

Workers' Liberty

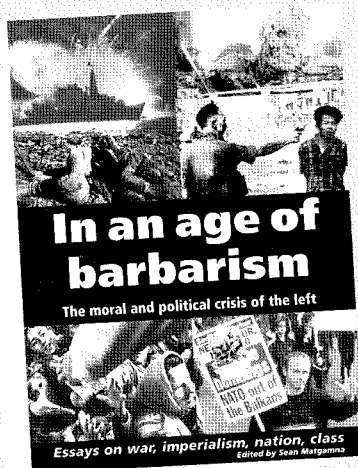
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Nationalise the railways!

THE privatisation of the railways "has been a catalogue of political cynicism, managerial incompetence and financial opportunism. It has cost taxpayers billions of pounds and brought rail travellers countless hours of delays... The scandal of rail in Britain is the gulf between the opulence of the rail companies and the oppression of their passengers... The promised investment of £27 billion by Railtrack is a sham..."

"The first train operators made spectacular gains..."

"Even worse was the scandal of the rolling stock companies, sold in 1996... One of the three rolling-stock firms, Porterbrooke Leasing, was sold to senior BR managers for £528 million. But only eight months later Porterbrooke was sold on by a management buy-out team for £826m... the managers and staff of Porterbrooke who had invested a mere £300,000 of their own, made nearly £83.7m. Porterbrooke's managing director who invested £120,000, scooped £34m..."

"It was a 'fat-cat carve up'."

"... As many as 18 franchises were let to people from the bus industry, many of whom knew nothing about rail."

Who wrote this scathing article? A rail union General Secretary? Tony Benn? No, these are the words of the "libertarian", right-wing, pro-free market *Economist* magazine.

The Economist, of 3 July, calculates the pre-tax profits of the rail companies for 1998 at £1.072 billion, or 19% of the industry's total revenues. It concludes "the privatisation of British Rail has proved a disastrous failure" and predicts "things are going to get worse".

As we go to press, bodies are still being pulled from the terrible rail crash outside Paddington station in which, perhaps, over a hundred people have died. Initial reports speculate that a red light had been crossed, and the debate in the papers and on TV and radio has centred on the question of rail safety. Almost

no-one is denying the link between cost-cutting and corner-cutting on safety.

The Economist report states clearly that Railtrack, the giant infrastructure-owning company whose pre-tax profits ran to £398 million, was saving money using "patch and mend" and quotes an anonymous senior rail-industry figure as saying "This policy is dangerous," and that the system "cannot be operated safely".

Both the previous Tory administration and the current Labour Government have allowed the rail companies to skimp on safety while profits balloon.

Rail workers have been made to suffer the consequences of privatisation. Rail industry working hours are now running at an average of 45.3 hours per week, which includes 7.5 hours overtime as workers stay on the job in order to earn a living wage (*New Earnings Survey*, 1998). It is inevitable that working such long hours will mean that some workers make mistakes at work. The bosses are happy to scapegoat individual workers, which takes the focus away from the general conditions of work and the state of the industry, and focuses on the "individual failings" of ordinary workers.

Mick Rix, the train drivers' union ASLEF General Secretary, has warned the rail companies that they have one week to address network safety or they will face strike action. Rix demands that they fit all trains with the fail-safe automatic train protection system, ATP. The companies claim that it costs too much. Rix says: "No longer must cost be put before public safety".

We say: Yes — and cut the working week to 35 hours with no loss of pay; re-nationalise the railway under workers' control.

This is the only policy which can guarantee that people come higher in the calculations of those who operate our railways than profit, and that tragedies such as the one we have just witnessed never happen again.

A manifesto for women's liberation

SINCE women began to fight for their liberation in modern society, they have in Britain, as in much of the Western world, seen their position in society undergo radical changes. Women have won many victories. Woman's oppression and sexism have been forced to retreat. But they have not

gone away. We have the vote and the Equal Pay Act, but women still suffer violence and they suffer discrimination.

In the West, it is now almost a "norm" for women of working age to work. In the UK, 71% of women of working age are employed. Work gives women more freedom and self-respect and a chance to escape the isolation of the home. However, for many working class women the experience of going to work is utterly miserable. Universally, "women's work" is concentrated in low paid, part-time and low status jobs. Capitalism racks up its profits by paying women the bare minimum — New Labour's minimum wage of £3.60 a week has legitimised waged poverty for three million women.

The lives of many working class women — especially mothers — are a never-ending whirl of juggling work and home life, of coping with inadequate wages and a hundred daily domestic responsibilities. In the UK, according to World Health Organisation figures, women still undertake 72% of housework and 77% of childcare. These are statistics that have barely moved under the impact of the modern women's movement.

In many parts of the world, the situation is much worse still. Women are denied equal rights under the law. In some

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countries, such as Afghanistan, Iran or Saudi Arabia, women cannot vote, women cannot go outside the home without a male escort — a woman can scarcely breathe without permission from her husband, father or brother. In such countries, women, body and soul, are still virtual chattels, possessed by men. Such was the situation for women in the advanced capitalist world until just over a hundred years ago, when women began their fight for the same rights afforded to men in bourgeois society.

In this issue of *Workers' Liberty* we look back over the history of that struggle for women's liberation and the issues it raises for socialists today. We need that perspective in order to see what part the struggle for women's rights will play in the socialist movement of the future. We need to assess the relevance or otherwise of that, now much maligned, word, feminism.

The future of feminism is yet to be decided, but it does have a future, we can be sure. Nowhere has the fight for women's liberation been fully successful. While capitalism continues to exist, it will perpetuate and thrive on all forms of oppression. The oppression of women is the oldest oppression in human society. It has very deep roots.

Of course attitudes have changed, women have won formal equality in many countries, many women have more opportunities, women enjoy greater sexual freedom. But while society is run to organise the exploitation of the majority for profit and advantage of the few, the needs of the majority of women — like the needs of the majority of men — will not be met. Throughout the history of class society, women have always been the slaves of the slaves. The statistics on housework and childcare show how much this is still so, despite what women have won.

Much has changed, much remains to be changed. The vast majority of women are working class women. The demands which would have made all the difference to their lives, such

as a decent minimum wage, free childcare, the socialisation of housework, have not yet been won.

A continuous problem with the fight for women's rights has been that liberal bourgeois women have dominated the "politics of women's rights". They have been concerned to create equal opportunities for middle class women to compete with men — very often they fought for their rights as middle class women, not for the rights of "women". The needs of their working class sisters were ignored or pushed to one side. Very often such women wanted the right to exploit and oppress the lower classes, including working class women, on an equal basis with the men.

During the fight for the vote, the women's movement divided between those concentrating on the rights of women with property, and those concerned with working class women. Today, women who are primarily concerned with "the glass ceiling", the number of women company directors, continue what might be called an "aristocratic" tradition within the women's movement. Indicative of rampant sexism "the glass ceiling" surely is. But it scarcely impinges on the lives of the majority of women.

If you are a working class woman on low pay with no rights and a boss who denies you

time off to care for your children, do you really care if your boss is a man or a woman? The focus of socialists has always been for working class women to gain liberation not alone as individuals — a few of whom may climb up the social ladder, or have more freedom of action high up the ladder where they were born — but as a class.

Capitalism is a system based on a fundamental class division in society. The oppression of women and exploitation of women's unpaid labour is central to this. Women's oppression did not begin with capitalism, but capitalism uses and organises the oppression of women for the benefit of the ruling class. This system uses and perpetuates sexism as it does other forms of oppression as a means of facilitating exploitation.

Understanding that women's oppression is inextricably linked to capitalism leads to one clear political conclusion, the need for a working class women's movement. Such movements, as articles in this *Workers' Liberty* outline, have been built in the past. Such a movement would not exclude middle class women. It is defined not in a narrow sociological way but by the programme which all its members fight for. It would fight as part of the labour movement for the abolition of all exploitation and all oppression of either women or men, and for the overthrow of capitalism.

The labour movement today scarcely fights for women's rights, even though more and more women are joining unions. That weakness is part of a pattern of passivity in the face of a systematic offensive by the bosses against our class. In the future, if the labour movement is to rebuild, issues that are of primary importance to women workers — low pay, childcare, a decent health service — will be centre-stage.

The history of women under capitalism is rich with brave struggles, with examples victories and defeats, all of which the labour movement of the future must take to heart. It is no less rich with lessons which must be learned today if we are to build a mass working class women's movement of the future.

Kate Buckell
Cathy Nugent

"Throughout the history of class society, women have always been the slaves of the slaves. The statistics on housework and childcare, show, how much this is so still, despite what women have won."

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. We aim 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, phone 0171-207 4673 or email: office@workersliberty.org.

Report from Australia

East Timor: magnificent solidarity!

THE whole of the 20th century has few finer stories of international working-class solidarity. On 4 September the United Nations announced that East Timor's 30 August referendum had produced a 78.5% vote for independence from Indonesia. The Indonesian army and its militias immediately launched a genocidal terror campaign. Almost equally fast, the Australian trade unions shut down almost all business links between Australia and its huge neighbour-nation, demanding that the Indonesian troops withdraw.

The Maritime Union banned all trade with Indonesia. Oil refinery workers refused to work with Indonesian oil. Transport unions took action against Garuda flights and air freight to Indonesia. Postal and telecom workers stopped services to Indonesian government and Garuda offices.

All this action was illegal under Australian law. Prime minister John Howard denounced it. Workplace Relations minister Peter Reith called on employers to take legal action against the unions, and the airline Qantas threatened to do just that. But so widespread was mass support for the East Timorese that Australian Council of Trade Unions president Jennie George, no daredevil, could confidently declare: "Any employer who seeks to penalise workers for participating in the campaign will be opposed by the whole union movement." Trade unions were also central in organising the larger of the many street demonstrations in support of East Timor. They ranged in size up to 25,000 on 10 September and 35,000 on 17 September in Melbourne, where there is a left-wing local union leadership and an East Timorese exile community of some thousands.

By 12 September the Indonesian government backed down, and said it would begin withdrawing its army and admitting a UN force to East Timor. This victory was won not just by the direct effect of the trade-union action on Indonesian business, but also by the ability of union bans and demonstrations to push governments into a firmer stand than the ordinary diplomatic protests they would otherwise have made.

John Howard is no consistent democrat — economic interests make him a



The Australian-UN troops have disarmed some of the militia. The situation for many East Timorese remains desperate. Trade unions must keep up solidarity action.

solid supporter of China's claims over Tibet and Taiwan! — but the mass mobilisations pushed him into speaking out against the Indonesian army terror to a degree which may seriously disrupt business between Australia and Indonesia. *The Far East Economic Review* reported that: "While the IMF and the World Bank have both condemned the violence in East Timor, neither organisation wants to withhold aid to achieve a purely political objective." (Imposing poverty and misery on the Indonesian workers and peasants in order to secure the profits of international banks counts with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank only as an "economic objective", not political at all!) However, both the IMF and World Bank were pushed into suspending aid. Their official grounds for doing so were a financial scandal which had blown some weeks previously, but on 24 September IMF managing director Michel Camdessus "repeated that the fund would not resume loans to Indonesia until the Bank Bali affair was properly investigated and the situation in East Timor improved"

(*AFR* 25 September, emphasis added).

The Australian unions have kept their strength in strategic sectors better than those in many other countries. Still, they are usually by no means radical. For 13 years, from 1983 to 1996, they placidly supported a Labor government which undermined their previous gains and their strength — and which continued an Australian state policy dating back to 1975 of full support for the Indonesian military and its rule in East Timor. Since the election of a fiercely anti-union Coalition government in March 1996, their stance has been defensive. How did they come to organise this tremendous solidarity action?

The tenacity of the East Timorese, continuing their battle for self-determination despite Indonesian terror which killed maybe one-

third of the whole population in the 1970s, was one essential precondition. Another was the rebellion of the Indonesian workers and students who toppled dictator Suharto in May 1998, discrediting all apologists for the Indonesian military. A third factor, however, must have been the efforts over many years of the Australian left to publicise the cause of the East Timorese within their labour movement. Thousands of leaflets, street protests, meetings, resolutions and so on finally bore fruit.

Particular credit here probably belongs to the Democratic Socialist Party, the biggest group of the Australian far left, which has made East Timor one of its most high profile causes. Sadly, the DSP blotted its record by switching, in the crucial week, to a fervent call for Australia to go to war with Indonesia as the only "immediate and practical" way to save the East Timorese. The situation was so urgent, said the DSP, that all the usual rules of socialist politics about looking to working class action and having no confidence in capitalist states ceased to apply — though, in a bizarre

evidence of their confusion, they also said that Australia must first get the approval of the UN! The call for war was not "immediate" or "practical" assistance to the East Timorese at all — unless you think that just asking could get the UN and Australia "immediately" and "practically" to do what no capitalist state has ever done, launch altruistic war. And if Australia and Indonesia do stumble into war, it will be no less bloody than the NATO-Serbia war.

The Australian trade unions also called for UN troops to East Timor — as did all factions of the East Timorese themselves — but by agreement with the Indonesians. Against Indonesia, any democrat must support the right of the East Timorese to invite in UN troops; and therefore, so long as the East Timorese want the UN troops there, almost all the Australian left refuses, and rightly so, to call for "UN-Australian troops out" (although the ISO, sister-group of the SWP-Britain, writes denunciations which leave them hard-pressed to explain why they do not make that call). That does not mean that socialists should follow the conservative ACTU leaders in their "common sense" assumption that UN-Australian military rule is the best and only alternative to Indonesian rule in East Timor, and positively endorse the troops. Our job is to make international solidarity strong enough that the East Timorese feel confident enough to assert their right to a free East Timor.

Much of the Australian ruling class is furious that Howard has damaged business ties with Indonesia. The *Australian Financial Review's* Peter Hartcher writes: "For the sake of the national interest, John Howard should keep quiet. Australia cannot afford any more Howard policy successes." This sentiment will create huge pressure on the Australian government to do deals with Indonesia over East Timor.

For that reason, continued vigilance and distrust of the Australian state by the Australian labour movement is vital. Australia will also be concerned to secure its capitalist interests in East Timor and in the rich oilfields of the narrow sea which lies between East Timor and Australia. For now, conflicts on this score are only potential. The East Timorese leaders have chosen to endorse the Timor Gap Treaty signed between Australia and Indonesia for the exploitation of the oilfields, reassure Australian and international investors that an independent East Timorese government would cherish their profits, and promise full compliance to the IMF. Nevertheless, socialists should advocate the full right

of the people of East Timor to determine their own future and control the wealth of their own coastal waters.

In East Timor itself, the situation is changing from day to day. As we go to press on 7 October, the UN-Australian troops (Interfet) have secured Dili and a few other towns, receiving a warm welcome from the East Timorese. They have got some food aid to some regions, and disarmed a few militia people. Most Indonesian troops have withdrawn from East Timor. Only about 1500 remain. It looks as if Indonesia's "People's Consultative Assembly" will soon ratify East Timorese independence. The Indonesian government is expected to sign an agreement with the UN within a day or so to permit the East Timorese in the West Timor refugee camps to return. But the great majority of East Timorese are still outside the UN-Australian controlled area — in hiding, in the refugee camps in West Timor where they were driven by the Indonesian military and militia, or in militia-controlled areas. It must be likely that many East Timorese are starving.

Continued smaller-scale militia massacres are reported. Militia people disarmed by the UN-Australian forces are handed over to the Indonesian police, who then release them. The militias are very far from being destroyed, though whether they will risk serious armed conflict with the UN-Australian forces, retire to Indonesian territory, or remain a subdued (for now) but menacing presence in East Timor, we still do not know. The East Timorese guerrilla movement, Falintil, claims to have driven the militia out of eastern East Timor. The UN-Australian forces have said they will disarm Falintil, but for now an uneasy deal has been made. The UN-Australian forces agree that Falintil can keep its arms in areas outside UN-Australian control; Falintil says it will disarm once it is sure all Indonesian forces have withdrawn.

On current UN plans, the dominant military power in East Timor in the next few years will be a revised UN force. According to the latest statements by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, it will comprise 9000 troops, about 2000 of them Australian; it will take over from Interfet within three months, and it will remain for at least three years. A "transitional" UN administration is planned for East Timor. Full East Timorese self-determination is a long way down the track. East Timor, a desperately poor nation even before the terror campaign, will require large-scale aid. It has been promised some. But now is the time to insist that the millions gained in profit by US, British, and Australian military sup-

pliers to the Indonesian military, and by multinationals producing with army-police labour in Indonesia, should rightfully be claimed for this purpose — and that the people of East Timor have the unbridgeable right to political and military control over their own country. In Indonesia, the East Timor crisis has left president Habibie discredited both with the military and with the reform-minded. There have been anti-Australian demonstrations in Indonesia, but mostly, it seems, concocted by the military. Far larger and more militant — and, for now, successful — have been the student protests against the army's attempt to gain increased powers."

Indonesia's largest trade-union organisation, the SBSI, stated that it "supports the actions of the Australian trade unions to pressure the Indonesian government to stop the violence in East Timor and recognise its right to self-determination. Though we are opposed to sweeping economic sanctions, we believe these workers' actions are sharp political protests that can help force the Indonesian government to comply with the May agreement [with the UN, on self-determination for East Timor]. We are concerned about government economic sanctions because they can hurt workers and peasants and because the Indonesian military may use them to gain the upper hand in the domestic political struggle. Nonetheless, we very much support the pickets and industrial action by the Australian trade unions".

Another Indonesian trade union federation, the FNPBI, linked to Indonesia's main left party, the PRD, declared "full support for all the solidarity actions and strikes conducted by trade unions worldwide", and called for immediate withdrawal of the Indonesian army and police from East Timor and the disbanding of the militias". Substantial sections of Indonesian big capital had evidently decided that holding East Timor cost more than it was worth, and some of them did speak out (less militantly) against the army terror. The leaders of two large Islamic parties, the PAN and PKB, came out in favour of admitting UN forces to East Timor, and so did sections of Megawati Sukarnoputri's PDI-P, though Megawati herself remained prudently silent.

A serious danger now in Indonesia is that Megawati, with her great popular support based on the vaguest of promises, and General Wiranto, chief of the army, will come together to form a new government which enables the army to restore its position.

Martin Thomas

Blair's 19th century, 21st century Party

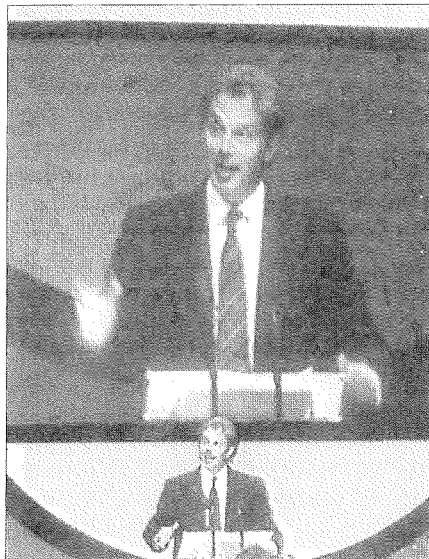
LABOUR Party conference this year was a triumph for the new Blairite policy-making structures. They effectively excluded the majority of issues in the Party that are contentious between the leadership and the membership. The only awkward items that were discussed were contemporary motions, whose place on the agenda is determined by the union bureaucracies.

The final year policy documents (all acceptable to the leadership) on Welfare, Health and Britain in the World, each a novelette long, were passed. No alternative positions had a realistic chance of getting debated. The "all or nothing" votes on policy areas became a test of Party loyalty, not a reasoned consideration of the issues.

Whilst the odds are stacked against anyone with a different view from the Labour Party leadership, the fact that no minority reports came forward from the National Policy Forum (NPF) and the fact that previous promises on the ability to take reports in parts were broken, without much dissent, shows the weakness of the left organisation in the Party. This is not totally related to the ascendancy of the leadership in Party organisation. It is also a result of a lack of political focus by the Labour left.

The success of the Blairite leadership clique in claiming credit for the landslide victory in 1997, and their subsequent re-use of the "don't rock the boat" cliché — used first to quell dissent before the 1997 election, and now being used to quell dissent in order to gain a "historic second term" — should not be underestimated. The pragmatic argument that being in power is 100% more effective (even if the ideology is near-unpalatable) than the correct ideology without power holds sway over the middle ground of the Labour Party, from the "old Labour" right (who don't like Blairism) through labour movement bureaucrats and their flunkies (who don't like Blairism) to the soft left (who don't like Blairism). These people make up the majority of individual Labour Party members. Blair and his supporters are a small clique whose coup on the Labour Party (via Clause Four and Partnership into Power) has been very successful.

The dichotomy of power with the wrong ideology versus no power and a socialistic ideology is of course totally



Blair's will be done

false. It's a lack of belief in popular socialism and a masochistic view of the labour movement. But that's the current state of play.

The hold over Party structures of Blairites was confirmed at this year's conference by: the vote for Conference Arrangements committee, Stephen Twigg and Yvette Cooper beating the alternative slate, headed by Audrey Wise, by 20,000 votes (140,000 odd to 120,000 odd); the vote for NPF positions, where the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy candidates gained no more than 30% of seats; and the threat of *The 21st Century Party* document. This document is due to go out for consultation throughout the Party until next summer.

It is vitally important that resistance is organised to the new proposals. They will mean the abolition of representative structures in the Party at constituency level (GCs). And with no representative structures it is in practice impossible to have accountability in Party organisation. The plans are to cut back trade union involvement and abolish the ability of ordinary Party members to vote on matters of policy. Executive Committees of local parties, elected yearly, will not have to be held to account by a wider body. Beyond this straightforward democratic argument there are other important issues to be tackled. There is a Millbank spin that the reason that (New) Labour did so badly in Euro and local elections this year is because local activists were wedded to an old-fashioned view of the

Party. So, if we change the structure and make them go out campaigning instead, not asking awkward questions at GCs, we will win the next election. Could Party policy and campaign priorities have had an effect in the less-than-enthusiastic response of Party members to canvassing? Never!

The plans are based on the false presumption that activists in smoke-filled rooms don't go out and campaign. And to involve and motivate members, organisations have to let them have a participatory role, not a cheerleading role. There is also the fact that the organised labour movement, primarily in trade unions, has always punched above its weight in campaigning — both in organisational experience and work. Every time Blair sides with big business he loses trade unionists campaigning for the Party. Then he needs more money in donations to cover for the lack of grassroots campaigning; for slick media work to get people to vote. The more money he needs, the more he relies on business donations. And so the spiral continues, all within the rhetoric of not being in hoc to "vested interests".

The resistance to *The 21st Century Party* will in the current situation inevitably be defensive. However, it would be a mistake to fall into the trap of "saving Old Labour" versus a modernisation of the Party. We should reject *The 21st Century Party* as an inadequate means of political representation of Labour Party members and the labour movement. We need a united campaign, like that against Clause 4, but one that stresses a modern agenda — a strengthened labour movement to fight the vested interests of the capitalists who bankrolled Thatcherism and now have their sleazy hands all over the Labour Party. We should create a powerful voice within the Party that marries democratic rights to the political expression of working class solidarity — for poor pensioners, against inequality in education, for trade union rights and other broad-based demands.

The democratisation of the trade union-Labour Party link is vital to any revival of the left in the Labour Party. A focus on the issues that would unite left Labour Party activists and trade unionists would give the left of the Party a positive agenda.

Continued on page 8

Spies and renegades

At a time when there is much hysteria about old spies in the press we might ask a few questions of our own which occur to me after reading Stan Crooke's review of Volkogonov's book on Trotsky. This work contains an odd little mystery.

In the preface to Volkogonov's book he thanks both his English collaborators Tamara Deutscher and Stuart Kirby. Tamara Deutscher was well-known and a liberal semi-Stalinist sort just when Volkogonov was trying to be a liberal Stalinist, so that makes sense. But who on earth was this English expert on Trotsky, Stuart Kirby?

Stuart Kirby was a very early Trotskyist who had been out of the movement since at least 1937. (He is never mentioned by name in either John Archer's thesis or Martin Uphams's.) He was at the London School of Economics 1932-33, where he recruited John Archer, then he taught in Japan, then

worked as Research Economist in the League of Nations and, just before the war, joined the Indian Army. This was sensible if you did not wish to meet dangerous Nazis in Europe. In India he attained the dizzy height of Lieutenant Colonel in the Intelligence Corps though as far as I can see from the Indian Army List his work involved operating in those parts of India that contained no fanatical Japanese but only nationalist agitators. After the war he became a university lecturer and eventually Professor of Geography at Aston University, where he wrote books and articles in military journals on the Far East which often express extreme right wing views. So much so indeed that in the correspondence columns of the *Royal United Service Institution Journal*, poor, puzzled countryside-loving Lt-Colonels wondered if he was correct in thinking that the "Greens" and ecology movement were part of a sinister Communist plot for world domination. At Warwick University at the time of the student agitation in the late '60s, some student members of the old International Socialists believed that

he was an agent of the security services.

How on earth did this obscure and third-rate academic from the far conservative right become Volkogonov's adviser on Trotskyism? Did Kirby and he only get in contact after 1991 and the fall of the Soviet Union? Is this likely? Kirby was about 80 years old then, unknown as any kind of expert on Trotskyism. His academic work was economic geography, such as *The Soviet Far East* (1971) — what I call "bomb-aiming manuals" — and his Trotskyist past almost totally obscure to any but the obsessives of *Revolutionary History*. I only picked him up because of my interest in strategy, tactics and military history and

"How on earth did this obscure and third-rate academic from the far conservative right become Volkogonov's adviser on Trotskyism?"

thus I must be the only Trotskyist in the world who once subscribed to and read the *Journal of the RUSI*, (Royal United Services Institution). So Kirby was a man who, like Volkogonov, had been in Military Intelligence but who had been out of the Trotskyist movement since 1935 or so — 57 years! In his academic work he had never published anything on Trotskyism. Had he, with the full permission of the security services and as his patriotic duty, been in contact with Volkogonov for years and was he perhaps one of the conduits, or as we say in our movement, the sewers, along which information on the Trotskyist and non-Stalinist movement here was passed to the GPU in exchange perhaps for the odd tidbit of information going the other way? It is more than likely that some nationalist, anti-imperialist movement, which would not toe the Moscow line completely, would be the subject of such little exchanges.

Indeed it is more than probable that 20 or 30 years ago Kirby got some of this information from his old friends here when many of them were around and active in the movement. Fleet Street at any rate would always be ready to approve of anyone willing to betray their friends for their country.

Ted Crawford

Much work needs to be done in affiliated unions — calling their representatives on the NPF and NEC to account, campaigning on their issues within the Party, not relying on bureaucratic methods to advance their views, and drawing collective union lines on issues of privatisation, PFI and welfare. These lines need to be drawn within the Party — not in official union policy that is conveniently forgotten at Labour Party meetings and Labour Party conferences.

On the clappometer, Prescott was welcomed more warmly than Blair's "Old" Labour Ministers got standing ovations, whilst "New" Labour ones met with polite applause. Conference speeches against privatisation of Air Traffic Control, against the "whingeing face of the CBI", and restating Old Labour values of a welfare state that cares, were all hits. When the trade union bureaucracies decided to take a stand on contemporary motions on the Working Time Directive and the Post Office, they won. The contradictions are all there: gut working class feeling trapped by Old Labour loyalty and New Labour design.

A conference delegate

Youth and students on the net

The WL youth paper, *Bolshy*

<http://www.bolshy.free-online.co.uk/>
Not for the fainthearted

The Campaign for Free Education (CFE)

http://members.xoom.com/nus_cfe
From which you can download the new tuition fees non-payment campaign pack, participate in discussions, join their mailing list and get details of the latest student actions in Britain and around the world.

Or e-mail the cfe: cfe@gn.apc.org

Women students and young feminists

<http://www.studentwomen.org.uk/>
for over one hundred links to feminist sites in Britain and internationally and all the latest news from the National Union of Students women's campaign.
Or e-mail helen_r@nus.org.uk

Iran: there will be more student protests

OVER the last few days, an obscure play, in a student journal with a circulation of less than 150, has become a major source of political debate and upheavals in Iran. Fatwa (death sentences) are issued by clerics against its authors, bazaars are closing down in major cities such as Tehran, Friday prayer leaders cry and encourage mass hysteria against the student writers of the play, in scenes Iran hasn't seen since the publication of *Satanic Verses*.

It is alleged that the 12th Shia Imam has been insulted in this play. As many have pointed out, if it wasn't for the exaggerated reaction of the fundamentalists and their hysteric behaviour, very few people would have ever been aware of this play and its content. The question is what are the aims of the fundamentalists in pursuing such an issue.

The answer must lie in their failure to unite their forces and defend "true Islam" following the student demonstrations of July 99. In an echo of the Shah's generals who kept saying "had we killed the first batch of demonstrators we wouldn't have witnessed the revolution," clerics and Friday prayer leaders kept saying last week "if the authorities had killed the protesters when the religious leader Khamenei and his predecessor Khomeini were insulted, we wouldn't have seen such disrespect for the 12th Imam".

In a clear attempt to restrict freedoms and go back to the bad old days of severe dictatorship, another cleric questioned why the country needed so many papers, and journals: "Surely two papers are sufficient to cover the opinions of the Muslim nation!"

Many have considered the attacks of the last few weeks against the liberals, the press and student leaders the worst of the last few years, yet it now looks as the danger from the right is over, for the time being. That the fundamentalists, even using their last weapon, the 12th Shia Imam (who has disappeared and will only appear to save the world), have failed and even the most senior cleric Khamenei has heard the "voice of protests" and realises that the tide of

opposition cannot be reversed simply by bringing up religious relics.

With the opening of the universities in the last few months before elections to the Majles, with rising unemployment and increasing hardship for the working class, the prospects for protest against the regime are very high. Threats of execution and political repression have not worked and both factions of the regime are weary of the dangers ahead. However, the student movement needs to find its allies amongst

the working class, whose independent protest against sackings, low pay, lack of payment of salaries and so on has been widespread.

The combined struggles for democracy, a decent wage and class struggle can and will bring down Iran's Islamic republic. Governments who have decided to support this regime in its dying days, such as the British Labour Government should be wary of the anger of Iranian people.

Yassmin

Writing off Third World debt

BOB Geldof, Bono, the Pope, Bill Clinton, Gordon Brown, some bishops and Oxfam are going to save the Third World. Right?

To read the newspaper reports on the latest successes of the Jubilee 2000 campaign, which is calling on Western governments to cancel Third World debt for the millennium, you'd think so.

Even better, they're not just going to write off the debt. They're going to insist that the interest saved is invested in health and education, and under no circumstances spent on anything unpleasant — for example, Hawk jets or superguns.

Clinton has announced that he intends to waive the \$5.7 billion debt owed to the US by 36 poor countries (provided Congress agrees; a neat political manoeuvre against the Republicans) under such conditions. The British Government, has pretty much agreed to follow the US. Although they are not (yet) writing off the full \$354 billion which Jubilee 2000 estimates is owed to governments, private banks and the IMF/World Bank, they are heading in the right direction. It's a good thing.

Why are the IMF's capitalist bankers and a variety of bourgeois governments going along with this?

First, it must, to them, be good business sense. From their perspective, it's largely a paper accounting exercise. Far better to write off these debts, gain some public approval, then start again making money by investing in solid multinational businesses which can efficiently exploit workers in the countries in question.

Second, poverty and debt are a barrier to political stability. While, during the Cold War, countries in massive debt to the West provided a useful bulwark against the Stalinist empire, now that need has gone. Less debt means consumers with more money, expanding markets; buoyant economies help guard against political troubles.

But it would be a mistake to think that the Western governments are playing fair with the Third World. Take, for example, Africa's HIV/AIDS epidemic. The most effective anti-HIV drugs are hugely expensive. Cheap versions could be made locally, but the multinational drug companies own the patents. The great debt-relieving US government is backing the drug companies' legal moves to maintain their monopolies. A large amount of money saved by debt relief will flow straight back to the US into the pockets of the (legal) drug barons. And the same for agriculture, and civil engineering contracts, and the rest.

The governments have a way of making a big deal out of debt relief. Figures like \$354 billion sound staggering. But let's put that figure in perspective: the three richest people in the USA are worth \$130 billion. To the bankers this money isn't a big deal. To the people whose countries have been in hock to the international loan-sharks for years it is the difference between life and death.

So, one cheer for Bob, Bill, Gordon and the bishops, but let's not be taken in. Capitalism hasn't suddenly developed a conscience: it's just changing tactics.

Cath Fletcher



The Blair Stitch-up Project

Saturday

OUR South West train to Bournemouth — where we are going for the Labour Party Conference — has friendly staff, prompt service and up-to-date upholstery. I realise why when the Prime Minister disembarks, to the delight of several baby Blairites.

At the union's hotel I meet up with several of our delegation. We agree that current union policy on the earnings link criterion for pensions means that our union cannot support the policy document on welfare. We also decide to support some of the CLP constitutional amendments on keeping an open reselection procedure for MPs and increasing the number of contemporary resolutions on the agenda.

Sunday

Delegation meeting. Risk the wrath of the General Secretary, but the only thing we win is support for a CLP constitutional amendment on MPs' reselection. A long discussion on the welfare document finishes in a close vote. Those who vote for the document say we cannot be seen to reject such a central plank of New Labour policy. Precisely why we wanted to vote against! We have no choice on contemporary motions: the General Secretary will cut a deal at the joint union stitch-up (the block vote is not dead: the unions can determine the outcome of this ballot).

Conference opens with the formalities: merit awards, General Secretary's address. There are two attempts to refer back the Conference Arrangements Report, one on the question of ruling out of order the contemporary motions on pensions, and one on the principle of being able to refer back parts of long policy documents. Both are important democratic points, but most delegates have little idea of the procedures or the significance of the report, and vote to accept it.

21st Century Party, an ultra-modernising report on abolishing General Committees, first appeared to delegates today — on our conference hall seats! We still manage to have a mini-debate on it, with several speeches for!

At the women's reception, speculation about which contemporary motions will be on the agenda. If all the unions stick to the line we'll discuss two motions which will annoy the Blairites: the Post Office and the Working Time Directive. The other three are sycophantic plants to highlight Government policy initiatives.

Monday

Included in the debate on Monday morning is a report on women's issues. It's a minor item and evidence of the Blairites' fear of demands for a stronger women's organisation.

At lunchtime I have a speech to write, having moved fast and proposed myself to speak at the delegation meeting. Back in the hall, I stick my hand up, to no avail. Too many people on the platform know me by sight. At the end of the afternoon session, votes are taken on the Democracy and Citizenship and Economy reports. A delegate moves to refer back the section on PFI. The Chair won't accept the reference back, so the delegate — a Claire Wadly, from Brighton — challenges his ruling. In the confusion, most delegates abstain and the vote is won. The Chair says we need to vote again tomorrow morning after he consults the Standing Orders. Keep voting until you get it right!

At the fringe meetings that night Claire is the toast of the conference. *The Labour Left Briefing* meeting is very well attended — 100 to 150 people. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn, Ken Livingstone, Liz Davies and Christine Shawcroft. We cover everything from East Timor to internal Labour Party (non-)democracy.

Tuesday

To the Education and Employment policy session, where people ask questions on the range of education issues, including when will we get rid of tuition fees and bring back student grants. The issues of casualised workers and access to parental leave are brought up by union speakers. The chances of getting called to speak in the sessions is roughly 2:1 as opposed to about 50:1 in the conference.

Tuesday afternoon — the leader's speech. The biggest cheers came for the mention of Stephen Lawrence, the reintegration of dental services into the NHS and other "Old Labour" crowd pleasers. Blair tries to convince us that because he is an egalitarian — "each individual is of equal worth" — he is following in a socialist tradition. The delegates want to believe it. Still, a quarter of our delegation refuse to join in the obligatory standing ovation.

That night at the *Tribune* rally, the issue of London Mayor is hotting up. Livingstone wants a Government bonds issue to finance the London Underground. Tony Benn declares that, if the class war is over, New

Labour should also issue statements saying Darwin was wrong, that Galileo made a mistake and the world really does revolve around Millbank!

Wednesday

Prescott's speech. A tactical dilemma — do I clap the man set to privatise the Tube, to prove he's more popular than the man who'd privatise everything that moves?

Some of us from the United Campaign for the Repeal of the Anti Union Laws leaflet delegates attending the Industry, Culture and Agriculture policy session. Stephen Byers refuses to accept that Britain should conform to ILO standards on the right to strike and the right to take solidarity action. His criterion is what's best for Britain. Fewer rights, more exploitation and cheap labour! Best for Britain!

Wednesday afternoon, and some basic trade union speeches on the Working Time Directive and Poverty. Bill Morris gets the silver star for mentioning shorter hours at work, but Rodney Bickerstaffe gets the gold star for getting in £5 minimum wage, earnings link to state pension and the need for jam today in his speech on poverty.

At 6.30 pm, outside the official conference, there is a question and answer session with Government ministers in the DfEE. I arrive to find it is sponsored by British Aerospace (the company that makes Indonesia's Hawk jets.)

Thursday

In the café, I overhear a party worker complaining to her friends that she has spent all week writing speeches for delegates, but only some of them have been called! A good use of our membership fees?

It really is a long week. We are on to Health now. At lunchtime there is free Havana Club rum at the Cuba Solidarity meeting. But it's not a good idea to indulge — difficult to stay awake all afternoon.

The Socialist Campaign Group Supporters' Network meeting is an opportunity for delegates to discuss the need to fight *21st Century Party* and make the NPF more representative of the views of Party members.

It would be nice to take the Blairite lid off, and let the socialism in the Party out.

Friday

A bit of razzmatazz and the *Red Flag*, then home at last.



Men and women are united by the need to fight the class struggle, but women also need to fight for their rights as women

Women, capitalism and socialism

The history of women under capitalism is rich with brave struggle, with victories and defeats. Janine Booth and Rosie Woods examine some of the events of the last century and a half of women's battles and highlight the lessons for socialists.

THE capitalist system re-arranged the way production was organised, and completely changed women's lives. Previously, the household had been the centre of production: goods were made in and around the home. Now, goods would be produced in factories, and in far greater quantities. Large-scale industrialisation took over the manufacture of goods. But another essential part of the production process was left at home. Just as machines had to be cleaned, maintained and re-fuelled, so did workers. And just as worn-out machines needed to be replaced, so did worn-out workers. Housework and child-rearing continued in the home. Of course, we feed and clothe ourselves for our own benefit, as well as for the bosses. And although bringing up children is hard work, it is a labour of love. So we get on with it, and employers do not even have to pay for these services women provide for them by renewing the workforce from day to day and from one generation to the next.

Capitalism had not invented housework, but something sig-

nificant had changed. Housework was no longer tied to the production process. It was now a distinct sphere, private and isolated. Building on prejudices that already existed, and taking advantage of women's biological role in childbirth, the new system allocated domestic work to women. The idea of "breadwinners" (men) and "housewives" (women) came into being. But working class women could not survive on the work they did at home; many sought employment either in domestic service or in factories.

Financial necessity drove the working class woman towards waged work, from the earliest days of capitalism. The waged work available to women was the lowest paid, lowest in status, drudgery. Conditions of working and living were terrible, as the cities were overcrowded, filthy and without sanitation. Most female factory workers were unskilled or semi-skilled; in Germany, employers considered them "willig und billig", submissive and cheap.

Josephine Butler argues that although simple sexist prejudice made some bosses exclude women, the over-riding factor in women's employment was the potential for exploitation: "Women, refused admission to [haberdashers'] shops on the pretext that they are not strong enough to lift bales of goods, have been afterwards traced to the occupations of dock porter and coal-heavers. In practice, the employments of women are not determined by their lightness, but by their low pay" (*The*

Education and Employment of Women).

Reacting to the miserable existence of women workers, Ferdinand Lassalle, leader of the General German Workers' Association, argued that women should be barred from working in the factories. He put forward the wage fund theory, or iron law of wages. This theory held that there was only a certain, fixed amount of money to be paid out in wages: therefore there was no point in struggles for higher wages; and female labour would only lead to a cut in male workers' pay. Lassalle and his followers demanded that women be paid to work at home, and urged men to take strike action to keep women out of the workplace. The Lassalleans — or "proletarian anti-feminists" — added what we would now consider thoroughly sexist prejudices to their theories, claiming that "the rightful work of women and mothers is in the home and family... the woman and mother should stand for the cosiness and poetry of domestic life".

In the 1850s and '60s, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels joined the debate on women's work in industry explaining why Lassalle's "iron law of wages" was wrong, and opposing his arguments against women working. They accused the proletarian anti-feminists of looking back to the old patriarchal household, instead of looking forward to social progress.

Marx and Engels argued that women's work was both an historical necessity and a pre-condition for achieving women's liberation. With the private and public spheres sharply separated, women had to break out from the private prison and find a place in the public sphere alongside men. However poor her conditions, a woman at work was not entirely dependent on one man. If a woman went out of the house and to work, she would come into contact with other working-class women and men; and she could take part in workplace struggles.

Engels argued that "to emancipate woman and make her the equal of man is and remains an impossibility so long as the woman is shut out from social productive labour and restricted to private domestic labour. The emancipation of woman will only be possible when women can take part in production on a large, social scale, and domestic work no longer claims anything but an insignificant amount of her time" (*The Origin of the*

Family, Private Property and the State).

However emancipation for women had to mean more than the right to be exploited in the factories as well as at home! Working class women were in a contradictory situation: they needed to earn money, but sexism stood in their way, and their conditions at work were appalling. This contradiction — and the opportunity to organise collectively — brought women into struggle.

On 23 June 1888, the newspaper *The Link* published an article — entitled 'White Slavery in London' — reporting the working conditions at Bryant and May's match factory in London's East End. Written by Fabian socialist Annie Besant, the article described the long hours of the women and girl workers, their poverty wages, the punitive system of fines that pared their meagre wages down yet further, violence from the foremen and the tedious, exhausting and downright dangerous nature of the work. Bryant and May threatened to sue for libel, and drafted a statement renouncing the article's claims which they instructed the matchgirls to sign. The girls refused and the alleged ringleader was sacked. The women in the department, and then in the whole factory, walked out on strike. Annie Besant helped to organise the strike: there were mass meetings, collection and distribution of strike money, and widespread support from the young trade union movement. On 18 July, Bryant and May conceded all the girls' demands. On 27 July, the women set up the Union of Women Matchmakers.

The matchmakers' success was a turning point for the workers' movement. Until then, many socialists (including Annie Besant) had thought that it was not worthwhile organising unskilled workers. Trade unionism had been based around protecting the privileges of particular crafts and skilled trades. Now it would be different. Yvonne Kapp, biographer of Eleanor Marx, wrote that "the Bryant and May strike... was the small spark that ignited the blaze of revolt and the wildfire spread of trade unionism among the unskilled". Many people date "New Unionism" from the "Dockers' Tanner" strike of 1889. This understates the role that working women played in shaping the British labour movement.

International Women's Day

ON 28 February 1909, socialist women in the USA held their first national Women's Day, staging marches and meetings across America to demand political rights for working women. The next year, Clara Zetkin proposed to the International Congress of Socialist Women that one day each year be marked as a Working Women's Day. The Congress agreed that on this day, socialists in all countries should hold big events, involving men and women in demanding improvements in the lives of working women. In 1911, over a million women and men marched and rallied in Denmark, Germany, Switzerland and Austria.

On 25 March 1911, less than a week after that first International Women's Day, over 140 workers died in the Triangle Fire in New York. Mostly young Jewish and Italian immigrant women, they burned to death when the Triangle Shirtwaist Company factory where they worked caught fire. They died because working conditions were terrible and safety measures lacking, because capitalists pocket the profit they make from women's labour rather than spending it on civilised working conditions. Capi-

talism killed them.

During these years, more and more women were going to work in the factories, and in domestic service. But women were still denied the right to vote. Russian socialist Alexandra Kollontai explained why the early International Women's Days focused on winning the vote for women: "In the last years before the war the rise in prices forced even the most peaceful housewife to take an interest in questions of politics and to protest loudly against the bourgeoisie's economy of plunder. 'Housewives uprisings' became increasingly frequent, flaring up at different times in Austria, England, France and Germany. The working women understood that it wasn't enough to break up the stalls at the market or threaten the odd merchant: they understood that such action doesn't bring down the cost of living. You have to change the politics of the government. And to achieve this, the working class has to see that the franchise is widened."

Since socialist women founded International Women's Day, it has been adopted by non-socialist feminists, governments and even the United Nations. It is now more likely to be marked by an aromatherapy open day than by a march for women's rights. We should return to the original purpose of the Day: to mobilise support for working class women's demands, and to celebrate the contribution that women make to the struggle for human liberation.



British Suffragettes and hunger strikers.

The German socialist women's movement

IN the last decade of the 19th century, socialist women in Germany began to organise. Although Germany had repealed its Anti-Socialist Law in 1890, there were still Association Laws banning women from many forms of political activity alongside men. To get round these legal impediments socialist women ran education clubs for working class women and girls. They set up "agitation commissions", and then, when these were banned, they elected a network of socialist women organisers (*Vertrauenspersonen*). They held public meetings, and recruited women to the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

One of the SPD's leaders, Clara Zetkin, edited a socialist women's newspaper, *Die Gleichheit*. The paper was designed to be more than just a good read: it provided education and ammunition for women activists. There were notices of upcoming meetings and events in a column called the Working Women's Movement; there were descriptions of the conditions that women endured at work; and there were also articles explaining Marxist theory. *Die Gleichheit* was immensely popular, attaining a circulation of 124,000 by 1911.

The German socialist women firmly identified themselves as a movement for *working class* women, distinguishing themselves sharply from the numerous "bourgeois feminists" of the time. One particular issue — "protective legislation" — demonstrated the different views of the two movements. The socialists demanded that laws be introduced to protect women at work: for example, banning work at night and around the time of childbirth. Bourgeois feminists believed such laws would undermine their claims for formal equality for women.

Clara Zetkin firmly believed a cross-class women's movement was not possible. She argued that women of the capitalist class and women of the working class were engaged in entirely different struggles, for a different kind of liberation. Bourgeois women sought to win the right to compete with men of their own class on a "level playing field". Working class women had

to struggle *alongside* men of their own class to abolish class society and liberate all humanity. Of course not all working class, or even socialist, men treated women as comrades! The women often complained of patronising and sexist treatment within their own party.

When the Association Law was repealed in 1908, the SPD's leadership took the opportunity to disband the women's organisation. The women's congress was cancelled, and all special structures for women closed down. This was not simply an attack by men on women; it was part of the offensive by a newly developed

right wing in the SPD which wanted to "make peace with capitalism" against the left, with which the women's section was politically aligned. The SPD leaders gutted *Die Gleichheit* of its political content: they even forced it to include a fashion supplement!

The women objected to the party leadership's actions. Although the Association Law had forced them to organise separately at first, the women had come to value their autonomy, and campaigned to maintain it even after the repeal of the law. Experience had shown that a socialist movement needs to have a specific strategy to mobilise women, and the driving force would be the women's own activity.

The fight for universal suffrage

THE German SPD campaigned for universal suffrage: votes for all adult men and women. Socialist parties in other European countries, such as Austria, campaigned for votes only for all men. Some feminists, too, stopped short of full political rights, and were prepared to accept "votes for ladies": that is, the right for property-owning women to vote. Clara Zetkin insisted on votes for all women and men. She argued that "votes for ladies" was not a "first step" to enfranchising all women, but a "final step" to enfranchising the whole of the capitalist class and thus would strengthen the power of the exploiting class over the exploited.

In Britain, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) — the most famous of the suffragette organisations — was also willing to support "votes for ladies". A cartoon in the WSPU's paper *Votes for Women* in 1912 compared the denial of votes to women with being forced to travel second class when one had a first class ticket: definitely a well-to-do lady's point of view! Sylvia Pankhurst, on the other hand, would settle for nothing less than universal suffrage, and turned her attention to organising the East London Federation of the Suffragettes (ELFS). Christabel later forced Sylvia out of the

WSPU for sharing public platforms with socialist men such as George Lansbury and James Connolly and for championing the rights of working class women.

Sylvia's East End suffragettes organised speakers' classes for working class women, indoor and outdoor public meetings, door-to-door canvassing and frequent, huge marches through East London and to Westminster. They sold thousands of copies of their weekly newspaper *Woman's Dreadnought*.

Christabel thought that working-class women were no use in the fight for the franchise. Sylvia responded: "Some people tell us that it is neither specially important that working-women should agitate for the Vote, nor specially important that they should have it. They forget that, comparatively, the leisured, comfortably situated women are but a little group, and the working women a multitude. Some people say that the lives of working women are too hard and their education too small for them to become a powerful force in winning the Vote, many though they are. Such people have forgotten their history."

It is tempting to look back and imagine a crusade for something so obviously right that no-one could disagree. But the suffragettes were fiercely attacked, physically, verbally, and with the full force of the law. Denied access to democratic channels, the suffragettes took up militant action, breaking windows, heckling Cabinet ministers and hunger striking. Some accused the women of harming their own prospects of success. Passing sentence on two window-breakers, a judge stated that "but for the mistaken action of a section of the women's franchise movement... a reasonable extension of the franchise to women would have been secured". It is much more likely that without militant action, politicians would have continued to ignore women's demands. Today, people still advise campaigners to moderate our behaviour so as not to damage our own cause: the suffragettes proved that this approach is mistaken.

By mid-1913, more than 2,000 suffragettes had spent time in prison. Many women prisoners took up a hunger and thirst

strike, and prison officers brutally forced food and drink down their throats. The Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health) Act 1913 provided for hunger strikers to be released until they regained a little strength, only to then be arrested and imprisoned again. The suffragettes called it the Cat and Mouse Act. Police attacks on the East End marches were so regular and so severe that campaigners held drill training and set up a "People's Army" to defend themselves. Women (and socialists) have fought for liberation in far harsher conditions than we face today!

Direct action was vital in winning votes for women, but the real difference between radicalism and conservatism was demonstrated by the different *political* directions taken by the leaders of the suffragettes. Emmeline Pankhurst wanted only "votes for ladies", and she went on to support Britain's imperialist slaughter in the First World War, and joined the Conservative Party. Christabel urged the Tories to support votes for women in order to prevent the women's movement becoming too left wing. Sylvia however became a working-class champion and a communist.

What the Welfare State meant for women

THE 1930s were years of bitter suffering for working class people in Britain and abroad. The Depression blighted lives with mass unemployment, slum housing and crushing poverty. In 1933, the Women's Health Committee surveyed 1250 working class mothers in Britain, and found anaemia, rheumatism, breast abscesses, varicose veins, constipation, phlebitis, bad teeth, neuralgia, backaches and gynaecological ailments. Women's death in childbirth was increasing, and 500 women died each year as a result of (illegal) abortions.

In 1945, when Hitler had been beaten, people were not prepared to return to the degradation and poverty of the years before the War. They elected a Labour government, which set

Women and revolution

ON Women's Day 1917, working class Russian women held a big demonstration in Petrograd. They wanted the war and the food shortage to end: they wanted bread and peace. The Petrograd women started a movement which led to revolution. The Russian Revolution was the only occasion in history when the working class took power and held onto it for a significant period of time.

What did the workers' state do for women? When the Bolsheviks took power, they scrapped the old, reactionary laws. They legislated for freedom of divorce and abortion, and for full legal and political equality for women — including the vote. They ran education campaigns against the seclusion and veiling of women in the Muslim areas of the Soviet Union. The Bolshevik policy was to liberate women from the burden of housework. So they set up communal kitchens, laundries, schools and nurseries. They introduced rights that we have not yet achieved in Britain over 80 years later — two months' paid maternity leave, and paid "nursing breaks" for working mothers to breast-feed their babies. Special trains took birth control facilities to remote areas.

But fulfilling this vision was difficult at that time in Russia. The world war had battered the largely peasant economy; invasion and civil war battered it further. The communal laundries, nurseries and facilities were woefully poor in quality. The Russian workers were relying on

workers in other countries to make similar revolutions. But unlike the Bolsheviks, the workers' leaders in those countries were cowards and traitors. The revolutions were betrayed and defeated: the Soviet Union was isolated.

Women's progress was thrown into reverse when Stalin won control of the Communist Party, crushing opposition from Trotsky and others. Stalin overturned the revolution and murdered its leaders.

The new regime glorified motherhood and "family values", just as Hitler's Nazis were doing in Germany. The family could play a similar role for Stalin's new class system as it did for capitalism, reproducing workers and encouraging deference. Women were given the "double burden": oppressed at home and exploited at work. Abortion became illegal in the Soviet Union in 1933; from 1944, medals (the Order of Maternal Glory) were issued to women who bore many children. Women were not allowed to choose not to become mothers — unless they were members of the bureaucratic ruling class. Contraception was so hard to get and so ineffective that in the 1980s (by which time abortion was legal again), Russian women were having an average eight abortions each, carried out in awful conditions, often with no anaesthetic.

Does Russia's experience prove that a workers' revolution will simply lead to renewed oppression of women? No — Stalinism's victory was a defeat both for women and for the working class. The counter-revolution that crushed women's rights also destroyed workers' democracy.

THE COVER STORY



Attacks on the welfare state threaten the freedoms women have won

up the Welfare State, nationalised important industries and pursued a policy of full employment.

The Welfare State — perhaps especially the National Health Service, set up in 1948 — made a big difference to women's lives. A friend's father remembers that before the NHS, a "doctor's pot" stood on the mantelpiece alongside the "rent pot". Spare money would be put in it when possible, for doctors' fees. The pot was for serious illnesses: his mother would usually take him to the pharmacist rather than the doctor, discuss his symptoms and buy a treatment.

The new Welfare State made parts of women's domestic role public concerns. The NHS provided care for the sick; state schools were free for the first time, and provided milk, meals and medical inspections; benefits stopped people falling into absolute poverty. Women's burden eased.

But the Welfare State was flawed. Benefits were set at a lower level than originally planned. Although women had worked in factories and fields during the war, the government's "full employment" meant full *male* employment. The benefits system treated women not as individuals but as men's dependants. Beveridge — the Liberal whose report had led to the creation of the Welfare State — believed that married women should not get benefits, and that divorced women should qualify only if the break-up was not their fault. Despite these things, the welfare state was an enormous victory for working class women and men.

Today the gains of the Welfare State which made such a great difference to women in Britain are under constant attack. Everything that was won is being clawed back for the benefit of the ruling class, to save money and make the workers pay. We can never be complacent about any victories, under capitalism — what you win one day, you have to fight to keep the next.

The modern women's movement

IN the '50s and '60s, women's lives changed again. Washing machines, central heating, fridges and laundrettes arrived, making housework a little easier. More women worked for wages and more women went to college. Traditional moral restrictions relaxed, and advances in contraception meant

women were no longer completely enslaved to their bodies.

But there are two sides to this story. Not everyone could afford a washing machine or a fridge. While more women worked, their jobs usually had low pay and were low status; work outside the home was regarded as an addition to, rather than a replacement for, housework. Working class women continued to be forced into backstreet abortions, as abortion remained illegal in Britain until 1967. Women with money could buy semi-legal, safe abortions. Just as in the 19th century, the tensions, contradictions and double standards in women's lives propelled a new women's movement into life.

The new women's movement in Europe and the USA was encouraged by the growth of other radical movements: student protests in Europe, rebellions in Portuguese colonies in Africa, the French general strike of May '68, the movement against America's war in Vietnam. Feminism in the USA drew its inspiration and momentum from the struggles of black

people, as it had in the previous century. On 1 December 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Park, tired and laden with shopping, sat down on a bus and refused to give up her seat to a white person. She defied the racist laws, and started the first bus boycott. Her single act of courage sparked a powerful black civil rights movement.

In the summer of 1968, women sewing machinists at Ford's in Dagenham, east London, went on strike for equal pay. The women, who made the upholstery of car seats, challenged Ford's sexist grading structure and demanded to be defined as skilled workers. They won a significant pay rise, but did not win the right to be graded as skilled workers. The Ford's strike prompted working women to set up the National Joint Action Campaign Committee for Women's Equal Rights. It was an important event in the rebirth of feminism, which — at least in Britain, and at least initially — had strong involvement of working class women.

A conference of 600 women at Ruskin College, Oxford, in 1970 launched the women's liberation movement. The conference became an annual event, and the second, in 1971, agreed the four original demands of women's liberation: equal pay; equal education and job opportunities; free contraception and abortion on demand; and free 24-hour nurseries under community control.

The women's liberation movement inspired many thousands of women to speak up for their rights. It forced a big change in popular attitudes (or at least lip-service) to women and our role in society; it piled on the pressure for important legal advances, such as the 1975 Equal Pay Act. Women organised, met, marched, discussed and protested in numbers we have not seen since. But by the end of the decade, the women's movement had slowed to a halt and broken into fragments.

The movement had lost its focus on winning tangible, material gains for women. The emphasis had shifted to more personal matters. In the early days, the slogan, "the personal is political" proclaimed that issues which may seem personal, such as childcare, contraception, housework and domestic violence, were in fact political issues demanding political answers. But by the end of the 1970s, the slogan meant something completely different — that a feminist could only have an opinion on issues

she had personally experienced, and that her personal life was open to political scrutiny.

The 1978 women's liberation conference decided that "the right of every woman to a self-defined sexuality" should be made a preamble to all the other demands (which by then already included "an end to discrimination against lesbians"). A vague statement of principle, which placed no specific demand on government or any other institution, was promoted over and above demands that would have transformed the material conditions of millions of women's lives. This move, which many women at the conference opposed, caused such division amongst feminists that there were no more women's liberation conferences after 1978.

Radical feminism versus socialist feminism

THE politics of "radical feminism" had come to dominate the women's movement. The radical feminists' view was that the basic divide in society was a gender divide; the problem was "patriarchy", a whole system of male power over women. They saw feminism as a struggle of all women against all men. The radical feminists conceded a fundamental point to the sexists: that men and women are naturally different, that there are unchangeable male and female natures. Their analysis reduced women's oppression to a matter of biology. They played down the idea that humans are social beings, shaped by our experiences; and that if we can change the conditions that shape people, then we can change both men and women. Radical feminism was essentially pessimistic about the prospects for women's liberation.

Radical feminism stressed "consciousness raising", and held that a woman's personal experience determined the validity of her opinions. Feminists became used to hearing speeches begin with "As a lesbian/black woman/survivor...". Susan Ardill and Sue O'Sullivan, writing in *Feminist Review*, described this as "a matter of rank determining righteousness"; the radical feminists were setting up hierarchies of oppression.

The women's movement became increasingly middle class in composition and outlook. It was less welcoming to working-class women. The radical feminists would not have anything to do with trade unions because they were male-dominated. They cut the women's movement off from the organisations which

many working women looked to for protection at work (and in doing so, refused to help these women tackle the male domination).

Other women argued for a "cultural feminism", asserting "women's culture" against "male values", and talking about a "special world of women". They echoed the sexist stereotypes at the heart of women's subordination, and capitulated to reactionary ideas.

Radical and cultural feminism failed the women's movement because its "men versus women" outlook could not explain the range of oppression and conflict that exists. Neither could it provide strategies that inspired, involved — or even seemed relevant to — the big majority of women.

Socialist feminism, on the other hand, could have done both. Socialist feminists realised that women's liberation is impossible while society remains divided into classes, and that women are ourselves divided by class. They wanted women to fight not in isolation, but as part of a movement for a radically different world, free from sexual oppression and from class exploitation. An emphasis on the needs and demands of working class women — and on practical campaigning rather than navel-gazing — would bring in millions of those women, to swell the ranks and make a mighty movement. However "socialist feminism" as an independent political current was not strong enough to undertake this task. And not all socialist groups were willing to rise to the challenge.

Some socialist groups refused to identify as feminist or to get involved in the women's movement. Organisations such as the Militant (now the Socialist Party) and the International Socialists (now Socialist Workers' Party) argued that women's self-organisation was diversionary and caused unnecessary division between men and women. Other, smaller factions behaved in a sectarian, heavy-handed way towards the women's movement. As class is the basic driving force of oppression, men and women should fight in unity and not separately. They ignored the fact that the labour movement and the socialist movement have often been hostile to women's rights and that sexism is deep-rooted. Women need to organise independently to fight for their liberation especially when the labour movement does not prioritise these issues or take them seriously. The proper attitude for socialists is to relate seriously to these women's movements, champion their struggles and argue that they orient-

Women and socialism

IN 1879, August Bebel's book *Women and Socialism* was published. Bebel wrote the book whilst he was imprisoned under Germany's Anti-Socialist Law. *Women and Socialism* rang like an alarm clock amongst working class women. Working class men, too, read the book and woke up to the issue of women's oppression. Ottilie Baader said that Bebel's book made her a socialist; she went on to become a leading organiser of socialist women. Clara Zetkin described the book as "an event — a great deed". By 1895, 25 editions had been printed in Germany alone.

Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* was published in 1884. Engels used the recent work of American anthropologist Lewis Morgan to explain how the position of women had developed historically, and how the class structure of society had shaped it. In doing this, he argued against those people who persisted with the view that sex divisions were "natural".

The Origin... pointed out that the original meaning of

"family" was the set of domestic slaves belonging to a man: "The term was invented by the Romans to denote a new social organism, whose head ruled over wife and children and a number of slaves, and was invested under Roman paternal power with rights of life and death over them all."

Engels also argued that, looking far back into history, monogamy had developed according to economic demands, rather than for any romantic reason: "It was the first form of the family to be based, not on natural, but on economic conditions — on the victory of private property over primitive, natural communal property... the sole exclusive aims of monogamous marriage were to make the man supreme in the family, and to propagate, as to the future heirs to his wealth, children indisputably his own."

Viewed with the benefit of hindsight, Engels' work contained factual inaccuracies and left important questions unanswered. But the book is very significant, for two main reasons: it argues that women's oppression can be explained through history rather than biology; and it links women's oppression to class divisions and property relations.



The 1984-5 miners' strike brought thousands of working class women into political activity

tate to class politics. Unfortunately left groups tended to lecture the women's movement from the outside, telling activists they were doing it all wrong, rather than being involved and offering their ideas in a constructive way.

The International Marxist Group (IMG) *did* get involved in the women's movement. Along with others — including *Workers' Liberty's* forerunners — it was involved in the Working Women's Charter Campaign. But the IMG adopted a strategy of mobilising for single-issue campaigns such as that for abortion rights a campaign which eventually dissipated.

These experiences left many feminists — including many socialist feminists — hostile to socialist organisations. The left made similar mistakes with the general radicalisation that had taken place since the '60s. A generation of activists had become militant against capitalism, but were unimpressed by socialism. It was a tragic waste.

Women and the labour movement

MEANWHILE, in 1976/77, the labour movement was learning an important lesson about women. Many people still believed that working class struggle meant strikes by white, male workers in industries with a tradition of militancy and strong trade union organisation. They believed that women only worked to supplement the breadwinners' wages and that black workers undercut white workers' wages; neither were interested in unions or strikes. The Grunwick strike crushed these myths.

Grunwick was a film processing plant in north London, whose workers were mainly women and mainly Asian. They worked in terrible conditions for poverty wages under a whip-cracking bully manager without the protection of a union. In the long, hot summer of 1976, the workload and the factory became unbearable. A few workers walked out, others joined them and so began a year-long strike for better conditions and union recognition.

When the women organised mass pickets, the police dispensed with "traditional values" of chivalry towards women. Grunwick's bosses could count on the police to brutalise the

strikers, the media to demonise them, and the right wing National Association for Freedom (NAFF) to organise Grunwick's legal and political campaign. The strikers had their own mountainous courage and active solidarity from thousands of other workers. They found, however, that they could not rely on the leadership of the trade union movement, who let them down. Their strike was defeated.

We can learn lessons from our defeats as well as from our victories. We need to build a movement capable of organising independently of the leadership of the unions where necessary, and on the basis of such a movement we need to challenge for the leadership, to make our organisations fight for us.

Women Against Pit Closures and against Thatcher

ATOWERING example of the predominance of the class divide over the notion of "sisterhood" was the election of Margaret Thatcher as Britain's first woman Prime Minister in 1979. She pursued a political programme which was the precise opposite of everything feminists had demanded. Her Tory government closed hospitals, cut nursery provision, reduced benefits and pared social services to the bare minimum. It sold public industries to the private sector at bargain-basement prices. A generation of young people had little to look forward to other than unemployment or cheap labour schemes masquerading as "training".

Thatcher savagely proved that not all women can be relied on to stand up for all women! Thatcher governed without shame on behalf of the ruling class, deliberately increasing the burden and suffering of working class women. Under her rule, the rich got richer and the poor got poorer. And to stop the working class fighting back, the Tory government chained up the unions with a series of laws that made effective trade unionism illegal. Thatcher felt no sisterhood: she knew that class is decisive. Unfortunately, the working class did not have leaders who fought as resolutely for the interests of our class as Thatcher did for hers.

The miners' strike of 1984/85 was an all-out battle between

workers and the Thatcher government. And it was a battle which women fought from the front line. First, women provided essential practical services to the strikes, distributing food, setting up soup kitchens and looking after kids. Before long, the women were organising demonstrations, rallies and collections, and insisting on taking their place on the picket line alongside men. They burst out of the confines of the traditional "women's role" in strikes and became much more than a support group. Placards reminded people to "Never Underestimate Miners' Wives". Women took the strikers' message beyond the coal-fields, travelling around Britain and overseas, speaking in public often for the first time.

The miners' strike was defeated after 12 months of hard-fought struggle. It is certain that the miners could not have fought so well or for so long without the strength of the women. Their courage made the leaders of the Labour Party and the other trade unions — who failed to deliver the solidarity that could have brought victory — look like the small, weak people that they are.

The miners' strike changed the men and women involved. Sylvia Jackson of the Keresley (Coventry) Miners' Wives Committee explained: "The coal mining industry is swamped in tradition, and the tradition is that it is a man's job and it's no place for a woman. But the attitudes have changed very much during the strike." The women changed too. One woman from South Yorkshire described it like this: "It was as though women had been asleep for hundreds of years. We awoke to a new awareness, a realisation of what we as women could do. It is only comparable to the suffragettes. I believe we are part of history being made."

After the strike, Women Against Pit Closures applied for associate member status in the men's union, the NUM. The men, defeated and demoralised, began to retreat to their old chauvinist ways. The application was rejected; women's placards outside the meeting remarked "Don't you have short memories?". It is remarkable how attitudes can change and prejudices drop through working class struggle. But the new, enlightened attitude is much more likely to stick if the struggle is successful. In defeat, reactionary ideas and old divisions reassert themselves as capitalism re-establishes its grip. Only the defeat of capitalism can bring about the beginning of the end for sexism.

The backlash and the future

JUST when you thought that feminism was getting somewhere, that some of its ideas had been accepted, the backlash came. In 1986, a Harvard-Yale survey claimed that

college-educated women over the age of 29 had less than a 20% chance of getting married (and assumed, naturally, that this was a bad thing). Although this survey has since been well and truly discredited, it started an avalanche. The media loved it, and "experts" added other, similar claims: for example, that women working full-time were lonely, unhappy and infertile. The backlash blamed feminism for everything from heart disease to hair loss. Its message was that equality and independence makes you miserable, feminism is bad for you, and that really you should get back to the home. Yet the reality of women's everyday lives means that this is not an option. The struggle for liberation will continue.

THIS whistle-stop tour of women's struggles under capitalism reveals a rich history. Women's lives have changed greatly, even in the last half-century. When our grandmothers brought up four children with no fridge, no TV, no disposable nappies and no access to a washing machine, their's was a typical woman's lot. Although, disgracefully, a few women in Britain still want for these things, most women's lives are much better.

Some feminists would have you believe that women have suffered oppression in exactly the same way throughout history. They suggest that nothing has changed and nothing ever will. They are mistaken. We cannot understand either women's position in society or the current issues in feminism without knowing something of how we got to where we are today. History casts women not just in the role of victims of oppression but as fighters against it. Women's movements have been motivated and affected by other movements against oppression too. Black people's struggles, for example, have inspired and been inspired by, given ideas to and taken ideas from, women's struggles.

Large movements of working class women have usually identified themselves firmly as part of the workers' movement, often distinct from, even opposed to, bourgeois feminist movements. And defeats for the workers' movement have brought defeats for women — whether inflicted by Tories, Stalinists, fascists or religious fundamentalists. The fate of feminism is so closely tied to the fate of the labour movement that you could not separate them if you tried (and plenty of people have tried).

Perhaps the loudest lesson from history is the importance of politics. Every decision, every rebellion, every strategy, every disagreement, every policy, every demand made by women has been a political matter. Much of our history is about struggle over politics and ideology, not just over economic demands. The choice of one political direction over another has made the difference between victory or defeat. And rejecting politics — as unpleasant, unnecessary or "male" — has merely allowed others to take control, dominate and defeat us. There is another history, not covered here, of women's involvement in right wing movements. Women have mobilised as fascists, anti-abortionists, Thatcherites; women have supported imperialist wars and have organised strike-breaking. It is not just struggle that is important: it is politics.

Women have had to struggle against oppression which we should never have been made to suffer in the first place. We have not been able to choose the conditions in which we have struggled. Nevertheless, history has been pushed forward by the deliberate actions of women. We face the same choices today: to fight oppression or to accept it; to organise with others or to stand alone; to learn from history or to repeat its mistakes; to try to determine the future or to just let it happen to you.

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Sylvia Pankhurst

An organiser for working class women

By Jill Mountford

"The name of our paper, the Woman's Dreadnought, is symbolic of the fact that the women who are fighting for freedom must fear nothing. It suggests also the policy of social care and reconstruction which is the policy of awakening womanhood throughout the world, as opposed to the cruel, disorganised struggle for existence amongst individuals and nations from which Humanity has suffered in the past... the chief duty of the Dreadnought will be to deal with the franchise question from the working-woman's point of view... (and) to review the whole field of the women's emancipation movement"

From the first edition of the Women's Dreadnought

ON International Women's Day (March 8 1914) Sylvia Pankhurst, having been expelled from the suffragette organisation, the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), by her mother, Emmeline, and sister, Christabel, launched a working class women's paper, the *Women's Dreadnought*, in the East End of London. With a guaranteed circulation of 20,000 Sylvia and the East London Federation of Suffragettes (ELFS) had a tremendous vehicle for a dialogue with broad layers of working women and, as time passed, working men.

From the first edition Sylvia saw the *Dreadnought* as being "...a medium through which working women, however unlettered, might express themselves, and find their interests defended."

She later recalled how "From all over the East End, and much further afield, people in dispute with, or suffering under, employers, landlords, insurance agents, government departments, local authorities, hospitals and asylums, lawyers and railway companies brought their difficulties for publicity and solution". From the beginning the paper was this and more besides. It rapidly gained the reputation of a broad, non-sectarian paper and evolved into a paper concerned with questions that faced the working class here and abroad.

Sylvia had moved to the East End two years earlier in 1912, convinced of the need for "the creation of a women's movement in that great abyss of poverty (that) would be a call and a rallying cry to the rise of similar movements in all parts of the country".

Unlike her mother and sister, Sylvia had not deserted her socialist roots. Instead, her beliefs had become firmer, more developed and more determined over the years. In stark contrast to her mother and sister she did not see the right to vote as an end in itself. The movement she built in the East End was according to Sylvia "not merely for votes but towards an egalitarian society — an effort to awaken the women submerged in poverty to struggle for better social conditions and bring them into line with the most advanced sections of the movement of the awakened proletariat".

Her fervour, drive and enthusiasm for building a working class women's movement convinced feminists in established branches of the WSPU to lend their support in setting up the East London Federation (ELF) of the WSPU (as it was called



Sylvia Pankhurst

from 1912 to 1914).

She wrote: "I induced the local WSPUs to assist in organising it: Kensington, Chelsea, and Paddington made themselves responsible for shops in Bethnal Green, Limehouse and Poplar respectively, and Unions, even so far afield as Wimbledon, sent speakers and canvassers. WSPU headquarters agreed to be responsible for the rent of a shop in Bow. An intensive campaign like that of an election, to include deputations to local MPs, was to culminate in a demonstration in Victoria Park."

Just weeks after arriving in the East End, Sylvia had working women willing to join ELF. Nellie Cressall was one such working woman. She said: "In 1912 I met Sylvia and others. I had been thinking for some time of the unequal rights of men and women... after talking to Sylvia and other speakers I thought that here is something I can dedicate myself to help in some way to put things right."

Sylvia described how "women flocked to our meetings;

members joined in large numbers. I at once began urging them to speak, taking classes for them indoors, and inducing them to make a start outdoors by taking the chair for me at a succession of short meetings in the side streets where workers lived, or by the market stalls in the shopping hours".

She had no doubts that the emancipation of working women would be an act of self-emancipation. No middle class woman could do it for them. She was completely convinced of working women's abilities. Recognising this, once they had gained the confidence to speak many became powerful orators, better able to put their case and that of other working women than any middle class women could do on their behalf.

Working women activists from ELF went with Sylvia to talk to women in other branches of the WSPU in places like Kensington and Mayfair. Sylvia said: "Their speeches made a startling impression upon those women of another world, to whom hard manual toil and the lack of necessities were unknown."

She recounted the passion of Melvina Walker, who had worked as a domestic servant: "She seemed to me like a woman of the French Revolution. I could imagine her on the barricades, waving the bonnet rouge, urging on the fighters with impassioned cries. When in full flood of her oratory, she appeared the very embodiment of toiling, famine-ridden, proletarian womanhood."

Another woman called Mrs Schlette, "well in her sixties" was "soon able to hold huge crowds for an hour and a half at a stretch".

Christabel, who declared "working women (to be in) the weakest position of the sex", berated Sylvia for organising with and fighting alongside working class women. She argued that it was "... a mistake to use the weakest for the struggle! We want picked women, the very strongest and most intelligent".

Sylvia abhorred such middle class superiority. Her affinity with the oppressed and downtrodden, her understanding of how capitalism works and objection to the idea of superior and inferior human beings led to her fighting racism and fascism, as well as for women's rights and broader socialist

ideals. Her anti-racist and anti-fascist work was way ahead of other white left activists of the time, and a very strong case can be put that she made a special, even unique, contribution here.

Her expulsion from the WSPU was in fact the result of her speaking, contrary to Christabel's wishes, on a platform alongside James Connolly and others at the Royal Albert Hall. The meeting was to demand the release of Jim Larkin (an activist in the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union) and to build support for workers involved in the Dublin Lock-out of that time. There was a crowd of 10,00 people. Sylvia said that she had agreed to speak so that she could point out that "behind every poor man there was a still poorer woman". She saw it as her responsibility "to keep our working women's movement in touch with the working class movement".

For Christabel this was the last straw. She said: "We want all our women to take their instructions and walk in step like an army!"

Expulsion from the WSPU meant more than a break from the organisation, though. It meant breaking the personal ties with her mother and her sister — a painful process. Sylvia's commitment to the WSPU, even when she thought their tactics wrong, was second to none. She was imprisoned and force-fed more times than most other suffragettes. But Sylvia was more, much more than a suffragette. She was a socialist.

So despite her hurt at being expelled from an organisation she had for 11 years been committed to, and in being cut off from her family, in the spirit of the best traditions in our movement, Sylvia wasted no time in getting on with the political task in hand.

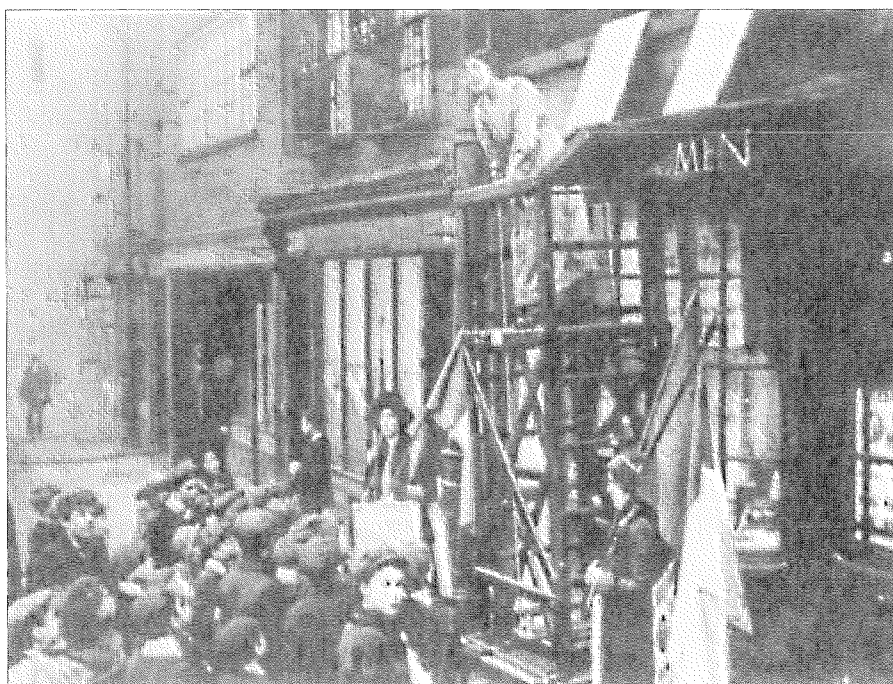
Within weeks of her expulsion, with the help of other women in ELFS (as it then became known) she put together the first issue of the *Woman's Dreadnought*.

In May, she and others organised a Women's May Day Procession in Victoria Park. In June, only six months after her ejection from the WSPU she had pulled off an important meeting with Asquith, the Liberal Prime Minister.

Sylvia, threatening indefinite hunger strike if he didn't agree to meet, and with some negotiations from her close friend Keir Hardie, got Asquith to agree to receive a deputation of women from her organisation.

Though she drafted a statement to be read out, she did not attend the meeting (an almost unique event) herself. Instead six "working mothers" selected by mass meetings went forward "to speak for themselves... the statement would give them their cue and break the ice for them. I had put into it what I knew to be near their hearts".

The women gave "well-reasoned" arguments as to why they should be given the vote. Highlighting the toil and hardship of working class women's lives they put their case intelligently and with dignity. By August 1914 the gulf between herself and her mother and sister widened dramatically as Britain entered the war. Sylvia opposed the war, and in no uncertain terms. On the other hand, Emmeline and Christabel led the WSPU into unreserved support for the British ruling class. They renamed their paper the *Britannia* and took to the streets handing out white feathers to men not wearing uniform. From radical arsonists to patriotism per-



Making speeches for the suffrage in the East End

THE COVER STORY



Sylvia with a delegation of working-class pensioners to Parliament

sonified, Emmeline and Christabel called for the conscription of women to fight the "German Peril" — a year before conscription for men was even introduced! They even called for the right to vote of men fighting as a priority over women!

The repugnant degeneration of Emmeline and Christabel is made even worse when compared to what was probably Sylvia's finest work. The movement she built in the East End was the result of consistent hard work; of actually being part of the day-to-day grind of life in the East End. From the beginning of the war she initiated and organised to relieve the misery of the poverty of working women and their families.

Sylvia's work here was not that of the Lady Bountiful, like much of the relief work of the time. Sylvia's work was that of a socialist, an internationalist, a revolutionary. The ELFS set up cost-price workers' restaurants and baby clinics to deal with the malnutrition and common childhood illnesses that ravaged and all too often killed the children of the working class; it set up nurseries and a toy factory, and all this at the same time as producing a weekly newspaper. Working class women managed and ran these services for themselves. They were able to take some control of important aspects of their lives in the most adverse circumstances. And it was through this crucial work that Sylvia was able to gradually win over working people to oppose the war as it was not in their interests, and to support many causes that were in the interests of working class people everywhere.

Organising marches and demonstrations for a woman's right to vote, calling for equal pay for equal work and an end to the "sweating trades", Sylvia and ELFS were able to mobilise thousands of women and men.

Walter Holmes, eventually a journalist on the Communist Party paper, the *Daily Worker* talked of his direct experience of Sylvia during the early war years in a tribute to her after her death in 1960: "What she aroused in the East End was a mass movement. Not only an enthusiastic following of young working class women joined in her franchise campaign... young workers came with them... They filled the streets with their marching. *The Red Flag* and *The Internationale* resounded under the dim lights of 1914-15... Sylvia Pankhurst contributed a powerful opposition to the imperialist war."

The *Woman's Dreadnought* fast gained the reputation of an open, broad paper, attempting to offer basic socialist education; practical advice on all sorts of things from dealing with bailiffs to organising rent strikes; agitation for women's rights, for the vote, equal pay and end to the "sweating trades"; detailed reports on what was going on in Parliament. From the beginning it covered international events and issues and, by 1915-16, had articles highlighting the plight of interned Germans. In 1916, the *Woman's Dreadnought* gave extensive coverage to the Easter Rising and frequently raised the banner for Irish liberation. In 1917, Siegfried Sassoon chose the *Dreadnought* to first publish his famous statement opposing the war. As always, Sylvia showed tremendous courage in publishing views and ideas that laid herself and the paper wide open to raids, bans and arrest.

By 1916 ELFS had changed its name to the Workers' Suffrage Federation, both reflecting and having helped to create a

general shift in the labour movement towards a genuine fight for adult human suffrage. In 1917 the *Woman's Dreadnought* became the *Workers' Dreadnought* inspired by the rank and file activism in Britain and the Bolshevik-led workers revolution in Russia. Still with a circulation of around 10,000 the *Workers' Dreadnought*, continued to have an important impact and influence. Sylvia's work remained diligent and consistent, relentlessly making propaganda for the overthrow of the capitalist system and in support of the Russian Russia.

Increasingly, the paper carried articles and reprints of works by most of the leading socialists and revolutionaries. Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg and even Trotsky can be found in the pages of the *Workers' Dreadnought*. In one copy of a 1917 paper alongside extensive coverage of the Russian Revolution was the first part of a discussion on childcare, looking at the contribution to thinking in this area by the radical Maria Montessori (now revered by the middle class and an expensive, private alternative to state nursery schools) — at the time an important and practical contribution to early years education for children of poor working class families.

In 1918, Sylvia established the People's Russia Information Bureau. With a small financial contribution from Moscow, the Bureau's work was to put out pro-Bolshevik propaganda to workers in Britain.

Harry Pollitt, who later became the General Secretary of the Communist Party, said that the work that Sylvia did amongst the working class of the East End was to lay the foundations for the refusal of East London dockers to load munitions on to the Jolly George, a ship bound for Russia and the White Army, in 1920. Sylvia's organisation, the Workers Socialist Federation (previously the Workers Suffrage Federation) was the first left group in Britain to affiliate to the newly formed Third International (Comintern). In her capacity of Secretary of the WSF, Sylvia wrote to Lenin about the pressing question of left groups in Britain affiliating to the Labour Party and any newly formed Communist Party relationship to the Labour Party and parliamentarism. Sylvia held an ultra-left position, and was in a minority amongst the serious left in Britain. Lenin disagreed with her; he wrote an initial reply in the form a letter and later responded to Sylvia and many oth-

Demonstrate on 27 October to mark 100 years of women's struggle **We're still fighting!**

Sheila Rowbotham told Kate Buckell why young women must come on this march

I WAS central to the women's movement when it first started in the late '60s. We saw it very much as something that would take up wider social problems beyond simply being concerned with women's equality relative to men. We saw it very much as a movement that would address wider social issues like women's rights at work.

As time went by, feminism became more and more seen in a very narrow sense, concerned with women rising within the existing system. It saw women's main problem as being simply inequality in relation to men.

I was part of the socialist feminist strand of the women's movement and I'm hoping those ideas will have a revival. When the labour movement was on the offensive, socialist feminism was much stronger and women were more aware of what was wrong in society. This is the case on a global scale at the moment. In the Phillipines and Korea, where you have very intense labour movement activity, women are much more conscious of class and trade unionism. I hope a new generation can rediscover these ideas.

There are now only a minority of young women who are active, the problems of the '60s are still there: childcare, combining work and home, etc. We saw women's fight as part of the fight to change society. I still do a lot of work to develop links between the women's and labour movements on an international level, fighting for the recognition of women's work within the home.

In the 1970s I discovered women like Alexandra Kollantai, Stella Brown and Sylvia Pankhurst. It was very exciting — there is a much longer history to the women's movement than just the late '60s.

Women are often at the bottom, and the whole victimisation and scapegoating, like with single mothers makes me very angry. There is a racist element to it as well.

When women are drawn into the movement they start to challenge sexist attitudes. Things in trade unions are improving. And there has been a real shift amongst trade unions in their awareness of women. They are interested in socialist feminism. Young men are much more aware that women will be stropky: this was one of the gains from the the early '70s. But there is a contradiction: for example the same women will still strive to be desirable to men.

There is a long history of women's struggle internationally, in India and China, that challenges sexism and social inequality. It would be lovely if this march could raise these issues and this history amongst young women.

We will be marching through Sylvia Pankhurst's East End of London for...

Equal pay • Against violence • For free abortion on request • For free education • For decent childcare • For trade union rights • Against homophobia • For the health care we need • Against racism and fascism
Assemble 6pm, Queen Mary and Westfield College, Mile End Rd, London. Followed by rally. Speakers: Mary Davis, Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal, Hilary Wainwright

ers in *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. Sylvia was invited to attend the Second Congress of the Comintern to put her case.

Around this time the WSF, alongside the British Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party, and South Wales Socialist Societies, were in unity talks about establishing a Communist Party in Britain. Once set up, Sylvia's relationship with the CPGB was short lived. She was in prison during the inaugural conference in January 1921 in Leeds. On her release, the CPGB discussed closing the *Dreadnought* down, arguing the party should speak with just one voice — applying, perhaps, the logic of the Russian situation to the very different British situation. Sylvia argued that the *Dreadnought* remained a popular paper, with a strong reputation and readership, and that the party could cope with, indeed benefit from, a variety of publications. Sylvia was expelled from the CPGB on release from prison. Weak and depressed by the experience of her latest incarceration and the general political situation, the CPGB showed little tolerance towards her or democracy.

Sylvia's drift from independent working class politics started here, and was gradually replaced by anti-racist and anti-fascist work. In 1927 she shocked and horrified many inside and outside of the establishment when she gave birth to Richard Pankhurst, her first and only child. Sylvia was 45 years old and unmarried, but remained a brave, free spirit, still totally unafraid of swimming against the tide. Motherhood seems to have pulled her back towards fighting for the woman's cause, campaigning for maternity rights and better conditions for working class women and children.

She died aged 78 in Ethiopia, having made it her home four years earlier on the invitation of Haile Selassie, though her relationship with this country started in 1935 when she got involved with supporting the liberation of Ethiopia.

Estelle Sylvia Pankhurst was born into a family of middle class, radical socialists. She trained as an artist and could have led a comfortable middle class life, expressing herself through her art. Having just turned 20 Sylvia vowed she could not return to art having seen the poverty and misery experienced by so many.

Sylvia Pankhurst should not be seen as extraordinary because she was a woman, though she was an extraordinary woman, but because she was an extraordinary human being and an equal to any man of her time.

Where is neo-Stalinist China going?

The ruling Communist Party's economic reform has brought enormous economic change to China over the last 20 years. How has the system changed and which direction will it take now? What is the reality for ordinary Chinese people? Harry Glass records his observations during a recent visit to the country.

THIS recent visitor to China was struck by the sheer scale of the building work going on. Chinese friends claimed that one fifth of the world's cranes currently operate in the country, and it isn't difficult to believe this.

Fifty years ago this month, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) secured control over the whole of this vast land, winning a civil war against the Guomindang which had lasted intermittently for two decades.

China is also undergoing the most rapid industrialisation yet seen in human history, in which (in the words of Paul Theroux), "Yesterday's paddy field is tomorrow's high-rise, and a thousand factories bloom". Twenty years ago Shenzhen, near Hong Kong, was merely a rural hamlet; today it is a super-city with four harbours. Suzhou Industrial Park, near Shanghai, known as "Little Singapore", is currently under construction after foreign investment of \$20 billion and will soon house 600,000 people. Shanghai itself is once more Asia's largest city, its polluted skyline dotted with high-rise towers, its rivers spanned by new bridges and its new roads teetering on top of the old, all built with the new money.

The Chinese government claims the economy has grown by 7% per year, compared with a global figure of 3%. Britain took 58 years, between 1780-1838, to double its per capita income, whereas China managed the same feat in the nine years between 1978-87, and again between 1987-96. China is now the world's largest producer of grain, meat, cotton and peanuts, as well as steel, coal, cement, fertiliser and TV sets. Already the second biggest economy in the world, it is expected to rival the US as the largest on the planet within two generations. Even for the sceptical observer unimpressed by government hyperbole, it is hard not to be amazed by the scale of transformation which China has undergone over the last 20 years when you see it with your own eyes.

Yet China remains a largely agricultural country. Stray off the urban highway and into the rural hinterland, where more than two thirds of the population still live, and you find more than 300 million people still subsisting on less than \$1 a day. In both town and country the state of the toilets indicates the extent of development: 90% of rural toilets are still a hole in the ground, and even in Shanghai, a metropolis of twelve million inhabitants, only half the residents can flush away their waste into the sewage system.

Chinese poverty is impossible to hide. In Beijing, painters and decorators hawk for business on street corners while the army of builders live in corrugated iron huts, or within the walls of their constructions, hosing each other down at night after working a 16-hour shift. Last year, 20 million workers were sacked or indefinitely sent home, yet the government quotes a figure of 3% for unemployment: the real figure must be ten times higher. And workers suffer from the arbitrary caprice of the authorities: three



men were recently arrested for using inferior materials when the Xingning highway collapsed. They were not engineers, but farmers with no qualifications, drafted in to do the work by the same authorities who now punish them.

If the last 20 years have been an economic rollercoaster for Chinese workers, the previous 30 were no better. When the three million-strong peasant army came down from its mountain strongholds in 1949 it surrounded and then occupied the cities, much as the conquering barbarians had done from the north in China's long imperial history. The new ruling class organised by the Communist Party expanded out of the mini-states it had created in isolated provinces over the previous 20 years, and proceeded to replace the rule of the landlords and the capitalists with their own form of exploitation on the blueprint of the Stalinist USSR.

Stalinism with Chinese characteristics centred on the danwei, a system of control through work units, which were responsible for the distribution of housing. The symbolic rent and low prices indicated the absence of a market and the prevalence of direct means of surplus extraction. Coupons for sugar, rice, soup and cigarettes were still a visible part of life a decade ago; food was rationed and people queued in the cities for their share. A huge pool of slave labour, incarcerated by the 1970s in over a thousand labour camps, served both as an economic resource for the state and a chilling reminder of the costs of opposition.

Farmers were forced into collective farms and made to deliver their agricultural surplus to the state. China repeated the folly of the Russian model it followed, experiencing a famine of gargantuan proportions between 1958-62, together with successive economic experiments foisted on a savagely oppressed population. There were absurdities such as backyard steel furnaces, which used up as much steel as they ever created, and bogus model "communes" whose output never filled the bellies of the hungry peasants. A ridiculous pest control programme saw sparrows exterminated to protect crops, which only led to more insects, and grass cut down to exterminate insects, only to turn these tracts of land into a dustbowl.

The tragedy is that while the Chinese paid for these experiments with blood, sweat and starvation, some western leftists lauded them as models of the socialist future.

During the Cultural Revolution, the Chinese people had to endure the irony of the septuagenarian Mao Zedong leading a campaign against the "olds": they were expected to believe that he had swum the Yangtze river four times faster than the world record. Mao compared himself with the Emperor Qin Shi Huang, the instigator of the Great Wall, the unifier of China in 210BC, whose burial chamber was guarded by the long hidden terracotta warriors, now viewed with awe by visiting tourists. Yet Mao is best remembered by ordinary Chinese for his slogan "in order to have construction, you must first have destruction". His portrait still gazes down on Tiananmen Square, the scene of the terrible massacre a decade ago, and his body remains embalmed for reverent onlookers in his mausoleum at the heart of the square. Meanwhile his bloody heirs still preside, still repress, still rule.

Yet within two years of Mao's death, China under Deng Xioping began to lurch towards capitalism under the guise of a "socialist market economy". At an otherwise innocuous central committee meeting in 1978, Deng announced the change of direction under the slogan "fording the river by feeling for stones". Since rationalised as gradualism, the bureaucracy thus signalled a limited opening to the market, an aperture which unleashed a wave of class struggle in the countryside. Believing they now had the chance to make money, peasants broke out of their "communes" to produce for profit, going beyond the intentions of the CCP. This process has transformed the countryside, with 200 million clambering out of absolute poverty (defined as \$1000 per year), releasing labour for the township enterprises which now generate 40% of China's industrial output. Signalling the collapse of the old "communes" and the danwei, 800 million people now effectively stand outside of the old system of exploitation, only to exchange it for the bondage of waged labour.

In the cities, the harbinger of capitalism has been the foreign investment from old capitalist segments of China, especially from Taiwan and Hong Kong, which invested in Deng's turn from the beginning. The prosperity of the Eastern seaboard has created a labour market and thus further undermined the danwei; market wage rates and prices have replaced state rationing. New housing is either sold or rented at exorbitant cost to tenants.

Out of these processes has mushroomed a 200 million-strong working class. That this is a force of tremendous revolutionary potential is well known to the CCP leaders, who maintain it in an atomised state, denying it the right to form its own legal organisations. Yet, during the Tiananmen demonstrations in 1989, workers' organisation did emerge, and together with the students the workers shook the totalitarian state to its foundations. As cap-

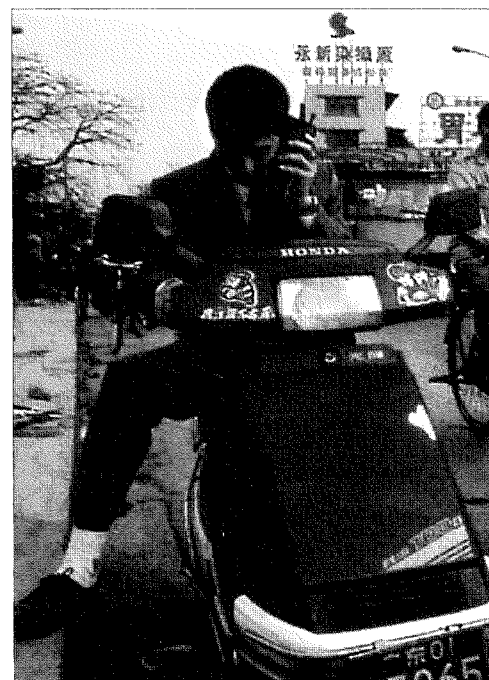
italism continues to seep into the pores of Chinese Stalinism, the Communist Party continues to lose its grip on the people it oppresses.

The situation is highly fluid. The CCP is still in power. According to dissident Harry Wu, it still has 15-20 million people in labour camps. The army owns 20,000 companies and the state still controls hundreds of thousands of

firms. At its last congress, in 1997, the CCP rejected privatisation of the largest enterprises, while agreeing to sell off some of the smallest under a new shareholding arrangements (effectively forced lending). The banking system is insolvent, with \$600 billion of loans outstanding: its economists breathed a sigh of relief when China avoided the "Asian flu" financial crisis two years ago.

But the neo-Stalinist state is squeezed from within by the revolution in the countryside and by capitalists from without. Whether the CCP will introduce full-blown capitalism itself, or be swept away by the forces it has unleashed, remains an open question. But in this situation, socialists have to do everything possible to help the Chinese working class play an independent role, to exploit the loosening of the danwei and the turmoil created by the introduction of the market in order to fight for their own interests.

The death of Stalinism in China would be good news. It will not be good if it is replaced by the bastard-capitalism which Russia has endured over the past decade. Far better for the Chinese working class to rediscover the militant traditions of the 1920s, when it stood on the threshold of its own revolution.



The new China

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The fate of the revolution

“COMMUNIST China” is 50 years old? *Communist* China was drowned in working class blood during terrible massacres in Shanghai and elsewhere in May 1927. The two pieces which follow — by Leon Trotsky from September 1932, and by Jack Ranger from December 1948 — will explain this statement.

The Communist working class movement of the mid-20s had been destroyed as a social force by the Guomindang led by Chiang Kai-Shek. The Guomindang had allied to the Communist Party of China which had held membership in it. Chiang Kai-Shek had been made an honorary member of the Presidium of the Communist International!

A workers' general strike and uprising in the city delivered Shanghai to the Guomindang in mid-1927. Shortly afterwards Chiang's forces suddenly turned on the Communist Party and on the workers. A great massacre followed. Of the surviving Chinese Communists some, including the party's founder, Chen Du Tsui, became Trotskyists.

Led by Chu Teh, Mao Zedong, Chou en Lai and others, the official Comintern party abandoned the cities and the workers and took to guerrilla war in the countryside. When Trotsky was writing, this turn to the countryside was four years old. By the time the Maoist armies would take Beijing (Peking) and proclaim the People's Republic in October 1949, the Maoist armies would have been 21 years in the countryside. From the late '30s they had control of a large, very backward part of China, inhabited by 80 million people: they had their own state. They formed an uneasy alliance with the Guomindang state when the full-scale Japanese invasion came in 1937. The alliance would last until civil war broke out in 1946.

Three years later, the Chinese Communist Party-army of peasants, in which declassed intellectuals and some declassed workers had the leadership, took power. Conquering society, they took Russia as their model and, in the '50s, transformed China after that model. In the beginning, they had Chinese bourgeois support because the Chiang family had used the state to rob and exclude the bourgeoisie. (An almost identical situation existed in Nicaragua before the 1979 Sandinista revolution, which initially had the backing of a big part of a bourgeoisie, because they had been robbed and excluded by the gangster Somoza regime.) The Maoists manipulated “the contradictions of the people”, using and then diminishing the bourgeoisie, using the peasants and then forcing them into ill-prepared collective farms.

From the beginning, the Maoist conquerors confronted the workers as a hostile force, allowing no labour movement, no civil liberties. Symbolically, they uprooted the gravestone of the founder of real Chinese Communism, Chen Du Tsui. The cities of the eastern seaboard had fared badly during the Japanese invasion. Much of the working class had been uprooted and dispersed to the countryside. This, and the savage police state, made the task undertaken by the Trotskyists in China — to rebuild the working class party destroyed in 1927 — impossible.

Trotsky's article brilliantly uncovers the social processes that would work to create the Maoist movement and let it conquer all of China. Trotsky did not, however — writing in 1932, when his analysis of the prototypical Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR was at an early stage — foresee that the Maoists would take power and create a replica of Stalin's USSR. He thought that, if the peasant armies took power, only something like the Guomindang bourgeois or quasi-bourgeois regime could result. In this, of course, he was mistaken.

Sixteen years later, when Jack Ranger wrote the first article we print here, the nature of USSR Stalinism as a new form of relatively stable exploitative class society had uncovered itself fully. Ranger's analysis was written a year before the proclamation of

the People's Republic, as the Maoist armies were moving towards victory in the civil war, (the US had chosen to withdraw its large World War Two army from China, in 1946). Its delineation of the anatomy of Chinese Stalinism is full and complete — to the extent that he foresees the patterns of the state's future relations with the classes it dominates, including the bourgeoisie.

That system remains in power 50 years later (in fact Maoists have held state power in parts of China for over 60 years). The activities of the state-licensed Chinese bourgeoisie in the first seven years of the '50s seem insignificant compared to that of today. The Chinese Stalinist state may have unleashed forces that will finally destroy it and will in any case be not so easy to snuff out as was the bourgeoisie of the '50s. (When expropriated by the state they were given 7% interest on their capital and were, mostly, retained as managers).

Both Trotsky's fine-point analysis of early Chinese Stalinism and Ranger's panoramic depiction of it as it rode to full victory stand in stark contrast to the perceptions of the post-Trotsky official Trotskyists. Trapped in the idea that so long as USSR industry remained state owned, the USSR would remain a degenerated workers' state, they were confronted in China by a regime which by the late '50s had achieved as much in China — nationalised property — as “remained” of the Russian October Revolution.

Some — Ernest Mandel, for instance — were wildly enthusiastic for Mao from the late '40s, seeing what Ranger saw implicit in Stalinist state power, but grotesquely misunderstanding and mislabelling it (Mandel was an enthusiast for Mao even while he was still passionately arguing that the Eastern European satellite states of the USSR, whose social and economic structures were now identical with the USSR, were fascistic state capitalism). Others, such as James P Cannon, were more cautious and waited a few years (1955) to proclaim China a “deformed workers' state”.

As distinct from Cannon, Mandel, Pablo and the European Trotskyists did not think a working class “supplementary”, “political” revolution was needed in China. They would not arrive at this conclusion for 20 years (1969). They claimed that Mao was the political heir of Trotsky. One of their number, Pierre Frank, polluted a French-language collection of Trotsky's writings in the late '50s by prefacing it with such absurdities.

Unlike so much of Trotsky's writings, ‘Peasant War in China and the proletariat’ was widely available from the mid-'50s, published with other material by the Cannonites. Faced with the giant “fact” that the Chinese Stalinists had created a “deformed workers' state”, it seemed only the plaintive, thrilling music of a Chinese proletarian past over which the Maoists had erected their system. In fact, Trotsky's focus on the working class is the music of the future too.

Fifty years after the proclamation of the Stalinist “People's Republic” the Chinese proletariat is a great force that, locked into the totalitarian system, has yet to become conscious of its own potential power. The comparative loosening of the system attendant on the state's licensing of capitalist exploitation, together with the savage social contrasts that are now so blatant in China, where there is conspicuous consumption side by side with dire want, cannot but speed that process on. Material such as these two pieces brought to the attention of the Chinese workers will help them understand their own situation, how it came to be so, and what they should strive to do about it.

SM

● Trotsky's article has been abridged. The full text will be found in *Trotsky on China*, published by Monad press. The article is dated 22 September 1932. At that time Trotsky and his comrades still considered themselves an “expelled faction” of the Stalin-controlled Communist International.

Where did Chinese S

By Jack

THROUGHOUT Asia the post-war period has been one of vast social upheaval. What happened in Europe after the First World War is now happening in Asia after the Second.

Without the organising technology of modern society which links together great areas and peoples, and without extensive industry which created more homogeneous and substantial working class, Asia's revolutions have taken varied forms.

In no case have these changes been organised by a socialist revolutionary party basing itself on the workers. Leadership has fallen to national bourgeois classes, social-democracy (Burma) or to mixed elements of the bourgeoisie and nationalist landlords. Though in most instances these elements have sought and obtained mass support from the peasantry and the working class the leadership has never passed to these latter. Thus the great transformation is taking place under conservative auspices and with limited objectives.

While Stalinist parties exist in almost all the countries of Asia, in only two of them is the nationalist movement operative in the name of Stalinism as such, and only here does Stalinism so completely dominate the movement as to clearly stamp its own character on it in exclusive fashion — in China and in North Korea. Elsewhere national bourgeois groups (India, Indonesia, Siam, Ceylon), social-democrats (Burma) or landlord elements (South Korea) are in the forefront.

The pattern in China and Korea

IN several of these countries social-democracy is active (India, Indonesia, Viet Nam). This is a new phenomenon which deserves examination, since Social Democracy in colonial areas on a large scale is something new. Trotskyist or left anti-Stalinist groups exist on a larger scale than they do anywhere in the West in Ceylon, India, Burma, Indonesia and possibly Indo-China.

The exception to the above pattern is Indo-China, where the CP is a leading but not excessive or completely dominant force. The reason for this is the protracted struggle which forces Indo-Chinese nation-

alism to seek international allies; that is, the national struggle is forced into the inter-imperialist framework. If warfare is renewed in Indonesia, as seems likely, the movement there may also be forced onto the alien tracks of Stalinism. Wherever imperialism has been too weak and has made serious concessions, Stalinism has had to take second place.

Both China and Korea have this feature in common: in both countries the world powers [the USA and USSR] face each other directly, creating a fixed inter-imperialist limitation to the struggle — unless it took the road of social revolution. Without that alternative (and the reason for its failure in Asia needs to be studied) middle elements between the powers were doomed. In the revolt of Asia, which is one of the great new forces of the post-war period and which is the most dynamic progressive factor in the world today, only in China and North Korea has Stalinism become dominant; these two instances are deviations from the general pattern, for they represent a new tyranny and enslavement.

1.

THUS in China, the US supported Guomintang rule, but at the time tried to strengthen the "liberals". This was the essence of Marshall's proposals. But neither the Guomintang nor the CP wanted the liberals as US spokesmen, and the liberals were too weak to accept such a role. The dolorous fate of the Democratic League is the full history of Chinese liberalism.

The Guomintang is no longer and has not been for many years the party of nascent capitalism. Unable to make headway against the continuous warfare and conquests of the Japanese, the bourgeoisie lost political power. Never fully emancipated from imperialism, part of it under Wang Ching-wei sold itself completely to Japan. Never fully divorced from usury and landlordism, it could not resist the growing dominance of feudalism over the Guomintang during the war, when the state was in the interior removed from the seats of power of the bourgeoisie and dependent on the landlords.

The Guomintang became a narrow dictatorship resting on local landlord alliance in the distinct provinces and on the Whampoa clique of militarists who personally sworn to Chiang. The top families

of the state utilised their monopoly of political and military power to take over the nation's economy. When the government moved back to Nanking this economic policy was extended, to the entire country. This bureaucratic state capitalism was anti-bourgeois, its methods and practices were aimed at limiting and hampering the capitalist class. The Guomintang had gone full cycle and had become a brake on capitalist development.

The Democratic League was largely representative of the intellectuals, the university professors and the students. The key program was prevention of civil war through establishment of a national congress in which all parties would be represented. This coincided with the program of the US for China, and Marshall later singled out these men of the Democratic League as the "splendid body of men" with whom alone he wished to work. Today the Democratic League is underground in Kuomintang China; its main centre is in exile in Hong Kong. Its greatest aspiration is to enter a coalition with the CP in an attempt to win the minimal conditions for the survival of the bourgeoisie.

The Democratic League is the last effort of a capitalist political party to play a role in China. Its present condition is a good measure of the miserable insignificance of capitalism. There can be no capitalist development without a capitalist state power and political party; these the enfeebled, demoralised, compromised, economically shattered bourgeois have been unable to create.

Failure of Chinese capitalism

THE historic failure of Chinese capitalism is the fundamental underlying cause of the failure of American policy there. It was the only possible counterweight to socialist or Stalinist development. Its failure opened the dikes to Stalinism as the leader of the "national revolution". It is Stalinism which has fallen heir to the unfinished tasks of the bourgeois revolution begun in 1911. War since 1938 and five years under puppet rule have exhausted the capitalist class so that today, like the proletariat, it is a spectator in the civil war, unable to determine its own future. Neither of the two great classes of modern society is a leading factor in the present civil war.

* First published in *The New Internationalist*, February 1949. Dated December 1948. Signed by Jack Brad. Original title: "What is Chinese Stalinism? Notes on the nature of the new state party".

Stalinism come from?

Ranger*



Youths parade the banner of Mao's Communism, after the taking of Shanghai by the Communists, August 1949.

Capitalism failed in China because it was unable to solve a single one of its pressing problems. It could not oust the imperialists; it could only shuttle between them to sell itself to the highest bidder. It did not unify the country geographically, politically or economically. It failed to develop a centralised state or representative character. It could not even begin to introduce the most moderate land reform, because it was itself corrupted by usury-land relations, nor modern national existence — industrialisation. Having failed in every one of these essentials, it could not hold power against the landlords or the Stalinists; nor did it

have the strength to effectuate a new alliance with US imperialism independent of the Guomindang. Chinese capitalism is not alone in this defeat. It is doubtful indeed if any native capitalism will succeed in making itself the dominant force anywhere in Asia. In none of the new states emerging out of the disintegration of capitalist imperialism is there a bourgeoisie

strong enough to rule by itself; this class tends to develop its power through state-controlled economy, and it is not likely that it will be able to assert itself on a purely economic basis. This is certainly one aspect of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution which remains valid. It is unlikely that classical capitalism has any more

of a future in Asia than anywhere else. What forms will arise out of the dissolution of Oriental society are not clear as yet.

Between Chinese feudalism and Stalinism, "liberal" capitalism is being crushed. (The same is true in Korea.) The inter-imperialist [USA-USSR] conflict is precisely what creates the greatest difficulties for the native capitalists in these two countries. Thus the inter-imperialist conflict establishes narrow limits for the national struggle, distorting it in its own interest. And where the US intervenes it forces the national leadership into Stalinist channels.

All over Asia the desire for national freedom goes hand-in-hand with the struggle against feudalism and the creation of modern industrialism. These are the social aspirations of the rising classes. Chinese Stalinism is an indigenous movement in the sense that it has secured for itself a monopoly of the leadership for these ends in China. Its party, programme and leadership are known and have established deep roots in the historic struggles of the last 20 years.

Its name is linked with the desires of the peasantry. Its armies are Chinese and nowhere in these armies is there an important amount of Russian power or Russian armaments — at least none has been revealed to this time. Like the Yugoslavs, the Chinese Stalinists are conquering without the Russian armies. They are establishing their own tradition of victories and their own patriotism.

A native Stalinism

THIS means that while the Chinese CP is part and parcel of international Stalinism and takes its lead in all matters from the Kremlin, it is not a movement of Russian expansion in a simple sense but the growth of a native Stalinism, which carries out the needs of Russian foreign policy on its own. It is more like the Yugoslav CP in this sense than (say) the Polish.

Its leadership has not been Russified by long years of residence in Moscow, although the Russians did bring their own Chinese commissars to Manchuria, who are now major factors in the leadership of the Chinese CP (CCP); and Chu Teh and Cho En-lai have been to Moscow. This party has fought its battles largely without Russian material or even diplomatic help. Not that it has had no help. But its kind and quantity is as nothing compared with US help to the Guomindang or Russian "aid" to the Polish CP. These distinctions are important for the future.

Thus while the Chinese civil war takes place within the context of the inter-imperialist struggle, this context distorts but does not so dominate it as to replace or overshadow the elements of national and social conflict. Only if the US altered its policy to one of full intervention and thus precipitated active Russian measures could the civil war become sub-

ordinated.

But the inverse is not true either. The CCP is part and parcel of world Stalinism. Its attitudes have always been governed by the latest requirements of Russian foreign policy just like every other CP. Its internal regime of hierarchy, discipline, bureaucracy and idolatry for the Leaders, including the Russian hagiography, as well as its slogans and foreign policy, have followed every zig and zag of the Stalinern. When Trotskyists were being purged in Moscow they were being purged in China. When the Bukharinists' turn came in Moscow, it came in China too.

One of the major crimes of Chinese Stalinism is its utilisation of the great agony of 400 million people to the purposes of Russian foreign policy. Victory for the CP does not remove China from the inter-imperialist struggle, as a socialist victory would, but transfers alliance to Russia. This is one of the major reasons why revolutionary socialists cannot support Chinese Stalinism any more than they can support Stalinism anywhere else. Far from bringing peace to China, the CP (no less than the Guomindang) will involve China in vast international imbroglios and eventually in a war in which it has no possible interest. This is the terrible price Stalinism extracts for its conquests.

2.

THE British historian RH Tawney has written that he who achieves an alleviation of the abysmal human degradation which is the lot of the Chinese peasant will win the support of half a million villages. This is the limitless source which feeds the Stalinist flood.

The CP has become a peasant party in the sense that it seeks its base primarily in the countryside and that it has developed a theory which gives leadership of the Chinese social revolution to the peasant class, through the instrumentality of the CP. It has not been connected with the struggles of the workers for over a decade. It has not had power in any sizeable city. It is a rural party and its entire outlook and membership is rural, as is most of its leadership. The problems of workers and cities are foreign to it.

Stalinism and the peasantry

NOWHERE else in modern history has a national revolution been led by a party based on the peasantry. The unique Chinese experience is possible because Stalinism is that unifying ingredient which is absent in the peasantry as a class. With it discipline, leadership and indefatigable organisational labours it creates cohesion and gives unified direction.

An extremely revealing and frightening statement of the Stalinist theory of the Chinese revolution has been made by Liu Hsiao-chi, member of the Central Committee, and next to Mao Zedong, the leading theoretician; it is worth quoting at length.

Anna L Strong, the reporter of his remarks, paraphrases Liu: "Even the concept of the 'proletariat' [quotation marks in the original] as a base for the Communist party is given a new meaning." And Liu says: "All this [proletarian leadership] applies to the western world. But in China we have only a few such people. Of our 500 million people only two or three million can be called industrial workers, whom the imperialists and capitalists are training to be reserves of the CP some day. Meanwhile Mao Tse-tung is training two or three million from another kind of people who are not only no less disciplined and devoted but in fact perhaps even more disciplined and devoted than the industrial workers.

"China has only a few industrial workers to be the foundation but we have millions of kids [CP youth] like this. Such people have never known Marx, but they are brought up in the spirit of communism. Their discipline and devotion to public affairs is no less than that of the industrial workers. They give their lives to

fight against foreign imperialism and native oppressors, even when very young. They fight now for the 'new democracy' but if in the future it is time to build socialism, they will be ready for this also. Only one thing they will not build or accept — the old forms of capitalism...

"Today we are building capitalism but it is a 'new capitalism'... As the core of this 'new democracy' and 'new capitalism' we have three million people — the army, the party and the government — who have lived for 20 years in what might be called 'military communism'. It is not the 'military communism' they had in Russia, for here it is applied only to this leading group [the army, the party and the state of three millions]."

In her comment on this statement, AL Strong adds: "China's revolution is a peasant revolution. Its basic characteristic is that the peasants (not the workers) are the principal mass that resists the oppression of foreign capital and left over medieval elements in the countryside. In the past Marxist analysis has not been applied to guide such a revolution."

CP as embryo state

SINCE 1927 Stalinism has not been a political party in China but an armed camp, an embryo state. Party members and leaders were equivalent to state officials. Sometimes the fortunes of the state-party were low indeed, as after the Long March when it was reduced to 40,000. In those days, and even today, not only were and are the party and state identical but the two are coefficients of the army's power and are identical with it too.

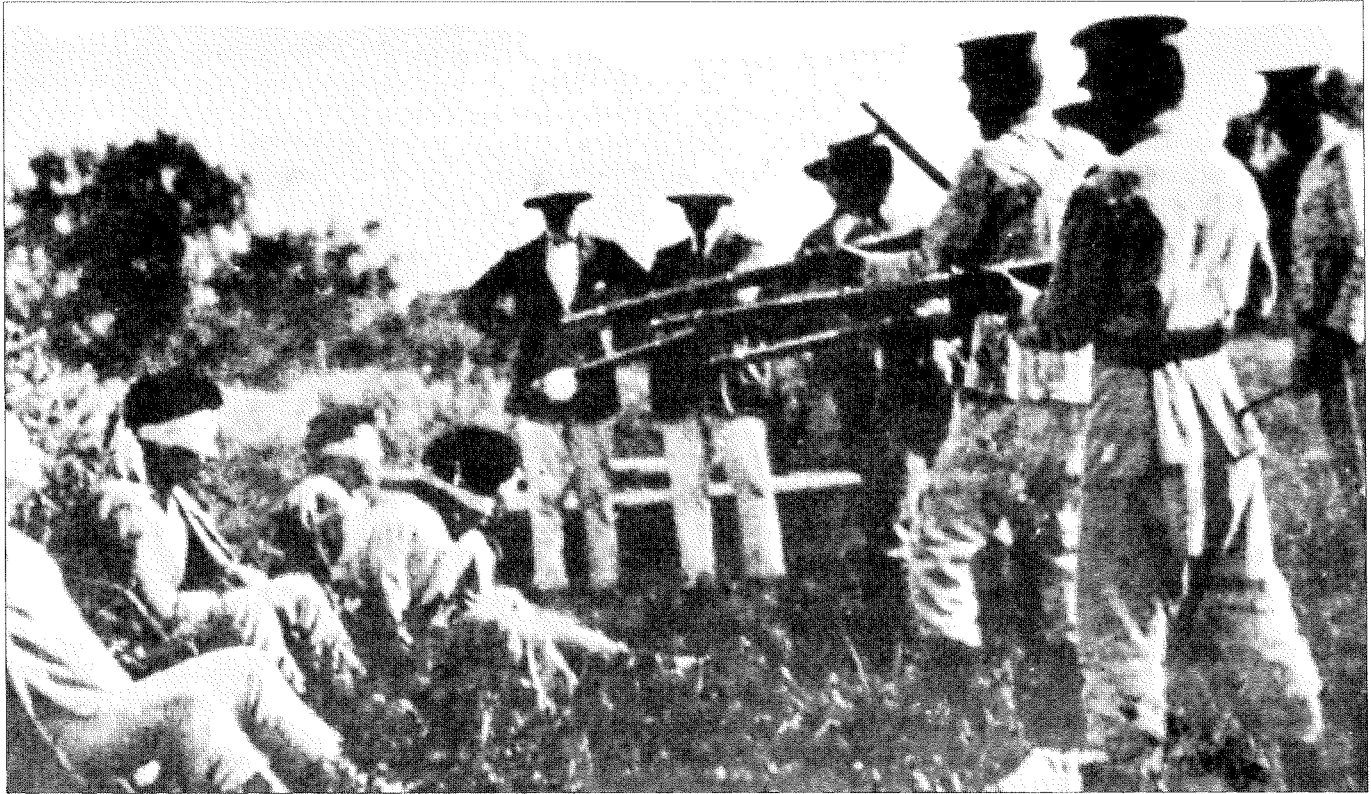
Liu is exaggerating when he says "we have three million people who have lived 20 years in what might be called 'military communism'", for the present CP and army of two and a half to three million are post-war developments. But the process he so clearly describes is important.

For 20 years this group, acting as a state, military and political power, isolated from the working class and the cultural influences of the coastal cities, has developed a hard bureaucratic corps. Carefully selected through numerous purges, the leadership is a tight homogeneous hierarchy. Not part of the peasantry, its self-arrogated role is to lead, organise, discipline and provide policy for the peasant, but never to become part of the peasant's class. While the peasantry remains the atomised mass it naturally is, the CP takes its best sons to itself and manipulates the real needs of the masses in its struggle for power. All this is done consciously. Relations between party and class are fixed from above.

The bureaucracy for the entire country is developed in advance, in isolation, almost in laboratory fashion. This is the cadre of the state, which advances with military victory, carries through the agrarian policy and organises the new citadels of political power. It deals with social groupings as a separate entity and by retention of its social independence determines the relationship between classes on the basis of the needs of its own rule. Thus Liu informs us that the policy for today is construction of a "new capitalism" but that the party retains the liberty to move against this "new capitalism" and its economic classes when it decides the time has come for "socialism". It is the party — or, more accurately, the state-party-army — which is the bearer of historic change, no matter in whose name it acts at the moment.

Distortion of the revolution

A CLOSE study of Mao Zedong's writings indicates, as Liu implies in the opening sentences above, that the CP considers itself the leader of the nation, of all classes in Chinese society, and as such it fulfils a programme which is above classes, i.e., in its own interests as the state power. This bonapartist conception gives the



The Maoists went to war with the working class. In this they were aided by the slaughter of the revolutionary workers by the Guomindang in 1927.

CP great tactical flexibility. At the same time it is a theory of social revolution, but not of the bourgeois-democratic revolution nor of the proletarian socialist revolution: it is the theory of the bureaucratic-collectivist revolution.

The social revolution which is clamouring for birth in China, as elsewhere in Asia, is conquered and distorted. As Liu puts it: "Today we are building capitalism, but it is a 'new capitalism'" like the "new democracies" of Eastern Europe, and for this a national alliance of classes eases the ascent to power and also serves to keep the masses quiescent. But as Mao put it so succinctly: "the United Front must be under the firm leadership of the CP". (*Turning Point* page 20). But when "it is time to build socialism [read Stalinism — JB]", after the consolidation of power, the CP "will be ready for that also". This is the answer to those who speculate about the Chinese CP following a different path from that of Stalinism elsewhere.

3.

WHEN placed against the background of the great revolution of 1925-7 the most striking feature of current events in China is the absence of the working class in an active role. Where are Canton's millions who in 1925 challenged the might of foreign gunboats and Kwangtung warlords, gave the power to the Guomindang and forced their way into the CP by tens of thousands? Where are the heroic masses of workingmen who paved the way for the Northern Expeditions by their independent militancy?

The steel workers and coal miners of Hankow and Wuhan are silent today, but in the turbulent years two decades ago they performed miracles, defied the British gunboats, organised mass unions in the cities and organisations of the poor peasants in the countryside, and still had enough left to man the armies of the Guomindang, later the "left" Guomindang. And still later, when

Chiang's terror had wounded and bled the aroused giant of China's revolution and Stalinism had eviscerated its spirit, this proletariat was still capable of the final defiance of the Canton commune [December 1927].

It was under the leadership of this great urban class that the peasantry organised the struggle against medieval leftovers and militarist tyranny. The democracy of the upheaval was self-evident in the rise of local leaderships everywhere, freedom from traditional restraints, the enormously rapid progress in political education of millions of the submerged and illiterate.

The people held the stage and the workers took the lead, ally-ing themselves with and creating political groups which acted on the people's needs. The masses taught the leaders, very often marching far ahead of them. The revolution in the villages was not a peasant revolt in geographic or social magnitude but, under the advanced lead of the proletariat, it took the radical character of an agrarian revolt, not reform. Ties between urban and rural masses were indissoluble in common struggle.

This heroic popular social movement of 20 years ago is a measure of the conservative, manipulated, primarily military march of Stalinism today.

Position of the working class

TODAY the Chinese proletariat does not have a party of its own; it is not an active, organised, cohesive social class. It does not have a programme of leadership to express its desires in the present situation. The intervening decades have brought cumulative disasters. When the Canton commune was suppressed thousands of workers were slaughtered, and in the Guomindang reaction in every city followed the massacre of the militants. Police terror, assisted by underworld hoodlumism and secret police, established a regime over the working class which did not permit widespread organisation. With the best militants assassinated or

in hiding, the proletariat was left leaderless and beheaded. The links with the peasantry were broken. Political organisation was non-existent.

The treason of Stalinist policy culminated in the exodus to the south. The workers were abandoned to the Guomindang; many of the surviving militants left with the CP peasant armies in the hills and mountains of south-central China.

The CP desertion of the cities was a betrayal from which the workers never recovered. After these shattering defeats even an underground of serious proportions could not develop. On occasions since 1927 the CP has raided the cities and universities for new leadership elements which had aroused the police of the Guomindang. This has been the only relationship the CP has had with the urban workers.

In addition to police terror and gangsterism the Guomindang organised the workers into its own "blue unions". When, after the war, even those "unions" became restive, Chu Hsen-fan, Guomindang-appointed president of the Chinese Federation of Labour, was driven to exile in Hong Kong. Chu joined with Marshal Li in the Guomindang-Revolutionary League and is now a Stalinist front in their recently launched Labour Federation.

Under Japanese and puppet rule the workers were unable to raise their heads. They were cut off from the anti-Japanese struggle. It is a weakened class which has not recovered from the disasters of 1927 and the subsequent 20 years of oppression. These were the cumulative disasters which permitted the control of the revolution and its transformation into a new reaction by the CP.

CP attitude toward proletariat

THE CP of 1948 is not the party of 1928. It does not look upon the workers as the leading class. Its attitude toward the workers is that they are necessary for production and to carry out directives, but its politics are not directed toward the workers.

Piece work and speed-up have been made universal. Production quotas for the individual worker as well as for each productive unit are established. Payment is made according to achievement. The entire Stalinist incentive system has been introduced under oppressive conditions. Stakhanovism and "labour heroes" are the means of establishing fear on the job, for it is not well to fail to meet the goal set by the pace-setters. "Labor heroes" receive public awards and state recognition in the presence of their fellow workers. Congresses of "labour heroes" are held at which methods of speed-up are discussed. The process of differentiation in the factory has begun with the new "labour heroes" being set above their class.

Since the CP is tied to its agrarian base it will project the cost of industrialisation onto the workers as the only class from which the tremendous burdens that are inevitable in such a programme can be safely extracted. From this indicated assumption we may conclude that Stalinism will from the beginning be especially oppressive to the workers of China. With their first contact with cities, there are already reports of declining standards of living.

In its relation to the working class the CP acts as a ruling bureaucracy exercising state power. Its separation from urban culture and urban classes and its complete Stalinisation in the last 20 years has transformed it into a party alien to the proletariat; it is a bureaucratised agrarian party. It does not even manipulate the workers through detailed control of its organisations because its estrangement is so complete.

During August 1947 in the Manchurian city of Harbin the CP began to re-establish connections with the urban working class through an All-China Labour Congress. Delegates are supposed to have come from Guomindang cities representing underground unions. It is significant that it is three years after the war and after

almost an equal period of Manchurian rule that such a congress is called. The scanty reports available on this meeting are all from official Stalinist sources. What comes through clearly is that the workers were given no role in the overthrow of the Guomintang — except to "prepare to welcome the People's Liberation Army; and to support and take part in revolutionary movements of the people [the CP, that is. Editor's note].

Relation to capitalist class

RELATIONS to the capitalist class are carefully defined: "...workers should make a distinction between the 'comprador' capitalists of the ruling bureaucracy and national capitalists who are also oppressed. They should endeavour to win the latter for struggle against imperialism and the Guomindang." (Above quotations from *China Digest*, 24 August, 1948).

The final official resolutions of the congress established two programmes for labour, one for Guomindang areas and one for the "liberated areas". These statements are important statements of policy. In Guomindang areas:

"1. The consolidation of their [workers'] own strength and the expansion of their fighting ranks so as to prepare for the arrival of the Liberation Army.

2. Co-operation with national industrialists in their common fight against the bureaucratic capitalists.

3. The dispatch of skilled technicians into Liberated Areas...

4. The protection of all factories and machines."

(*China Digest*, 21 August, 1948).

The relation of the workers to the CP armies is clearly defined as a passive one of "preparing" for the CP armies to take power. If there is to be "liberation" the CP will bring it, and this task is exclusively and uniquely the CP's.

In the directive on administration of newly conquered cities (*China Digest*, 13 August, 1948) the Central Committee orders: "All law-abiding enemy functionaries, personnel of economic and educational organs and policemen should not be taken prisoner or arrested. They must be given duties and remain at their original posts under the orders of definite organs and personnel, to watch over their original organs."

The directive very carefully states the role of each section of the bureaucracy and bourgeoisie but has not one single word on the part workers or their organisations are to have in the "liberation" and reorganisation of the cities. On the contrary every effort is made, as the above quotation shows, to keep the administration intact until the CP political commissars arrive to take over. Those "who violate these policies must be thoroughly taken to task..." The policy is fixed and imposed, and woe to him of any class who dares to struggle against it.

In relation to the civil war the CP pursues a conservative military policy. Popular activities independent of its own troops are frowned upon. There is no call for workers or peasants to rise in revolt in Guomindang areas. Social policy is likewise a function arrogated by the CP and carefully imposed by advance bureaucratic determination of its limits, stages and methods.

No surrender to capitalism

EVERY last element of spontaneity or mass participation is strained out of the movement. In this way the entire direction of the real social revolution which is the profoundest desire of the people is transformed into a new tyranny of bureaucratic collectivism. The "new democracy" of Stalinism does not aim at eliminating the bourgeoisie or the agrarian rich at this time. The only group put out of the pale of acceptance by the CP is the Guomintang itself. With all other classes it proposes a period of "joint reconstruction."

In order to carry through such a programme the CP must guar-

antee the quiescence of the masses. However, this does not constitute a surrender by the CP to native capitalism. Nothing would be further from the mark. For the power of all classes is strictly defined and limited by the CP, which retains all real power. Through its control of the peasant unions and the village poor, the CP can and will launch an offensive against the new kulaks which its present policy is producing. Through similar control in the cities, the CP will (when it is decided) be able to use the workers and petty bourgeois against the capitalists.

The CP, by its position above the classes, manipulates all of them to its own state needs. The class struggle is replaced by class manipulation.

This is the actual relationship which is emerging under the "new democracy". Instead of a pro-labour state we have the emergence of an anti-labour state; instead of a peasant power, an anti-peasant power; in the name of democracy the new tyranny of Stalinism arises out of the failure of capitalism and proletarian independence.

4.

IT is hardly likely, since no serious alternative exists, that the urban working class will be able to avoid the fatal embrace of the CP. Yet it will take a long time before this party's roots are secure among the workers. Memories of the betrayal of '27 persist among older workers, and tendencies to reject the labour-capitalist collaboration policy of the CP are inevitable. A period of economic chaos is probable and restlessness with CP rule and with the bourgeoisie will develop. Also, Stalinism's labour policy is one of intensified work and increasing production at labour's expense. The agrarian policy of Stalinism tends to create a newly rich kulak in the village who will threaten the food supply of the cities. All this is in prospect and the sailing will not be easy for the new masters.

That the present Stalinist revolution in China is led from, and gives prior leadership to, the village is of enormous importance. Much of the peculiar political manoeuvring in China today — the coalition programme of the CP, its hesitancy to utilise the masses except under closest control, its slogan of "return the factories to their owners" — arise from this original difficulty. The CP may actually be unable to organise and administer all of China because of this alienation.

The key to the uprooting of feudalism, to a modern revolution in the village as well as national unification, lies in the cities. Unless modern transport and communications are constructed the country cannot be held together physically. Unless agriculture is reorganised to the needs of industry, city and country will not be integrated. Only an industrially-oriented agriculture can create the mentality which will accept sharp breaks from traditional peasant patterns and introduce new methods adapted to local use as well as deal with such otherwise "insoluble problems" as land fragmentation.

The lesson of the Great Revolution of 1927 is the very opposite of that stated by Li above. The revolutionary urban masses, at the head of which was the working class, did prove sufficient to take and organise the power. The Stalinists have put this tremendous dynamic force in fetters, substituting themselves for it. It may well be that its alienation from the working class will prove to be the Achilles heel of Chinese Stalinism.

Notes for a programme

AT this moment a socialist programme must begin with this working class, which is not yet committed to or permeated by

Stalinism. This working class can still be imbued with independence. The CP is, as we have stressed, an agrarian party primarily. An independent proletariat could eventually organise its own organs, take the power in the rich coastal cities, organise an independent democratic movement which could call the peasants to revolutionary action.

It could organise under the programme of ousting the capitalists regardless of party; for social and political democracy, not a new one-party regime; for maximum freedom to organise freely, without CP direction, through the democratic activities of the masses; against the CP doctrine of revolution by "stages"; restoration of the revolutionary leadership to the workers; for full freedom of speech and press. Such a movement could extend its hand in comradeship to the peasantry with the call to arms, for an immediate arming of all the people in fighting units of their own, under elected officers of their own.

Against the central national political slogan of Stalinism (bureaucratic party coalitions in a new political consultative conference) can be posed the call to democratic assemblies of freely elected delegates, first in each city and province and then nationally; rejection of a new political consultative conference as a coalition of leaders in which the CP is bound to establish one-party rule, since the other leaders represent nothing. And above all peace to China, not the "new democracy" of Stalinist totalitarianism but the socialist democracy of the workers and peasant poor.

The struggle against imperialism is the fight against all imperialism and its agents, American and Russian. Drive American dollars out of Guomindang China and renounce Russian control of Manchuria through its control of the South Manchurian Railway. Free the cities of Dairen and Harbin from the Russian army; national freedom requires an end to Russian as well as American rule and spheres of influence.

These are points in broad outline for a revolutionary socialist programme. The chief need is for a party, an independent workers' party. For the social base of the proletariat remains untapped. It is still possible to reorient the Chinese revolution by a leadership which believes in the ability and necessity of proletarian hegemony, which believes that the cities must lead the villages.

Such an orientation strikes at the heart of Chinese Stalinism and is the basis of democracy. The workers of China need a party of their own. That is the beginning of a programme.

However, Chinese Stalinism has prepared the repressive machinery with which to prevent activities designed to undermine its rule. Whatever temporary liberties are allowed to the small bourgeoisie of the cities it will not permit any expression whatsoever to the working class outside of its own fully controlled organs. For it is a universal characteristic of Stalinism that it fastens itself on the working class and that this class is its first victim. This means that what is most necessary, the closest relations between revolutionary anti-Stalinist socialists and the workers, is the most hazardous and most difficult and will be met by the severest counter-measures. The programme described above is an orientation fraught with enormous difficulties and it is by no means certain that it can be effected in the immediate future. For the attack on all socialist and left opponents is already under way and it is a campaign of extermination. In these circumstances the problem of survival is of chief importance; the vigilant assistance of socialists everywhere will be necessary if these cadres are to be saved. All manner of special forms of organisation and struggle will be necessary and these very instruments of survival can also become the means of making connection with the workers and organising the struggle with them.

The nature of the Chinese revolution

By Leon Trotsky

THE [Chinese Communist Party-led] peasant movement has created its own armies, has seized great territories, and has installed its own institutions. In the event of further successes — and all of us, of course, passionately desire such successes — the movement will become linked up with the urban and industrial centres and, through this very fact, it will come face to face with the working class. What will be the nature of this encounter? Is it certain that its character will be peaceful and friendly?

At first glance the question might appear to be superfluous. The peasant movement is headed by communists or sympathisers. Isn't it self-evident that in the event of their coming together the workers and the peasants must unanimously unite under the communist banner?

Unfortunately the question is not at all so simple.

The worker approaches questions from the socialist standpoint; the peasant's viewpoint is petty bourgeois. The worker strives to socialise the property that is taken away from the exploiters; the peasant seeks to divide it up. The worker desires to put palaces and parks to common use; the peasant, insofar as he cannot divide them, inclines to burning the palaces and cutting down the parks. The worker strives to solve problems on a national scale and in accordance with a plan; the peasant, on the other hand, approaches all problems on a local scale and takes a hostile attitude to centralised planning, etc.

It is understood that a peasant also is capable of raising himself to the socialist viewpoint. Under a proletarian regime more and more masses of peasants become re-educated in the socialist spirit. But this requires time, years, even decades...

But after all aren't there communists at the head of the Chinese Red armies? Doesn't this by itself exclude the possibility of conflicts between the peasant detachments and the workers' organisations? No, that does not exclude it. The fact that individual communists are in the leadership of the present armies does not at all transform the social character of these armies, even if their communist leaders bear a definite proletarian stamp. And how do matters stand in China?

Among the communist leaders of the Red detachments there indubitably are many decayed intellectuals and semi-intellectuals who have not gone through the school of proletarian struggle. For two or three years they

live the lives of partisan commanders and commissars; they wage battles, seize territories, etc. They absorb the spirit of their environment. Meanwhile the majority of the rank-and-file communists in the Red detachments unquestionably consists of peasants, who assume the name communist in all honesty and sincerity but who in actuality remain revolutionary paupers or revolutionary petty proprietors. In politics he who judges by denominations and labels and not by social facts is lost. All the more so when the politics concerned is carried out arms in hand.

The true Communist Party is the organisation of the proletarian vanguard. But we must not forget that the working class of China has been kept in an oppressed and amorphous condition during the last four years, and only recently has it evinced signs of revival. It is one thing when a Communist Party, firmly resting on the flower of the urban proletariat, strives through the workers to lead a peasant war. It is an altogether different thing when a few thousand or even tens of thousands of revolutionists, who are truly communists or only take the name, assume the leadership of a peasant war without having serious support from the proletariat. This is precisely the situation in China. This acts to augment to an extreme the danger of conflicts between the workers and the armed peasants.

In China the situation is completely to the disadvantage of the workers. In the most important regions of China the power is in the hands of bourgeois militarists; in other regions, in the hands of leaders of armed peasants. Nowhere is there any proletarian power as yet. The trade unions are weak. The influence of the party among the workers is insignificant. The peasant detachments, flushed with victories they have achieved, stand under the wing of the Comintern. They call themselves "the Red Army", i.e., they identify themselves with the armed forces of the Soviets. What results consequently is that the revolutionary peasantry of China, in the person of its ruling stratum, seems to have appropriated to itself beforehand the political and moral capital which should by the nature of things belong to the Chinese workers. Isn't it possible that things may turn out so that all this capital will be directed at a certain moment *against* the workers?

The commanding stratum of the Chinese "Red Army" has no doubt succeeded in inculcating itself with the habit of issuing commands. The absence of a strong revolu-

tionary party and of mass organisations of the proletariat renders control over the commanding stratum virtually impossible. The commanders and commissars appear in the guise of absolute masters of the situation and upon occupying cities will be rather apt to look down from above upon the workers. The demands of the workers might often appear to them either inopportune or ill-advised.

Nor should one forget such "trifles" as the fact that within cities the staffs and offices of the victorious armies are established not in the proletarian huts but in the finest city buildings, in the houses and apartments of the bourgeoisie; and all this facilitates the inclination of the upper stratum of the peasant armies to feel itself part of the "cultured" and "educated" classes, in no way part of the proletariat.

Thus, in China, the causes and grounds for conflicts between the army, which is peasant in composition and petty bourgeois in leadership, and the workers are not only eliminated but, on the contrary, all the circumstances are such as to greatly increase the possibility and even the inevitability of such conflicts; and in addition the chances of the proletariat are far less favourable to begin with than was the case in Russia.

The Russian Narodniks used to accuse the Russian Marxists of "ignoring" the peasantry, of not carrying on work in the villages, etc. To this the Marxists replied: "We will arouse and organise the advanced workers and through the workers we shall arouse the peasants." Such in general is the only conceivable road for the proletarian party.

The Chinese Stalinists have acted otherwise. During the revolution of 1925-27 they subordinated directly and immediately the interests of the workers and the peasants to the interests of the national bourgeoisie. In the years of the counter-revolution they passed over from the proletariat to the peasantry, i.e., they undertook that role which has fulfilled in our country by the SRs when they were still a revolutionary party.

The party has actually torn itself away from its class. Thereby in the last analysis it can cause injury to the peasantry as well. For should the proletariat continue to remain on the sidelines, without organisation, without leadership, then the peasant war even if fully victorious will inevitably arrive in a blind alley.

In old China every victorious peasant revolution was concluded by the creation of a new dynasty, and subsequently also by a new group of large proprietors; the movement was

caught in a vicious circle. Under present conditions the peasant war by itself, without the direct leadership of the proletarian vanguard, can only pass on the power to a new bourgeois clique... which in practice will differ very little from the Guominfang of Chiang Kai-shek. And this would signify in turn a new massacre of the workers.

What then are the conclusions to be drawn from all this? The first conclusion is that one must boldly and openly face the facts as they are. The advanced workers must be taught to distinguish from among "communist" labels and banners the actual social processes.

The activities of the "Red armies" must be attentively followed.

On the basis of our own observations, reports, and other documents we must

painstakingly study the life processes of the peasant armies and the regime established in the regions occupied by them; we must discover in living facts the contradictory class tendencies and clearly point out to the workers the tendencies we support and those we oppose.

We must follow the inter-relationships between the Red armies and the local workers with special care, without overlooking even the minor misunderstandings between them. Within the framework of isolated cities and regions, conflicts, even if acute, might appear to be insignificant local episodes. But with the development of events, class conflicts may take on a national scope and lead the revolution to a catastrophe, i.e., to a new massacre of the workers by the peasants, hoodwinked by the bourgeoisie. The history of revolutions

is full of such examples.

The trade union and party units must be built up, the advanced workers must be educated, the proletarian vanguard must be brought together and drawn into the battle.

The Left Opposition may turn out to be too weak to direct events in the interests of the proletariat at the present stage. But we are sufficiently strong right now to point out to the workers the correct road and, in the development of the class struggle, to demonstrate to the workers our correctness and political insight. Only in this way can a revolutionary party gain the confidence of the workers, only in this way will it grow, become strong, and take its place at the head of the popular masses.

● Abridged from 'Peasant War in China and the Proletariat', September 22, 1932

**Work for a Workers World;
Join the Workers Party!**

LABOR ACTION

APRIL 26, 1948

A PAPER IN THE INTEREST OF SOCIALISM

FIVE CENTS

FOR PEACE AND SOCIALIST FREEDOM -- NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW!

The Way Out!



Labour Action, weekly paper of the Workers' Party, 26 April 1948. With the division of the world into two imperialist block, revolutionary socialism was marginalised. By telling the truth and rejecting the delusion that Stalinism had any positive connection with socialism, they preserved authentic socialism and prepared the future.

May Day 1948—a day dedicated to independent working-class struggle.

May Day 1948—a day demanding as never before the assertion of labor's independence, a rededication of socialist action.

Less than three years have passed since the hostilities of the Second World War ceased. Yet the world is again tormented by fear of war, torn by imperialist conflict.

Two colossal power blocs drive to impose their will on the peoples of the world.

Stalinist totalitarianism—under its heel the majority of the East European peoples and millions in Asia—seeks to extend its rule. It has conquered Czechoslovakia, where the working class seeking freedom from capitalist tyranny became the vassals of a Russian-model slave system.

In Italy, in France, in the United States—everywhere—Stalin's agents are operating, directly through the Communist Parties or indirectly through fronts.

They seek to ally these countries with Russia, to make their people the subjects of Russia's imperialist aims.

Untie the Strings on Aid!

United States imperialism, rich and powerful, rests on the cracked pillars of capitalism.

Racing against time with oncoming economic crisis, driven by its imperialist rivalry with Russia, it aims to fix its domination upon the battered lands of Europe and Asia and on the unscarred nations of Latin America.

Locked in contest with Moscow, the United States orders nations into its own orbit. With hypocritical humanitarianism it sells desperately needed economic aid at the price of submission to its own foreign policy.

It knows that the people of Europe cannot survive, cannot beat back the wave of Stalinist totalitarianism, unless their shattered industries are rebuilt. It knows that they must utilize aid from whatever source.

But we, as American workers, must see to it that this aid is given in a real European Recovery Program—not in a Marshall Plan for the world domination of Wall Street and the strangulation of our European brothers' socialist goal.

Millions upon millions of Europe's working men and women are determined to rid themselves of a capitalist system which has brought them two wars in one generation, and indescribable misery. Must they be told by Washington that an American receivership is their only alternative to Stalinist conquest?

American labor's NO will resound through Europe and hearten them to fight

for the DEMOCRATIC alternative to capitalism—a real socialist government!

There is no way out for the imperialists of both camps except preparation for war. It is unlikely today or tomorrow. But whenever they are ready for it, they will slip the leash from the dogs of war.

And if they succeed—

Again the victims of the war will be the peoples of the world. The industrial machine, rebuilt today, will be smashed. This time atomic weapons will not leave the cities of the United States unscathed.

May Day, 1948, Statement by the Workers Party

There is no victory when that war is over. No problem is settled, no dispute solved. Economic security remains a mirage among ruins, and peace a vain hope—as long as imperialism, Stalinist variety or capitalist variety, still lives.

With this, only this, as their offering, the propaganda loudspeakers shriek that we must choose between Moscow or Washington—Washington or Moscow—poison or club.

There is a Way Out

They lie. There is a way out for labor. For sixty-one May Days labor has fought for it. The heroes and martyrs, the fighters and victims of the working-class struggle gave everything they had—and when they died, they died standing up. We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before, and look along the same way.

It is the alternative wherever men have fought for freedom. It is the alternative of an INDEPENDENT WORKING CLASS REFUSING TO SUBMIT TO EITHER OF THE WAR CAMPS—LOCKING BOTH IN A STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALIST FREEDOM!

NEITHER WASHINGTON NOR MOSCOW! BUILD THE THIRD CAMP OF LABOR AGAINST THE WAR!

The socialist movement, the forces of independent working-class action, are hard pressed. The leeches of Stalinist and U. S. imperialism are sapping the vitality of the THIRD CAMP.

Socialism a Practical Goal

In every country, the spineless parties of "official" socialism have gone over to one or the other of the two camps, becoming stooges either of the Kremlin or the White House.

The former tell us: The slaveholders and butchers of the Russian people are bringing their "kind of socialism" to us too. The latter tell us: The fight for socialism is impractical now; let us hug the remnants of democratic capitalism to our bosom.

Both are sliding into the pit of barbarism with their eyes closed.

THERE IS NOTHING MORE PRACTICAL THAN SOCIALISM IN THIS DEGENERATING WORLD. IT IS NOT TRUE THAT THE "PRACTICAL" MEN ARE THOSE WHO WIELD THE WHIP OF ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL REPRESSION! IT IS NOT TRUE THAT THOSE WHO FIGHT FOR A WORLD OF PEACE AND PLenty ARE VISIONARY DREAMERS!

IT IS NOT TRUE THAT WE MUST CHOOSE BETWEEN THE "PRACTICALITY" OF THE SLAUGHTERHOUSE AND THE DREAM OF UTOPIA. THE IDEALISM OF SOCIALIST LABOR IS BORN OF THE GREATEST PRACTICAL NEED AND THE GREATEST PRACTICAL POTENTIALITY FOR A WORLD OF ABUNDANCE.

THERE IS NO TASK BEFORE MANKIND SO PRACTICAL AS THAT OF REORGANIZING ITS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS SO THAT THEY WILL SERVE, NOT PROFITS, BUT HUMANITY—SO THAT THEY WILL SERVE, NOT OPPRESS, HUMANITY!

THE PROBLEMS THAT WEIGH UPON THE EUROPEAN worker also press upon the American worker. He lives in the same world. He too is confronted with the choice between Washington or Moscow, Wall Street or the Kremlin.

He too must answer: NEITHER.

We face many needs. The Taft-Hartley Law is still on the books. Housing is the shame of the nation. High prices are siphoning our paychecks into the pockets of the profiteers. Jim Crow poisons the air.

We cannot meet these problems as they have to be met unless we too assert our independence AS A CLASS.

Over all of these vital issues hangs the shadow, the world-wide clash between Washington and Moscow. The Democrats and Republicans, of course, speak for U. S. imperialism. The new-party movement which has Wallace as its figurehead is car-

(Continued on page 3)

What is Irish Republicanism? part two

By John O'Mahony

WHEN Fianna Fail comes to power in March 1932 (it is dependent on Labour votes in the Dail for the first of its unbroken 16 years in power), De Valera opens the jails and releases the Republican prisoners. Banned organisations are unbanned. One of the first acts of De Valera's Lieutenant Sean Lemass, now a Minister, is to visit Republican prisoners to tell them they are being released.

There is now an upsurge of Republicanism, rendered triumphant by Fianna Fail's victory. The Stalinist-Republican Frank Ryan coins the slogan: "No free speech for traitors". They start to attack meetings of the ex-government party.* The ex-government party, in response, begins to organise its own "IRA", the Army Comrades Association.

De Valera immediately stops the payment of the farmers' mortgage money ("land annuities") to Britain. Britain retaliates by banning imports of Irish beef, and takes other hostile economic measures. An "Economic War" develops between Britain and the 26 Counties.

The accumulation of marketless cattle allows De Valera to give free meat to the poor. Such measures, and stopping the farmers' repayments to Britain (the farmers paid a lesser sum to the Dublin government instead) built up popular support for Fianna Fail.

Fianna Fail's politics amounted to a lesser, poorer, version of the US's "New Deal", which started a year after Fianna Fail came to power.

The Blueshirt fascist challenge

BITAIN'S ban on Irish beef threatens the big farmers ("the ranchers"), represented by the ex-government party Cumman Na Gael, with ruin. The result is that the Army Comrades Association becomes the nucleus of a mushrooming, soon blue-shirted, fascist party of the southern European, clerical-fascist type. When De Valera dismisses the long-time chief of police, Eoin O'Duffy, they have a ready-made Il Duce, Taoiseach, chief. The ex-government party sinks itself in the new movement. Overnight Irish fascism has sprung up fully formed, a contender for state power. They have the backing of the princes of the Church, who raise a great hue and cry against the danger of "communism" lurking inside the Republican left. De Valera is depicted as a "Kerensky", an unstable bridge towards Republican-Communist revolution.

They were odd fascists as the species went then. They advocated "free speech", in the first place their own; they were less nationalistic than either the government or the IRA; they had imposed "Britain's treaty" in a cruel civil war and been allied to Britain during their years of power. To many, during the "Economic War", they seem to be Britain's ally still.

Faced with a militant fascist opposition for two years — it quickly fell apart: the old Free State party reconstituted itself as Fine Gael — De Valera relies on the IRA for unofficial paramilitary auxiliary support. The IRA and the labour movement spearhead the fight against the fascists in the streets — until the government feels strong enough to do without their support.

Republicanism in power

WHAT did Republicanism represent now that one of its post-Civil War segments was the government and the IRA was not, in political terms, significantly different?

The dominant — "rational" — Republicanism now was that of

Fianna Fail. "Fianna Failers with guns" was no misrepresentation of the political position of the IRA.

De Valera's government sets about rearranging relations between the 26 Counties and Britain along the lines De Valera had advocated in 1921/22. Instead of Dominion Status within the British empire, they work for De Valera's "external association". They get rid of the British-appointed Governor General; they fight the Economic War with Britain to a state of limited conflict by the mid-'30s, and to a full agreement with Neville Chamberlain's government in 1938. Under the 1938 agreement, the last British naval bases in the south are handed over to the Free State. When the British king Edward abdicates to marry Wallis Simpson, De Valera seizes the chance to abolish the Oath of Allegiance to the king.

After a referendum, De Valera codifies his constitutional changes in the December 1937 Constitution. This claims the whole island as the "national territory", including the Protestant-Unionist parts, but also recognises a "special place" for the Catholic Church in the state.

De Valera can now truly describe the Irish Free State as "a republic, externally associated with the British empire". He has achieved the political alternative for which, insofar as the Civil War can be reduced to clear-cut politics, the Republicans had rejected the Treaty.

In justice, it should be said that the 1931 Statute of Westminster, which made these things legally possible, was in part the result of efforts made by the Irish government in the 1920s to expand what Michael Collins, championing the 1921-2 Treaty, had called "the freedom to win freedom".

De Valera's New Economic Policy

ARTHUR Griffiths' original monarchical Sinn Fein had advocated building up Irish industry behind high tariffs. Though Britain maintained a policy of free trade until 1931, and most likely would not have retaliated then, (other dominions had tariffs) nothing was done about it until De Valera came to power.

Now, in a crisis-ridden world of intensifying economic nationalism, De Valera implements the old Sinn Fein policy. Small industries are created in the economic space made for them by high taxes against imports of competing foreign goods — including those of Northern Ireland. (The unfortunate corollary is that Irish goods so nourished can not compete outside Irish markets — but that will not matter much until after the Second World War.)

The ideal of both governmental and semi-oppositionist Republicanism is a mainly self-sufficient Ireland of peasant homesteads and small workshops and factories — a Gaelic Ireland and a Catholic Ireland.

The rule of a cultural sect

THE Gaelic language is the language only of certain very poor and economically unviable areas in the west, the Gaeltachts. Its revival has been proclaimed one of the great "national goals". Gaelic is the official language of the state. But English is the native language of most Irish people.

For at least a quarter century, under Cumman Na Gael and under Fianna Fail, elementary schools use Irish as a vehicle for teaching many subjects to children whose native language, like that of their parents and grandparents, is English. Certain ultra-important subjects such as religion and commerce are taught in English...

The national schools — those not staffed by religious teaching

* In this, Ryan was consistent: as a student he had organised a riot in the Abbey Theatre against Sean O'Casey's realistic play about the Easter Rising, *The Plough and the Stars*.

orders — had been one of the great nurseries of nationalism, but the teachers' union at conferences vainly protested against this system. Its main victims were the poor: Gaelic became a hurdle to higher education and a precondition for all central and local government jobs, even road-sweeping.* Meanwhile, the number of native Gaelic-speakers declined continuously as people migrated. By the '40s and '50s the best exponents of traditional Gaelic music and singing were to be found on building sites and factories in London and elsewhere in England. The great Gaelic singer Seosamh Ó h Éanaí (Joe Heaney) was, for example, a doorman in London.

National oppression of a people by forcing a foreign language on it is a very common experience. It is hard to know what to call the language policy of the Irish state for its own people if not a perverse form of national/cultural oppression. It did not succeed in reviving Gaelic.

The Catholic part of the ideal was easier to arrange. The Protestant population of the south declined continuously in the decades after independence; the border walled the others off.

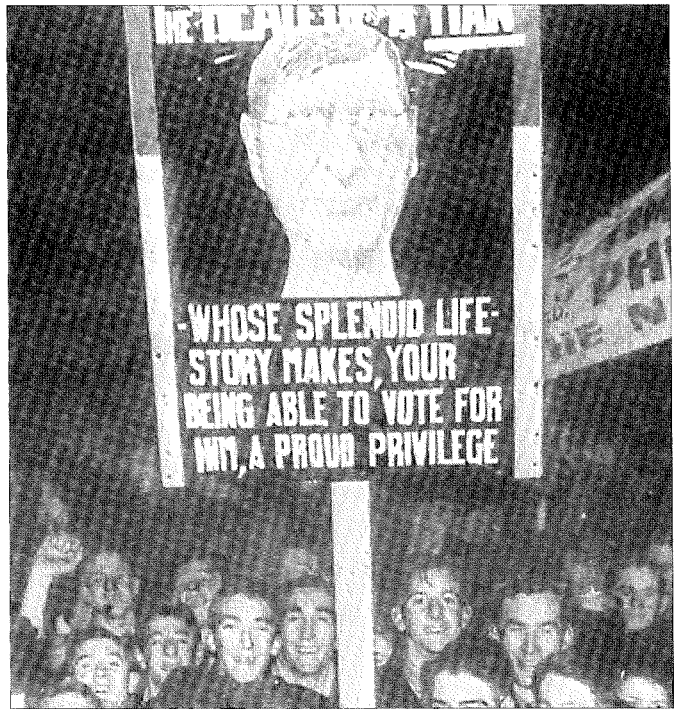
The Republican Congress

MOVE on now to 1934. The predominance of Fianna Fail and its success in achieving what could be achieved, to move towards enlarged independence, and doing it legally and politically, has marginalised the IRA. It will do it further. Politically the medium-term result of the victories of De Valera Republicanism in the 26 Counties will be that the IRA will focus more and more on "the North". Force against the north is ruled out by the IRA, as by De Valera. In 1934 the first result of the IRA's political marginalisation is that some of the leftist IRA leaders conclude that they must now define themselves more clearly and more narrowly: proclaim the need for a Workers' Republic.

Their motion to that effect fails narrowly at the IRA Convention in 1934, and its advocates walk out, issuing a call for the convocation of a "Republican Congress". Their call says that a Workers' Republic should be the goal the Republican Congress sets for itself. Truly, that was the only way to rescue the revolutionary elements, who were drowning politically in the broad currents of Republicanism, and prevent revolutionary Republicanism developing as it did develop — into political incoherence and mysticism, substituting for politics a proto-Christian sado-masochistic cult of guns, self-sacrifice, blood and death. But by the time Congress meets at Mullingar later that year, most of the leaders — Ryan, O'Donnell, the two Gilmore brothers — have changed their minds.

The Communist Party of Ireland, which greatly influences them and takes a prominent role in the Republican Congress, is not of the Workers' Republic mind. The Irish Stalinists believe in a two-stage revolution: first "complete the bourgeois revolution", then the Workers' Republic — socialism. The successes of De Valera is undermining this position too. The result will be that "completing the bourgeois revolution" comes to be identified solely with ending partition. But this is not so yet. Stalinism and Stalino-Republicanism will from that point on be a bedrock of ideological support for cross-class Republicanism. At the 7th World congress of the Communist International — mid-1935 — CPI Secretary Sean Murray self-criticises the Party for initially being too critical of De Valera. In subsequent decades they will compensate for that!

In 1934 the Stalinists form the right wing of the Republican Congress — the most bitter opponents of the Workers' Republic as the goal to proclaim. In Northern Ireland, the CP preaches socialism to Protestant workers; but their position in Ireland "as a whole" is that "the bourgeois revolution has not yet been completed". We will later



De Valera admirers

have to discuss the role of the CPI and its successors in Republicanism in some detail.

At its first national gathering, the Republican Congress splits between those advocating a Workers' Republic as the up-front objective and the majority of the leaders who now think "The Republic" is still the "high ground" on which to rally a big national "anti-imperialist" movement. Their problem is that Fianna Fail holds that ground.

This policy could mean nothing but that they — both Stalinist-Republicans and plain CPI Stalinists — would assume the position of "more advanced" Fianna Failers and critics of Fianna Fail, a Fianna Fail ginger group. Once Fianna Fail has made its constitutional changes, the "left" populist Republicans can have nothing but increasingly ill-defined nationalism and a — now platonic — mysticism of violence to sustain them. Peadar O'Donnell would continue to write, not often about politics.

The Workers' Republic left wing of the Republican Congress — it included James Connolly's daughter Nora and his son Rory — disappeared too, some into the Labour Party. Nora Connolly had contact with Trotsky in the mid-'30s. Perhaps 200 left-wing Republicans went to fight in the Spanish Civil War, where half of them died.

The IRA and southern labour

BELOW the great political generalities, what was the IRA? Let us look at what it was in the 1930s in one area, Clare, and particularly in one town, Ennis, part of Eamonn De Valera's constituency. We are not, in this excursion, in which we will look at the labour movement in that town, wandering off the subject: we are trying to bring the IRA of that time and of such places, and the sort of people who joined it, into clearer focus.

Republicanism is strong in Ennis, but Republicanism has become De Valerism. Alongside De Valera's Fianna Fail there is a "die-hard" IRA in the town. The last three of the 77 prisoners of war shot during the 1922-23 civil war after a pseudo-trial (others were killed without "trial"), Quinn, Mahoney and Shaughnessy, had died in Ennis. There is a "Republican plot" in the cemetery at Drumcliffe. In the 1930s, thousands march annually to do homage at the graves of the three martyrs.

Clare is a county of owner-occupier farms and shops in which

* In the east end of London there has been success in teaching very young children of Bengali-speaking parents in English. But English is all around them. In Ireland, where an effective compulsory education act was brought in as late as 1926, it produced, as the saying went, "illiterates in two languages".

most of the population is either self-employed or works for relatives in a family enterprise, shop or farm. The proletariat, people with nothing but their labour power to sell, is a small part of the population, largely confined to towns such as Ennis and the small port of Kilrush to the south. The class structure in these towns is caste-rigid.

A useful sociological study of Clare and of Ennis exists, made by two US social anthropologists, Solon Kimball and Conrad Arensberg in the 1930s. At the bottom in the town is a class of labourers, dependent for the most part on irregular work — building work, cattle droving, all sorts of odd jobs. The “labour aristocracy” is made up of people with steady jobs and regular incomes — labourers in the bigger stores, railway workers....

A lot of them are pre-literate (the 26 Counties did not get an effective compulsory Education Act until 1926). They live in one-storey houses along the no-longer-used quays on the River Fergus — leading to the broad Shannon two miles away which leads to the sea — and in roads starting at the edge of the town — Drumbiggie, Turnpike, Old Mill Street, Boreen. These houses are officially described by the council as “hovels”, without water or sanitation, without lighting other than paraffin lamps or cooking facilities other than the open fire; some are subject to annual flooding. They will be described as hovels again and again for decades, and nothing done about it. Some of them will be cleared away only in the '70s.

These are proud people, condemned to endless humiliation, quick to take offense and willing where they can to avenge themselves. They care how they appear in each others' eyes and in their own. The poverty of this proletarian underclass is dire and permanent. There are big families and bigger clans of extended families in the streets of “hovels”, much sporting competition — hurling teams from the different streets and districts — and some feuding. Somehow out of this bonding together in families, hurling teams, named local clubs that hunt on foot with local packs of beagles, card schools and street patriotism, a magnificent culture of labour solidarity has developed. They have their own one-town trade union, the Ennis United Labourers' Union, with about 500 members (the population of the town is 5-6,000). Where you might expect savage competition for the little work there is, there has grown up the opposite — a culture of working class solidarity. In the period 1932-34, in the euphoria around the change of government, this takes the form of labour demonstrations that will lead to a mass trial of 24 pickets and a three-day General Strike in the town.

Much of the work the labourers get is from the council, repairing roads, or breaking stones (by hand at the side of the road) for road-making. Every December in the '20s and '30s there is a labourers' march and demonstration to the council to petition for two weeks' Christmas relief work so that they “can have a Christmas dinner”. Labour disputes are often about the demand for the employment of union-only labour on such jobs. When a job starts at a quarry in Fountain, a couple of miles outside the town, half or more of the union's members form up behind their fife and drum band at nine o'clock in the morning and march the hilly roads up to the quarry, to recruit those employed there into the union. Representatives of the union go into the quarry, the rest stay in the road. When some of the quarry workers refuse to join the union, others come in from the road and fighting starts. Out of this incident will come the trial of the 24.

A small housing estate is due to be built at Ard na Greine and a small group of men are sent from the — newly opened — Labour Exchange to start digging foundations. Some workers there are not EULU members. The union members refuse to work with them. The job is closed down. Not long after, the job starts again with new men sent from the Labour Exchange. The union insists that this work belongs by right to the first group of workers, who had effectively been sacked. This is now a dispute about whether the union or the Labour Exchange and the employer will control the supply of labour. The union tells the new men sent by the Labour Exchange not to

take the jobs. The workers accept the union's judgement. Another group is sent from the Labour Exchange to take their place. They too stand by the rights of the first group to the jobs — and for the right of the union to control these matters.

A big effort of imagination is necessary for even badly-off people of today if they are to put themselves in the place of these men and understand the tremendous guts and commitment to labour solidarity which they showed. They had nothing to fall back on, families to care for; there was not more than the beginnings of a welfare state — everything that might go to creating in them a “F. you Jack” self-centredness; the sort of situation that led dockers in Britain and Ireland, before they organised themselves in a union, to fight each other with fists, clubs and boots every morning for the chance of half a day's work. Yet they stuck to the union.

The upshot is a three-day General Strike involving about a thousand workers backed by labourers from the surrounding towns — and victory! A false victory. The County Council agrees to the union demand that work should go only to union members. A few months later the Dublin Government ministry will “overrule” the council...

Two months before the General Strike, on Christmas Eve 1933, 26 members of the EULU are arrested. Twenty-four are sent for trial on charges of conspiracy and assault in connection with the mass picket at the Fountain quarry. About half of those charged are from one of the roads of “hovels” — Old Mill Street. It is an attempt to put an end to the eruption of “Larkinism” in the town by state coercion and intimidation. In April 1934 the jury acquits the 24 men, despite the efforts of the judge, who had come close to an instruction to convict.

And where is the IRA? Right in the heart of it. It was from such people that the IRA mainly recruited. The EULU secretary, Michael Glynn, has two sons, Patrick and James, in the IRA. In 1934, James is shot dead in O'Connell Street, coming out of a meeting of the IRA club, by a blueshirt fascist, McNamara. A memorial meeting will be held by the union for its member, James Glynn. About the same time, James' brother, Paddy, is brought to court after some conflict with a policeman. The IRA does not recognise the “Free State courts.” Paddy Glenn — who held the rank of captain in the local IRA — stands by his principles, refuses to recognise the court and is automatically jailed. He will spend almost as long in jail as will the blueshirt, McNamara, (who got 18 months) for killing his brother, James Glen. Such people are serious about their rejection of the state and the establishment, even with De Valera in power. The blueshirts too are strong in the area. The Bishop of Killaloe, Dr Fogarty, sits on blueshirt platforms; the clergy recruit for them. The union, like the IRA, is active in the fight against the blueshirts. That too involves sacrifices. For example, men who work regularly, cattle droving from fairs for a “big farmer” who is blueshirt — as most of them are — will either “put on a blue shirt” or not be employed again.

The labourers

“No God ! No Soul ! No Hereafter ! ”

THE HEAD AND FRONT OF COMMUNISM.

DANGERS THAT THREATEN CHRISTIANITY.

MOST REV. DR. FOGARTY'S SOLEMN WARNING.

LIFE-AND-DEATH STRUGGLE MAY AWAIT THE CHURCH.

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE FAITHFUL.

A solemn warning against the dangers that threaten Christianity was uttered by Most Rev. Dr. Fogarty, Bishop of Killaloe, in his Lenten Pastoral read at all public Masses in the Diocese on Sunday last.

Referring to Communism, his Lordship stated that it was conducting an open campaign against all religion. “No God,” “no soul,” “no life hereafter,” were the head and front of its whole system.

The one institution on earth that the agents of Communism most hate and fear, added his Lordship, was the Catholic Church; “for they know that they are up against a mysterious power that has often been lacerated but never killed. It is not impossible that a life-and-death struggle awaits the Church with that anti-Christian force. If that struggle does come the Church will suffer many losses and may have to suffer long; but in the end, as always in history, she will triumph: because she has Christ on Board. Who commands the winds and the waves.”

Socialism, like “communism” here was subject to the permanent barrage of outright condemnation from the church.
From *The Clare Champion*, 1933



A group of stone-breakers at the side of the road outside Ennis, County Clare, in the late '30s, on "relief work". Stones were broken with sledges and hammers into small chips for road making. They are sitting on a pile of broken stones. "I'd rather go breaking stones!" was a saying amongst these men, meaning that the work to which "breaking stones" was preferable was the world's worst. When war time labour shortages gave them the chance, they fled to England, where many settled. All if these men will have been members of the Ennis United Labourers Union. The man on the bottom right with a fag in his mouth, Tommy Mahony, was a defendant in the trial of the 24 Ennis labourers in 1934 (see text), and suffered victimisation for refusing to "put on a [fascist] blue shirt". When he died, in the mid-'70s, of an industrial disease, after a quarter of a century as a fireman at Salford Gasworks, he was a member of the GMBTU. The later life histories of most of them will also involve wartime immigration and for some, eventual resettlement of their families in England.

vote Labour Party — there is a Labour TD for the area, Paddy Hogan, who had contributed a couple of pieces to James Connolly's *Workers' Republic* before 1916 and in the '30s is on the left side of the LP — and Fianna Fail. But what can they hope to do politically? In almost all of the 26 Counties, Labour is in a not too different situation from Labour in Ennis — a minority in a bourgeois and petty-bourgeois world. The precious seeds of a better world, labour solidarity, can grow abundantly as it does, but its possibilities are limited by the objective conditions of the working class. The struggle to make all council jobs union jobs is in its way an epic struggle, but for a small objective — not "some Hampden in his little fields", but Larkins in their little town and little one-town union. Socialism is subjected to a permanent barrage of outright condemnation from the church. Nationalism and Catholicism lock them into a world outlook held in common with priests, small bourgeois, big farmers and enjoins them to accept their place. There is much working class anger and resentment. But such anger has nowhere to go politically in an Irish state from which the big battalions of the working class on the island have been severed by politics, religion and the partition border. *The IRA in the south is, at this stage, the lower orders revolutionary movement that corresponds to this unripe social condition.*

There is a bitter negativism towards the existing state; there is a condition of war or great tension with the Church even though the IRA member would almost always at this period be devoutly Catholic — their own understanding of Catholicism no matter what the bishops and priests say: which is a protestantising contradiction in terms; there is dissatisfaction with the condition of society and with their place in it, but no coherent acceptable alternative, no goals

but small ones that can be plausibly formulated within their situation; there is no revolutionary working class movement, and the fraudulent substitute there is, the Stalinist organisations, are stigmatised with the mark of Satan, and can only get a hearing disguised as Irish nationalists; there is the mystique of violence and of the gun — which in such a context ceases to be a means to an end, a mere tool, and becomes a fetish, something in itself possessing magical power, and looked to as a substitute for clear social and class goals. That is what Republicanism is in the small towns and villages of the south. "The Republic" is an absolute, something beyond their own world, something immaculate: no wonder De Valera's practical steps taken towards realising the mundane real constituents of a real, bourgeois and petty-bourgeois republic, does not impinge — or not immediately — too much on the attitudes of many "die-hard" Republicans.

On the ground, amongst the town and country labourers in the '30s, who made up the rank and file of the IRA in the south, are social revolutionaries —

without the prospect of making a revolution. Take a particular case, Michael Scanlon. Scanlon will be a life-long Republican in this town. (He died a few years ago, a supporter, I understand, of the Provisional IRA.) If the Irish are the black people of Europe, the tinkers (travellers is their preferred term) are the black people of Ireland, lower by far than even the labourers of such a caste-ridden small town as this. "Tinkers" are persecuted, driven from pillar to post, harried and routinely batoned and beaten by the police, and by vigilantes. They are jailed for begging, for trespassing, for fighting, for being drunk — for being. A couple of baton-swinging Guards have arrested an elderly drunk tinker, Martin Faulkner. A 19 year old youth steps out from the watching, amused crowd and harangues them: "Come on, let's save the tinker!" Michael Scanlon. He tries to do it himself, and winds up in court, which is how we have an account of it. Scanlon will spend the years of World War Two in an internment camp in Kildare, taken out of the town under armed guard on an open fenced-in lorry full of people like himself. He returned and helped rebuild the movement in the '50s.

Republicans and the North

MOVE to January 1939. We have now entered into the world of what might be called "Post-De Valera Constitution Republicanism". After the 1934 split with the Republican Congress people, the IRA is still a force, and still legal. Blue-shirt fascism has fallen apart. De Valera has won at least the tolerance of the larger bourgeoisie and the church. He no longer frightens them. He is no longer seen as a "Kerensky". Keeping the balance, in 1936 he bans the IRA.

His biggest blow at them, though, is the 1937 Constitution and

all the achievements that it sums up. Die-hard Republicanism is thrown into a *raison d'être* crisis. What is it? What should it do? What can it do? Central leaders such as Sean McBride give up and fade out.

The great unfulfilled goal of Republicanism now is "national unity", all-Ireland unity. That is least of all likely to come from the IRA with its anti-politics and its mystique of violence.

There are two Northern Irelands — the sizable areas bordering the 26 Counties, with a Catholic-Nationalist majority, and the Protestant heartlands of north-east Ulster. De Valera believes that coercion could at best only succeed in shifting the border northwards and east; the Protestant heartlands could not be won that way. Picking up the threads of the pre-1914 Home Rule Party's policy for Irish unity — rely on Britain to get the Protestants into a united Ireland — De Valera defines the intra-Irish divisions as Britain's responsibility. Irish unity is to be got from Britain — British persuasion, British pressure on the Irish Unionists.

The Catholic majority areas on the border are arguably "British occupied Ireland", but the British "garrison" in most of Northern Ireland is the Protestant-Unionist Irish. The line that Britain is mainly responsible, that the Six Counties is just "British occupied Ireland" and not "Irish-British occupied Ireland", is used to cloak and mystify the primary reality of intra-Irish division. Mystification about British occupied Ireland grows out of and is nourished by Republican bafflement: "persuasion" would not work and coercion was not desirable — and it wouldn't "work" either. An external magic-working cure is sought where there is, immediately, no internal cure.

The malign influence of this mystification will echo down to the end of the 20th century.

The IRA and "British-occupied Ireland"

IN the discussion in the IRA leadership about what to do, which now develops, Tom Barry, a hero of the War of Independence and its most successful soldier, advocates that they should invade Northern Ireland across the border. Border custom huts had been burned to "celebrate" the coronation of George VI in 1937. The other side, led by Sean Russell, who has the backing of key US-based Republicans, proposes that they declare war not on the North, but on England. Both proposals are equally fantastic. The Russellites win control and their opponents retire in disgust.

Early in 1939 the IRA give Britain an ultimatum to vacate "British-occupied Ireland", and soon launch a feeble but bloody bombing campaign in England.

"Modern" Republicanism has taken full shape — focused on Northern Ireland, rejecting politics; glorifying military action and the mystique of blood; resting on the central delusion that partition is only a matter of British occupied Ireland, regarding Britain in Northern Ireland as both chief villain and potential miracle worker. The militarist Republicans embody the nationalist ethos, mythology and stated goals of the 26 County state — and regarding Northern Ireland, of the '37 Constitution — adding to it only their own recipe for what to do.

Republicanism and Nazi Germany

MOVE now to 1945. Republicanism has been ground down to almost nothing. The IRA war again Britain had led them to kill a few British citizens — a woman in Coventry was cut in two by flying glass in an unintended explosion — and had made the perpetrators seem to be senseless maniacs. It was a no-hope gesture.

But "Britain's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity". Britain's enemy is Ireland's ally. So the IRA sought an alliance with Nazi Germany.

In principle, representatives of an oppressed nation, if that is how you define Sean Russell and his friends, have a right to ally even with the Devil, on one condition — that it makes political sense. The idea that Nazi German victory over Britain would help Ireland become a free all-Ireland Republic was political idiocy — politically

immoral idiocy, even if the idiotic calculation were correct, because of the price in other people's enslavement and destruction — the British included — which such an "Irish" "victory" over England would entail. Real Irish Republicanism is a democratic creed [see, for example, the Fenian Manifesto in *WL57*]: this was the narrowest Irish chauvinism, not Irish Republicanism.

Essentially, Russell is an apolitical innocent, thinking in purely military terms: except that there is no such thing as politics-free militarism.

Yet it is not only the right wing of 1930s Republicanism that allies with England's fascist German enemy — so does the most anti-fascist of the left, the leader of the Republicans who had gone to the Spanish Civil War to fight fascism, Frank Ryan, no less! Ryan is rescued from a Francoite jail, where he would probably have been killed by his fascist captors, as a result of the intervention of the German secret service, intent on using the IRA against Britain. In the early '30s, the IRA — to judge from their paper *An Phoblacht* — had connections with German nationalists. Now Ryan becomes a guest of the Nazi regime, where he works as a news analyst for the Germans and also as an unofficial representative — using the official Irish diplomatic channels — of De Valera in Germany!

When they "sprung" Ryan from his Francoite jail, the German-Russian alliance [August 1939-June 1941] was, seemingly, thriving. That event must have impacted oddly on the consciousness of a Stalinist-Republican who had travelled far from home to fight fascism, and had barely escaped a Francoite bullet. In any case Ryan will work with the Germans until he dies, peacefully, in 1944.

The 26 Counties opts to be neutral in the war, thus demonstrating conclusively, if it still needs demonstrating, that it is now a fully independent state. The IRA pulls off a spectacular but ultimately suicidal coup, capturing the main Irish army arsenal in Dublin and removing enormous quantities of weapons. The organisation is crushed in the crackdown which follows.

Republicans are jailed in the Curragh Internment Camp, and subjected to courts martial which impose the death penalty. Believing that the state cannot maintain neutrality if it allows a group of citizens to declare and wage private wars and enter into private military alliances, De Valera's ruling Republican regime kills and ill-treats their intractable political kith and kin. In the north, Republicans are openly pro-Axis. They are jailed as in the south, though in general they are less savagely treated.

The IRA's German allies had contingency plans to invade Ireland (so had the British and the Americans). There is no reason to doubt that had they landed they would have exploited the divisions in Ireland as they exploited the Flemish-Walloon conflict in Belgium and used Croats against Serbs in Yugoslavia. Given the chance, would not the IRA have collaborated with them against the British-Irish? What that would have meant is not pleasant to contemplate.

The '50s campaign

MOVE forward 12 years to 1957. By now the once-new economic approach of Fianna Fail has led to murderous economic stagnation. The population of the 26 Counties is slightly under three million: 1,000 emigrants a week are leaving. In 1958 Fianna Fail will begin to dismantle the quarter-century old attempt at autarky and begin to open the economy to more international economic connections.

The IRA, smashed during the Second World War by Fianna Fail has laboriously been reconstituted. It has a monthly 12 page paper called *The United Irishman* — a very dull, mind-dead publication devoted to commemorating the events and the heroes of the past. The IRA's ideal remains the anachronistic one of small-island self-sufficiency — Fianna Fail's bankrupt and soon-to-be-discarded policy. It is deeply and piously Catholic. It is concerned with only one thing: freeing "British occupied Ireland." It is for boycotting all three



A CPI-organised contingent of Protestant workers from the Shankill Road, Belfast coming to honour Wolfe Tone at a Republican ceremony at Borderstown, where Tone is buried. Tone had proclaimed the need to "break the connection with England", a popular Republican cry at that time. They proclaim the need to "break the connection with capitalism". It is the time of the Republican Congress/IRA split. The Belfast people are set upon by right-wing Republicans intent on breaking their heads...

parliaments: London, Belfast and Dublin. It exists to prepare the men and the weapons to "renew" the war with England.

Flesh of the 26 County establishment's flesh and bone of its bone, the IRA/Sinn Féin has been boosted by the campaign against partition (partition seen as only a British imposition) which De Valera, out of office, launched in 1949. In the same year, a coalition government, in which the main force was Fine Gael, had renamed De Valera's 1937 Constitution-Ireland a Republic and formally left the British Commonwealth. Privately, De Valera thought that a mistake, raising more barriers between north and south. Britain had responded with legislation guaranteeing Six County membership of the British state so long as the majority there desired it. So De Valera took the anti-partition trail. De Valera had no weapon but propaganda blaming Britain for sustaining a Unionist regime in Belfast that ill-treated Northern Irish Catholics. In relation to this, the 1950s Republicans will be "Fianna Failers" prepared to try the gun.

But everything is becoming topsy-turvy here too. In 26 County schools and in the official ideology of the state, Irish Nationalism and Catholicism are taught as virtually facets of one religion — the cause of Ireland is the cause of Catholicism and the cause of Catholicism is the cause of Ireland.*

The state which inculcates those ideas then jails, interns and has killed the young men who *act* independently to secure the common objective. Dominic Behan's song, "The Patriot Game", about an adolescent Republican, Fergal O'Hanlon, shot dead on a cross-border raid in January 1957, poignantly sums this up (Behan was a Stalinist Republican):

*My name is O'Hanlon and I'm just gone sixteen
My home is in Monaghan, 'twas there I was weaned
I was taught all my life cruel England to blame
They soon made me part of the patriot game*

*They told me how Connolly was shot in a chair
His fine body twisted, wounds bleeding and bare
And yet De Valera is greatly to blame
For shirking his part in the patriot game*

* In terms of real history, this was far from true and the discovery of the dichotomy between myth and the real history of the Catholic Church in relation to the original English conquest, Irish nationality and Irish Republicanism would for some be a religion-shattering enlightenment.

*I don't mind a bit if I shoot down police
They're lackeys of war, never guardians of peace
But yet at deserters I'm never let aim
Those quislings who sold out the patriot game.***

Formally, the IRA is apolitical. Inevitably, it is all of a piece with the deeply right wing Catholic consciousness of the 26 Counties and, as we will see, parts of it are far worse than that.

Faheyites and heros

THE 1950s is a time when Catholic Irish provincial papers — in Clare, for example — run editorials lamenting the state of a world in which Tito's godless Yugoslavia could be a member of the United Nations while holy General Franco's Spanish Catholic regime is excluded, and in which so many of "the holy places" of Palestine have fallen into the hands of the Jews. In so far as the fifties IRA, or parts of it, differ from the consensus right wing politics of Catholic Ireland, it is in that they travel deeper into certain common lines of thought.

A spectrum of Sinn Féin and the IRA (once again two sides of one coin) are members of an organisation called Maria Duce — Maria as in the Virgin Mary, Christ's mother; Duce as in Il Duce — run by a Hitlerite priest, Denis Fahey! He preaches against the evils of financial capital, that is "Jewish Capital". He preaches against the Jews, the evil geniuses of the world. He edits and revises *Waters Flaming Eastwards* by L Fry, which, denouncing Zionism at length, includes an English language edition of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, the notorious forgery put out by the Tsarist political police, which one writer has aptly called "a warrant for genocide".

Fahey has written and still circulates crazy anti-Jewish tracts like *The Rulers of Russia* (1938), which, with copious quotations from others of his own mind, proves that the Jews — who also control finance capital — rule in Russia. (And Trotsky's Fourth International is a mere part of the Communist division of labour).

"Stalin's government, in spite of all its attempts at camouflage, has never been and will never be, a national government. Israel will always be the controlling power and driving force behind it. Those who do not see that the Soviet Union is not Russian must be blind."

"Trotsky and Stalin, though hating each other, are both being employed in their appointed roles. Trotsky has been excluded from the executive board which is to put over the New Deal concocted for Soviet Russia and the Communist Third International. He has been given another, but not less important, duty of directing the Fourth International.

"...Whatever bloodshed may take place in the future will not be provoked by the Soviet Union, or directly by the Third International, but by Trotsky's Fourth International, and by Trotskyism. Any violent disorders and bloodshed which Jewish internationalists decide to provoke will not be traced back to Moscow but to Trotsky-Bronstein."

Nor was Fahey an isolated crank. *The Rulers of Russia* was published by the Holy Ghost Missionary College Kimmage, Dublin where Fahey was Professor of Philosophy and Church History. His pamphlets were issued under the imprimatur of Bishops. (*Waters Flaming Eastward* was published by Briton's Publications, London.)

Young Republicans who were "Faheyites" included Sean South of Limerick, whose death on the border on New Year's day 1957 made him a famous hero, celebrated in a very popular song of the

** Bob Dylan's well-known song "With God On Our Side" is a polemic-parody, to the same tune, in response to Dominic Behan's song — he also wrote "Sean South of Garryown" — about O'Hanlon, "The Patriot Game": "My name it means nothing, my age it means less./The county I come from is called the mid west..."

time. "Sean South of Garryowen" was a Maria Duce anti-semitic.*

In a series of mid-'50s raids on British army depots the IRA sought to accumulate weapons and to recruit from the publicity. An Irish-based writer, the trade union official Matt Merrigan, in *Labor Action*, the paper of the Independent Socialist League USA, justly described this IRA as quasi fascist.

Invading the north

WHAT should they do? Declare war on the English — that is bomb English cities — as in 1939? They decided against that and in favour of a variant of Tom Barry's strategy of 1939. They would invade the north. But how can they, a very small group, effectively "invade" Northern Ireland? They decide on a strategy of attacks along the border in mostly Catholic territory. The entire campaign will consist of border raids from the south, by 26 County people.

They decide to avoid conflict with 26 County state personnel, and not to fire on them in any circumstances. In part this is learning from the catastrophe of the early '40s: more importantly it is recognition of the south as an independent state.

Their intended war is war against the British state; in practice it becomes war against the RUC. The Catholic identity of the main IRA forces is still decently wrapped up in traditional Republicanism — the Protestant-Unionists are only misguided "children of the nation", corrupted by Britain.

This statement is made by Sean Geraghty, a member of an IRA splinter group in a southern court in mid-'56. It is fantastic in the circumstances. It is interesting because it was probably sincere. Geraghty and three others are charged with having guns and ammunition.

"On behalf of my comrades and myself I wish to state that any arms and ammunition found on us were to be used against the British forces of occupation to bring about the reunification of our country and no Irish man or woman of any political persuasion has anything to fear from us. We hold that it is legal to possess arms and also believe that it is the duty of every Irishman to bear arms in defence of his country."

An instruction manual for members of the same splinter group — that was led by Joe Cristle and Sean Geraghty — describes what they want to do. It is found in a raid on a 21-year old who has a sketch map — seemingly for an attack on a border post — on which he has scrawled: "Infiltrate, annihilate and destroy." (This is the man referred to in the footnote on this page). From the instruction manual:

"The resistance movement is the armed vanguard of the Irish people fighting for the freedom of Ireland. The strength of the movement consists in the popular patriotic character of the movement, the basic missions of local resistance units are the destruction of enemy installations and establishments, that is, TA halls, specials huts (the special police penhuts), BA recruiting offices, border huts, depots, etc..."

"Attacks against enemy aerodromes, and the destruction of aircraft hangers, depots of bombs and fuel, the killing of key flying personnel and mechanics, the killing or capture of high-ranking enemy officers, and high officials of the enemy's colonial Government, and traitors to our country in their pay, that is British officers, police agents, touts, high members of the Quisling Party [the Unionists], etc."

* One of the Faheyites, Gerard Lawless, is considered by "experts", who aren't, to be the founder of modern Irish Trotskyism — for example in Robert Alexander's enormous book on world Trotskyism, which takes its account from the second-hand-tale-spinning adoptive Irish nationalist, Rayner Lysacht. Lawless, a member of an IRA splinter group led by Joe Cristle and Sean Geraghty, was interned for almost 5 months in '57 before securing his release by promising to be "of good behaviour". Sean MacBride, now a civil rights barrister, chose Lawless to test the legality of internment without trial in the European Court of Human Rights. Where Alexander, following Lysacht, has Lawless become a Trotskyist while interned in the Curragh (in 1957), as a result of reading James P Cannon, the court records have him in 1960 explaining his politics in terms of the influence of Father Fahey and record that he deposited a copy of the Maria Duce paper, *Fiat*, to explain his position (*ECCHR Series B* 1960-61 p165 and p 167-8). He became a sort of Trotskyist in London in the early 1960s. He was still an anti-semitic in 1967-8, conducting an anti-semitic witch-hunt thinly disguised as "anti-Zionism" in the quasi-Trotskyist organisation the Irish Workers' Group.

This pixillated, militarist elitism deals with an imaginary Northern Ireland, in which most of the people who actually live there don't count for anything. The Cristle group were wild men, but the official Republicans would not have told the story differently.

It will be useful here to show how the 26 County establishment saw the activities of these Republicans. After a border raid on New Year's Day 1957, the Taoiseach, John F Costello, he who had declared the Republic in 1949, lamented in the Dail, the death of three young Irishmen, one of them an RUC man.

"Young men, some of them hardly more than boys, have been led by a small minority group of older men — experienced and ruthless men — who believe that they can end partition by destroying the lives of others and endangering their own lives and liberty, in violent forays into the Six County area... [if this is allowed to continue] there would be further bloodshed. There would be all the bitterness and hatred that bloodshed causes. There would be a hardening of resolve among Irishmen in the north east to remain divided from us, to rely upon support from another country and to give to that other country the loyalty that is Ireland's due... Peace and order would vanish. Our democratic institutions would be undermined and the hope of a united Ireland would be defeated — perhaps for ever."

A few police barracks are attacked, a handful of people, police and raiders, are killed. Many Republicans are locked up in Northern Ireland and, in 1957, when the leader of political Republicanism, De Valera, comes back to power after three years in opposition, internment is reintroduced in the 26 Counties.

By 1958 the military campaign is effectively dead, capable of only an occasional spark. Arguably the most important effect of the "Border Campaign" has been the election of four Sinn Fein abstentionist TDs from Border Counties.

The aftermath

QUITE a few disillusioned Republicans wash up in London. Some of them, such as Liam Daltun, Phil Flynn, Sean Geraghty and Gery Lawless, became involved in left-wing politics. Since the early '50s, there had been a critical Irish left in London, opposed to the Communist Party-Connolly Association line of backing Fianna Fail. It came to be influenced by Trotskyism when the Communist Party was thrown into crisis by the Russian suppression of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956. Brian Behan, a member of the Executive Committee of the CPGB, who had criticised the lack of working-class politics in the CPGB's extensive work among Irish immigrants — through the Connolly Association — became a Trotskyist. The refugees from the IRA's military fiasco became part of that London Irish left.

How the organisers of the campaign ever thought they could achieve any of their objectives by border raids is incomprehensible to minds not high on the magic mystique of violence and gripped by the hopes of a "miraculous" political transformation, like that of 1916-18. Revolutionary action for them, as for the insurrectionary sects of France in the first half of the 19th century, had been only a matter of assembling enough guns and soldiers and then raising the banner of war. Assessment of objective conditions seems to have played no part. The survivors will learn from the CPGB a "better" approach.

The IRA war of the '50s was an almost a gentle, humane, restrained affair in that era of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-62) and the Greek Cypriot war against Britain (1956-60). The Algerians bombed French civilians in cafes and in the streets on a large scale; the IRA tried to be careful not to provoke Protestant-Catholic clashes. All that would change forever in the "next round".

● Part 3 will appear in the November Workers' Liberty.

● Corrections: In the first installment there were two important typing errors. 1888 was given instead of 1881, for a very important land reform; "Blanquist" was given instead of Bukunist.

Jerry Springer and the end of civilisation

By Edward Ellis

JERRY Springer is the talk show king of the US, and seems to be on British television several times a day. In his show, people are wheeled on to reveal their darkest secrets not only to an international audience but to their lovers (usually), whether it's that despite appearances they have a penis, or — the staple — that they've been cheating. It is almost de rigeur for physical fights to break out, at which point the studio audience goes mental and chants "Je-rry! Je-rry!"

Watching Jerry Springer is like watching the collapse of civilisation. (Oprah Winfrey, recoiling in horror, transformed her own show into appeals for self-worth and introductions to a common audience of great works of literature). It's like the craziest fantasies of '70s sci-fi movies — a sort of talk show *Rollerball*. What's worse is that you *do* watch, in appalled, but transfixed, fascination. Of course much of it must be faked, either consciously by the producers or simply because the guests are making it all up for a laugh. But much of it feels horribly real.

Springer, a former (disgraced) politician whose show was going nowhere until it was spiced up to out-trash anything on TV — it makes the Ricky Lake show seem the height of propriety — describes his daily spectacle as "a silly show". But he claims it gives a voice to the voiceless, the little people that America ignores, portraying it as some kind of democratic trail-blazer. It takes what is always disturbing about these talk shows, mainly that people would want to bare their darkest secrets on TV, and magnifies them to the *n*th degree. But where there might be something therapeutic in these public confessions on other shows, it's hard to imagine that any of the guests go home from Jerry Springer in other than the deepest depression.

In a typical scenario, a woman comes out and declares that her man's been cheatin' on her, but she ain't gonna put up with that shit no more. The husband arrives, admitting he's been sleeping with her sister; then the sister appears and the two women proceed to attack each other, as the audience cheer and give each other high fives. The security men separate the women, then they attack each other again, screaming beeped out expletives. They then hurl abuse at each other to the effect that "you're a bitch who can't satisfy your man, I'm gonna kill you, you motherfuckin' bitch", and so on. Whereupon the wife will reveal that she's also been cheatin', and the "person" is waiting in the wings. The "person", naturally, is her husband's sister, to the audience's delight (although anyone who's watched the show more than once would have known there'd be a lesbian relationship in it sooner or later), who then launches into the husband's lover, for no discernible reason.

It is deeply, deeply depressing stuff.

It treats people's worst emotional trauma not simply as entertainment, but as circus. Frequently, the guests are not far off circus freaks, or at least act up their freakishness for the sake of the camera. The nastier guests are to each other, and the more violent they get, the more the audience laps it up. The guests normally seem to be unutterably stupid, so stupid it is a miracle they can get up in the morning, and speak (or rather, yell, simultaneously) in nothing but talk show clichés.

Yet one of the remarkable things is that it's very rare for a guest who has been told some awful thing by their loved one to react by demanding to know why they've been brought on national TV to be told it. Occasionally, they do, and walk off. Even then you wonder what they expected, as nobody comes on Jerry Springer



Ringmaster Jerry Springer

to receive a declaration of love. Normally, they simply participate in the circus, seizing, it would seem, on their chance for 10 minutes of fame or attention, even at the cost of horrendous humiliation. People justify their actions in only the most cursory manner. Men caught out cheating on their wives with scores of women (and a few men, not unusually) just grin proudly

and tell their hurt and miserable spouse how crap they are in bed. A cheating wife will announce that her husband's got a small dick. Parents of convicted wife batterers confront their son's victims with screams of hysterical abuse, pause briefly to concede that what their son did was wrong, then return to the abuse. Audience members stand to make crass, moralising points, then applaud themselves as the rest of the gang leap to their feet screaming "Je-rry! Je-rry!" for the twentieth time in as many minutes. Quite often the audience will wander bizarrely from the point, like a woman who rises to demand of the lesbian *menage a trois* not why they are so unspeakably vile to each other, but why on earth they are lesbians at all. Sometimes, guests and spectators challenge each other to fights, or flash their breasts in gestures of contempt.

The hysteria of guests and audience is carefully staged and encouraged, of course, and recently Springer has been ordered to tone down the on-stage violence. Sometimes, as the hand-held cameras whirl around the enraged guests who are literally pulling out clumps of one another's hair, you catch a glimpse of the floor manager holding up a placard, and jumping up and down to incite the audience.

But it's not simply that. The *Jerry Springer Show* reveals a society with no moral centre whatsoever. The guests are people whose way of life is based on deceit and emotional cruelty. The audience are voyeuristic sadists who are only happy if other people are suffering. Springer injects moral lessons into the monstrous thing by his end-speeches, but in the context of what has been encouraged and delivered these are only the most blatant acts of hypocrisy.

Yet the entire spectacle is bolstered by an appearance of moral principles. Springer, audience and guests alike all talk as if they have a clear idea of what's right and wrong. "Take care of yourselves... and each other," Springer daily advises. It's a world in which, at least most of the time, anything goes as long as nobody's being hurt. The only freak show Springer says he couldn't really cope with was of adult men who pretend to be babies complete with diapers (he lost his rag with the Klu Klux Klan, but that's obviously a bit different: they were saying they were glad his family perished in death camps). It's a world in which the only categorical evils seem to be cheating on your partner, especially if you have children, and dishonesty more generally (neglecting to tell your lover you're actually a man, say). It's also that particularly American world in which nothing is more disgraceful than being without

a job and failing to pay your bills.

Yet there's a repellent prurience in everything that occurs. The *Jerry Springer Show* just loves lesbians. There's hardly a show without a couple of dykes trying to kill each other. It loves transsexuals almost as much, as long as they're terrifying harpies. The audience cheer and boo with apparent open-mindedness on these issues; but it's not true. Sexual minorities are the stock-in-trade circus freaks, a parade of weirdoes whose sexual excesses are just what's to be expected. In this, Springer is distinct from Ricky Lake, for example, whose treatment of such minorities is far less sensationalist.

Throughout, what's striking is the gap between the moral certainties which give rise to the anger, outrage and hatred, and the real, amoral world these people inhabit. The core values to which Springer appeals again and again, despite the surface liberalness towards his freak show, are old-fashioned, conservative family ones. His guests and audience ostensibly share them. What makes them so angry is that these values have collapsed in practice — their lovers are constantly unfaithful, nobody can be trusted — and they have nothing to fill the void. It's the gap between how they think the world is, and their actual experience, which torments them. And in that gap you find, over and over, the most bizarre misplacement of anger. Why do two women fighting over some selfish, arrogant, badly-behaved man tear each other's hair out, rather than his?

It's the rage of America's underclass. Springer's guests are usually unemployed, or if they have work it will be somewhere in the sex industry (many's the show in which a stripper will suddenly offer to perform his or her act to taunt their lover, and the lights immediately dim and the music plays in a carefully-prepared display). They come, broadly speaking, from the same world in which kids kill each other over what kind of shoes they wear — a world in which society is literally disintegrating. Poor, politically unrepresented, uneducated, ignored by the system, it's as if there is nothing left in their lives but an incoherent rage focused on nothing, an inarticulate despair; and the only thing which can possibly fill the hole is to be on television, so that's why they come and come.

There's a constant, uncomfortable frisson from the fact that audience members will pontificate (usually in talk-show soundbite jargon, endlessly repeating the word "respect" until it has absolutely no meaning) about lives and relationships of which they know next to nothing ("Girl, he's a dawg, you should leave him!", or "You just a fat bitch who can't get a man!"); yet the guests have chosen to be there, knowing this is what they will get.

It is, of course, the crassest "dumbing down" commercial exploitation. Yet it reveals the problem: audiences like it. Springer is a hero — especially, it seems, among young black Americans, who don't have a huge number of Jewish heroes. The show ends with tapes of people leaving, telling "Jerry" how they've travelled from the far corners of the US to be on his show and they love him. Do they find something more than titillation in this barbaric spectacle? Do they maybe even find some solace in his words of wisdom? Do they leave, or at home switch off, thinking they would rather die than be like one of the people they've been watching, and live their lives with greater consideration and "respect" for other people? It's hard to believe. For the audience, at home and in the studio, the circus reassures us: thank God I'm not like that. But it's not as if the show was appealing to a middle class middle-American audience quite different from what's on display. The guests, it would seem, are normally regular viewers who have achieved a life's ambition to be there. To a significant extent, the core audience is watching itself, at least in America. In Britain there's an extra layer of protection, as we can feel "those yanks are crazy" and it's nothing to do with us; but the trend in British talk shows is in that direction, even if *Tricia* is a pale imitation.

A conspiracy theory would claim that Jerry Springer is an out-rider for the Moral Majority. Every show is a graphic demonstration of how low American society has sunk without conservative values which mean something; it's like propaganda for anti-abortionists which shows tragic, dead foetuses.

The appeal of talk shows like this is close to that of docu-soaps. "Real life" dramas are judged by many audiences to be more interesting than invented ones; and for the programme makers they are vastly cheaper to make. The characters have all the attributes, except wealth, of those in soaps, living out larger-than-life situations at a safe remove. The fact they've chosen to be there gives the audience license to love it. Like docu-soaps they offer their participants the chance, even if it's a vague one, of making it. From British docu-soaps a couple of stars have emerged (Jane Macdonald from *Cruise*, and the camp guy from *Airline*). In the desperate ass-wiggling of Springer's strippers there's the glimmer of hope that someone out there will offer them a job; and sometimes the guests must be actors put up to it by their agents, if they have them.

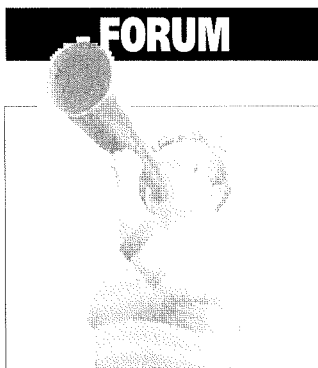
Watching it on TV, you know the decent thing is to turn off. But you don't (or usually don't: sometimes it's just too awful). When I first saw it I thought it was appalling; then I started to find it outrageous and funny. Now it makes me want to cry. But horrible and degrading as it is, to view as much as guest, I have to admit it can be compelling, even as I hide behind my hands and shake my head in despair.

In the Roman Empire, the circus — where gladiators fought to the death, and enemies of the state were eaten by lions — fulfilled the role of keeping the masses happy. It allowed the audience to experience intense emotion, matters of life and death, vicariously. The Greek theatre, on the other hand, fulfilled the same function through invented dramas. Roman culture was more brutal and barbaric at least in part because it was based on a more brutal and exploitative system. The Greeks had slaves, of course; but their society did not depend on the savage mass exploitation of slavery, and of far-flung rebellious dominions, to the extent that the Romans' did. A system founded and dependent on conquest and cruelty developed a cruel, bloody popular culture. Modern capitalism is like that. The system of exploitation breeds citizens who revel in its decadent excesses.

This is a peculiarly capitalist type of excess, in which even people's personal lives and disasters are a means for TV companies to make a quick buck, where even emotions are treated like a commodity. They're not literally a commodity, in that as far as I know the guests aren't paid for their trouble (although they're flown in and put up in hotels). But it is the utter sacrifice of emotional life to the gods of money, and if not money for the guests themselves, a tiny taste of what money can bring — fame, and the pleasure of having a lens pointed at you. It gives a chance for people without a "voice" to experience, if only for a few minutes, doing what stars do: show off to a mass audience. The programme-makers bank the traumatic result.

So in a sense Springer is right about giving voice to the voiceless. The problem is that the disenfranchised underclass of American society don't know what to say when they get a "voice", and the voice is manipulated and transformed into something ghastly. His show doesn't prove the need for a return to traditionalism; rather, that the traditional values are empty, worthless phrases. The reality of American capitalism, or at least for a significant number of its people, is this hollow, loveless, meaningless bear-pit. For all the manipulation and fakery, for all the fact that much of it must be somebody's joke, or the guests are actors, or making up any old rubbish to get on TV, the *Springer Show* expresses an awful truth about where American society, and increasingly our own, has reached.

The emptiness is real. The question is how to fill it.



Rizzi not a device for demonisation

THE article by Hal Draper in *WL 57* ("Anatomy of the Rizzi myth") is valuable, but spoiled by a plain factual blunder in its interpretation of the role in Trotsky's thought of his 1939 polemic against the otherwise-obscure Bruno Rizzi's version of the idea that the USSR was "bureaucratic collectivist".

Draper writes: "Trotsky was in the midst of a general revolt inside the Trotskyist groups... against his insistence that the Stalin regime, *which had just invaded Finland...* had to be defended... as a 'workers' state'... On reading Rizzi's book, he seized on it for ammunition... Trotsky whirled [Rizzi] around his head like a dead cat and hurled him at the opposition..." (emphasis added).

Sean Matgamna's introduction to Draper points out that the presentation of the Trotskyists' argument over Finland is misleading. Almost all the "opposition" on the Finnish question shared Trotsky's general view that they should defend the USSR in war against the big capitalist states, and a large number, maybe most, of them also shared his belief that the USSR was still a degenerated workers' state. The opposition argued that none of that meant that the USSR could be "defended" or supported when it was conquering a small nation like Finland; Trotsky argued that that it must be so "defended" because of the context of the world war.

But there is also a simpler and greater misrepresentation in Draper's account. Trotsky's Rizzi polemic did not come after the invasion of Finland. "The USSR in War", the only article in which Trotsky discussed Rizzi, was written on 25 September 1939. The USSR invaded Finland over two months later, on 30 November.

Trotsky did not mention Rizzi in any of the articles he

wrote when the dispute among the Trotskyists had become a fierce, all-out faction-fight (and many "dead cats" were indeed being "let fly"). He mentioned him only in the earliest stages of the dispute, when the lines were not yet clear, and Trotsky was writing: "I hope that still today despite the attempt of some comrades to uncover differences on the question of the 'defence of the USSR'... we shall succeed by means of simply rendering our own ideas more precise to preserve unanimity on the basis of the program of the Fourth International."

Trotsky was not using Rizzi as a device to demonise the opposition. When he wrote "The USSR in War", the chief person he was remonstrating with was James Burnham, who at that time, very definitely, saw the USSR not as "bureaucratic collectivist" but as undergoing bourgeois restoration. Far from damning Burnham's views by conflating them with "bureaucratic collectivism", Trotsky drew careful distinctions. He wrote that Burnham's view amounted to arguing that the USSR was "a non-class state" — which was a "revision of Marxism" — but a "bureaucratic collectivist" thesis, on the contrary, might well be tenable given certain facts not yet accomplished. Trotsky used Rizzi as a representative not of Burnham's views, but of tentative notions which Trotsky himself was thinking over but rejecting.

Trotsky's argument on Rizzi, in essence, was this: Yes, it seems nonsense to call the USSR a workers' state. Yes, at first sight it makes more sense to call it something like "bureaucratic collectivist". But then, in the development of the productive forces, this "bureaucratic collectivism" represents a step forward from capitalism. You cannot just use

the words "bureaucratic collectivism" to give yourself a less "difficult" label for the USSR. You have to recognise it as the wave of the future (as per Rizzi: it must be a possibility that Trotsky never actually read Rizzi's book, but, on skimming it and noticing the "wave of the future" thesis, just used Rizzi's as a convenient up-to-date name to peg the discussion on). And there is not sufficient evidence for that.

The whole argument, in hindsight, falls down completely because of its unjustified assumption that the USSR represented a higher development of the productive forces than capitalism. And, yes, Trotsky did use it to try to foreclose theoretical speculations.

But Trotsky was not using Rizzi as a device to misrepresent his Marxist opponents. And he is not responsible for the subsequent "orthodox Trotskyist" garbling of history which made Rizzi the scary epitome of what naughty girls and boys might grow up as if they dared to deny that the USSR was a workers' state.

Chris Reynolds

Finnishing touch

SEAN Matgamna's interesting introduction to the review by Hal Draper left out an interesting sidelight on the Finnish War and the Trotskyist attitude to it some of which I have mentioned in my obituary of Nils Dahl in *Revolutionary History*. Perhaps Sean missed it.

On the Winter War itself Dahl was very clear that the Finns had the right to defend themselves, thus totally rejecting the orthodox Trotskyist view. In a conversation with me,

which I did not put in the obituary, Dahl said that every member of the Norwegian section, he specifically included Walter Held, indeed as far as he knew every Scandinavian Trotskyist, supported this. He further told me that a letter from the comrades in Norway was sent to the International Secretariat in Paris at the time but this had never so far come to light. My belief is that the Scandinavians knew more about the situation in Finland than the Parisians.

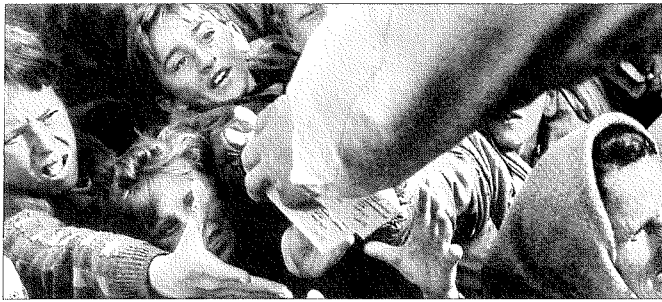
This evidence is all the more interesting in that Nils himself was, after the war, a loyal supporter of the International Secretariat, though towards the end of his life he worked with the comrades in Norway affiliated to the British SWP. He was thus always, if I can use the term, a "workers' statist" and himself saw no contradiction in this. He never took it up afterwards for I am sure he would not have seen it as relevant to the tasks that seemed important in the post-war period.

Regrettably we at *Revolutionary History* did not interview him on this topic and go into it in more detail. It is, I fear, among our many sins of omission.

Ted Crawford

Kosova and Palestine: the parallels

ONE of the problems with the discussion on the left over the crisis in Kosova is that all participants accept terms of debate which are misleading and confusing. And which lead, necessarily, to confused conclusions. Everyone seems to accept as given that the only question at issue is: for or against the right of the overwhelming majority of the population of the region



to independence. As if that settled the matter.

No one seems to be interested in discussing the more important issue. Is the exercise of this right by the Kosovars a good thing or a bad thing? Those who deny the Kosovars — and by extension any other minority — the right to self-determination have no problem. They can choose to support NATO or Milosevic as they see fit. Those who insist on the right of the Kosovars to self-determination, with no exception that I am aware of, go on to advocate independence of the Kosovars as a desirable end in and of itself. But, in fact, one can accept the right of the Kosovars to self-determination — and oppose the Serb government's brutal suppression of that people — while at the same time maintaining that the attempt to establish yet one more ethnically pure *völkisch* mini-state in the Balkans is a disaster.

There is an interesting historical parallel which readers of *Workers' Liberty* may be familiar with. That was the revolt of the Jewish population of Palestine in 1948. This oppressed people also demanded — with considerable historical justification — the right of self-determination. The left at that time divided much as it does today. The majority overwhelmingly backed the long-suffering Jewish people, including hundreds of thousands made refugees by the Holocaust. A minority opposed this revolt out of sympathy for the aspirations of the Arab peoples and, with more or less embarrassment, more or less openly, supported the attempt of the reactionary Arab governments to suppress this revolt militarily.

A small minority of socialists took a "third camp" position. They refused to identify themselves with the uncritical support of a "Jewish state" but they did not support the military campaign of the

Arab governments with their demagogic "anti-imperialist" slogans. They took the position that the Jewish population of the area had the right to self-determination while arguing that to claim that right would lead to disastrous consequences — not least of all for the Jews of Palestine themselves. I know of no political prediction — Marxist or not — which has proved to be so tragically accurate.

In the present case, even if we were to accept all of the propaganda of the NATO press — which includes the mass media in all the NATO countries — some questions still beg to be answered.

For one thing, support for the independence of Kosova de facto means support for the KLA. One of the most disgraceful aspects of the left's response to this crisis is that the only people who are willing to talk about the really vicious politics of this movement are those who are apologists for the equally vicious Serbian nationalists — I include Ramsay Clarke and his colleagues among this company — while those who clamour for independence ignore this whole unpleasant matter. To carry out the analogy, it was one thing for progressives in 1948 to defend the right of the Jewish people of Palestine to self-determination and quite another to defend the chauvinist politics of the Zionist movement which was the organised force making this demand. Those politics required, as has now been abundantly documented, the "ethnic cleansing" of non-Jewish Palestinians.

There is another question too. One that was present in 1948 but of less weight than is the case today. Everyone knew that behind the Zionist movement and its demand for self-determination stood the real might of the USA and the Soviet Union, each of whom was, at that point, and each for its own reasons, interested in forcing the incumbent imperi-

alist power, Great Britain, out of the area. Later, the USA became Israel's backer while the Soviet Union switched to the side of Arab nationalism. Outside imperial support was, and is, vital to the Zionist project.

In the Balkans this element of outside imperialist support is much more important. The Jewish war for independence was certainly not a creature of outside forces however much those forces may have exploited the situation. But it is hard to see how either Kosova, or Bosnia, can maintain itself economically or militarily except as the protégé of an outside power — in this case NATO. And NATO means the United States.

It seems to me the only defensible left position, the only humane position, is to oppose this kind of outside force basing itself on the worst chauvinist tendencies in the region with an alliance of the anti-nationalist, anti-chauvinist movements in the region. To counter one chauvinist force by supporting another equally vicious one is madness.

Ernie Haberkern

A letter from Russia

I USED to be a Trotskyist but I then understood that Trotsky had made some great mistakes in his definition of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state, a mistake that had fatal consequences of the Trotskyist movement. The question of the class nature of the USSR is the most discussed question between Marxists in modern Russia. Unfortunately it is necessary for us to "reinvent the wheel" — all past Western Marxist literature about this subject is almost unknown. Of all the state-capitalist conceptions of the character of the USSR, the only widely known theory is that of Tony Cliff. That is not the best of such conceptions. Works by bureaucratic collectivist theorists are totally absent. I have heard you are supporters of this theory and would be glad to receive a copy of your *Fate of the Russian Revolution*.

Alexandr Savchenko

The Fate of the Russian Revolution



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TEACH YOURSELF MARX'S CAPITAL



Commodities and the capitalist mode of production

THE class struggle on the field of ideas conditions the class struggle as a whole. Bourgeois ideas help the bourgeoisie keep control of the working class. For example: the idea that capitalism is permanent, normal, in accord with basic human nature, works against consideration of possible or desirable alternative ways of organising our social and economic life. The idea that there *can* be such a thing as “a fair day’s pay for a fair day’s work” makes the employer-worker relationship seem to be at root a just one. The idea that socialism is an unrealisable ideal, impractical and utopian, works on people’s minds in favour of making the best of capitalism. In *Capital* [*Das Kapital*], Karl Marx subjected capitalism to rigorous scientific analysis and cut the ground from under the key ideas on which the vast and labyrinthine edifices of bourgeois self-justification and self-exoneration have been erected. He showed how capitalism works; how it is formed historically; how its organic processes work towards more and more centralisation and *socialisation* of the capitalist economy; how these organic processes build the prerequisites of socialism and thus move capitalism, one of a number of socio-economic formations in history, on towards its natural end, the “expropriation of the expropriators” — the expropriation of the capitalists by the working class. Marx showed how exploitation occurs within the wage labour-capital relationship. Marx thus laid the scientific

foundations of an all-round, conscious working class challenge to capitalism. Capitalism has changed enormously since Marx published Volume I of *Capital* in 1867 — the fundamental processes of capitalism, which Karl Marx uncovered and anatomised, have not changed at all. Today, the labour movement needs to rearm itself politically and ideologically. We must go back to Marx — back to the fundamental critique of root-capitalism — if socialism is to renew itself in the post-Stalinist world. In this *Workers’ Liberty* we start to serialise an abridgement of Volume I of *Capital*, made by Otto Rühle, in collaboration with Leon Trotsky. The fundamentals of Marx’s analysis are here presented in Marx’s own words, stripped of outdated examples and contemporary polemics. In connection with this series, *Workers’ Liberty* will be running a correspondence course on *Capital*. Please let us know if you are interested. We urge all *Workers’ Liberty* readers to join us in this collective study.

Section 1: The two factors of a commodity: use value and value

THE wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as “an immense accumulation of commodities,” its unit being a single commodity. Our investigation must therefore begin with the analysis of a commodity.

A commodity is, in the first place, an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another. The nature of such wants, whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy, makes no difference.

Every useful thing may be looked at from the two points of view, of quality and quantity. It is an assemblage of many prop-

erties and may therefore be of use in various ways. To discover the various use of things is the work of history.

The utility of a thing makes it a use-value. But this utility is not a thing of air. Being limited by the physical properties of the commodity, it has no existence apart from that commodity. A commodity, such as iron, corn, or a diamond, is therefore, so far as it is a material thing, a use-value, something useful.

Use-values become a reality only by use or consumption: they also constitute the substance of all wealth, whatever may be the social form of that wealth. They are, in addition, the material depositories of exchange value. Exchange value, at first sight, presents itself as a quantitative relation, as the proportion in which values in use of one sort are exchanged for those of another sort, a relation constantly changing with time and place.

Let us take two commodities, e.g., corn and iron. The proportions in which they are exchangeable, whatever those proportions may be, can always be represented by an equation in which a given quantity of corn is equated to some quantity of iron. What does this equation tell us? It tells us that in two different things there exists in equal quantities something common to both. The two things must therefore be equal to a third, which in itself is neither the one nor the other. Each of them, so far as it is exchange value, must therefore be reducible to this third.

This common “something” cannot be either a geometrical, a chemical, or any other natural property of commodities. Such properties claim our attention only in so far as they affect the utility of those commodities, make them use-values. But the exchange of commodities is evidently an act characterised by a total abstraction from use-value.

If then we leave out of consideration the use-value of commodities, they have

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only one common property left, that of being products of labour. But even the product of labour itself has undergone a change in our hands. We see in it no longer a table, a house, yarn, or any other useful thing. Its existence as a material thing is put out of sight. Neither can it any longer be regarded as the product of the labour of the joiner, the mason, the spinner, or of any other definite kind of productive labour. Along with the useful qualities of the products themselves, we put out of sight both the useful character of the various kinds of labour embodied in them, and the concrete forms of that labour; there is nothing left but what is common to them all; all are reduced to one and the same sort of labour, human labour in the abstract.

It consists of the same unsubstantial reality in each, a mere congelation of homogeneous human labour, of labour-power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure. When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are — Values.

A use-value, or useful article, therefore, has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialised in it. How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured? Plainly, by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour, contained in the article.

The quantity of labour, however, is measured by its duration, and labour-time in its turn finds its standard in weeks, days and hours.

The total labour-power of society, which is embodied in the sum total of the values of all commodities produced by that society, counts here as one homogeneous mass of human labour-power, composed though it be of innumerable individual units. Each of these units is the same as any other, so far as it has the character of the average labour-power of society, and takes effect as such; that is, so far as it requires for producing a commodity, no more time than is needed on an average, no more than is socially necessary. The labour-time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time. The introduction of power looms into England probably reduced by one half the labour required to weave a given quantity of yarn into cloth. The handloom weavers, as a matter of fact, continued to require the same time as before; but for all that, the product of one hour of their labour represented after the change only half an hour's social labour, and consequently fell to one half its former value. We see then that that which determines the magnitude of the value of any article is the amount of labour socially necessary, or the labour-

time socially necessary for its production. Each individual commodity, in this connection, is to be considered as an average sample of its class.

The value of one commodity is to the value of any other, as the labour-time necessary for the production of the one is to that necessary for the production of the other. In general, the greater the productiveness of labour, the less is the labour-time required for the production of an article, the less is the amount of labour crystallised in that article, and the less is its value; and vice versa, the less the productiveness of labour, the greater is the labour-time required for the production of an article, and the greater is its value. The value of a commodity, therefore, varies directly as the quantity, and inversely as the productiveness, of the labour incorporated in it.

A thing can be a use-value, without having value. This is the case whenever its utility to man is not due to labour. Such are air, virgin soil, natural meadows, etc. A thing can be useful, and the product of human labour, without being a commodity. Whoever directly satisfies his wants with the produce of his own labour, creates, indeed, use-values, but not commodities. In order to produce the latter, he must not only produce use-values, but use-values for others, social use-values. Lastly, nothing can have value, without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labour contained in it; the labour does not count as labour, and therefore creates no value.

Section 2: The two-fold character of the labour embodied in commodities

LET us take two commodities such as a coat and 10 yards of linen, and let the former be double the value of the latter, so that, if 10 yards of linen = W, the coat = 2W.

The coat is a use-value that satisfies a particular want. Its existence is the result of a special sort of productive activity, the nature of which is determined by its aim, mode of operation, subject, means and result. The labour, whose utility is thus represented by the value in use of its product, or which manifests itself by making its product a use-value, we call useful labour. In this connection we consider only its useful effect.

As the coat and the linen are two qualitatively different use-values, so also are the two forms of labour that produce them, tailoring and weaving. To all the different varieties of values in use there correspond as many different kinds of useful labour, classified according to the order, genus, species, and variety to which they belong in the social division of labour. This division

of labour is a necessary condition for the production of commodities but it does not follow conversely that the production of commodities is a necessary condition for the division of labour.

In a commodity, the produce of which in general takes the form of commodities, i.e., in a community of commodity producers, this qualitative difference between the useful forms of labour that are carried on independently by individual producers, each on their own account, develops into a complex system, a social division of labour.

The use-values, coat, linen, etc., i.e., the bodies of commodities, are combinations of two elements — matter and labour. Man can work only as Nature does, that is by changing the form of matter. Nay more, in this work of changing the form he is constantly helped by natural forces. We see, then, that labour is not the only source of material wealth, of use-values produced by labour. As William Petty puts it, labour is its father and the earth its mother.

Let us now pass from the commodity considered as a use-value to the value of commodities. By our assumption, the coat is worth twice as much as the linen. But this is a mere quantitative difference, which for the present does not concern us. We bear in mind, however, that if the value of the coat is double that of 10 yards of linen, 20 yards of linen must have the same value as one coat. So far as they are values, the coat and the linen are things of a like substance, objective expressions of essentially identical labour. But tailoring and weaving are, qualitatively, different kinds of labour. They are, however, each a productive expenditure of human brains, nerves, and muscles, and in this sense are human labour. They are but two different modes of expending human labour-power. But the value of a commodity represents human labour in the abstract, the expenditure of human labour in general.

Simple average labour, it is true, varies in character in different countries and at different times, but in a particular society it is given. Skilled labour counts only as simple labour intensified, or rather as multiplied simple labour, a given quantity of skilled being considered equal to a greater quantity of simple labour.

Just as, therefore, in viewing the coat and linen as values, we abstract from their different use-values, so it is with the labour represented by those values: we disregard the difference between its useful forms, weaving and tailoring. As the use-values, coat and linen, are combinations of special productive activities with cloth and yarn, while the values, coat and linen, are, on the other hand, mere homogeneous congelations of undifferentiated labour, so the

labour embodied in these latter values does not count by virtue of its productive relation to cloth and yarn, but only as being expenditure of human labour-power.

Coats and linen, however, are not merely values, but values of definite magnitude, and according to our assumption, the coat is worth twice as much as the ten yards of linen. Whence this difference in their values? It is owing to the fact that the linen contains only half as much labour as the coat, and consequently, that in the production of the latter, labour-power must have been expended during twice the time necessary for the production of the former.

An increase in the quantity of use-values is an increase of material wealth. With two coats two men can be clothed, with one coat only one man. Nevertheless, an increased quantity of material wealth may correspond to a simultaneous fall in the magnitude of its value.

This antagonistic movement has its origin in the twofold character of labour. On the one hand all labour is, speaking physiologically, an expenditure of human labour-power, and in its character of identical abstract human labour, it creates and forms the value of commodities. On the other hand, all labour is the expenditure of human labour-power in a special form and with a definite aim, and in this, its character of concrete useful labour, it produces use-values.

I was the first to point out and to examine critically this twofold nature of the labour contained in commodities. As this point is the pivot on which a clear comprehension of political economy turns, we must go more into detail.

Section 3: The form of value or exchange value

COMMODITIES come into the world in the shape of use-values, articles, or goods. This is their plain, homely, bodily form. They are, however, commodities, only because they are something twofold, both objects of utility, and, at the same time, depositories of value. They manifest themselves therefore as commodities, or have the form of commodities, only in so far as they have two forms, a physical or natural form, and a value form.

If we say that, as values, commodities are mere congelations of human labour, we reduce them by our analysis, it is true, to the abstraction, value; but we ascribe to this value no form apart from their bodily form. It is otherwise in the value relation of one commodity to another. Here, the one stands forth in its character of value by reason of its relation to the other.

The simplest value relation is evidently that of one commodity to some one other

commodity of a different kind. Hence the relation between the values of two commodities supplies us with the simplest expression of the value of a single commodity.

A. ELEMENTARY OR ACCIDENTAL FORM OF VALUE

1. The two poles of the expression of value — the relative form and the equivalent form

THE whole mystery of the form of value lies hidden in this elementary form. Its analysis, therefore, is our real difficulty. Here two different kinds of commodities (in our example the linen and the coat), evidently play two different parts. The linen expresses its value in the coat; the coat serves as the material in which that value is expressed. The former plays an active, the latter a passive, part. The value of the linen is represented as relative value, or appears in relative form. The coat officiates as equivalent, or appears in equivalent form.

The relative form and the equivalent form are two intimately connected, mutually dependent and inseparable elements of the expression of value; but, at the same time, are mutually exclusive, antagonistic extremes — i.e., poles of the same expression. They are allotted respectively to the two different commodities brought into relation by that expression.

Whether, then, a commodity assumes the relative form, or the opposite equivalent form, depends entirely upon its accidental position in the expression of value — that is, upon whether it is the commodity whose value is being expressed or the commodity in which value is being expressed.

2. The relative form of value a. The nature and import of this form

WHEN occupying the position of equivalent in the equation of value, the coat ranks qualitatively as the equal of the linen, as something of the same kind, because it is value. In this position it is a thing in which we see nothing but value, or whose palpable bodily form represents value. In the production of the coat, human labour-power, in the shape of tailoring, must have been actually expended. Human labour is therefore accumulated in it. In this aspect the coat is a depository of value, but though worn to a thread, it does not let this fact show through. And as equivalent of the linen in the value equation, it exists under this aspect alone, counts therefore as embodied value, as a body that is value.

Hence, in the value equation in which the coat is the equivalent of the linen, the coat officiates as the form of value. The value of the commodity linen is expressed by the bodily form of the commodity coat,

the value of one by the use-value of the other.

All that our analysis of the value of commodities has already told us, is told us by the linen itself, so soon as it comes into communication with another commodity, the coat. Only it betrays its thoughts in that language with which alone it is familiar, the language of commodities. In order to tell us that its own value is created by labour in its abstract character of human labour, it says that the coat, in so far as it is worth as much as the linen, and therefore is value, consists of the same labour as the linen. In order to inform us that its sublime reality as value is not the same as its buckram body, it says that value has the appearance of a coat, and consequently that so far as the linen is value, it and the coat are as like as two peas.

b. Quantitative determination of relative value

THE equation 20 yards of linen = one coat, or 20 yards of linen are worth one coat, implies that the same quantity of value-substance (congealed labour) is embodied in both; that the two commodities have each cost the same amount of labour or the same quantity of labour time. But the labour time necessary for the production of 20 yards of linen or one coat varies with every change in the productiveness of weaving or tailoring. We have now to consider the influence of such changes on the quantitative aspect of the relative expression of value:

I. The value of the linen may vary, that of the coat remaining constant.

II. The value of the linen may remain constant, while the value of the coat varies.

III. The quantities of labour time respectively necessary for the production of the linen and the coat may vary simultaneously in the same direction and in the same proportion.

IV. The labour time respectively necessary for the production of the linen and the coat, and therefore the value of these commodities may simultaneously vary in the same direction, but at unequal rates, or in opposite directions, or in other ways. The relative value of a commodity may vary, although its value remains constant. Its relative value may remain constant, although its value varies; finally, simultaneous variations in the magnitude of value and in that of its relative expression by no means necessarily correspond in amount.

3. The equivalent form of value

WHEN we say that a commodity is in the equivalent form, we express the fact that it is directly exchangeable with other commodities.

The first peculiarity that strikes us, in considering the form of the equivalent, is

this: use-value becomes the form of manifestation, the phenomenal form of its opposite, value. The bodily form of the commodity becomes its value form. The second peculiarity of the equivalent form is that concrete labour becomes the form under which its opposite, abstract human labour, manifests itself.

4. The elementary form of value considered as a whole

THE opposition or contrast existing internally in each commodity between use-value and value, is, therefore, made evident externally by two commodities being placed in such relation to each other, that the commodity whose value it is sought to express, figures directly as a mere use-value, while the commodity in which that value is to be expressed, figures directly as mere exchange value. Hence the elementary form of value of a commodity is the elementary form in which the contrast contained in that commodity, between use-value and value, becomes apparent.

Nevertheless, the elementary form of value passes by an easy transition into a more complete form. Therefore, according as it is placed in relation with one or the other, we get, for one and the same commodity, different elementary expressions of value. The number of such possible expressions is limited only by the number of the different kinds of commodities distinct from it. The isolated expression of the value of a commodity is therefore convertible into a series, prolonged to any length, of the different elementary expressions of that value.

B. TOTAL OR EXPANDED FORM OF VALUE

1. The expanded relative form of value

THE linen, by virtue of the form of its value, now stands in a social relation, no longer with only one other kind of commodity, but with the whole world of commodities. As a commodity, it is a citizen of that world. At the same time, the interminable series of value equations implies that, as regards the value of a commodity, it is a matter of indifference under what particular form, or kind, of use-value it appears.

In the first form, 20 yards of linen = one coat, it might, for ought that otherwise appears, be pure accident, that these two commodities are exchangeable in definite quantities. In the second form, on the contrary, we perceive at once the background that determines, and is essentially different from, this accidental appearance.

But in the first place, the relative expression of value is incomplete because the series representing it is interminable. In the second place, it is a many-coloured

mosaic of disparate and independent expressions of value. And lastly, if, as must be the case, the relative value of each commodity in turn becomes expressed in this expanded form, we get for each of them a relative-value form, different in every case, and consisting of an interminable series of expressions of value.

2. The defects of the total or expanded form of value

THE defects of the expanded relative-value form are reflected in the corresponding equivalent form. The accidental relation between two individual commodity owners disappears. It becomes plain that it is not the exchange of commodities which regulates the magnitude of their value; but, on the contrary, that it is the magnitude of their value which controls their exchange proportions.

C. THE GENERAL FORM OF VALUE

1. The altered character of the form of value

WHEN a person exchanges his linen for many other commodities, and thus expresses its value in a series of other commodities, it necessarily follows that the various owners of the latter exchange them for the linen, and consequently express the value of their various commodities in one and the same third commodity, the linen. We get a general form of value: one coat = 20 yards of linen, 10 lbs. of tea = 20 yards of linen, 40 lbs of coffee = 20 yards of linen, one quarter of corn = 20 yards of linen, two ounces of gold = 20 yards of linen, one-half a ton of iron = 20 yards of linen, x commodity. A = 20 yards of linen, etc. All commodities now express their value (1) in an elementary form, because in a single commodity; (2) with unity, because in one and the same commodity.

The value of every commodity is now, by being equated to linen, not only differentiated from its own use-value, but from all other use-values generally, and is, by that very fact, expressed as that which is common to all commodities. By this form, commodities are, for the first time, effectively brought into relation with one another as values, or made to appear as exchange values.

The general value form, which represents all products of labour as mere congelations of undifferentiated human labour, shows by its very structure that it is the social resumé of the world of commodities. That form consequently makes it indisputably evident that in the world of commodities the character possessed by all labour of being human labour constitutes its specific social character.

2. The interdependent development of the relative form of value and of the equivalent form

THE degree of development of the relative form of value corresponds to that of the equivalent form. But we must bear in mind that the development of the latter is only the expression and result of the development of the former. The primary relative form of value of one commodity converts some other commodity into an isolated equivalent. The expanded form of relative value, which is the expression of the value of one commodity in terms of all other commodities, endows those other commodities with the character of particular equivalents differing in kind. And lastly, a particular kind of commodity acquires the character of universal equivalent, because all other commodities make it the material in which they uniformly express their value.

A single commodity, the linen, appears therefore to have acquired the character of direct exchangeability with every other commodity because, and in so far as this character is denied to every other commodity. The commodity that figures as universal equivalent, is, on the other hand, excluded from the relative-value form.

3. Transition from the general form of value to the money form

THE particular commodity, with whose bodily form the equivalent form is thus socially identified, now becomes the money commodity, or serves as money. It becomes the special social function of that commodity, and consequently its social monopoly, to play within the world of commodities the part of the universal equivalent.

This foremost place has been attained by one in particular — namely, gold.

D. THE MONEY FORM

WE get the money form: 20 yards of linen = two ounces of gold, one coat = two ounces of gold, 10 lb. of tea = two ounces of gold, 40 lb. of coffee = two ounces of gold, two qr. of corn = two ounces of gold, one-half a ton of iron = two ounces of gold, x commodity A = two ounces of gold.

Gold is now money with reference to all other commodities only because it was previously, with reference to them, a simple commodity. Like all other commodities, it was also capable of serving as an equivalent, either as simple equivalent in isolated exchanges, or as particular equivalent by the side of others. Gradually it began to serve, within varying limits, as universal equivalent.

So soon as it monopolises this position in the expression of value for the world of commodities, it becomes the money commodity, and then, and not till then,

does the general form of value become changed into the money form.

Section 4. The fetishism of commodities and the secret thereof

A COMMODITY appears, at first sight, a very trivial thing, and easily understood. Its analysis shows that it is, in reality, a very queer thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties. So far as it is a value in use, there is nothing mysterious about it. It is as clear as noonday that man, by his industry, changes the forms of the materials furnished by nature, in such a way as to make them useful to him. The form of wood, for instance, is altered, by making a table out of it. Yet, for all that the table continues to be that common, everyday thing, wood.

But, so soon as it steps forth as a commodity, it is changed into something transcendent. It not only stands with its feet on the ground, but, in relation to all other commodities, it stands on its head, and evolves out of its wooden brain grotesque ideas far more wonderful than "table-turning" ever was.

The mystical character of commodities does not originate in their use-value. Just as little does it proceed from the nature of the determining factors of value. Whence, then, arises the enigmatical character of the product of labour, so soon as it assumes the form of commodities? Clearly from this form itself.

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things. In order, therefore, to find an analogy, we must have recourse to the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production

of commodities.

This fetishism of commodities has its origin in the peculiar social character of the labour that produces them. As a general rule, articles of utility become commodities, only because they are products of the labour of private individuals or groups of individuals who carry on their work independently of each other. The sum total of the labour of all these private individuals forms the aggregate labour of society. Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labour does not show itself except in the act of exchange. In other words, the labour of the individual asserts itself as a part of the labour of society, only by means of the relations which the act of exchange establishes directly between the products, and indirectly, through them, between the producers. To the latter, therefore, the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear, not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as what they really are, material relations between persons and social relations between things.

It is only by being exchanged that the products of labour acquire, as values, one uniform social status, distinct from their varied forms of existence as objects of utility. From this moment the labour of the individual producer acquires socially a twofold character. On the one hand, it must, as a definite useful kind of labour, satisfy a definite social want, and thus hold its place as part and parcel of the collective labour of all, as a branch of a social division of labour that has sprung up spontaneously. On the other hand, it can satisfy the manifold wants of the individual producer himself, only in so far as the mutual exchangeability of all kinds of useful private labour is an established social fact, and therefore the private useful labour of each producer ranks on an equality with that of all others.

The twofold social character of the labour of the individual appears to him, when reflected in his brain, only under those forms which are impressed upon that labour in everyday practice by the exchange of products. In this way, the character that his own labour possesses of being socially useful takes the form of the condition that the product must be not only useful, but useful for others, and the social character that his particular labour has of being the equal of all other particular kinds of labour, takes the form that all the physically different articles that are the products of labour, have one common quality, viz., that of having value.

Hence, when we bring the products of our labour into relation with each other as

values, it is not because we see in these articles the material receptacles of homogeneous human labour. Quite the contrary; whenever, by an exchange, we equate as values our different products, by that very act, we also equate, as human labour, the different kinds of labour expended upon them. We are not aware of this, nevertheless we do it. Value, therefore, does not stalk about with a label describing what it is. It is value, rather, that converts every product into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, we try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of our own social products; for to stamp an object of utility as a value, is just as much a social product as language. The recent scientific discovery, that the products of labour, so far as they are values, are but material expressions of the human labour spent in their production, marks, indeed, an epoch in the history of the development of the human race, but, by no means, dissipates the mist through which the social character of labour appears to us to be an objective character of the products themselves.

When I state that coats or boots stand in a relation to linen, because it is the universal incarnation of abstract human labour, the absurdity of the statement is self-evident. Nevertheless, when the producers of coats and boots compare those articles with linen, or, what is the same thing with gold or silver, as the universal equivalent, they express the relation between their own private labour and the collective labour of society in the same absurd form. The categories of bourgeois economy consist of such like forms. They are forms of thought expressing with social validity the conditions and relations of a definite, historically determined mode of production, viz., the production of commodities. The whole mystery of commodities, all the magic and necromancy that surrounds the products of labour as long as they take the form of commodities, vanishes therefore, so soon as we come to other forms of production.

Could commodities themselves speak, they would say: "Our use-value may be a thing that interests men. It is no part of us as objects. What, however, does belong to us as objects is our value. Our natural intercourse as commodities proves it. In the eyes of each other we are nothing but exchange values." It is a peculiar circumstance that the use-value of objects is realised without exchange, by means of a direct relation between the objects and man, while, on the other hand, their value is realised only by exchange, that is, by means of a social process. Who fails here to call to mind our good friend, Dogberry, who informs neighbour Seacoal, that, "To be a well-favoured man is the gift of fortune; but reading and writing comes by nature"?



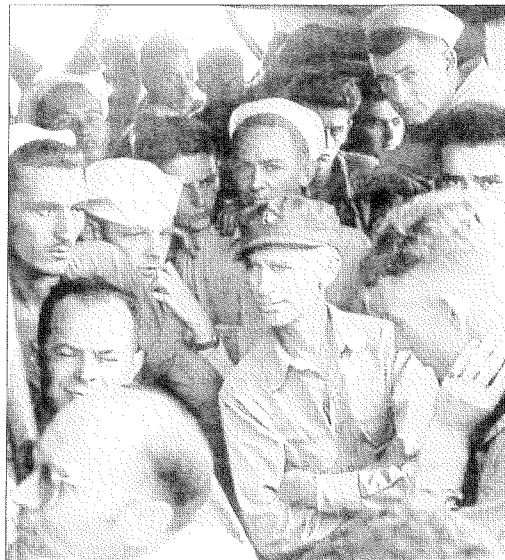
Real men

Stiffed: The Betrayal of the Modern Man by Susan Faludi, Chatto and Windus, 1999

Reviewing *Stiffed* in the *Guardian*, Ros Coward said that worrying about men will be the “next stage of feminism”. As the author of a new book about “the crisis of masculinity” you might expect her to make that claim. Having read Lynne Segal’s excellent *Slow Motion* about the same subject nine years ago, I thought this was all old hat. One thing for sure is that Faludi, as the author of the mega-bestselling feminist book of the ’80s, *Backlash*, will get more publicity than Segal. *Stiffed* is not as good book as either *Slow Motion* or, for that matter, *Backlash*.

Stiffed is big on zeitgeist (a very very very 608 pages big) and short on concrete political analysis. It is a scrapbook of investigative interviews with, mostly white, American men of different generations. Through these narratives Faludi demonstrates how American men have been affected by the recession and the subsequent restructuring of capitalism — the advent of long and short term unemployment as a permanent feature of life, of part-time and “flexible” work, the decline of manufacturing industry and how women have replaced men as the “breadwinner” for families.

Some of the men Faludi talks to are what middle class Americans would call “blue collar”, i.e., working class, men in unskilled jobs. Some of the men are what middle-class Americans would call “middle-class” i.e. working-class people who have — or in the past would have had — the skills to get well-paid jobs. Faludi does not make class or race an explicit part of her narrative and this is a real weakness in the book. Instead she looks at the effect of economic and social trends on men *per se*. So when she interviews a fam-



World War II heroes: this generation of American men were betrayed

ily of young black men from South Central Los Angeles, she does not ignore the racism they have faced in their lives, but does not dwell too deeply on the broader patterns of racism that are found in American society.

Throughout, the book lacks this kind of context. And, although it is a “social history” in as much as it is a snapshot of the moment, it also lacks a sense of history. She does not compare the recent economic recession with other periods of high unemployment. She does not give us any statistics for domestic violence for the past or the present day. Yet one of the anecdotal points of the book is that domestic violence has increased. These comparative historical facts would have made this book a much more interesting study. As it is, reading *Stiffed*, you feel as if you are going over the same ground, the same limited set of circumstances, the same ideas. It’s all a bit of chore.

But is Faludi convincing about the existence of a “crisis of masculinity” which is peculiar to today’s conditions?

Faludi argues that a certain post-war cultural paradigm has been destroyed. The men who returned from the war were told that if they worked hard they would reap a decent living for themselves

and their family, that they could have a piece of the American Dream. For Faludi, men were willing to accept this cultural ideal because it was in keeping with their experience of themselves during the war, where the selfless “little man” getting on with it was presented as the hero. She quotes a veteran: “You had 15 guys who for the first time in their lives were not living in a competitive society... There’s a job to be done and everyone pitches in...” These men were betrayed when the old industries were shut down and they were not able to pass on the “heritage” of a steady stable existence to their “baby boom” sons.

Faludi is great at describing the mood of that generation but she gets carried away with her own narrative. No doubt *Saving Private Ryan* is, as Faludi says, a piece of nostalgia. But it is also in its first 30 minutes a realistic evocation of the brutality of war. Faludi does not admit that many of the “grunts” of whom she speaks may have been revolted by, scared to death by and, reasonably, not at all nostalgic about their experience. Equally, these men may not all have bought into the American Dream.

Along the way Faludi records the experiences of men in the Vietnam War, an LA gang-banger, a sexually rapacious teenager and many many more. Her main point is that men have — in cultural terms — become as “useless” as women; they have, in her phrase, become “ornaments”. Hence the growing obsession with male style and fitness. Faludi argues that for many

men “making it” can only be defined in terms of things like getting on the *Jerry Springer Show* — five minutes of fame. These broad brush strokes have the ring of truth; you feel, yes she has touched on something that is characteristic of modern-day American society. But without an analytical framework and more precise historical, economic and social facts, it is unsatisfactory. Anyone managing to wade through all those pages is likely to feel a bit cheated.

Helen Rate

The new capitalism

New Realism, New Barbarism: Socialist Theory in the Era of Globalisation, by Boris Kagarlitsky, Pluto, 1999.

THIS book is the first of three ambitious volumes which seek to recast Marxism, and is not just another academic tract by a tired professor seeking refuge in academia. Kagarlitsky is well known for his involvement in the Russian labour movement, and his concern for practical activity is never far from the surface even as he discusses theory.

Kagarlitsky defines the ’90s as a decade of frustration, in which the ideology of neo-liberalism — privatisation, free markets and global competition — seems to have reigned supreme. His own experience in Russia, together with his panoramic survey of the international scene, indicate that this period is better described as one of neo-barbarism, an epoch of decline which he compares to 4th century Rome. Then the apparent successes only shielded the fundamental crisis of the empire, a time when the barbarians could take on the forms of civilisation but not the substance. The parallel with Russia’s bastard-capitalism is striking, where the old nomenklatura has not been

replaced by a genuine bourgeoisie, and these societies look no nearer to catching up with the West than they did in 1989.

New realism has arisen because of the absence of a socialist alternative to neo-liberalism. Millions of people whose interests lie in change lack the ideology, the programme and the organisation to make it. The result has pulled reformism to the right, where electoral success (such as New Labour's in Britain) has masked political failure, and socialism redefined merely by 'values' such as social justice which are readily incorporated into the capitalist project. The tragedy is well summed up by South Africa after apartheid, where the ANC presides over free-market capitalism.

Kagarlitsky takes no solace from "history is on our side", denounced as a consolatory myth and disproven by the rolling back of the welfare state after decades of gradual improvement. If history is far from being a rectilinear process of movement towards more advanced forms, then struggles for reform which are not also struggles for a new society are doomed to reverse and defeat. For Kagarlitsky, only Marxism has the answer to these defeats and the malaise of the period.

Yet Marxism too has suffered historic defeat, not from the fall of the Berlin Wall but decades earlier, as it became incorporated into academia and engulfed by Stalinism. Kagarlitsky does not make as

much of the impact of Stalinism as I think is necessary, but he is committed to a return to the simple truths of classical Marxism — and crucially the centrality of the working class as the subject and object of socialist transformation. He concludes the book with a ringing confirmation that Marx is still alive because capitalism is still alive, and that Marx's analysis of capitalism remains valid. He approvingly quotes the choice for humanity summed up by Rosa Luxemburg: socialism or barbarism.

Kagarlitsky dismisses arguments about the "end of the proletariat" and the "end of work", fashionable in universities, pointing to the restructuring of world capitalism and the intensified exploitation of waged labour as signs of the relevance of the working class. In fact the new technologies afford some workers, such as computer operators, even greater potential power both to bring the system to a halt and to remake it in their own interests. He is alive to the radical possibilities of the Internet, which challenges both state censorship and free market property rights.

The book is not without its oddities, such as when Kagarlitsky compares the working class to a crocodile, a survivor from the earlier world of dinosaurs, and concedes that it may survive not as the largest class but like the peasantry, as just a significant force. The early section on South Africa reads too much like a lament for the South

his Marxism is not entirely free of these influences.

These weaknesses do detract from his overall attempt to refocus Marxism on the existing realities of world capitalism. Yet there is enough here to suggest Kagarlitsky is groping in the right direction. It will be interesting to see if he can sketch out the programmatic contours of this recasted Marxism in the subsequent books.

Paul Hampton

Keynesian economics, alive and well...

The Return of Depression Economics, by Paul Krugman.

KEYNESIAN economics was sent to the dustbin because it failed in the 1970s? It's been totally discredited ever since then? Right? Dead wrong.

Paul Krugman of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, probably the most famous economist of his generation, is an unrepentant Keynesian. This short book gives a crisp, readable and instructive account of the Asia-centred economic crisis of 1997-9. The key idea is Keynes's "liquidity trap" — where a general desire to hold cash (to provide safety against future troubles; to be ready for new industrial-investment openings when they arise, which is not yet; to fend off creditors pressing for their cash) makes it harder to get cash (you want to sell, but no-one with cash wants to part with it and buy), and the vicious circle spirals into a slump. Keynes himself gave credit to Marx for discovering this phenomenon earlier. Marx went much further than Keynes, I think, in showing the roots of the "liquidity trap" in the fundamental contradictions of capitalist production, but Keynes's exposition of the mechanics is far more developed than Marx's unfinished notes and fragments on the question.

Krugman, like Keynes, sees himself as a gadfly within the Establishment. His argu-

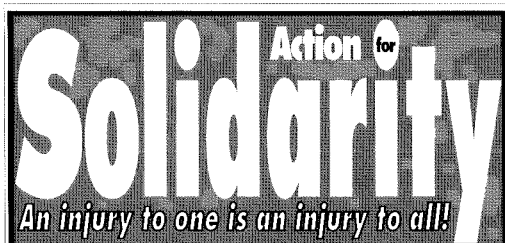
ments that Japan should get itself out of its slump by deliberately creating inflation, and that Malaysia was right to reimpose capital controls, are too daring for most. But the mainstream is not so far away. No-one has argued for leaving Asia's crisis, for free-market mechanisms to fix it, nor denied the broadly "Keynesian" idea that the Japanese government should put "stimulus" into its economy.

Besides, Keynesian economics did not fail in the 1970s. It served the bourgeoisie well. It got them out of the sharp slump of 1974-5 quite fast, and enabled them to contain and tame the great working class militancy of that period. Thatcherism (economic rationalism, neo-liberalism, whatever) followed because the Keynesian policies had succeeded to the extent that the bourgeoisie felt confident about a counter-offensive. Its true pioneer, in fact, was not Thatcher but Pinochet in Chile after 1973 — proving that the precondition for "neo-liberalism" was not some intellectual discredit for Keynes's economics, but a confident ruling class avid for revenge.

For the "neo-liberal" offensive, however, the ruling classes were best served by people who believed in it as general doctrine, not just as an expedient for smashing down the working class. Hence, as Krugman has shown in an earlier book, *Peddling Prosperity*, at the start of the 1980s US government economic advice was dominated by outright cranks.

The nonsense-theory of monetarism was abandoned by the Tories themselves within a few years. The growl that remains from that Cheshire tiger is the idea of "no gain without pain" — that if capitalist crises do not exact their full toll of suffering, then "the economy" will not have had the proper "purge" which that crisis showed to be necessary, and any recovery will be "unsound". That idea is still widespread — and very useful to the ruling classes, though it also exists in perverse "Marxist-fatalist" variants. Krugman, though he is no radical or socialist, usefully shows its falseness.

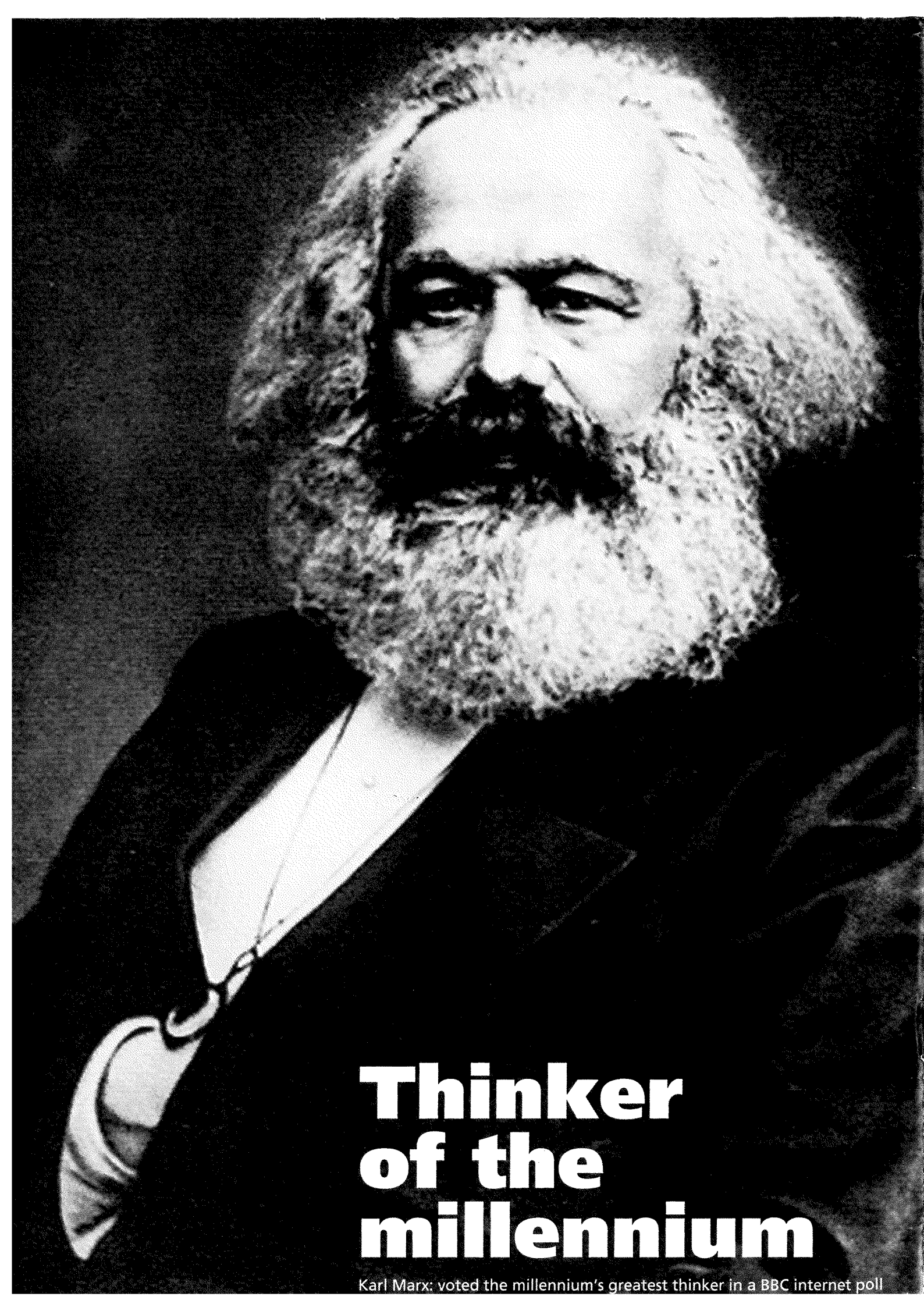
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African Communist Party, which in fact always acted as a brake on the development of independent working class organisation. And his account of alternatives to "peripheral capitalism" (i.e. Stalinism and Third World nationalism) indicate that

A high-contrast, black and white portrait of Karl Marx. He is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt. He has a very full, white beard and mustache, and his hair is also white and slightly disheveled. He is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

Thinker of the millennium

Karl Marx: voted the millennium's greatest thinker in a BBC internet poll