

Workers' Liberty

The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself



SOCIALISM
Means **FREEDOM**

1848-1998

The Communist Manifesto after Stalinism

Labour and the cuts revolt Student fees strike in Germany
Is there a gay gene? Will there be a new slump?

IN WORKERS' LIBERTY THIS MONTH

3 Commentary

Revolt against welfare cuts: a big movement is now possible

Mindless militarism

5 Survey

Labour Party; Korean workers; Diary of a casual postal worker; Racism in Australia; Netanyahu; Refugees

16 Verse

"Holy Thursday", "The Chimney Sweep"

by William Blake

17 Economic Notes

Will there be world slump? by Martin Thomas

19 Behind the News

Is there a "gay gene"? by Clive Bradley

Berlin: a capital for Capital, by Tony Brown

25 Science

Hot air from Kyoto, by Les Hearn

26 Fightback in Germany

No fees! No cuts!

28 Review

Lenin traduced, by John Buckell

28 As We Were Saying

The Winnie Mandela scandal

29 1848 - 1998

The principles of Communism, by Frederick Engels

The Red Flag, by S.M.

The Communist Manifesto after Stalinism,
by Sean Matgamna

45 Platform

Was Stalinism a 'third road'? by Galia

Break with the past, by Voix des Travailleurs

Socialist Labour Party "severely injured",
by Alan McArthur

48 Forum

Workers' government and workers' democracy,
by Bill Davies

The USSR was not state capitalist, by Roger Clarke

Sectarian towards Scots radicalism, by James D Young



Revolt against cuts, page 3;
Labour Party, page 5



Korean workers, page 11



Germany:
After the Wall came down,
page 23;
cuts revolt,
page 26



1848-1998: 150 years after the
Communist Manifesto, page 37

Subscription information, page 8

Revolt against welfare cuts

A big movement is now possible

The most important political event in the labour movement since the General Election is the revolt of 61 Labour MPs on 10 December against the government decision to cut benefits for single parents and their children, followed by the open denunciation of the Blair leadership by Labour MEPs Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr. Given the neo-Stalinist structure and atmosphere in New Labour's parliamentary party, this revolt is bigger, and has come earlier in the life of this government, than we had dared hope.

Around opposition to welfare cuts and the defence of the welfare state, a long overdue recomposition of the political labour movement can now begin. The Blair faction's flaunting of their deeply Tory ethos and their smug middle-class disdain for the concerns and traditions of the labour movement will force the pace.

Not only Blair's arrogance, but also the very core of his policy, is driving him to provoke further rebellions. The "reform" of welfare is, it seems, to be the chief concern of New Labour in its "first five years". What the Tories did all too well, Blair intends to do better. Welfare? Let them sink or swim in the whirlpools

of the capitalist market! Let them live off low-paid odd jobs! Let them buy their own pensions and insurance! Tony Blair will press for more cuts — in benefits for the disabled, and in Health Service budgets — as an ostentatious assertion of his government's "pro-business" orientation. If welfare "reform" — that is, the slashing-back of what remains

after 18 years of Tory destruction, in the name of sound finance and sound profits — is central to the "New Labour" strategy, the fight for social protection and social solidarity will be central to the working-class resistance.

When the Health Service and the welfare state were created in their modern form by a Labour government which had won an overwhelming victory at the polls in 1945, they were a tremendous extension of "the political economy of the working class" at the expense of the political economy of the ruling class. So overwhelming was the support for the reforms of the 1945 Labour government that even the Tory party, as it was then and for three decades after, was forced to accept them. But even the most impressive part-measures leave the commanding heights of the economy and the state power in the hands of the ruling class. Over time the ruling class recovers and fights back. For almost twenty years now they have been taking their revenge.

To turn the tide you need conviction. Only a bold proclamation of the principle that life comes before property can rally, organise and focus the existing mass resentment and disgust at the Tory and Blairite destruction of welfare. For 18 years the Labour leaders failed to fight the Tory assault. Why? Their reformist nerve had failed. Morally, they buckled and bowed down to the dog-eat-dog philosophy of the Tories. The years of submission shaped a new Labour leadership which now, in office, prosecutes that philosophy as its own.

The labour movement that created the Health Service had its roots in a powerful governing idea, expressed in the early years

of the movement by people such as Henry Hyndman, James Connolly and Keir Hardie in the words, "A full, free, happy life, for all — or for none". We must recall, proclaim and fight now for that principle.

Clearly or diffidently, confidently or timidly, outspokenly or despondently, one way or another, a vast majority of people oppose the Tory-Blairite philosophy. Blair can be stopped. A bold campaign for all-out acceptance of the principles of social solidarity, for full-scale restoration and extension of health care and welfare, could rally millions. It could bring those who, from anti-Toryism, have gone along with Kinnock, Smith and Blair, to a realisation that right now the main enemies of the labour movement are the Tories within its own institutions!

Things have got to this stage because of the failure to fight of the trade union leaders and of the old left of the Labour Party. The revolt of the 61 MPs could signal a new start here. We will see. They have not, any of them, tried to rouse a mass campaign against Blair. How, given the state of labour movement leadership, can we launch a crusade to save and to renovate the Health Service

and the welfare system? Who can now proclaim, establish, and fight for a working-class philosophy against that of the Tories and their "New Labour" pupils and understudies? Who can organise the fight — with every means necessary, propaganda, demonstrations, direct action — to save and rebuild the welfare state?

In the past, powerful movements have been created by ad hoc committees. The most relevant model is the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Committee of 100 of the late 1950s and early 1960s. It was started by prominent writers like J B Priestley and Bertrand Russell, and left-wing politicians like Michael Foot. At a time when the foremost figure of the Labour left, Aneurin Bevan, had made his peace with nuclear armaments; when most of the trade union leaders were stonewall supporters of the right-wing, pro-nuclear, Labour leaders; and when what was then by far the biggest and most influential group of the non-Labour left, the Communist Party, was equivocal on the issue — at such a time, it tapped and mobilised the vast previously-headless support for the principles of human

"Around the defence of the welfare state, a long overdue recomposition of the political labour movement can now begin. Not only Blair's arrogance, but also the very core of his policy, is driving him to provoke further rebellions"

Workers' Liberty

Incorporating Socialist Organiser



THE WORKING CLASS WILL RISE AGAIN!

Editor: Martin Thomas; Assistant Editor: Sean Matgamna;
Design: Tom Rigby; Business Manager: Alan McArthur.

Published by Phoenix Press, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA;
phone 0171-207 4673, fax 0171-277 8462, e-mail awl@gn.apc.org.
Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of Workers' Liberty.

life as against those of great-power military competition and threatening nuclear annihilation. It became a great force, able to shape the affairs of the labour movement. It was the seedbed of the big revival of the socialist left which would develop in the later 1960s and early 1970s.

We can use that model now. Many local and partial campaigns are already active on health and welfare issues. The Welfare State Network has built up a track-record and a profile, over the last three years, as a force for coordination and mutual support. The job now is to assemble such groups in an effective ad hoc alliance, together with Labour MPs willing to take their defiance beyond votes in Parliament and with trade unionists ready to challenge the subservience and passivity of the top union leaders.

To thousands of workers and activists who hate what Blair is doing — but who feel trapped in a labour movement which is

dominated by the right wing and often enfeebled and emptied-out at grass-roots level — such an alliance could offer immediate perspectives for effective action and mobilisation. And they, in turn, by taking the message and the initiatives of the campaign into the trade unions and Labour Parties, can help the grass roots revive and challenge the servile leaders. The basic welfare-state demands — like state-of-the-art health care freely accessible to all — point to a logic of solidarity and working-class self-assertion which can guide a far-reaching development of struggle against the rule of profit. They can unite, mobilise, and encapsulate a whole philosophy. They can provide a bridge over which to go from workers' concerns today to the movement we need.

The time is now! That is the message the 61 MP "rebels", and Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr, whether they understand it or not, have sent to the labour movement.

Mindless militarism

The Irish National Liberation Army, INLA, the group which sparked the current new wave of communal bloodshed in Northern Ireland by killing Loyalist Volunteer Force leader Billy Wright, considers itself more left-wing than the Provisional Sinn Fein/IRA. Most of its members and sympathisers consider themselves Marxists, some Trotskyists.

The INLA and the LVF, and the other "ultras" on both sides who advocate continued shooting and bombing, are small groups. Yet Bosnia, from 1992, showed how such small groups, once they have achieved a certain level of weight and impact, can trigger mass communal bloodshed. People at risk from such "ultras" are naturally driven to support the militant communalists on their own "side", and that in turn brings bloodier retaliation from the other "side".

We shed no tears for the sectarian assassin Wright. But what can INLA bullets win? The maximum possible result is a collapse of the slow and feeble process of peace talks, and a return to one degree or another of open communal civil war in Northern Ireland. The Catholic minority cannot win that civil war; and even if they could, their victory would mean only that Northern Ireland's Protestants would be a trapped minority under a Dublin regime they saw as alien instead of its Catholics being trapped under a Belfast regime they see as alien. In practice all INLA's efforts can bring to the people they claim to fight for, the Northern Ireland Catholics, is more death and repression.

INLA's rationale is that revolutionaries should not do deals with imperialism. They should instead mobilise the greatest possible militancy and intransigence. But socialism is not nihilism. The shout of defiance and protest is the beginning of wisdom; but socialist progress is not made by raw rage, still less raw sectarian rage. INLA has in its time been responsible for sectarian killings no different from those done by Billy Wright and his associates. On 20 November 1983, for example, they machine-gunned the crowd at a Pentecostal gospel hall in South Armagh, killing three. Between INLA and working-class socialism there is much more than a theoretical dispute.

Struggle educates and organises, but not any struggle: struggle in line with the logic of working-class needs. Sectarian-communalist struggle, even if it is based on an oppressed community, disrupts organisation and befouls political awareness.

Before the rise of Stalinism, it was taken for granted in all Marxist debates on the question of national rights that Marxists could not outbid narrow nationalists on their own terrain. The Polish-Jewish Marxist Rosa Luxemburg wrote: "Social Democracy [meaning, in the terms of the time, the Marxist movement] does

not distinguish itself through the magnanimity of its programmes and is in this respect constantly outstripped by Socialist Parties which are not tied by any scientific doctrine. These always have their pockets full of attractive gifts for everyone". No other Marxist would have questioned this truth; nor did those, like Lenin, who dissented from Luxemburg's opposition to "self-determination" for Poland dispute her criticism of the Polish "Socialist Parties which are not tied by any scientific doctrine" and which identified socialism with the most militant Polish nationalism.

The version of Marxism which feeds into INLA was first developed in the mid-1920s. The leadership of the USSR and the Communist International — not yet a counter-revolutionary ruling class, but already bureaucratically distanced from the working class — sustained falsely hyped-up and administratively-decreed "revolutionary" perspectives by "seeing red" wherever there was agitation or tumult. It was in this period, for example, that the young Communist Party of Yugoslavia was swung round to call for the immediate and militant independence of all Yugoslavia's constituent nations as a supposedly revolutionary-socialist cause — a programme whose disruptive logic for the working class would be catastrophically confirmed after 1991. In some of their later phases, the Stalinists hardened this approach into a corrupt dogma, as in 1929 when Moscow instructed the Communist Party of Palestine to reinterpret anti-Jewish pogroms as anti-imperialist revolution.

If Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness and the other Sinn Fein leaders want a "historic compromise" with British imperialism, they should be opposed in the name of consistently-democratic working-class politics, not of nationalistic ultra-militancy. Adams and McGuinness are right in so far as they want to call off the war. Those who can see "revolutionary" and "anti-imperialist" scenarios in a renewal of communal war in Northern Ireland serve neither the working class nor the oppressed.

The parties linked to paramilitary groups that have called ceasefires — Sinn Fein, the PUP, and the UDP — remain communalist. When they concern themselves with workers' interests, it is the interests of the workers of their "own" community. If they look to workers' unity, it is a unity to be achieved by them first winning hegemony in their "own" community, and then doing deals with partners in the "other" community. But communalism that talks about compromises is better than communalism that shoots and bombs to try to break down the steel wall of the other community's resistance — and better, especially, for the chances of retrieving socialist working-class politics, for workers' unity based on consistent democracy, from its current extinction in Northern Ireland.



Lone parents lobby Parliament on 10 December against benefit cuts

A chance to reconstruct

By Tom Rigby

THE REBELLION BY 61 Labour MPs on 10 December against the government's cuts in lone parent benefit marks a decisive change in the political situation. The overwhelming majority of Labour's core working-class supporters see the cuts as unjustifiable. "We didn't vote for this!" sums up their mood. Even amongst those sections of the middle class who were supposed to be uniquely attracted to Blair, the cuts have produced a level of opposition that can only be explained by recognising the enduring strength of those collectivist values the spin-doctors told us had been abolished by Thatcherism.

This widespread social opposition found expression in the Parliamentary Labour Party. Given that the dismantling of the welfare state is the cornerstone of the Blair government's programme, the rebellion against it in parliament will not go away and should continue to grow and crystallise politically. Though the issues are still posed tentatively and conditionally by most dissidents, we could begin to see, over the next few months, a de facto split in the Parliamentary Labour Party over the very core policies of the entire Blairite project.

If this split is big enough — and the mutterings of "thus far and no further" over lone parent benefit cuts suggest it may be — then Blair could well find him-

self having to rely on Tory parliamentary support to ram through policies that are deeply unpopular with the great majority of Labour voters and the ranks of the broad labour movement. In other words, we could be about to witness the creation of a very special form of undeclared national government of the right. The question is, will this development be matched by a hardening of the parliamentary rebellion into an alternative Labour group of MPs and an all-out fight to win the political allegiance of the labour movement and Labour voters away from Blair and his New Labour apparatus, or will there be no more than a few howls of protest followed by the death rattle of Labourism?

The answer to that question will, of course, be provided by the struggle. It will in no small part depend on the character, mettle, political will and strategic orientation of those people who are now central to the growing parliamentary rebellion against Blair. If the Parliamentary Labour Party dissidents link up to a broad movement of trade-union based opposition to the dismantling of the welfare state, then there is the possibility of fusing mass direct action resistance to the government with a political struggle inside the labour movement for working class politics and a workers' government. Everything depends on understanding

exactly the balance of class forces and defining the key next steps forward. If the left misses this chance to reconstruct mass working class politics on a socialist basis, then the die will be cast and we may not get another opportunity for a very long time to come.

The rebirth of hope

Polls show unprecedented levels of support for Labour in opinion polls (still running at 55%, with a 29% lead over the Tories), combined with extremely high levels of opposition to key government policies like cutting single parent benefit (58% to 22%, or roughly 3 to 1).

This contradictory mood is further highlighted by the fact that though the number of people satisfied by the government's performance fell by 19% after the lone parent benefit cuts — with a 16% fall in Blair's own personal rating — the fall in support for Labour was just 2%. The same polls continue to register clear majority support for precisely those measures of elementary collectivist re-distribution — like taxing the rich — that the new regime declares impossible. Without trying to read too much into a few polls, it would not be outrageous to suggest that the voters want a Labour government but are no longer so sure they want this one.

The polls are certainly confirmation

of the fact that on May Day 1997 the people thought they were throwing out not just the Tories, but Tory policies. And now the big majority of Labour voters are having to come to terms with the fact that the great wave of hope unleashed by the election landslide faces betrayal by none other than the government that the landslide swept into office. They may well conclude that they have to do things for themselves. Anticipating, preparing and fighting for that sort of development of consciousness inside the class is the rational basis of our perspectives for action. As this magazine argued immediately after the election: "Hope will stimulate and liberate desire. Desire and hope will stimulate action."

Blair's purpose in cutting lone parent benefit was to try to stop that kind of development happening by radically reducing expectations amongst broad sections of the working class. He wants to crush hope while maintaining majority support to ensure re-election. The cut in lone parent benefit was in no way an immediate necessity for the government, given the vast amounts of money in state coffers and the £1.6 billion undershoot on the Tories' spending projections. It was rather a demonstrative blow against all those who expected Labour to be different. It makes sense only as a deliberate slap in the face not just for lone parents but for the millions of people who share the labour movement's basic egalitarian values. The Supreme Leader set out to force through parliament — and a reluctant Parliamentary Labour Party — an unpalatable policy that had not even been discussed by cabinet committee, never mind a full cabinet, in a classic Stalinist style loyalty test. Order was to reign over the corpse of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The scale of the rebellion, 61 in total with 47 voting against, was truly unexpected only for those who have allowed the apparent dominance of the New Labour apparatus to define their political horizons. It was no more than an entirely

predictable assertion of core working-class values against Blairite provocation by, in the main, honourable labour movement people. Both the Millbank apparatchiks and some of the best of the parliamentary left nevertheless did not expect such a big revolt. For the left MPs it was probably a question of not quite believing that they could pull it off, a fear that at the end of the day they would be able to muster only a few of the "usual suspects" to vote against the first Labour Government in 18 years. The response is understandable, given the Blairites'

"The cut in lone parent benefit made sense only as a deliberate slap in the face not just for lone parents but for the millions of people who share the labour movement's basic egalitarian values, and a Stalinist-style loyalty test"

strength in the Palace of Westminster, but it betrays a certain isolation from struggles outside — a case of what us "crude Marxists" would call "social being determining social consciousness."

Flying without radar

Why did Blair miscalculate so badly? Martin Jacques — of all people — put it rather well when he told a late night political chat show that "Blair seems to be piloting this aircraft without the radar system normally used by Labour Governments." What the former Eurocommunist guru and ex-Blairite has put his finger on is something we have often pointed to in this journal: the lack of a solid material base for the Blairite project outside of the narrow parameters of the political class and a few media moguls. The government, argued Jacques, was clearly not

responding to the normal channels of representation via the labour movement that keep even right wing Labour governments within certain bounds. There is, he said "an unpredictability about the government, a volatility even, that could lead to it simply imploding. A sense in which the government is no longer shaping events but being blown about by them."

So even those, like the former editor of *Marxism Today*, who played such a role in sponsoring and providing ideological cover for the Labour Party "modernisers", are now deeply alienated and disorientated by the true blue reality of Blairism in office. Facts, as someone once said, are stubborn things. Not even post-Marxists can escape them. Jacques went on to tell the late night TV audience that it was now "quite obvious that Labour would still have won the election comfortably without any of the extremism of Blair." When Jacques was backed up by the *Democratic Left's* Nina Temple, who said that the government should listen to the trade union movement and not launch any more attacks on its natural supporters, it added to the sound of pennies dropping.

Recent months have given a crash course in political reality not just to ex-Eurocommunists but also to some of Blair's formerly most slavish supporters in the "left of centre" mainstream media. Take *Observer* editor Will Hutton. The Labour leadership have managed to take a natural ally — he invented "stakeholding", after all — and turn him into something close to an enemy. Two years ago Hutton was speaking at Labour Coordinating Committee conferences on the need to get rid of Clause Four; now he is leading the hunt to track down Geoffrey Robinson's offshore millions. The root of this is Brown and Blair's straitjacketed refusal to countenance even the limited experiments in Keynesian reflation advocated by Hutton, who unlike Gordon Brown no longer has to take private tutorials on economics. This liberal disillusionment reached a peak recently with the call by the *Guardian* for the "Old Labour" cabinet ministers, particularly Blunkett, Dobson and Prescott, to rein in Blair before he does irreparable damage to the Labour Party's reputation as a party of the left.

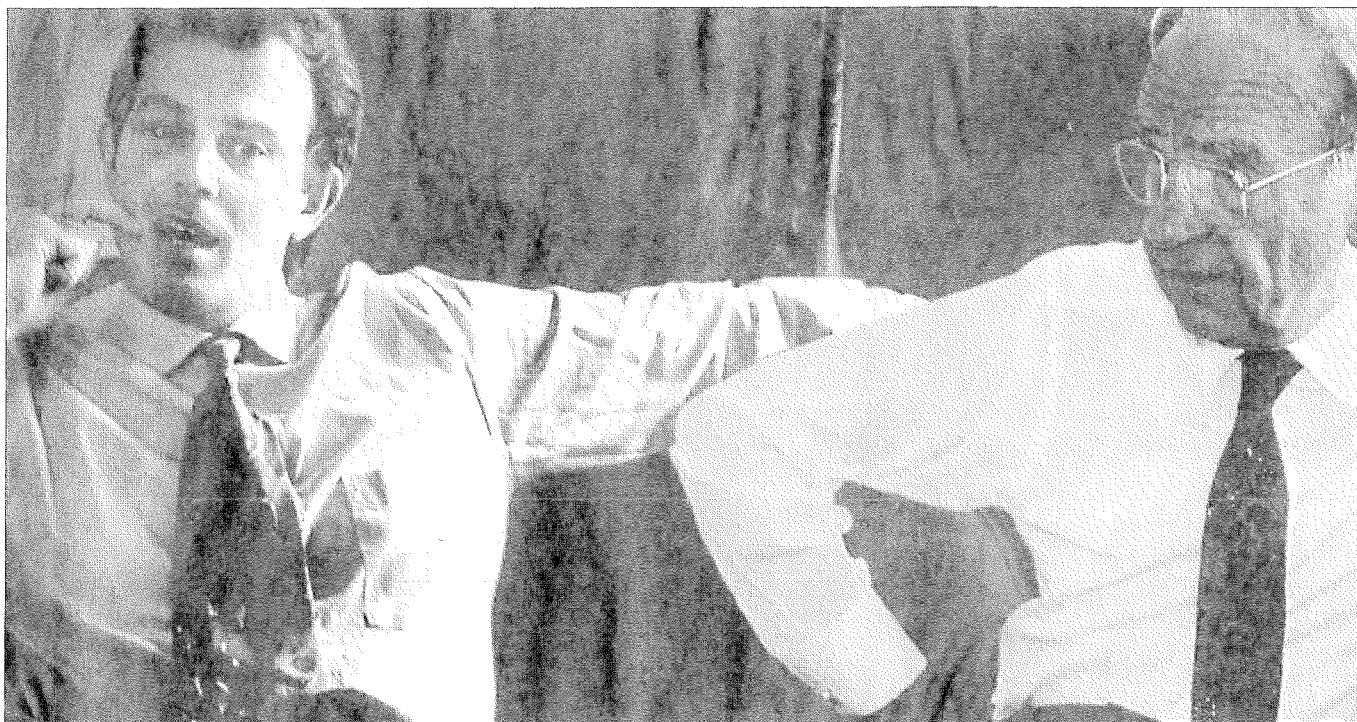
We should register just how brittle the Blair government is, and how bereft of convincing champions. It is a very narrow and randomly assembled clique of political lightweights, who because of a series of political accidents (the death of John Smith, the self-destruction of the Tory Party) and the utter desperation and political collapse of the trade union lead-

What is Workers' Liberty?

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty organises to fight the class struggle on all levels — trade-union and social battles, politics, and the combat of ideas. We are active in workplaces, in trade unions, in the Labour Party, in single-issue campaigns, in student unions, and in debates and discussions on the left, aiming to integrate all these activities into a coherent effort for socialism.

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

If you want to know more about the Alliance for Workers' Liberty write to: PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



Spot the connection: Tony Blair wants to dilute New Labour's promises on legislation for union recognition, and Tony Blair wants to keep in with Rupert Murdoch

ers, find themselves in a position of enormous power and leverage that doesn't remotely reflect the real level of support for their reactionary programme. For instance, the Blairites can no longer even rely on Neil Kinnock for support. Glenys Kinnock has written to the *Guardian* opposing the cut in lone-parent benefit; Neil Kinnock, speaking to the *New Statesman*, has implicitly endorsed her stance; and Kinnock's longtime leading hatchet-man, Charles Clarke, has "leaked" a letter of protest in an attempt to warn Blair off from more cuts.

This weakness of the Blairites was revealed by their pathetic response to the Commons rebellion, an outbreak of dissent precisely where they are supposed to be strongest. Before the vote, they told the press that any dissent would be dealt with "swiftly and decisively". Come the morning of 11 December there was no talk of disciplinary action. Most rebels got a letter. Four "super-rebels" were given a special telling off by the chief whip, and Alistair Campbell told the press that they had "received a yellow card." Were the four to be expelled if they voted against the government again, or just suspended for a few weeks if they do it a total of three times? The Supreme Leader then chose the *Sun* to announce that "I'll crush welfare rebels!" — a funny way of describing doing precisely nothing to intimidate them and an awful lot to transform them into heroes overnight. Two rebels from the 1997 intake reported walking nervously into their local party meetings after the vote — having been

threatened by the whips that their local parties would turn against them — only to be met by standing ovations, not a response which will make them think twice about rebelling in the future.

The Prime Minister didn't even have the guts to support Harman in parliament but instead, in an act which combined cowardice and contempt, hid away at a JFK style Downing Street reception for showbiz trash. This smart move simply alerted the press to the story that the government has spent more in seven months on receptions for bigwigs than it will save with the lone parent benefit cuts. Meanwhile the Geoffrey Robinson tax haven fiasco just got funnier; Jack Cunningham managed to simultaneously capitulate to and alienate the farmers and butchers; while Blair was faced down and out-"toughed" on live TV by that well-known political heavyweight, the finance minister of Luxemburg.

The Blairites are far from invincible. They can be beaten by any half-serious and determined working-class fightback. The problem is, who will lead it?

Union leaders to Blair's rescue

The lone parent benefit cuts impoverish people on income support, and also lower the standard of living of lone parents in employment by cutting their £6.05 per week extra child benefit. You would expect even the most narrowly sectional, economic and "a-political" trade unions (i.e., even those who don't think the unemployed are part of the working class) to make a great fuss about

the standard of living of some of their lowest paid members being reduced by a Labour Government. But while Blair, Brown and Harman were picking the pockets of lone parents and stealing food from the mouths of their children, the trade union leaders said and did absolutely nothing to stop it.

Minor TGWU and GMB full-time officials put in a token appearance at a

Guiding star

ON 4 DECEMBER 1997, the Financial Times asked: "Why is the government so vulnerable to the charge that influence can be purchased by wealthy donors?" Its answer hit the nail on the head: "Part of the explanation lies in Tony Blair's aim of governing for the 'whole nation' and his repudiation of the notion that the government should further the interests of organised labour. Before Blair, Labour at least had the advantage of a highly visible guiding star by which all its actions could be measured. If the electorate starts to mistrust Blair, it will be because they feel the 'national interest' means whatever he chooses".

Or whatever his big business cronies choose...

Westminster rally against the cuts, but the unions did nothing as collective organisations to fight these cuts, and the main union leaders remained completely silent. This was terrible given the fact that the trade unions have the resources and the numbers to put thousands of people onto the streets in protest.

If that wasn't bad enough, a week after the Commons vote a TUC delegation popped in to Downing Street for a cosy chat and, after all of half an hour, emerged to tell the press that they were "happy" with the Government's focus on welfare to work. The attack on lone parents coincided with both Brown's announcement of another public sector pay freeze and a Blair-inspired CBI pincer movement to gut the proposed legislation on trade union recognition, yet it still wasn't enough to stir the union leaders from the impartial stance that these great men now take on all matters of conflict between the government and their own members. This tells us a lot about the degeneracy of today's trade union leaders. The key union bosses have clearly decided that, for now, they will take absolutely anything rather than resist Blair.

The main strategic problem facing the developing opposition to Blair is the role of the trade union bureaucracy. In general, trade union officialdom has to work to secure some material advances for the class in order to shore up its own positions of privilege and expand its bureaucratic empires. The problem is that, right now, the union leaders have clearly decided that all other working-

class interests mean nothing compared to their key aim, which is to win some law for union recognition which will allow them to recruit members and gain relief from the financial crisis that affects all the main unions. This stance means that in the here and now — as opposed to in some theoretically possible future — the union leaders are an *absolute* block on developing any kind of mass working-class fightback against Blair. This doesn't mean that they can't be pushed into opposition, particularly if they fear they could lose control of the unions to left wing rebels, but as yet they have not been put in that position. Thus, the future of the Labour party — and of mass working class politics — is indissolubly linked with the struggle to build a rank and file movement that can wrest control of the unions away from the bureaucracy and start a fightback to defend jobs, wages and services.

Though the union leaders are the major obstacle to developing a fightback against Blair, the calibre of the parliamentary rebels is also of concern to the broader class movement. We must hope that the thinking elements on the left of the Parliamentary Labour Party — who played an entirely positive role in audaciously building up the opposition on lone parent benefit — will not succumb to the arguments of those who peddle a form of would-be left wing *realpolitik* that is really nothing more than evasion and inaction. For instance, the bizarrely secretive Stalinoid sect *Socialist Action*, self-appointed grand strategist for the Labour left, has argued in favour of

putting off struggles today in the hope of a better balance of forces in the future. "You fight on issues of your own choosing, not your enemies'." "You don't let your opponents dictate the agenda". It may sound very hard-headed in the abstract, but when your opponent is the *government* and you are the main parliamentary opposition, it means that they can introduce as many attacks on working-class people as they wish and you are only going to resist if you think you can get away with it without suffering disciplinary consequences. In other words, the government will continue to dictate the agenda and you will do nothing about it.

In reality, wresting the agenda from Blair will require some very tough confrontational tactics indeed, so if the rebels want to make their mark on this parliament then they are going to have to go in for a lot more defiance of the whips, not less. For instance, if both the Liberal Democrats and the Tories oppose cuts in disability benefits, then an extra 40-odd Labour rebels could defeat the government. In such a rebellion — that is, when the rebels can really make a difference to what the government does, and really raise a banner for working-class people — the pressure from the whips will be a thousand times greater. The key is for the left MPs to start to function as an independent Labour group who owe their allegiance to the broad labour movement and not to the Prime Minister. We don't, of course, mean that they should demonstratively resign the Labour whip, but that they should refuse to vote for anti-working-class measures and set out to appeal to the broad labour movement — the trade union rank and file, Constituency Labour Party activists and community-based campaigns — for political support and solidarity. That way they can link up with the opposition outside parliament over issues like tuition fees and cuts. If the left MPs dodge difficult issues by hiding behind the silence of the right-wing leaders of the trade unions or the National Union of Students, then they will simply leave the extra-parliamentary opposition without any kind of parliamentary focus, thus making defeat more likely.

The best of the rebels are already prepared to put their loyalty to the class above the dictates of the whips, but others see the rebellion as a way of bolstering their careers — and in the long run their ministerial prospects. If the latter group are allowed to shape the strategic thinking of the rebels, and people start to rest on their laurels about the government's temporary setbacks, then

Workers' Liberty

"The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself"

£16 for one year post free (£8 unwaged/students). Australian subscriptions: \$45 from Workers' Liberty, PO Box 313, Leichhardt, NSW 2040 (cheques payable to "Workers' Liberty"); US subscriptions: \$45 from Barry Finger, 153 Henderson Place, East Windsor, NJ 08520 (cheques payable to "Barry Finger"); European subscriptions: £24 from the London address (payment in British currency). British/European subscriptions: cheques payable to "Alliance for Workers' Liberty".

Name: Address

Cut out this form and send it, or write, to Alan McArthur, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA; or e-mail us at awl@gn.apc.org, or fax to 0171-277 8462.



The ultra-Tory Adam Smith Institute gave Harriet Harman 100% in its favourable review of the Blair government

Blair will inevitably regain all the initiative and plough on with his programme of counter-reforms. Thankfully, the future of socialism does not rest solely in the hands of 61 parliamentary rebels. There are millions of people who are already starting to feel disillusioned with the direction in which Blair is taking the government. The key here is to mobilise people into activity. In the last analysis, it will be the level of defiance in demonstrations, protests, pickets, occupations and strikes that will determine whether or not Blair will succeed in further driving down working-class living standards and culture and in remaking the welfare state on US lines.

However, mass action on its own can only frustrate a government. As the experience of the poll tax demonstrates, if direct action is to do more than block the government, then those engaged in it need their own overall political alternative. It is the job of revolutionary socialists not just to be the very best fighters in the front-line, but also to give a sense of political coherence and purpose to the fightback that will develop in the workplaces, on the estates and in the schools, colleges and hospitals. This is not just a matter of defensive battles and demands on Blair to change course. The core idea that has to be popularised is a workers' government. We should counterpose to Blair's bosses' government, which is in the pockets of big business and committed to carrying out those bits of the Thatcher programme that even the Tories never dared attempt, the idea of a workers' government based on and accountable to the democratic grass roots of the labour movement and committed to an emergency plan for full employment and rebuilding the welfare state.

Labour should oust Blair

By Ken Coates

I AM VERY sympathetic to those who wish to continue fighting for socialism inside the Labour Party. I am not opposed to people remaining within the Labour Party, nor will I do anything to undermine their struggle, but I now think that it is also important to focus on, and attempt to organise, those party members who have dropped out or left in disgust. Remember, there has been a huge collapse of Labour Party membership. This reflects the great number of Labour voters who feel that the party has abandoned them.

Can we organise those who have already left? I would reject the arguments of those who think you must stay in the Labour Party at all costs even if the original reasons for being in the party no longer hold. People need to think for themselves in the new conditions that are developing, rather than engage in rather arcane arguments among activists about whether or not the new Partnership in Power structures of the Labour Party can be used for left-wing purposes. You see, even a Parliamentary rebellion double or triple the size of the one over lone parent benefits will not stop Blair, because of the size of his majority. The more I look at the situation, the more convinced I am that a public stand has to be made in defence of the poor, the unemployed and those on benefits. They are the people who will suffer most as a result of the attack on the welfare state, and right now they do not have a voice. The left ignores these developments at its peril.

In our Euro-constituency we have carried out a survey of the opinions of Labour Party members, 4500 of them. We have found that the vast majority support the stand I have taken on benefit cuts, and interestingly 42% of Labour Party members think I am right to consider standing as a protest candidate against the government rather than endorsing its attacks on the poor. Only around 20% think that would be wrong, while the rest have not come down firmly one way or another. There is enormous support in our area for resistance to the Blair agenda.

My long-term assessment of the situation is that there will be a chal-

lenge to the Blair leadership, and either the Labour Party will succeed in removing Blair and replacing him and his private team of aliens and SDP converts, or the labour movement will have no alternative but to start on the long and difficult road to the foundation of a new party.

Obviously, we cannot predict what will happen. It seems to me that a number of outcomes are possible. If the left is able to organise effectively and link up with broad forces in the labour movement, we may be able to evict Blair. That is by far the best thing for us to do. Then we could all reunite in the struggle to revalidate the Labour Party as a socialist party. But we can't be certain of that outcome. There are many other possibilities.

The question of the relationship between the unions and New Labour is of great strategic importance. At the moment the union leaders are hoping and waiting for legislation on trade union recognition. The unions are now very weak socially. They are hanging on by the fingernails, hoping and waiting for the legislation. If they don't get effective reforms in this area, they could simply get weaker and weaker.

The irony here is that Blair is going to try to give the union leaders a version of the anti-union Taft-Hartley laws in the USA, which will very likely reduce union membership and lead to more derecognition. Blair has a quite deliberate goal of diminishing trade union power still further. So he will try to present proposals effectively to derecognise unions as legislation for union recognition.

I don't, of course, disagree with the need to win the unions away from support for Blair's policies. I think there will be a movement building up to limit the massive financial support the unions give to Blair and to replace the carte-blanche support with more targeted campaigning initiatives.

My fear is simply that the unions may not move in the here and now. Right now we have a duty to defend the poorest in our society from the attacks emanating from the government — a government that has turned out even more right-wing than my worst fears.

Reclaiming the Party

Ken Coates has sent this letter to all the members of his European Constituency Labour Party, North Nottinghamshire and Chesterfield. It provoked a row which has led to his expulsion from the European Parliamentary Labour Party and probably from the Labour Party.

DEAR COLLEAGUE: — During 1998 there will be a great deal of activity to prepare for the European elections in June 1999. I am writing to you because I think it is proper to inform all our members so that they are the first to know of some of the difficult choices we are being offered.

Without any consultation on the practicalities, the Government is introducing a new European electoral system which will be very undemocratic indeed. What will happen in 1999 is that people will go to the polls to vote, not for an individual candidate, but for a Party list to represent a massive region. In our case this will stretch from Northampton up to the Sheffield boundaries, and appoint six Members. Voters won't be able to decide the order in which the candidates on the closed Party lists go forward. If normal numbers vote Labour in the East Midlands, the top two people on the Labour list may win seats. But who these people are will have been decided by a combination of Party leaders rather than by the electorate itself. Nor will electors be allowed to pick and mix between Party lists.

Unfortunately, this is not the only harmful change which we have had to deal with during the last few months. The Government has also decided that it will "reform" the welfare state, by reviewing the benefits of disabled people, cutting the benefits of single parents, abolishing student grants, imposing fees and ending grants for higher education, and refusing to upgrade pensions to relate them to rises in average earnings. All these measures hit poor people, to reduce the costs of welfare.

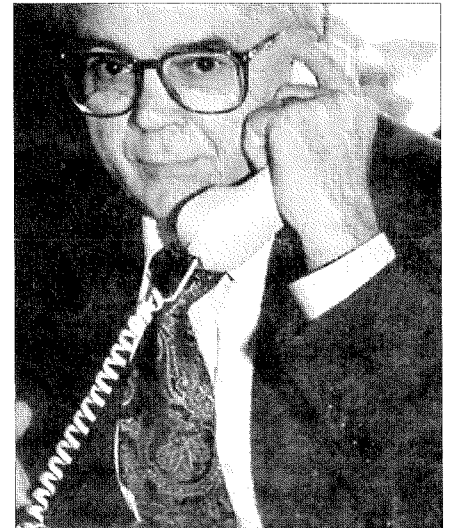
These welfare "reforms" could also lead to different kinds of charges within the Health Service, and have already provoked a great deal of disquiet in the schools, where teachers have been subject to very severe authoritarian pressures.

When I was re-elected in 1994, it was on an election manifesto drafted by the late John Smith, promising specific action in Europe to recreate full employment. I was enthusiastically in favour of this agenda, and indeed I had made a contribution to the drafting of the proposals which the manifesto included. During all the time since, I have worked very hard to try to implement those promises. Together with local Councils and voluntary bodies, I have ceaselessly campaigned for job creation in the Constituency. I have introduced two major Employment Reports in the Parliament which have been carried by very large majorities. I have initiated a prolonged dialogue between the European Churches on the problems of full employment. I have published several books, all on the same theme. And I have initiated the European Convention for Full Employment, which brought together nearly one thousand people from all over Europe to discuss how to implement the agenda of full employment. In short, I had no difficulty with the manifesto of 1994, and could, in good conscience, sign up to act upon it.

But I cannot sign up to support what we are now being offered: an agenda of cuts in the welfare state, penalties for poor people, and gross maldistribution of wealth throughout society. It is true that the Labour leadership changed its philosophy and policy after I was elected in 1994. But it could not change the historical fact that my contract with the electorate, the 1994 Manifesto, had been determined back in the days of John Smith. But now the future 1999 contract to be proposed to the electorate will defend policies of which I am heartily ashamed. I cannot therefore offer myself for selection on the New Labour panel of candidates for the European Parliament. I have thought deeply about this, and at first I wondered whether it might be right to retire from parliamentary politics.

But for sure, there is a mass of unfinished work to do, for recovery of economic life in the coalfield, for defence of employment in coalmines, factories and offices, and for the recovery of an environment which has been badly damaged by a century and more of industrial greed.

That is why, given these present circumstances, I think I ought to consult all our members about what to do next. Is



there an alternative course of action? I sense that members of our Party are in despair about some of the problems which I have mentioned in this letter. Surely there is something we can do about the fact that the Labour Party has been led so far away from the principles which drew us all to join it? None of us wants to found a new Party, but many of us think we need to reclaim our own party, with all its present mix of supporters and of different opinions. I want the Labour Party to come home to its own people. I want everybody to stay inside it and argue for the principles in which we all believe. We all need each other more than ever now that we face this crisis.

The question is, how can we register a protest about all these adverse decisions which are coming down from London? In the European elections, should we consider protest candidates to enable Labour voters to express their support for democratic elections, for the welfare state, for full employment, and for the redistribution of wealth? Might this help to persuade Labour to come home to its own people?

I am sharing this problem with you, in the earnest hope that you will give me your frank advice about it. My feeling is that if we do not make a protest, many hundreds of our members will be so disillusioned that they will leave active political life, and our movement will be deeply damaged. Already we are suffering serious losses of membership. Might such a protest candidature give hope to people, and encourage them to stay and defend the things that they believe in? And could it give hope to other people outside our district, to register that Labour ideals are still alive, and that there are very many people who wish to defend them?

What do you think?

• *Abridged slightly.*

Korean workers will fight IMF plans

Paul Field, who visited South Korea during the January 1997 general strike and again in November 1997, spoke to Alan McArthur about the state of the Korean workers' movement as it braces itself for an assault following the country's economic crisis

THERE IS A STAND-OFF developing in South Korea: who bears the brunt for the crisis, workers or bosses? In the short term, strikes are certainly possible. There's an analogy with Britain at the end of the 70s. They're going to deflate the economy, there are going to be big redundancies, they're going to force mergers and acquisitions and closures. There is going to be a massive attempted rationalisation of the workforce. The law has had to be reformed to allow more foreign imports and investment. Companies with huge debts they can't pay have to close or be bought out and redundancies made. The government wants to ban strikes in whole sectors of the economy. It's going to be dreadful if it goes through.

In the middle of December Kwon Yong-kil, the trade-union leader who was contesting Korea's presidential election, publicly shaved his head as a declaration of war on the government and the cuts. This was the positive side of his campaign that activists are now looking to build on. A new layer of activists is coming forward after the general strike last January, even despite the reprisals and intimidation since the strike. In the Hyundai Trade Union Federation, which is one of the biggest federations, that new layer is starting to take positions in the union.

The decision for Kwon Yong-kil to stand in the presidential election was taken late in the day, in late September. It came after a long debate in the trade union movement and progressive movement about whether to stand a candidate. Kwon is the head of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), the illegal or semi-legal federation of democratic unions which led last January's general strike.

The KCTU is the product of successive unifications of the democratic unions that, despite state repression, came out of, and managed to survive after, the democracy struggles against the military dictatorship in 1987. Along with key industrial unions, such as car work-



Trade-union leader Kwon Yong-kil has his head shaved to protest against IMF cuts

ers and metalworkers, there are also white collar unions in the KCTU, teachers' and journalists' unions. Kwon was a journalist. He was based in Paris for ten years as a broadcasting correspondent.

The KCTU organises maybe two or three percent of South Korean workers. That's in the face of repression, you have to bear in mind. Membership went up by about 10 percent to 600,000 in the wake of the general strike, out of a workforce of 30m. But the democratic unions organise workers in such key export industries that they can have a real impact. And the

“A new layer of activists is coming forward after the general strike last January, even despite the reprisals and intimidation”

general strike proved they have extremely widespread support.

It's illegal for trade unions to form a political party in South Korea, so Kwon's supporters set up a paper party, Peoples' Victory for the 21st Century. Significantly, they got the support of one of the main democracy movements from the 1987 struggles, the longest standing campaign, the National Alliance for Democracy and Reunification of Korea (NADRK) — although its influence has certainly declined. [NADRK has about 55,000 members.] This support was the legacy of alliances built in the general strike.

The campaign couldn't have direct

funding from or involvement of trade unions — although it was mainly individual trade unionists involved in the campaigning, and various workers' rallies did become election rallies.

The campaign received a lot of harassment from the state, including threats of arrest. They hadn't declared a proper party, to get around the issue of a labour party being illegal. Then the state said it was illegal for an independent to stand, that they must declare themselves as a formal party or disband. Of course, they couldn't be a labour party, so they were caught in a catch 22, hassled continually.

Money was a real problem, too. They needed £600,000. Elections are taken very seriously in South Korea and cost a fortune. People will spend £6,000 just to get elected to students' unions. The campaign couldn't get money directly from trade unions or it would be closed down. So there were real problems.

There was also the self-imposed problem that they didn't decide to run until late September. There was no worked out platform or manifesto, which admittedly is the way in Korean bourgeois politics: it's very centred around individuals. But the programme was very vague; you had to draw it out of speeches and statements in interviews where Kwon would set out a broad formal position. There was no detailed policy. The broad policy was not even social democratic in the politics of it. You could even call it Blairite — although they did call for some kind of

turn to page 13

welfare provision, which was the most progressive thing they were saying.

What was significant was that it was the first time the unions didn't support a liberal, bourgeois candidate like Kim Dae-jung, who won the election. Even the democratic trade unions would have supported him in the past. Kim has had a populist image. He has personally struggled and sacrificed a lot in the democracy struggles up to 1987. He survived two assassination attempts, has been arrested, exiled and so forth.

Kim cast himself, even explicitly, as a sort of Nelson Mandela figure. He's always had dialogue with trade unionists but had no formal links or accountability. A bourgeois, reform candidate, he moved significantly to the right to get elected, and did a deal with quite reactionary forces — even the man who tried to kill him in the 70s, the former director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency.

Korean politics of the last 20 years has been dominated by the so-called Three Kims who came out of the 70s: Kim Young-sam of the New Korea Party, the previous president, a former democrat under the dictatorship quite happy to keep that repression in place when he had power, now held up as a failure; Kim Dae-jung, who was always a marginal figure struggling against the dictatorship; and Kim Jong-pil, who was linked with the Park dictatorship in the 70s, and the most conservative and reactionary one.

In this election the two Kims from the left and the right did a deal. One thing that Kim Dae-jung did that upset a lot of people was to say he would grant an amnesty to President Chun, who was the militaristic dictator in the 80s, and to Roh Tae-woo, who was his right hand man. They were responsible for the massacre of 5,000 people at Kwangju in 1980.

Kim Dae-jung was constantly comparing himself to Nelson Mandela. He said we need truth and reconciliation in South Korea in the way they had it in South Africa. He was able to get the areas of his strongest support to back him. He even got 92% of the vote in the region around Kwangju, where the massacre took place.

The state unions [the state (and US)-sponsored Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU), organises 1.2m workers] supported Kim Dae-jung, even though they supported the general strike last year, albeit in a limited way. Quite a few unions defected from the FKTU to the KCTU after the strike, such as the biggest banking union. Many workers will have voted for Kim Dae-jung tactically, to get rid of Kim Young-sam. A large number

have illusions in him that will have to be overcome.

Kwon Yong-kil's election campaign failed to make any real impact on the process, polling only about two percent of the vote. Why? The late candidacy, and also the fact that it was quite an apolitical campaign. A lot of the best forces on the left (not the Stalinists but the best forces) — were initially very reluctant about going into the campaign.

NADRK formed a bloc with the most conservative elements of the KCTU and dominated the politics of the presidential campaign. The more dissident, left-wing forces didn't really have a voice in the way it was run. They ran a Tony Blair-style campaign, even namechecking him, which apart from anything else is stupid politics. It makes some sense for someone like Blair to suck up to the Establishment and run a populist, reactionary campaign, as he was in a position to win power. But when the aim was to make an impact on the process and gain

“Although the politics weren't very radical, Kwon's presidential bid was an independent workers' campaign. It puts the democratic unions in a much more powerful position”

a profile, Kwon should have played on his working class credentials. All the posters pictured Kwon in a suit rather than on the demonstrations last January.

The KCTU response to the economic crisis has been much more encouraging in terms of the prospects of setting up a workers' party than the election campaign in general. The fact that they didn't support Kim Dae-jung and spoke out against the International Monetary Fund plan means that they are much more able to put demands on him as the IMF package [the IMF has put together a \$60 billion loan deal to try to bail out the South Korean economy] translates itself into cuts and job losses. The IMF is also insisting on labour laws being tightened, a threat the general strike had beaten back. [The bouncing through parliament of anti-union legislation is what sparked the general strike.] The KCTU has staked its independence.

It has called for a national public debate on who is responsible for the crisis, and said it will oppose all redundancies. It is also calling for the creation of a welfare state, so that workers don't bear the burden of the crisis. It

has sent a letter to the IMF and the US government, detailing an alternative strategy.

As the general strike last January showed, support for the democratic unions goes way beyond their actual membership. They were getting 65 percent support in polls. Translating that politically is difficult — because of money, because of a lack of any kind of tradition in these things.

At the time the campaign was set up the more left-wing youth groups and student groups, and a sort of think-tank that has close links with the metalworkers' union (which is one of the more politically radical class struggle unions), wouldn't support the campaign as the politics were too liberal and populist. They set up a committee which at first had an abstentionist position. But people persuaded them to support the campaign in return for some of the slogans being changed. They got “For Prosperity and Happiness” changed to “For Democracy and Progress,” which, particularly in the Korean language, has much more political resonance.

There is very little in the way of a revolutionary left, beyond a few think-tanks who I think have independent Marxist politics. There is a small British SWP-sponsored group, which is mainly students and has little impact. Because of the dictatorship there is very little of any kind of socialist tradition; it's not a language imbued into the labour movement in the way it is in Britain, say.

It is a very complex picture but the next few months will see big struggles over lay-offs and redundancies imposed in line with the IMF's conditions for loans, and that will be the acid test. What the state have failed to do in the past with repression and riot police they are now trying to do with economics.

There is a real union-busting zeal among the government. They have also tried to isolate and break the student movement. There are 5,000 students in prison. Some workers have illusions in Kim Dae-jung. He will find it hard to turn his back on his history of struggle and remain credible. An analogy is if Nelson Mandela had had to face down the unions immediately, not very gradually as he has done.

The most important thing is that although the politics weren't very radical, Kwon's was an independent campaign. It puts the democratic unions — which do organise by far the most class conscious and militant element of the working class — in a much more powerful position to oppose the government than before.

OF
A CASUAL
POSTAL
WORKER



“Resign!” is the most popular call

TUESDAY. I’m just about to set off for work when the phone rings. It’s someone from Royal Mail — they want me to turn up at the delivery office at 5.00 tomorrow morning to “have a chat and a look around”. Being as yet unaware of Royal Mailspeak, I presume I have an interview.

Wednesday. Arrive at the delivery office. Everything looks hectic. Managers in flash shirts and ties hold important-looking mobile phone conversations. Radio One blares out across the floor whilst endless trolleys of mail are transported into the office.

Eventually I find the line manager I am looking for — short, stocky with a grin that says “look at me, I’m dynamic”. He shakes my hand and introduces himself “Can you do the second today?” he asks me. I don’t understand what he’s on about so I give him a nervous looking grin — it was obviously a joke about doing a second delivery. He takes me over to Andy — a young postie — and informs me that I’ll be with him for a week. “See how you get on” he tells me. Hang on, have I just got a job? Part of me feels elated, the other half terrified. I haven’t handed in my notice at work — I’ll be working over seventy hours this week!

Tuesday. The long hours and the early mornings are killing me — I’m not doing the second delivery, however just the first, and my other job means that I’m working from 5am to 10.30pm with only five hours of sleep in between. I’m pretty certain that I’ll die of exhaustion by the end of the week.

Ask Andy about the union — everyone is a member, but it isn’t seen as anything other than a ‘last resort’ for when the workers are particularly peeved off. The union organisation at the workplace is poor — only one union rep for five different divisions and around two hundred and fifty members! Arrange with him to go and see the union rep tomorrow.

Wednesday. The union rep is not

the most approachable person I’ve ever met. “Got a contract?” she asks me in an impatient and routine manner in response to my enquiry about joining. I told her that I didn’t. She went over and fetched my line manager, who, looking rather worried, asked if I had a problem. Panicking, I replied that I was simply enquiring about union membership as someone had told me to join. I was informed that as a ‘casual’ I was not entitled to be a member of a union.

Saturday. The other privileges of being a casual are soon becoming apparent — the significantly lighter pay packet, the lack of uniform and the demand to be more “flexible”. Basically this means that unlike permanent staff,

“A ‘team briefing’... Mr Dynamic runs through a list of targets that haven’t been met. There is no right of reply but this does not stop the workers screaming at him”

casuals do not have a ‘set’ allocated walk (delivery round). You turn up each morning not knowing which walk you will be put on, and are expected to complete it in the same time as those who have been on the same walk for five years! Today I am asked to do a walk in a completely different division. Casuals do not sign-in and sign-out, so it is left up to you to make sure that you are being paid the correct number of hours. Casuals are also a useful way of cutting down on full-timers’ pay. All that management need to do is ‘halve’ a walk with you and a full timer (many of whom are grateful for the help) and hey presto, the amount of wages paid for that walk is 25% less!

Thursday. It’s a busy morning and tempers are rising. Workers scream at the line manager to resign. Andy is getting pissed off. “Oi! I asked for some elastic bands ten minutes ago and I still

haven’t got any!” he shouts at Mr Dynamic. “That’s Management promises for you!” shouts a wag.

The second delivery is particularly heavy today. The workers become more stropky. There are a few half-hearted calls to get the union in, but nothing comes of it.

Monday. A ‘team briefing’ is called by the line manager. Technically casuals do not attend them but as they are on the floor, I poke my head around the corner and listen in. Mr Dynamic runs through a list of targets that haven’t been met on our division and how much it is costing the company. There is no right of reply but this does not stop the workers screaming abuse at him. “Resign!” is the most popular call. He announces a meeting organised by Royal Mail bigwigs to discuss future targets and improvements. Nobody intends to attend. On the noticeboard is a poster for the meeting — “A chance for you to air your views and concerns” it states: “... and have them rejected” someone has scribbled underneath.

Thursday. Engage in conversation with a postie on the bus. He tells me that he had voted Labour because they had pledged not to privatise the post office — the illusions that he has in Blair are not particularly strong. Much is spoken about the ‘good old days’ when deliveries were lighter and walks shorter. There is a tendency to blame this on ‘good gaffers’ and ‘bad gaffers’ rather than Royal Mail as a whole. There does not seem to be too much resentment of casuals, and most full timers are surprised to learn that the union is not recruiting them. Though Royal Mail cannot get away with it now, due to the strength of the union, casualisation is the long term aim. Already there is an alarming ratio of part-timers to full-timers. Despite the air of demoralisation with the government, there seems to be some willingness for a fightback against management and the new work methods. All it needs is some leadership...

Neil Orchard

Racist gamble in Australia

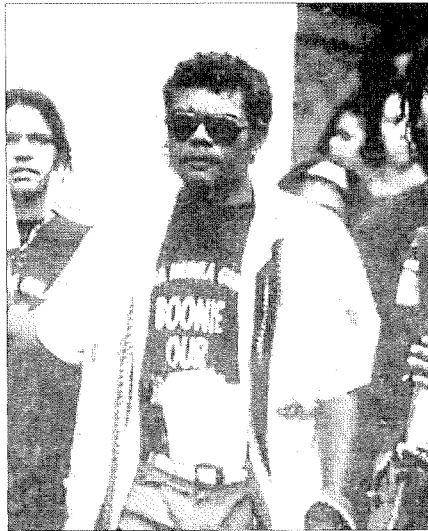
THERE IS A STENCH hanging low over the country. It's not the bushfires nor the greenhouse gases which Australia has inexplicably been allowed to increase as a result of the Kyoto conference. No, it is the stench of racism that the right-wing Coalition government has been generating since its election in March 1996 and which came to a head just before Christmas.

The Senate effectively killed prime minister John Howard's Native Title Bill by passing amendments unacceptable to the government. The bill will now be sent back to the House of Representatives who will pass the original bill and send it back to the Senate a second time. If the Senate fails to pass it then the government can dissolve both Houses of Parliament and call an election. One of the central issues of such an election would be over Native Title, that is the recognition of Indigenous Australians' land rights.

The system of land ownership and management in Australia was turned on its head in 1992 when the High Court reversed the long-standing legal fiction that Australia was *terra nullius*, or empty land, when the British arrived in the 18th century. There had never been a treaty with the Aborigines as there had in New Zealand nor any recognition that a society, or a system of ownership and connection with the land existed. The High Court ruled that native title had in fact covered the entire continent, but in the meantime Crown grants of 'freehold' had extinguished native title.

In 1993 the Labor government introduced the Native Title Act to give legislative force to this decision. In 1996 the Wik people went back to the High Court arguing that native title continued to exist on Crown Land which was covered by pastoral leases, that is, leases with a specific duration issued for specific pastoral purposes. Pastoral leases cover some 42% of the continent.

The High Court accepted the Wik argument ruling that the rights of native title holders and pastoralists could co-exist, but ruled that where there was a conflict of interest the rights of the pastoralists prevailed. Native title applicants still had to be able to prove a historical connection with the land which would be confirmed by a tribunal. Once that occurred negotiations between Aboriginal representatives and pastoralists would take place.



Howard's plan would trash hard-won Aboriginal rights

But the Wik decision coincided with the election of the Coalition who immediately denounced the High Court and the decision saying it destroyed pastoralists 'certainty' and proposed to legislate to extinguish native title rights and at the same time upgrade pastoral leases to the same level as a freehold lease thus giving pastoralists a windfall property gain.

The pastoralists' representatives, the National Party and most State governments called for a one point plan in response to the High Court's ruling —

“Howard's government has deliberately pandered to racism”

extinguishment, that is taking away the property rights of native Australians. Howard, who has since said he entered into a covenant with the pastoralists and the miners, developed a ten point plan in response to the High Court, but which in effect is a one point plan with nine points of camouflage.

That ten point plan became the revised Native Title Bill which went to the Parliament for approval in late 1997. The bill is racially discriminatory in that no other group of Australians would ever face the permanent extinguishment of their property rights and never on the basis of their race. The bill also removes all rights to negotiate government or commercial activities on traditional lands; prevents applications for native title unless there is a proven physical connec-

tion with the land, thus preventing those peoples who were forcibly removed and locked out from their land from applying for recognition, and sets a six year time limit on applications during which time they are locked out of their land pending the tribunal's decision.

The remarkable thing is that despite historic legal breakthroughs in overturning *terra nullius*, recognising the existence of native title and the co-existence of native title with pastoral leases, Indigenous Australians have lost most of their new found property rights. Each of the High Court's decisions, while confirming that native title exists, sets out to limit its application. For instance, in the landmark Mabo decision freehold property extinguishes native title, while in the Wik decision native title co-exists to the extent that it doesn't conflict with the pastoralists activities, but where it does the pastoralists rights take precedence. Yet the government has set out to portray Indigenous Australians who claim what the High Court acknowledges is their right as making a land grab.

It is unlikely that the Senate will pass the bill unamended when it is returned there in March after the required three month delay. And the amendments gut enough of the bill's obnoxious clauses to make it unacceptable to the government in general and to the National Party and pastoralist groups in particular. In the background waiting to wreck havoc on the Nationals among their rural constituency is Pauline Hanson's openly racist One-Nation Party.

Howard's government has deliberately fostered and pandered to racist prejudice ever since coming to office. Its very first act was to cut funding to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) claiming widespread fraud and incompetence which a subsequent inquiry found no evidence of.

In addition there has been the growth of Hanson's ugly racist and xenophobic party which has appealed not only to the undercurrent of racism in Australian history especially in rural areas but also to those who have been affected by economic restructuring and job loss.

But the most damning behaviour of the government has been in response to the report on what has become known as the 'Stolen Generations'. A national inquiry held into the practice of removing Aboriginal children from their parents

Will Netanyahu fall?

Yochanan Lorwin, an Israeli socialist, spoke to Workers' Liberty about the political crisis in Israel and the general strike in December which forced the right-wing government to agree to consult the unions on future economic policy.

I don't think the government will fall. It may not last out its four years to the year 2000. The Knesset [parliament] passed the budget yesterday, 58 to 56. A no-confidence motion requires 61 votes. The government is very vulnerable now. If two or three Knesset members walk out, they could lose a no-confidence vote.

Five months down the line, maybe, the big issue coming up will be the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank, and whether the right wing of Netanyahu's government will accept any redeployment. Personally, I believe that they will, because they know that the alternative is Ehud Barak of the Labour Party. Barak will not make a solution with the Palestinians, but he will make a more generous redeployment than Netanyahu. From the right-wing point of view, the alternative is worse, so I don't think they will make an issue of redeployment.

With the changes in the Israeli economy — textile factories moving to Jordan as a result of the peace process, the budget-cutting and the so-called neo-liberalism of the government — the general strike shows that the Histadrut is beginning to fight the anti-worker government. That is partly because it is now a more or less pure trade union. In the past it was also an employer: it owned many companies.

I don't think this is the beginning of a workers' revolution. But it does show a beginning of trade-union consciousness developing, and that is encouraging.

In the short term, I think the new liberal agenda will prevail anyway, because the Labour Party also supports it, though in a more moderate form. But there is some opposition from the workers.

I would be sceptical about the reports of discussions for a new independent workers' party. Most workers in Israel vote for Likud. The Labour Party has become a middle-class party.



Netanyahu is destroying Likud's fake anti-Establishment image

This is partly an ethnic division. The Labour Party is supported by the Ashkenazi (European) Jews — not all of them, of course, but mostly the secular, European-descended Jews. Maybe their parents were workers: they are not, but they still support the Labour Party.

Jews from Arab and Middle Eastern countries have mostly voted for Likud as a protest. David Levy's party Gesher [which has just left the government coalition] represents a social protest, but there is no ideology of a workers' party. There might be small groups here and there talking about an independent workers' party. I would be sceptical about it going very far, under present conditions, but maybe I'm sectarian.

There is some disappointment with Netanyahu. With the general aura of incompetence around Netanyahu, his image has been tarnished. We have seen over and over again in Israel that people who are in the Histadrut, and vote for Labour Party people to be their union representatives, vote Likud in a general election. People find it difficult to make a connection between the political process with the Palestinians and, for example, unemployment — though the so-called stagnation of the peace process is one of the reasons for the problems of the Israeli economy.

The fact that police are being called against workers must affect attitudes to the Establishment, but unfortunately Likud is still perceived as being anti-Establishment. The Labour Party, although it is out of power, is perceived as the Establishment.

through much of the twentieth century in order to assimilate the children with white society thus wiping out the Aboriginal population released its report in early 1997. It found that between 1910 and 1970 as many as 100,000 Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families by State and Territory authorities and church groups. It set out in great detail the horrific consequences to those children and their families of their removal and demonstrated that the practice was still occurring up to the 1970s.

Howard first of all during the inquiry refused to allow any Department to make a submission to the inquiry and then following the report refused to so much as issue a formal apology from the government on behalf of the white Australian population. And now the government has entered into a 'covenant' (Howard's words) with the miners and pastoralists to extinguish indigenous land rights less than five years after they were belatedly recognised.

Going to an election on such a volatile issue is a big gamble for Howard. Even if the Coalition is returned (which opinion polls currently show is uncertain) the depth of anger and bitterness will take a long time to overcome. For Australian exporters such as miners and many pastoral industries who are now orienting more to Asia the prospect of a race based election could have disastrous consequences as Australia is once again portrayed as 'White Australia'. Howard is painting himself into a corner over native title and race.

He is gambling also on Labor folding under the pressure of not wanting to fight an election on race. When the native title bill was first being discussed Beazley and Evans gave every indication they would compromise also wanting to give 'certainty' to the pastoralists. However they have been pushed by the growing groundswell of opinion in favour of reconciliation and land rights, by Indigenous activists campaigns, and by the Australian Labor Party left into taking a much harder line than they would have otherwise. There is still the possibility that they will back down when the Senate debates it a second time but at the moment that doesn't appear to be an option.

In early 1998 the Parliament will once again vote on the native title bill. If it is rejected again an election is likely. If it is passed it will be challenged in the High Court. But either way the issue of race and white Australia's reconciliation with the indigenous population will be more and more a central feature of Australian politics.

Gerry Bates

Doors close for refugees

There are now some 50 million people around the world who are victims of forced displacement. Around 16 million of them are refugees who have fled their own country in order to find asylum in another. The other 34 million are internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have sought safety in another part of their own country.

In the past decade five million asylum applications have been lodged in Europe, America and Canada. On average, 20% of asylum-seekers are recognised as refugees or granted leave to remain on a humanitarian basis. The other 80% are refused. The 750,000 Liberians who fled the war in Liberia to Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea were all recognised as prima facie refugees. Of the 20,347 Liberians who made it to Europe, however, only 214 were recognised as refugees.

In the early 1990s Western governments and their camp-followers in the human rights industry argued for a new

“Eighty per cent of asylum seekers are refused in Europe and North America”

almost-closed-door policy, rationalised by an assessment of the end of the Cold War. The totalitarian states of Eastern Europe would be replaced by stable democratic regimes, putting an end to the flow of asylum seekers from the East. The “peace dividend” delivered by the end of the Cold War would allow for increased development aid for the “Third World”, cutting back the flow of asylum-seekers from the South. The end of the Cold War would allow resources and armed force to secure “safe havens” for refugees in their own countries, and speedy repatriation programmes for refugee communities in exile, further cutting back the flow of asylum-seekers to the West. And then why, ran the argument, would genuine asylum seekers need to come to Europe, when so much assistance would be available in their own backyard?

This “new thinking” has already proved to be utterly inaccurate in its predictions, and disastrous in its consequences for refugees and IDPs.

The post-Stalinist regimes in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are

anything but stable democracies. Continuing political repression, institutionalised corruption, an explosion of poverty, and a series of large-scale ethnic conflicts, have triggered successive waves of refugees and IDPs there.

Political parties there have competed for popular support amidst resurgent nationalism by outbidding each other in their scapegoating of foreigners in general and refugees in particular.

Meanwhile, in the poorest regions of the globe, 89 countries have lower per capita incomes now than a decade ago. 19 of them are poorer today than they were in 1960. The difference in income between the richest and poorest fifths of the world's population now stands at 78:1. It was 30:1 three decades ago.

As for the three major attempts to create “safe havens” — in Iraqi Kurdistan, Bosnia and Rwanda — they may have protected Western countries from an influx of asylum-seekers, but they did not protect those trapped inside the “havens”.

The “haven” established in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991 faced an economic blockade by Iraq from the outset. It quickly became a battleground for competing Kurdish factions and their foreign backers. Repeated military incursions by Turkish, Iranian, and, less frequently, Iraqi forces added to the overall insecurity of life in the “safe haven”.

In the six Bosnian “havens” the effectively imprisoned populations found themselves under siege from Serb forces, subject to periodic shellings, and dependent on international aid for their survival. By the end of the war two of the “safe havens” had been overrun by Serb forces, with a new wave of massacres and “ethnic cleansing”.

The short-lived “haven” in South-West Rwanda was motivated mainly by France's concern to prevent the unrest in Rwanda from spilling over into Zaire, with which France maintained close ties. It existed for the safety of the Zairean dictatorship rather than of the Hutus.

Yet a vast array of mechanisms has been put in place to prevent asylum-seekers from reaching West European countries, and to make life as unpleasant as possible for those who do manage to get here.

Visa requirements are imposed on refugee-generating countries. Airlines who carry asylum-seekers using false doc-

umentation are fined. The detention of asylum-seekers is increasingly common. Asylum-seekers are denied the right to claim welfare benefits, and rejected asylum-seekers get no adequate rights of appeal. The “New World Order” means not only economic crisis in the world's advanced economies, but also a worsening of the social and political tensions in developing countries, unleashing new waves of refugees, whilst simultaneously slashing the assistance available for the victims.

Stan Crooke

Holy Thursday

Is this a holy thing to see,
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduced to misery,
Fed with cold and usurous hand?

Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!

And their sun does never shine.
And their fields are bleak and bare,
And their ways are filled with thorns.
It is eternal winter there.

For where-e'er the sun does shine,
And where-e'er the rain does fall:
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appall.

The Chimney Sweep

A little black thing among the snow:
Crying weep, weep, in notes of woe!
Where are thy father & mother? say?
They are both gone up to the church to pray.

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winters snow:
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

And because I am happy, & dance & sing,
They think they have done me no injury:
And are gone to praise God & his Priest
& King
Who make up a heaven of our misery.

William Blake. The unusual punctuation is Blake's.



Korea's workers will be driven into struggle not just for jobs and wages but also for social provision

Will there be world slump?

By Martin Thomas

BUSINESS IS ALWAYS thoroughly sound, and the campaign in fullest swing, until the sudden intervention of the collapse", wrote Karl Marx (*Capital* vol.3, p.616), and it has never been more true than of the "Asian tiger" economies now in crisis.

Since the 1960s industry in countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore and, especially, South Korea, has grown at rates unmatched in history, three or four times the pace in Britain in the 19th century which made Marx exclaim that "the bourgeoisie has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals..."

The "tigers" got through the world recessions of 1974-5 and 1979-83 with few setbacks. They upgraded their industrial profile from cheap clothing through electronics assembly-shed work to cars, computers, and shipbuilding. Bourgeois optimists claimed that they had proved that world-market export-oriented industrialisation was the high road to prosperity for all.

Now the pundits denounce South Korea's economic regime as overly-statised, bureaucratic, corrupt, and therefore biased towards extravagant over-expansion without the restraint of free-market discipline. They recommend

instead, as a model, the more free-market economy of the USA — that same USA, let's remember, which only a few years ago was cited as a sad example of decay, its cities becoming wastelands, its education system hopeless, its industry stymied by the breathless drive to cash in short-term gains. There is no escaping the conclusion: in all its various economic regimes, whatever their differences, capitalism has contradictions which lead to disaster.

"Even if the crisis spreads no further, its social effects in Asia will be huge. In Indonesia, maybe 20 million people will be pushed below the absolute-poverty line"

The industrial growth of the east Asian economies has not, despite what some on the left say, been illusory or unreal. The educated, city-dwelling, many-million-strong working classes now central to countries which a few decades ago were peopled by illiterate peasants are no fiction. They would not be a fiction even if all the industry were a

product of US, Japanese or European multinationals using the Asian countries as cheap-labour production sites, but in any case it is not: very little of Korea's industry, for example, is foreign-owned.

Not the "hidden hand" of the world market, but the dollar-disbursing hand of the US government, was central to the growth. Vast sums were pumped in through aid and through purchases for the Vietnam war¹. Then the growth acquired its own momentum.

To explain why the crisis has come now, we must go back to the late 1980s. A brief splurge of easy credit then fuelled a property boom in many countries. The mechanics of such episodes were explained long ago by Marx: "Since elements of productive capital are constantly being withdrawn from the market and all that is put into the market is an equivalent in money [wages, payments to suppliers, etc.] the effective demand rises, without this in itself providing any element of supply... A band of speculators, contractors, engineers, lawyers etc enrich themselves. These exert a strong consumer pressure on the market, and wages rise as well... This lasts until, with the inevitable crash, the reserve army of workers is again released and wages are pressed down once more to their minimum and below it". (*Capital*

vol.2 p.390-1)

In the early 1990s, over a thousand savings-and-loans companies (building societies) collapsed in the USA, owing hundreds of billions of dollars, and leaving half-built shopping malls and office blocks all over the country. In Japan, property prices crashed after a peak which had valued Tokyo's buildings at more than the total real-estate of the USA, and all the country's big banks were left technically insolvent.

Both in the USA and in Japan, these property crashes passed without a general slump. In Japan, the banks were saved from collapse but a great overhang of debt has kept the economy stagnant in the 1990s. In the USA, growth has been, despite all the ballyhoo, pretty feeble, but profits have been high (with an increase in the rate of labour exploitation). Great streams of the world's growing sea of footloose capital have flowed into the tiger economies — and into the USA, where they have allowed consumer demand and imports to remain brisk.

It has ended with the classic capitalist syndrome of relative overproduction of fixed capital. In Thailand, where the crisis first broke, over 50% of office building due to be completed will have no tenants, and property prices look like halving². Hectic investment overshot markets which were only moderately expanding, and generated a build-up of intractable debt beyond the capacities of the tiger economies, which are still much smaller than the USA's or Japan's. Now the knock-on effects are bringing a full-scale financial crisis to already-enfeebled Japan.

Even if the crisis spreads no further, its social effects in Asia will be huge. Millions of migrant workers will be expelled; vast numbers will be jobless; in Indonesia, where the financial-industrial crisis coincides with a drought, maybe 20 million people will be pushed below the absolute-poverty line.

Business Week magazine (22.12.97) expects that "The image of Asia's workers may now change — from salaryman in a starched white shirt to banner-waving protester". The workers' movements, new but buoyant, will be pushed towards politics. South Korea, for example, has been transformed in most respects into an advanced capitalist economy, but still has no welfare system, not even a minimal one like the USA's. Workers losing their jobs — in an era when the old option of going back to the family farm is less available — will be driven to demand social provision.

Will there be a world slump? Yes, and very quickly, if Japanese capitalists,

in order to pay their debts, start selling lots of the \$320 billion worth of US Treasury securities which they hold. The USA's economy depends heavily on its inflow of foreign cash: overseas buyers bought \$367 billion of US Treasury securities in 1996. The Japanese start selling; the US financial system goes into shock; the wealthy world-wide start dumping dollars; and within days the world trading system, based as it is on the dollar being "hard cash", could be in chaos. Measured against the vast scale of foreign-exchange dealing today, the gold in Fort Knox is mere small change; in fact, the foreign-exchange turnover each day, at over \$1500 billion, exceeds the total reserves of all the central banks in the world!

On balance I think this fast-track to world slump is unlikely. If I'm right, socialists should not mourn a missed chance to gloat at the discomfort of our enemies. *Schadenfreude*, the *politique du pire*, the idea that whatever's worst for capitalism is best for us, is not Marxism. The European and US labour movements are beginning hesitantly to revive. A sudden cataclysmic economic crash would probably, in the short term, wipe out that revival and swell social despair.

Slower routes to world slump are also possible, maybe even probable. *Business Week* magazine (January 1997) may ask, of the US economy, "Could it possibly get any better than this?" — but it certainly could. Investment is sluggish — 70% of profits, an unprecedentedly large proportion, are shovelled out in dividends to shareholders, helping a middle and upper-class consumer boom. The average real incomes of the poor have dropped 20% since the 1970s. The much-feted drop in unemployment is in large part (though not all) a product of fiddling the figures. Consumer debt has ballooned (it's 40% greater, relative to income, than it was in 1985); the stock-market boom has overshot so much that a return to historic average relations between share prices and the real economy would bring those prices crashing down by 68%; unsold inventories are increasing fast. Many of the conditions for a downturn are already there, and a sharp decline in Asian export markets could bring them together.

As for Europe: after the 1992 Exchange Rate Mechanism crisis, I wrote that the European Union's schedule for a single currency had been wrecked. Yet the European governments have pressed ahead and agreed to fudge the "Maastricht criteria"³.

The question remains of how stable and workable the single currency will be

if put under a strain by big losses for European banks in Asia, and a decline of Europe's exports to Asia and the USA. A single currency implies large-scale industrial restructuring⁴; it means that economic troubles focused in single countries will be more intractable (because the national government has less scope for the usual offsetting measures of monetary policy, which sometimes do have an effect); and it is more vulnerable to inflation. (National governments, being governments, have almost unlimited credit; and with a single Euro-currency they cannot be restrained from over-borrowing by the devaluation threat which follows from over-borrowing in a national currency. The Maastricht Treaty provides for the European Union to enforce penalties and fines for over-borrowing; but how will it enforce them?)

The relatively even (though not actually buoyant) course of world trade since 1992 has allowed not only for the Euro-decision — which may soon be proved reckless — to ram through monetary union, but also for a little era of "liberalism", partly comparable to the phase of "democratic pacifism" which Trotsky analysed in Europe around 1924, symbolised by the bland politics of Clinton and Kohl, Jospin, Prodi and Blair. A new downturn will raise the temperature.

1. The "revolution from above" made in Korea and Taiwan under US military supervision after World War 2 also provided important preconditions for growth. Land was confiscated from the landlords — effectively without compensation — to forestall the threat of Stalinist revolution; a population of smallholding farmers was created who, offered generous credit, developed fairly productive agriculture. In the early stages of industrialisation, young workers could be employed at very low pay and without any welfare provision because the family farm underpinned their subsistence.

2. According to estimates cited in "The Banker", December 1997.

3. The Italian economist Luigi Pasinetti reckons that "all major European countries find themselves outside the [public-finance] sustainability area, except Belgium and Italy..." Cambridge Journal of Economics, 22, 1, 103-116.

4. Despite its thick web of trade connections, Western Europe is still in crucial ways much less economically integrated than the USA. In particular, across Europe industries are not "clustered" as they are in the US (aerospace and information technology in California, cars in Detroit, finance in New York, etc.) A single currency implies integration, which implies clustering, which implies industrial relocation and restructuring.



The demand for equal rights depends neither on genetic theory, nor on rejecting genetic theory

Is there a “gay gene”?

By Clive Bradley

IS THERE A ‘GAY GENE’? Does it matter? Evidence has been building that there is a genetic basis, on some level, to sexual orientation. Chandler Burr’s well-researched, readable book* goes through this evidence in detail, and looks with commendable fair-mindedness at both sides of the debate.

At root, the questions raised by research into sexual orientation are about the world in which we are starting to live — a world of ever-increasing genetic knowledge and capacity for genetic engineering. Scientists constantly make bigger and bigger claims for what genetics can or soon will tell us about our lives (and deaths). These are not only interesting issues, they are essential ones for socialists to confront.

There are three main pieces of research which, allegedly, show genetic differences

between homosexual and heterosexual men (little has been done on lesbians).

Simon LeVay’s 1991 study claimed that a part of the brain, the hypothalamus, includes a section which is different (smaller) in gay men than in straight men. The part in question is called the INAH-3, a tiny cluster of cells thought to have something to do with gender differentiation.

A couple of years later Dean Hamer and Angela Pattatucci claimed to have found the ‘gay gene’ (or rather the genetic marker for homosexuality in males) — which is Xq28, which means it is inherited through the X chromosome, therefore from your mother.

From Burr’s account, the Hamer/Pattatucci research sounds more convincing, if only because LeVay’s was carried out on the brains of dead people, whose sexuality, one assumes, would be hard to confirm (it has been contested on this basis, along with others: the people died of AIDS, so all manner of things might account for a smaller INAH-3).

Collecting information by interview from 114 families, Hamer and his team eventually found evidence that there was a genetic correspondence for sexual orientation, and that it was passed down on the maternal side. This led them to look at the X chromosome, and eventually find the gene they think is in some way responsible, at least in many cases.

Another study, published shortly after LeVay’s in 1991, contains the most compelling evidence of all. Bailey and Pillard researched groups of brothers — fifty six monozygotic twins (identical and from a single egg), fifty-four dizygotic (non-identical) twins, and fifty seven non-genetically related adopted brothers. 52% of the monozygotic twins were both homosexual — far above the average (11% for the adopted brothers). Identical twins are five times as likely as adopted brothers brought up by the same parents to both be gay.

Later, Bailey and Pillard, who are psychologists, did a similar study of lesbians, and got more or less the same results.¹

* *A Separate Creation. How Biology Makes us Gay* by Chandler Burr. Bantam paperback £8.99.

Burr outlines many of the reservations scientists have about these claims — including among those who are championing them. Neither LeVay's hypothalamus clusters nor Hamer's Xq28 are claimed to be uniquely responsible for homosexuality. Indeed one of the strengths of Burr's book is that he explains clearly how certain things don't mean for scientists what they mean for the media. He quotes Angela Pattatucci: "We can all be taken to task for not making the disclaimer that we in no way are attempting to reduce an individual's experience to a molecule... We're trying to ask how a molecule contributes to a person's experience." (p384).

As well as these main areas of research, Burr recounts a large number of theories (including one, 'off the record', that homosexuality might be a bacterial infection), dealing especially with hormones.

For example, apparently women are the 'default' sex. To become male, a foetus with XY chromosomes needs not only testosterone to masculinise, but something else, called MIH (Mullerian Inhibiting Hormone), to 'defeminise'. Without this extra hormone, even with both X and Y chromosomes and a healthy dose of testosterone, a foetus will grow into a human being which looks, at least externally, female. Some theorists have had a high old time with this fact (although, as one of them notes, if it helps explain anything it's more likely transsexualism than homosexuality).

The same is true of many of the other interesting experiments which have been done with, for example, rats. Fiddling around with rat hormones can make male rats behave, sexually, like females (i.e. offer themselves to be mounted). The same sort of thing has been observed in fruit flies.

Burr quotes scientists dismissing this stuff, largely on the grounds that hormonal reactions are so widely different even between closely related species that conclusions for human beings are impossible to reach. This is an important point, but rather less so, I feel, than noting that gay human sexuality is not even vaguely similar to a rat offering its anus to any old male who enters its cage.

There are other interesting case studies from nature, again more to do with gender than sexual orientation. One species of wasp has no males. The females of one kind of hyena have penises, or what look like penises.

There are objections — discussed in the book — to doing this research at all, which I will turn to later. What are the objections to the findings themselves?

Burr relates a number of the scientific-methodological ones (some scientists dispute the existence of an INAH-3, never

mind LeVay's claims). But ultimately, all objections come down to political and conceptual ones. Burr does his best, but plainly doesn't understand these objections enough to do them justice.

We know from a huge amount of sociological, anthropological and psychological research that sexual behaviour is vastly more complex than the labels 'homosexual', 'heterosexual' or 'bisexual' would allow, and that notions of human sexuality vary enormously across cultures and periods of history. The question 'Do you regard yourself as homosexual?' (which is the kind of question Hamer and Pattatucci asked) would be meaningless to most people in most societies in most periods of world history. The concept of homosexuality — or certainly of 'a homosexual' as a type of person, rather than a type of sexual behaviour — is very recent and confined, basically, to advanced or relatively advanced capitalist societies, and 'advanced' Stalinism.

Pattatucci in particular is not insensitive to this issue. She doesn't confront it directly, but she and Hamer et al offer two theoretical suggestions which address it indirectly. One is to distinguish between 'sexual orientation' and 'sexuality'. The other is to insist that sexual orientation is

“We know from a huge amount of sociological, anthropological and psychological research that notions of human sexuality vary enormously across cultures and periods of history”

a kind of real essence (my phrase, not theirs) underlying this or that sexual behaviour. (It is worth noting in this context that Hamer et al consider genuine bisexuals to be extremely rare, contrary to most research since Kinsey).

'Sexuality', they agree, is immensely complex, and not reducible to any gene or group of genes (or unlikely to be), because sexuality is about the precise details of whom we desire, what we like to do, etc etc. 'Sexual orientation', however, is quite simple and is just about whether we find men or women sexually, and therefore romantically, attractive. This they can look for a gene for.²

And this 'sexual orientation' is deeper than mere sexual behaviour (especially in men, they think). A person might have only heterosexual experiences for his or her entire life, yet know deep down that they

are not heterosexual. Changing patterns of sexual behaviour have no impact on fundamental orientation.

The anthropology and so on I have mentioned seems to suggest this 'essentialist' (for want of a better word) account of sexual orientation is false. To take only the most obvious and well-known example, the ancient Greeks appear to have had different ideas about sexual orientation to us (as I understand it there were considerable differences between city states: Thebes and Sparta had a lot of what we would call homosexuality, i.e. between adult men; in Athens it was older men and pubescent boys, what we would call paedophilia).

Other societies suggest that where 'homosexuality' is not (or is less) stigmatised, there is a lot more open bisexual activity.

If there is hetero- or homo-sexual essence beneath this appearance, it is impossible to measure. It remains, whatever circumstantial evidence, not much more than an assertion which falls very far short of being proven.

The Hamer/Pattatucci evidence that few men are bisexual is based entirely on how men answer their questions. Many of us know from personal experience how unreliable heterosexual men's fervent denial of any homoerotic feelings can be. It's like the joke: What's the difference between a straight man and a bisexual? About four pints of lager.

On the other hand... I can remember directly facing the fact that I might be 'one of those homosexuals' when I was eleven, and by then had already had sexual experiences with boys, and knew I preferred boys to girls. The idea that I have an essential homosexuality to some degree fits with my experience. Certainly, it's hard to see how accepting I was gay was in any real sense 'forcing myself' into a category. Many gay men who have had sex with women do not claim the experience was bad in any way — it might even have been pretty fantastic, but it doesn't change the fact they're homosexual; vice versa for some lesbians. 'Bisexuality' does not properly describe their experience (which is not to say it can't describe some people's experience). So the argument that behaviour is not equal to orientation has some legs to it.

You could go further. Just because societies have no concept of homosexuality doesn't mean there aren't homosexuals-in-waiting, so to speak. Sexuality isn't all 'discourse', all culturally-specific.

Arab societies, for example, have as yet very little of a Western concept of homosexuality, yet homosexual behaviour is very common. You can read this

as proof of the cultural specificity of the Western concept of homosexuality. But as capitalism develops, perhaps it will bring with it precisely that Western concept (as it has everywhere else), because there are thousands of people in Arab societies who currently lack a concept to describe them. They don't suddenly spring into existence once a word has been invented; they were there all along. In this perspective, what capitalism has done is partially liberate people we now call homosexual by identifying them, and creating a space for a cultural phenomenon. And if 'homosexuals' are a real phenomenon, not just some discourse or other, a materialist account of them might at least include biology. Then, on the other hand...

There are certainly issues here which are not merely empirical, scientific ones. They are conceptual. It seems to me that even if there can meaningfully be said to be some 'essential' sexual orientation in each of us, the research described in Burr's book is conceptually dodgy. The researchers take too much for granted, ask too few questions of their basic assumptions, base too much on the unproven assertion that an essential sexual orientation exists. We shouldn't allow ourselves to be intimidated by specialist scientists: their training might leave them insensitive to methodological considerations which are perfectly obvious to someone trained as, say, an anthropologist (or to a Marxist).

Nevertheless: if you concede that there could be some 'essential' sexual orientation in each of us, you are conceding the possibility of a genetic component to it.

Burr's book is American, and so, interestingly, largely (not entirely) assumes that the enemies of the gay gene argument are reactionary, i.e., if such a gene exists it is an argument for equal rights. Basically, the argument runs that if it's biological it's natural, so homosexuals shouldn't be discriminated against. Burr points out that this is misfounded: the gay gene logically threatens the liberal outlook and vindicates a conservative one. (It's also, as a couple of his interviewees point out, based on a peculiar notion of 'natural' equals 'good': cancer is perfectly natural.)

Underlying the argument is a generalised genetic reductionism — genes for gender behaviour, intelligence, violence, and so on. (By 'reductionism' I mean an argument which thinks genetics provide a complete, finished explanation, that everything complex in life is straightforwardly accounted for by genes). The scientists he talks to think all these things (maybe not intelligence, but certainly violence) have identifiable genetic causes which are within

our grasp to find — and, of course, alter.

Burr discusses the political objections to carrying out this research at all, quoting quite extensively scientists who oppose it. There are two big fears. One, that if there is a 'gay gene', foetuses could be tested for it and aborted. (Apparently, in America sections of the Right are suddenly implicitly pro-choice on abortion, at least on this question). The other is that in the future there could be 'genetic surgery' to make people straight.

Burr quotes one of LeVay's assistants who chooses to remain anonymous. "I disagree with Simon that this work is good for gay people politically, and I think all of us working in this field have delusions of grandeur in thinking that we will have any control. If we find a gene linked to sexual orientation, there will be a test for it. That is a fact... [This] knowledge... can and will be abused." (p389)

Burr clearly comes down on the other side of this debate, that knowledge is intrinsically good, and if we are always afraid of the consequences of knowledge we will never learn anything.

On one level he's right, obviously. But disingenuous. It is naive to complain, as

"A significant part of the socialism I am fighting for includes a fundamental change in the ways people relate to each other erotically, the liberation of human sexuality"

some critics have done, that nobody does research into the genetic origins of, say, liking ice-cream — sexual orientation is more important, and more interesting, than that. But scientific research has to be paid for, and the question of why do this research rather than that is not a spurious or intellectually-Luddite one. This kind of research is not motivated by the thirst for pure knowledge. One way or another it depends upon ideological choices (even if the choices are on the face of it honourable, as LeVay's seem to have been).

One other thing needs to be said about the fears expressed towards the political implications of the 'gay gene', however, which is not said in this book. The idea that selective abortions or even genetic surgery would eliminate homosexuality is ridiculous. It sums up the poverty of genetic reductionism.³

But perhaps genetic reductionism is a soft target. Few if any of the scientists involved in this research claim genes will

explain or determine everything. And at the end of the day, we can't argue against genetic explanations of personality simply on the grounds that we don't want them to be true. Geneticists are finding out more and more. Everybody accepts genetic accounts of physical characteristics, and left or right handedness (one of Burr's favourite examples). Where do we draw the line? We can't draw the line just by political sensibility.

Burr's book, despite his efforts to the contrary, illustrates part of the problem here. After pages of explanation of what 'genetic' means and doesn't mean, reassurance about what is and isn't entailed by this or that scientific finding, the book gradually abandons its early even-handedness, and becomes more and more crudely reductionist. He starts off carefully delimiting what a 'gay gene' might be (including the observation that it might only secondarily affect sexual orientation), and ends up talking about genetic explanations as if they require no qualifications, have no limits. The effort to avoid reductionism disintegrates, and then collapses.

By the end of the book he is approvingly quoting Laurence Frank (the man who's researched the weird hyenas): "Trying to deal with human behaviour... like criminality or domestic violence or aggressiveness or racism while pretending that evolutionary and biological reasons for them don't exist is like attempting to cure a disease without dealing with bacteria and viruses."

This is as straightforward a reductionist case as you could make. Viruses cause diseases. To suggest, as this does, that there is a genetic cause of criminality in an even slightly comparable sense is to abandon all qualification, all sense of complexity and mediation, and render talk about how little it really means to say something is 'genetic' (to which a whole chapter is devoted) so much soft-soaping.

'Genetic', therefore has what you might call a weak sense (stressed, in fact, by all the researchers into sexual orientation, as well as their critics, quoted in this book), and a strong sense. The strong sense is the frightening, reactionary reductionism expressed by Frank. In its weak — apparently, its accurate — sense, though, it need not entail such frightening conclusions. If you have the 'gay gene' (Xq28 — or whatever other genes later research might identify), it may only predispose you to homosexuality, given other, for example environmental factors. For example, I am diabetic. One of my parents' families must have carried the genes which 'made me' diabetic. Something external appears to have 'triggered' the diabetes, however (it might have been a dose of Hep B). But nei-

ther of my parents, nor my sister are diabetic. It's rather like the argument among Marxists about whether economics 'determine' or 'condition' politics.

Yet this makes the argument seem like a lot of fuss about nothing, and I think quite a lot more is at stake — more than Chandler Burr understands.

If an important factor in sexual orientation is genetic, this strongly suggests that most people are and always will be heterosexual. It suggests that sexuality is less fluid or varied or whatever than many of us like to think. For most of my politically awake adulthood I have believed that a significant part of the socialism I am fighting for includes a fundamental change in the ways people relate to each other erotically, the 'liberation of human sexuality', the transcendence of the limited categories 'gay' 'straight' etc. An implied proposition in this 'programmatically' idea is that most people who consider themselves exclusively heterosexual are wrong, and that it is just society which has fucked them up.

Linked to this — and to the argument about genetics — is the idea that 'masculine' and 'feminine' are culturally and historically constructed to a very high degree, and that in the socialist future men and women will behave differently in all sorts of ways.

The 'gay gene' if it exists, and all the other genes which might also therefore exist, could mean, logically or implicitly, that this is all a load of nonsense.

But think of groups of 'lads', pissed, say on holiday in a Club Med resort — you've seen them on TV if not in the flesh. They spend half their time pantomiming sex with each other. I would not wish to argue that they are all secretly gay. But that there is sublimated homoeroticism throughout their behaviour seems to me pretty incontestable. The way many men adapt to sex in all-male environments for long periods; or how in societies which severely oppress women homosexual behaviour among men can become quite normal (including emotional attachments, it's not all alternative orifices) — all these so strongly suggest that more is involved than genes, and that there is a powerful and purely psychological dynamic to sexuality, that abandoning our aim of sexual liberation seems premature. This is just in reference to men. Hamer and Pattatucci acknowledge a greater fluidity in women's sexuality, and this again suggests something more interesting than genetic predisposition is happening in people's psychological make-up.

Burr is ignorant and abusive about psychoanalysis. But a broadly psychoanalytic, or at least Freudian-inspired, account of sexuality has, it seems to me, much to teach us. In particular, it might help us understand

the neurotic fear many heterosexuals (especially men) seem to feel about homosexuality. It is very hard to believe that this fear (homophobia is, I think, the right term) is not to do with repressed homoerotic desire. The theory that queerbashers are repressed queers is as old as the hills; but it strikes me as basically right. Why else bash someone, if they do not represent something you fear in yourself? And queerbashing is only the most violent expression of homophobia.

An account of sexual orientation based purely, or mainly, on genetics would not — or anyway not very convincingly — explain homophobia. An explanation based on psychological processes stands a much better chance of it.¹

Perhaps the way to think about all this is in terms of a theory of 'personality'. Genetic reductionism seeks to explain everything biologically. How far can this go?

The differences between each person's personality are infinite. How much could biology conceivably explain? Each of us has ambitions, aspirations — are these genetic? Take someone who decides to be an actor. Was it a burning ambition from their earliest memory, or did they realise relatively late that this is what they wanted to do? Are they any good at it? What type of actor are they, what style of acting appeals to them ('method', classical...?)

Maybe genes play a part in deciding the answers to these questions. It certainly seems to me relatively inoffensive to suggest that if an actor, for example, has talent, the raw material for this might be genetic. They may squander their talent; another actor might, with perseverance and training, give better performances, but there is a bedrock on which their skill is built.

In Peter Shaffer's play (and Milos Forman's film) *Amadeus*, the composer Salieri immediately recognises that Mozart is the genius he will never be. Is it possible to doubt that Mozart's superiority over Salieri was both real and genetic?

If genes can explain that, why not — to the same degree, with the same qualifications — sexual orientation?

I hope genes have nothing to do with sexuality, because I hope people prove to be more interesting than that. Maybe the research will prove beyond any reasonable doubt, and beyond whatever conceptual and methodological problems, that there is a genetic element to sexual orientation, in the same way as there might (if not must) be to other aspects of personality, like Mozart's genius.

But it seems to me quite out of the question that it is genes and genes alone which explain sexual orientation. Whom

we desire is, after all, not limited to observing which sexual organs they possess. Nobody finds all women, or all men, attractive, and usually there are particular 'types' we like. Do our genes determine — or even condition — whether we tend to go for blond(e)s or Mediterraneans, black or white people, older or younger, short or tall, fleshy or skinny...? These are aspects also of sexual orientation, if on the face of it less fundamental. Desire is a complex thing. It is not a matter of saying our 'environment' shapes our desire. But it's hard to imagine that we were simply born with it.

1. I have my doubts about the logic of some of these results, but since I don't even have physics O Level, I wouldn't like to stake money on my doubts. For what it's worth: for the LeVay theory to hold, surely logically it needs to be true not only that most gay men have smaller INAH-3s than straight men, but that most men with smaller INAH-3s are gay. This appears not to have been established at all. Similarly, the Bailey study, as described by Burr, seems to state not only that if you are gay and have a twin, that twin is more likely also to be gay if he (or she) is an identical twin, but that identical twins have a much higher chance of being gay than the rest of the population. I'm not sure that's what it's supposed to state, but that's how Burr's account of it reads (see fn4, below)

2. By looking for a gene the scientists already assume homosexuality is a genetically-determined or conditioned trait; otherwise there would be no point looking for it. Burr treats this as an example of how scientists and the media misunderstand each other: the media question *Does This Prove Homosexuality Is Not A Choice?* is meaningless to a geneticist. You might ask, though, if it isn't making self-fulfilling prophecies.

3. It may be that the ability of people in same-sex environments to experience homoerotic arousal doesn't mean they aren't fundamentally either hetero- or homosexual. But it proves that homoerotic arousal is part of the range of individual sexual experience. Genetic engineering plainly can't eliminate it on this level. And if not on this level, then surely, fundamentally, not at all. If homosexuality will always be a possible type of sexual expression, there are likely to be people who prefer it. The genetic-essentialist case would be convincing only if heterosexuals were incapable of homoerotic arousal.

4. The most compelling evidence, referred to above (about which Burr tells us a lot less), about monozygotic twins, is also the easiest to suggest an alternative explanation for. If I understand the research findings, an unusually high percentage of identical twins were both gay — 52%. A stab at a psychological explanation might have something to do with Narcissism. Certainly, it does not seem to me that psychological processes are irrelevant if we are discussing twins, or that the triumph of genetics is quite as resounding and unanswerable as it first looks.

Berlin: a capital for Capital

By Tony Brown

Think of Berlin, think of the cold war; the Wall — that physical juncture separating capitalism and what was commonly called socialism; the atmospheric setting of Le Carre novels, David Bowie's *Low*, and Wim Wenders' films.

For socialists Berlin has been a focus of hope and defeat. In the early twentieth century it was the stage for the rise of the mass German Social Democratic Party with its revolutionary wing and its decline when it supported the First World War. It was where Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht died in the heroic Spartacus uprising in the wake of the Bolshevik revolution, where the Bauhaus movement was housed until forced out by the Nazis, where Brecht wrote plays and poetry against capitalism and achieved a detente with Stalinism, where the Nazi Reich fell, where the workers launched the first post-war uprising against Stalinism in 1953, and where the Wall finally fell in 1989.

Now at the end of the twentieth century the city is once again a microcosm of larger events. Berlin is being transformed into the 'capital' of Europe. Two cities, two systems — a square peg and a round hole — are being forcibly merged.

I revisited Berlin earlier this year to see what changes were taking place and to renew acquaintances with Margrit and Kosta who I had met through our connection with the German Adult Education Association. They live in East Berlin and share the difficulties many in the East are experiencing as a result of reunification. While parts of Berlin boom, this is certainly not being enjoyed by many in the East.

In 1994, four years after reunification, the city was still effectively divided. Even though the public transport system had been reintegrated and the Wall removed, you only had to travel a bit away from the centre of East Berlin to feel that you were out of the West and in a central European city. The rebuilding which had occurred at that time was centred around the famous city spine of Unter der Linden, with its museums, monuments and hotels, and the Alexanderplatz.

Three years later much has changed and yet much has remained the same. The first thing that strikes you is the massive construction that dominates the city skyline and which by 2003 will have remodelled much of central Berlin.

Work has been started on 2,000 new buildings since the Wall came down and there are 1,200 cranes towering above the



The euphoria of 1989 has evaporated today

inner city districts of Tiergarten and Mitte alone. New government offices are being built around the Reichstag in preparation for the move from Bonn and the river Spree has even been diverted during building work to allow new train tunnels to be sunk into the river bed. Thirty per cent of the workforce is now involved in the construction industry.

The bleak corridor that was the Wall which divided the city between the Reichstag and Potsdamer Platz will yield up the commercial, government, transport and entertainment heart of Berlin in time for its restoration as the 'capital' of Europe. By then £130 billion will have been invested in Berlin.

Friedrichstrasse, once one of the city's elegant shopping and commercial streets, has been given a face lift as the grime from decades of neglect has been removed. The French department store Galeries Lafayette, Gucci, Benetton, DKNY, and American Express have all opened up for business in the past four years, though to mixed success.

Friedrichstrasse acquired a different claim to fame in the cold war years. It ran from the train station where westerners first entered East Berlin to Checkpoint Charlie. Today the Checkpoint square is in the process of being removed from history. The football field sized no-man's land of concrete, barriers and checkpoints is today being replaced by the 'Checkpoint Charlie

Marketing Centre'. The Centre, which is the work of the world's leading post-modern architect Philip Johnson, will house businesses and a plaza. Johnson is only one of a number of international architects who have been attracted to the city to turn Berlin into a modern centre for capital. Aldo Rossi, Norman Foster and Nicholas Grimshaw have designed a new housing and business centre, government centre and stock exchange. But all has not gone to plan. The expected building boom has not been what was hoped for. In April this year the Berliner Grundkreditbank admitted that it had lost more than £40 million through property investments after a 50% fall in prices since 1994. This

followed the sacking of the chairman of the Berliner Bank last year after reporting losses of £800 million

Hundreds of developers moved into Berlin after reunification in 1990, investing billions of marks in projects that turned the city into Europe's biggest building site.

Commercial rents soared, driving many long established shops and restaurants out of business. Young squatters, who occupied derelict buildings in the east of the city and turned them into bars, cafes and clubs, have been driven out of the centre by developers eager to build new offices.

The opening of Galeries Lafayette on Friedrichstrasse was meant to herald the turning of the tide. Instead the store has failed to attract customers and many other new buildings on the famous street remain unoccupied.

The move from Bonn to Berlin has also been delayed as rising costs and disaffection with the amount being spent has coincided with the slow down of the economy and rising unemployment.

The aim of the German government is that Berlin will become a showpiece of the new Europe. The massive building program is being funded through a combination of private and state investment, with the state providing the new transport links, the relocated government buildings and much of the tourist sites around East Berlin. Their expectation is that the relocation of the government, the hoped for influx of European Union centres

and the establishment of head offices such as Sony and Mercedes Benz will give industry, developers and the government the boost that has so far failed to materialise.

Despite reunification West and East remain divided economically. Wage rates for the same job still differ in many cases and unemployment in some areas of East Berlin, where employment if not useful work was once guaranteed, is 50% and more.

Margrit and Kosta live in the suburbs away from the centre of East Berlin. They have both just turned 50. Margrit had been an adult educator and Kosta a bookkeeper.

They live near Treptower Park the East's sprawling wooded park well away from the Mitte. The Spree borders one side of the Park and in the middle is the massive monument to 5,000 Soviet soldiers who died in the battle of Berlin.

Margrit is now employed as a temporary civil servant by the unified Ministry of Education while Kosta lost his job some years ago. Their daughter finished school the year before and their son was nearing the end of his.

While they are critical of some aspects of the East German regime, they express a sense of loss or nostalgia for what they once had. They don't expect that Kosta will work again even though he has been undertaking retraining schemes and now speaks English and can apply capitalist accounting methods.

Now they fear that Margrit will lose her job at the Ministry. She explains that almost all the staff from the East are temporary employees while those from the West are permanent. A new wave of redundancies is imminent and temporary staff will be the first to be sacked since not enough volunteers have put up their hands.

This comes on top of new, increased higher education fees for their children and a protracted dispute over ownership and repairs of their flat and a fourfold rent increase. Housing has become one of the most contested areas of ownership rights in the city.

Margrit and Kosta had lived in their modest but comfortable three bedroom flat for thirty years when its ownership was reclaimed by a West German after reunification. They were allowed to remain in the flat but last year the owner refused to replace the broken heating system. He suggested they move away while it was being fixed, a proposition they didn't take up as once out of the flat they could be refused permission to return or forced into a less secure, more expensive lease. Instead they borrowed thousands of marks to get the job done and now are in court again trying to get reimbursed.

If Margrit loses her job the family will

be in a desperate position. They ask 'what use is freedom if you can't afford anything?'

After coffee they take us on a 'socialists' tour of East Berlin. First we visit the Gedenkstätte der Sozialisten, or Socialists' Memorial. The centre piece of the park is a burial ground where Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht hold pride of place under a stone telling us 'the dead remind us' (die toten mahnen uns). Surrounding them are the graves of Stalinists such as Walter Ulbricht and other notorious figures of the German SED.

Each January a parade would march to the cemetery. The marchers carried red roses to place on the graves and East German leaders would make hypocritical speeches extolling the virtues of 'socialism'. Today the cemetery is no longer maintained by the state but by supporters

“Berlin is being transformed into the ‘capital’ of Europe. Two cities, two systems — a square peg and a round hole — are being forcibly merged”

and the January parades have become something of a rallying point for the old supporters of the old regime.

From there we drive the length of Potsdamer Strasse where pieces of the Wall with commissioned paintings, such as Brezhnev and Honecker's passionate kiss, have been placed side by side. And then to Treptower Park and the Soviet War Memorial erected in 1948. Along the perimeter of the memorial are massive granite slabs with quotations from Stalin, leading up to the colossal bronze figures of a Soviet soldier supporting the German child as they symbolically crush Nazism in typical socialist realist style. This memorial hasn't been removed partly one suspects because of its sheer size but more because of the 5,000 bodies buried under the memorial. However the constant fear of neo-nazi attack means that it is now permanently guarded.

Throughout Berlin there is a contest for history and a denial of history. For instance, apart from a few isolated pockets and the remaining Checkpoint Charlie Museum it is now very difficult to find anything about the Wall. What generally remains is 'safe' history.

In the West the main boulevard linking west with east Berlin is the Strasse des 17 Juni, named after the date of the 1953 workers' uprising in East Berlin. Around the corner from our pension and opposite the

Technical University is a small memorial to the 'victims of Stalinism' maintained by the Christian Democrats.

There are other more poignant reminders such as the bombed out Wilhelm Church by the Zoo Station and the 12 foot slogan in front of the Ka De We department store listing each of the concentration camps under the statement 'Places of terror which we must never be allowed to forget'. Both sides wish to maintain the fiction that it was they who were the real opponents of fascism.

What open resistance there is to the remaking of Berlin can be seen around precincts such as Prenzlauer Berg and around Oranienburger Tor. Working class organisation in these areas has been replaced by alternative lifestyleism opposed to the prettification of the city.

Prenzlauer Berg was one of the few areas of Berlin which consistently voted for the Communist Party in the early days of the Nazi regime and again in the 1980s had the largest number of informal votes when any vote against the SED represented courage.

Today, it along with Oranienburger Tor, is home to grunge cafes and bars, squats and artists' studios. In the big derelict buildings near the Jewish synagogue the yards have been landscaped with recycled rubbish, metal and building materials. A sign is draped from the 3rd storey glassless window saying 'the Council and investors are stealing public space.'

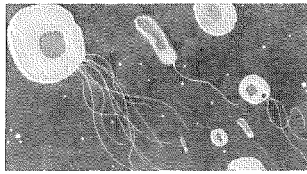
Dissatisfaction with reunification is easy to find in the West also. Unemployment is rising, cuts in government spending grow and immigration is a big issue. As each cut is made Berliners can look to the skyline to see where that money is going instead. Anna a German language teacher in an adult education centre says that jobs are being cut and that she is using outdated textbooks because there is no money to produce new ones. Teaching German to immigrants has become a low priority.

A young businessman in Frankfurt expressed surprise that we would visit Berlin. He saw it only as a problem place. Like many he resents the East because it is a drain on his taxes. He feels he has more in common with Parisians, Romans or Viennese than with Berliners.

In the East they resent the West because the promises of reunification haven't materialised.

The government is pinning its hopes on the market, underwritten by the state, to lead to jobs and growth.

What is clear, is that whatever euphoria there may have been in late 1989 has evaporated. Beyond the glass facades of the new buildings lies a much less settled population.



Hot air from Kyoto

By Les Hearn

Can hotter mean colder?

EVERYONE TALKS about the weather but nobody does anything about it, runs the old joke. Unfortunately, the result of the Kyoto climate summit does little to prove this wrong. Five years ago, at the Rio Earth Summit, the developed countries agreed to return their emissions of carbon dioxide (CO₂), the major "greenhouse" gas, to 1990 levels by the year 2000. Since emissions have been increasing since then, mainly due to the USA, the target is already starting to look ambitious. Nevertheless, the Kyoto summit of signatories to the UN Convention on Climate Change met in December to consider how to achieve reductions in CO₂ emissions to below 1990 levels.

The European Union (EU) nations were proposing a reduction in emissions by the industrialised countries of 15% by 2010 but would only go ahead with these reductions if the others agreed, too. Faced with a US position which essentially promised nothing, the conference finally agreed reductions of 7% by the US, 8% by the EU and most other smaller European nations, and 6% by Japan, Canada, Hungary and Poland. Russia and Ukraine were allowed a zero reduction target.

This agreement was described as "dirty dealing" by *New Scientist*, "a coup [which] allows the US to buy the

right to pollute". Let's see how this is the case. Firstly, the implosion of the former Soviet Union's economy means that Russia's CO₂ emissions are now some 30% below 1990 levels. All well and good for the fight against the "greenhouse" effect, one might think. But Russia's agreed target is the same level as in 1990, allowing it to either pump out masses more CO₂ or to sell its emissions permit to the USA or Japan. That way, these countries can buy the right to pollute. Energy analysts estimate that they can thus increase their CO₂ emissions by some 14% above their agreed targets.

Many people think that global warming could bring more pleasant weather to the British Isles. In fact, the result could be just the opposite. There is a massive current in the Atlantic Ocean carrying warm water north and cold water south. Often known as the "Gulf Stream", this flow, equal to that of a hundred Amazon Rivers, transports an enormous amount of heat northwards. This warms the Arctic air currents which blow over Western Europe, giving that region its anomalously high temperatures. Computer modelling suggests that the Gulf Stream would be disrupted if fresh water were injected into the North Atlantic — as it could be if the greenhouse effect produced partial melting of the ice cap and greater rainfall in the north. If the current were disrupted, temperatures in winter could fall by some five degrees in Western Europe. Dublin, for example, would acquire the climate of Spitsbergen, about 600 miles north of the Arctic Circle. This could happen quite fast, perhaps in a decade or two.

Even without "emissions trading", the Kyoto agreement will still leave total world CO₂ emissions higher in 2010 than they were in 1990 whereas the goal is one of zero net CO₂ emissions for the world taken as a whole! In fact, the ultimate goal should be one of CO₂ consumption to get CO₂ levels back to pre-industrial ones.

Of necessity, predictions about "global warming" are imprecise but certain interesting features emerge from a recent study by Karl, Nicholls and Gregory reported in *Scientific American*. Firstly, even small increases in average temperatures can cause a big jump in the number of very warm days. Secondly, rainfall should decrease at lower latitudes and increase at higher ones. Average precipitation should increase, though, because a greater average temperature means more evaporation. A lot of the extra water will fall in less populated parts of the world, much of it as snow.

Thirdly, the models predict an increased number of heavy downpours with accompanying flood damage and erosion, with some evidence for drier soils, nevertheless, because of increased evaporation.

The overall picture is one of massive disruption in the most highly populated areas of the world.

What is the "greenhouse" effect?

By day, the Earth is heated by the Sun's heat and light, which is absorbed by the land and sea. By night, that heat is radiated out again but is partly absorbed by the atmosphere, which behaves rather like an insulating blanket or like the glass in a greenhouse. If there were no atmosphere, every night would be way below freezing, as on the night side of the Moon. Some gases are better than others at absorbing heat and it turns out that the gas CO₂, which is very rare in the atmosphere, is particularly good at this. In the last 200 years, as a result of the growing industrialisation of the world, an increasing amount of the carbon stored as coal, oil or gas has been converted into atmospheric carbon dioxide, increasing the total by some 20%. The vast majority of the increase has occurred over the last 50 years. The "greenhouse" effect is the supposed heating effect of this extra CO₂ in the atmosphere.

No fees! No cuts!

Kate Buckell and Rosie Woods visited Germany in December, to take a message of solidarity to the striking German students from the Campaign for Free Education in Britain. This is what they found.

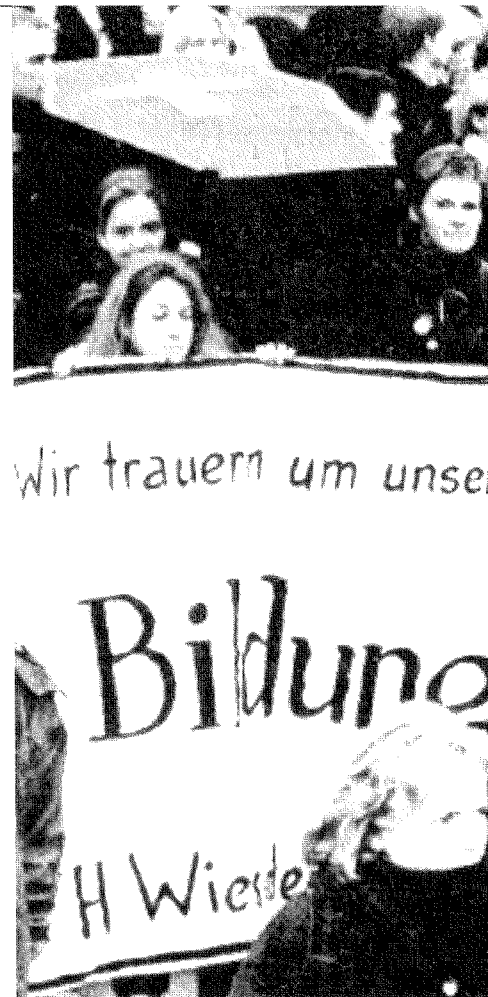
TUESDAY 16 December, 11.25am: arrive in Berlin and meet Judith and Michael from the Student Government at the Free University of Berlin. It is -9°C. We go straight to the Technical University, where banners proclaim "Streik!" and slogans compare government military expenditure with that on education. Students have been striking for over a month at this university. It is part of a wave of student strikes that began in Hesse in September when hun-

dreds of students had courses cancelled for lack of space and teachers.

Later, we go to the Free University to picket the Minister of the Interior, who is expected to speak at a meeting of Christian Democrat students. 100 students come to the picket, but the Minister of the Interior does not. No-one seems to know who has organised the picket.

The campaign so far has been largely spontaneous. The student unions do not have the same resources as in Britain. Membership is voluntary. The national Free Federation of Student Unions, FZS, was established in 1993, but many of the larger universities — including the three in Berlin — are not affiliated.

Wednesday 17 December: Straight to



Humboldt University. After meeting a students' strike picket, we go round the back to the Infopool, pick up leaflets and talk to Cordula, Petra and Matte for about 15 minutes. They tell us that the strike is mainly about more money for the universities, but there are many detailed demands. They have already forced the government to send representatives to



Strike wave in German u



‘Profits have tripled between 1980 and 1997, whereas average real income stagnated. Meanwhile the rate of tax on business has gone down. The money is there. We are struggling against a policy of declining solidarity and social exclusion, which increasingly aligns all areas of life along free-market principles and so-called ‘international competitiveness’. We declare our solidarity with school students, trainees, the unemployed, claimants, asylum-seekers, and others hit by social cuts. We want a common movement against educational and social cuts. No student fees! No elite universities! Education for all! There is enough money, it just has to be distributed fairly!’

(From the student demands at Humboldt University, Berlin)

talk to them directly and are in good spirits, though concerned that the movement may peter out over Christmas. Few have had any lectures for weeks, and exams are looming. Although lecturers are banned by federal law from striking, they are offering support by holding open-air lectures.

We hear that school students have walked out in solidarity with the university students. The students have also begun making links with trade unions, in particular with civil servants who may strike in the New Year.

At 3pm, about ten thousand students assemble to demonstrate in Berlin. This turnout is smaller than usual, but it is a week before Christmas and -15°C. The demonstration has been organised by members of the Student Governments at the three universities, although when we arrive no-one seems to be doing much organising. Even more surprisingly, to us, there is only one left-wing paper-seller there.

The demonstration is peaceful but tense. There are speakers from teaching unions, the Student Governments, and the CFE. Our words of solidarity are met with cheers, and the rally ends with chants of

“Solidarity International”.

We retire to the warmth of a cafe to chat with Ingo and Sylvie from the Free University. Their demands are wide-ranging, including broader issues of social rights. They complain that only three thousand out of a potential 42,000 students attend the weekly General Assemblies that plan the city-wide campaign. Only?

They confirm that organised socialists are not very visible in the movement, and tell us that a national congress is planned for 8-11 January to codify demands and coordinate action.

Thursday 18 December: At 2am we are on one of 12 coaches travelling the ten hours from Berlin to a national demonstration in Bonn. On arrival we are met by Ulrike from FZS. She tells us that the Federal Government is trying to introduce a law giving the State governments greater control over education, enabling them to introduce tuition fees and to remove student representatives from university governing boards. The FZS is calling on the government to outlaw the introduction of fees and to increase the student grant, which is paltry and avail-

able only to a few. It has called the demonstration today.

There is a feeling of frustration on the demonstration, and at one stage about a thousand students clash with riot police in an attempt to reach government buildings. They are driven back with tear gas. There are a few left paper-sellers here, but still not many by British standards.

The students we talk to here are, however, more confident than those in Berlin that they can kickstart the movement again after Christmas. About 30,000 attend the rally, with speakers from student unions, the teachers’ and scientists’ union GEW and, of course, the CFE. Once again we get a rapturous response. The FZS is keen to develop links with the CFE and to send a representative to Britain in the New Year.

As for us, we have seen what students can do, given just a little bit of confidence. British students lack that confidence, for now, and part of our job must be to help create it. If we can, then we have two things on our side that the German students still lack: a well-resourced student union movement, and an organised body of socialists, the AWL, well placed inside that movement.

universities and schools

Lenin traduced

The Russian Revolution is often presented as an attempt to impose socialism by the coercive means of dictatorship and terror. In order to do this, historical facts are used very selectively, and the actions of the Bolsheviks are described with little or no reference to their historical context. BBC2 TV's "Lenin's Secret Files", broadcast last December in the "Time-watch" series, was a good example of the method. It described the Red Terror with only a cursory mention of the desperate circumstances of civil war and foreign intervention.

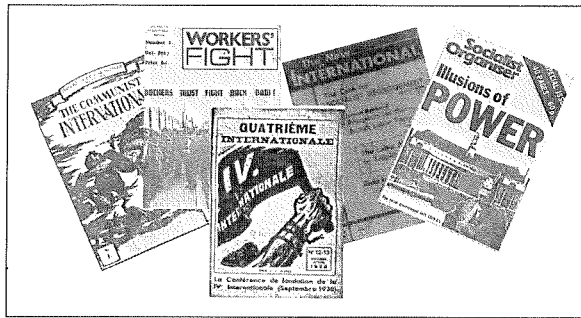
The programme made no mention of the initial leniency of the Bolshevik regime towards its opponents. After the 1917 insurrections in Petrograd and Moscow captured White Guards were released in return for a (soon broken) promise not to take up arms against the revolution in the future. Captured members of the Provisional Government were also released and one of the Bolsheviks' first decrees was to abolish capital punishment. Although introduced during the civil war, this measure was again abolished when the military situation improved. The impression was conveyed that the attempt to assassinate Lenin in August 1918 was enough to prompt the Bolsheviks to adopt terror tactics. However, there were successful assassinations of two other Bolshevik leaders that summer and there had been earlier attempts on both Lenin and Trotsky. The viewer would not know from this account that the Bolsheviks were fighting, literally, for survival. The contemporary observer Victor Serge describes them "living in the sure inner knowledge that they would be massacred in the event of defeat; and the defeat remained possible from one week to the next". In the same way, the execution of kulaks during the civil war to encourage the surrender of grain was presented with no reference to the starvation facing the cities. The White Terror was dismissed in the phrase, "reciprocal atrocities".

But then, according to this version of events, the terror is not to be explained by historical circumstances but by the "cruel, violent side" of Lenin's character. Viewers were presented with a picture of Lenin as the single-handed instigator of the revolution. The role of parties and the influence of class forces was ignored. Lenin, we were told, had learned that there was "something wrong with his brain" and that he would not live long. He therefore believed himself to be working against time. This caused him to force the pace of change and insist that the Bolsheviks take power in October 1917! This is not history but a caricature of it.

The programme, in spite of itself, could not help giving glimpses of the dying Lenin's struggle to prevent Stalin from taking over the party, and even admitted that Russian history could have been different if he had succeeded.

John Buckell

AS WE WERE SAYING



The Winnie Mandela scandal

Many opponents of apartheid are still unwilling to look too closely into what has become known as the "Winnie Mandela affair". That is a mistake. The episode tells us much about the ANC, its methods, and the prospects for democracy in the new South Africa. To refuse to examine the evidence against Mrs Mandela and her followers amounts to nothing less than a refusal to come to terms with the recent history of the liberation movement. It is the politics of faith rather than facts.

What are the facts? Mrs Mandela has been found guilty of being an "accessory" to kidnapping and assaulting four youths. The court record, agreed by both defence and prosecution, states that "a decision was made by Mrs Winnie Mandela and the 'Football Club' to kill" two ex-members of the club, Sibusiso Chili and Lerothodi Ikaneng. The same court record states that Mrs Mandela's house was used for hiding a murder weapon, that the killers set off from and returned to her house in her car, that her daughter Zinzi was involved in exchanging the murder weapon, and that the killers continued as members of the 'Football Club' and the household.

Mrs Mandela has consistently lied in court about her whereabouts at key times in the case of Stompie, the 14 year old allegedly murdered by members of her 'Football Club'. Mrs Mandela slandered an anti-apartheid priest as a "gay child molester", when in fact he was sheltering terrified young men from her. Outside the court, Mrs Mandela's supporters held up placards with the slogan, "Homo sex is not in black culture". The doctor to whom Mrs Mandela took the boys she kidnapped in an attempt to produce physical evidence of abuse provided no such evidence. Instead, he was brutally murdered. The visitors' book for the last day of his life includes a record of a visit by Jerry Richardson, captain of the 'Football Club', and the words, written in red, "Sent by Winnie".

Despite all protestations to the contrary, Nelson Mandela knew about the

abduction of the four youths. It was his intervention from jail, via his lawyer Ismail Ayob, that probably saved the lives of Stompie's three friends, by making it clear to Mrs Mandela that she had to release her captives. Key witnesses in the Stompie case disappeared, "Sicilian" style. The ANC's security staff were all trained by the KGB or the Stasi. Outraged Soweto high school students had tried to burn down the Mandela home at Diepkloof Extension after beatings and an alleged rape connected with the 'football team'.

Those are the facts, as far as they are known to us today. What can we make of them? Firstly, the Stompie case was no isolated incident, but part of a broader pattern. Secondly, the broader pattern was known about for some time, but nobody in the ANC did anything about it. Thirdly, the people who benefitted from the violence, particularly the violence directed against other groups of the liberation movement such as Azapo (the political successor to Black Consciousness), did nothing to stop it.

The inescapable conclusion from all this is that the top leadership of the ANC hoped to rise to power on the backs of destruction and disruption of other forces by lumpen, impoverished youth. In the mid '80s, they sought a short-cut to revolution by way of the "comtotsis" (half "comrade", half "totsi" or street gangster). That failed, and now the violence of "ungovernability" is being turned against the people themselves by the "hidden hand" of the State.

What now? Winnie and her "boys" are cases for therapy and re-education, not revenge. The best ending to all this would be for the ANC to disband and make way for democratic working-class politics. Unfortunately, that will not happen. Instead, we will see those who rose to international prominence on the backs of the "comtotsi" army take their share of power. They should get on well with De Klerk.

Tom Rigby

Socialist Organiser 521, April 1992



For Marx and Engels, communism meant the self-liberation of the working class

The Principles of Communism

By Frederick Engels

WHAT IS COMMUNISM? Communism is a theoretical statement of the conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.

2. — What is the proletariat?

The proletariat is that class in society which obtains its livelihood wholly and solely from the sale of its labour, and not from the profit of any capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose whole existence depends upon the demand for labour, and therefore upon the variations of anarchical competition, with its alternations of good and bad periods of trade. The proletariat, in a word, is the working class of the 19th century. [And also of the present time].

3. — Has there not, then, been a proletariat, always?

No. There have always been poor and working classes — and the working classes have usually been poor. But never before have there been poor men or workers living under such condition as those just mentioned; and there has not, therefore, been a proletariat always, any more than there has been free and unchecked competition.

4. — How did the proletariat originate?

1. By "manufacture" Engels means hand-production in capitalist workshops, or by home-workers employed by a merchant capitalist, as distinct from both independent handicrafts and factory production. For a note on the background to the whole text, see page 30.

The proletariat originated with the Industrial Revolution, which began in England in the later half of the 18th century, and which has since been repeated in every civilised country in the world. The Industrial Revolution was caused by the invention of the steam engine, the various spinning machines, the mechanical loom, and a whole host of other mechanical contrivances. These machines, which being very expensive, could only be purchased by men with considerable capital, changed the whole method of production; and supplanted the workers of that day, because they could produce commodities much more cheaply and efficiently than the workers, with their imperfect spinning wheels and looms. The machines, therefore, placed industry entirely in the hands of the capitalists, making the former property of the workers — tools, hand-loom, &c., — useless, and thus leaving them propertyless. The factory system had first been introduced in the textile industry. Work was more and more divided among individual workers, so that he who formerly had completed a whole piece of work, now worked at only one part of it. This division of labour made it possible for products to be turned out more rapidly, and therefore more cheaply. It reduced the activity of each worker to a very simple operation, constantly repeated, which could therefore be performed as well, or even better, by a machine. Once the impulse was given to the factory system by the installation of machinery, this system quickly assumed the mastery of other branches of industry, e.g. printing, pottery, metal ware. In this way, various branches of industry, one after the other, were dominated by steam power, machinery, and the factory system, as had already happened in the textile industries. But at the same time these industries necessarily passed into the control of capitalists. In addition to actual manufactures¹, handicrafts also

Why the Manifesto was written

THE PRINCIPLES of Communism was a first draft, by Engels, for the Communist Manifesto. It was found in Engels' papers and published by Eduard Bernstein in 1914. The translation we use here (very slightly adapted) is by A J Hacking, from the *Plebs Magazine*, a journal of working-class education, which serialised it over several months in 1914. Questions 9, 22 and 23 were left unanswered in the draft, and Bernstein filled in answers from other writings of Engels and Marx.

The political background to *The Principles of Communism* and the Communist Manifesto was sketched as follows by the Bolshevik scholar David Ryazanov in the introduction to his annotated edition, "The Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels".

During the years 1845 and 1846, the debates grew at times somewhat heated. From Engels' letters to Marx we learn how communist groups came into being in certain towns. There was, however, no link between the groups, and no widely read journal which might have kept them in touch one with the other. The groups had a purely working-class membership, without a sprinkling of "bourgeois intellectuals". "Men of Letters", on the other hand, "intellectuals" with socialist and communist sympathies, had various literary journals at their command, and there they carried on communist propaganda. In this matter they had the advantage over their working-class brethren. But the intellectuals were content to write disquisitions on socialist themes, to appeal exclusively to the "cultured" classes, to eschew all political activity. They felt no need for an all-embracing organisation, nor for getting into touch with the scattered groups of working-class communists in their midst.

Matters took a very different turn when Marx and Engels were able to work out a synthesis between "politics" and socialism, and when, at the same time, they provided an answer to the question as to how the working-class movement could be hitched on to socialism, thereby putting an end to the cleavage which had hitherto existed. They showed that socialism or communism constituted the highest expression of the workers' movement, that communism presupposed complete democracy, that communist society could be established by none other than the working class, and that the whole burden of the inauguration of the new social order must be assumed by the workers, the proletariat. Hence, the task of the workers was to enter the arena with a clear consciousness of the goal they were out to win, and to create an independent political party to represent the workers' interests. Nor must the proletariat shrink from the fulfilment of its mission, it must not withdraw into anchorite cells, or become disintegrated into sects. On the contrary, it must take part in every manifestation of social life, must learn the lesson which every action is capable of teaching, must take a lively share in all spheres of contemporary life.

It goes without saying that the endeavour to unite the intellectuals and the workers in the communist groups did not run a smooth course. On the one hand, war had to be waged against the old belief in "true socialism" [i.e. moralistic, anti-political, non-class-struggle socialism], and, on the other, the workers' prejudices had to be overcome and their distrust of "literary gents" dispelled. An organisational centre had to be created, a focus of propagandist activities, as a step towards the inauguration of a compact, fighting body.

gradually came under the domination of the factory system; since here as well capitalists supplanted the small producers by the establishment of the greater workshop, which saved time and expense, and permitted an increasing division of labour. Thus, in civilised countries, all branches of work and manufacture were replaced by the great industry. The former status of the workers was entirely revolutionised, and the middle class of the period - particularly the master-craftsmen - ruined; and thus arose two new classes, gradually absorbing all the rest, namely: (i) the capitalist class, which everywhere is in possession of the means of subsistence - the raw materials and tools, machines, factories, etc., necessary for the production of the means of life. This is the class of the bourgeois, or the bourgeoisie; (ii) the working class who, being propertyless, are compelled to sell their labour to the bourgeoisie, in order to obtain the means of subsistence. This class is called the proletariat.

5. — Under what conditions does the proletariat sell its labour to the bourgeoisie?

Labour is a commodity, and its price is therefore determined by the same laws as other commodities. Under the system of large-scale industry or of free competition - which, as we shall see, amount to the same thing - the price of a commodity is, on the

"The class of big capitalists are in almost exclusive possession of all the means of subsistence and of the instruments (machines, factories) and materials necessary for the production of the means of subsistence. The class of the wholly propertyless are obliged to sell their labour to the bourgeoisie in order to get their subsistence"

average, determined by its labour-cost of production. The cost of production of labour, however, is in reality just as much of the means of subsistence as is necessary to keep the worker physically fit, and to enable him to reproduce his kind. The worker will thus receive for this work no more than is necessary for this purpose. The price of labour, or wage, will therefore be the lowest, the minimum, necessary for subsistence². But trade being at one time good, at another bad, the wage of the worker will vary accordingly, just as the manufacturer receives more or less for his commodities. Just as the manufacturer, however, receives on the average neither more nor less for his commodities than the equivalent of their cost of production, so the worker will, on the average, receive neither more nor less than this minimum of wages. And the more large-scale industry conquers all branches

2. The idea of an "iron law" forcing wages down to starvation level was widespread at the time among both radicals and conservatives. After Marx's economic studies he and Engels concluded that the commodity sold was *labour-power* — ability to labour — not labour. They argued that exploitation arose from the peculiar nature of the exchange between worker and capitalist, formally equal but really unequal. The worker sells a commodity, labour-power, for a limited price, while the capitalist gets, when he "consumes" that commodity, command over the general, open-ended, human power to create new wealth. Marx and Engels then rejected the "iron law of wages". Marx wrote that it was "as if to inscribe on the programme of [a slave rebellion]: Slavery must be abolished because the feeding of slaves in the system of slavery cannot exceed a certain low maximum!" See also Marx's pamphlet *Wages, Price and Profit* on this question.



Marx and Engels learned not only from books but from the workers' struggles like the Silesian weavers' revolt (above)

of industry, the more definitely will this economic law of wages assert itself.

6. — What was the position of the working classes before the Industrial Revolution?

At different stages of the evolution of society, the working class has occupied different positions in relation to the owning and ruling classes. In ancient times the workers were the slaves of the landowner, as they still are in many backward countries, and even in the Southern part of the United States [i.e. 1847]. In the Middle Ages they were the serfs of the landowning noble, as they are yet in Hungary, Poland and Russia. In the Middle Ages also, and until the Industrial Revolution, there were handicraft guilds in the towns under the control of small masters, out of which developed manufacture, the factory system, and the wage-worker employed by a capitalist.

7. What distinguishes the proletarian from the slave?

The slave was sold outright. The proletarian must sell himself daily and hourly. It is to the interest of the slave-owner than his property, the slave, should have an assured existence, however wretched that may be. The individual proletarian, the property, so to speak, of the whole capitalist class, has no assured existence; since his labour will only be purchased for just the period when someone has need of it. Existence is only assured to the workers as a class. The slave stands outside competition; the proletarian stands within it and suffers all its variations. The slave is regarded as a thing, and not as a member of society; the proletarian is regarded as a human being, and is acknowledged as a member of bourgeois society. The slave may enjoy a more assured existence, but the proletarian belongs to a higher stage of the development of society — stands indeed on a higher level than the slave. The slave can free himself because, of all the private property relations, he need only abolish the single relation of slavery — in this way, indeed, becoming a proletarian; the pro-

letarian, on the other hand, can only free himself on condition that he abolishes private property in general.

8. — What distinguishes the proletarian from the serf?

The serf has the possession and use of a means of production — a piece of land — in exchange for a tribute of a part of the produce, or for the performance of work for his lord. The proletarian works with another's implements of production, for the benefit of this other, in exchange for a part of his produce. The serf, therefore, pays; whereas payment is made to the proletarian. The serf has an assured existence; the proletarian has not. The serf stands outside competition: the proletarian within it. The serf frees himself either by running away to the town, and there becoming a handicraftsman; or by making payments in money to his lord instead of labour or payments in kind, thereby becoming a free farmer; or by forcibly ridding himself of his feudal lord, and becoming himself a private owner; in short, by one or other of these means, entering either the ranks of the owners or of the competing workers. The proletarian can only free himself by abolishing competition, private property, and all class distinction.

9. — What distinguishes the proletarian from the handicraftsman?

In the old handicraft industries, the workman, after his apprenticeship was served, became a wage worker for a time, but only in order that he might become an employer later. The proletarian is almost always a wage-worker all his life. The handicraftsman who had not yet become an employer was the companion of his master, lived in his house, and ate at his table. The proletarian stands solely in a money relation to his employer. The handicraftsman was a member of the same class of society as his master, and shared the same mode of life. The proletarian is separated from his master, the capitalist, by a whole world of class distinctions; he lives in a totally different environment, and his outlook is totally different. The tools used by the handi-

craftsman were usually his own property, and he could carry them with him. The machine worked by the proletarian is neither his own property, nor is it ever likely to become such. The handicraftsman usually made a complete object, and his skill in the use of his tools was always an important factor in the making of the product. The proletarian as a rule makes only one part of an article, or even contributes only to one process in the making of a single part, and his personal skill is in inverse ratio to the work done by the machine. The handicraftsman, like his master, was secured throughout his life against hurtful competition by means of guild regulations and trade customs. The proletarian must combine with his fellows, or seek the aid of legislation, in order to avoid being crushed by competition; if he is outbid by other sellers of labour-power, he — and never his employer — is crushed. The handicraftsman, like his master, had a narrow outlook, was thrifty, and disliked new inventions or ideas. The proletarian becomes daily more convinced that the interests of his class are fundamentally opposed to those of his employer; thrift gives place to class-consciousness and the conviction that an improvement in his position can come only by general social progress. The handicraftsman was a conservative even when he rebelled — it was indeed his desire for reaction that usually made him a rebel. The proletarian must inevitably be a revolutionary. The first step in social progress to which the reactionary handicraft spirit opposed itself was manufacture — the subjection of handicraft, master as well as worker, to mercantile capital, which developed later into commercial and industrial capital.

10. — What distinguishes the proletarian from the early factory worker?

The factory worker of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries had usually some implement of production as his own property — his loom or spinning wheels, or a piece of land which he cultivated in his leisure time. The proletarian has none of these things. The factory worker usually lived on the land, in more or less patriarchal³ relations with his landlord or employer. The proletarian lives mostly in large towns, and stands to his employer solely in a money relation. The factory worker's more personal relations with his master were destroyed by the coming of large-scale industries; he lost what little he still had, and became the first proletarian.

11. — What were the immediate consequences of the Industrial Revolution and the resulting division of society into bourgeoisie and proletariat?

Firstly, in consequence of the universal cheapening of all the products of industry following on the use of machinery, the old system of manufacture, depending on hand labour, was completely destroyed. Semi-barbaric countries which had previously remained more or less outside the influence of historical development were now forced out of their seclusion. They purchased the cheaper commodities from England, and allowed their own hand workers to be ruined. So countries which for centuries had made no progress, e.g., India, were completely revolutionised; and even China now advances towards revolution. It has thus come to pass that a new machine, invented today in England, results in less than a year in millions of workers in China being without bread. In this way have large-scale industries brought all the peoples of the earth into close touch with one another; small local markets have been lumped together into a great world market. The path has been prepared for civilisation and progress, since

whatever takes place in civilised countries nowadays must react on all other countries; and if today [1847] the workers of France or England were to free themselves, revolutions must inevitably follow in other lands.

Secondly, the Industrial Revolution has developed the wealth and power of the bourgeoisie to the greatest possible extent, making it the most powerful class everywhere. It proceeded to get political power into its own hands, superseding the classes which had been predominant previously — the aristocracy, the townsmen of the guilds, and the absolute monarchy representing both. It destroyed the power of the aristocracy by abolishing the right of primogeniture⁴, or the unsaleable character of real property, as well as the various privileges of the nobility. It destroyed the power of the townsmen of the guilds by abolishing all the guild and handicraft privileges. In place of these it established free competition — i.e., a state of society, in which any individual is free to carry on any branch of industry agreeable to him, and in which there is no hindrance to his so doing but the need of the required capital. With the introduction of free competition, therefore, the individual members of society are only unequal in so far as their capitals are unequal; capital is the determining factor, and the capitalists, the bourgeoisie, have become the real ruling class. Free competition is necessary for the establishment of large-scale industry, since it is the only state of society in which large-scale

industry can develop. The bourgeoisie, after it had thus abolished the social privileges of the aristocracy, and the guildsmen, next abolished their political power. Since it had raised itself to the position of the chief class in society, it proceeded to proclaim itself, in political form, as the chief class. It

accomplished this by the introduction of the representative system, which depends on civic equality and the legal recognition of free competition. This was bound up in European countries with a constitutional monarchy. In these countries, electors had to possess a certain amount of capital — and were therefore confined to the bourgeoisie. These bourgeois voters elect bourgeois representatives; and these in turn ensure a bourgeois regime⁵.

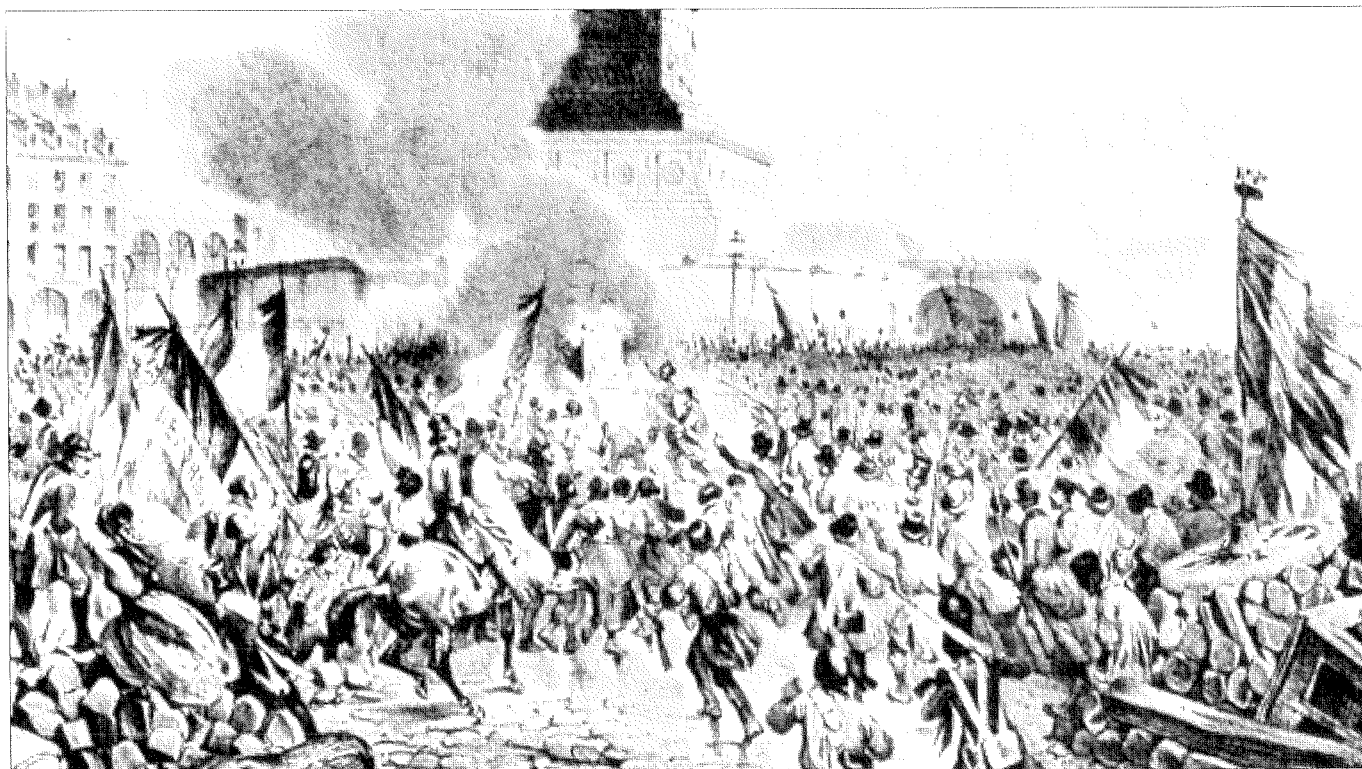
Thirdly, the Industrial Revolution has developed the proletariat to the same extent that it has developed the bourgeoisie. Just in the same ratio as the bourgeoisie has become richer, the proletariat has grown more numerous⁶. The proletariat could only come into being through the power of capital, and capital only increases when it is increasing the number of workers. An increase of the proletariat has therefore gone hand in hand with the increase of capital. At the same time, bourgeoisie and proletariat have both been concentrated in large towns, and this massing of the workers in large numbers has given them a con-

3. "Patriarchal" here means a family-type relationship, with the worker being tied to the employer like a child to a father.

4. That is, legal requirements that land could pass only to the owner's oldest son. It could not be freely bought and sold.

5. Property qualifications for voting were universal in Europe before 1848, and common well into the 20th century. The demands of the Chartist movement, the world's first mass workers' political party, which flourished in England between 1838 and 1848: it called for universal suffrage (for men, and, its more radical elements, for women too), for payment for MPs so that workers could be MPs, and for new elections to Parliament each year. At that time, when the permanent, unelected state machine was far less bulky than it is today, and the bourgeoisie had no mass media or mass political parties dominating the working class, such democratic demands meant — to friend and foe alike — working-class power. See Lenin's *State and Revolution* and *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*.

6. Marx later corrected this view, arguing that capital tended to increase faster than the number of workers: see *Capital* volume 1 chapter 25.



Marx and Engels got their ideas not just from books, but from workers' struggles like that of the Silesian weavers (above)

sciousness of their power. Further, the more this process develops, the more labour-saving machines are invented and utilised, and in this way, as has already been pointed out, wages are reduced to a minimum, and the position of the proletariat becomes more and more unendurable. Thus, by means on the one hand of the growing discontent, and on the other of the increasing consciousness of the proletariat, the way is made ready for a revolution of society.

12. — What were the wider consequences of the Industrial Revolution?

By means of the steam engine and other machines, large-scale industry created the means of indefinitely increasing the industrial output, at a diminishing cost both of time and money. The free competition which followed this accelerated production soon produced definite results; a crowd of capitalists seized upon industry, and in a short time far more was produced than was actually needed. The commodities manufactured could not be sold, and a so-called trade crisis occurred. Factories had to be closed, employers became bankrupt, and the workers starved. After a time the surplus products were sold, the factories opened again, wages rose, and trade gradually became more prosperous than before. But this could not last long. Again, too many commodities were produced, and another crisis occurred, with all the effects of the first. Thus, since the beginning of the 19th century the condition of industry has constantly fluctuated between periods of prosperity and periods of crisis. Such crises have recurred almost regularly every five or seven years; each time resulting in the greatest misery for the workers, and each time stimulating revolutionary tendencies and threatening shipwreck of the whole existing state of society.

13 — What is apparent from these regularly recurring business crises?

In the first place, that large-scale industry — although in its earlier stages it had itself given birth to free competition — has

now reached a stage at which free competition, so far from being useful to it, is actually a hindrance — a fetter from which it must break free. So long as it is organised on this basis of free competition, large-scale industry can only exist at the cost of a general upheaval every few years, an upheaval which each time threatens the whole fabric of civilisation, thrusting not only the proletariat into misery, but also ruining some section of the bourgeoisie itself. It is plain, therefore, either that large-scale industry must be abolished — which is an absolute impossibility — or that it must develop into a new organisation of society, in which industrial production shall no longer be in the hands of individual owners all competing one against the other, but shall be owned and controlled by society as a whole and shall satisfy the needs of all.

In the second place, it is apparent that large-scale industry, and the tremendous increase in the production made possible thereby, now makes practicable a new order of society in which such a sufficiency of the necessaries of life will be assured, that every member of that society will have leisure and opportunity to develop his natural powers and abilities in comparative freedom: in fact, that those same qualities or aspects of large-scale industry which under our existing social organisation result in misery and instability, could, under another social system, have exactly opposite consequences. It is obvious, therefore:

(i) That from now onwards all our social problems and evils are simply the result of a social system which is no longer adapted to social needs; and

(ii) That the only means by which these evils can be abolished, viz., a new order of society, is now close at hand.

14. — Of what nature must this new order of society be?

First and foremost, it will take all industry and all branches of production out of the hands of individual competitive owners; carrying on industry by the active participation of all the members of society. It will abolish competition, and put association in its place. Further, since production for individual profit is

based upon private property, this latter must also be abolished, and its place taken by the use of all instruments of production, and the division of all products — by communism, in short. The abolition of private property in itself sums up the new order of society, which in itself is the inevitable result of industrial development.

15. — Was not the abolition of private property possible at an earlier date?

No. Every change in the social order, every revolution as regards property relations, has been the necessary consequence of new productive powers, which could no longer be adapted to the existing property relations. Private property itself arose in this way. For private property has not always existed; towards the end of the Middle Ages a new means of production — manufacture — was evolved, which could not be adapted to feudal or guild relations, and which accordingly outgrew and overwhelmed them, producing a new form of property — private property. But for the first stages of development of large-scale industry, no other form of property but private property was possible — no other order of society than one based upon private property. So long as the productive powers only produce enough to satisfy the needs of a given time, without a surplus being available for the augmentation of social capital and the further development of the forces of production, so long must there inevitably be a ruling class controlling and an oppressed class subject to the social productive powers. The creation of these classes depends upon the development of these productive powers. The Middle Ages — the period of agriculture — gave us the baron and the serf; the towns of the later Middle Ages, the guild master, the journeyman, and the day-labourer; the 17th century evolves the manufacturer and the mechanic; the 19th century, the great manufacturer and the proletarian. Up to that time the productive powers were not so widely developed that private property in them were a fetter or restraint upon them. But now, when, owing to the development of large-scale industry, the powers of production are constantly increasing by leaps and bounds; when, moreover, these powers are in the hands of a constantly decreasing number of bourgeois owners, while the great mass of the people become ever more firmly fixed as proletarians, and their condition becomes ever more unbearable: when, finally, these colossal productive powers have grown so far beyond the control of the bourgeois private property owners, that they threaten to over-balance the whole social order, now surely, the abolition of private property has become not only possible, but absolutely necessary.

16. — Will the abolition of private property be achieved by peaceful means?

That it may be is much to be wished, and the Communists are certainly the last people likely to wish otherwise. But they know that revolutions are not planned arbitrarily and deliberately, having always been the inevitable results of circumstances, and to that extent independent of the will and guidance of individuals or even of whole classes. They see the growing oppression of the proletariat in all civilised countries, and they foresee that sooner or later the proletariat will be forced into active revolution. And in that day Communists will be prepared to defend the interests of the proletariat with deeds as well as with words.

17. — Will it be possible to abolish private property at one stroke?

No. Since the existing mode of production must be allowed to develop to a degree at which it can meet the demands of the

whole community, it is more probable that even after the revolution has begun the proletariat will only be able to transform society gradually. It can only abolish private property entirely when the mode of production is sufficiently developed to make this possible.

18. — What course of development will the Revolution have?

First and foremost, it will set up a democratic political constitution, thereby ensuring, directly or indirectly, the political sovereignty of the proletariat⁷. Directly in England, where the proletariat already form the majority of the people. Indirectly in France and Germany, where the majority consists not wholly of the proletariat proper, but also of peasants and small bourgeois, whose political interests, however, must depend more and more upon those of the proletariat, and who must therefore inevitably submit themselves to the proletarian will. This may indeed involve a second struggle, but the ultimate victory of the proletariat would not be long delayed. A democratic constitution, of course, would be entirely useless to the proletariat if it did not immediately take further measures aimed directly at private property and thereby making the existence of the proletariat more secure. The most important of these measures, as suggested by existing relations, are as follows:

1. The gradual limitation of private property by means of progressive taxation, heavy estate duties, the abolition of inheritance by collaterals (brothers, nephews, &c.), forced loans, and so forth.

2. The gradual expropriation of ground landlords, manufacturers, railroad and ship owners, partly through the competition of State industry, partly directly in exchange for assignats (State paper money).

3. The confiscation of the property of all emigrants and rebels against the majority of the people.

4. The organisation of work for all the proletariat upon national estates or in factories and workshops, in order that the competition of the workers amongst themselves may be abolished. Private owners, so long as they are allowed to remain so, will be compelled to pay the State rate of wages.

5. The compulsion of every member of society to work, and the organisation of industrial armies, especially for agriculture.

6. The centralisation of the credit system and the money market under the control of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital; and the suppression of all private banks and bankers.

7. The extension of State factories, railroads, and shipping; the bringing into cultivation of all waste land; and the improvement of all land already cultivated in proportion to the increased capital and greater number of workers at the disposal of the nation.

8. The education of every child in national institutions at the national expense.

9. The erection of large buildings on national estates as communal dwellings for groups of citizens following industrial as well as agricultural pursuits.

10. The destruction of all insanitary and badly built slums and dwellings.

11. Equal opportunities for all children.

12. The concentration of all means of transport in the hands of the State.

Obviously, all these measures cannot be carried through at once. But one will necessitate another. Once the first attack on private property has taken place, the proletariat will find itself com-

⁷ See note 5.

pelled to go ever further, until finally all capital, all agriculture, all industry, all transport, and all exchange are in the hands of the State. All the above measures inevitably lead in that direction, and will be practicable enough as they are proceeded with. Then, if all capital production, and exchange are in the hands of the State, private property has not so much been abolished as been enabled to disappear of itself, money has become superfluous, production so far changed, and mankind so far altered that all remaining forms of the old society can also be permitted to perish.

19. Will this revolution be confined to a single country?

No. Large-scale industry, by creating the world market, has already brought the people of every country (and particularly of civilised countries), into such close touch with each other, that each separate nation is affected by events in any other one. It has further so far levelled social development, that in every country the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat has become the most important matter of the day. The communist revolution will not merely be national: it will take place simultaneously in every civilised country, that is, in England, France, America, and Germany, at least. It will develop in each country more quickly or more slowly according as that country possesses a more highly developed industry, greater wealth, or more perfected productive forces. It will, therefore, probably come about most slowly in Germany, most quickly and easily in England. It will at once have an important reaction on other countries, altering or accelerating their development. It is a universal revolution, and must have, therefore, a universal sphere of action.

20. What will be the consequences of the abolition of private property?

First, that as society will have taken out of the hands of the capitalists the entire forces of production and means of transport, administering them according to the actual needs of the whole community, all the evils which are at present inseparably bound up with large-scale industries will be done away with. Crises will end; an increased production, which under the existing order would mean overproduction — a very fruitful source of misery — will then not even be adequate, and would need to be increased yet more, since production over and above the immediate necessities of society would assure the satisfaction of the needs of all, and also beget new necessities and the means of satisfying them. It will be the condition and occasion of further stages of progress, and it will bring about their accomplishment without, as hitherto, society having to go through a period of disorder and disorganisation at every new stage. Large-scale industry, freed from the

The Red Flag

The "Butcher's Apron", tricolours galore,
Flags of present might: paltry passing
things!

Our flag, Flag of the proles and of the poor
Denotes long war and rooted will to fling
Red truth against encumb'ring lies; to try
Our strength — until humankind wins
Liberty.

S.M.

shackles of private ownership, will develop to an extent compared to which its present development will appear as feeble as does the stage of manufacture compared to large-scale industry of today. Agriculture, too, which is hampered by private ownership and the accompanying parcelling-out of land, will be improved and developed by the scientific methods already discovered.

Society will be able to regulate production so that the needs of all its members will be satisfied. The division of society into classes with antagonistic interests ceases automatically. The existence of classes has resulted from the division of labour, and the division of labour to which we are accustomed today will come to an end. For in order to raise industrial and agricultural production to the standards already suggested, mechanical and chemical forces will not of themselves be sufficient. The capacities of the men setting those forces in motion will have to be developed in corresponding measure. Just as the peasants and artisans of the past century altered their whole mode of life, and became quite other men, when they were forced into large-scale industry, so will the common pursuit of production throughout the whole of society, and the new developments of production following thereon, necessitate — and produce — a new type of man. Today men are confined to a single branch of production; they are forced to develop one talent at the expense of all the rest, and know only one process, or even one part of a process. But an industrial commonwealth presupposes men whose talents have been developed on all sides, men who will have an intelligent knowledge of the whole business of production. That division of labour which now makes one man a peasant, another a shoemaker a third a mechanic, and a fourth a stock-market speculator, will entirely vanish. Education will aim at enabling young people to go through the whole system of production, so that they can be transferred from one branch to another according as the necessities of the community demand. A communist society will in this way give far more scope for individual development than does the capitalist society of today.

And along with antagonistic classes, the opposition between town and country will disappear⁸. The pursuit of agriculture and industry by the same men, instead of by two different classes, is already a necessary condition of communistic association. The dispersion of the agricultural population, side by side with the growth of the industrial population in the great towns, is the result of an incompletely developed stage both of agriculture and industry, and is, moreover, an obstacle in the way of further development.

The association of all the members of society in a regulated system of production; the increase of production to an extent at which the needs of all will be satisfied; the cessation of a state of things in which the needs of one are satisfied at the cost of another; the abolition of classes; and the full development of the abilities of all the members of society by the abolition of the present division of labour, by industrial education, and by the blending together of town and country — these will be the results of the abolition of private property.

21. — How will Communism affect the family?

It will make the relation of the two sexes a purely private relation, which concerns the interested parties and them alone. It can do this because it puts an end to private property and cares for all children alike, thereby doing away with two fundamental characteristics of present-day marriage — the dependence of the

8. The abolition of the opposition between town and country was an idea very widespread among radicals of many sorts at the time. The Garden Cities in Britain were a bourgeois-reformist attempt to put it into practice. For the city conditions that provoked this idea, see Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1845*.

wife on the husband, and of the children on their parents. This is the answer to the shrieks of those highly moral philistines who rave about "community of wives." Community of wives is a relation pertaining to bourgeois society, and exists today, in prostitution. Prostitution, however, is based on private property, and falls with it. Communism, therefore, so far from introducing community of wives, abolishes it

22. How will Communism affect existing nationalities

"National differences and antagonisms between peoples," says the Communist Manifesto, "already tend to disappear owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, the freedom of commerce, the world market, and uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto. The supremacy of the proletariat will cause them to disappear still more quickly. United action, on the part of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the primary conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat. In proportion as the exploitation of one individual by another is put an end to, the exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to. In proportion as the antagonism between classes within the nation vanishes, the hostility of one nation to another will come to an end."

23. How will Communism affect existing religions?

"Does it require deep intuition," asks the Communist Manifesto, "to comprehend the fact that man's ideas, views, conceptions, in a word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life? When the ancient world was in its last throes, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the 18th century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience merely proclaimed the sway of free competition in the realm of knowledge..... The Communist revolution is the most radical rupture with traditional property relations; no wonder, then, that its development involves the most radical rupture with traditional ideas."

24. — How do Communists differ from Socialists?*

The so-called Socialists are divided into three classes.

The first class consists of hangers-on of that feudal and patriarchal society which has already been largely abolished by the development of large-scale industry, and the consequent creation of bourgeois society. This class, pointing to the evils of existing society, declared that the feudal, patriarchal form of society must be re-established, since it was free from these particular

9. In the 1890 preface to an edition of the Communist Manifesto, Engels wrote: "When it appeared we could not have called it a Socialist Manifesto. In 1847 two kinds of people were considered Socialists. On the one hand were the adherents of the various Utopian systems, notably the Owenites in England and the Fourierists in France, both of whom at that date had already dwindled to mere sects gradually dying out. On the other hand, the manifold types of social quacks who wanted to eliminate social abuses through their various universal panaceas and all kinds of patchwork, without hurting capital and profit in the least. In both cases, people who stood outside the labour movement and who looked for support rather to the 'educated' classes. The section of the working class, however, which demand a radical reconstruction of society... then called itself Communist. It was still a rough-hewn, only instinctive, and frequently somewhat crude communism. Yet... since we were very decidedly of the opinion as early as then that 'the emancipation of the workers must be the act of the working class itself', we could have no hesitations as to which of the two names we should choose".

evils. All their proposals are aimed, directly or indirectly, at this object. And these reactionary "Socialists," in spite of the hot tears they shed over the misery of the proletariat, will always be energetically opposed by the Communists, because (1) they strive for something absolutely impossible; (2) they seek to establish the sovereignty of the aristocracy and the guildmasters, with all their retinue of absolute or feudal kings, officials, soldiers and priests — a form of society which was certainly free from the evils of present-day society, but had just as many evils of its own, and held out, moreover, much less hope for the proletariat; and (3) because they reveal themselves in their true colours every time the proletariat revolts, by immediately uniting themselves with the bourgeoisie against the forces of revolution.

The second class of so-called Socialists consists of hangers-on of present-day society, who, being fully alive to the evils of that society, are full of fears for its stability. Accordingly they try to strengthen and maintain the existing form of society by getting rid of its more obvious evils. Their watchword is Reform. And these bourgeois Socialists will also be constantly opposed by the Communists, since they seek to defend the society which the Communists aim at overthrowing.

The third class consists of "democratic" Socialists; who, along with the Communists, are in favour of certain of the reforms outlined in the answer to Question 18; but regard these, not as means of transition to Communism, but as measures adequate in themselves to abolish poverty and misery, and all the other evils of present-day society. These democratic Socialists are either proletarians who have not yet realised the conditions necessary to the emancipation of their class, or they are members of the petty bourgeoisie, a class which, up to a certain point, has the same interests as the proletariat. The Communists will therefore avail themselves of the assistance of this class for the moment, but will not lose sight of the difference of interests which will prevent that assistance being depended upon when the time for action comes.

25. — Where do the Communists stand in relation to the other political parties of our times?

The relationship varies in different countries. In England, France and Belgium, where the bourgeoisie is in power, the Communists have many interests in common with the various democratic parties — with the Chartists in England, for instance, who stand much nearer to the Communists than do the democratic petty bourgeoisie, the so-called Radicals.

In America, where democratic conditions already exist, the Communists will work with the party which applies these conditions against the bourgeoisie — i.e., with the Land Reformers.

In Switzerland there are various Radical parties, some of which have progressed further than others, and with which, although they are still somewhat confused in their aims and interests, the Communists can temporarily ally themselves.

Finally, in Germany, a determined struggle between the bourgeoisie and the absolute monarchies is imminent; and since the Communists cannot make their reckoning with the bourgeoisie until the latter has attained to power, it is thus to their interest to assist the bourgeoisie in the struggle in order to attack them again as soon as possible on their own account. The Communists will therefore side with the Liberals in opposition to the Government, remembering, however, that the only advantages which the victory of the bourgeoisie would win for the proletariat are (1) greater freedom of discussion and propaganda, thus facilitating the organisation of the proletariat, and (2) the fact that on the day when absolutism fails, the struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat takes front place. From that day onwards the policy of the Communists will be the same as in the countries where the bourgeoisie already rules.



There are more wage-workers today in South Korea alone than there were in the whole world in 1848

The Communist Manifesto after Stalinism

By Sean Matgamna

O, sing me not that song again
My lovely Nora, dear,
The strong, the proud defiant strain
It breaks my heart to hear.

*Charles J Kickham**

One hundred and fifty years on from the Communist Manifesto, the spectre that haunts the collective imagination of Europe and the world is not the looming prospect of communism, but the experience of “communism”, that is, Stalinism. Ours is an age of disillusionment. We live in the time after the fall of “utopia”. Not only is “utopia” discredited and abandoned, so also — and the two are connected — is much that went to make up the old liberal commitment to social progress and belief in general social and human improbability, and even “perfectibility”.

* Charles J Kickham, poet and novelist, was a one-time Head Centre (president) of the Fenian Irish Republican Brotherhood who lived on into a time of venal parliamentary politics after hope for an all-transforming Republican revolution had receded.

Yet this social and political timidity of thought, hope, programme, and action, this collective abandonment of hope for anything more than individual ‘prosperity’, is twinned paradoxically in our world with dazzling scientific and technological realities and possibilities. It exists in a world in which humankind has greater technical mastery over nature — including its own physiology — than the old social optimists could imagine even in their highest flights of creative extrapolation and fantasy.

We are living through a tremendous revolution in artificial intelligence and in communications — communications which can bring immense quantities of information, sorted, sifted and collated, quickly to hand, and which might make possible continuous political democracy, on the model of an old city state or a local soviet in 1917, for vast or dispersed populations. We are in the comparatively early stages of a revolution in biological science and therefore in medicine and healing. Even death can now really be pushed back, and back. Marx and Engels, writing about the spectre of communism 150 years ago, and also Lenin and Trotsky, organising the October Revolution in Petrograd 80 years ago, would be as astonished as they would be elated at what is real now

or almost immediately possible for humankind.

The prevailing "anti-utopianism" is in stark contrast with the once widespread assumption that humankind, using science and technology, would move itself and its society upwards and upwards, from lower to higher, and higher, levels of literacy, education, self-awareness, freedom, and control of its own society. With the old common idea — it was one of the root notions of the theorists of bourgeois democracy, when they were serious about it — that major social inequality would radically diminish, or even disappear. With the old assumption that despite its frequent and known misuse, science offered the benign hope that it could help create a society altogether better on every level of culture and civilisation. That the general level of society and humanity would rise.

Not so long ago the technical and scientific wonders we have now would have generated renewed hope and fantasies and "utopias", and buttressed and strengthened and vindicated the old socialist idea, whose premises and prerequisites — abundance of the basics of life for everyone — are proved to have been no utopia. But "utopia" is dead... Now, though people take for given an endlessly coruscating fountain of scientific wonders, around which economic and social life is organised and reorganised, they also take as given and settled the present social relations and structures of capitalist society. There is to be no human breakthrough into a society that is qualitatively better. There must be no more striving for something proved to be unrealisable: that is the way to pull down the pillars of the Temple on our heads. There is not, nor can there be, "perfectibility" of society or humankind. That is the lesson of the 20th century. The future is seen as a continuing, perhaps intensifying, *now*: and the negative things in our society will probably continue and perhaps get worse.

Where once existing positive things were emphasised and extrapolated from, and generalised and imaginatively supplemented with, things of their own sort to build hopeful and positive perspectives and programmes which elaborated ideas about better social ways and means and social structures, now a whole large culture of books, movies, TV, comic books, extrapolate from the *negative* things in capitalist society and in the experience of Stalinism and fascism, and tease out from them general "anti-utopian" ideas, and fictions embodying nightmare scenarios.

The contrast is stark. Ours is a world where "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living". The typical futuristic romances at the end of the 20th century are despairing, space-Gothic, horror stories, purveying waking nightmares about humankind's future.

The science-fiction nightmares — today's mass-consumption anti-utopias — tell the story, as the old utopian and visionary exhortations about the benefits of scientific and technological progress told the earlier story of widespread social optimism.

Take the splendid film *Blade Runner*, with its double parable in the form of a creation story set not in the Garden of Eden, not in an "utopian" paradise, but in the ecological hell of a ruined Earth. Humankind is God the creator to the androids, who have an essentially human consciousness, a short life, and no power to shape their destiny. Human beings are to them what the forces of recalcitrant nature have been to human beings throughout our history. They fear death, seek understanding, and want contact with their Maker. But humanity, the life-creating God to the androids, has turned the whole Earth into a poisoned, dying world. The God has lost his own Heaven; seeking Heaven, he has found Hell. He is Lucifer, Angel and Devil: he has cast himself out of Paradise, and has himself destroyed that Paradise; he is a tormenting, exterminating nemesis to his human-like creations. He has difficulty distinguishing his creatures from himself.

When one of the outlaw androids, on the run from the

exterminator, literally meets his maker, the scientist who designed robots like himself, he rips his head off — as humankind has, seemingly, ripped its own head off, and the Earth's too. Humanity, having become God, is less than human.

Or take another film, *Soylent Green*, in which Edward G. Robinson — an actor who once visited Trotsky in Mexico — plays an old man living in a Malthusian nightmare of a ruined world where green grass and free animals exist only on film records, and the teeming masses of humans live on food made out of dead human beings, in a social system made possible only by the arbitrary rule of all-powerful, socially-responsible policemen, like the hero, played by Charlton Heston. Or Judge Dredd, the vastly popular comic depicting the rule of robot-like but human judges with the power of instant death or life over the citizens of another ruined world.

Many other examples could be cited. To posterity ours will be an age of miracles and wonders which has somehow nevertheless lost hope of social "miracles", which dreads the future and fears its own creation — an age in which Promethean mankind came to see itself as its own Frankensteinian monster. In our late 20th century world, the future holds only horror and disaster. The paths of scientific glory lead only to nightmare and destruction, creating a world like the abattoir and the crypt. Progress leads to regress; increasing knowledge to greater terror of the unknown; greater technical possibilities of human control, to a world growing more and more beyond human control. Human control over nature leads not to human advancement, but to the ruination of nature. Humankind can only foul its own nest. An earlier age would have looked for the source of the curse, the hidden sin, and the search might lead eventually to a remedy; we do not even do that. Technical genius; social idiocy.

Leon Trotsky once tried to explain the ancient Greek tragedies as at root an expression of the terrible contradiction and tension between on the one side their free-flowing, unencumbered flights of creative imagination, and on the other side the primitive level of their technology and social productivity — what they could actually do with their ideas. Late 20th century capitalist society's tragedy — it is in the first place a tragedy of the labour movement — is the very inverse of that, its mirror-image: tremendous technology and social productivity enable us to casually do now things that were even a few decades ago conceivable only as products of supernatural intervention, as magic and miracles. Yet, even so, we suffer now from a general paralysis of social and political imagination and vision: indeed from a mass aversion to it — strong as if produced by aversion therapy — that is akin to superstition. An age of disillusionment...

None of this, in its objective causes, is at all mysterious. At the root of the loss of hope is the failure of socialism and communism, the logical social next step, extrapolating from and building on advanced capitalism, that seemed not only logical but desirable and possible to millions over so many decades. But it is not only that. It is also the failure of older prescriptions, or rather the realisation of something resembling them with unexpected results. It is — perhaps because of disappointment with old prescriptions for progress — the feeling of a social world of our own creation grown beyond our possibilities of control.

We fear atomic power, first as the Bomb and then also as nuclear fuel. We fear that the ecological system in which we live is falling into slow ruin. Third World slum conditions re-emerge in the world's most advanced cities, and all our notions of how to control our conditions seem to have failed.

Bourgeois democracy has not deepened, increasing its social dimension. On the contrary it has become shallower, more bureaucratised, and more discredited among large numbers of people. In Britain the bourgeoisie is in the process of hijacking the

Labour Party, built by the working class over one hundred years, and we are learning that even long electoral interest and electoral effort may not affect what happens very much. Bureaucratised politics becomes a cynical profession, overlapping with show-business and advertising.

The growth of international corporations, as powerful as medium-size nation-states, has moved much power of decision and regulation out of the sphere of governments, that is, of existing democracy. Existing governments are not as powerless as, for political reasons, they sometimes pretend, but the trend is real. "Internationalism" is a means not for extending democracy beyond national limits, but for the emancipation of capitalist enterprise from possible electoral control.

The first step... is... to win the battle of democracy", said the Communist Manifesto. In many countries the working class has "won the battle of democracy" to the extent that it has the vote and wide civil liberties. Yet everywhere the working class is quiescent or in tow to capitalist political formations. In fact the working class has not won "the battle of democracy" as Marx, Engels, and the democrats of the day understood it in 1847-8 — social democracy. The forms of democracy have been turned against the substance. If outright failure has to be registered for the hopes released by the French Revolution, in which socialism too has its roots, then the first failure, the one that conditioned the rest, was not the failure of socialism and communism but the failure of democracy and the hopes vested in it.

Marx and Engels advocated battle against vested interests and against hereditary rights and privileges. In our day, the knocking-down of many such vested interests has, as the Manifesto put it, "left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'."

The working class fought for a free press. In Britain, the struggle for an unstamped (untaxed) press occupied militants and incipient socialists in a heroic struggle for many years. They believed that, like the truth, a free press would, by spreading education, enlightenment and reason, make the people free. They got an unstamped press. After a while they got Rothermere. Today we have the Murdoch press. We have television most of which is commerce-driven "wallpaper for the mind" and "chewing gum for the eyes".

A vast destruction of the old apparatus of sexual repression has brought to society, to the collective, all-pervasive commercialised sexual images like sugar in processed foods.

The working-class movement itself generated its own petty-bourgeois extension, the "labour lieutenants of capital", tied to the system and tying the working class to it.

Of course, *Marxists* never subscribed to the older naive liberal view of steady and inevitable improvement. We have had a darker, less complaisant, less unconditionally optimistic, view of society as it exists, seeing it as a society built on capitalist class exploitation, rent and riven by class struggle — the successor to earlier societies where the class struggle had, in the words of the Communist Manifesto, led to either "a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or the common ruin of the contending classes". We saw social reality not as inevitably progressing but as a continuous struggle between the forces of socialism and those of barbarism. But we had hope and the will to fight for the progressive outcome by way of building labour movements and converting labour movements to socialist ideas: we conceived of the class struggle as *also*, and all-shapingly, *a battle of ideas*.

Yet today, Marxism too is in eclipse, unable to offer the

creative, active, conditionally optimistic alternative to the predominant social pessimism that it once counterposed to the sleepwalking bourgeois optimism.

Nobody but a fatuous and naive person could ever imagine that a world could be remade — a powerful and immensely flexible and dynamic and adaptable ruling class overthrown — a subordinate class organised and educated in adequate conceptions of the needs of its struggle — without battles and setbacks, massacres and political masquerades, treacheries and usurpations. As Marx put it: "Proletarian revolutions criticise themselves constantly... come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh... seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again, more gigantic, before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims..." Something has 'interfered' with and derailed this natural process.

The central experience in our growth of hopelessness is, it seems to me, the experience of the Russian Revolution. The problem is not just that it eventually failed, but the peculiarities of its failure, and the horrors of its decades-long "posthumous existence" in the form of Stalinism, an immense empire of systematic lies into which generations fed their hopes and their credulities. Tens of millions of people thought the future could be shaped and human life be self-controlling. Limited early success, 1917 and after, bred confidence... and credulity. And then they found that everything had been 'switched'. They had been tricked by faith and fate. Socialism? If this was socialism, then capitalism was better. Horrified awareness overtook at different turning points a succession of political generations — the Moscow Trials, the Stalin-Hitler Pact, the annexation of Eastern Europe, Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, Cambodia 1975, Afghanistan 1979. And Tiananmen Square, 1989... Then the Stalinist system collapsed, leaving nobody with the possibility of illusion. It is appropriate that the ex-"believers" are among the most prostrate conservatives. They are left mouthing the idea that all

"utopias", and all politics concerned with such things, are dangerous tales told by idiots — ultimately and incurably treacherous.

The poisonous reality of Stalinism and the vapours unleashed by the collapse of that system taint our world, paralysing wills and intellects.

Yet none of the problems which generate despair today seem so daunting and insurmountable if only we believe in, and can get enough people to believe in, or believe again in, the possibility that old socialist goals can now be realised. To make firm the intellectual basis for regenerating a powerful will for socialism, we have to understand what has happened to the idea of communism in the last 80 years — that is, we must understand Bolshevism and Stalinism.

II

In 1917 the Bolsheviks proved in practice that the working class could take power. They vindicated the Communist Manifesto. The Stalinist counter-revolution against Bolshevism vindicated the ideas of the Communist Manifesto too, but negatively. If Stalinism, official "communism", had anything to do with socialism, then it was a historical regression to ideas that the Communist Manifesto polemicised against, the idea of the "utopian socialists" who believed in going into the wildernesses of America to create socialist colonies which would then demonstrate their superiority in competition with advanced capitalism. The Stalinist drive

"Marxists never subscribed to the naive liberal view of steady and inevitable improvement. We saw not inevitable progress but struggle between the forces of socialism and barbarism"

to create closed-off societies which would compete with capitalism, and from backwardness come to outstrip and surpass it, was a gigantic exercise in utopian colony-building. Although in fact it had nothing to do with socialism, except by negation, it did claim to be socialism, it has had much to do with how socialism is seen now, and it did relate to capitalism by counterposing "force of example to pave the way for the new social Gospel" and by resolving "future history... into the propaganda and the practical carrying out of their social plans".

That was not the approach of the Bolsheviks. They understood what Marx had written in the Manifesto: "The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas and principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes". Or again: "The working class have no ready-made utopias to introduce par decret du peuple. They know that in order to work out their own emancipation, and along with it that higher form to which present society is irresistibly tending by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historical processes, transforming circumstances and men. They have no ideals to realise, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant".

The Bolsheviks did not believe that communism could be created in backwardness and underdevelopment such as that which prevailed in the old Empire of the Tsars. They believed, with Marx, that communism had to be built on the foundations, structures, and social potentialities that the most advanced capitalism had created. They knew that "the elements of the new society" were not adequately developed in Russia.

The Bolshevik-led Soviets had state power, but they understood that there were proper limits to the surgical and engineering power of the state in relation to society, that is, the population; their "reshaping reason", armed with the state power, could only reorganise, modify, and set on lines of development. The obdurate reality of society could not be taken by storm, like political power, but only transformed over time, in the interests of the wage-workers and poor farmers. Society could not be reduced to a tabula rasa, a blank slate on which anything could be written. It could not at will be recreated from the ground up. The immense concentration of state power characteristic of Stalinism would have seemed to those who formed the government in October 1917 to be a throwback to the Pharaohs' Egypt or pre-Spanish Peru.

The Russian working class was a comparatively small minority in a vast land inhabited by peasants scarcely two generations out of serfdom, a country which was, taken in isolation, one hundred and more years behind advanced Europe. The Bolsheviks would have dismissed as impossible and ridiculous the idea that the workers would or could, having seized power, then begin to construct, in parallel to capitalism, a closed-off society on communist principles. They understood from what they knew of history that in those conditions communist principles could not for long govern society.

They would have branded an attempt at "socialism in one country" as a regression from Marxism to the socialism of the epoch before the Communist Manifesto — to the socialism of Robert Owen and Etienne Cabet, who, following imaginary maps of history, as

far from social reality as the chart which guided Christopher Columbus, so he thought, to the Indies, built doomed primitive-communist colonies in the backwoods of America.

By the middle of the 20th century the predominant model of communism would become a state-imposed forced march for industrial growth and development, in which an authoritarian or totalitarian state held the proletariat and the whole people in an iron grip of terror and exploitation — essentially playing the role which in Marxist theory the bourgeoisie had embodied in history. This model was supposedly rooted in the 1917 Revolution. But it had nothing to do with the workers' revolution of 1917.

It was not the Bolsheviks' policy, but the policy of those who drowned the Bolshevik revolution in blood, stole its identity and its symbols, and buried it in a falsely marked grave. Before the rise of Stalin's USSR, no Marxist could have put forward such a policy without hearing the voice of the founders of Marxism insisting that in such conditions, no matter what the rulers' intentions were, "all the old crap" of class society — in the first place, class differentiation and class exploitation — would inevitably return.

Lenin saw the Russian Revolution as part of a larger world, the key parts of which were ripe for communism, and in unity with which Russia would "construct the socialist order". He saw the working-class seizure of power in Russia as a pioneering "moment" in an unfolding revolution of the working class in western Europe,

where capitalism had done its progressive historical work. As Rosa Luxemburg, a fervent supporter and loyal though severe critic of Bolshevik rule, put it: the Bolsheviks had taken their stand on international socialism.

But then a gap between intentions and expectations on one side, and uncontrollable reality on the other, opened wide under the feet of the Bolshevik regime, first shook it out of recognisable shape and then pulled it down. Other wills and

other intentions and strivings cut across, and would ultimately nullify, their will, their hopes, their programme — and with it, international communism for the rest of the 20th century.

The working-class revolution in Russia, to which nothing in the way of communism was possible without the economic and social collaboration of advanced Europe, remained isolated. The revolutions which the Bolsheviks had expected did erupt in Europe, beginning with Germany in November 1918. Soviets appeared all across central Europe, and even as far from Russia as rural Ireland. In 1919 Soviet regimes ruled for a few weeks in Bavaria and Hungary, before being crushed by bourgeois forces.

The strength of the capitalists in some countries, and the strength and loyalty of their "labour lieutenants" in others, isolated the Russian revolution. Like the lone first soldier over the parapet into the enemy fortress who finds that no-one else has got through, the Bolsheviks were doomed.

The Bolsheviks, who had will and determination in greater than common measure, did not submit passively. Historical fatalism was not their tradition. They had had great hopes. But they had never believed that the bourgeoisie would fall like a stone tumbling into an abyss. It would have to be cut down in battle — prolonged battle, so it now seemed. They believed that the war had radically dislocated world capitalism. It had achieved no more than a temporary stability in 1920-21. The objective possibility of European revolution remained. The weakness lay in the "subjective factor", in the state of the labour movements. The victorious Russian revolutionaries would reorganise the workers' movement in the West and strike down the reformists who had been the shield



None of the evils of capitalism have been abolished or excused by the collapse of Stalinism

(and, in Germany, also the sword) of the bourgeoisie. Thus, in a paradoxical inversion, they would first rescue the west European revolution, so that then the west European revolution could rescue them. A new workers' International was set up in Moscow in March 1919.

Publicly admitting that workers' rule in Russia was doomed in the medium term unless the workers took power in the West, the Bolsheviks held on. They did so by way of tremendous exertion against the "other wills" operating inside and outside Russia. Against all their intentions they thereby extemporised a first draft of what the Stalinist counter-revolution, overthrowing the workers' rule, would develop into an elaborate map of history as fantastic as any drawn up by the mid-19th century utopian colony-builders.

Full-scale civil war erupted in mid-1918. It would last for two and a half years. The Reds successfully contested with the counter-revolutionary "Whites" for the allegiance of the peasants in the countryside. Looking back at the revolution through the thick, opaque, bloodily-smeared lens of the Stalinist regime, later commentators have imagined a tyrannical and bureaucratic "Stalinist" state machine inexorably working its tank-like power in a drive to create a totalitarian state. But that is not what happened. That is to read backwards into the history things that did not and could not exist then, to mix up the pages of two different calendars, that of the workers' revolution and that of the Stalinist counter-revolution.

At the beginning, after October 1917, the working-class Soviets firmly controlled only the cities and the major towns. In July 1918 their erstwhile partners in government, the Left SRs, took up arms against the Bolsheviks — they shot and wounded Lenin — because they could not agree to accept peace with Germany on terms dictated from strength by the Kaiser. In order to create the state that existed by say 1921, at the end of the civil war, the Soviets and their Bolshevik leaders had to win the leadership and support of the mass of the people, the peasantry, in a fierce, free competition of ideas, leadership and arms with their bourgeois-landlord opponents, led by Tsarist generals like Kolchak, Denikin, and Wrangel. The "Whites" demagogically appealed to one sort

of democracy (the Constituent Assembly) against the Soviets. The workers and peasants chose Soviet power against the bourgeoisie and the landlords.

Later in the century, Stalinist parties calling themselves "communist" would take power as already-mighty military-bureaucratic machines, in China for example. The Bolshevik party was not like that. The party that led the revolution was unruly, argumentative, and democratic. As late as 1918 its central administration had a staff of no more than a dozen, for a party with hundreds of thousands of members. The central party files were hurried jottings carried by the secretary, Sverdlov, in his jacket pockets. Only in the civil war and after did the party acquire a strong apparatus.

If the Bolsheviks had not won the competition for the minds and assent of the rural people, they could not have won the armed contest with the White armies and their foreign promoters, sponsors and allies.

To civil war was added foreign intervention by the armed forces of no fewer than 14 states. The seriousness of the foreign assaults on the Soviet government varied. They never became a full-scale, coordinated international anti-Bolshevik crusade, but they encouraged the internal armed opposition, fuelling it with hope and material aid.

In the course of the civil war much changed, including — and this is our central concern here — many of the defining ideas of communism. The exigencies of the civil war and the wars of intervention determined what the Bolsheviks did. Essentially, what was overridden was their democratic-socialist, Soviet-socialist programme. Even the highest point reached by Russian capitalism before 1917 had not made the country ripe for socialism; now the civil war wreaked great destruction, pushing Russia backwards even from what seemed possible in 1917. The Soviets had to organise an immense army for self-defence, subordinating all society and industry to the struggle to survive and prevail. A vast bureaucratic administration of society grew up around the maintenance of the Red Army. The Bolsheviks felt obliged to suppress, in so far as they could, the operation of markets, and to substitute a barracks

communism-of-backwardness, in which the produce of the peasants was simply seized in order to feed the towns and the armies. This was “war communism”.

The regime still had mass popular backing. Throughout the civil war the peasants continued to support the revolutionary government — not without dissatisfaction, bitterness and episodes of militant resistance, to be sure — in the interests of winning the war against the White and foreign armies whose victory would have brought back the landowners to lord it over them once more. They supported the “Bolsheviks” who gave them the land while disliking the armed “Communist” requisitioners of their grain.

The working class itself changed. Much of industry seized up. The revolutionary workers had to staff the new army and the state machine on which survival came to depend. Very soon, it was not in fact the state “of the Paris Commune type” which Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades had aimed to create in 1917 — free, easy-going self-administration, with minimal bureaucracy — but a heavily bureaucratized state, increasingly modelled on and intertwined with the command structures inseparable from the sort of army they felt obliged to create.

The Soviets, the organs of popular self-rule, also changed. Most of the Menshevik and Social-Revolutionary participants in the 1917 Soviets — the bourgeois-democratic opposition to the Bolshevik-led majority in the days of the October Revolution — actively or passively supported the anti-Soviet armies fighting the Bolshevik government, and therefore left the Soviets or were driven out. The Soviets, like so much of society, had their life and vitality drained out of them and into the work of the army and of organising a state which administered backwardness and, now, chaos and economic regression.

The Bolsheviks never thought that Russia could be communist on its own; but now, out of civil war, something very alien to communism began to develop in the workers' state. It was shaped not by Bolshevik intentions, but by the exigencies of a long and terrible series of wars. Defending the right of free trade unions to help the workers fight that state and resist its giant pressure at the 10th congress of the Communist Party in early 1921, Lenin himself called it a “workers' state with bureaucratic deformations”. 18 months later, the dying Lenin used a striking metaphor for the situation of the Bolshevik party at the head of the state: it was like driving a car in which the wheels did not respond to the steering.

The Bolsheviks undertook now not to “construct the socialist order”, as Lenin had promised on 25 October 1917, with the perspective of international working-class revolution in mind, but to survive in power. The ruling party would defend and serve the working class, and develop the backward territory over which they ruled, until working-class revolution in the West would come to their aid and open up better options. The fate of the defeated Communards of 1871, the massacres of communist workers in Germany and Hungary, and the massacres and pogroms unleashed by their own opponents — in the Ukraine, especially, terrible slaughter of Jews was unleashed by the White armies — kept the Bolsheviks in mind of the alternative.

In 1921, three and a half years after the October revolution, a “New Economic Policy” put paid to war communism — around which some Bolsheviks had woven utopian fantasies that Russia could go from this primitive command-at-gunpoint economy to communism. Markets — in which self-interest and the drive for the accumulation of wealth would motivate farmers and merchants — were restored, under the ultimate control of the workers' state, which, as Lenin insisted, would hold “the commanding heights” of the economy for the working class. Socialism and communism would, Lenin of course believed, have been better; but the market was better than the primitive communism of the

civil-war economy, because more appropriate to the level of development. Essentially this was a limited bourgeois counter-revolution, controlled and regulated by the workers' state and subjected to its purposes. To control the transition from war communism and to ensure the Bolshevik regime's ability to control events, all other parties, even those such as Julius Martov's Menshevik Internationalists who had never risen against the Soviet government or supported those who had, were banned. Soviet government became in fact what it had so far not been either in fact or in theory — a one-party monopoly regime. Theory would catch up. As a logical and necessary corollary of the ban on every other party, the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (March 1921) banned factions within the ruling party.

This was a radical departure. In the course of 1917 and the civil war there had been many factions in the Bolshevik party. For example, Bukharin set up a faction in 1918 to oppose Lenin's policy of accepting a forced peace at the hands of Germany, and in the course of the internal party fight the Bukharin faction published a daily factional paper.

The series of emergency measures in 1921 was intended to be a temporary response to an extraordinarily tense and dangerous situation, not the establishment of new norms. But in the sequel, even when in practice the ruling party was intensely faction-ridden, the emergency measures came to be the theoretical norm. And not only for Russia, but also for the non-Russian Communist Parties.

In the first year of the Russian Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg had urged that measures taken by the Bolshevik-Soviet regime in response to its perilous situation should not be erected into norms, either for the Bolsheviks or for their international supporters. Emergency and hard exigency do not make good general theory, and should not be used to set universal norms. Necessity should not be made virtue, she argued, adding her conviction that Lenin and Trotsky would be the last to think that enforced Bolshevik practice, in a backward country where the proletariat was a minority inhabiting urban atolls in an agrarian sea, should be made the ideal rule of international communism. In fact, however, that is what happened. Communist theory followed where Russian practice pioneered.

Under the regime of the New Economic Policy, which would last from 1921 until Stalin created the command economy at the end of the 1920s, occurred the struggle that would shape, reshape, and falsify communism for the rest of the 20th century. Under the NEP layers of the ruling party — which in relation to society was already a bureaucracy, based on a much shrunken remnant of the old working class — crystallised into a privileged elite which gropingly developed an awareness of its own distinct interests of its own and slowly began to evolve a new world outlook within a reshaped “Marxism” that became scholastic ideology.

Something akin to this “bureaucrats' Marxism” had developed in the early years of Russian Marxism — “Legal Marxism”. Wanting to break with the old, heroic and self-sacrificing, tradition of “Narodnik” (populist) resistance to Tsarism in the name of the people and of a rather ill-defined utopian socialism, in the 1890s layers of the intelligentsia became “Marxists”. But they came to stress only that part of Marxism which said that capitalism was progressive and unavoidable — thus licensing themselves to make peace with developing Russian capitalism. They became liberals... The working-class revolutionary Marxists — future Mensheviks and Bolsheviks alike — agreed that capitalism was inevitable and progressive in Russia, but combatted this one-sided Marxism.

Now the bureaucrats took over “Marxism” and gutted it. Specifically, what they did was take all of it that was negative and



Blade Runner: "Humanity, having become God, is less than human"

critical of bourgeois society and bourgeois democracy, and cut off the positive working-class alternative: working-class democracy, expanded liberties, and working-class control. In their place they put their own bureaucratic anti-working-class alternative: totalitarian state power, miscalled socialism. Here they followed the pattern of the reactionary or feudal socialists criticised in the Communist Manifesto: "incisive criticism, striking the bourgeoisie to the very heart's core... In political practice they join in all coercive measures against the working class".

In their fight against "Legal Marxism", the revolutionary working-class Marxists of around 1900 had been able to base themselves on a rising working-class movement. Those who resisted Stalinist "Marxism" had no such base. In 1924 the bureaucracy implicitly broke with the Bolshevik programme of international revolution on which, according to the old ideas, the survival of the Russian revolution depended. Stalin proclaimed "Socialism in One Country", insisting that it was "Marxism" and "Leninism", and that the old ideas were "Trotskyist" heresy. "Trotskyism" would be the hood which the counter-revolution put over the head of Bolshevism as it was led, bound hand and foot and gagged, to the guillotine; for this new gutted "Marxism"

was armed with state power. The Stalinist counter-revolution disguised itself as Bolshevism triumphant.

Ban on factions or no ban, all the political struggles, to the end of the 1920s, including the class struggles and incipient class struggles, took place within the political monopoly of the Bolshevik party. Stalin's counter-revolutionary struggle against Leninism took place in name of Lenin; against equality, in the name of future communist egalitarianism; against Marx, in the name of Marxism; against any form of democracy, in the name of a higher democracy; his enslavement of the workers and the rural population in the name of working-class rule; his fight against communism, in the name of communism.

Stalinism was, as someone aptly said, the dictatorship of the lie. The power of that dictatorship to sap and confuse and disorientate is still strong today. This is the spiritual legacy of Stalinism, shaping today's culture of social despair, pessimism, and disillusion in the same way as its physical legacy, the aftermath of Chernobyl and the sulphur-belching factories of Russia and East Germany, still spreads physical ill-health in much of Europe.

The bourgeoisie has retained and adapted the spiritual legacy of Stalinism — its equation of communism with tyranny — and

it has to be confronted, not only in terms of history, but of now.

III

Is capitalism vindicated by the disintegration of utopian “state socialism”? Not so. The Communist Manifesto contains one of the most profound and heartfelt paeans of praise ever written about capitalism: “It has been the first to show what man’s activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals”. Capitalism gave a tremendous boost to human capacity to change and control our environment and thus created the objective possibility of humanity rising above its “pre-history” out of the social jungle into a classless socialist society.

Marxists criticise the waste and irrationality and savage inhumanity of capitalism, but at the same time see capitalism as the necessary forerunner of socialism. That, not that capitalism is vindicated, is the proper conclusion from the experience of the Russian Revolution and of the society set up by its Stalinist gravediggers, who tried in their own way and for their own reasons to “by-pass” and “dispense with” capitalism.

Capitalism has not ceased to be irrational and inhuman, nor have market mechanisms ceased to be blind and wasteful just because of the Stalinist experiment in “state socialism”. Wage slavery and exploitation have not ceased to be at the heart and root of capitalism. *Millions of poor children die needlessly under this system every year.* In the United States, the richest capitalist country in the world, thousands of people sleep on the streets, or get a living only through the drug trade. As already noted, Third World slum conditions exist side by side with obscene opulence in its leading cities. In Latin America unemployment runs at 40% in many cities, workers’ living standards have sometimes been halved since the debt crisis broke in 1982, cocaine gangsters rule huge areas, and malnutrition and even starvation are widespread. That “utopian state socialism” failed to bypass capitalism and emerge as a historical alternative to it does not mean that socialism has ceased to be the answer to capitalism! Stalinism was an experience on the fringes of world capitalism, arising out of the defeat of a working class revolution, and stifling under its own contradictory bureaucratic regime. Stalinism was part of the pre-history humankind must grow beyond. So, still, is capitalism!

Does the experience of Stalinism show that only a free market economy can give a secure basis for democracy; that without it you get state control, and state control inevitably stifles democracy? No, it does not. Marxists do not want any sort of bureaucratic state, neither that of a country like the USA or Britain, where the bureaucratic state works in tandem with the bourgeoisie, nor that of the Stalinist systems where the bureaucracy was the sole master of society’s wealth.

We advocate a “semi-state” without a standing army, without an entrenched bureaucracy. The Bolsheviks wanted that, too. They could not create it because of the backwardness of the isolated USSR, but it would be entirely possible in a country like the USA, especially with modern technology. The idea that only the market system of the West can be the basis for democracy is the idea that only wage slavery for the masses together with the phenomenal concentration of wealth — and therefore power — at the top of society can be the basis of democracy! It is a prize example of the crazy logic satirised by George Orwell according to which war is peace and lies are truth. It has a lot in common with the Stalinist habit of asserting that black was white, truth was lies, bureaucratic tyranny was socialism.

Even such democracy as we have in the West owes its

existence to decades and centuries of struggle by the working class. Democracy in capitalism is limited, imperfect, and frequently not very stable. Mass self-rule by the producers, dominated neither by a bureaucratic state monopoly nor by the economic rule of the multimillionaires and their officials, is a better form of democracy. It is democracy worth the name. It is socialist democracy.

Finally: does the collapse of Communism vindicate the reformist “social democratic” model of socialism? Is there such a model of socialism?

Social democracy defined itself historically not against Stalinism but against Bolshevism. And the social democrats were wrong at every point against Bolshevism. They either supported their own bourgeoisie, even against the revolutionary communist workers, or temporised and hesitated and thus helped the bourgeoisie to win. It was the social democrats who rescued German capitalism in 1918 and thereby isolated the Russian Revolution. By betraying socialism or dithering in countries like Germany and Italy, the social democrats played the role of historic stepfather to Stalinism.

The Bolsheviks did not lead the workers to power believing socialism could be rooted in Russia; they led the Russian workers on ahead believing the European workers would follow. The socialist leaders in the West left them in the lurch, amidst the Russian backwardness. That was the root cause of the Stalinist counter-revolution. Whatever about this or that error made by the early Communist International, the international Bolshevik current

was entirely right against reformist social democracy. The reformists’ criticisms of Stalinism have often, of course, been correct. They have been right on the same questions bourgeois democrats have been right on. The disintegration of Stalinism cannot lead logically to the

conclusion that reformist social-democracy is the answer — unless we also accept that Stalinism was socialism, and that its collapse therefore shows us that capitalism is the best we can ever hope for.

Reformist social-democracy is not a different strategy for achieving socialism. Socialism is the replacement of wage-slavery and the capitalist system built on it by a different mainspring — free co-operative self-administering labour. What has that got to do with the achievements of social democratic reform? The fight for welfare-state reforms, and the defence of existing welfare state provision, is indeed necessary for socialists. But socialists cannot stop there. And today most social democrats — like the British Labour Party — do not even “start” there. Since the 1920s, social-democratic parties have abandoned even a verbal commitment to fighting for a socialist system defined as something radically different from capitalism. They aspire at most to modifying capitalism, with a few welfare measures. In the 1980s and ‘90s, social-democratic leaders in France, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Greece and Britain have become no better than pale-pink Thatcherites and Reaganites. The only model of socialism restored to its proper shape and colour by the disintegration of Stalinism and the open disavowal of socialism by the Stalinists is the only model of socialism that ever deserved the name — the fight to organise the working class as a clear conscious force, a class for itself, to break bourgeois state power and abolish wage slavery. Or, as the Communist Manifesto put it, “to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy... to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class... In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”.

Was Stalinism a 'third road'?

By Galia

Your analysis of "the political significance of the debate on the nature of Yeltsin's Russia and of the USSR" leads us to pose a number of questions.

In the introductory paragraph, you say that "the basic question is not that of a theoretical label for the Stalinist state. It is the question of where we stand in history, the question of knowing where we are in the historical processes of development of the working class and of capitalism". If we understand correctly, theoretical analysis is useful in your eyes only if it allows us to situate ourselves in the struggles we have to wage. If that is what you mean, it seems correct to us. But what you do mean by "Stalinist state"? All the states ruled by a Stalinist bureaucracy are certainly Stalinist states, but what social reality is there behind them? Is it the same in China, in Cambodia, in Eastern Europe, and in the USSR?

You then justly criticise the analysis made by the LCR of the events of the years 1989-91, in which it saw a "revolutionary upsurge", which led in its ranks, according to you, to a demoralisation leading it today to envisage abandoning "communist, revolutionary and Bolshevik" references.

Then, if we understand correctly, you attribute the analysis of Voix Ouvrière, then Lutte Ouvrière, to a sort of conservatism of thought, a fear to depart from the reasoning of the Union Communiste, which has become in recent years a "bureaucratic refusal" of discussion. If you are in agreement with refusing to see socialist workers' revolutions in China or in Yugoslavia, as the "Fourth Internationals" did, you, on the other hand, reject the idea that "the USSR remained a degenerated workers' state" and that "the East European states and China remained bourgeois states". You, for your part, never use these characterisations, speaking of the "Stalinist state" in the first paragraph, then "Stalinist regime" in the third, or "Stalinism and capitalism" in the fifth. The characterisation of "degenerated workers'" state for the USSR is false, according to you, apparently because "the bureaucracy has clearly shown itself to be a qualitatively more



solid formation than the caste described by Trotsky, which was very unstable and trapped between the USSR working class and Western imperialism"; and that of "bourgeois state" for Eastern Europe and China, because "the Stalinist bureaucracies had thrown out the bourgeoisie and created stasised structures following the model of the USSR". We deduce from your analysis the idea that the USSR, China and Eastern Europe were neither workers' states nor bourgeois states. But what were they exactly? You do not say clearly. Nor do you say what they are today.

For what you say about Russia today is that it is not a workers' state, and we agree with you in saying that "it is hard to see what is workers' about the state", since "there is no longer a planned economy... no longer more or less completely nationalised industry... no longer any monopoly of foreign trade". But you deduce from what has happened since 1989 in Russia the idea that long before then, and even in Trotsky's time, the USSR was already not a workers' state. And if we understand your analysis correctly, you believe that because we have not seen in recent years any "social counter-revolution", any "generalised confrontation which might indicate a transformation of a workers' state (even degenerated) into a capitalist state". That is why you put that counter-revolution back in the 1930s, which obliges you to add that "Trotsky was cautious in the 1930s". Why was he cautious? Although you pose the problem, you do not answer it, unless one should think that an answer to the question is provided by your own caution which made you wait "22 years before drawing theoretical conclusions". You indicate, in conclusion, that it is the "political and theoretical approach of Trotsky" which leads you to think that "the social counter-revolution in the USSR took place in 1927-36", without giving further explanations.

Perhaps we should find this explanation in the fact that "for a long time now, there has been no Bolshevik party, no Soviets, no communist working-class organisation of any power" as you say when you analyse Russia today. And "the ruling layer remains more or less the same". You reject the idea — since it leads, according to you, to a "depressed defeatism" — that "a handful of venal bureaucrats could destroy the workers' state without a struggle".

Now at the time when Trotsky wrote *The Revolution Betrayed*, there was then too no Bolshevik party, no Soviets, no working-class and communist organisations, the working class having lost political power, in the course of what can effectively

Voix des Travailleurs (Workers' Voice) is a group of activists recently expelled by the French revolutionary organisation Lutte Ouvrière — the organisation whose candidate, Arlette Laguiller, won 1.6 million votes in France's 1995 presidential election. In this discussion article a member of VDT takes issue with the ideas of Workers' Liberty on the USSR and the Stalinist states as they have been expressed in letters from Workers' Liberty to VDT. Lutte Ouvrière and its forerunners — Voix Ouvrière, 1956-68, and the Union Communiste, to 1950 — had the view, shared by no other Marxist group, that the USSR was a degenerated workers' state while China, the East European states, etc. were bourgeois states. VDT declares that Yeltsin's Russia is today a bourgeois state, although Lutte Ouvrière still holds that it is premature to call "the ex-USSR" anything other than a degenerated workers' state. The editorial view of Workers' Liberty, as regular readers will know, is that the Stalinist states were exploitative class systems, broadly parallel to capitalism in the development of the productive forces, and historically a blind alley within the epoch of capitalism.

be called a reverse civil war, against the workers and the revolutionaries, in the years 1927-36. But Trotsky still said that "the question of the social character of the USSR is not yet decided by history". That is the title of a chapter of *The Revolution Betrayed* in which Trotsky analyses the different possibilities of development of the USSR.

The first one he considers is that *"the bureaucracy is overthrown by a revolutionary party... Such a party would begin with the restoration of democracy in the trade unions and the Soviets. It would be able to, and would have to, restore freedom of Soviet parties. Together with the masses, and at their head, it would carry out a ruthless purgation of the state apparatus..."* And he adds, still within the framework of this hypothesis, *"so far as concerns property relations, the new power would not have to resort to revolutionary measures. It would retain and further develop the experiment of planned economy. After the political revolution — that is, the deposing of the bureaucracy — the proletariat would have to introduce in the economy a series of very important reforms, but not another social revolution"*.

Then he envisages a second hypothesis. *"If — to adopt a second hypothesis — a bourgeois party were to overthrow the ruling Soviet caste, it would find no small number of ready servants among the present bureaucrats... A purgation of the state apparatus would, of course, be necessary in this case too. But a bourgeois restoration would probably have to clean out fewer people than a revolutionary party. The chief task of the new power would be to restore private property in the means of production. First of all, it would be necessary to create conditions for the development of strong farmers from the weak collective farms, and for converting the strong collectives into producers' cooperatives of the bourgeois type into agricultural stock companies. In the sphere of industry, denationalization would begin with the light industries and those producing food. The planning principle would be converted for the transitional period into a series of compromises between state power and individual 'corporations' — potential proprietors, that is, among the Soviet captains of industry, the émigré former proprietors and foreign capitalists. Notwithstanding that the Soviet bureaucracy has gone far toward preparing a bourgeois restoration, the new regime would have to introduce in the matter of forms of property and methods of industry not a reform, but a social revolution"*.

But, you say, if there has indeed been a crisis, there has for all that not been a revolution or a counter-revolution. Trotsky saw a third hypothesis in the development of the USSR, which he explains immediately after the first two. *"Let us assume to take a third variant — that neither a revolutionary nor a counterrevolutionary party seizes power. The bureaucracy continues at the head of the state. Even under these conditions social relations will not jell. We cannot count upon the bureaucracy's peacefully and voluntarily renouncing itself in behalf of socialist equality... it must inevitably in future stages seek supports for itself in property relations... It is not enough to be the director of a trust; it is necessary to be a stockholder. The victory of the bureaucracy in this decisive sphere would mean its conversion into a new possessing class. On the other hand, the victory of the proletariat over the bureaucracy would insure a revival of the socialist revolution. The third variant*

consequently brings us back to the two first, with which, in the interests of clarity and simplicity, we set out".

That is what seems to us to take account of what has happened in the USSR. It is not in our view "a handful of venal bureaucrats", as you say, who are at the origin of the transformations which have taken place in the USSR in recent years. The whole of the bureaucracy is venal, in the sense that its aspirations at all times have been bourgeois, aspirations to privilege, and, if it had been able to do it before, to establish those privileges by the re-establishment of private property.

That is to say that Trotsky characterised the Soviet state as a degenerated workers' state, not because of its political form, its leadership, the power of the bureaucracy, but despite that, because that bureaucracy could only exercise its power and be parasitic on the whole of Soviet society by adapting itself to the property forms which had come out of the proletarian revolution and the radical expropriation of the bourgeoisie. It was not that it did not want to get rid of those forms earlier, just the opposite, but that it was prevented from doing so by the fear which it had of an intervention by the working class.

And if the bureaucracy found a certain stability while continuing to rule a state whose bases had been determined by the expropriation carried after the revolution and the construction on that basis of a planned economy, it was in the framework of a balance of forces on the world scale, where imperialism after the war was confronted with a wave of colonial revolutions, and confronted also, even if the workers' movement continued to retreat, with a more numerous and powerful working class, and capitalist economic expansion allowing the bourgeoisie a greater stability. It was in that framework that the bourgeois aspirations of the bureaucracy could express themselves more freely, that it was able to enjoy its privileges without feeling the permanent threat of a revolver at the back of the head as was the case up to Stalin's death, but with such a fear of the working class

"Trotsky characterised the Soviet state as a degenerated workers' state not because of its political form but because of the property forms which had come out of the proletarian revolution and the radical expropriation of the bourgeoisie"

that it knew it could not allow the workers the smallest freedom of expression, and it could not re-establish private property and thus had to conserve, for its own interests and its own survival, statisation and the planning of the economy.

That stability was moreover criss-crossed by several crises. The period from 1953 to 1964 in the USSR is significant from that point a view — a period when, by way of the crisis which broke out in the leading circles of the bureaucracy following the death of Stalin, reforms were discussed and sketched out in the direction of a restoration of capitalism which as yet dared not speak its name, and quickly withdrawn in face of the danger of a working-class intervention — which the Hungarian revolution, for example, might have sparked off in the USSR itself — as soon as the vice of the dictatorship was loosened. Another crisis was opened by the problem of succession to Brezhnev. In the meantime, the labour movement having retreated further, the bureaucracy had been able to strengthen its bourgeois tendencies, but still in the official framework of the statised economy. The crisis revealed the state of the forces in the field. The working class intervened, but without being able to block the development which led to the re-establishment in law and then in fact of private property.

But revolutionaries cannot take the struggle as determined in advance, as you do unconsciously when you develop the argument, which seems to us truly ridiculous, that "the events of

1989-91 confirmed these conclusions", that is, that the counter-revolution had been completed since the 1930s, and that in the end Trotsky maintained his characterisation of the Soviet state "out of caution".

In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Trotsky analysed the situation and the complex nature of the Soviet state to trace and define the perspectives and the tasks proper to revolutionaries in the revolutionary crisis which could result from the upheavals of the coming war. He did not underestimate the depth of the revolution which the Soviet working class would have to make, but he simply indicated that, unlike the working class of the capitalist countries, it would not have to confront or expropriate a bourgeoisie which was solidly implanted because it was based on a petty bourgeoisie defending private property, and strengthened by its links with the world bourgeoisie. Those tasks had already been accomplished in the first months of the revolution, after October 1917, and now it was a matter for the working class of overthrowing the bureaucracy, re-establishing the democracy of the Soviets, and thus retaking control of the whole economy.

Today, we can say that the Russian working class will have to carry out a much more deep-going revolution, against what we can now call a bourgeoisie which is in the course of developing a thousand links with foreign capitalist groups, and which also finds a base inside the country in a petty bourgeoisie which never completely disappeared but has been considerably strengthened in the last ten years. It is in that sense that we think that the counter-revolution liquidating the material conquests of October 1917 has been completed in the ex-USSR, or, more exactly, the last phase of that counter-revolution, which had been in progress ever since the workers' revolution found itself isolated, and the workers' movement began to retreat from its high point of development in the years 1917-20. It is a process which took several decades, and the course of which could at several points have been reversed — perhaps you will say what you think about this — and that longevity is in our view a proof of the revolutionary capacity of the working class to transform social relations deeply. In the face of the propaganda of the enemies of the working class and of revolutionary politics, it seems to us essential to defend this idea firmly.

We are in agreement on the current situation in the ex-USSR, but your argument which leads you to conclude that the counter-revolution was complete by 1936 is entirely mistaken. That also leads to you to think that what happened in Vietnam or even in Cambodia was the same as in the USSR. For us, there was nothing in common. It remains to define what were the states in those countries, as in China or Eastern Europe, which you call "Stalinist" without specifying what social reality lies behind this term.

We still think that the analysis of those states made by Voix Ouvrière and then Lutte Ouvrière was correct, because there was no intervention by the working class at the origin of those states, and neither was there, as you seem to say, a revolution from above. Neither in China nor in Eastern Europe did the "Stalinist bureaucracies", the Communist Parties, throw out the bourgeoisie. In China, the bourgeoisie left the country, for the island of Formosa, while in Eastern Europe, in the first period after the war, the bourgeoisies had pride of place in the governments of national unity. After that structures comparable to those of the USSR were put in place in those countries, but that is precisely because of or thanks to the existence of the USSR. China would not have been able to resist the imperialist offensive without the existence of the USSR, even though it had a policy of seeking peaceful coexistence. As for the countries of Eastern Europe, to keep them in its orbit, the USSR had to impose an iron frame to stop them having links with imperialism. Note that the disappearance of the USSR, or even just the

Break with the past

In March 1997, Lutte Ouvrière expelled 10% of its militants — mainly the Bordeaux and Rouen branches — who formed Voix des Travailleurs. Many had been active in LO for decades. All felt deeply committed to the policies of the organisation. The expulsion followed LO's successful campaign in 1995 and Arlette Laguiller's subsequent call for a new workers' party. The score of 1.6 million votes in the first round of the presidential elections, that is 5.3% of the total, gave the organisation new opportunities and new responsibilities. As militants of the organisation, the comrades currently active in Voix des Travailleurs made the prospect of a new workers' party the centre of their activity. However, the prospect was gradually abandoned by the LO leadership. Our exclusion meant the refusal to carry on what the organisation had started.

This is all the more regrettable since the current situation not only provides the raw material for such a party but also the opportunity for revolutionaries of making a significant break with the past. For Voix des Travailleurs, the approach the call implied is more relevant than ever with the return of the left in power.

The new government met with few illusions among workers about what it would bring. Many members of the CP declare they will not be silenced again as they were in 1981. The first measures taken by the government have increased contradictions in the CP. For the time being, the CP has accepted some measure of dissent in its ranks, but, sooner or later, as the government carries out its attacks against the workers, working-class activists will have to choose between their support to the government and the interests of their class. In a context of mass unemployment and increasing social inequalities, things could go faster in the coming months than they have in past years. The discontent the government's policies is bound to arouse could well end up in further demoralisation or, worse, profit the far right, if those who expect nothing from the government, who know it will do everything it can to silence any opposition to its policies, who have and who feel no solidarity with it, do not join their efforts to create a new force placing itself resolutely and exclusively on the basis of the political defence of the exploited. The raw material for such a party exists today among those who voted for the Socialist Party and the Communist Party thinking they would carry out genuine socialist and communist policies or who voted for the left because "there was nothing better", among the members of those parties who do not want to be sold down the river again.

The working class needs a new party, free of the limitations of the existing groups. This is the challenge set before the revolutionaries today. No group, no organisation is able to meet that challenge alone. Voix des Travailleurs aims to put an end to the crumbling and the dispersal of the far left and to work at its reconstruction — here and abroad — with all those who want to build a new party with real and deep roots in the working class. The creation of a pole at the far left would attract many workers who want to fight back. Regular contacts with LO's minority, with the LCR's "R" tendency and with other groups such as "La Gauche Révolutionnaire" and the organisation of joint fetes in Bordeaux and Rouen in September are a first step in that direction.

Voix des Travailleurs

possibility of integrating more completely into the imperialist world which the retreat of the workers' movement gave to the Soviet bureaucracy, led very quickly to the disappearance of these structures everywhere in the world.

To our mind that is a proof that, contrary to what you seem to say, there is no third category of state — "Stalinist state" — beside bourgeois states and workers' states. If there were, that would mean that there was a third social class — the Stalinist bureaucracy? — which was the bearer of a possible path of development for society. In our view there can be, as the Union Communiste said, only two possible paths for human society: socialism, or the barbarism created by the maintenance of capitalism and private property in the means of production. But is that what you mean? If you will allow us a joke, did you elucidate this problem in the course of your 22 years of reflection?

In conclusion, it seems to us that your argument, in our view false, poses the problem of what the state is without you

explaining yourselves clearly on this question. For us, the nature of the state is not determined by its political leadership, however important that may be, but by the property relations, the foundations of the social relations on which it is based. The social relations established by that immense upheaval which was the Russian Revolution lasted, despite the bureaucracy, for decades.

It was the absence of private property in the means of production which was the basis of the development of a planned economy and a powerful and numerous working class without a bourgeoisie developing in parallel. This longevity of the social bases created by the October Revolution is in our view a proof of the immense progress that can be established by the revolutionary intervention of the working class, and, moreover, we believe that from that point of view, the Russian working class has not said its last word, even if it has not been able to prevent the destruction of the material conquests of the revolution.

Socialist Labour Party "severely injured"

by Alan McArthur

THE SECOND CONFERENCE — excuse me, Congress — of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party proved it to be just that, Arthur Scargill's party.

The conference, held at Conway Hall in London over the weekend of 13-14 December, descended into chaos as the block vote wielded by one affiliate — referred to by some as Lancashire NUM, but in fact the North-West, Cheshire and Cumbria Miners' Association, a retired miners' welfare society; there aren't any working pits in Lancashire — made the votes of the rest of the conference irrelevant.

Terry Burns, who was the SLP's general election candidate in Cardiff Central and polled the second highest vote nationally for a non-Labour socialist candidate, said: "Arthur didn't quite kill the party at the conference but he certainly severely injured it. Instead of a conference it was a farce. Individual members of the SLP have more freedom in bourgeois Britain than they do in the SLP."

"I intend to remain in the party and still think that, while it will now be reduced to something of a rump, the party has the potential to grow and be a pole of attraction for people looking for an alternative to Labour. However, I believe that as long as the SLP has its present constitution — more rigid than even the Labour Party's — it is going to be a top down party rather than a bottom up party, and one that reflects Scargill's own views about politics, which are still locked in the era of Stalinism."

With the "Lancashire NUM" block vote three men wielded 3000 votes, while the rest of the conference — 114 local SLP groups were represented, with a total of fewer

than 1,000 members — had fewer than 1,000 votes (one per paper member represented.)

About a third of the delegates did not come back for the second day — including most of the Cardiff branch, who led a small walkout and resigned their membership on the Saturday.

Amazingly, there was no discussion whatsoever of the general political situation or of the various political changes of the two years since the SLP's last conference — such as the change of government, for example.

Terry Burns said: "There was no real relationship between what was going on in the outside world and what was going on in the conference hall."

The subjects that were up for debate — mainly the SLP's own constitution — were not really debated: two speeches for each motion were allowed before moving onto the next motion; there were no speeches against or general discussion. (Some debate was allowed on the Sunday, apparently, though the Chair was quite "selective" in choosing speakers.) There was some mention from the platform of "our successes in the general election" in passing, but no real analysis of either the election or the SLP's performance in it. The SLP's big forthcoming project, participating in the Reclaim our Rights conference for free trade unions in March, along with the Free Trade Unions Campaign, was mentioned only in passing.

The platform alleged the membership of the SLP to be 5,000, fast approaching 6,000. Scargill claimed the SLP to be the fourth largest party in Britain, and the fastest growing. Both are patently untrue.

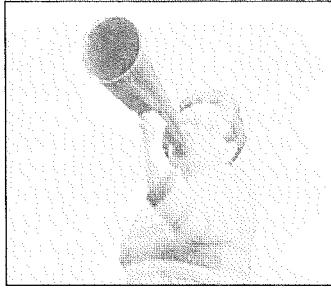
SLP dissidents — a number of

whom have already resigned their membership — are due to meet in Reading on 10 January to discuss the way forward. Undoubtedly the SLP has attracted some serious comrades. (About a third of the conference voted for left candidates for the NEC.) Hopefully those comrades will now rethink.

I hope they will get involved in a serious fight back against the Labour Government, by uniting in organisations like the Welfare State Network (as a number of SLP members have already done), and making a serious fight to defend working class political representation. The SLP is no alternative to a movement of the type of a Labour Representation Committee which will, in the first place, defend the Labour-union link, but also look to building a new, open labour-movement based party if we need to. I think the "Labour Representation" orientation is more relevant to translating politically the militancy that will in time be unleashed against New Labour.

Signs from some are not encouraging. Martin Blum, in the 18 December post-conference edition of the *Weekly Worker*, wrote: "If the class was combative, if we were moving forward, the SLP would be swamped by workers who would simply not put up with the bureaucratic shenanigans of the leadership."

Even if this were not so very unlikely, to attempt to channel the upsurge in working class activity into a neo-Stalinist sect would be a grave mistake for socialists. (The facts in this article were taken from discussions with various SLP members and from the conference report in the *Weekly Worker*. The article does not reflect the views of any member of the SLP).



Workers' Government and workers' democracy

The editorial in *Workers' Liberty* no. 43, *Who will stop Blair*, advocates a workers' government. To develop this argument further and more effectively we need to have some reference to the objections likely to be raised in discussions in the labour movement. Many activists may well ask why we want to, or perhaps how we can expect to, impose such a radically different government from that of Blair's New Labour, which after all has just won an election and therefore has a mandate for its policies, including no income tax rises, welfare-to-work and keeping to Tory spending limits.

Our answer has to be that advocacy of a workers' government must include condemnation of the existing "democracy" in Britain. If this, in turn, is not to be taken to mean opposition to all democracy and support for a dictatorship, then such condemnation must be supplemented by outlining an alternative democracy, best summed by calling for workers' democracy. That is, not just a workers' government but a workers' system of government.

We also need to stress that Blair has been able to get away with his attacks on the working class so far thanks to a long campaign of attacks on Labour Party democracy and on the link with the unions by the leadership, which has been echoed by trade union leaderships treating their own union memberships in a similar way. Blair has been able to use the highly bureaucratized labour movement in conjunction with Britain's sham parliamentary democracy to dictate to the working class, as the accepted leader of its own movement, what is and is not possible in politics.

We therefore need to change not just who is in government but this underlying situation that enables New Labour to get away with Tory policies. To do this means winning back the elements of workers' democracy that Blair and previous Labour leaders have

abolished and extending workers' democracy to new limits.

The fight for workers' democracy is therefore a fight for thorough-going democracy in the labour movement and a fight to impose and replicate the norms of that thorough-going democracy on bourgeois politics, the bourgeois state and throughout society. This includes calling for: working-class representatives and candidates, a labour representation committee, annual election of all labour movement positions, all paid officials to receive the average wage of the workers they represent, the right to recall dele-

gates and officials, a rank and file movement in the unions, rank and file control of labour movement conferences, annual elections for all parliaments, assemblies and councils, abolish the Monarchy and the House of Lords, reduce the voting age, directly elected committees to control the utilities, public services and branches of the state. In making the case for workers' democracy, and illustrating the meaning of it with the above demands, Marxists can convey more effectively what a workers' government involves, as well as how it can be won. We can also

clearly present ourselves as the true democrats and expose the utter shallowness of Blair's claims to be building a modern democracy.

The editorial in WL43 ends with the sentence, "The job of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty is to make links between those immediate demands... to impose the political economy of the working class against the priorities of profit, and the political aim of a workers' government." The idea of workers' democracy is the key idea for making those links.

Bill Davies

The USSR was not state capitalist

Say the words "state capitalism" and who comes to mind? Martin Thomas or Tony Cliff? Martin (WL 43) advocates his own version of the theory, but in order to engage in the debate on the ground, he should have compared and contrasted his version of the theory with Cliff's. For this purpose, useful sources are Cliff's own book and an article entitled "The law of value and the USSR" by Derek Howl (*International Socialism* 49). Howl's article is an earnest attempt to explain Cliff's "method". The opening sentence reads: "The Socialist Workers Party's theory of bureaucratic state capitalism has often been misunderstood as a theory to explain the differences between the USSR and Western capitalism." So where do the differences come in? Howl explains further: "He [Cliff] used the Marxist method to abstract from the apparent differences between East and West in order to explore the underlying similarities."

Thus Cliff claimed that East and West were similar; he supported this claim by abstracting from the differences! Martin's version of the theory aligns the USSR with capitalism in genesis, rather than developed capitalism. Undoubtedly this is more plausible. However his "state capitalism" includes countries where "the state

nurtured a native private-capitalist class" and others where "the state substituted for and clashed with private capitalists". This distinction is obliterated by Cliff-like "abstraction", creating a single category for all countries where the state fostered industrialisation — despite state industry being developed within differing sets of social relations.

The debate between Trotsky, Shachtman and others was an attempt to define the social relations that existed within the USSR, in order to decide the answer to a political problem — whether or not to adopt a position of unconditional defence of the USSR. As it turned out, clarity on this issue was not achieved, and the political problem has now disappeared with the USSR. However, revisiting this debate is potentially of value, if it helps us to understand where the post-war Trotskyists went astray in their appraisal of Stalinism. What is required for this purpose is not a series of generalisations about Turkey, Algeria and India, but an analysis of social relations in the USSR, in the dozen or so years before the second world war. The decisive event in this period was the forced collectivisation of agriculture. In the space of five years (1929-34) collective farms replaced individual farms as the dominant

property form. The better off peasants ("kulaks") were expropriated and excluded from the collectives. Many were killed or died of starvation. Of those that survived, most were transported to labour camps — they were the first mass intake of "recruits" to the convict labour system.

The poorer and middle peasants became the collective farm peasantry. In theory their farms were a collective asset, but in reality they were a collective liability. The state demanded deliveries of grain and other products and paid very low prices in return. Sometimes state demands imposed a net loss on the farms. Many peasants would have preferred to leave the collective farms and eke out a subsistence living on the small private plots that they were allowed to retain. But the state required food, so labour on the collective farm was compulsory for all adult members of the collective. This is in accord with Marx's discussion of labour rent (*Capital* Vol 3), where he points out that if the direct producers possess the means to produce their own subsistence, "surplus labour for the nominal owner of the land can only be extorted from them by other than economic pressure".

Thus, at least in the countryside, a system was set up that resembled Marx's "Asiatic" mode of

production (where the state was the nominal owner of the land) far more closely than it resembled any form of capitalism. Nor did the collectivisation process remotely resemble capitalism in genesis (except for the abundance of blood). Rural capitalism was already developing under the NEP, but this process was halted by collectivisation. The potential capitalists were liquidated, the majority of poorer peasants became tribute payers to the state — not wage workers. In the industrial and commercial sectors, the private traders and capitalists (NEPmen) were also expropriated. However the numbers of industrial workers expanded. If they had remained wage-labour, as they undoubtedly were under the NEP, then the USSR in the 1930's would have been a hybrid economy, with a state capitalist industrial sector and an "Asiatic" rural sector. Perhaps this is what Martin is trying to say when he informs us that: "History is full of hybrid and exceptional formations which cannot be slotted tidily into one category or another". [Why then slot the USSR tidily into the category "state capitalism"?] If the USSR was an exceptional and hybrid formation, then "state capitalism" is a poor choice of terminology to describe it, given that "state capitalism" already has an established meaning as a concentrated form of capitalism in the main line of historical development — not a hybrid and exceptional system.

Trotsky wrote (in *The Revolution Betrayed*): "To define the Soviet regime as transitional, or intermediate, means to abandon such finished social categories as capitalism (and therewith 'state capitalism') and also socialism."

Trotsky's objection to "bureaucratic collectivism" was in essence the same — he thought it too was a finished social category, prematurely applied to the USSR.

Yet, as a description of the Stalinist USSR, a formula like "transitional, hybrid economy" is bland and unsatisfactory. Formulations like that suggest two economic forms simply added together, without conflict between them, and without the dominance of one form over the other. As Marx put it in his *Grundrisse*:

"In all forms of society there is one specific kind of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others. It is a general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity. It is a particular ether which determines the specific

gravity of every being which has materialised within it."

Marx identified the "particular ether" of capitalism as follows:

"The capitalist era is therefore characterised by this, that labour-power takes in the eyes of the labourer himself the form of a commodity which is his property; his labour consequently becomes wage-labour". (*Capital*, Vol 1).

The Stalinists waged a determined campaign to dispossess the workers of their labour-power.

Trade unions, which in the early years of the NEP could bargain with and strike against their "own" state, were converted into "transmission belts" to represent the state against the workers. The very high labour turnover in the early 1930's was combated, not by offering better working conditions, but by imposing administrative penalties (loss of social insurance) for "flitting". In December 1932 the internal passport system was enacted, so that movement to another district, without official permission, became illegal. Workers were still paid wages and there was extensive use of piece rates. However Martin's argument that wage-labour therefore remained dominant is mistaken. Without freedom of movement or the right to leave one job in the hope of finding something better, workers no longer had effective ownership of their labour-power. Whether they were paid wages or handed rations is of secondary importance; the main issue is the real social relation between worker and "employer". Convict labourers who are paid wages are not thereby magically made free. Martin's further argument that the Soviet economy remained capitalist, because money was not abolished, is feeble — money predates capitalism by centuries.

The Victory of "Socialism" was proclaimed in 1934, when compulsory labour for the state — the "particular ether" of Stalinism — had become the dominant form of labour. In the years following 1934, state control over workers was intensified. The terror swelled the ranks of the convict labourers to millions. Hundreds, maybe thousands, were political oppositionists, but millions must have been workers who had simply complained about something, or had crossed their supervisor at work. The influence of the gulag on Soviet society was far greater than its role in production — although its productive role was by no means negligible. The fear of arrest was a major "incentive" to work hard and keep quiet. Martin's argument that work-

ers outside the gulag remained wage-labour, because those on the inside were worse off, is an extreme case of straw clutching. Any reactionary regime, relying on a prison system to terrorise its workforce, will make sure that it is worse to be in prison than out! The culmination of the campaign against wage-labour was a set of draconian measures, decreed by Stalin in 1940. Details may be found in Alec Nove's *An Economic History of the USSR*, p264-267. Here is one paragraph:

"No one was to be allowed to leave his or her job without permission. This was only to be granted in special circumstances, some of which were listed (e.g. old age, call-up to the army, move of husband to another town, admission to higher educational establishment, etc.). If anyone disobeyed and left work he would be subject to criminal-law penalties and imprisoned as a 'flitter'. Sentences of four months were quite common."

This was not communist voluntary labour! Nor was it capitalist wage-labour. Martin (WL 39) says that "extreme state control modified (!) wage-labour". The Stalinist aim was the abolition (or extreme modification) of wage-labour, but in the "opposite direction" to socialism. The Stalinists were reactionary utopians, resembling the "feudal socialists" described in the Communist Manifesto.

In the long run the Stalinist system would prove to be incapable of matching the productivity of modern capitalism. The rulers would introduce market mechanisms in an attempt to keep up with the West. Therefore, Martin argues, the system was capitalist, because it changed into capitalism! In 1940, however, this was in the future. Of course tractors, steelworks, power stations, tanks and aeroplanes were not produced for the personal use of the rulers. But, in the Stalin era, the drive for "generalised wealth" intensified the "Asiatic" exploitation of the workers and peasants. In some musings on political economy (*Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*, 1952) Stalin wrote:

"Talk of labour power being a commodity, and of 'hiring' of workers sounds rather absurd now, under our system: as though the working class, which possesses means of production, hires itself and sells its labour to itself. It is just as strange to speak now of 'necessary' and 'surplus' labour: as though, under our conditions, the labour contributed by the workers to society for the extension of production, the promotion of education and public health, the organisation of

defence, etc., is not just as necessary to the working class, now in power, as the labour expended to supply the personal needs of the worker and his family." After the despot had made this pronouncement, who would then dare to advocate a labour market, or an increase in the resources allocated to supplying the personal needs of workers?

After the war, the continued existence of the Stalinist USSR posed a problem for the Trotskyists. Trotsky's expression "degenerated workers state" had implied that the USSR was acutely unstable, but (since neither a new workers revolution nor the restoration of private property had occurred) his expression was retained as a description of the USSR. Then the Fourth International decided that the structurally similar states in East Europe must be "deformed workers states". But these states were created by the Red Army, not the workers.

Cliff was justifiably alarmed by the notion that the Red Army could create a workers state. He argued that the overthrow of capitalism could only be achieved by the working class, therefore the East European states must still be capitalist. The structural similarity between East Europe and the USSR showed, not that the East European states were workers states, but that the USSR was also capitalist. Any other conclusion, he claimed, contradicted the concept of socialism as the self-liberation of the working class. This claim was untrue. While the Red Army could not replace the workers and create socialism, it could (and did) impose the USSR's "Asiatic" system on the occupied countries.

Cliff does not appear to have considered this possibility, which does not contradict the idea that only the working class can take human society forward from capitalism. So Cliff's conclusion that the USSR was some sort of capitalism was decided at the outset. His theoretical arguments are decorative word spinning, in order that his presupposition (that the USSR was an example of the militarised state capitalism discussed by Bukharin in 1915) might appear to be a conclusion from his "analysis". However, Cliff's book was not all pretentious (and preposterous) "theory"; Cliff also asked the question: is labour-power a commodity in the USSR? Today, SWP theoreticians can effortlessly deduce that labour-power in the USSR was a commodity because the USSR was state capitalist. In 1948, Cliff was better than that. He investigated Soviet labour legislation and concluded — No, workers in

Sectarian towards Scots radicalism

It is a very long time since I have read anything so coloured by the mentality of the "intellectual" thug, by utter moral bankruptcy and by unimaginably anti-intellectual sectarianism as Stan Crooke's review (WL43) of my book *The Very Bastards of Creation*. From my own viewpoint, the only positive aspect of Crooke's review is that it will guarantee that more copies will be purchased by public libraries in England. Keep it going, Stan.

It is now tragically evident that Crooke is not, in the 19th-century Scottish phrase, "pregnant with bright parts". On top of his lack of perception, he is further handicapped by his self-imposed militant ignorance, obsessive sectarianism and cultivated nastiness. I really feel sorry for someone like him.

To the best of my knowledge, though I am not an expert on the history of the 1990s left-wing sects, sectarianism or the working of the religious sectarian mind, Crooke and the editors of *Workers' Liberty* did not object in principle to the appearance of E. P. Thompson's seminal essay "The Peculiarities of the English". For daring to look at "The Peculiarities of the Scots" in my book *The Very Bastards of Creation*, Matgamna — otherwise known as Pope Patrick Avakuum or sometimes as Bishop Paddy Dollard — and Crooke denounce me for being "a Scottish nationalist" who has abandoned his lifelong socialism.

from page 50

the USSR do not even have the limited freedom of workers in capitalist countries. This created severe difficulties for the theory of state capitalism, but they were conjured away with more word spinning. Cliff's supporters still claim that he has given us a unique insight into the nature of the USSR, but they have "taken out insurance" by deciding (without the bother of examining the evidence) that labour-power was always a commodity in the USSR, even in the Stalin era. In the real (as opposed to "state capitalist") USSR, the first steps towards wage-labour were Khrushchev's reforms of 1956. In his history (p356), Alec Nove writes: "Workers were now free to leave their jobs, though subject to some limitations on movement owing to the passport system, thus

Why is Edward Thompson exempt from your generous comradely wrath? However, when Crooke accuses me of being soft on the Anglo-Scottish ruling class, it is crystal-clear that he has not read — or, at least, understood — anything that I have published on Scottish workers' history. If he would read outside the prescribed texts and look at the books and articles on *Workers' Liberty's* Index, he would be aware of the comment by Frank Maitland, one of the 1930s British Trotskyists, that in Scotland "capitalism has reigned with an absolute sway that has no parallel". Though I don't for one moment expect Crooke to understand or absorb this, in 1930s England the orthodox English Trotskyist C. A. Smith wrote: "Scottish history differs from English in the recency of servile conditions and the comparative suddenness of the transition to modern capitalism." Moreover, in all of my nine published books I have tried, in the phrase of the American socialist Daniel De Leon, "to identify with the ancient lowly".

In spite of the brilliance of the Communist Manifesto (1848), Marx and Engels said little useful about nationalism. Unlike the dunderhead Crooke, Marx did not assume that socialist ideas were eternally valid and applicable in all times and places irrespective of changing circumstances. Since Crooke seems desperately to need

it was still very hard to obtain permission to live in Moscow and some other big cities. None the less, greater unplanned labour mobility was a fact, and this, plus the abolition of most of the forced-labour camps, complicated the process of planning and made wage relativities of ever greater economic significance." According to the Maoists, this was treason against socialism and the restoration of capitalism! Capitalism was eventually restored, but it could be said in Khrushchev's "defence" that his reforms were only the beginning — and he had no intention of going all the way. The Soviet empire was still patrolled by armed border guards (keeping people in), and any suggestion of collective wage bargaining was still anathema to the regime.

Roger Clarke

some old-fashioned socialist tuition, he ought to ponder over the words in S. S. Prawer's book *Karl Marx and World Literature* (1976): "Marx came, in fact, to realise this and consistently distanced himself from his followers, who underestimated the power of national feeling. In 1866 he ridiculed the French delegates to a Council meeting of the First International for announcing 'that all nationalities and even nations were antiquated prejudices'... Later still he praised the Russian economist Flerovsky because he had 'a feeling for national characteristics', and he took up the cause of the Irish as a 'national question'".

When considering that Crooke called for "an orthodox" Marxist (rather than an anarchist) interpretation of modern history in a context where he is clearly not at all well read, I suspect he is destined to remain a prisoner of his aggressive and militant ignorance. So, instead of addressing Ignazio Silone's "anarchist" socialist criticisms of Victor Serge and the intolerant, authoritarian Bolsheviks, Crooke had to "rubbish" me. Of course, he was really rubbishing himself. Poor Stan, whose pen name is, I am told, Mark Osborn, is never on the mark.

For the record, my book *The Very Bastards of Creation* received very favourable reviews in the Scottish press; and one reviewer in *The Scotsman* asserted that "Young is a writer who is as entertaining as he is uncompromising". And yes — though it narks Crooke and his sectarian friends — I do have the bare-faced cheek to call myself a socialist, an internationalist and (in this age of militant ignorance in socialist ranks) a scholar and a teacher. In spite of Crooke's scarcely literate comments on my books over the years, other fine socialists with whom I have not always seen eye to eye have recognised the importance of what I have been doing in often hostile circumstances. So, when Raymond Challinor was reviewing my biography of John Maclean in an American publication, he said: "James D. Young is, in my opinion, one of the finest historians of the British working class". Furthermore, at the end of his review of *The Very Bastards of Creation* in

the current issue of the American socialist magazine *New Politics*, Challinor, with the generosity typical of socialists of our generation, concludes: "Though it is unclear how long he will be able to continue, one thing is certain — James D. Young will die with a pen in one hand, his other raised in a clenched-fist salute." Will anyone, I wonder, ever say anything like that about the sectarian bully Stan?

Far from my trying to offer, in Norman Mailer's words, "advertisements for myself", I think your readers ought to know that intelligent, non-sectarian socialists — and nonsocialists — have seen some merit in the books I have written during a time of reaction and sloth when ruling classes everywhere are struggling to lower democratic consciousness. However, in recommending Edward Thompson's fine essay *The Poverty of Theory* inside the pages of *Workers' Liberty's* self-enclosed sect of pure socialist saints (as distinct from justified socialist sinners like me), I am not going to be silenced by some would-be Holy Proletarian Emperor.

In defence of my own "Marxist-humanism", I would like to suggest that *The Very Bastards of Creation* will remain and endure for a long time as, in E.P. Thompson's words, "the best emetic to prescribe to Marxist theologians and theoretical practitioners — a sectarian emetic to be administered only to sectarians". But, while proclaiming my socialist outlook and taking action on the side of those who are struggling for social justice as well as contributing to scholarship and enlightenment, I am prepared to match my own five-decades' track record in the labour movement and on picket-lines with anyone active in any of the various sects.

James D Young

P.S. Since you doctored my reply to Pope Paddy's review of *The Very Bastards of Creation*, and left paragraphs out of it, I hope you will publish this letter in full without your unco-guide "proletarian" censorship. *Editorial note: No, we did not "doctor" James D's delightful diatribe. Nor have we edited references to persons and identities in this contribution.* SM.

The Fate of the Russian Revolution

Lost Texts of Critical Marxism Vol 1



**By Max Shachtman, Hal Draper, CLR James,
Al Glotzer, Joseph Carter and others**

Edited by Sean Matgamna

Available February

512pp. £14.99 from: Phoenix Press, Workers' Liberty Publications
PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 0171-207 4673.
Cheques payable to "WL Publications."