labour's 1987 campaign

Against that background, what was the campaign like?

It is tempting for socialists to scoff at Labour's election campaign. And easy, too: John F Kinnock runs for president of Britain Inc. Labour preaches moderation and reconciliation in the name of a working class living with the jackboot of the Tory class-warriors on its neck. Labour's leaders appear on TV — an election broadcast they felt proud enough of to put out twice — and beg for votes for Neil Kinnock by showing him bitterly denouncing the misdemeanours of... the Liverpool Labour Party.

All that is true: but it misses what was *new* in the month before 11 June, the vigorous and passionate anti-Toryism of Labour's campaign.

When was it last seen in an election that the leader of the Labour Party indicted the ruling class as Kinnock did? He used the language of 'One-Nation'-ism, but the message was a message of a fightback by the working class and the oppressed. He used the language of moderation, and for sure Labour's proposals and programme were moderate enough, but there was nothing 'moderate' about the bitter indictment of Toryism which Kinnock

The Tories' plans

- Force all 16-18 year olds onto cheap-labour YTS schemes, on pain of having their dole cut off.
- Do their best to stop council building any more council housing, encourage the selling-off of council estates to private developers, and cut back tenants' rights.
- Hive off favoured schools from the general state system.
- Replace rates — a property tax on occupiers, which does at least hit the rich more than the poor — by a flat-rate poll-tax. Even the unemployed will have to pay 20% of the poll-tax.
- Bring in new laws against trade unions, making postal ballots (rather than workplace ballots) compulsory for union election, and making it illegal for unions to penalise scabs even in a legal strike.
- Introduce censorship on TV.
- Continue to sell off public enterprises.

Labour's vote up

Labour's vote increased by 19% over 1983 — from 8.5 million to 10 million.

Labour gained ground mainly where its support was already strongest — among worse-off workers and younger people. Among unemployed people Labour's share of the vote went up 6%; among semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, also 6%. Among the 57% of voters classified by MORI as working class, Labour's share increased 8% while it increased only 3% over the whole electorate. Among council tenants, Labour's share went up 10%.

Labour got a good share of those who did not vote in 1983. According to MORI, Labour defeated the Tories among 18-24 year olds, though Gallup had the Tories ahead among first-time voters. Labour also seems to have done particularly well among young and working class women.

All these facts back up what the left has long argued, that Labour's priority should be to mobilise and inspire its working class vote with bold policies, rather than to try to win over the middle class with palid moderation. There is plenty of scope for further gains from such work: 45% of those who did not vote in 1983 abstained again this time, and 32% of young people eligible to vote for the first time did not bother.

First 'out' gay MP

Chris Smith, who held Islington South and Finsbury for Labour, became the first openly gay person to be elected as an MP.

Chris had 'come out' as gay since he was elected last time. He got 16,511 votes, and increased his majority, despite the threat of a Green Party candidate who might have tipped the balance.

Chris's personal sexuality was not used in the campaign by his opponents, but accusations that the local Labour council 'spends all its money on gays' did feature especially in SDP campaigning.

delivered. Neil Kinnock spoke for every class-conscious worker and for all the victims of Thatcher's 'reinvigorated' capitalism.

Even the highly personalised first (and repeated) election broadcast — so easy to mock — in which Kinnock's relatives told us what a nice fellow he was, was more than just a chocolate-box advertisement for the leader of the Labour Party. It used the focus on Kinnock's personality to get across a radical message.

Kinnock was shown saying that he was the first Kinnock in a thousand years to go to college, and then asking 'Were the others all stupid, miners and poets as they were'? That was no empty 'beauty contest' broadcast. It was a recapitulation of the experience of the British working class.

Now the political content of Labour's campaign had nothing to do with socialism — the replacement of the present system of wage slavery and state oppression based on the private ownership of the means of production. The sort of message Kinnock put across (including his positive alternative) was delivered 100 years ago by Liberals and Radicals.

During the long decades when Labour and Tory parties alike subscribed to the post-1940 (or '45) consensus, the 'anti-Tory rhetoric' which the labour movement inherited from its Radical prehistory became increasingly hollowed out and devoid of content. It was, as *Workers' Action* (which was, of course, vehemently for a Labour victory) put in the 1979 election, the refuge alike of Labour's right wing and of sectarian socialists like the SWP.

But the Thatcher revolution in the Tory party has given a renewed meaning to the hollowed anti-Toryism of the labour movement. The Tories are now different in a way they were not for decades before 1979. The Labour Party's counter-proposal to the Thatcher Tories was old-fashioned and inadequate. But in its own way Labour brought *class* into a British election more clearly — if not explicitly — than at any election for decades. It was a clear clash, if not between capitalism and socialism, at least between raw, harsh capitalism and capitalism tempered by 'the political economy of the working class'.

Where now?

Marxists in the British labour movement need to rediscover and explain the programme of the self-liberation of the working class — of socialism as Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky understood it. At the same time we must recognise that the working class learns mainly in struggle, not through propaganda, and we must start from where we are.

We should fight for the labour movement to continue the anti-Tory crusade started in the election period — for local Labour Parties to go 'back to basics', campaigning on the streets and door-to-door against health cuts, education cuts, rent rises, housing cuts, and the selling-off of council estates. Trade unions should develop direct action to resist the Tories and the bosses wherever possible.

Socialism is not dying. In Britain it has not been tried in a mass movement. The working class is changing, but it is not dead or dying. Thatcher's third term will not go through without resistance and struggles. And in those struggles workers can learn and make their way to working-class socialist politics.

The Thatcher years are a tragic time for millions of people — the homeless, the unemployed, the young, the old, the sick. Yet nobody with a realistic grasp of what capitalism is as a system could have expected the post-1945 settlement to continue indefinitely. Either the bourgeoisie or the working class must rule — and the working class cannot rule, and serve its own interests, by fiddling with the capitalist system. The savage and inhuman capitalist counter-attack was inevitable.

And the collapse of the social compromise of the 1950s and '60s under the onslaught of the Tories is forcing the working class to rethink politically. The labour and socialist movement is being reshaped. The outcome of the British general election of 1987 was a tragedy. But we can still turn it into the prelude to the triumph of the labour movement ●

Labour councils

In the geographical pattern of the vote, the oddity was London.

Although London comes within the relatively prosperous South-East, its inner areas have as much working class poverty and unemployment as anywhere. Yet Labour did badly in London. So did the Alliance, and London was the Tories' best area.

Local Labour council policies seem to be the reason. In Ealing, Waltham Forest, and Hammersmith and Fulham, where Labour lost seats, Labour councils have recently imposed big rate rises. The candidate from the Ken Livingstone Career Promotion Tendency in Brent East won but saw the Labour vote go down 9%. In Battersea North, the other lost seat, selling off of council estates by the local Tory council and a subsequent influx of 'yuppies' were blamed.

The voters' revolt was not against 'loony left' councils as such. Labour did well in Islington and Liverpool.

As local Labour canvassers well know, working class voters in Islington and Liverpool have plenty of criticisms of those councils. But those voters were not put off by their local Labour Parties being supposedly 'Marxist' and left-wing, maybe because enough of their radicalism is directed towards real goals of class struggle. Both Liverpool and Islington have run major housing programmes, and have made some efforts, however inept, to campaign against the government.

But in Ealing, for example, voters have a Labour council which has led no campaign against the government but has raised rates by 60% — with the new spending going mostly to pay people £20,000 or so a year to enlighten the local proletariat about sexism, racism, gay rights and so on. Such behaviour only damages the important causes the council sets out to promote.

Neil Kinnock, incidentally, responded to Ealing's budget not with the condemnation he has given Liverpool, or the cold silence directed to other left councils, but with a personal letter of approval.

In truth most of what has passed for the left-wing and socialist presence on Labour councils for the last five years is about as distant from working-class socialism as the positive programme Neil Kinnock advocated in the election. It too is old-fashioned radicalism.

If anything Kinnock was better, for his radicalism appealed to the working class and all the oppressed, whereas the liberal radicalism of the local government left appeals at best to a series of sectional interests — to women, blacks, gays, etc. treated as sectional interests.

Votes and the dole

REGIONS

In order of unemployment	In order of improvement in Labour vote
1. North	1. Wales
2. Scotland	2. Scotland
3. North-West	3. North
4. Wales	4. Yorkshire
5. Yorkshire	5. North-West
6. West Midlands	6. West Midlands
7. East Midlands	7. East Midlands
8. South West	8. South West
9. East Anglia	9. East Anglia
10. South East	10. South East

Ireland

Workers hit back at Haughey

Before they were elected, the Fianna Fail government in the 26 counties promised to protect the health service. Today, three months later, they are facing massive opposition from workers throughout the service for their attempts to implement vicious cuts in health care. Doctors have imposed a nationwide indefinite strike affecting most hospitals and the Alliance of Health Service Unions have been waging a campaign of demonstrations, strikes and protests.

70% of state aid to voluntary hospitals goes on wages. The Fianna Fail government accuses the previous Fine Gael-Labour coalition government of overspending by £55 million and want cuts which will cost at least 2,000 jobs this year and close 9 hospitals. It will be the first time in a decade that state funding for the health service has dropped below 7% of GNP. Ireland already has the second lowest spending per capita on health in the EEC. Unemployment in the country stood at 250,700 in May.

Resistance to the proposed cuts has been led by the Alliance of Health Service Unions, which includes the Local Government and Public Services Union (LGPSU) and the Federated Workers' Union of Ireland (FWUI). There have been protests since April, nurses' strikes and some opposition from Area Health Boards.

On 12 May over 5,000 workers from 14 hospitals in Cork marched through the centre of the city to protest at the health cuts. One union leader said that the health cutbacks had created an atmosphere of fear thorughout the country not witnessed since the days of Cromwell!

One of the proposals most bitterly opposed is the introduction of fees charged to outpatients. These charges were introduced on May 18 despite opposition from the LGPSU which urged (but didn't instruct) its members to refuse to collect them. Many health workers refused to collect the charges and in some hospitals non-union and temporary staff were used to do the job. There were reports of patients being turned away

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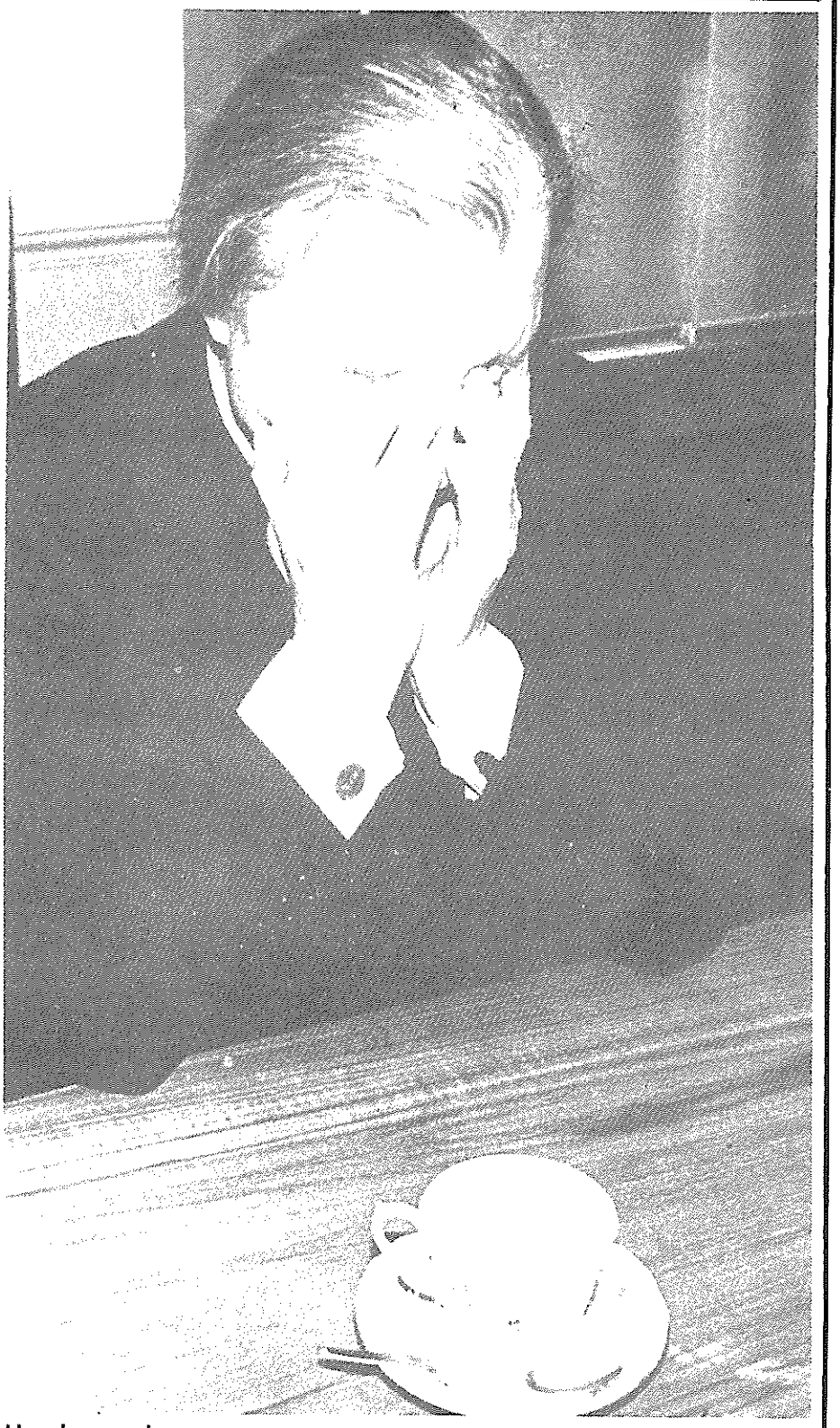


Haughey: under pressure

because they did not have the £10 fee.

After the introduction of fees, hundreds of health workers demonstrated in Limerick on 18 May. Cork Health Board voted to refuse to make the cuts required and on 21 May 15,000 marchers demonstrated against them in Dublin. On the same day 2,500 health workers marched in Kilkenny and 1500 in Tullamonc. Despite all this, the government is discussing further "rationalisation" and threatening widespread privatisation. The Health Minister, Dr. Ruig O'Hanlin, insists that the government will not retreat from plans to severely cut spending on the health service in 1987. In addition they have announced plans to make more detailed and sweeping cuts in public expenditure generally.

Perhaps the most dramatic development was the decision by over half of Ireland's non-consultant hospital doctors to go on an indefinite strike from Saturday 6 June. The doctors, members of the Irish Medical Organisation, are pro-

SURVEY

testing at a proposal to sack 200 doctors — without even consultation or negotiation — and against attacks on their pay and conditions. Emergency services were negotiated for some hospitals and provided by consultants at others. On the day the strike began the Mid-Western Health Board was told by the government that it was to make a further cut of £800,000 in services if it was to remain within the budget estimates.

In Cork, after union members refused to move patients as part of the 'rationalisation' the Gardai (police) were called in to do the job!

By 8 June routine operations and admissions had been stopped in most hospitals and they were relying on emergency services provided by consultants. At that stage the IMO were considering escalating the action because of the lack of response from the government and the militancy of its members at mass meetings. Finally on 13 June the dispute escalated into a nationwide strike with no exemptions.

The battle over the health cuts has had major repercussions in national politics. The two major opposition parties originally agreed to accept the government's budget because they themselves had also planned severe cuts. Public opposition has forced them to alter that and they (Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats) have been critical of the methods employed by Fianna Fail.

In May there was serious dissent in the Fianna Fail parliamentary party. Some TDs (MPs) were forced into opposing specific cuts because of massive opposition from public, health workers and doctors in their areas.

Charles Haughey, the Prime Minister, faced the first threat to his government's stability. He began by sorting out his internal opposition to ensure that the cuts programme went through. His backbenchers were faced with a choice: vote for the cuts or be expelled from the parliamentary party. Later this instruction was extended to party members and local Health Boards and subsidiary bodies. So far it seems to have quelled the opposition within Fianna Fail.

Haughey knows that he must succeed in getting these cuts through if he has any hope of launching a wider programme of austerity and making the Irish working class pay for the severe economic crisis in the country.

Of the parties in the Dail only the Labour Party and the Workers Party have consistently opposed the cuts. The Labour Party blame Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats as much as Fianna Fail. They say that it was this issue that forced them to leave the previous coalition government with Fine Gael. They have organised a national campaign against the cuts in consultation with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

Meanwhile the struggle against the cuts through direct action continues to involve traditionally non-militant unions. The Irish Nurses Organisation, which has organised impressive strikes and demonstrations, is not an affiliate of the JCTU. The nursing profession in Ireland has a far higher status than in the UK. The doctors are pressing their organisation to step up the action and attempting to decide the future of their campaign through a series of mass meetings.

The strength of the resistance to this first round of cuts was clearly not expected. It will probably have an effect on future plans, the thrust will have to be the same but the methods may be more cautious. It isn't a style which will suit Charles Haughey but the resistance so far will have to be built on and spread if it is to be effective. The outcome is still undecided as I write. Whatever the outcome, the resistance in Britain to Thatcher's plans for the health service can learn a great deal from the spectacular resistance which has dominated Charles Haughey's "first 100 days". Speak Irish to Mrs Thatcher! After 11 June it's probably the only language she will listen to●

Patrick Murphy

South Africa: treason trial documents

Free Moses Mayekiso!

Moses Mayekiso, one of South Africa's leading black trade unionists, is on trial for treason. If found guilty, he could be hanged.

Moses was recently elected general secretary of COSATU's newly formed giant metal union, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). At the time of his detention he was general secretary of MAWU, one of the most openly socialist of South Africa's independent unions.

The charge against Moses and four others accused with him is that in attempting to organise street committees and democratic structures in the black township of Alexandra they were attempting to overthrow the state.

The state has launched an attack against the trade unions in an attempt to stop them being 'political'.

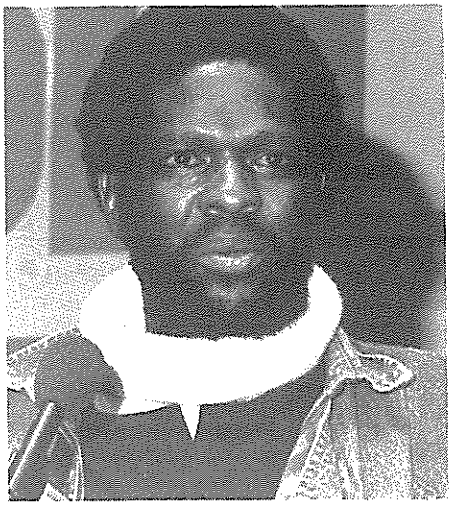
COSATU, the 750,000-strong trade union federation, has increasingly been at the forefront of the struggle against the racist state, as well as against the employers. All sections of the liberation movement have accepted the necessity of the working class's 'leading role', and in COSATU the working class has forged a weapon with which to make its 'leading role' a reality.

The massive township-based revolt that began in the autumn of 1984 has petered out under the impact of heavy repression, and because of a lack of clear direction. The unions, which began to organise in the 1970s and especially in the period running up to the recent 'unrest', have taken on increased importance in this situation.

The apartheid state needs urgently to decapitate the unions as it represses the township struggle. Thousands of unionists have been rounded up under the State of Emergency — but the unions have survived.

The government was forced to back down by a long rail strike it had provoked, believing that it would be easy to crush. But COSATU's offices have been attacked, and the drive against the unions continues.

The trial of Moses and his comrades is a significant milestone. The Alexandra Action Committee was a firm attempt to develop union-type democratic structures within a township struggle — stronger than the usual rather loose township organisation. So it is no accident that this Committee, and Moses in particular, should face this attack.



Moses Mayekiso

Now the government is repeating in Alexandra what it did in Soweto after the revolt there eleven years ago: spending a fortune to develop it and buy off its militant population.

Solidarity with these working class leaders on trial is an urgent priority for the international labour movement. Workers' Liberty here reprints extracts from the State's indictment against them.

Preamble to the indictment

This shows that the main charges against Moses and the others are that they organised the township along democratic lines.

*Whereas the Republic of South Africa (hereinafter referred to as the State) is and was at all relevant times a sovereign State.

*And whereas the accused at all relevant times owed allegiance to the State.

*And whereas during or about the period 1985 to June 1986 and at or near Alexandra, in the district of Randburg, or elsewhere, the accused unlawfully and with hostile intent to coerce, overthrow, usurp or endanger the authority of the state and

*with the intent to achieve the objects, or any of the objects set out in section 54(1) of Act No. 7 of 1982, and

*with seditious intent to defy and to subvert the authority of the state, conspired and/or associated in a common

purpose with one another and/or with the organisations and with members and supporters of the organisations set out in Annexure A, and/or with any of them
*to seize control of the residential area of Alexandra and/or to render the area ungovernable by the State, by
*establishing so-called organs of people's power and/or of self-government and/or so-called popular organisational structures, and
*forming the Alexandra Action Committee (hereinafter referred to as the AAC) and by participating in the management and/or activities of the AAC, and/or
*promoting the aims and objectives of the AAC, to wit the aims and objectives set out hereinafter, or any of the said aims and objectives, and
*organising and uniting the residents of Alexandra into yard, block and street committees under the AAC;
*forming their own courts (hereinafter referred to as People's Courts);
*forming a group known as the Marshals or Comrades *inter alia* with the duties to investigate 'misbehaviour' by residents; discuss disciplinary measures; liaise with the block and street committees on heavy punishment; execute discipline; act as functionaries of the People's Courts; enforce and carry out the decisions and policies of the AAC and its committees; act as a people's army or an army of the comrades.
*launching a campaign against the South African Police Force and the South African Defence Force and members of the said forces; the Town Council of Alexandra and its councillors and employees; so-called collaborators.
*launching a rent boycott and a consumer boycott of the industries and businesses referred to in the annexures hereto and;
*attempting to coerce the State into meeting their demands and by making demands upon the state and
*changing the existing names of streets in Alexandra to MK, Steve Biko, Soviet, Mandela, ANC, Lusaka, Katrida, Mabhida, Slovo, Mbeki, Vincent, Sobukwe, Basooka, Oliver and Dos Santos streets...

Popular organisational structures

This is a leaflet which, it is alleged, was written by Moses.

The suffering in this Township of ours has forced the people to form the people's organs of power. The workers have been oppressed by the big bosses, and at their homes they are oppressed by the same government. In the factories the workers have already formed their workers' organs of power like the trade unions. They elect their own shop stewards, they have their own leaders. They have their constituency and their leaders are democratically elected.

Here in Alexandra, the people's organs of power have been started. Unlike the other Townships, the lowest structure is the yard committee, the reason for this is that each yard in Alexandra has more than one family. Above the yard committee is the block committee. After the block, is the street committee which in turn there is the highest structure which is the AAC.

Minutes of the Alexandra Residents General Meeting held at Freedom Park, 7th Avenue, Alexandra, 86/02/05.

The purpose of introducing street or avenue committees in Alexandra is to unite the people of Alexandra and to look at people's problems in order that they be solved. The struggle in Alexandra is backward, and therefore the street committee is a step towards conscientising and building unity amongst residents, to fight their problems. Further it is to encourage discipline in our society conscientising people of their struggle. To ensure mass control of the struggle and proper democracy.

The street committee is a common thing in other townships at the Cape, e.g. Queenstown, and this has helped to unite people. This structure has been discussed by some of the progressive organisations. Alexandra is moving very slowly and is backward in the struggle because of reluctant parents.

All these structures and committees shall not discriminate racially, ethnically but shall unite the Alexandra residents regardless of their beliefs, colour, age and religion.

Yard Committee: This committee will be the committee of the people in the yard. They could choose a committee and have their own general meetings and could make that general meeting a committee. They should choose their representatives to the Block Committees and elect their office bearers; general meeting weekly and when there's an urgent need.

Duties: to unite the people in the yard; to encourage comradeship/brotherhood and working together as one family of the people in the yard. To look to the welfare of the people in the yard; to promote peace and discipline in the yard; for people to help each other financially, physically, morally and otherwise; to defend each other when there is a need, against any enemy attacks; to look to the cleanliness — clean the yard of dirt and crime.

N.B. Any unsolved problem or a matter that involves residents in other yards should be referred to the Block Committee.

Block Committee. This committee comprises of resident reps from all yards in that block, making a committee. There shall be general meetings to discuss block matters. These meetings shall be once per fortnight and whenever the people need at the same day, time with other block committees, 6.00 p.m. The block shall elect four reps to the Street or Avenue Committee. The volunteers may attend the meetings. The block shall elect its own office-bearers.

Duties: To do all that is mentioned as the duties of the AYCO in a broader scale for the block; to tackle unsolved problems from the yard committees of that block; to discuss residents' problems, needs and requirements — family, inter-family, house to house hooliganism, crime, hazards, crisis unemployment, rent, etc.; to introduce harmonious relationships amongst the residents through discipline, working together; to promote family life, accommodation and food for all. To deal with matters mentioned at AYCO, ABCO and ASCO in a broadened way for the whole township.

Street or Avenue Committee. The committee will be composed of representatives elected from ABCOs. It shall hold its own general meetings and committee meetings. The general meeting shall be once per month and O/Bs once per fortnight. It shall elect its own office bearers and two representatives to the AAC.

Duties: To deal with matters not dealt with at ABCO and AYCO; to deal with matters referred to it by ABCO; to deal with all matters that affect the street people; street marshals are responsible to this committee; to deal with matters dealt with at AYCO and ASCO in a broader scale.

Alexandra Action Committee

It shall be composed of two representatives elected from ASCOs and some appointed people by ASCO. The AAC shall meet once per month and urgently when there is a need. There shall be general meetings of the Community every quarter of the year and urgently when there is a need.

Summary of the substantial facts.

Accused (i.e. Moses Mayekiso) held or expressed *inter alia* the following views:

*that the working class (also referred to as the proletariat), as the vanguard for liberation, should be in the centre of and in control of the struggle,

*that the working class, including the unemployed, the youth and other members of the community should be mobilised, organised and united against the capitalist system and the State,

*that the working class or its unions and the so-called progressive organisations should seize control of the means of production and of the residential areas,

*that the so-called capitalists must be forced into a situation where they are unable to exercise control ●

SURVEY

Stalinism

Gorbachev and the workers

Some 5,000 delegates, supposedly representing 140 million Soviet workers, gathered in the Kremlin Palace of Congresses at 10 am on Tuesday 23 February for the opening of the 18th Congress of the ACCTU (All-Soviet Central Council of Trade Unions).

It says much about this congress of a supposedly "socialist" "trade union" organisation that the most left-wing

statement expressed at it was made by TUC General Secretary Norman Willis when he spoke out briefly in support of the Polish free trade union Solidarnosc.

Despite the treatment of the Congress by the Soviet media, it was not a significant event for the Soviet working class. The ACCTU, like its equivalents in other Stalinist states, is not a genuine trade union movement, but an appendage of the ruling state bureaucracy. It does not represent the workers' interests against the bureaucracy, but the bureaucracy's interests against the workers.

This was reflected in the composition of the platform at the congress when Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Gorbachev delivered his keynote address. It was not workers who were on the platform but the leading members of the Soviet government — including the head of the KGB secret police.

The rulers of the Soviet Union are confronted with an economy in crisis. In terms of technological innovation, it lags even further behind the West than the Politbureau's taste in clothing: their taste for '50s-style trilbies and raincoats merely reflects the backwardness of the Soviet economy as a whole.

A return to Stalinist levels of repression would be no solution. Even the longest working hours and worst rates of pay under threat of the severest penalties would not make up for the extent to which the Soviet economy lags behind the Western capitalist economies. Slave labour cannot compete with the microchip.

The answer of Gorbachev and his colleagues is "Perestroika" — the reorganisation, modernisation and reconstruction of the Soviet economy. In an attempt to open the economy up to productivity-raising innovations, the screws of repression have been slightly released.

The Soviet government's "peace offensive" is merely a different aspect of the same strategy. However much arms spending represents a burden for leading capitalist economies, it is an even greater burden for the stagnant Soviet economy. A truce in the arms race would allow the switching of financial resources from arms to modernisation of the economy.

The way in which the whole strategy has been developed proves that it has nothing to do with genuine democratisation. The initial decisions were made at the April 1985 Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee. The subsequent CPSU Congress rubber-stamped these decisions. The strategy was reviewed and updated at the January 1987 Plenum and the subsequent ACCTU Congress was a rubber stamp like the CPSU Congress of a year earlier. The real decision-making powers remain vested in the hands of the inner circle of the leadership of the CPSU.

ACCTU President Shalayev stressed the commitment of the "trade unions" to "increase their contribution to the acceleration of the socio-economic development of the country, and to develop the initiative and creativity of the workers," and, like a number of other speakers, dwelt upon ways in which "socialist competition" could be improved in order to raise productivity, as one example of this commitment.

Genuine working class liberation in the Soviet Union will not be achieved by the ACCTU nor by Gorbachev's policy of Perestroika, but by the struggles of the working class itself. If workers in the West allow their unions to align themselves with the ACCTU, then they will find themselves on the wrong side of the barricades in the fight for the creation of workers' democracies in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union●.

Stan Crooke

Union mergers

The new super unions

A major re-shaping of the trade union movement in Britain is presently taking place, comparable in its scale and implications, to the formation of the great industrial unions of the 1920s, and the merger wave of the late 1960s.

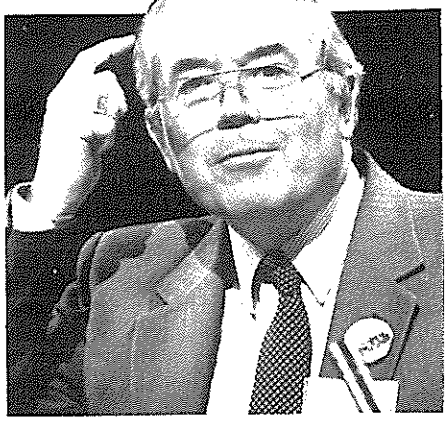
Membership of the TUC-affiliated unions is down from a 1979 peak of over 13 million to just over nine million. Over £100 million in annual income from membership dues has been lost since 1979. Failing to mobilise an effective industrial counter-attack, the unions have moved increasingly into the field of services — cheap holidays, insurance discounts, mortgages, etc., etc. — in their efforts to attract members, but this in turn has massively increased administration costs, which cannot be offset by increased contributions because of competition for members. So, for the bureaucrats, the only answer is rationalisation and economies of scale. Hence the present drive towards mergers.

Socialists are generally in favour of union mergers.

But things ar not always as simple as that in practice.

The question that has to be asked in each case is, will the benefits of the merger (breaking down sectional divisions) outweigh the possible disadvantages (increased bureaucracy, less rank and file control) as far as the ordinary members are concerned?

The ASTMS conference in May was dominated by discussion of the proposed merger with TASS, which would create a 650,000-strong union, the third or fourth largest in the TUC. The delegates gave an excellent example to all rank and file trade unionists, in their approach to the question: overwhelmingly, they supported the merger, seeing that it would massively strengthen the position of both unions' members throughout industry. But they did not let their enthusiasm for the move blind them to possible risks to their democratic rights within the new organisation. In particular ASTMS members are anxious to retain their branch-based structure against TASS's more bureaucratic "divisional" system, which presently gives the 'Broad Left' (i.e. Stalinist) leadership around Ken Gill complete domination of TASS. The two unions' respective national conferences reflect their different structures with TASS having just 135 divisional delegates at their 1987 conference, while



King rat

ASTMS had almost 1,000 branch delegates.

ASTMS members voted overwhelmingly to retain the branch-based conference, and to protect the rights of the rank and file with regard to distribution of dues and delegates to Labour Party and TUC Conferences. They also demanded elected representatives to TUC general council, and instructed the NEC to reach agreement with TASS on that basis. Perhaps most important of all, the delegates overturned the recommendation of the NEC and called for a special rules conference involving 1200 delegates from each union within six months of the merger. The NEC had reached an agreement with TASS for a much smaller conference.

Thus ASTMS members look set to achieve a successful merger, and to enhance the democratic rights of the rank and file within *both* unions.

In stark contrast to this, the proposed AEU/EETPU merger does not augur well for either the members directly affected, or for trade unionism as a whole. The proposal has been kicked around by the bureaucrats of both unions since the mid-1970s, but has recently been given fresh impetus due to the break-up of the AEU/TASS amalgamation and the election of Bill Jordan (who makes no secret of his liking for the EETPU) as the engineers' president last year. The AEU is in serious financial difficulty (it recently announced extensive redundancies and a wage freeze for its staff and full-time officials and is anxious to regain access to white collar workers and technicians denied to it since the departure of TASS. A major obstacle to the merger is the fact that the AEU elects its officials while the EETPU appoints. But Jordan has already suggested in the course of informal talks with APEX,

UCATT and the EETPU that this and other "problems" posed by the AEU's relatively democratic constitution can be circumvented by drawing up a rulebook from scratch for a new union.

But the danger posed by an AEU/EETPU lash-up goes deeper: paradoxically, a merger between these two unions (plus, perhaps one or two of the smaller right-wing managerial unions like the Institution of Professional Civil Servants) could well prove to be the catalyst for an historic split in the ranks of the British trade union movement. Despite successfully defying the TUC general council and Congress over ballot money, Wapping and single union/no strike deals, the EETPU remains largely isolated within the TUC, shunned even by the mainstream right "New Realists". General Secretary Eric Hammond now makes little secret of his willingness to contemplate life outside the TUC.

Politically, it could well align with the Alliance, and EETPU press officer John Grant has already stood as an SDP candidate in the general election.

Already, Hammond has made his intentions clear over the issue of single union/no strike deals: the EETPU's willingness to offer companies a comprehensive package which gives the union sole bargaining rights in return for an agreement not to strike, has brought the electricians into conflict with NUPE, the TGWU, and — in particular — the GMBATU. John Edmonds, the mainstream-right general secretary of the General and Municipal has put forward proposals (supported by NUPE and TGWU) for September's TUC Congress that would strictly limit the EETPU's ability to sign such deals. Hammond's response was summed up in an article he wrote in the May edition of the union's journal: "I must warn that these proposals imply a restrictive practice of considerable magnitude and one which is fundamentally against the public interest. If these unions wield their big block votes at this year's TUC conference, it could lead to another critical situation over our continued TUC membership."

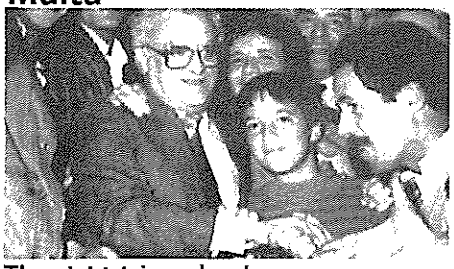
Hammond has now presented a provocative counter-proposal that would turn the TUC into a single national union with affiliated unions becoming, in effect, branches. Such a structure would, however, be a far cry from the Wobblies' objective of "One Big Union" to maximise working class power and militancy.

Hammond's plan would allow "free movement of members", and be a charter for "beauty contests" between unions, in which they compete to present the most moderate image to employers in exchange for sole bargaining rights. Hammond surely realises that such a proposal is unacceptable even to right-wingers like John Edmonds. It is not, in fact, a serious proposal, so much as a deliberate provocation designed to take the EETPU one step nearer walking out of the TUC altogether. If Hammond could be sure of taking the AEU with him, he would almost certainly split after September's TUC Congress. So for AEU members, the reasons for opposing any moves towards a merger with the EETPU are twofold: to defend their democratic structures, the District Committees and elected officials, and also to prevent (or, at least, minimise) a split in the trade union movement as a whole. For the beleaguered left in the EETPU the hard fight against the business-unionism and scabbing of Hammond and his cohorts goes on. A campaign to keep the union within the TUC could provide the left (mainly organised around the journal Flashlight) with an important opportunity to break out of its isolation, and group new forces around itself, in defence of basic trade union principles.

More mergers are certain to take place in the near future. The APEX conference in June voted by a large majority to proceed with negotiations with the GMBATU, and the latter is almost certain to respond positively. Although this would produce a new bloc on the right of the TUC, there is no reason in principle for socialists to oppose it, while of course insisting upon maximum democracy and accountability in the merger negotiations, and in any new union that results from them ●

Jim Denham

Malta



The right triumphant

Labour falls

Nearly all the population of this small archipelago situated in the centre of the Mediterranean turned out to vote in the general elections on 9 May. The elections had been billed as "crucial" and "decisive" in the bourgeois press, both locally and abroad. But in fact there were few surprises.

The Nationalist Party — which is of Christian Democrat inspiration and affiliation — won the majority of votes — but only narrowly. The share of the vote going to each of the two main parties was almost the same as in the 1981 election.

The Malta Labour Party, the national section of the "Socialist International", won 34 seats with 48.8% of first preference votes under Malta's single-transferable-vote system, down 0.2% on the 1981 election. The Nationalist Party's vote fell by an insignificant 0.01% to 50.91%. But the electoral boundaries favour Labour and the Nationalist Party obtained a mere 31 seats. The Nationalists were saved by the constitutional amendment passed earlier this year according to which the party which pools an absolute majority of the valid first preference votes cast is assured of a majority of seats in parliament. The Nationalists were granted an additional four seats to bring their total to 35.

The tribal nature of Maltese politics can perhaps be evidenced by the meagre harvest of votes reaped by the two minor parties which were contesting the elections for the first time. The Democratic Party, which although unaffiliated with any international political grouping, espouses Thatcherite economic policies, obtained a mere 0.16% of the first preference votes cast; the "Communist" party, which is a Stalinist party modelled on the present-day CPSU, polled even less. Indeed, it obtained a derisory 0.5%.

Wherein lies the real significance of these results? Not in the policies of the new government which are likely to be little different in substance from those of its predecessor. Certainly there will be some changes: moves to join the EEC; greater economic links with Western countries; improved Church-State relations; introduction of local government; and the removal of most import controls. But the real significance of the election result is to be found in the reasons for Labour's electoral defeat. There can be no doubt that Labour's failure to address the needs of the working people and to work for the overthrow of capitalism played an important role in ensuring its return to the opposition benches.

Shortly after Labour was elected into office way back in 1971, it did manage to carry out some important reforms. It nationalised some key sectors of the Maltese economy; it introduced a number of new social services and improved existing ones. But Labour's progressive degeneration was absolutely inevitable in the absence of any left-wing perspective other than the thoroughly reformist one of "compelling" the capitalist system to hand out a few more crumbs to keep the working class in line. This became evident after Labour's re-election in 1976.

During its second legislature, Labour brought the General Workers Union, Malta's major trade union, completely under its control and suppressed industrial action by other trade unions. It did not hesitate to resort to such reactionary measures as the lock-outs and suspensions of striking workers. Labour refused to tolerate any hint of internal dissent and expelled the members of a would-be Marxist pressure group within it. Its only positive achievement during this second legislature was the withdrawal of British troops from Malta on 31 March 1979.

Labour failed to heed the warning of the 1981 December general elections when it was re-elected only because of the way in which the boundaries of the electoral districts had been drawn. In that election the Nationalist Party won a majority of the votes by cynically exploiting the justifiable disappointment of many Labour supporters with their party's record in office.

During its third legislature, Labour

continued on its merry march rightwards. It slapped a seemingly interminable freeze on wages and reintroduced streaming — with a vengeance! — in the government educational sector. Unemployment continued to rise during this legislature, decreasing somewhat only as the general elections approached and Labour desperately tried to salvage some credibility by offering government jobs to the unemployed.

Undoubtedly many who voted Nationalist, especially those with no experience of past Nationalist misrule, sincerely believe that the new government will live up to its electoral slogan: "Work, Justice and Liberty". But these laudable aims are impossible to fulfil within the framework of Maltese capitalist society. The task of revolutionary Marxists in Malta in the years to come is to explain to disillusioned workers who will experience ferocious attacks, the complete unattainability of "Work, Justice and Liberty" under capitalism●

From a correspondent in Malta

Australia

Hawke's third term?

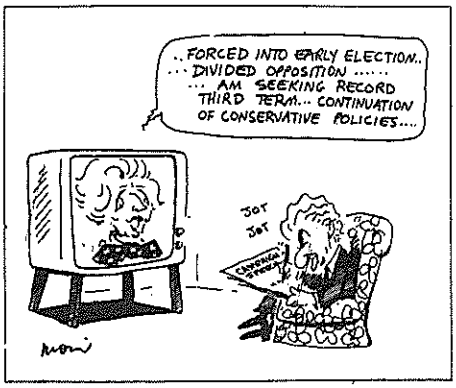
Australia goes to the polls on 11 July, with the Labor Party seeking a third term of office. Labor leader Bob Hawke's line is that the Labor government is best for business and can work best with the unions. And he has even got the backing for this from three of Australia's leading capitalists, Alan Bond, Robert Holmes a Court, and Kerry Packer.

The election was called because Hawke saw a chance after the break-up of the 38 year old coalition between Australia's main right-wing parties, the Liberals and the National Party. Both Libs and Nationals are in internal disarray, but both are pushing a hard right-wing line, accusing Labor of pandering to trade union power.

Labor is ahead in the opinion polls, and should win with the help of the majority of working class votes. But most workers will vote Labor with mixed feelings. Labor has moved rapidly to the right since winning office in 1983, and has attacked working class living standards substantially.

Now Hawke has started the election campaign by sacking Labor's advertising agency and replacing it with right-winger John Singleton.

The media have had a great time replaying Singleton's 1974 election ads with the old Estonian woman saying that Labor were disguised communists, and another with Singleton saying that socialists were lazy bums. Now he's telling us that the worst times are over and that we should work with Labor: we've come this far, and why throw it away now?



The left is disoriented. The Australian Socialist Workers' Party (like Socialist Action in Britain, but more Stalinist) says that people should vote only for protest candidates. The SWP may stand candidates itself in a few seats. Only four years ago they were proposing 'a Labor government with socialist policies'. The Hartley group, a Stalinist-oriented splinter from the Labor party in Victoria, will give first preferences (Australia has a transferable-vote system) to the small Nuclear Disarmament Party. Most of the Trotskyist groups are conspicuous by their silence.

The monthly *Socialist Fight* is arguing for a campaign for working class politics *within* the Labor campaign. It explains:

"The campaign should explain the problems of Laborism and attempt to gather support from those who see the need to try to change the labour movement. In this context we should call for a vote for Labor, to be accompanied by a call for Labor to break from its capitalist policies, and by a commitment from participants to organise against anti-working class policies of any government.

"To say that now is the time to campaign for the unions to break from the ALP is to open the question, is now the time to build breakaway revolutionary trade unions?

"Organisational counterposition to the ALP is also self-isolation from trade union politics. Clearly there is no political development in the trade union movement which suggests that a decisive battle with the reformist officials is on the cards."

The left and Labor

A great many left-wingers have become disillusioned with Labor in recent years. Many have left the Labor party. When the Hawke government legislated to smash the militant Builders' Labourers' Federation, only one Labor member of the federal parliament, George Georges, voted against. Now he has simply given up and quit the Labor party.

There is talk of creating "a new left-wing party" — a project supported by the SWP and by the ('Euro'-) Communist Party of Australia. But Socialist Fight reckons that such moves will not produce much, and are an evasion of the central job of building a solid left wing in the unions and ALP. "A break with Labor is not necessarily positive, and can be simple disillusion".

The fact has to be faced that Hawke and Keating have been able to do what they have done because of the unfailing support they have had from the leaders of Australia's trade unions. The job of changing those unions from within cannot be dodged.

Australia was ruled by the Liberal-National coalition from 1949 to 1972. Labor won in 1972 as a modernising reform party, in a parallel with Harold Wilson's Labour election victory in Britain in 1964. Australian Labor, under Gough Whitlam, made rather more reforms than Wilson. Whitlam, like Wilson, ended up turning on the working class but not harshly enough for the ruling class: the Labor government was sacked in 1975 in a legal coup by the Governor-General, the Queen's representative in Australia.

Labor returned to office in 1983 under Bob Hawke, a former leader of the Australian TUC. For two years the Australian economy did well, riding on the wave of a world economic recovery. Hawke gave the credit to the 'Accord', an Australian version of the British Social Contract, which limited wage rises.

But in 1986 the decline in world prices of raw materials — including Australia's main exports — brought balance-of-payments and foreign-debt problems. The Labor government has cut public spending sharply, and embarked on a semi-Thatcherite programme of 'deregulating' Australia's economy and dismantling its heavy import controls.

Liberal leader John Howard is an ultra-Thatcherite, closely linked to a 'New Right' group of union-busting bosses. But he does not go far enough for Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the National Party Premier of Queensland, who has been the motor force for the break-up of the Lib/Nat coalition.

Bjelke-Petersen has brought in a law in Queensland making strikes illegal unless every striker has given seven days' notice to the employer, the government, and every person who may be affected by the strike! (The federal Labor government wants to bring in a law restricting strikes more mildly which will override the Queensland law). Street demonstrations are already outlawed in Queensland. Not only is homosexuality illegal, the law forbids bar owners to serve 'perverts'. The penalty for possessing illegal drugs is life imprisonment.

Bjelke-Petersen has considerable backing from right-wing Queensland capitalists, who pledged A$25 million to help him launch himself into federal politics. He preaches a right-wing populism, with the same hostility to the cosmopolitan south coast of Australia as a South-Western US right-winger like Barry Goldwater had to the East Coast of the USA.

So Australia's workers face hard times. But the Australian labour movement is still strong, and may soon begin to stir from the traditional easy-going attitudes bred by decades of relatively secure high wages●

Janet Burstall and Tony Brown

Students must link with workers. Photo: John Smith, IFL

Student 'soft left' and the bureaucrats

Labour's youth movements are set for re-organisation under proposals from Tom Sawyer, chair of the Labour Party NEC's Youth Sub-committee. The proposals would abolish LPYS representation on the NEC — instead it would be elected by a new structure, involving the Labour Party student organisation and trade union youth sections as well as the existing LPYS.

Sawyer's most radical proposal is to reduce the age of YS membership from 26 to 21. The Labour Coordinating Committee are backing these proposals. They think Sawyer's plan provides a way for their influence over Labour's youth to grow at the expense of the Militant tendency who currently run the Young Socialists. The LCC's unofficial student wing — the Democratic Left — run Labour Students, which is the organisation most likely to benefit from the proposed changes.

It looks like much of the rest of the Party will back Sawyer. Partly, at least, this is because the Young Socialists have so few friends in the movement because of Militant's political style. So the right wing can touch a raw nerve — the YS does, in fact, leave a lot to be desired.

Militant has controlled the YS for 18 years. During that time it has repeatedly failed to relate to youth movements from the Anti-Nazi League in the late 1970s to YCND in the early 1980s. And the YS has also failed to involve its own members in the Party — save perhaps for areas where the Militant are dominant in the adult party.

For instance, during the left-right battles over the Labour Party constitution in the early 1980s, the YS was absent. Even during the big witch-hunt against Militant in 1982 the YS was again absent from the mainstream left campaign.

In fact, the YS has had a kind of peaceful coexistence with the Labour Party bureaucracy. It has kept the youth under control for them. And now that the bureaucracy has turned against Militant, there aren't many who will defend their record.

NOLS — the National Organisation of Labour Students — are fully behind Sawyer. In fact, the proposals that eventually came forward in Sawyer's name formed much of the forward planning of the Phil Woolas/John Mann leadership of NUS and NOLS in 1982-4.

The key element in the new youth movement is to be trade union youth sections. At present, there aren't many of these. And many union bureaucrats probably don't want them — because if they did exist, Militant would probably end up dominating them. Mann and Woolas had to have an answer to these problems for their plan to be viable.

Their idea was that youth sections could be set up via the organisation of YTS trainees at Further Education colleges, initially into NUS, where Clause Four could hope to dominate. The appropriate unions would then be brought into the FE college to recruit the trainees. These members of trade union youth sections would therefore be inoculated against Militant.

The plan never came to anything: neither NUS nor NOLS managed to carry out such an immense change in orientation and organise seriously in FE colleges.

NOLS constitution to this day bars part-time FE students from membership. YTS trainees are able to join NOLS. But without part-time students, it is very difficult to set clubs up in the first place. There are about four times as many part-time as full-time FE students.

And in any case, there are very few members of either Clause Four or its 'broad' front, the Democratic Left, who really have much interest in organising Further Education students.

There was a further problem. While the rest of the labour movement considered trainees to be super-exploited, in many FE colleges they were the 'aristocrats'. Their wages may have been low, but a low wage is better than nothing — which what most FE students get.

There was not the mood of rebellion amongst YTS trainees in FEs which everyone had expected.

Seeing some of these limitations, Woolas and Mann decided to try to use NUS Area organisations as an intermediate layer. 'Democratic Lefties' could go into FE colleges in their role as Area officials. Indeed, this could have been an effective route to the organisation of working class youth. Unfortunately for the plan, outside of Scotland the Democratic Left then lost control of almost all significant urban NUS Areas.

NOLS has controlled the NUS since 1981, when they won the Presidency after their final break with the Communist Party-dominated Broad Left/Left Alliance faction.

NOLS organised a wave of occupations and rent strikes just before the Executive elections, in colleges where they had influence. They had keyed into a wave of militancy, having tested their strength early in the academic year. The Broad Left leadership of NUS were completely outflanked. NOLS also effectively took over the annual NUS demonstration with placards and stickers which kept the election bandwagon on the move.

Unfortunately for Clause Four, NOLS was not so securely under their control as NUS quickly became. Militant have always been a sizeable bloc in NOLS and Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN — a hard-left faction) was about to be launched.

During the early 1980s, NOLS was part of the 'new left' in the Party. But as the Party began to drift to the right, so too did the NOLS leadership. That, together with their increasingly obvious inability to organise rank and file campaigns in NUS meant that they started to lose their control of NOLS.

The Clause Four officers of NOLS seem always to have specialised in denying opposition delegates credentials for national conferences, even when they have had no real factional reason for doing so, as their majority has in fact been secure.

But since the start of their demise, the obstacle course that clubs have to go through to be represented at conference has been made even tougher. And the lies told by the officers have become even more apparent.

The most spectacular examples were at the 1982 and 1983 NOLS conferences. In 1983, the left won all the votes. Labour Party student organiser John Dennis closed down the conference.

When the Labour Party NEC considered the Report on NOLS conference, its response was not to investigate the allegations of foul play, but to impose a new set of Standing Orders on NOLS which forbade challenges to the Creden-

tials Report.

Since 1983, NOLS conferences have been quieter. Opposition Clubs are still ruled out, of course, but the political battleground has moved over into NUS. NOLS is now nothing more than an NUS election machine and a poor one at that.

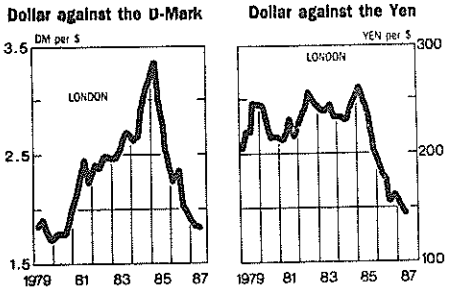
NOLS does not have any campaigning profile. There are no internal discussions or debates. The general election initiative, Students for a Labour Victory, achieved very little. As a national organisation, NOLS has effectively ceased to exist. The stultifyingly bureaucratic methods of the Democratic Left/Clause Four have run down NOLS and are now threatening to run down NUS.

The Democratic Left are partially aware of the problem they face, and the disasters they have caused. They are also aware enough to be considering a change of name and a re-launch next October.

Defending the Democratic Left's control of the apparatus 'by any means necessary' has damaged NOLS and NUS and has stopped the organisation from playing a part in developing the campaigning left in the Party. The carving in NOLS needs to stop. There are too many more important things to do. The Democratic Left have to make up their mind — either carry on ruining the organisations or start to work on their avowed commitment to building a campaigning NUS and Labour Party. It may not be too late ●

Sandra Cartlidge

Trade Wars



The decline of America

"Once a hegemonic force, able to impose its own vision on the system, the USA is neither able to provide a rational solution to its own problems or those of the world economy as a whole".

As E.A. Brett put it in his book 'The World Economy Since the War: The Politics of Uneven Development', the underlying problem revealed by the current trade war between the US and Japan is a world system based on US dominance struggling to adapt when the US is no longer dominant.

The dollar is both the domestic currency of the US and the main currency of world trade. The management of the dollar has to meet both the needs of US capitalism and the needs of world capitalist trade. Yet it cannot always do both.

In recent years the US has run the hugest trade deficits the world has ever seen, importing far more than it exports. For many years productivity has risen slower in the US than in other big capitalist economies, and the deterioration of its relative position is shown by the figures for trade in machinery and transport equipment.

In 1980 Japan exported 5.8 times as much machinery and transport equipment to the US as the US exported to Japan. By 1985 the ration was 9.2:1.

Third World producers have caught up with the US most drastically. In 1980 they were still importing 4.4 times as much machinery and transport equipment from the US as they exported to the US. By 1985 their exports to the US were only 29% behind their imports from the US. Exports to the US had expanded by a factor of 2.7, while imports from the US had declined 14%.

But British, Dutch, Japanese and other capitalists have since 1982-3 bought US shares, bonds, and companies at a tremendous rate, more or less balancing the trade deficit and transforming the US within a few years from the world's biggest creditor country (the one whose assets abroad most exceeded foreign assets within it) to its biggest *debtor* country. Despite the trade deficit, the dollar continued *rising* against other currencies (so that the yen, mark or pound prices of goods costing so many dollars to produce in the US rose, while the dollar prices of goods whose costs were fixed in yens, marks or pounds fell — and imports to the US rose still more, while exports stagnated). The rise in the dollar continued until early 1985, causing great anxiety about the risk of a drastic collapse at the point where this rise became unsustainable.

In fact the dollar has come down relatively gently since 1985. But the problems for capitalism are still not over. The trade deficit remains huge. Some people reckon that the dollar is now nearly at the level where US goods will become competitive with Japanese goods, but no-one really knows. In the meantime, tension continues — hence the US-Japanese semiconductor trade deal, the US claims that the Japanese were flouting the deal, and the US trade restrictions against Japan.

Import restrictions other than tariffs have been increasing all round the world for many years, and an increasing proportion of trade is under 'countertrade' or barter deals. While from 1955 to 1973 world trade grew by an average 7.5% per year, dragging world output behind it at a rate of 4.5% a year, since 1973 world trade has grown only marginally faster than output.

But the risk of a catastrophic decline of trade comes more from the sphere of international finance than of trade itself. The 1970s saw a vast transfer of money from the big capitalist economies to the oil producers and from them, via the international banks, to industrialising Third World countries in the form of loans. The Third World countries based their policy on exports and the supply of new loans always expanding fast enough to cover repayments on the old loans; hence the 'debt crisis' since 1982, with exports limited by recession in the advanced countries, credit short, interest rates much higher than they were in the 1970s, and the dollar (the currency in which the loans were made) high relative to other currencies. The continuing acuteness of this Third World debt crisis has been underlined recently by Brazil's unilateral halt on payments and by Citicorp's decision to write off billions from the value of its Third World loans.

In the 1980s, financial markets in the big capitalist economies have been liberalised, and linked together into one global market, at a hectic rate. The 'Big Bang' in the City of London is part of this process. Huge amounts of money move round the world at great speed. London alone does £60 *billion* of foreign exchange business every day.

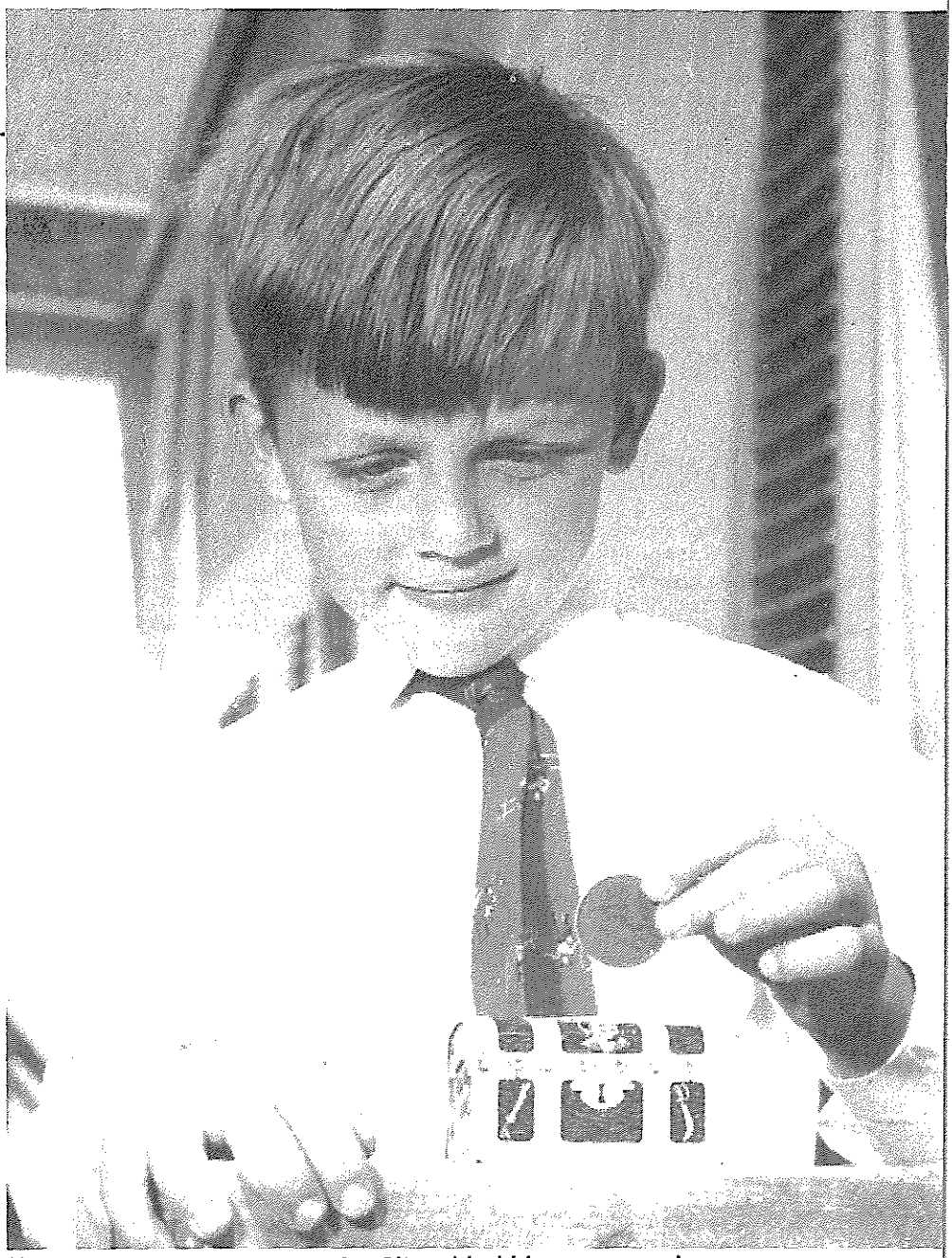
The whole structure is, in a sense, an elaborate bluff. If the US's deficit does not narrow, and speculators become convinced that the dollar is going to have to fall much further, then their speculation could make the dollar fall much faster and quicker — to the point where no-one would want to hold dollars any more, no-one would accept dollars in payment in international trade, and world trade would collapse into a series of one-off negotiated barter-type deals. In the meantime, action to reduce the US deficit worsens the debt crisis: if the US reduces its imports, then Third World countries' dollar export income is reduced, and they are less able to pay the banks. This problem, again, if it became bad enough, could lead to the collapse of major banks, repercussions in the Eurodollar market, and the collapse of the dollar by a different route.

Capitalist trade requires the framework of a state to regulate it. Unregulated free trade was possible only in the days of the gold standard. A return to gold as the basic currency of international trade became impossible long ago: there simply is not enough gold to do the job, and for the major countries any attempt to shift to gold has the drawback that it would be an immense bonanza for the USSR and South Africa. The US was strong enough immediately after World War 2 for the US state to be a stand-in for an international state, and the dollar to be a stand-in for international money. The US is not strong enough for that any longer. But it is still the biggest capitalist economy; all the others are even further from being strong enough to underwrite world trade. There is no prospect of the various capitalist governments coming to enough agreement to create an international monetary and trade authority; indeed, those same problems which make such an authority necessary simultaneously sharpen the conflicts between states. Whatever happens in the short term, there is no escape in the longer term from these contradictions●

Chris Reynolds

Fallen heroes

In Thatcher's Britain the spiv is hero and the profit-gouger is king. But, awkwardly for the Tories, the new captains of capitalism keep getting caught up in scandals. Paul Demuth reports.



Keep the box well locked if the City whizzkids are around

One of the oddities of the Thatcher years is that they have never produced a great business leader who can represent in the public imagination the strengths of the enterprise culture which will, some day at least, lead to the industrial rejuvenation of Great Britain Inc.

There have been no lack of contenders. Sir Ian MacGregor staked a claim early on, but he was too aggressive, too old, and anyway he was American. Graham Day and Michael Edwardes have a MacGregor problem — they are better known for closing old industries than opening new ones. Clive Sinclair showed early promise, and indeed was the official candidate for a while, but went the way of his three-wheel electric car. His successor, Amstrad's Alan Sugar, looks too much like a second hand car salesman. Richard Branson could get the youth vote, but might not go down so well in the shires. And anyway, airlines have a terrible tendency to go bust, as another failed candidate, Freddie Laker, can attest.

It must be considered a major failure of the Thatcherite public relations machine that at the end of eight years the best-known businessman in Britain is Ernest Saunders, sacked chairman and chief executive of Guinness, now facing charges of attempting to pervert the course of justice and the target of outpourings of moral indignation from leading Conservatives, industrialists and financiers alike.

Merchant bankers and stockbrokers in the City are only too happy to pin the blame for the scandal which propelled Saunders onto the front pages on its leading protagonist. Guinness itself is currently attempting to do much the same thing in the courts. The truth is rather different - while the Guinness scandal was not inevitable, it took off from a mood in the City of London which had been fostered by six years of a booming stock market, a feeling that the unfettered pursuit of profit could leap over any obstacle and an equally strong feeling that the referees who were supposed to keep order were all part of the winning team.

Merger mania took off in Britain in a big way towards the end of 1985 when a string of bitterly-fought takover bids drove the stock market to fever pitch. While the phenomenon itself was not unusual — powerful companies generally snap up weaker ones in the aftermath of the kind of economic recession Britain suffered between 1979 and 1981 — the stakes grew higher and higher, with several offers breaking the £1 billion barrier. The value of the bids was ratcheted up because the booming stock market allowed strong companies to issue new shares to buy weaker ones. The price of failure could be a short sharp shock to the share price, which could leave the bidding company itself open to takeover.

If the stakes were high for the companies involved, they were no less so for the financiers in the City. Merchant banks advising victims and predators were in for millions of pounds in fees, with their reputations on the line. The big financial institutions would underwrite share offers, often with an added fee if the bid was successful. The sums involved were enormous: it cost Argyll Group over £30 million in fees to fail to take over Distillers — the eventual (legitimate) cost for Guinness was £122 million to the merchant bankers and underwriters.

The feverish mood was encouraged by government policy on mergers. In times gone by, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission might call a halt to a takeover on the grounds it was "against the public interest". For the present government competition alone would be the only deciding factor and it went out of its way to make its view public. As many of the bids involved conglomerates angling for new business areas where they were not involved already, the road seemed

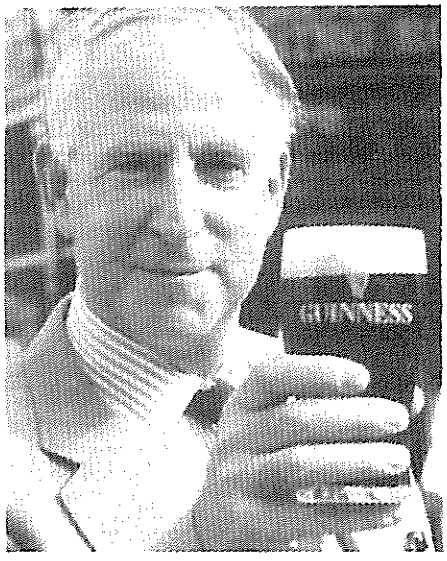
clear. Since 1985 only one major bid — the £1100 million tilt at Plessey by GEC — has been blocked by the Commission.

'Big Bang' in the City added to the pressure. Big Bang meant two things — the cosy cartel of stockbrokers charging fixed rates for trading in shares was abolished and the giant securities houses from Japan and United States were allowed free rein in the British market for the first time. The merchant bankers in the City pocketed huge commissions they received as they were snapped up by one or other of the international banks and muttered darkly about falling standards when the foreigners were allowed in. Those who were not taken over were under even more pressure to win that next takeover bid on which they had a lucrative contract to provide advice.

Big Bang exploded on 27 October last year and the signs were not auspicious from the start. Stock Exchange chairman Sir Nicholas Goodison appeared on breakfast television to tell a bemused public about the wonders of the new computerised stock market just as the new computers went on the blink. The stockbrokers sniggered and started trading like mad. Within days, the turnover of the stock market had breached the £1 billion per day barrier.

But more ominous developments were on the horizon. Engineering firm Turner and Newall lost a £260 million bid for the car components group AE, but it turned out that AE's merchant bank advisers had indemnified two shareholders for losses if they supported AE's defence and had not told anyone. The failure to disclose was cheating. The Takeover Panel, the City body responsible for fair play in mergers, stepped in and allowed Turner to make another bid, which it won.

More ominously still, the merchant bank involved was not American or Japanese, but Hill Samuel, a high flyer in the Square Mile. And the broker involved was none other than Cazenove, broker to the Queen, whose power to fix deals was whispered in tones of awe by its rivals. But the new regulatory system, which allowed panels of City participants to referee the match, appeared to be working. After all, the Takeover Panel had acted quickly and any nonsense had been firmly nipped in the bud.



Saunders: 'pure genius'... and a bit of cheating

But within days, the whiff of scandal was once again wafting around City streets. One of the two leading securities traders at the most blue blooded merchant bank, Morgan Grenfell, resigned. It was alleged he had used the confidential information he gained from his position in the firm to make profits by trading shares on his own account, which since 1979 has been a criminal offence. He was later charged with insider dealing.

Attention then moved across the Atlantic, as Wall Street watched in horror while one of its heroes, Ivan Boesky, was publicly arraigned on insider dealing charges. Boesky was what the Americans call an arbitrageur, a professional share dealer who made his money by taking positions in companies before a bid was launched. But his natural flair turned out to have been assisted by insiders in the merchant banks who gave him tip-offs. In return, they got a slice of the profits, some literally delivered in the form of suitcases stuffed with $100 bills.

From Wall St to Throgmorton St

Things were becoming serious. If some of the top bankers on Wall Street had their already inflated salaries boosted by illicit payments, what of the City? The bankers and brokers shrugged and consoled themselves: this was not America, whose brashness was the polar opposite of the genteel respect for the rules that prevailed (a few minor transgressions aside) in Throgmorton Street, where the dealers collected every day to exchange gossip, but only in the most legal possible way.

When Department of Trade inspectors moved into Guinness on December 1, London tumbled down the same chute as Wall Street. What on earth was going on? Guinness was one of the best-performing companies on the British stock market under the dynamic leadership of Ernest Saunders, whose belief he could do no wrong was echoed by grateful shareholders, for whom he had made a fortune. And the credentials of Guinness's advisers were impeccable. Its merchant bankers? The same Morgan Grenfell which had just shown its uprightness by clamping down on insider trading. Its brokers? The sacred Cazenove once again.

There was another outbreak of nerves a few days later when Saunders announced that the previous May Guinness had invested $100 million in a fund run by the same Ivan Boesky who had just coughed up $100 million in penalties to the US government for insider dealing. What was a British beer and whisky company playing at by investing huge sums of money in a shady Wall Street dealer without bothering to tell its shareholders until forced to by newspaper leaks?

As Saunders helpfully explained the money was just a good investment and Boesky might have been useful to Guinness in making a major acquisition in the US, the financiers shook their heads in stunned disbelief. This was just too much to swallow — there was trouble on the way.

But although London's financiers threw up their hands in disbelief, they really had little excuse. The same takeover bid which had sparked off the DTI investigation had already caused a major City scandal, and the City had backed Saunders to the hilt.

Guinness launched its massive £2.6 billion bid for Distillers in January 1986 after Saunders had received a desperate plea for salvation from the Distillers board, whose management credibility was less than zero in the City. The Distillers management were desperate to fight off a rival bid from James Gulliver's Argyll Group. Although it dominated the Scotch whisky market, Distillers stood for everything the new yuppies in the Square Mile hated. It lacked flair, its major brands were, they said, going astray and it needed nothing more than a wholesale bout of sackings among the executives to lick it into shape. Distillers had never really recovered from its disgraceful behaviour during the Thalidomide scandal almost 20 years previously.

Saunders won his bid, but only after some adept political footwork to win over the so-called 'Scottish lobby' — the great and the good of the Edinburgh financial world, who did not like the idea of the management of a major Scottish company moving south of the border. Saunders promised he would move the Guinness headquarters to Scotland and promised to make the eminence grise of Scottish finance, Sir Thomas Risk, chairman of the merged company.

No sooner had Guinness won the day than Saunders went back on his word. There was now said to be no place for Risk on the Guinness board and references to the moving of the Guinness headquarters became so vague as to be meaningless. While the City could not have cared less about the wounded pride of a few greying Scots worthies, or about where Guinness had its offices, there was an important principle at stake. The Guinness commitments had been made in an official document proposing the issue of new shares to finance the Distillers bid. Listing documents have biblical status in the City; to break proposals made in them is to strike at the very heart of the Square Mile's central ethic — "my word is my bond".

It also looked blatantly unfair. After

all, it only took a small number of Distillers shareholders to be swayed to the Guinness cause by the broken promises, not a majority. So to hold a meeting of shareholders to rubber stamp the changes hardly settled the matter. But Guinness did, and did it with the support of all the major City institutions which owned its shares. They also voted to replace the jilted chairman Risk with none other than Saunders himself.

Still, that was small beer compared with some of the other things which began to emerge from December onwards. To beat Argyll, Guinness had relied on keeping the value of its shares up. Allegations began to pour in that to do that it had organised an enormous support operation both to indemnify people who agreed to buy its shares (which is illegal) and even to commit itself to buying its own shares (even more illegal).

As the allegations poured in to Guinness's West End office building, Saunders first stood down and then within a week was unceremoniously sacked, with no compensation for the loss of his £350,000 a year salary.

Heads roll

Respectable heads began to topple like ninepins. Guinness's finance director Olivier Roux resigned. Roger Seelig, the Maradonna of Morgan Grenfell's takeover team, resigned amid allegations that he had arranged for Guinness to buy a tranche of its own shares owned by clients of another merchant bank, Henry Ansbacher. A top official of Ansbacher followed close behind. Then the Bank of England stepped in and said it was not enough to heap opprobrium on Seeling. Morgan's chief executive and head of corporate finance were forced out and the bank told to tighten up its internal rules.

A series of tearful confessions began to arrive at Guinness headquarters. An obscure Geneva bank, Bank Leu, admitted it had 41 million Guinness shares (five per cent of the total issued) and claimed that Guinness had said it would either have them bought by others or would buy them back itself after the dust had settled. Guinness had put a £50 million deposit into the bank's vaults as a token it would keep its word. Bank Leu protested it had done nothing wrong. The Swiss Banking Commission launched an investigation.

Gerald Ronson, boss of the Heron car hire and property group, said he had been buying Guinness shares for a "success fee" of over £5 million, which he returned. As the City watched in disbelief, the affair grew more and more bizarre. Another Guinness director, American lawyer Thomas Ward, was alleged to have been bought a flat in the Watergate complex with some of the money paid to another participant in the alleged share support operation. The $100 million invested in Ivan Boesky's fund was said by Olivier Roux to have been a pay-off for his support during the Distillers bid.

The total spending on supporting the Guinness share price could have been as high as £250 million. The new-look Guinness board, under a team of non-executive directors appointed at the time of the Risk affair, tried to recover the fees paid out by the company. The DTI investigation drags on and might not report for another year. Argyll Group has threatened legal action for damages following its costly failure to win control of Distillers.

The affair has already moved to the courts, however. Guinness is pursuing Thomas Ward through the High Court for the return of a £5.2 million payment said to have been for his services during the bid, while Saunders himself was charged with attempting to pervert the course of justice and destroying and falsifying documents.

Behind all the headline stories, there are two crucial aspects of the Guinness affair. The first is that it is alleged that a major company which is listed on the London Stock Exchange systematically abused both the City's Takeover Code and possibly the law to win a takeover bid. That moved the scandal to a higher plane than the insider dealing affairs, which concerned individuals working for their own gain who could safely be dismissed as 'bad eggs'.

The second is that although the alleged support operation pre-dated Big Bang, none of the organisations which have become the bedrock of the new system of self-regulation in the City did anything about it. The Takeover Panel was silent, as was the Stock Exchange. Nothing has been done that really convinces anyone matters will be different in the future.

There have been a series of minor reforms: the Takeover Panel's rules have been toughened up, the Bank of England stepped in to reorganise Morgan Grenfell and the government brought forward powers to interview witnesses under oath, with the threat of prosecution if they do not cooperate. There has also been a marked change of emphasis — the government used to stress that the system for policing the City was one of self-regulation, now it stresses that self-regulation is backed by law.

Who polices the City?

But the fundamentals of *who* polices the City have not been changed; the Takeover Panel and the Stock Exchange, the courts of the City system, are made up of insiders appointed by the practitioners themselves. And there is no investigative branch — outside the Fraud Squad, there is no body charged with getting to the bottom of dirty dealing in the Square Mile.

Investigations run by the Department of Trade and Industry are run by appointed inspectors (usualy a QC and an accountant) with no specific training for the task, and take aeons to produce a report. The system is in stark contrast to that in the United States, whose Securities and Exchange Commission is staffed by young lawyers eager to make a name for themselves. The American Justice Department official prosecuting Ivan Boesky cut his teeth chasing the Mafia.

But underlying the problems of regulation is a deeper problem of enforcing any sort of restraint on financial markets. The City works on the principle of Adam Smith's hidden hand — everyone goes hell for leather after their own interests, which balances out at the end of the day as in the best interests of everyone. While, for the Tories, the same theory underlies the operation of industry, it is in the City, with its over-paid yuppies pocketing vast commissions and going into a frenzy over every movement in the FT index, that it finds its purest expression.

The trouble is that, apart from the abstract consideration that if all the rules are broken all of the time no-one profits, there is no compulsion to keep any of the rules. This is particularly the case when those you are cheating are themselves driven by the same motives of greed. Sucks to them if you can con them.

Rules in financial markets have only technical, not moral force. It is unclear, for example, who suffers by the activities of insider dealers. It has been the subject of much erudite debate, but there is some truth in the argument that it is "a crime without a victim". The most convincing 'victim' is the smooth operation of financial markets (though some argue insider dealing *helps* the operation of the market), but that means little to the merchant banker in a takeover bid whose credibility is on the line. In the case of malpractice in takeovers, one set of rich capitalists is merely cheating another set, who stick to the rules.

It is also difficult for many people to see why some practices (insider dealing, supporting a company's own share price) are breaking the rules while others are not just sanctioned, but lauded. Asset-stripping — buying a company, beefing up the bits you don't want, selling them off and then keeping the bit you do want having covered your costs — which more often than not leads to widespread redundancies, is considered a virtue almost second to none, because of the effect it has on a company's share price.

As the system cannot rely on consent to police its rules, it must rely on coercion. That means scaring the hell out of any would-be transgressors. There is little to show that the shake-up in the City has gone beyond the cosmetic. While it will be more difficult for the specific abuses which allegedly took place during the Guinness affair to be repeated, the endless ingenuity of the City whizz-kids will soon come up with some new tricks. As matters stand, there is little to stop them trying them out.

Agnes O'Reilly at the funeral of her son John

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
Rides upon sleep; a drunken soldier
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;
The night can sweat with terror as before
We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,
And planned to bring the world under a rule,
Who are but weasels fighting in a hole.
W B Yeats

A mother, murdered at her door, to crawl in her own blood, during the struggles to set up the independent Irish state... A mother, Mary McGlinchey, shot dead in Dundalk on 31 January as she bathed her nine year old son, who vainly shouted at the killers, "Leave Mummy alone".

INLA's bloody feud

Paddy Dollard looks at some lessons

Mary McGlinchey's death was the most horrifying incident during the recent feud between two sections of the so-called Irish National Liberation Army, in which 13 people died and 20 were injured.

Mary McGlinchey was the wife of jailed one-time INLA chief of staff Dominic McGlinchey, and she is said to have been killed in revenge for her husband's summary 'execution' of an INLA activist. Herself an activist, Mary McGlinchey may have been involved in that killing.

Under her husband's rule as Chief of Staff, a system was in operation in INLA — Direct Military Rule it was called — under which he had the right to shoot any member he felt he had a reason for shooting. He apparently used that right.

Dominic McGlinchey's less than two year reign in INLA was only one of the more bizarre episodes in the 'Republican Socialist' organisation's history.

INLA came out of a bloody split in the Official Republican Movement in 1974-5. The Officials have since evolved into the quasi-Stalinist, reformist 'Workers' Party'. The INLA and its political wing, the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), were led by Seamus Costello, a veteran of the 1950s IRA. They proclaimed an anti-Stalinist sort of socialism, and also the need to continue the 'armed struggle' which the Officials had abandoned in mid-1972.

In 1977 Costello was murdered by the Official IRA (which even today has a shadowy existence), and the centre of the INLA/IRSP began to disintegrate, though it was still a force in Northern Ireland. Three of its members died together with seven Provos during the hunger strikes of 1981. INLA became an 'alternative IRA' for Provos dismissed for indiscipline and other offences. Local 'warlordism' emerged within the loosely structured organisation.

Court cases in the mid-'80s established that the organisation was heavily infested with spies, provocateurs and informers. In 1982 the INLA's deputy operations officer in Belfast, Harry Kirkpatrick, was arrested and turned 'supergrass'. He was the first of a string of 'grasses'. Admitting six killings and involvement in much self-serving ('Me Fein', or me myself) gangsterism, Kirkpatrick was promised — and will surely get — an early release. In return he helped put 30 others behind bars.

At that point McGlinchey, a dismissed Provo, came out of jail. By mid 1982 he had made himself 'chief of staff', under 'Direct Military Rule'. Probably 'direct military rule' was a means to contain warlords and try to create a strong centre able to direct the organisation to the job it supposedly existed for — fighting the British. But McGlinchey was captured in the 26 Counties, and has been in various jails since mid-1984.

In August 1984 John O'Reilly was released on bail, and the train of events that led directly to the feud was set in motion. O'Reilly set out to be 'chief of staff' by getting control of the organisation's arms supply and arsenal. In April 1985 he beat information out of long-time socialist activist Seamus Ruddy, who had been organising INLA's supply of weapons from a base in Paris, and then murdered him. With control of the weaponry, O'Reilly set about eliminating his rivals.

'Me Fein'

Jailed former Belfast operations officer Gerard Steenson had been implicated in 'Me Fein' robberies by his former deputy Kirkpatrick, and O'Reilly expelled him. O'Reilly's opponents would make the same allegation of 'Me Feinism' against O'Reilly and his friends. They moved to organise what became the 'Irish People's Liberation Organisation' (IPLO). They demanded that INLA disband.

Then, in December 1986, the supergrass system suddenly collapsed when the 30 jailed on Kirkpatrick's evidence won their appeals. Once they were out on the streets, it was inevitable and immediate war.

In January 1987, O'Reilly and an associate went to a hotel expecting to parley with the Steensonites, and were ambushed and killed. After that it was tit for tat until Steenson was killed on 15 March. The police made no attempt to intervene, and provocateurs probably stoked the fire as INLA tore itself apart.

The Provos — who have sometimes commented adversely on INLA's wildest and most counterproductive activities, and denounced 'Me Fein' gangsterism — declared that the best contribution INLA could make to the Republican struggle was to disband. With Provo arbitration, a truce of exhaustion was finally fixed up. There is no sign that the groupings have disbanded.

But gangsterism is probably the least of INLA's faults! INLA has a well-deserved reputation for Catholic sectarianism and for the sectarian or quasi-sectarian killing of Protestants, many of whom have not even had a notional link with the British state.

In November 1983 INLA people calling themselves the Catholic Retaliation Force entered a small Pentecostal Protestant church at Darkley in predominantly Catholic Armagh and sprayed the worshippers with machine-gun bullets, killing three and wounding seven. Dominic McGlinchey publicly admitted giving a gun to the killers.

The INLA's political front, the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP), made a statement saying it was "totally opposed" to sectarian killings. But that was either hypocrisy or an expression of the inability of those in or around the IRSP who really felt like that to affect events . Maybe it was both. In such groups the men with the guns always rule. The 'Army Council' is far more important than the executive of the political party.

The striking paradox here is that the INLA and IRSP say that they are left-wing socialists and Marxists, more aligned to the working class than other nationalist groups like the Provisionals. Many of its militants sincerely believe this. How, then, has such an organisation become what I have described above?

The Provisionals and the Officials are organisations with a solid tradition and with the organisational bone, sinews and muscle to enforce it. They are the mainstream. Anything to the left while still 'Republican' has not only to build an

organisation and gain credibility, but also to work out where (and for what) it stands.

The problems INLA/IRSP faced when it split from the Officials in 1975 had already been encountered, ruinously, by the first attempt since the present Troubles began to form a new left-wing Republican group. It was a movement calling itself 'Saor Eire (Free Ireland) Action Group'.

It was formed, or rather given shape piecemeal, in the late '60s by dissident Republicans (premature Provos, really) who resisted the drift of the Official Republican movement away from the traditional militarism and towards Stalinism — a drift that made the official movement incapable of defending the Belfast Catholics during the Protestant pogroms of August 1969 and led to the Provo/Official split a few months later.

Guevarism

These dissident Republicans joined up with one or two people who called themselves Trotskyists, but who, like many Trotskyists, had come under the influence of Guevarism in the late '60s. They believed in 'immediate armed struggle', and they believed that what 'the Irish Revolution' needed — not having yet achieved national unity — was 90% nationalist slogans. The clashes in the North, and the taking of direct control of the streets by the British Army in August 1969, convinced them that their hour was coming.

They started robbing banks — mainly or exclusively in the South! — so that they would be able to buy guns. What guns they bought, or what they did with them, is not publicly known. But such an organisation, some of whose members were permanently on the run, also needed money to keep its members going; and if you can get money by robbing banks, you don't need to stint yourself.

Saor Eire robbed many banks, caused great alarm to the Southern government, and was eventually said to have shot an unarmed policeman in Dublin during a bank robbery in early 1970. Some of its leaders were eventually put on trial for murder. They were acquitted but jailed on other charges.

It had become essentially a gangster organisation. It started with ideals, but the proportion of idealism to gangsterism began to change. So did the proportion of gangsters to politicians. The values and skills needed to prosper or just to survive became those of the soldier — or gangster. Propaganda, open political activity, trade union work, class struggle — all that had to be left to vague sympathisers, people who by definition were in an inferior category to the practitioners of 'armed struggle'. The gun, and the 'hard man' wielding it, became decisive.

Probably there were gangsters or semi-gangsters in Saor Eire from the beginning, but in such cases the distinction between political militant and gangster becomes blurred anyway. The development of the Provos in the North and the competitive militarism of the left-wing Officials in the early '70s left Saor Eire high and dry. In November 1971 one of its members, Peter Graham, was found dead in a Dublin flat.

He had been bound and gagged and shot through the neck. According to the police he had been tortured.

Aged 26, Peter Graham was a Trotskyist. In theory he was highly critical of the 'Guevarist' current then prominent in international Trotskyism, and rejected the idea that socialism in Ireland could come through 'permanent revolution' — nationalist struggle 'growing over' into socialism. He began his 'guerilla' career by believing it was a good thing to learn about guns in the Ireland of 1969. But then he got drawn into the 'action'.

The alleged leaders of Saor Eire issued a statement from jail denouncing the rest of the organisation as a-political gangsters.

IRSP/INLA started bigger, with a real standing in the Republican milieus and a place in the Republican spectrum as the 'good' left-wingers resisting the apostasy of the Officials. It had a base in Belfast and Derry. It seemed to have prospects Saor Eire could never dream of.

Yet within a year independent socialists — former MP Bernadette Devlin and Eamonn McCann, for example — who rallied to the IRSP after its break with the Officials, abandoned the organisation, declaring it to be a mere glove-puppet of the new militarists.

Neave

INLA killed Northern Ireland 'security' force personnel, including 'soft' targets. It attacked Ian Paisley, reckless of the consequences of what Protestant workers would be bound to see as a straightforwardly sectarian act. It pulled off surprising coups like killing Mrs Thatcher's 'campaign manager' and personal friend Airey Neave in the car park of the House of Commons in 1979.

No less a person than Enoch Powell has suggested that this was done by the CIA as part of a plot to get a united Ireland that would be useful to NATO. Take Powell's claim seriously or not, some of the INLA's activities were very odd indeed.

For example, in 1982 INLA killed the pathological Loyalist minor politician John McKeogh just as he was being exposed for involvement in the scandal about sexual abuse of boys in the Kincora boys' home. This was and is a major scandal involving leading politicians in Northern Ireland. The evidence suggests that it has been suppressed so that it can be used by the state to blackmail and control difficult politicians in Northern Ireland. It may yet blow up in the Establishment's face. McKeogh's timely death helped them keep it under control.

In the 'supergrass' trials, INLA was shown to have been riddled with spies and provocateurs. Lacking a coherent leadership, it became the receptacle for dissident Republicans of all sorts. As with Saor Eire, its socialism came to mean nothing in practice.

It became a loose conglomeration of groups, fighting the British and Northern Ireland state, and organising robberies, with sizeable proportions of the proceeds 'going private'.

The INLA's aspiration to be to the left of traditional Republicanism became, paradoxically, a factor in its degeneration. Traditional Republicanism is a movement with a strong and honourable tradition. For example, the idea that Protestant and Catholic are equally Irish still has a real grip, despite often Catholic-nationalist practice. Like anarchism, of which it is in some respects an aberrant strain, Irish Republicanism has been a highly moral movement.

The left Republicans (and this is partly true of the new leadership of the Provos around Gerry Adams, too) relate to this tradition in a contradictory way. The old morality is dissolved by the supposedly higher principles of socialism and an eclectic Marxism — but, since the way to socialism is seen as proceeding through nationalism first, the effect is not to replace nationalist principles with socialist principles, but to replace nationalism with morality by nationalism without morality.

That is why you can get 'left' Republicans acting like nihilists, people who believe in nothing, and recklessly kill Protestants. Darkley was the most spectacular case.

The 'left' Republicans tend to have *less* concern for the Protestant workers than old-fashioned right-wing Republicans. The mechanism here is partly psychological — an urge to be tough and realistic, and to take account of the reality of Protestant opposition to the national struggle.

The Protestant workers are seen not in social, class terms, but almost exclusively as a catspaw of Britain and as the embodiment of sectarianism. By a process of redefining terms, non-sectarian socialism is equated (in terms of immediate activity) with a narrow nationalist militarism, incapable of laying any basis for class unity. Recklessness in relation to the Protestant workers is justified in terms of political intransigence against Loyalism.

Thus the 'socialist' element becomes a matter of sentiment, aspirations, and faith in the nationalist struggle somehow 'growing over' into socialism. The immediate practice is nationalist — or even *Catholic-communalist*, for the Catholics are defined as 'the nationalist community'.

The objective conditions in Northern Ireland — fundamentally those of a division in the Irish people — mean that the choice of 'armed struggle now against imperialism' is inevitably a choice for communalism against class politics. That holds both for the Provo socialists, with their strong apparatus and high personal morality, and also for the smaller 'left-wing' groups. But the Wolfe-Tone Republican outlook of the latter dissolves more easily in the acid of an eclectic brew

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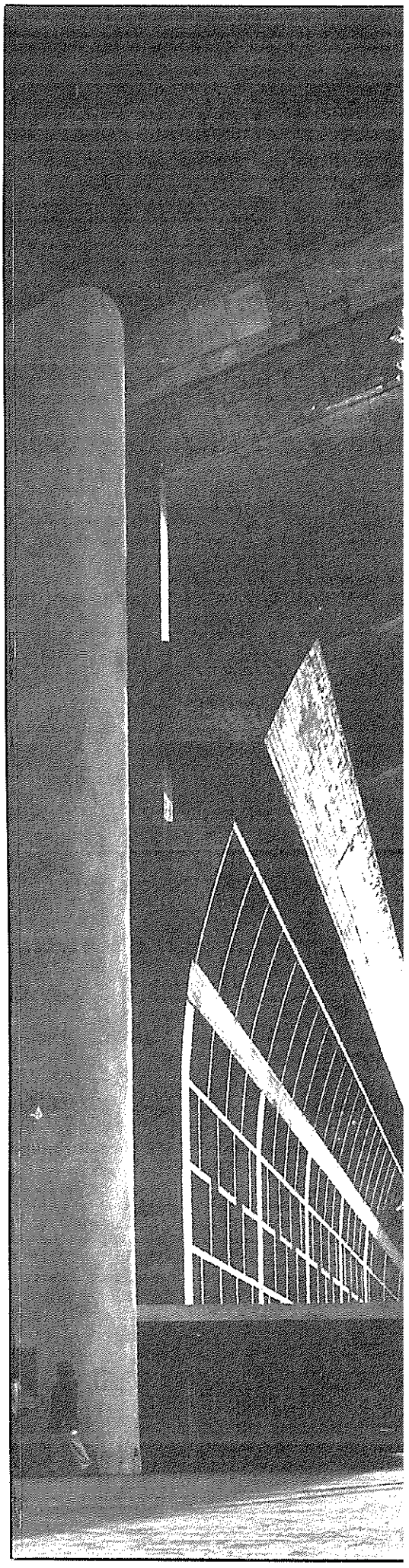
A future turned sour

We now see the bare steel, glass, and concrete blocks of 'modern' architecture as epitomising capitalism and bureaucracy. Yet the 'modern' style was originally associated with the left. What went wrong? Martin Thomas looked at the Hayward Gallery's exhibition 'Le Corbusier: Architect of the Century'



No city today looks like the plan for a "Contemporary City" which Le Corbusier drafted in 1922. Every major city, however, is marked by its ideas.

Offices should be in sixty-storey skyscrapers, housing in big 12-storey blocks. Buildings so tall would allow a dense population but a lot of open space. Each building would be surrounded by air and light and greenery.

To allow even more air and light, open space and rapid traffic, the buildings would be erected on concrete stilts. Modern construction methods should be exploited to the maximum, and not smeared over with styles and decorations derived from old construction methods. Windows should be in great horizontal strips. Everything should be clean, crisp and in straight lines. Roofs should be flat.

Le Corbusier's ideas were part of a whole 'modern movement' in the 1920s. Before modern industry, architecture had been concerned only with temples, cathedrals, palaces and monuments. Houses were just built, not designed. But 20th century architects wanted to be designing factories, offices, mass housing — indeed, whole cities. In the 19th century architects had improvised, designing banks and museums on the model of classical temples, schools and town halls to look like medieval cathedrals, and so on.

The 20th century should produce a new unity of art and technology; indeed, that was the only way to save the cities from mounting chaos and squalor. Houses should be designed (in Le Corbusier's phrase) as "machines for living in", and indeed whole cities should be planned as "machines" for human society, with the same sober elegance that the best 19th century industrial design had had.

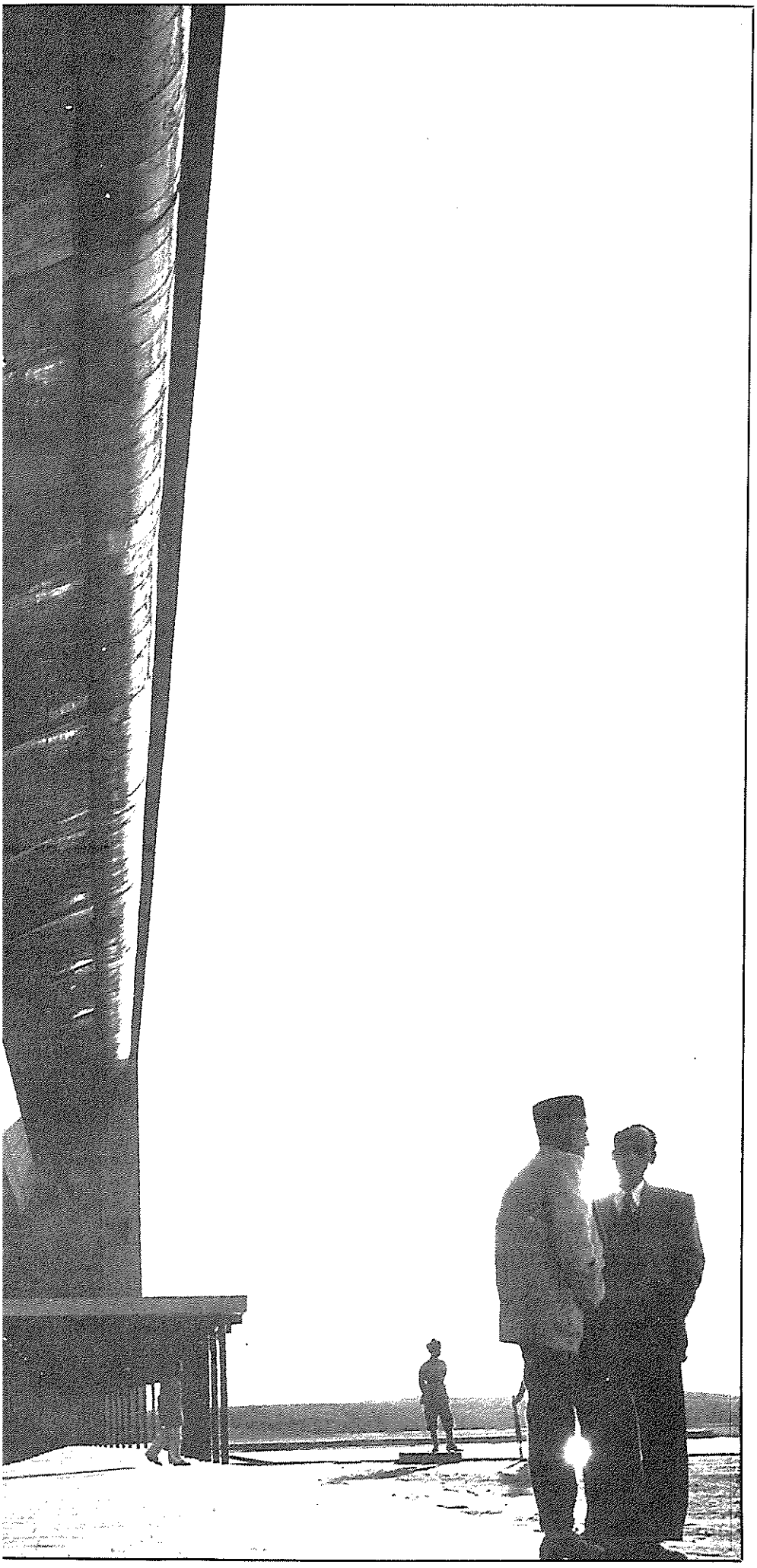
Modern architecture was vaguely but unmistakably linked to the left. It was the Bolshevik government in the USSR, and left Social-Democratic local authorities in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands, who commissioned big blocks of flats for workers in the spare, clean-cut modern style; and the Nazis who denounced this style as 'cultural Bolshevism', promised individual houses with gardens instead, and condemned the flat roof as 'un-German'.

Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, and Fascist Italy all rejected modern architecture, and for their major buildings preferred instead a stripped-down classical style, ponderous and monumental.

Most of the modern architects were left wing only in the vaguest sense. Le Corbusier himself disavowed all politics: "This work...is not dedicated to our existing Bourgeois-Capitalist Society nor to the Third International. It is a technical work". He supported the Popular Front in 1935, but later tried to collaborate with the pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

But there were logical links between the ideas of modern architecture and collectivist and egalitarian politics. The modern movement wanted architecture to concern itself with mass, industrialised building for the many, not monumental constructions for the rich few. They demanded city planning, which meant overriding the interests of individual property-owners. They wanted publicly-provided housing for the working class, rather than the squalor generated by the free market. Their housing schemes aimed to create large communities, living together and sharing common services, with housework socialised. Le Corbusier himself borrowed ideas from the great utopian socialist Charles Fourier.

After World War 2 it looked as if modern architecture, or at least the main drift of its ideas, had triumphed in many



Chandigarh in India — a city designed by Le Corbusier, but failing as a 'machine for living'

countries. In Britain, council housing increased from 0% of the total in 1914 to 13% in 1947 and over 30% in the mid-'70s. But today, 40 years on, the triumph has turned to ashes. Councils are tearing down the big blocks of flats which not so long ago won architectural awards.

The right wing still proclaims the same ideal — "Everyone having their own house and little garden", as Margaret Thatcher puts it — but now the left, from Peter Tatchell in Bermondsey to Militant in Liverpool, adopts this aim too, differing only on the means of achieving it.

The much-vaunted open spaces between the tower blocks or in housing estates have become scrubby and desultory expanses of grass, serving only to give a cold, dead appearance to their area. The steel-and-glass blocks which dominate city centres are universally resented as signifying callous bureaucracy, and little liked by those who work in them.

What went wrong? Jane Jacobs, Oscar Newman, and Alice Coleman have analys-

'Modern design has made streets and other public or semi-public areas dead — therefore repellent and unsafe... '

ed the problems of the modern architects' city.

It is on the *streets*, argues Jane Jacobs, that cities must make themselves into communities. For streets to be safe, lively and attractive they need to be used densely and throughout the day; to be overlooked by the buildings along the street, but to have a clear division between public and private space; and to have points of easy, casual public contact between people, like corner shops, bars and cafes. They need to have a proportion of *old* (i.e. cheap) buildings in them, to generate the necessary diversity of uses.

Modern design has made streets and other public or semi-public areas *dead* — therefore repellent and unsafe. Strict zoning, with public buildings, shops, housing, industry and offices all parcelled off into separate areas, creates thoroughfares which are crowded for a small part of the day and empty the rest.

Big areas — the grounds, entrances, landings, lifts and walkways of housing estates — are neither clearly public nor private. The public authorities cannot or will not keep them clean and safe. Worse: these areas have neither the density of use nor the visibility to surrounding dwellings and workplaces to create and enforce social norms there. The individual in those areas is usually alone and unobserved in a bleak world.

So they become at best grubby and lit-

tered, at worst foul and unsafe.

Shops within estates, or in separated-off shopping centres, stand shut and silent in emptiness for most of the 24 hours, away from the life of the street. Thus they become prey to litter and vandalism. The surrounding streets, 'blind-eyed' because the flats or shops are set back or walled off from them, become equally bleak.

In these areas children are more unsafe, and more vandalistic, than they were playing on the pavements of the old streets. There is nowhere where they can play within sight of adults who know them.

Many of the problems have been caused by the cheapskate way modern cities have been developed. Modern architecture was adopted in the 1950s not because of any of the ideals associated with it in the 1920s, but because it suited big corporations, property developers, and governments. Big integrated developments — blocks of flats, office complexes, or shopping centres — suited financiers and construction companies better than piecemeal jobs. But the basic ideas of modern architecture also made their contribution to the debacle.

In its days of exuberance after World War 1, the modern movement tended to try to leap into the future in a utopian way. Trotsky commented on the Russian modernists: "To tear architectural construction out of the future is only arbitrariness, clever and individual...beyond a practical problem and the steady work of solving this problem, one cannot create a new architectural style. The effort to reason out such a style by the method of deduction from the nature of the proletariat, from its collectivism, activism, atheism and so forth, is the purest idealism..."

As the exuberance faded, and the modernists' meagre links with the workers' movement were broken, the utopianism hardened into a technocratic, formalistic attitude.

Le Corbusier, who was never politically-minded, represented this technocratic and formalistic view most clearly. His book 'The City of Tomorrow' praises the cities created by Oriental despotisms — Istanbul, Peking — and condemns the chaotic capital cities of freer societies like Paris and New York.

Although all the characteristic features of Le Corbusier's designs were supposed to be functional — serving the "machine for living in" — he often commends his plans by claiming how splendid they would look as one sped through the city on the great motorways, rather than looking at what they would be like for day-to-day living.

There was a sort of utopian socialism in modern architecture in its early days. As it became just a stylistic fashion, that utopian socialism mutated into bureaucratic regimentation. The great state bureaucracies and the giant corporations then adapted those modernist ideas to their purposes when they needed some notions about how to redevelop their cities rapidly, drastically and cheaply after World War 2.

Thus an approach to architecture which set out to be simple, straightforward, and close to human needs, breaking with the puffed-up, pomposity of the 19th century, found its main expression in modern office blocks which with their uniform blank, glaring glass walls give signals of blandness, impenetrabilitiy, anonymity, and inhumanity. Traditional 19th-century public buildings seem almost human by comparison in their vanity and pretentiousness.

The early modernists had thought that working class people should live in large communities, and in any case *would* do so after the soon-coming revolution. As the modern style became standard for working class housing, the ideas about community living were reduced to perfunctory assumptions or disregarded altogether. Blocks of flats were like office blocks — only with balconies, slighly smaller windows, and, in place of grand entrance halls, dark holes next to overflowing rubbish skips. It was not so much a case of "machines for living in", as of "living in machines" — Marx's ideas about the domination of the machine over the worker in the capitalist factory were borne out in housing, too.

On the rebound from this debacle, the right wing has claimed the initiative. Alice Coleman calls for an end to public intervention in housing and a return to the free market. Jane Jacobs, too, wants no more housing built by public authorities. A slum area, she says, is better improved by its residents becoming a bit better off, and doing up their houses or rebuilding piecemeal, than by being replaced with a desolate array of concrete slabs.

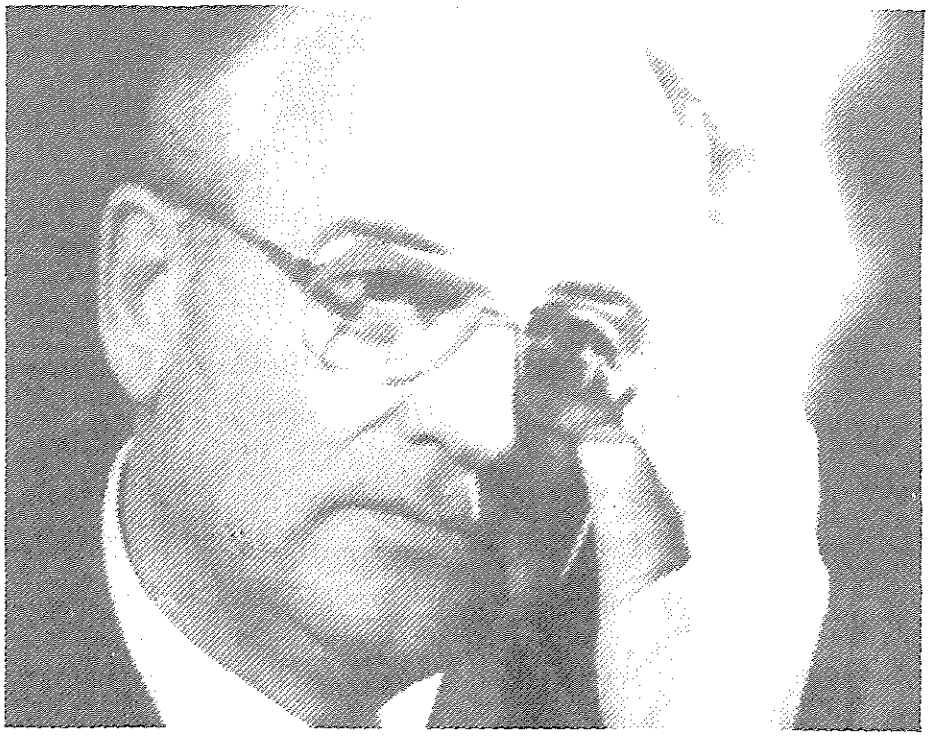
But under a free market, the poorest sections of the working class — the jobless, the irregularly employed, the young, the single parents, the immigrants, all those who cannot offer the necessary cash deposits and guarantees to get better housing — will always end up in slums. They will pay rent even for overcrowded, decaying accommodation to have shelter and be near their work (or where they might find work). Big city centres thus tend to polarise into luxury dwellings and overcrowded slums — both offer landlords a high return per house — while the middle class and better-off workers go out to sprawling suburbs.

Socialists need to develop new ideas about city planning, architecture, and housing. The left today places great stress on democratic consultation with tenants about the design of housing, and rightly so. But that isn't enough. A mass meeting of tenants can choose between different designs, but it can't sketch a new one.

New designs will develop only if the alliance of creative talents with a mass radical labour movement which so briefly and precariously existed in the 1920s can be established again ●

Gorbachev through Polish eyes

Zbigniew M Kowalewski, a former leader of the left wing of Solidarnosc now living in France, talked to Martin Thomas about Gorbachev's reforms in the light of Polish experience, and about the basic problems of the Stalinist societies.



Before 1980 you saw the bureaucracy in Poland as a new exploiting class, but then you became convinced that Trotsky's theory of the bureaucracy as an unstable group, with the vices of a ruling class but without its historic role, was more accurate. Why?

Before my activity in Solidarnosc I had little contact with the working class and with social relations in industry. I had a rather ideological approach to the problem of the social relations in Poland and the other countries of Eastern Europe.

What struck me when I went into the factories, as part of the process of building Solidarnosc in which I participated, was a very strong impression that the bureaucracy was external to the 'immediate process of production', to use the classical term of Marx. The bureaucracy was a social entity very alien to the process of production; it tried to control this process but achieved only a feeble control.

The workers themselves had quite a high degree of control over the labour process, even though their control is completely atomised. It is obviously not control by the working *class*, but control by individual workers or small groups of workers.

The other thing that struck me was that the labour process was different from what I knew of capitalist society. Work did not proceed in a continuous, regular, almost automatic way, but discontinuously, and extremely irregularly. Production did not proceed with a more or less automatic rhythm, but was constantly interrupted and had ups and downs. The workers had to work very hard at the end of the plan periods — the month, the quarter, the year, the five years — and work was slower at other times.

That was the second aspect which raised the question for me: what is the bureaucracy? It confirmed the impression that the bureaucracy was something external, that it had no proper socio-economic base. It was not an agent of the process of production. Under capitalism, the representatives of capital and the workers are agents of production, but in Poland there was only one agent of production, the workers.

Nevertheless Poland has industrialised quite rapidly since the Second World War. Who has organised this industrialisation, if not the bureaucracy?

That's a very complicated question. But I think that industrialisation is possible without a real ruling class in power. During that industrialiation you may have the impression that there is a new ruling class and the bureaucracy plays a necessary social and economic role.

But it's important to look at what happens after this initial period of industrialisation — which may be impressive — as regards the role and the social position of the bureaucracy. Then you see all the negative effects of bureaucratic management. The bureaucracy is a social group which acts as a brake on social and economic development and on increasing the productivity of labour, i.e. the systematic introduction of the material means necessary for higher productivity, modern technology and so on.

The great irregularity of the work in the factories — and in the whole economy — is an obstacle to the modernisation of industrial plant.

These facts make it clear that the bureaucracy is something external. It is because it has no proper base in the relations of production that it is incapable of managing economic development in a more or less rational manner. And if you start off from this point where the negative role of the bureaucracy is visible, and then study the process of industrialisation, you can see that the negative role is also present there, in the process of industrialisation — the process which gives an image of the bureaucracy as a new class which is even progressive in a certain sense in countries which have been underdeveloped under capitalism.

The huge wastage, the irrationality, the bureaucracy's inability to master the process of production, are also present during the period of industrialisation.

In your book 'Rendez-nous nos usines' you write about a tendency to over-exploitation of the working class in Poland and Eastern Europe. How does the bureaucracy impose this over-exploitation?

With every tendency there are also counter-tendencies. In Eastern Europe there are two great contradictory phenomena at the level of the process of production. The tendency to over-exploitation is very much linked to the fact there is no progress in the organisation of the labour process and there are big obstacles to the introduction of new technology — the bureaucracy tries to

raise productivity by extracting more effort from the workers, by administrative increases in labour norms. These increases in labour norms may be linked to a supposed improvement in the organisation of work, or introduction of new technology, but the modernisation has often been partial or largely fictitious. The increases come down to pressure to increase working hours, to do overtime, or to work on two or three machines simultaneously in place of one.

This pressure for over-exploitation corresponds to the mechanism of absolute surplus-value under capitalism. It is stronger in Eastern Europe than under capitalism.

The other phenomenon is the capacity of the workers to defend themselves against the over-exploitation, through the individual workers' control over their immediate conditions of work.

It is difficult to have an overall picture because lots of contradictory tendencies operate. But you can see the results in the long-term. For example, in my town, Lodz, which is dominated by textile factories with women workers, you can see the tendency to over-exploitation in the streets. It is a town of women workers who are exhausted, prematurely aged, and sick.

It is often thought in the West that work rates in Eastern Europe are more moderate than in the West. It is true, on average. But work rates in Eastern Europe are irregular. Sometimes they are very high, sometimes very low.

Workers who systematically work at a high rate adapt to it, or at least, most of them do, and the rest are rejected by capitalist production. But in a country like Poland workers never get used to high rates of work, so the effects of the high rates of work on their health, on their nervous system and so on, are disastrous.

Why couldn't the bureaucracy tolerate a trade union organisation in the factories?

The bureaucracy is a group whose social power is so brittle and whose roots are so weak that it is impossible for it to accept any sort of independent organisation of the working class.

The workers individually have a degree of control over the means of production which they use. so if the working class is not kept atomised — excluding even the most elementary forms of organisation — collective control by the workers over the means of production emerges very easily, at least at the level of the factory.

The bureaucracy does not have a proper social base for its power, and is obliged to govern through the atomisation of the working class.

Gorbachev's new measures obviously aim to overcome the situation you describe, of economic stagnation. What is your assessment of these measures?

Gorbachev wants to modernise the economy, and to eliminate blockages to the application of science and technology to production.

So a liberalisation for the scientific and technological sectors is very important. You can't modernise the economy without freeing the circulation of information and of new scientific ideas, and allowing freer exchange of ideas, including internationally. Gorbachev also wants to win over sections of intellectuals to the regime.

But at the same time Gorbachev is pursuing a very traditional and Stalinist policy towards the working class itself — taking administrative measures to discipline the working class and make it work harder.

It seems that the Brezhnev regime, which was very conservative, adapted itself to the situation in the factories, where work was done badly and a lot of time was lost. Gorbachev's team wants to change things.

'Gorbachev is pursuing a very traditional and Stalinist policy towards the working class itself — taking administrative measures to discipline the working class and make it work harder... '

On this level, I don't think Gorbachev will succeed. I have read accounts of what goes on in Soviet factories. In one factory, for example, a very modern machine was put in to monitor production. The workers turned it round so that it was bombarded by items coming off the production line. The bureaucrats responded by building a wall to protect the machine. They ended up by employing an old woman to sit in the factory and note down the number of items produced. Something very sophisticated was brought in to control the workers, but the whole thing ended in the traditional way, with an old woman keeping tally in a notebook.

You can't really modernise the economy without completely changing the method of control.

Many of Gorbachev's measures have been in effect for a long time in Poland.

Yes. Many people in the West tend to think too schematically that the Soviet Union is the centre of the Eastern bloc, and that everything must go from the centre to the periphery.

But Poland in 1956 was the first country to enter the phase of anti-bureaucratic revolution, and after 1956 the bureaucracy was forced to make various efforts at reform. For example, all that is being discussed in the Soviet Union about economic reforms — a degree of autonomy for individual enterprises, autonomy for managers, a bigger role for market mechanisms — all these reforms have been in operation in Poland for 30 years. And nothing has really been reformed except that the bureaucracy exercises power in a different manner.

In Poland we have seen that if you have economic reforms combined with social pressure it leads to a process of disintegration of the bureaucracy. The Polish bureaucracy is much more disunited today than in the past.

In the Brezhnev period in the Soviet Union (1964-82), and the Gomulka period in Poland (1956-70), you had a bureaucratic centre which was capable up to a point of maintaining a balance between the various bureaucratic interests. It was a very conservative model of bureaucratic rule, producing stagnation.

In the Gierek period (1970-80), one bureaucratic interest group made itself the centre of the bureaucracy in Poland — it was a group linked to certain sectors of heavy industry. That provoked a terrible struggle between the different interest groups inside the bureaucracy around the sharing-out of investment funds, and terrible imbalances in economic development. Bureaucratic planning disintegrated.

Jaruzelski's team wants to re-establish a balance between the different bureaucratic groups linked to different sectors of economic management, and an autonomous political centre to control this balance. But it is a very interesting fact that this centre comes from other sources than the traditional one. Essentially, it does no' come from the party apparatus. And the new centre has not managed to control the different interest groups. The process of disintegration of the economy continues.

The Polish bureaucracy has already tried different methods of constituting a political centre. And each time, in the long term if not in the short term, it has failed. I think that Gorbachev's team will not be able to achieve what it wants either. It may unleash a struggle between factions of the bureaucracy which is much more open than today and thus open breaches in society which let mass struggle develop.

At present I don't think the Gorbachev group is allied to a special interest group in the bureaucracy. It is a group which has a more intellegent, lucid vision of the bureaucracy's overall interests. But one of the possible dynamics for its development is for it to base itself on certain groups of the bureaucracy linked to specific economic interests. If that happened, it would unleash a dynamic similar to what happened under Gierek.

The bureaucrats linked to the Urals industrial sector seem to have acquired a lot of weight in Gorbachev's apparatus.

Workers' Liberty no.8 will include a translation of the account of the struggle for workers' control over food distribution in Lodz from Kowalewski's recent book on Poland and Solidarnosc, 'Rendez-nous nos usines'.

From permanent revolution to permanent confusion

In latter-day Trotskyism the theory of 'permanent revolution' — anti-landlord or anti-colonial revolution being merged with socialist revolution under the leadership of the working class — has become a dogma, used more to obscure the fact of many colonies winning freedom on a capitalist basis than to enlighten. Clive Bradley discusses the issues.

Trotsky

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution was one of the most important of his contributions to Marxism, but it has become one of the most vulgarised aspects of his legacy.

In particular, the theory of permanent revolution and the Marxist attitude towards the national question have been collapsed into each other, to the detriment of both. In this article, I want to unravel these separate questions, and unearth the real assumptions and points of departure of classical Marxism.

Trotsky agreed with all the Russian Marxists that the revolution against the Tsar would be a *bourgeois* revolution in its general character. Its principal tasks were those of the bourgeois revolution: formation of a democratic republic, land to the peasants, and so on. It would sweep away all the impediments to the free development of capitalism.

Trotsky argued that social conditions in Russia put the young working class at the centre of the revolutionary movement. This was the crucial lesson of the 1905 revolution, and Trotsky was not alone in drawing it (the Bolsheviks, Luxemburg and even Kautsky all stressed it). Indeed the centrality of the working class to the bourgeois-revolutionary movement was common ground among all the early Russian Marxists; it was one of the things that distinguished them from the populists.

Zinoviev writes: "The conflict between Marxism and populism reduced itself essentially to the question of the role of the working class in Russia, whether we would have a class of industrial workers and if we did, what its role in the revolution would amount to". (1)

The early Plekhanov advocated the 'hegemony of the proletariat' in the revolution. The Leninist strategy, aiming at a 'revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry', looked principally to the workers (the Bolsheviks never saw themselves as a 'worker-peasant' party). But the precise relationship between the workers and the peasantry was not clearly understood. Trotsky posed the matter sharply: the peasantry could not play an independent political role.

This meant specifically that it was not a question of forming a strategic alliance with a revolutionary peasant-based party. The workers would *lead* the revolution, and on the basis of their own power would "stand before the peasants as the class which has emancipated it". (2)

He thus criticised the Bolshevik formula as evasive on the key question of the class character of the state to be fought for. The implications of working class leadership should be faced squarely:

"...the fact that both the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks invariably talk about the 'independent' policy of the proletariat...in no way alters the fact that both...become scared of the consequences of the class struggle and hope to limit it by their metaphysical constructs". (3)

The working class in power would be compelled to go beyond the limits of the bourgeois revolution if it was not to hand

power over to the bourgeoisie. Faced with a strike, for example, a workers' government would have to side with the workers, to the point of expropriating the capitalists. The logic of the class struggle thus pointed towards the immediate, 'uninterrupted' development of a bourgeois-democratic revolution into a socialist one.

While both Lenin and Luxemburg hinted at this conclusion, Trotsky alone spelled it out clearly — and was of course vindicated by the course taken by the revolution in 1917. As a result of conscious intervention, the revolution — which began as a bourgeois revolution fired by the industrial workers — became a socialist revolution. Trotsky, in other words, most clearly drew political perspectives and strategy from the logic of the class struggle in the actual conditions of Russia.

Trotsky of course accepted that the objective limits to 'socialist' revolution pointed to by the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were real: backward Russia, where the vast majority of society were illiterate peasants, could not sustain this socialist extension of the revolution. Socialist revolution was only possible if it was extended internationally.

"Without the direct state support of the European proletariat the working class of Russia cannot remain in power and convert its temporary domination into a lasting socialist dictatorship". (4)

The material prerequisites for socialism did not exist in Russia, but *internationally* they did.

The main coherent alternative perspective was that of the Mensheviks: that the revolution was 'bourgeois' and therefore the bourgeoisie would lead it; that socialism was impossible, and therefore it would be wrong to fight for it; that the role of the Marxists was to develop bedrock working-class organisation in preparation for a socialist revolution in the future, after capitalism had further developed.

Lenin, like Trotsky, argued that the weak Russian bourgeoisie was incapable of playing a revolutionary role. But Lenin's position remained somewhat incoherent. What he seemed to envisage was a revolution creating a democratic assembly within which the Marxist workers' party would accept their minority status. He did not think through the implications of the dynamics of class struggle.

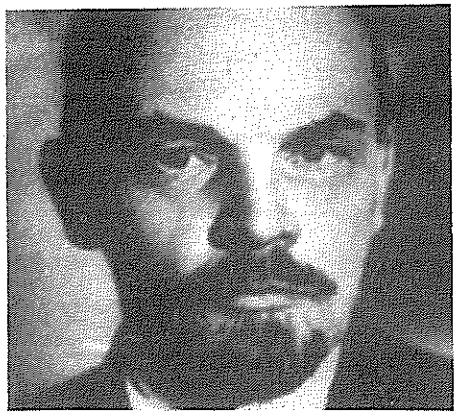
Trotsky was historically vindicated. After April 1917, the Bolsheviks fought for a programme essentially similar to that advocated by Trotsky, and took power on that basis. The issue of 'permanent revolution' was thereafter a dead letter — until the Stalinists revived it as part of their campaign against 'Trotskyism'.

The theory after 1917

In the course of the Chinese revolution of 1925-7, the Communist International retreated from the strategy pursued by the Bolsheviks to a variant of Menshevism. Advocating a 'bloc of four classes' for a 'first stage' in the revolution, they liquidated the Communist Party into the bourgeois Kuomintang. Politically disarmed and organisationally unprepared, the Communists were slaughtered when the Kuomintang inevitably turned on them.

Trotsky and the Left Opposition fought against this disastrous course (after an initial period of silence on the question). As he was to put it in 1928:

"China is still confronted with a vast, bitter, bloody and prolonged struggle for such elementary things as the liquidation of the most 'Asiatic' forms of slavery, the national emancipation, and unification of the country. But as the course of events has shown, it is precisely this that makes impossible in the future any petty-bourgeois leadership or even semi-leadership in the revolution. The unification and emancipation of China today is an international task, no less so than the



Lenin

existence of the USSR. This task can be solved only by means of a desperate struggle on the part of the downtrodden, hungry and persecuted masses under the direct leadership of the proletarian vanguard — a struggle not only against world imperialism, but also against its economic and political agency in China, against the bourgeoisie, including the 'national' bourgeoisie and all its democratic flunkeys. And this is nothing else than the road toward the dictatorship of the proletariat." (5)

The experience of China confirmed the general applicability of Trotsky's earlier conclusions for Russia. He therefore *generalised* the theory of permanent revolution. From a theoretical and strategic perspective for Russia, it became a general theory.

"With regard to countries with a belated bourgeois development, especially the colonial and semi-colonial countries...the complete and genuine solution of their tasks of achieving *democracy* and *national emancipation* is conceivable only through the dictatorship of the proletariat as the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses." (6)

Three theoretical issues come together in this generalisation: permanent revolution, imperialism and the national question. Before the generalisation of the theory, these were quite separate questions: Trotsky's original exposition of permanent revolution makes no reference to imperialism or national independence (and was in any case put forward for a country that was in one sense imperialist itself). Trotsky was right to integrate the issues. But they were and are separate issues, and it is important to look at *how* they do inter-relate. Above all, it is important to remember that Trotsky's position was not simply derived from a theory of imperialism: it was based upon an understanding of the dynamics of class struggle, first in Russia, then in China, and upon a generalisation of these historical experiences.

Permanent Revolution after Trotsky: the historical record

Contrary to Trotsky's hopes and despite his efforts, the international socialist revolution did not happen. After World War Two, both imperialism and Stalinism found a new stability. Old colonial imperialism was largely superseded by a new imperialism, different in important respects from the capitalist system in Lenin's day. Bourgeois democratic movements for national independence were successful across the 'Third World'. Often as a result of long wars against brutal colonial domination, new nation states have been formed throughout Africa and many parts of Asia. In some countries, Stalinist states have been created.

This new reality poses many questions and throws some aspects of the theory of permanent revolution into sharp relief. In some respects this new reality has rendered the theory irrelevant or superfluous — not always or in every case; but in very many parts of the world, to speak today of 'permanent revolution' is an exercise in mystification.

Even in its generalised version, the theory relates to a limited range of situations. As we have seen, it was originally formulated to answer questions posed by an impending *bourgeois* revolution. It was extended to cover anti-colonial movements; but these likewise were, on the whole, bourgeois-revolutionary — not just in the sense that their principal demands were bourgeois democratic, but in the more fundamental sense that the movement for national independence was one part of an actually bourgeois-revolutionary struggle.

What are the limits to the situation Trotsky was describing?

a). The starting point for revolutionary struggle was a general issue of democracy (republic versus Tsar; independence versus colonialism). This democratic struggle mobilised a mass movement.

b). The bourgeoisie itself was at once relatively weak as a class, and closely tied

to the most visible enemy — to the Tsar, or old ruling classes more generally; to the colonial/imperialist power.

c). The working class was socially strong as a class, and its struggle could and did merge and inter-relate with the broader democratic struggle.

d). The bourgeois-democratic struggle was given wider social power and force by its interconnection with the revolt of a large class of poor peasants.

Of course, there have been situations in which these limits are stretched and a perspective of something very similar to permanent revolution applies even though the society is very considerably more developed than Russia was in 1917. The Spanish Revolution was an example. Trotsky specifically criticised the POUM's notion that the revolution was merely 'socialist'. Although Spain was relatively advanced compared to Russia, the criteria specified above were more or less relevant.

Similarly, South Africa today is a relatively advanced capitalist country; certainly what is at stake is not a 'bourgeois revolution' in any meaningful sense. But nor is the revolution merely 'socialist': and a working class strategy is something so broadly similar to the basic idea of permanent revolution that it would be scholastic to deny it. We could argue about whether there is a 'peasantry' in South Africa; but the unmistakeable fact is that the *immediate revolutionary issues* are those of elementary bourgeois democracy, and that on the basis of that struggle the organised working class can hope to rally the rural masses.

Generally, however, in conditions where there is no peasantry it is meaningless to speak of 'permanent revolution'. In Argentina, for example, there is no peasantry; nor is the bourgeoisie weak. The common 'Trotskyist' notion that the Argentinian revolution will be 'permanent' is therefore based on the alleged national oppression experienced by Argentina. This begs the question of the relationship between permanent revolution and the national question.

The national question: national independence

Faced with the end of colonial imperialism, many socialists, anxious to preserve their critique of it, reinterpreted basic Marxist ideas. In particular the notion of 'independence' underwent a transformation; and most would-be Trotskyists (albeit often unwittingly) went along with the changed conception.

Ex-colonies (even countries that have not been colonies for a long time) are considered to be only 'formally' independent as a result of decolonisation. 'Real' independence is denied them because of their subordination to more powerful national economies and multinational capital. Independence is thus defined *economically*; 'economic' independence becomes an objective of the socialist revolution. (7)

The theory of permanent revolution thus ends up looking something like this: under the leadership of the petty bourgeoisie or bourgeoisie, anti-colonial movements were unable to break the grip of imperialism; the oppressed nations remain 'semi-colonies' of the imperialist countries; only socialism can break this domination of imperialism; only socialism can bring genuine national (i.e. economic) independence. Socialism (which is defined as the working class seizure of power only as a preferable option) thus will bring 'economic independence'.

Ernest Mandel argues, for example: "the working strata of these ('underdeveloped') countries will have to push the colonial revolution towards the point where *liberation from the capitalist world market* by socialisation of the major means of production and the social surplus product make it possible to solve the agrarian problem and to launch full-scale industrialisation". He adds as an afterthought: "The building of a socialist economy can itself, of course, only be completed on a world scale." (8)

South Africa: a permanent revolution?

Michael Lowy, Mandel's co-thinker, defines national liberation as "the unification of the 'nation' and its political and economic emancipation from foreign (imperialist) domination...today it would be more familiar to speak of 'dependency'..." (9)

Cruder definitions are innumerable.

While, of course, a socialist workers' government would centralise its available surplus and implement a plan of production, this would by no means entail 'liberation from the capitalist world market'. Indeed, according to Trotsky (who was speaking of a very large country, the USSR):

"The proletariat of Tsarist Russia could not have taken power in October if Russia had not been a link — the *weakest* link, but a link, nevertheless — in the chain of *world economy*. The seizure of power by the proletariat has not at all excluded the Soviet republic from the system of the international division of labour created by capitalism." (10)

Or again:

"Anyone who sees 'pessimism' in an admission of our dependence on the world market (Lenin spoke bluntly of our *subordination* to the world market) reveals thereby his own provincial petty bourgeois timorousness in the face of the world market, and the pitiful character of his homebred optimism which hopes to hide from world economy behind a bush and to manage somehow with its own resources." (11)

The notion of 'economic independence' belongs to the tradition of 'socialism in one country'. The Marxist programme for dealing with massive inequalities within and between nations, terrible poverty in the Third World and so on, is not 'economic independence', but *international* socialist revolution. A big part of Trotsky's opposition to the idea of 'socialism in one country' was his correct conviction that economic independence was *impossible*, and the idea, indeed, reactionary.

Nor did the notion of 'economic independence' play any role in Lenin's understanding of the national question. The core to the Marxist programme on this question is the right of nations to self-determination. Lenin's opponents like Luxemburg and Piatakov argued precisely that self-determination was impossible because economic independence was impossible.

Lenin argued:

"National self-determination means political independence. Imperialism seeks to violate such independence because political annexation often makes economic annexation easier...But to speak of the *economic* 'unachievability of self-determination under imperialism' is sheer nonsense." (12)

Because:

"...self-determination concerns only politics, and it would be wrong even to raise the question of its economic unachievability". (13)

For Lenin, too, the answer to imperialism as an economic phenomenon was international socialist revolution.

As we have seen, Trotsky considered the unification and emancipation of China to be an international task. And in his later work he stressed the international dimension to the theory of permanent revolution even more, referring to the "permanent character of the socialist revolution as such":

"The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena, and is completed on the world arena...it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet." (14)

The democratic programme and permanent revolution

"It is impossible merely to reject the democratic programme; it is imperative that in the struggle the masses outgrow it...As a primary step, the workers must be armed with this democratic programme. Only then will they be able to summon and unite the farmers. On the

basis of the revolutionary democratic programme it is necessary to oppose the workers to the 'national' bourgeoisie.

"Then, at a certain stage in the mobilisation of the masses on the slogans of revolutionary democracy, soviets can and should arise...sooner or later, the soviets should overthrow bourgeois democracy. Only they are capable of bringing the democratic revolution to a conclusion and likewise opening an era of socialist revolution." (15)

A revolutionary democratic programme is therefore central to the general perspective of permanent revolution. It is one aspect of the socialist programme — and like any other aspect it can be fought for and won relatively independently. It is no more impossible in an absolute sense to implement the democratic programme on a capitalist basis than it is 'impossible' to have a sliding scale of wages on a capitalist basis.

Like any other aspect of the socialist programme, in isolation its results will be limited, possibly reactionary, or as Trotsky put it "directed entirely against the working masses". And this is exactly what has happened. National independence, for most of the 'Third World' has been won in isolation from the rest of the socialist programme. It is therefore limited, not usually accompanied by more general democracy, and has produced new 'national' ruling classes. But for many former colonies, the struggle for independence is over: it is as complete as it can be, short of international socialist revolution. It is pure mystification to call, for example, for 'national independence' for Argentina.

And there are some situations where national questions are central to the socialist programme, yet it is nevertheless mystifying to speak of 'permanent revolution'.

Ireland and Israel/Palestine

It is absurd by any rational criteria to believe that the theory and strategy of permanent revolution can be applied to the struggle of the Irish Catholics or the Palestinian Arabs. None of the basic political and social dynamics described by Trotsky apply.

In Russia or China or many anti-imperialist movements, the line of march was clear: the workers could establish their rule on the basis of becoming "the leader of the subjugated nation, above all of its peasant masses." Within the mass democratic movement, the workers could establish their own hegemony, through leadership of the democratic movement, and through integrating the democratic questions with its own programme of class power. You can see the relevance of such a perspective for South Africa today — with the qualifications mentioned above.

But Ireland? There is no Ireland-wide mass democratic struggle. The (legitimate and just) democratic struggle is confined to a small minority — about 10% of the population. A significant section of the working class is actively hostile to the demands of national democracy. The demand for national independence is not a rallying cry for a mass democratic movement within which the workers can establish their hegemony: it is an issue that *divides* the working class (in a far more fundamental sense than that some, say, black South African workers are not part of the democratic struggle or may actively fight against it). Ending that division requires a working class perspective on the democratic, national question.

For the Palestinians, too, it is difficult to see how a revolution could usher in socialism without having answered the question of relations between Arabs and Jews. As in Ireland, supposed adherents to the theory of permanent revolution try to fuse the specific democratic programme and the socialist programme in one of two ways. Either they call upon a united working class to lead the existing national struggle — without actually addressing the cause of division itself. Or they believe that a more 'revolutionary' or 'working class' prosecution of the existing struggle will *itself, automatically* solve the question of divisions. The democratic secular state, the argument runs, for example, can only be realised through a joint socialist struggle of the workers. But here the democratic and socialist programmes are simply dissolved into each other: 'socialism' is presented as an answer to the national conflict; a supposed answer to the national conflict is a disguised way of saying 'socialism'.

To argue that 'permanent revolution' is not relevant in these cases is not, of course, to advocate a resurrection of the old Menshevik/Stalinist policy of 'two stage revolution'. Both the Mensheviks and the Stalinists argued not just that socialist revolution was not immediately on the agenda, but that it was wrong in principle, premature, Blanquist or whatever. They therefore opposed the class struggle of the workers. The Popular Front policy in Spain was not just an abstract call for 'two stage revolution': the Stalinists opposed workers' struggles to the point of killing revolutionary workers.

We are for the victory of revolutionary working class movements in Ireland and Israel/Palestine. The aim of our democratic programme is to help create such movements. We don't say: hold back on your own specific struggles until the national question is solved. We say: a working class programme for the national question is necessary to build a united workers' movement.

Whether a united Ireland or a democratic solution to the Middle East conflict happen before a socialist revolution, or as a part of one, will depend entirely upon the balance of forces.

Socialists should not fail to fight as hard as we can for an immediate, democratic answer to national conflicts or situations of national oppression for fear of 'stagism'. That would be madness. And nor should we deck out our opposition to 'stagism' in mystifications.

Self-determination and permanent revolution

The demand for national self-determination is therefore just one democratic demand in the programme of socialist revolution. It can and should be fought for as an *immediate* demand. We are for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied West Bank, for example, and the right of the Arabs there to self-determination. To add 'but this is only possible on the basis of socialist revolution' would be sectarian ultimatism of a particularly primitive kind. (This also focuses another issue: you *can* demand immediate Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, but you can't demand immediate Israeli withdrawal from Israel; such a programme is therefore not a rational, democratic programme).

It is in any case simply not true to argue that self-determination can only be realised on a socialist basis. Post-war history has proved otherwise. The factor which explains this is the absence of a revolutionary International. Without such an International — without revolutionary parties — many outcomes to democratic struggles are possible. If Trotsky's theory is taken to be a prediction, it has been falsified by events. But it was not a 'prediction': its fulfilment depended upon the development of the 'subjective factor'. The revolutionary parties were not built, and history took a different course ●

Notes

1. Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party*, New Park, 1973, pp.28-9.
2. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects* in *Permanent Revolution and Results and Prospects*, New Park, 1982, p.203.
3. Trotsky, *Our Differences* in *1905*, Penguin 1971, p.332.
4. Trotsky, *Results and Prospects*, p.237.
5. *The Draft Programme of the Communist International — A Criticism of Fundamentals* in *The Third International After Lenin*, New Park, 1974, p.145.
6. *Permanent Revolution, op cit.* p.152, emphasised in original.
7. See Martin Thomas, *The Development of capitalism in the Third World* in *Under Whose Flag?, Workers' Liberty no. 3.*
8. E. Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, Verso 1978, p.376, emphasis added.
9. M. Lowy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development*, Verso 1981, p.161.
10. *The Draft Programme...*p.35.
11. *Ibid.* p.37.
12. *A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism, Collected Works,* Lawrence and Wishart, vol. 23, p.44.
13. *Ibid.* p.49.
14. *Permanent Revolution, op cit.* p.155.
15. *The Transitional Programme*, Pathfinder, 1973, pp.137-8.

Forging the weapon Part 2.

Brian Pearce explains how the Bolsheviks worked in a period of defeats for the Russian working class to prepare for the revolution of 1917.

At the Stockholm or 'Unity' Congress the Mensheviks found themselves in the majority on the central committee of the Russian Social Democratic and Labour Party (RSDLP).

Following the Congress, those delegates 'who belonged to the late "Bolshevik" faction', issued (May 1906), an appeal to the party membership in which they declared: "We must and shall fight ideologically against those decisions of the Congress which we regard as erroneous. But at the same time we declare that we are opposed to a split of any kind'. To work for another congress with a Bolshevik majority, Lenin and his associates formed a secret factional centre — what Zinoviev called 'an organisation which was doubly illegal: in relation to the Tsarist regime and in relation to the Mensheviks'. Those local party committees which had Bolshevik majorities sponsored a paper called *Proletary*, and the editorial board of this paper functioned as the leadership of the Bolshevik 'double underground'.

This was an extremely difficult period for the Bolsheviks in the party, but they were saved from it by the development of events in Russia in general and among the Mensheviks in particular in ways which they had foreseen. Evidence accumulated that political progress was not after all going to proceed as smoothly as the Mensheviks had claimed, while at the same time some of the Menshevik leaders came out more and more openly as people who were ready to destroy the independence of the party and even the party itself for the sake of a coalition with bourgeois liberals. Already before 1906 was out proposals began to be canvassed in Menshevik circles for dissolving the RSDLP in a 'broad Labour congress' modelled on the British Labour Party of that time — a loose, comprehensive body which would embrace the trade unions, the cooperatives, petty-bourgeois radical groups, etc.

The July Days 1917

In Petersburg the local Mensheviks defied the views of their Bolshevik comrades in the 'united' party organisations and linked up electorally with the liberals. Lenin's reply to this was to publish a pamphlet attacking the Mensheviks for treason to the common cause. Summoned before a party court on a charge of violating discipline, he showed himself quite unrepentant and aggressive. There was no real unity in the party, he said, and a *de facto* split had taken place. 'What is impermissible among members of a united party is permissible and obligatory for the parts of a party that has been split'. The Mensheviks of the party court had better think carefully before coming to a decision to expel him: 'Your judgement will determine whether the shaken unity of the RSDLP will be weakened or strengthened'. Lenin was not expelled.

The balance of support within the party was now moving slowly but steadily towards the Bolsheviks again, as fair-weather members dropped away and the more stable of the new members learnt from experience, observed the conduct of the Menshevik leaders and absorbed the influence of the old cadres. The Fifth (London) Congress, held in 1907, and elected no less democratically than the Fourth, proved to have a small pro-Bolshevik majority. It was at this congress that the party adopted as Rule Two of its organisational statute: 'All party organisations are built on the principles of democratic centralism'. A number of

decisions in the direction of further democratisation were taken; a *congress* was to be held every year, with one delegate for every thousand members, and an all-Russia *conference* every three months, with one delegate for every 5,000 members.

No congress could in fact be held thereafter until 1917, owing to the onset of reaction. Only two days after the close of the Fifth Congress came the Tsarist coup d'etat of June 3, 1907, and a more severe reign of terror than ever began. The central committee elected by the Congress, though predominantly pro-Bolshevik, was very mixed, and the Bolshevik faction decided to keep its secret leading centre in being.

Lenin's balance-sheet

In the second half of 1907 Lenin prepared for publication a collection of his writings to be entitled *Twelve Years*. Only one and a half of the projected volumes were actually published, and these were seized by the police. (A few copies circulated illegally, but not until 1918 did *Twelve Years* appear again, in full and openly). The preface which Lenin wrote for this collection, in September 1907, is often referred to by opponents of Leninism as proof that at this time (the opening of the period of blackest reaction!) Lenin repudiated the ideas of party organisation which he had expounded in 1902 in *What Is To Be Done?* and elsewhere.To show the mendacity of this allegation and to present Lenin's own estimation of the balance sheet of the 'twelve years' from the organisational standpoint, here is a lengthy quotation from the preface in question:

"The basic mistake which is made by people who nowadays polemicise against **What Is To Be Done?** consists in their completely detaching this work from its connection with a definite historical situation — a definite, and now already long-past period in the development of our party. This mistake was strikingly committed by Parvus, for example (not to mention innumerable Mensheviks), when he wrote, many years after the appearance of this pamphlet, about its incorrect or exaggerated ideas regarding the organisation of professional revolutionaries.

"At the present time such statements make a frankly comical impression. It is as though people want to brush aside a whole phase in the development of our party, to brush aside those conquests which in their day cost a struggle to achieve but which now have long since become consolidated and done their work. To argue today about *Iskra's* exaggerations (*in*1901 *and* 1902!) of the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries is the same as though, *after* the Russo-Japanese War, one were to reproach the Japanese for having exaggerated the strength of Russia's armed forces, for having been exaggeratedly anxious before the war about the struggle against these forces. The Japanese had to summon up all their strength against the maximum possible power of Russia, so as to ensure victory. Unfortunately, many people judge our party from outside, without knowing what they are talking about, without seeing that *now* the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries has *already* won a complete victory. But this victory would have been impossible unless this idea had been put *in the forefront* in its day, so as 'exaggeratedly' to make those people grasp this idea who were hindering its realisation.

"*What Is To Be Done?* is a *summary* of the *Iskra* group's tactics and organisational policy in 1901 and 1902. Just a summary, no more and no less. Whoever will take the trouble to familiarise himself with the *Iskra* of 1901 and 1902 will undoubtedly convince himself of that. And whoever judges this summary without knowledge of *Iskra's* fight against the then *predominant* economism and without an understanding of this struggle is merely talking through his hat. *Iskra* fought for the creation of an organisation of professional revolutionaries, fighting especially energetically in 1901 and 1902; overcame the economism which then predominated; *created* the organisation at last in 1903; upheld this organisation, in spite of the subsequent split in the *Iskra* group, in spite of all the troubles of this period of storm and stress, upheld it during the whole of the Russian revolution, upheld and preserved it from 1901-2 through to 1907.

"And behold, now, when the fight for this organisation has long since been concluded, when the ground has been sown, when the grain has ripened and the harvest has been reaped, people appear and announce that there has been: "an exaggeration of the idea of an organisation of professional revolutionaries"! Isn't it laughable?

"Take the entire pre-revolutionary period and the first two-and-a-half years of the revolution (1905-7) as a whole. Compare for this period our Social-Democratic Party with other parties, from the standpoint of cohesion, organised character, continuity of purpose. You will have to acknowledge that from *this* standpoint the superiority of our party over *all* the others — the Cadets, the SRs and the rest — has been *indubitable*. The Social-Democratic Party worked out before the revolution a programme which was formally accepted by all members and, while making amendments to it, never broke away from this programme. The Social-Democratic party (in spite of the split from 1903 to 1907 (formally from 1905 to 1906), made public the fullest information about its internal situation, in the minutes of the Second (general) congress, the Third (Bolshevik) congress and the Fourth or Stockholm (general) congress. The Social-Democratic Party, in spite of the split, utilised the momentary gleam of freedom earlier than any of the other parties to introduce an ideal democratic structure for its open organisation with an elective system and representation at congresses according to the number of organised members of the party: Neither the SRs nor the Cadets have done this yet — these almost-legal, very well organised bourgeois parties which possess incomparably greater financial resources, scope in use of the press and possibility of functioning openly than ourselves. And did not the elections to the Second Duma, in which all parties took part, show graphically that the organisational cohesion of our party and our Duma group is higher than that of any other?

"The question arises — who achieved, who realised this greater cohesion, stability and staunchness of our party? This was done by the organisation of professional revolutionaries created above all with the participation of *Iskra*. Whoever knows the history of our party well, whoever has himself lived through the building of our party, needs only to take a simple glance at the composition of the delegation of any faction, let us say, at the London congress, to be covinced, to note at once the old basic nucleus which, more diligently than anybody else, cherished and reared the party. The basic condition for this success was, of course, the fact that the working class, the flower of which created the Social-Democratic party, is distinguished, owing to objective economic causes, from all other classes in capitalist society by its greater capacity for organisation. Without this condition the organisation of professional revolutionaries would have been a toy, an adventure, a meaningless signboard, and the pamphlet *What Is To Be Done?* stresses repeatedly that only in connection with a "really revolutionary class which spontaneously rises in struggle" does the organisation which this pamphlet defends make sense. But the objectively very great capacity of the proletariat to be organised is carried out by living people, is carried out not otherwise than in definite forms of organisation. And no other organisation than that put forward by *Iskra could*, in our historical circumstances, in the Russia of 1900-05, have created such a Social-Democratic Workers' Party as has now been created. The professional revolutionary has done his job in the history of Russian proletarian socialism. And no power will now disrupt the work which has long since outgrown the narrow limits of the "circles"; no belated complaints about exaggerations of the fighting tasks by those who in their day could only by struggle ensure a correct approach to the fulfilment of these tasks will shake the significance of the conquests which have already been achieved."

With the advance of reaction and dissipation of the rosy illusions of 1905 the Bolshevik *proportion* in the ranks of

the party continued to grow. At the Party Conference held in November 1907, the Bolsheviks were able to secure the passing of resolutions which subordinated the Social-Democratic group in the Duma to the Central Committee and forbade Party members to contribute articles to the bourgeois press on inner-party questions. At the Party Conference held in December 1908, in view of the now intense police terror in Russia, the elective principle in organisation was sharply modified and the party regime of before 1905 was in the main restored. This conference also passed a resolution condemning 'liquidationism' (advocacy of dissolving the party in a broad Labour Congress), a political disease now spreading very rapidly in the upper circles of the Menshevik faction.

While extreme right-wing tendencies grew among Mensheviks, an ultra-left tendency appeared in the ranks of the Bolsheviks under these conditions of reaction. This took the form of 'Otzovism' ('recall-ism'), a system of ideas justifying withdrawal from all attempts to work in the Duma and other legal organisations and concentration of activity exclusively on underground work. At a meeting of the editorial board of *Proletary* (the secret Bolshevik factional leadership) in the summer of 1909 'Otzvoism' was condemned as having nothing in common with Bolshevism, and members of the faction were called upon to fight against it. So far as the leading 'Otzvoist', Bogdanov, was concerned, it was resolved that the fraction took no further responsibility for his doings (he had set up a 'Party school' at which he preached his doctrines); but it is not correct to say that the 'Otzvoists' were expelled from the Bolshevik faction. On the contrary, the factional leadership stated that it aimed at avoiding an *organisational* split with the 'Otzvoists' and would strive to win them back to Bolshevism. (They themselves broke away, trying to form a faction of their own around a paper they called *Vperyod*, after the Bolshevik factional paper of 1904; but this did not win much influence, and most of the 'Otzovists' found their way back to Bolshevism in due course).

At this same meeting a decision was taken *against* agitation for a separate Bolshevik congress to be convened at once, as advocated by some comrades indignant with the degeneration of Menshevism into 'liquidationism'. The latter development had aroused misgivings among many of the Menshevik rank and file who, though they disagreed with the Bolsheviks on some important political points, shared with them the conviction that the workers must retain an independent party of their own, organised for illegal as well as legal activity. If the Bolsheviks played their cards properly they could win over a substantial section of this Menshevik rank and file; at this stage it would be wrong to take the initiative in splitting the party, though a split was inevitable in the not too distant future. A fight must be waged under the slogan of 'preservation and consolidation of the RSDLP'.

One of the most influential Menshevik leaders, the veteran propagandist of Marxism, Plekhanov, came out against 'liquidationism' and gathered around him those Mensheviks who regarded the continued existence of the party as a *sine qua non*. With these 'pro-Party Mensheviks' Lenin formed an alliance for the specific purpose of fighting the 'liquidators'. Plekhanov had played a negative role in 1904-08 and was to return to that role later, but, in Zinoviev's words, 'during the difficult years 1909, 1910 and 1911 Plekhanov rendered invaluable services to the party'. Through his alliance with Plekhanov, Lenin was able to make contact with wide sections of the Menshevik workers whom otherwise he could not have approached so easily.

The conciliators

The Bolsheviks' striving to isolate and eliminate the liquidators was for a time complicated by the appearance in their own ranks of a 'conciliationist' tendency which, demoralised by the shrinking in the size and influence of the RSDLP under the blows of reaction, and by the sneers of outsiders, including the spokesmen of the Second International, at the 'faction-ridden' state of the Russian workers' movement, wearily urged the dissolution of all factions, 'mutual amnesty' and general brotherhood at the expense of all differences of principle. At a meeting of the Central Committee in January 1910, these conciliationists carried a resolution obliging everybody to dissolve their factions and close down their factional papers. The Bolsheviks fulfilled their obligations under this resolution, but the liquidators failed to do so. This open flouting of the party finally exposed the liquidators in the eyes of numerous Mensheviks, and Lenin and Plekhanov made the most of the situation. At the end of 1910 the Bolsheviks announced that they regarded themselves as released from the undertaking they had given in January, and launched a weekly paper, *Zvezda*, which was edited jointly with the 'pro-Party Mensheviks'.

Zvezda functioned in the years 1910-12, as *Iskra* has functioned in 1900-1903, as the organiser of a regrouping of political forces on a basis which it helped to clarify. The task, said Lenin, was not to 'reconcile certain given persons and groups, irrespective of their work and attitude' but to organise people around 'a definite party line'. 'Unity is inseparable from its ideological foundation'.

The Bolsheviks were aided in their work now by the revival of the working class movement which was beginning, favoured by the boom which had started in 1909. With less danger of unemployment — and with the paralysing shock of the reaction of 1907 somewhat worn off — the workers began to recover their militant spirit. Strikes increased; and in 1912 the shooting down of some strikers in the Lena goldfields was to enable the Bolsheviks to infuse political consciousness into this militancy on a large scale. Pressed between the increasingly restive working class on the one hand and the grim wall of Tsarism on the other, the liquidators were obliged to move even faster and show their full intentions without dallying any longer. In June 1911, Martov and Dan, leading liquidators, resigned from the editorial board of the official organ of the RSDLP and declared the latter to be no longer existent so far as they were concerned.

The moment had come to carry out the reconstitution of the party on new lines. In December 1911 Lenin was in a position to record that the Bolsheviks and 'pro-Party Mensheviks' had formed an Organisation Committee to prepare for a special party conference; that in the course of joint work these two factions had practically fused in such key centres as Baku and Kiev; and that, 'for the first time after four years of ruin and disintegration', a Social-Democratic leading centre had met inside Russia, issued a leaflet to the party, and begun the work of re-establishing the underground organisations which had broken up under the combined action of police terror and liquidationist propaganda.

When the special party conference met in Prague in 1912 it was found to be the most representative party gathering since the Second Congress. Every faction in the RSDLP had been invited, but only Bolsheviks and 'pro-Party Mensheviks' attended; the underground organisations on which the conference was based were now practically entirely in the hands of these two factions. The conference took to itself all the rights and functions of a party congress, and formally expelled the liquidators from the RSDLP. A new central committee was elected to replace the one elected in 1907, which had collapsed after the fiasco of 1910; this central committee was entirely Bolshevik in composition except for one 'pro-Party Menshevik'. The faction of 'pro-Party Mensheviks' disappeared soon afterwards; while Plekhanov and a few other leaders broke with the Bolsheviks, the bulk of the rank and file came over completely to the Bolshevik position, as Lenin had foreseen. Henceforth, until it changed its name to 'Communist Party' in 1918, the party was the 'RSDLP (Bolsheviks)', with the Petersburg daily *Pravda* as its central organ. The Bolshevik *faction* had at last completed its development into the Bolshevik *party* — the party which, after fusing in 1917 with Trotsky's *Mezhrayontsi* ('inter-ward group'), led the great October proletarian revolution●

The first part of this account of the Bolsheviks' history appeared in Workers' Liberty no. 6. The article first appeared in 'Labour Review' in 1960.

CLR James on black politics

C L R James joined the Trotskyist movement in the mid-'30s after coming to Britain from his native Trinidad; later he moved to the US and took part in the discussions with Trotsky published in the pamphlet 'Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination' (Pathfinder Press). In this interview James also talks about his contact with James Connolly's daughter Nora, and his work in launching the first agitation for the independence of colonial Africa, in the 1930s, with George Padmore. After 1935, in line with Stalin's policy of a cross-class 'Popular Front against fascism', the Communist Parties had dropped the call for independence for the colonies of the 'democratic' imperialist powers such as Britain and France.

CLR James in the 1930s

I was in the Labour Party. I was a Labour Party man but I found myself to the left of the Labour Party in Nelson, militant as that was. I came to London and in a few months I was a Trotskyist.

I joined the Labour Party in London and there I met Trotskyists who were distributing a pamphlet. The Trotskyists decided to go into the ILP and I went with them.

I was active in Hampstead. I joined the Hampstead group in NW3 and we had meetings almost every evening. In the summer we held meetings along the side of the road. We put up something to stand on and we sold books and spoke. I used to go into Hyde Park and I was a speaker there.

In Ireland they had read about me and sent for me to come because I was speaking against the British Government.

I met Nora Connolly O'Brien. She came to London for the ILP. I had invited her. I remember that woman, because in those days the British Trotskyist revolutionaries were no more than left wing Labour.

So I went to meet her and invited her to come over here and speak and she did. Coming from the railway station we crossed the river by Parliament, and she said, "You should have done away with that years ago, it is easy from the river". So I said "Yes, we were revolutionaries, but bombing the Houses of Parliament was useless." "You're talking of something that you know nothing about!" She instinctively saw the revolutionary possibilities. From this side of the river you could bomb the Houses of Parliament and get away with it.

I knew George Padmore in Trinidad. As boys we used to live in Arima and go and bathe in the river there. When we grew up, he was far more of a leftist that I was. I was a historian, while George had joined the labour movement in Trinidad before I did. Then he went to America and I lost him. Then I came to England and joined the labour movement, and became a Trotskyist.

Then the news came that George Padmore had been expelled from the United States and had come to England. Everyone was talking about "George Padmore" and there was a meeting and "George Padmore" was my old friend, my schoolboy friend from Trinidad! I hadn't the faintest idea that "George Padmore", whom I had written about spoken about and recommended to everyone was the same. That night when we left the meeting we went to eat and finally parted at four o'clock in the morning, speaking the whole time about the revolutionary movement.

Now he was a member of the Communist Party and had been a high official, he had lived in Moscow. I was a Trotskyist, but we remained good friends and when he left the Communist Party we joined together and formed the Black movement which I had started. When Padmore came in, he said that he was a Marxist, but what about the Colonial question? What about Africa? That movement became an African movement, a Marxist African movement. Padmore did that. He educated me and I carried it on. After he died, people began to think that I had brought Marxism to the African movement. It wasn't so.

Did he ever speak to you about his bad experiences with the Communist International

Padmore said when he was in Germany he had been sent to England. They wanted a black man in the Communist International in Moscow and as he was the right one so they sent him. He went to Moscow, he had nobody, but they made him into a big political leader. He married a Moscow girl and on Mayday when Stalin, Molotov and the others would be on the platform reviewing the revolutionaries, they would invite him, and he would be up there with them representing the Caribbean, where they had nobody.

When the Communist Party began to change their line they said that they could no longer be completely for the revolution in the Caribbean. In your country and in America the blacks had democracy, so we are not going to attack them. There are some democratic capitalists. He said, "I come from those countries, and they know me for years as the man who had denounced the 'democratic capitalists'. How do you expect me to go there and write and say that this is democratic capitalism?" They said to him, "Well George, sometimes you have to change the line". His answer was, "Well boys, this is one line I can't change". He broke with them and went to England and we joined together and reformed the Pan-African movement

Marcus Garvey's first wife and I founded the journal International African Opinion.

I am being cautious here, because I haven't got documents. As I remember it, there was nobody concerned about the colonial movement in Western politics. Nevertheless something was happening. Mussolini had attacked Ethiopia and Mrs Garvey and I said that we were openly to oppose that.

We tried all ways [to get our journal into the colonial world]. We couldn't get it in normally, because many of those colonial governments, and those that came in afterwards, were quite hostile to us. Others if not hostile were sympathetic that James was writing books that brought in the colonial people, but were nevertheless unfriendly because the books were Marxist, Trotskyist. We had one or two people who worked on the waterfront. They gave the pamphlets to seamen and people in boats. In that way it went around.

I am very conscious that most of the African leaders of the independence movement, who were in Europe, orientated naturally towards the Marxist movement which said we are for freedom in the colonies. Later I was often invited to come and speak on the Marxist movement in Africa.

It was in a very small way influenced by the Stalinists. Normally they would have dominated it. Those leaders who had worked in London hadn't become Trotskyists — but we had so educated them that Stalinism didn't do much to them.

Did you attempt to have conferences with them and try to get them to discuss together the idea of a United Africa, or anything like that?

I must say the idea of a United Africa was nonsense. That was quite obvious. It was not a practical proposition. East Africa was one way, West Africa another and Central a third way. On the coast there were different tongues, and away from the coast you had entirely different African villages and styles. So whilst in every resolution or at the end, you spoke of Africa united at every important part, you knew it wasn't being realistic. It was a general vision, and one that would become an ideal.

I once spoke, and it was very effective, and said that the unity of Africa was closer, theoretically speaking, than the unity of Europe for this reason, that the African states were not organically settled as was Britain, France, Germany. There were large tribal organisations but they didn't have the barriers between them that the European states had. But the policy shouldn't be put forward when people objected. But that was all. There were one or two fanatics who talked about it...

Is there any truth in the statement that Trotsky and James supported a black state in America?

NO! NO! NO! We discussed in some detail plans to help create and build an independent black organisation in the United States. That we did, but we were thinking of a political grouping that would advocate the cause of the blacks. But this was taken up by people to mean that we wanted to build a little black section of the United States — a black Mississippi!

There were people in the United States doing that who were claiming that a part of Mississippi should be a black state, but the Marxist movement had nothing to do with that — absolutely nothing! But our enemies, or one or two of them, took it up when we said, "an independent black organisation". I am sure that if you read the resolution you will see that it makes clear that it was a political organisation fighting for the position of rights in general and the black people in particular. That was misinterpreted to mean something else, but nobody took it seriously, although we had a lot of trouble with it.

CLR James was interviewed by Al Richardson on Sunday 8th June and 16th November 1986 in South London. Also present were Clarence C and Ms Ann Grimshaw. The full text of this interview is to be published separately by Socialist Platform.

The 'Perdition' affair: a letter

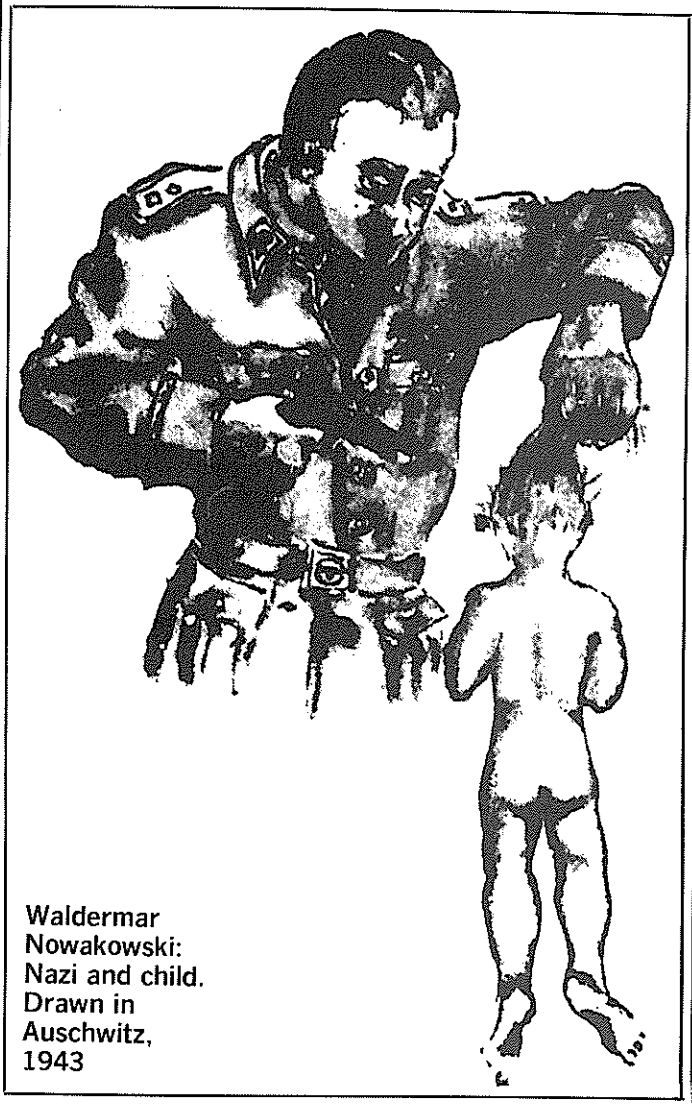
JIM ALLEN is accused of being "vainglorious, boastful" and the campaign against the banning of Perdition is described as being "smart" and "disingenuous" ("The Perdition Affair" by John O'Mahony, WL6).

Far be it from me to accuse John O'Mahony of these sins, despite setting himself up as some form of expert on the subject matter under discussion. But where O'Mahony is wrong is when he equates freedom of speech for anti-Zionists and socialists with the right of those who disagree with Perdition to campaign for its banning. It's like saying that a film on police violence against pickets or MI5 on TV can only expect the state to react and seek a ban and those who seek to oppose such a ban are 'smart' and 'disingenuous'.

Of course the state will seek to ban that with which it disagrees, as it did over 'Real Lives' or indeed the refusal of the BBC to reshow Jim Allen's plays including the award winning 'Days of Hope', but since when do marxists recognise such bans as merely something to be expected? We campaign against them precisely because the prevailing ideas in this society are anti-socialist and freedom of speech means our freedoms, those of the vast majority of people in this country. So too with Perdition.

Who was it who was campaigning for a ban if not the most reactionary sections of the political establishment? Lord Goodman in 'The Standard' (a paper well known for its anti-racism), the 'Independent', the 'Mail' and 'Sun', Martin Gilbert (biographer of Churchill) in the 'Telegraph' and a leader in the same paper (the Telegraph opposed to anti-Semitism!?). Finally, in the 'Times', no less than Bernard Levin takes an identical position to that of O'Mahony: Perdition is anti-Semitic, but he defends its right to be staged. This is the same 'Times' which at present is defending Nazi war criminals on the run in Britain and accusing those who wish to see them hunted down at pursuing 'vendettas'.

Likewise the overwhelming majority of the media treats the Palestinians as terrorists and a problem. The Israeli state is still treated as the David of the Middle East, the Israeli state as democracy, and Zionist figures like Ben-Gurion with awe and respect. Films and documentaries deal with the Holocaust through the prism of Zionist hindsight with the message being that a Jewish state would have prevented catastrophe.



Waldermar Nowakowski: Nazi and child. Drawn in Auschwitz, 1943

Perdition ran contrary to all this which is why there was a massive Zionist campaign for it to be banned. This campaign included many non-Jewish Zionists, people like Conor Cruise O'Brien and other reactionaries, who would never lift a finger to fight racism but who were willing to speak out against Perdition.

The only time we would support a ban was if Perdition was a play attempting to incite racial hatred. It doesn't, O'Mahony knows it doesn't, as do its mainly Jewish cast and the many Jews — Holocaust surivors included — who support its being shown.

O'Mahony argues that Perdition argues that Zionism needed an extra million dead Jews in order to achieve statehood. It doesn't, indeed it says quite the opposite. What it does do is show the mixture of Zionist fatalism, opportunism, cynicism and 'realpolitik' that led the Zionist movement to obstruct the efforts of others to mount rescue campaigns at the critical time.

Comparisons of Perdition with stage-managed Moscow trials or blood-libel feudal-Christian anti-Semitism are absurd. Why not compare it with the trial on which it is based, that of Kastner, where Kastner too failed to put up a defence? In making this absurd judgement, which the Jewish Chronicle immediately picked up on, O'Mahony fails to deal with the substantive material of the play. He doesn't ask what type of movement it is that obstructs rescue in the West by insisting on Palestine as the only destination for Jews, which concluded an economic transfer agreement with Nazi Germany, which sees a 'divine hand' in anti-Semitism even today, that separates out Jews from non-Jews in Israel today in just the same way as European anti-Semites sought to do with Jews.

The intemperate attack on Perdition can only give sustenance to those who seek to portray Zionism as some form of national liberation movement rather than a danger to Jews and Arabs alike.

Tony Greenstein

A reply

Tony Greenstein praises and justifies 'Perdition' by pointing to some of those who are against it. That's altogether too crude. Yet it is the normal standard of judgment used by the two-camps left in world politics.

Here, as on everything else, the serious Marxist left needs an independent judgment. On a second reading, I think I was too soft on 'Perdition', much too soft.

The factual accuracy of Allen's account of Hungary has been contested on a number of important points. Here I will discuss what Allen makes of what he says are the facts.

A 'Hungarian Zionist leader', 'Yaron', has been accused of 'collaborating' with the Nazis in the mass murder of Hungary's Jews in 1944. He has brought a libel case against his accusers. Towards the end of the play Scott, counsel for Yaron's opponents, asks Yaron about a train on which, after negotiations between Jewish leaders and the Nazis, 1684 Jews escaped. How were the 1684 selected? Yaron says their first choice was to save the children.

Scott: *Why didn't you?*
Yaron: *Eichmann and Wisliceny refused. They thought that a children's transport might attract too much attention.*
Scott: *But 12 trains a day were already leaving for the killing centre at Auschwitz?*
Yaron: *It was their decision.*
Scott: *And so naturally you agreed...*

Yaron — the Jew, facing the mass murder of his community by the Nazis — is presented as a free and equal collaborator with the Nazi leaders.

Or take this exchange:

Scott: *In your earlier testimoney you said that you were innocent of committing treason against your own people.*
Yaron: *Yes.*
Scott: *Liar! The evidence presented in this court has proved beyond any reasonable doubt that you... collaborated with the Nazis.*
Yaron: *We represented the best interests of our people.*
Scott: *By sending them to the gas chambers?*
Yaron (agitated): *I explain, but you won't listen!*
Scott: *The language is unequivocal: betrayal. There was a distinction between the needs of the Hungarian Jews and the dictates of Zionism, and let us not blur that distinction by all this talk about 'representing their best interests'. To save your own hides you practically led them to the gates of Auschwitz. You offered soothing assurances while the ovens were made ready, the transports organised, the deportation orders signed, and the lists already made up.*
Yaron: *I told you. Our Zionist tradition demanded...*
Scott: *Dogma before people!*
Yaron: *Not to save our hides.*
Scott: *Not from ignorance.*
Yaron: *No.*
Scott: *Mistakes?*
Yaron: *No.*
Scott: *From conviction then. (Pause) Was it worth it? Was the purchase price of nearly one million Jews worth it?*
Yaron (as if reciting): *The crea-*

tion of the Jewish state above all other considerations.
Scott: *Coined in the blood and tears of Hungarian Jewry.*
Yaron: *We had to subordinate our feelings.*
Scott (mockingly): *The cruel criteria of Zionism!*
Yaron: *All deeds good or bad must be judged by the final outcome.*
Scott: *Now at last we are getting down to it.*
Yaron: *By the consequences... and by the historical aims they serve.*
...
Scott: *And Zionism is a political movement.*
Yaron: *Tied to God through its religious faith and sanctioned by the prophets whose ideas gave it birth.*
Scott: *But why wait 2000 years? If Zionism was only discovered in the late 19th century when Herzl appeared on the scene...*
Judge: *I do hope that we are not about to enter into a theological discussion, Mr Scott?*
Scott (grins): *Sorry. (Pause) Would you not agree that the more earthy demands of Zionism are reduced to territory, Dr Yaron? After all, that is what the six day war was all about, wasn't it? Expansion?*
Yaron: *Protection.*
Scott: *Morally justifiable of course? (Yaron offers a wintry smile). Given that 'the creation of the State of Israel stands above all other considerations', then from the materialistic Zionist point of view, was it morally right to betray the Jews of Hungary?*
Yaron (snaps): *Was it morally right to drop the bomb on Hiroshima?*
Scott (unsure): *No...*
Yaron: *Then kindly spare me your ethical fainting fits!*

The hatred and loathing embodied in this passage, the dramatic climax of the play, is palpable, and I'm not sure it is just loathing of 'Zionism'.

Yaron is characterised as a sneaking, revengeful and vicious ex-victim who collaborated with his oppressors and helped them against his own people for reasons of an unreasoning, absolute, mystical commitment to 'Zionism'. The playwright allows Yaron to offer no real defence: Yaron's answers simply serve to build up the case against him by asserting that his actions are due to 'Zionism'.

There is even a Stalinist-type amalgam between Zionism and religion. In fact most of the Zionists in that period were atheists or not especially religious. This is one of many examples of the way that Allen's target broadens far beyond the present, or the wartime, Zionist movement, to Jews in general, or to his idea of Jews.

Despite all the histrionics, nothing remotely serious is ever said about how it all fits together — how the betrayal of Hungarian Jews (including lots of Hungarian Zionists) served the historical programme of Zionism. The play zig-zags between political assertions and explanations in terms of personal self-serving by Yaron.

Yaron is allowed some spirited lines, for example accusing Britain and the USA of refusing to bomb the railway lines to Auschwitz, to stop the death trains. But politically and intellectually — and it is a political argument or it is nothing — 'Perdition' never rises above the level of old-style Stalinist or Healyite stock-in-trade polemic. There is a lot more of the same sort of stuff.

Take another comment by Scott:

"They allowed themselves to become Eichmann's Trojan Horse, the Zionist knife in the Nazi fist. The simple, terrible truth is that the Jews of Hungary were murdered, not just by the force of German arms, but by the calculated [sic] treachery of their own Jewish leaders". All through the play Allen zig-zags between denouncing Zionists and Jews. The result is that they are more or less identical.

In the following sentence he lapses back to 'Zionists' to avoid open absurdity: "In terms of salvation, the only 'chosen people' left in Budapest were these Zionists". The use here of the term often favoured by anti-semites is, incidentally, quite representative of the play, which is full of Christian images in inappropriate places.

Or take — in detail — the judge's summing-up, which encapsulates the 'message' Allen wrote the play to convey.

The judge (i.e. Jim Allen) sums up the 'charge' against Yaron: *"Miss Kaplan has accused Dr Yaron of collaboration with the Nazis, of fratricide, of helping in the destruction of his own people".* **The "accusation" has branded Yaron** *"with the mark of Cain".*

How has the judge (Allen) understood the defence made by and for Yaron? *"The defence has entered a plea of justification, which simply means an admission that the words defamatory of Dr Yaron... were true".* **The judge has 'understood' Yaron to say that** *"he cooperated with the Nazis, but he justifies this cooperation by saying that this was the only way that he and his colleagues could help their community".*

'Perdition' makes its account of events in Hungary in 1944 serve for all the Nazi-controlled and surrounded Jewish ghettoes in Eastern Europe. Characters giving 'evidence' garrulously include details of the lives and behaviour of some of the strange satraps who ran the Judenrate (Jewish Councils) in Polish ghettoes. All details and particularities are blurred and blended into one picture.

It may be legitimate dramatic technique to concentrate, distill, and focus material. But it works totally against registering the gradations of experience of the Jewish communities.

For 1944 Hungary, it can be argued in retrospect that refusal to comply with Nazi instructions would have saved more people in the end, though immediately it would have led to mass slaughter of unknowable proportions and scale. Even there, to explore 'bargains' made sense to people whose alternative was to give the signal for mass slaughter to commence. The Jewish community was unarmed, facing the Nazis, and surrounded also by a considerable degree of Hungarian anti-semitism, though compared to the Nazis this traditional Catholic prejudice was almost benign. Jewish leaders hoped to play for time until the Russian army drove the Nazis from Hungary.

But in Hungary, we can say with hindsight that resistance might have saved many lives. No such thing can be said of the Jewish ghettoes in Poland, who were surrounded by the Nazis: all resistance was met with immediate mass murder, whose potential scale at any moment would be unknown.

Yet this is how the judge sums up, supposedly dealing with Hungary but speaking at the end of a play in which Hungary and Poland and everywhere else in Eastern Europe have been indiscriminately mashed together.

The opponents of Yaron, says the judge (Allen), *"argued that this was not cooperation but collaboration. That Eichmann needed the support of the Jewish leaders in order to hoodwink the Jews and make it easier for them to get them to participate in their own annihilation.".*

The judge then picks out bits of the 'evidence' to summarise Allen's case — and he cites the Nazi decree giving the Jewish Council control over all Jews, as if it were the Jewish leaders' fault.

The Council allegedly distributed postcards from Auschwitz inmates written at gunpoint, to reassure the Jews in Budapest. The judge discusses the train at length. Yaron's opponents had claimed *"that the train was filled with privileged functionaries, young Zionists, and wealthy prominents, a fact which Dr Yaron himself did not contend. He... justified the selection by saying that had it been left to Eichmann, 'Palestine would have been flooded with cripples, old people, and socially worthless elements'."*

The judge (Allen) continues: *"We approach a most difficult and sensitive area, for we are dealing with what Dr Yaron describes as 'the cruel criteria of Zionism... the Zionist tradition that it is right to save the few out of the many'. Now this might appear as heartless",* **adds the judge, a man of rigorous principle who believes in all or nothing, or maybe that you should not bother with a measly 1684 lives.**

With that remark to show his good heart and clear head, the judge (Allen) then discusses the moral question. *"Individuals are often praised for their heroism in war after performing deeds which at the time earned condemnation, yet which in the long term appear to have been noble and justified".* **The other way round, too, says this unusual judge, who is really the Trotskyist Jim Allen — citing the atom-bombing of Japan. He thinks maybe the Hague Convention will have to be** *"revised to accommodate new concepts of mass murder".*

With that warm-up, the judge then says this:

"Looking at it from Dr Yaron's point of view, ruthless measures **[i.e. he accepts the allegations in the play]** *must of necessity accompany progressive aims, and the harsh doctrine of Zionism* **[sic — i.e., as defined by the 'ruthless measures', identified with and thereby made responsible for Yaron's 'collaboration']** *is justified within the historical context of what was necessary to achieve a new Homeland in Palestine. 'When needs must the devil drives'. But here we are back on the shifting sands of morality, of the ends justifying the means, and I don't want to go into that".*

But he will, and having asserted that collaboration with the Nazis to save 1684 and kill hundreds of thousands of Jews was a means to the end of achieving the Jewish homeland, he doesn't pause to ask himself how such means, in Hungary or anywhere in Eastern Europe, could possibly serve the ends of Zionism.

He continues, driving home the point to which all the philosophy is leading up. *"Nevertheless, it can be argued that Israel exists today as a direct result of the actions of David Ben Gurion and men like Dr Yaron".* **He means 'actions' like 'collaborating' with the Nazis in killing Jews.**

The stuff about necessary ruthlessness and singlemindedness in a progressive and noble cause is in fact tongue-in-cheek, for earlier in the play Israel today has been roundly condemned. The philosophising serves only as a bridge between the allegations against Yaron and the assertion that collaboration with the Nazis lies at the root of Israel — that there is a sort of world Jewish-Nazi conspiracy to replace the old Jewish-Bolshevik conspiracy.

In a serious discussion or play, the judge would question and probe all the unproven assertions and unestablished links. Here, even his 'sympathy' for Yaron's side serves to condemn it.

The judge clinches the point, just to make sure you remember it, and works in human consideration and spurious sympathy to disarm resistance to his message. *"It is a complex issues with different strands woven into the pitiless tapestry of war, genocide and the efforts of a group of individuals trying, against all odds"* **— and by deliberately betraying millions of their own people and helping the Nazis lead them to the slaughter!** *— "to build a nation, a haven for a people persecuted throughout history.*

"If, on the evidence, you decide that Dr Yaron did collaborate" **— then, of course, he is damned, and the state which arose** *"as a direct result of the actions of men like... Yaron"* **is, at the least, morally tainted. But Allen is engaged in a weaseling wrapping-up exercise, and the sentence switches direction in the middle, going from the vicious political slander to the hypocritical 'sympathy'. The sentence ends:** *"... then you must also take into consideration the circumstances. You must ask yourself how would the average man behave in that kind of situation? Would he have sacrificed his own life and the lives of his family?"*

But hold on a minute! If Yaron is guilty of selfishly saving his own skin at the expense of others, what has that got to do

with 'the cruel criteria of Zionism'? Nothing. This passage is an example of the incoherence, and the slipping and sliding from one thing to another, that makes 'Perdition' a bad example even of what it wants to be (though it does help hypocritically to wrap up the poisoned politics).

After the judge makes a few more 'legal remarks', he sends the jury away, telling them to "consider your verdict", and the curtain falls. The pretence is that the audience is the jury. But really the judge has been the jury. And his verdict is plain and clear: the Zionists collaborated with the Nazis in order to help get Israel.

Like the judge's summing-up, the final speech by counsel for Yaron is really just part of the political indictment. Much of it is tongue-in-cheek rhetoric which really conveys, and is meant to convey, the opposite of what is said. This, for example:

"Mr Scott went to great lengths to prove that Dr Yaron acted as a representative of the Jewish Agency, and yet, as we have heard, Dr Yaron never denied this. Throughout his political life he has consistently identified the problem of the Jews with the need to establish a Jewish Homeland in Palestine, a Jewish renaissance in the land of Israel. That was always his primary goal.

"But this of course raises problems for the defence which was never touched on. And with good reason, for if Dr Yaron acted as the official representative of the Jewish Agency in Palestine, then why single him out as a collaborator? Why not go the whole hog and accuse the entire Israeli cabinet of collaboration?"

Accuse the Israeli cabinet, not of doing vile things to the Arabs under its rule (though that is the sort of consideration that 'Perdition' appeals to), but of collaboration in the mass murder of Jews... ? Absurd, yes, but one Israeli prime minister,Ben Gurion, is linked elsewhere with Yaron, as we have seen.

I have pointed out that Allen makes Hungary serve for all the Jewish ghettoes, ignoring the different conditions in Warsaw after September 1939 and Budapest just after the Nazis seized Hungary in 1944. He has his characters tell horror stories about the Polish ghettoes and the Judenrate there. Add to this the way that, when supposedly polemicising against Zionism, he often uses 'Zionist' and 'Jewish' interchangeably; and add the way he zig-zags in explanation of Yaron's motives from desire to save himself to Zionist grand design — the fire is forever wobbling away from the Zionist alleged target to include more and more Jews.

The loathing and hatred he spews out targets not 'Zionists' but Jews. Does Allen mean to do that, or is the effect unintentionally produced by sloppiness and lack of control over his material? At first I thought the latter, but I'm not sure any more.

Certainly the 'balancing' remarks — which are there — and the conventional warning against a revival of fascism put into the mouth of Scott towards the end of the play, do not and cannot offset the anti-Jewish drift of the play, as Allen intends them to. The picture presented by Allen (like Brenner, and like the Stalinist inventors of the thesis of links and identification between the Nazis and Zionists) is, as I've already said, an inversion of the old Nazi idea of the 'Jewish-Bolshevik' world conspiracy. In Allen this is replaced by a sort of 'Jewish-Nazi' conspiracy, made to seem slightly less lunatic by being described as a 'Zionist-Nazi' conspiracy against the Jews, and backed up by examples of

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Zionist/Nazi contact and of the 'collaboration' at gunpoint of the victims of Nazism with those who held the gun and annihilatingly superior force.

When they come to expound the 'Zionist-Nazi' conspiracy, both Allen and Brenner wind up clawing in the Jewish communities and outlining the lunatic picture of a conspiracy between the Nazis and the leaders of the six million they killed (though they killed the leaders, too). Their 'Zionist-Nazi' version breaks down because there wasn't a sharp division between Zionists and Jews. The Zionists were an organic part of the Jewish communities, not some intervening demons 'ex machina'. Allen's sloppy zig-zags are a mechanism for reconciling his political conscience — what he thinks he is doing, and why — with his rampant prejudices. Even if it is triggered by Israel's dealings with the Palestinian Arabs, the prejudice is retrospective and historically all-embracing; and 'Perdition' is awash with it.

John O'Mahony

Not an inch!

Geoff Bell, author of 'The Protestants of Ulster', etc. replies to Workers' Liberty no.5

At one point in the fictional socialist dialogue which makes up half of this pamphlet the character Mick declares, 'Let's go back to one of the greatest reference points in the history of Marxism — the Second Congress of the Communist International'.

He then goes on to note the debate there and the set of theses adopted on the national question, and asserts that this 'is one of the most profound and important documents of revolutionary Marxism'.

This is generally a correct estimation, with only one or two qualifications. One of them is to disagree with Radek during this debate when he said, 'It is the duty of the British Communists to go to the colonies and to fight at the head of the rising masses of the people.' While the intention of this statement was no doubt internationalist, the idea of British socialists speeding off to Ireland, India or wherever to place themselves 'at the head' of the rebellious natives does leave a rather chauvinist taste in the mouth. Far better, as Connolly said that, 'each nation should work out its own means of salvation', even if the working out of that salvation is accompanied by friendly discussions with those in the same class camp internationally.

So it is best to be wary of devoting great time and space, as this pamphlet does, to the British left telling the Irish how to wage their struggle. And it is best to be all the more wary of this particular discussion when the 'solution' suggested is as insubstantial and peripheral as the advocacy of some non-defined Protestant semi-autonomy within a future federal Ireland.

To make this a great dividing line as its chief advocate John O'Mahony does is, on the face of it, rather absurd. Does he, or anyone else really imagine, for example, that if a million Protestant workers came to the IRA and said 'We agree with a 32-county Ireland, we agree with fighting the Brits, all we ask is that we discuss between us some form of Protestant Home Rule', that the IRA would show them the door?

But, of course, there is more to the matter than a suggestion of a future constitutional arrangement in a Brit-free Ireland. For this is only a peg upon which several shabby and threadbare garments are hung.

One of these is an analysis of contemporary Irish Republicanism. For O'Mahony Sinn Fein today is 'explicitly Catholic Republicanism' and 'Catholic nationalism'. Two pieces of 'evidence' are offered. One is a statement from Gerry Adams saying that in a 32 county Ireland the minority will have to abide by majority decisions. This is seen by O'Mahony as Sinn Fein wanting to coerce or 'conquer' the Protestants, others would see it as an uncontentious restatement of democratic principles.

The other reason given for Republicanism's present 'sectarianism' is the dropping six years ago of the advocacy of a federal Ireland by Sinn Fein. David O'Connell is quoted as saying this withdrew 'the hand of friendship to the Protestant people of Ireland', and from this the largely unsubstantiated conclusion is drawn that 'the Provisionals have now broken with Republicanism' adopting 'Catholic nationalism...the opposite of Tone's Republicanism'.

This is ahistoric nonsense. To put it at its kindest it is a half truth to say that 'Republicanism originated as the democratic left wing of the mainly Protestant aristocratic Irish nationalism of the late 18th century "patriot" movement' or that Tone Republicanism 'evolved' from Grattanism . In a sense this is true, just as it is an historical fact that Trotsky 'evolved' from Menshevism. But that tells us little about where either Trotsky or Tone ended up.

Tone's decisive break from Grattanism came because of his wish to form an alliance between the mass of the Catholic peasantry and that section of the Protestant bourgeoisie who identified themselves with the republicanism of Revolutionary France. The decisive difference between Tone and Grattan was Tone's willingness to submit himself to the demands and the democratic rule of Ireland's Catholic majority. He did not argue as David O'Connell did that there should be special treatment for the Protestant minority in a new Ireland; he did not adopt a 'federal solution' or demand semi-autonomy for the Protestants. And the reason he did not was precisely because he wanted to break religious divisions in Ireland rather than, as O'Mahony wants to do, erect state structures which solidify and perpetuate those divisions. To seek to adopt constitutional structures which divide Ireland on religious grounds is one thing. But, in doing so, to claim the mantle of Tone is another and really rather breathtaking.

The re-writing of history is not confined to the eighteenth century. For, if the Republicans of today are not really Republicans then what is the character of the present battles in the North of Ireland? The answer is that 'The Republicans (real or fake?) superimposed themselves and their militarist strategy on a revolt which came from the social and political concerns of Catholics'. Now this is sailing very close to the imperialist wind — the idea that there were these poor uneducated downtrodden Catholics in the North who were suddenly taken over, led astray, terrorised or 'superimposed on' by the Godfathers of the IRA.

What really happened was rather different. The demands for civil rights, for equality with Protestants, which the Catholic community and others made in the late 1960s were rejected out of hand by the Unionists and, in the final analysis, albeit at times reluctantly, by the British as well. It was this refusal to 'reform' the Northern state, it was the very failure of the civil rights campaign, it was the pogroms of 1969 and events like Bloody Sunday which produced the Provisionals *from within* the very Catholic community O'Mahony says they 'superimposed' themselves on.

O'Mahony finds it difficult to accept that because it means accepting in turn conclusions about loyalism, as the political creed of the majority of Protestants, which would raise rather awkward questions about his autonomy proposals — not that those proposals are ever detailed by him. But, for instance, would they include majority control of allocation of council houses? Would they include control of education, of council employment? Of the local police? If they would not, then the

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autonomy wouldn't amount to very much. If they would, then how are we to be sure that what happened before in terms of anti-Catholic discrimination wouldn't happen again?

This is a very practical question, and a rather obvious one. It is a pity the pamphlet refuses to go into this and prefers instead to give over half of its pages to erecting straw arguments in a fictionalised discussion, in which the O'Mahony supporters come over as clever, serious and good socialists and the others come over as simpletons and sloganizers. The caricaturing is so over the top that it is not even good fiction.

But the fiction is not confined to this section. The substantial argument that is advanced is that the semi-autonomy for Protestants is the only alternative to seeking to smash the Protestants, drive them into the sea or subject them to Catholic nationalism.

Sad to say, the error being made here is that made only too often by bourgeois commentators — to see the North of Ireland conflict in religious terms. No, Republicanism does not want to smash Protestantism or drive Protestantism into the sea. What it does want to do is smash Unionism and Loyalism. It also wants to smash British imperialism and the Free Statism of the rich and powerful in the 26 counties.

All these are very worthy endeavours, but the reason in particular socialists seek the destruction of Unionism and Loyalism is because its strength has come from its conscious policy of seeking to divide the working class of Ireland, and of the North of Ireland. As a consequence it has reduced the Protestant working class to what James Connolly called 'slaves in spirit because they have been reared up among a people whose conditions of servitude were more slavish than their own'.

Accordingly, no concession to the politics and practice of Unionism/Loyalism can be sanctioned.

In the event of an unconditional British withdrawal does this mean, as the British media and O'Mahony tells us that there will be 'a civil war, involving big forced population movements and mutual slaughter'? Well, without going into the blood bath discussion yet again, it is now fairly obvious, given the current disarray within Unionism, that the Protestant community has neither the confidence, enthusiasm nor singleness of purpose to indulge in the mass slaughter which has been so often predicted.

Since 1968 Unionism has been divided. It can say 'no' with one voice but it cannot agree on its 'solution' to the 'troubles'. It always has been a gross insult to the Protestant community to say that hundreds of thousands of them are just waiting for the chance to wipe out all the Fenians they can; but it is even crazier still to say they would do so for purely sectarian reasons. Like all communities, the Protestant one in the North of Ireland needs something positive to fight for, and because they are split on this they are all the more weakened. As the old Orange slogan puts it 'United We Stand, Divided We Fall', and a political strategy which seeks to exploit the divisions within Unionism weakens it to the point of collapse.

One further point must be made. It is claimed in the pamphlet that its advocacy of some sort of Home Rule for Protestants has not stopped Socialist Organiser from siding with Irish Republicanism against the British state, or dampened its enthusiasm for demanding British withdrawal from Ireland. This was not evident at the recent AGM of the Labour Committee on Ireland when SO supporters distinguished themselves by two interventions.

One was to argue against a conference motion calling for the disbandment of the murderously sectarian Ulster Defence Regiment — a 'discussion' on this was proposed instead.

The other was to disagree with the view that members of the Orange Order should be banned from membership of the Labour Party. The Orange Order, said one SO supporter, was nothing but 'a social club'.

It is not worth a single sentence to answer this reactionary rubbish. Far better to ask comrades, is this where your 'rights for Protestants' takes you? — defence of the Protestant terror of the UDR? The right for the bigotry of the Orange Order to be given a voice in the Labour Party?

Well comrades, if that is the road you wish other socialists or Irish Republicans to travel then the answer must surely be — not an inch.

Note by the editor: At the LCI AGM the issue was the call to disband the UDR implied more British troops (in order to carry it out), and therefore contradicted 'Troops Out'. SO supporters were not 'against' disbanding the sectarian forces.

Some of the best militant miners in the Scottish coalfield are members of Orange lodges. This shows that the issue is more complex than the simple-minded approach 'Green good, Orange bad' takes account of. Geoff Bell will be replied to in the next issue.

AGAINST THE STREAM

Kitsch-Trots tango

By John Alloway

Any attempt at dialogue, discussion or international left regroupment should be welcomed. For this reason, the call for an open conference of Trotskyist groups put out by the British Workers' Revolutionary Party attracted interest on the left.

But it was all a con. The conference is not to be open at all. It will be no more than an international fusion conference of the WRP, the Moreno Group (the Liga Internacional de los Trabajadores, LIT), based in Latin America, especially Argentina, and the very tiny splinter of the Lambertist organisation led by the Hungarian Michel Varga. There will be a grand fusion and the declaration of yet another spurious and probably unstable 'Fourth International'.

This is a shame, though not at all surprising. For a transition period after it expelled its old caudillo Gerry Healy, the WRP seemed as if it might be opening itself up to arguments and was prepared to reexamine its own sorry history. It was a bit like the Communist Party in the mid-'50s when Stalin was denounced by his successor Khrushchev. That period is now over. The rump WRP has fallen under the ideological tutelage of the LIT — one of the largest and also one of the most miserable would-be 'Trotskyist' groups.

The LIT, whose main base is in Latin America (but hitherto have had no presence at all in Britain), is the tendency until recently fronted by Nahuel Moreno. Moreno died earlier this year, and it remains to be seen if the LIT can survive him. Under his leadership, especially in Argentina, the LIT built substantial support. The Argentine Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) seems to have quite widespread support among militant sections of the Argentinian working class.

Politically the LIT expresses just about all the defects of post-Trotsky 'Trotskyism' — although often more crassly than its competitors. Until 1979, Moreno was part of the Mandel-led 'United Secretariat' (although generally aligned to the rightward-moving American SWP). Moreno finally broke with the USec over the Nicaraguan revolution, and had a short-lived link-up with the 'Lambertist' current based in France. Their fusion soon fell apart, and the LIT was formed.

Ultra-orthodox Trotskyists on many questions today, in fact the Morenists have been among the most opportunist tendencies. In the 1950s, the Morenist paper 'Palabra Socialista' declared itself 'Organ of Revolutionary Workers' Peronism — Under the discipline of General Peron and the Peronist High Command'.

In the 1960s, they embraced first Castroism ("today (the Castroite) OLAS (Organisation of Latin American States)...is the only vehicle for power"), and then Maoism.

The LIT are probably the *most* populist tendency claiming to be Trotskyist in the world. For example, when Argentina and Britain went to war in 1982, the LIT called for 'national unity' of Argentines, and for the unions to open recruiting offices for the army.

In 1984, looking back, the LIT commented that if British imperialism had been defeated: "it would have unleashed a huge wave of anti-imperialism in the area." In a marvellous case of heads I win, tails you lose, they add: "The defeat of Argentina, nevertheless, resulted in the advance of the revolution in the Southern Cone."

Classless, meaningless and contentless ideas of 'the revolution' and 'the counter-revolution' dominate LIT material. (In Central America, 'the revolution' is petty bourgeois; in the Southern Cone, the same 'revolution' is proletarian...). And the revolution is generally the most militant and vehement petty bourgeois nationalism.

On Ireland, they call for driving the Protestants (and the Dublin government, 'the worst Loyalists') into the sea. On the Iran-Iraq war, they say the two countries should stop fighting each other and instead unite to crush the 'fascist enclave' of Israel.

Generally, though, the LIT's trouble is not so much awful positions as grotesque ignorance of whatever it is they are talking about. Their slogan for South Africa, for example, is: 'a government of the ANC, the PAC, Azapo and the independent unions" — which if it means anything at all (other than chaos) is a call for a bourgeois government.

They have also called for 'self-determination for all races' (?) and the right of all *tribes* to representation in the government. So much for the demand of the workers' movement for an undivided non-racial South Africa. (No doubt we can expect an 'anti-imperialist united front' on these questions with Buthelezi — or even, given South Africa's massive foreign debt, Botha himself).

In any rational discussion among revolutionaries, the LIT would be washed down the plug hole. It is a sad comment on the would-be Trotskyist movement that they seem to be able to dominate this latest 'regroupment'.

INLA feud

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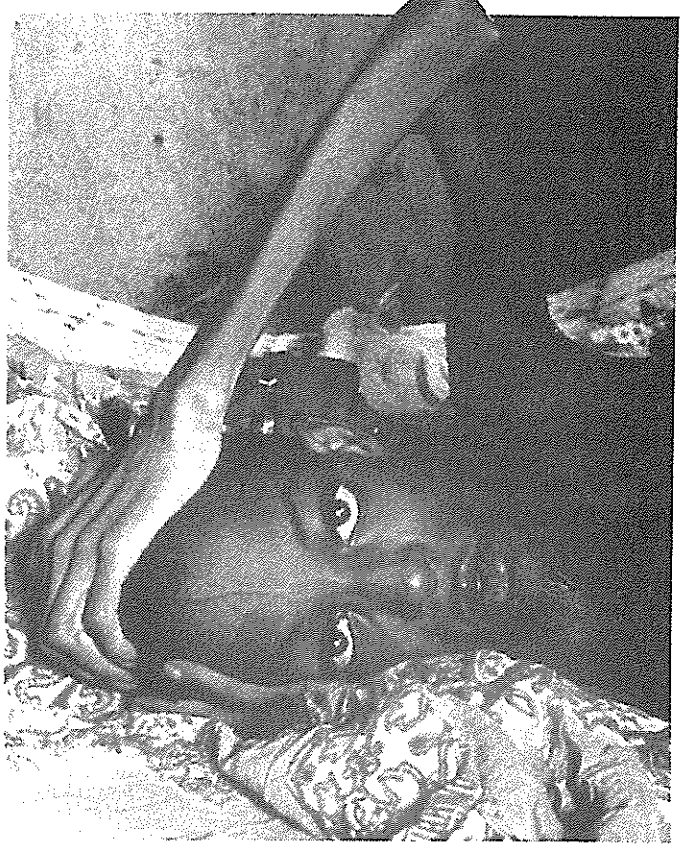
acid of an eclectic brew of bits of Marxism and various Third World ideologies. The smaller groups inevitably lack a powerful and stable centre, and can therefore easily come to provide a flag of convenience for 'wild men', oddballs, or plain self-serving gangsters.

The extent to which 'armed struggle' degenerates into gangsterism varies according to the degree to which the movement is involved in real struggle, its tradition, its base, and the strength of its central apparatus to impose a political objective. Nevertheless, the choice has to be made by socialists — self-liberating working-class mass action or military elitism.

Some honest and sincere IRSP militants say they will continue to try to build a revolutionary working-class party. No, they won't — not unless they face the fact that the entire 'armed struggle now' eclectic revolutionary culture in which the INLA/IRSP has been embedded is the opposite of serious working-class politics. Working-class politics ends with armed struggle. It does not begin with it. The lesson of the latest murderous bloodletting among the INLA is that you cannot build a revolutionary socialist party as a political adjunct to a military formation ●

How not to fight AIDS

George Davey Smith reviews 'The Truth About the AIDS Panic' by Dr Michael Fitzpatrick and Don Milligan (Junius, £1.95), and 'AIDS: The Socialist View' by Duncan Blackie and Ian Taylor (SWP, 90p)



AIDS victim in Africa

BOTH THE right and the left have been thrown into confusion by the advent of AIDS.

Reagan finally advocated public education about safe sex, then stated that this must be purely about how to say no. In the UK, a seemingly explicit information campaign was initiated well ahead of the US, with leaflets through every door. At the same time the government announced that if parents or governors objected to sex education in schools it could be dropped.

Meanwhile, almost every conceivable response has come from the left. The pamphlet from the 'Revolutionary Communist Party' (RCP) illustrates the confusion.

'The Truth About the AIDS Panic' identifies AIDS as being fundamentally a moral panic — yet another stick with which to beat gays.

For this purpose, it has been overplayed as a disease. Unless you are a homosexual man in London or an intravenous drug user in Edinburgh or London, AIDS is *"not at present a serious health problem"*. You have *"a higher chance of being run over by a bus than contracting AIDS"*.

These conclusions stem from arguments that AIDS is very difficult to transmit heterosexually, and anyway has caused a trifling number of deaths in the UK — 350 up to February 1987, compared to 190,000 from heart disease *per year*. Consequently it is not much of a problem and, unless you are in a high-risk group, the practice of safe sex is *"quite unnecessary"*.

This oversimplified reasoning is unfortunately legitimised by the reassuring presence of a GP as an author. Medical knowledge regarding AIDS is still very limited, and the most active researchers are willing to admit their uncertainty as to the future course of the disease. Naturally no such worries trouble the authors of *this* book: they appear to *know* things which people who have spent years investigating the disease can only speculate about.

This book contains the truth about AIDS, after all. But how does the current evidence measure up to the RCP's *'truth'*?

There is definite evidence of two-way transmission of the AIDS virus by vaginal intercourse, although this does not seem to occur as readily as through anal intercourse. The rapid spread of AIDS through Africa is largely through heterosexual contact.

Although malnutrition and co-existing infectious diseases may accelerate it, in some parts of Africa the disease first became established among the relatively affluent sections of the population.

The second cause of confusion concerns the impact of the disease. AIDS seems to pale into insignificance compared to heart disease as a cause of death, but this is very misleading.

AIDS generally affects younger people, whilst heart disease often occurs at the end of a long life. Therefore the total years of life lost because of a particular disease are a more useful measure of its impact on a community.

Calculations based on one District Health Authority in London, Lewisham and North Southwark, suggest that by early next year AIDS will be the second biggest cause of years of life lost, ahead of lung cancer, breast cancer, road traffic accidents and strokes. By 1990, it seems AIDS will be the major cause of lost years of life.

The basis upon which the arguments of this book rest is seriously flawed. The future course of the disease is uncertain. True, it may not become established among heterosexuals, and the number of cases may stop rising. It is also true that the threat of AIDS can be overplayed and manipulated for reactionary political and social ends.

However, simply denying the importance of the disease is an inadequate response to the biological, political and moral repercussions of AIDS.

One way of downplaying the significance of AIDS as a disease (as opposed to a moral panic) is to ignore the horror of its spread through Africa. Therefore this book barely mentions AIDS outside the USA and UK, neglecting the areas where it causes most harm.

The fundamental misunderstanding shown in this book renders it at best useless and at worst dangerous. This is unfortunate since increased mobilisation against repression of gays is rendered vital by the onset of AIDS. AIDS is being used to control and harass gays.

The Public Health (Infectious Diseases) Regulations 1985 allow local authorities to perform forcible medical examinations on people "believed to be suffering from AIDS" and to have them detained in hospital.

The media feel increasingly free to attack gays in the grossest fashion; Tory politicians have advocated everything from enforced isolation to *"putting 90% of homosexuals in the gas chamber"*, while Labour's paper policy against discrimination has become increasingly muted.

This book suggests that denying that AIDS is a threat to the heterosexual community will stem the increasing homophobia generated by the disease. The logic of this is not clear since when AIDS was seen as an exclusively gay disease there was a widespread belief that this *'gay plague'* was somehow a punishment for deviant sexual behaviour.

The book's train of thought crystallises around the notion that *"for the majority of gay men who are forced to pursue their homosexual encounters furtively, campaigns for safe sex are useless. The clandestine and chancy circumstances in which most gay men conduct their sexual encounters make it difficult for them to follow the government's guidelines"*.

Therefore it is the *"oppression of homosexuals that allows HIV infection to spread among gay men"*. This is entirely consistent with the idealism inherent in the RCP's ultra-leftism.

The material reality — in this case the virus — becomes irrelevant. Once the structures of capitalist society are smashed, AIDS — together with women's oppression, racism, gay oppression, etc — will instantly and automatically disappear.

So long as you vote for your Red Front candidate, you can forget about AIDS and safe sex.

After the entertaining lunacy of the RCP, the pamphlet from the SWP is a duller but more worthy affair.

Unlike the former pamphlet, it correctly devotes space to the devastating epidemic in Africa and discusses the way AIDS will be used to increase racial, as well as anti-gay, discrimination. However, it mirrors 'The Truth...' in having no time for uncertainty.

This time the authors are sure that AIDS is the black angel's death song writ large. It outdoes the government's campaign when outlining the potential devastation of the UK by the disease. One article about AIDS in Socialist Worker was illustrated with a picture of the Grim Reaper, complete with grey cassock and scythe, waiting to take us home; whilst another suggested that all the people carrying HIV in Africa would go on to develop the disease.

There are dangers in presenting AIDS as threateningly as this. Irrational fears are developing — the reports of suicides of people believing themselves infected, and of fire-bombings of houses of

AIDS sufferers, must only reflect the tip of the iceberg in this respect. Furthermore, merely emphasising the threat of a disease is not effective in encouraging health-protective behaviour, especially if the message is based on uncertainty, as in this case, and is liable to be changed.

Naturally this pamphlet ends with a photograph of the main cause of AIDS — Neil Kinnock. Unfortunately excising his malignant presence from the labour movement won't by itself eliminate AIDS. Nor will making abstract propaganda for breaking with reformism and building the revolutionary party. However, this is what is counterposed to searching for a vaccine or treatment, which is dismissed as ultimately unimportant, together with that old scapegoat "attempts at reform by governments".

In fact, rather than being opposed, social change and scientific advance are intimately linked. Implementing a successful vaccination programme in the Third World and western countries is as much a political as a technical activity. The direction and nature of research into disease control is just as political.

Nixon's war against cancer declared in the late 1960s was, together with the space race, a useful cover for the disintegration of Lyndon B Johnson's 'Great Society'. Giving money to the Public Health Services laboratories and for AZT has been used as a pre-election softener in Britain.

On a worldwide scale there is a necessary connection between the struggle for social liberation and measures against all diseases, including AIDS. Safe sex and pharmaceutical companies will not finally control AIDS, but neither will the repetition of abstract slogans or the pretence of certainty where uncertainty exists.

George Davey Smith is a medical doctor.

New new world

Colin Foster reviews 'The End of the Third World' by Nigel Harris. Penguin £3.95.

Nigel Harris starts off from the facts of rapid industrial growth in many formerly colonial or semi-colonial countries, and more especially from two features of that growth: its export orientation, and the growing trend in recent years to privatisation of

Capitalist development

state enterprises.

These developments, he argues, make it no longer tenable to think of a 'Third World' separated from the advanced countries by a Chinese wall. Singapore and South Korea, where further and higher education is more widespread than in Britain, do not have much in common with rural Ethiopia.

The facts also mark the collapse of the *ideology* of 'Third Worldism' — an ideology which said that industrial development in the 'periphery' of the world economy could be achieved either not at all or only through militant nationalist measures, including nationalisations and industrialisation aimed at the *home* market.

There is now, Harris argues, a "global manufacturing system". "If capitalism seemed to be 'the offspring of the state' in the early phases of national accumulation, (by the 1980s) in the great broad ocean of the world system the world's states were clearly the offspring of world capitalism".

It seems to me that he somewhat underestimates the extent to which the national state has been, and continues to be, a motor force in capitalist development. Though he does document the great role of the state even in cases of supposedly 'free-market' development, like South Korea or Taiwan, he sees the decisive factor in the recent rapid expansion of capitalism in the 'Third World' as "companies and buyers in more developed countries (being) impelled by the changing structure of the world market to seek lower-cost purchases (or lower-cost locations for manufacture) in new countries", around the late '50s and early '60s.

I'm not at all sure that I understand Harris's argument here, but I would be inclined to see the late '50s and early '60s as significant above all for something else: the winning of independence by many ex-colonies, and powerful nationalist movements in others, such as Egypt and Iraq.

A great deal of the industrial development of 'Third World' countries has been directed not at markets in the more developed countries, but at their home markets and at other 'Third World' countries. (In 1983, 45% of the exports of what the World Bank calls 'low-income' economies went to other 'Third World' countries, and 37% of exports of the non-oil 'middle income' countries).

Harris reckons that in the modern world each national economy is becoming more *specialised*; but he cites no direct evidence for this idea, and takes no account of such glaring counter-evidence as Saudi Arabia's effort to develop wheat-growing.

Harris's book is, however, useful in many ways. He sets out many of the key facts about recent capitalist development in the 'Third World', and explodes some of the myths of nationalist ideologies which still have a grip on the left even though the writers who first developed those ideologies have mostly retreated from them in confusion.

"To be 'developed' ", he comments, for example, "was confused with economic independence. But were there any such countries? By what criteria could one judge 'independence'?...The concept of a 'self-generating' economy (was) a myth, except for the most backward countries...If 'dependency' indicated the economic relationship between a country and the world, the more developed the country, the more dependent it was..."

In one respect the book is all too typical of the work of the Socialist Workers' Party, with which Harris is associated. Harris tells the reader in his first chapter that a peculiar version of 'Third-Worldism' was argued in the 1960s by one Michael Kidron, to the effect that development in 'Third World' countries was impossible *even if* the most radical measures advocated by the nationalists (or by anyone else) were carried through. Whereas most 'Third Worldists' pointed to China and Cuba as examples of how to break out of backwardness, Kidron argued that China and Cuba, too, could not really develop.

Harris recognises that this theory was wrong. What he does not tell the reader is that Michael Kidron was in the 1960s the leading economic theorist of the SWP (then called IS), and that Kidron's notion of a 'post-imperialism' in which the Third World was left desolate was a central part of a more-or-less integrated body of theory that the SWP/IS then had, along with their doctrines of state capitalism in the USSR and of the permanent arms economy.

That integrated body of theory has simply been abandoned by the SWP over the last ten years or so, without it being replaced and without any attempt to examine, account for, and learn from its errors.

Stalin and the peasants

Rhodri Evans reviews 'The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Inter-War Russia', by Moshe Lewin, Methuen.

Moshe Lewin does not believe that Leninism caused Stalinism.

"With respect to the original Leninism, Stalinism not only changed strategy but also reorientated the system towards quite different objectives. It was no longer a matter of constructing a society in which the classes and the state would disappear...It was now a matter of 'statising', that is, of crowning the whole with an all-powerful, dictatorial state in order to preserve the class system and such privileges as had been put into place during the period of forced industrialisation".

Nor does he believe that Stalinism was the USSR's only road to industrialisation: "while it is agreed that the process of industrialisation was bound to involve sweeping changes in the countryside, it is wrong to suppose that these changes could not have been effected otherwise than by collectivisation as Russia experienced it".

Lewin has also written a book on 'Lenin's Last Struggle' — against emergent Stalinism — and he is fully aware of the struggle by Trotsky and other Bolsheviks to continue that last struggle of Lenin's.

The main new idea he adds to existing accounts of the rise of Stalinism is a study of the way that the Stalinist bureaucracy was moulded by its struggle with the peasantry.

Rural life in Russia in 1917, he stresses, was on about the same level as rural France in the 16th century. Before World War 1, the Tsarist government made some efforts to promote capitalist enterprise in the countryside, but the revolution of 1917 paradoxically led to a regression. Afterwards, some 95% of the land was in the hands of the peasants' traditional communes.

This levelling-down of the peasantry, according to Lewin, substantially continued in effect until the late 1920s. Whatever the justice of the Trotskyist Left Opposition's general programme, says Lewin, and of their fears about the rise of a merchant

class, they grossly exaggerated the strength of the 'kulaks'.

Lewin examines the factual evidence minutely, and concludes that there was no 'kulak' *class*. Some peasants were more prosperous than others, but there were practically *none* who could be classified even as small capitalists.

Official Soviet calculations classified only three or four per cent of the peasantry as 'kulaks' — but even of that three or four per cent, half employed *no* wage-workers.

Thus the Stalinists' war against the 'kulaks' was in fact a war against the whole peasantry. In that war the Stalinist bureaucracy was shaped, with its brutality, its furious terror as the counterpart to sullen peasant resistance, and the great internal tensions which made that bureaucracy itself subject to huge purges.

Simultaneously the Stalinist bureaucracy was establishing itself against the workers. Even in the mid-'20s, although the system was far from the original democracy of workers' councils, the workers "had freedom of movement and of job selection, a quite effective litigation system against management, an opportunity to criticise managers, a labour code that meant something". Within a few years after 1929, that was all gone.

"The cadre problem was not just one of getting enough specialists and managers, but of promoting a powerful class of bosses — the *nachal'stvo*, composed of top managers in the enterprises and top administrators in state agencies". These bosses won despotic power in the factories and great material privileges.

The bureaucracy was more successful in establishing control over the workers than over the peasantry. The workers resisted, as Lewin emphasises, but their relatively organised resistance was easier to deal with than the dumb sullenness of the peasantry. "The breaking in of the peasant was the least successful of the policies of the Soviet state...What followed was a creation of a system that was more oriented to and more successful in squeezing than in producing".

The paradoxical result was that the peasants' private plots, allowed to them beside the collective farms, came to account for an important part of output. "In its Stalinist stage, collectivisation, although aimed at uprooting (concepts of private property), went in fact a long way towards reinforcing and developing them".

As Lewin emphasises in other respects, the bureaucracy, despite its apparatus of terror, was far from having full conscious control of events. It was moulded by the developing Soviet society as much as it moulded that society.

Lewin concludes: after de-Stalinisation, "Russia found itself advancing and powerful, but the grip of the initial social backslide of 1917-21 (in the countryside), strongly conducive and favourable to the authoritarian, ubiquitous state system of the 1930s, has not yet been broken to this day — far from it — and the result has been periodic slowdowns, decline and conservative blockages in the country's development and social relations".

Industry in Africa

Gerry Bates reviews 'The Development of Capitalism in Africa' by John Sender and Sheila Smith. Methuen.

Of all the areas of the Third World, Africa offers most evidence to those who deny the existence or possibility of dynamic capitalist development in the Third World.

Ethiopia, Sudan, Mozambique, and large areas of West Africa, are still suffering from terrible famines. Apart from Nigeria, Congo (Brazzaville), and Algeria, none of the countries of Africa can show higher than a 3% per year growth of national income from 1965 to 1983, and those three can be dismissed as exceptions because of their oil. Africa has no industrial miracles like South Korea or Brazil. A devastating study by the eminent French agricultural economist Rene Dumont described it a few years ago as "a downtrodden, plundered and polluted continent".

Sender and Smith do not necessarily dissent from Dumont: in fact, despite vastly different slants on the subject, their picture of Africa is not so different from Dumont's. But they define the aim of their study thus: "Rather than re-emphasising the persistence of poverty and suffering, the focus...will be on the identification and analysis of change as opposed to continuity".

They show, carefully and in detail, that capitalism *has* developed in Africa. Indeed, much of the present suffering is caused by capitalist *development*, rather than *absence of* development.

The colonial regimes were brutal, thieving, and racist. Nevertheless they did develop certain conditions for economic development. The argument, often advanced, that the export sectors in colonial Africa had no or very few 'linkages' with the rest of the economy is false. Those export sectors did encourage the development of transport and of small industries.

Sender and Smith also argue, more contentiously but without going into detail on this point, that the extent of destruction of native handicrafts by colonialism and the competition of manufactured goods from the metropolis has been much exaggerated.

After an intermediate stage of forced labour — administered with great cruelty — the colonial regimes also developed a *wage-working class*. And, at least in the period just before independence, there were some beginnings of mass education.

To promote capitalism further, heavy state intervention was necessary. And that was made possible after independence. In the period since independence, development has accelerated a lot.

Sender and Smith look more closely at some of the countries that have developed less, or even gone backwards — Ghana and Tanzania. They argue that the main reason for these countries lagging behind is inappropriate government policies — a nationalist wish to develop the country in isolation from the world market which leads to failure to develop exports.

As well as criticising 'state capitalism in one country', however, Sender and Smith also denounce currently-fasionable theories that the free market is the key to development.

John Sender prepared Bill Warren's book 'Imperialism, Pioneer of Capitalism' for publication after Warren died before finishing it but this book has none of the one-sidedness of Warren's, which often reads like an apologia for capitalism and imperialism.

Sender and Smith conclude with an appeal for socialists to look towards *working class* politics in Africa. Too often, they say, "the political agenda becomes dominated by rhetorical condemnation of the World Bank, the IMF, multinationals, etc., leaving very little space for the more mundane and immediate issues of trade union rights, wages and working conditions."

The lies of Lilian Hellman

Jim Denham reviews 'Lilian Hellman — The Image, the Woman', by William Wright. Sidgwick and Jackson.

Searching for 'Hellman lies' has become something of a sport in recent years, as William Wright notes in this biography.

Many of the attacks on Lilian Hellman's integrity have been motivated by pettiness and jealousy (neither of which have ever been in short supply in New York intellectual circles), and quite a few have come from hard-line right-wingers bent on destroying the reputation of an outspoken radical.

But there is more to it than that: for one thing, Hellman brought a lot of it on herself by her vindictive lawsuit against Mary McCarthy. McCarthy, a fellow writer and near-contemporary of Hellman's, appeared on the Dick Cavett show in 1980 and was encouraged by the host to say controversial things about others of her profession.

What she said about Hellman has since entered the annals of one-liners: "Every word Lilian Hellman writes is a lie, including 'and' and 'the'." Hellman's response was to issue a defamation suit for $2,225,000 against McCarthy, who was not rich, coldly calculating that she could easily outspend her foe and ruin her even if (as Wright speculates) the case was never intended to reach court.

No wonder Vanessa Redgrave admires Hellman so much!

In the event Hellman died before her full legal gameplan became evident, and McCarthy was rescued by a defence fund.

Hellman will probably now be remembered as much for her mean-minded spite towards one McCarthy as for her relatively courageous stand against another — Senator Joe McCarthy and his House Committee on UnAmerican Activities (HUAC).

In May 1952 Hellman was subpoenaed to appear before the red-baiting HUAC to answer the question 'Are you now, or have you ever been, a member of the Communist Party?' Her account of this experience (written up in 'Scoundrel Time' 25 years later) is a brilliant description of the McCarthyite hysteria of the time, and her famous statement to HUAC ('I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions', etc.) made her something of a hero in left circles.

But here again the question arises, just how truthful was Hellman's account of what actually occurred? For sure, she 'pleaded the Fifth' (invoked the Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution, which allows a citizen to refuse to answer any question on grounds of self-incrimination), and probably did so to protect others rather than to cover herself. That, at least, sets her apart from many fair-weather radicals and liberals from Tinsel Town, who betrayed their friends, colleagues and (sometimes) comrades.

But the famous 'statement' was never *said* to HUAC: it was contained in an otherwise evasive and

apologetic letter that was released to the press after the hearing. Her lawyer, Joe Rauh, told Wright: "To me, the truly courageous position was the one Arthur Miller took when I represented him in the same situation. He said to me 'I don't give a shit if they send me to jail, I am not cooperating'."

Rauh thinks Hellman felt guilty about not having given HUAC what he calls, in reference to the film 'The Front', the Woody Allen speech, telling them to go fuck themselves. In fact, Hellman was terrified by the prospect of jail, and this fear was deliberately stoked up by her long-time lover Dashiell Hammett (who *had* been jailed for defying HUAC the previous year). According to Wright, Hammett ensured that Hellman never considered that particular form of martyrdom, with "tales of rats and marauding lesbians".

And yet Hellman allowed the overblown version of her role at HUAC — in particular, the patent falsehood that she was the first to refuse to name names — to go unchallenged, and indeed promoted that picture of herself in 'Scoundrel Time'.

She did not capitulate to HUAC, or rat on her friends — that should have been enough, but it seems that it wasn't good enough for Hellman herself. Why this should have been is, essentially, what Wright's book is all about.

Wright presents a largely psychological explanation: "Perhaps she altered the truth not only to enhance her public image — to leave to posterity a portrait of the woman she would have liked to have been, a life she would have liked to have led but to meet a psychological demand for a less painful reality. There is a significant difference between a person engaged in dishonest public relations and one who is fundamentally delusional. In Hellman's case, she may have worked out a compromise with her psyche: to realise wish-fulfilment fantasies and salve painful truths by revising her history in her memoirs and perhaps thereby forestalling a collapse into psychosis."

Such an explanation of Hellman's character may well be accurate as far as it goes. Certainly the death of Hammett in 1961 gave Hellman free rein to rewrite her own history, free from the restraints of her brutally honest companion.

But Wright has not explored in such depth the corrupting influence of Hellman's chosen political allegiance — Stalinism.

Whether or not Hellman was ever a card-carrying Party member has never been established. She always denied it, writing her memoirs "I did not join the Party, although mild overtures were made by Earl Browder and the Party theorist C J Jerome".

Wright produces some evidence to suggest that she probably was a secret member between 1937 and the late '40s. What is beyond question is that throughout her adult life she glorified Stalin's regime, claimed to be unaware of the purge trials during her visit to Russia in 1937, turned a blind eye to the CP's murderous onslaught against socialists and anarchists in Spain, applauded the US government's jailing of Trotskyists during World War 2, and bitterly attacked several intellectuals who remained on the left but broken with Stalin.

When, in the early '70s (20 years after Khrushchev's speech attacking his predecessor), Hellman brought herself to admit she had been perhaps a little wrong about Stalin, she wrote about his "many sins" in such a nonchalant, off-hand way, not offering any explanation for her change of heart, that the criticism itself was almost an affront to the reader (and, as Wright notes, "her use of the word 'sins' is in itself interesting, since, to a free spirit like Hellman, a sin is something forbidden by wrong-headed authority, something harmless and pleasurable like overeating or sleeping with your neighbour; to have it also encompass the murder of several million Russians would seem to be overtaxing three letters".)

Here, I think, lies the root of Hellman's lying and self-deception: she was an intelligent person, motivated (initially) by the highest ideals, horrified by the poverty and racism she saw in the US and by the Nazi menace internationally. It is impossible to believe that she simply was not aware of the Moscow Trials, or that she did not understand what the disputes on the anti-Franco side in Spain were about.

So she wilfully blinded herself to such unpleasant realities, in her desire for the security of (in her words) faith in the 'Motherland' as the only real, existing alternative to the degradations of everyday capitalism and the horrors of Nazism.

Against this romantic ideal, her own role as either fellow-traveller or secret member, and a very rich and privileged one at that, seemed completely inadequate. Lilian Hellman did nothing in the Spanish Civil War, nothing for the Resistance to the Nazis, and was never even jailed for standing up to McCarthy. So she had to reinvent her brief visit to Spain in 'An Unfinished Woman', assume for herself the heroic role in the Julia story in 'Pentrimento', and improve upon the true facts of her brush with HUAC.

Like so many Stalinist intellectuals of her generation, she lived a lie because she could not face the reality of the cause she had espoused, and because she lacked the courage to become a real class fighter, with all the sacrifices that would have involved. To bridge the gap between her awareness of what was required, and the inadequacy of her political and personal response, she took basically true stories about real people, and invented her own role in events.

The immense skill with which she constructed her fabrications fooled not only the critics and public, but — finally — herself. She ended at least half-believing her own vicarious fantasies, just as politically her wilful ignorance turned into the inability to distinguish between truth and falsehood. A sad but fitting end for a true disciple of Earl Browder and Joe Stalin.

Peron's legacy

Clive Bradley reviews "Argentina — From Anarchism to Peronism" by Ronaldo Munck with Ricardo Falcon and Bernardo Galitelli. Zed Press.

The Argentinian labour movement, as Ronaldo Munck comments in the introduction to this book, is "foreign" to workers elsewhere "in more than the obvious sense". A movement and an ideology, Peronism, dominates the working class to an extraordinary extent.

Peronism, the movement created by General Juan Peron, who was president of Argentina from 1946 to 1955, is not exactly unique. Many working class movements have fallen under the leadership of radical — or not-so-radical — bourgeois nationalist forces similar to Peronism in some respects. But Peronism is still peculiar. The Argentinian working class, as this book graphically shows, has had an immensely militant history, and is extremely powerful, with a high degree of class consciousness in a limited sense.

Yet Peronism is not merely the *political* domination of this movement by nationalism. It is the subordination of the movement in effect to a particular individual (in the past), and to the nominees or successors of this individual in later years. A powerful workers' movement became terribly stunted politically.

How this came to pass is an interesting and vital question. Munck's book, informative and useful as it is, doesn't really get to grips with it, however.

The book shows how the early labour movement was heavily dominated by anarchists and syndicalists, and covers its history up to the rise of Peron. It does not examine precisely how the transition to Peronism took place. Of course Peron's role in meeting working class demands in the post-war period, and the relationship he established between the state and the powerful trade union bureaucracy, are described and explained. But why such a *profound* ideological prostration before Peron?

The most interesting part of the book is its discussion of the 1969 'Cordobazo' — a semi-revolution in the industrial centre of Cordoba — and the radical 'classist' tendencies in the workers' movement that emerged from the experience. It traces the development of the class struggle to crisis point in 1976, when the military seized power once again, to impose a horrendous dictatorship even by Latin American standards.

Munck argues that we are witnessing the end of Peronism, and that a new period is opening up for the Argentine workers. This concise survey of the history of the workers' movement will help us understand those developments when they occur.

Ice in the thaw

Frank Higgins reviews 'Hungarian Tragedy' by Peter Fryer (New Park, £2.95)

One of the saddest and most disappointing things on the left in recent years has been the growth of faith and illusion in mythical socialist fatherlands far away.

Nowadays you can run into people you have known for a long time, people with ten, fifteen and more years in the Mandelite 'Fourth International', and they will tell you with stars in their eyes about the workers' democracy which they know exists in Castro's Cuba — where there is freedom neither of speech, nor of writing, nor of self-organisation (least of all for the working class), nor of sexuality.

Five or ten years ago they would have scoffed at such notions and talked rationally and knowledgeably about the bureaucracy which had crystallised some time in the 1960s.

Stranger still is the growth of illusions in the USSR — which for the last 7½ years has waged, and still wages, a Vietnam-style war of colonial conquest by way of napalm and helicopter gunships against the peoples of Afghanistan.

19 years ago Russian tanks crushed Alexander Dubcek's liberalising 'Prague Spring' in Czechoslovakia and thereby educated a whole new generation of socialists about the nature of the totalitarian Stalinist regime in the USSR. Now many who once knew better, Tony Benn for example, laud the rulers of the USSR — and they didn't wait for Gorbachev to start talking (so far it is mostly just talking) about reforms.

And of course the soft-on-Stalinism noises made by Benn and others will miseducate many who have not had a chance to know better.

Just as people tend to turn to religion and Mother Church in times of trouble and perplexity, it seems socialists turn to the 'socialist fatherlands' in times, like our own, of setbacks and political depression. It is unlikely, however, that anything like the Stalinist ice-age of the '30s, '40s, and early '50s will return, the years when millions of the best would-be revolutionary socialist workers throughout Europe believed in the USSR with the fervour and commitment of religious fanatics.

That period came to an end 30 years ago with the Hungarian Revolution and the denunciation of Josef Stalin — who died in March 1953 — by his liberalising successor Nikita Khrushchev.

Early in 1956 Khrushchev told a congress of the so-called Communist Party of the Soviet Union — the first such congress since 1939 — that Stalin had been a bloodthirsty tyrant and mass murderer. Then in November 1956 Khrushchev's own tanks went crashing into Budapest to overwhelm the heroic resistance of the Hungarian workers, and thereby proved to thinking and honest Communists throughout the world that Stalinism was still alive. It was a symptom of totalitarian bureaucratic rule, and not just the personal failing of one half-demented tyrant.

Hungary had been an ally of Germany in World War 2, a tepid and reluctant one which Germany occupied in 1944. Soon the Russians drove the Germans out and took over. By 1948 Hungary had been turned into a replica of the USSR.

The small Hungarian CP grew rapidly, swollen by careerists after the Russian occupation. Yet the Hungarian party had some tradition of its own. In the chaos after World War 1 the Hungarian CP had been able to seize state power for a few weeks in 1919. After being overthrown, it was heavily dependent on Moscow. Its leader, Bela Kun, became an ally of Stalin in the Communist International, but he was shot in 1937, after refusing despite torture to 'confess' in one of the show trials.

Parties like the one which ruled Hungary for Stalin were contradictory things. The dedicated careerists, of course, would do anything. But there were also many people who had started out as honest communists and who, despite the political corruption of Stalinism, were still honest communists according to their own lights.

Such 'honest Stalinists', led by Josip Tito, had taken power in Yugoslavia without any help from the Russian army. Still Stalinists, they broke with Stalin in 1948.

Stalin did not like or trust the 'honest Stalinists'. He suspected them all of being potential Titos. So between 1949 and 1952 Eastern Europe got its own version of Stalin's mid-'30s Moscow trials. The victims were the most loyal Stalinists, courageous people who had run the underground CPs before the Russian occupation. In Hungary, CP secretary Lazlo Rajk was the chief victim. He was hanged, shouting 'Long live the Party!' on the scaffold.

After Stalin's death, and before Khrushchev denounced him, came the 'thaw', a slackening of Stalin's extreme terror within the ruling parties. Some of the victims of the purges were rehabilitated, some of the jails opened. Formerly condemned leaders became the focus of alternative *Stalinist* centres against the ruling groups. A strange and transitory sort of pluralism existed within or around the ruling parties.

Some of these dissidents had been accused of 'nationalism', that is, of having reservations (or more) about Russian overlordship. National independence became an issue. In Poland it was only 17 years since Stalin and Hitler had jointly invaded and divided the country. A workers' revolt in Poland in June 1956 brought Eastern Europe to the boil. The Russians were on the verge of invading Poland when the alternative Stalinist team around Gomulka (just out of jail) took control, and Gomulka convinced the Russians that he could keep control.

The Hungarians responded to the Polish revolt eagerly. A vast funeral procession in Budapest followed the bones of Lazlo Rajk to reinterment. An alternative Stalinist team led by Imre Nagy, who had also been in jail, took power.

When they decided to leave the Warsaw Pact, Russia invaded. The Hungarians fought back. They built barricades in Budapest, contesting every street with the invaders, fighting tanks with bottles of petrol and captured guns.

Disaffection appeared in the ranks of the Russian army, and then a miracle seemed to happen — the Russians withdrew from Budapest. But they came back almost immediately, with fresh troops. They crushed the uprising.

Workers struck in the factories, and the Stalinists had literally to take the means of production out of their hands. Tens of thousands of refugees streamed across the Austrian border, to disperse in the West. The new regime installed by Moscow was still hanging insurgents five years later. Imre Nagy and three others were hanged in Moscow in 1958.

Peter Fryer was a reporter on the Daily Worker (now, in reduced circumstances and outside the CP's control, called the Morning Star). He had reported on the Rajk trial and was sent to Budapest in 1956.

What he saw horrified him and opened his eyes. He wrote the truth as he saw it, and the Daily Worker refused to print his articles. Soon he was expelled from the CP. He wrote this book and it was published by a small group of Trotskyists, led by Gerry Healy, in December 1956. It is now reprinted in a new edition.

Fryer became a Trotskyist and helped win many ex-CPers to Trotskyism after 1957. His book is a vivid first-hand account of the Hungarian Revolution. No wonder it had such an impact 30 years ago: read it! It is still an antidote against illusions in Stalinism because what it deals with is an event which happened not at the high point of Stalinist terror, but in the middle of the 'thaw' initiated by Gorbachev's direct predecessor as a reform dictator, Nikita Khrushchev.

A sour joke of that period is worth remembering. When Stalin died he left a big box labelled 'To my successor: to be opened in time of trouble'. In trouble Khrushchev opened the box and found inside it another box and a message.

The message said 'Blame it all on me', and the box was labelled, 'Open when things get worse'.

When Hungary boiled over, Khrushchev opened the second box. Inside he found a message: 'If things are really bad, do as I did'.

Never the same again

from back page

"When you go in you have to strip off entirely and are taken into a room with three or four women prison warders. They run their hands over your body, look into your mouth, under your feet, under your arms, everywhere. They are continually worried about drugs being smuggled in and out.

Then you go into another room where there is a nurse or matron type, and they have a big iron chair. The seat of the chair is on a level with this woman's face, and you have to get up on it. There were two bars going out from this chair with two loops on the end, and you had to put your legs on that.

You can imagine what the search was. When you don't know what to expect, it's so degrading... and so unnecessary".

Women in miners' support groups have since taken up the campaign against strip searching, particularly in Armagh jail in Northern Ireland.

During the strike, the women didn't just picket the pits, but also offered solidarity to other struggles. For example, the women from Yorkshire went and picketed Cammell Lairds shipyard, where workers were occupying against closure.

"We just read about Cammell Lairds in the papers and saw it on television, and decided to help them. We got in touch with somebody there and told them we'd like to join the picket line, and they said, 'Yes, great, when are you coming?'."

Travelling round the country to raise funds and support, the women encountered many different struggles going on that until then had been nothing more than a remote idea from a TV screen or the newspaper.

"Before, they had always seen themselves as a working-class elite, and at first it was a shock to find that in police eyes they rated as blacks, teenagers with drugs, or gays. It was a healthy awakening".

The women came to identify with groups they had previously ignored or been critical of, one of the strongest links being with the women of the peace camp protesting against Cruise missiles at Greenham Common.

Many women in the mining villages have continued to be active since the miners' strike was lost — in Women Against Pit Closures, demanding a voice in the NUM; in the Labour Party, demanding the right of women to equal representation; demanding the release and reinstatement of all the miners imprisoned and sacked as a result of the dispute; or supporting whichever strike or struggle keeps alive the fighting spirit of the working class.

The women of the miners' strike will never be the same again, and because of them the women's movement will never be the same again either.

"The women's movement which evolved during the strike regenerated pride among all working-class women. Their feminism was based not on a doctrine of individual opportunity, but on the strength of the solidarity of women to achieve a better and fairer society".

The experience of the women in the miners' strike is the nearest this country has come to seeing the birth of a working-class women's movement. As the strike of 1984-5 showed, such a movement would benefit not just women, but the working class as a whole.

Jean Lane reviews 'Never the Same Again: Women and the Miners' Strike', by Jean Stead (The Women's Press, £5.95)

Mary Hallam from Edwinstowe near Workshop in North Notts. Photo Brenda Price/Format.

Never the same again

"They wanted to keep their solidarity. They wanted to remain sisters and not compete with each other like successful middle-class career women in a rat-race copied from middle-class male society.

"In fact, they wanted to do no less than dig up the roots of society, shake them, clean them, and plant them again in a better soil".

Such is Jean Stead's assessment of the women in the miners' strike. In her book she allows us to relive the courage, the excitement, the solidarity, the sorrow and the fear — and, most of all, the comradeship — that existed among working-class people during the miners' strike of 1984-5.

The demands of the women's movement, which up to then had been mostly the concern of middle-class, relatively well-off, articulate women, were taken up in the most active way possible by working-class women. The demands for peace, against nuclear weaponry and nuclear power, for education for working class women, for better health services, for an equal right to jobs, and for a more equal share-out of the burden of domestic labour, were all part of the struggle taken up by the women of the coalfields.

And, because those demands were being raised as a result of a class struggle that was questioning the very basis of capitalist philosophy (profit before people), and was therefore coming up directly and violently against the forces of the state, the women of the coalfields were thrown headlong into politics.

Women who had never done anything like it before had to learn very quickly how to organise meetings, how to speak, and how the labour movement works (what do all those initials stand for?)

They were also learning the best ways to picket. They were organising rallies, and they were travelling, not just all over the country but internationally, collecting money and support for the striking miners.

The most immediate effect of the women's involvement was of course on family life. Many marriages broke up under the strain. But many others were strengthened by the new comradeship between miners and their wives.

As one striking miner from Maerdy put it: *"Before, you felt you were just the person who went home on a Friday night with the pay packet. There was nothing to look forward to, nothing to talk about. You just thought about how you could manage to pay the bills.*

Now we read the newspapers, think a lot about world affairs we see on television, and think maybe we can change things".

Roles had to change — and just as the women were learning new skills in speaking, fighting, travelling, many of the men were learning to keep house and look after the bills.

Not all the stories in the book are light-hearted or humorous. Some men found it difficult to accept the women's new independence, and the ensuing arguments caused pain, illness and hardship. But the majority of the women's lives were changed completely and irrevocably by the strike.

"Some men found it very difficult to get used to the fact that it was not them but their wives who would be rolling merrily through the door after midnight, the better for a few drinks after the evening meeting and full of stories about their successes".

Another area where women's involvement brought the women into conflict with their allies — their husbands and the men in the NUM — was the picket line. Many men did not like to see women there and felt it particularly hard to see the police hitting out at the women. But picket the women did nevertheless, and proved themselves courageous and fearless fighters, despite the violence, imprisonment and harassment they faced.

120 women picketed Calverton pit in Nottinghamshire, where scabs were working a night shift.

"We went onto the side of the road leading to the pit. But they didn't want us there, so they forced us all over to a piece of grass on the other side. They penned us in there by encircling us. Then more and more police started to arrive and forced us over the road.

They were hitting women. There were no holds barred; there were 13 women taken to hospital. It was terrifying".

Brenda Greenwood was arrested at Ollerton colliery for shouting at the scabs, and was jailed for seven days at Risley remand centre.

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