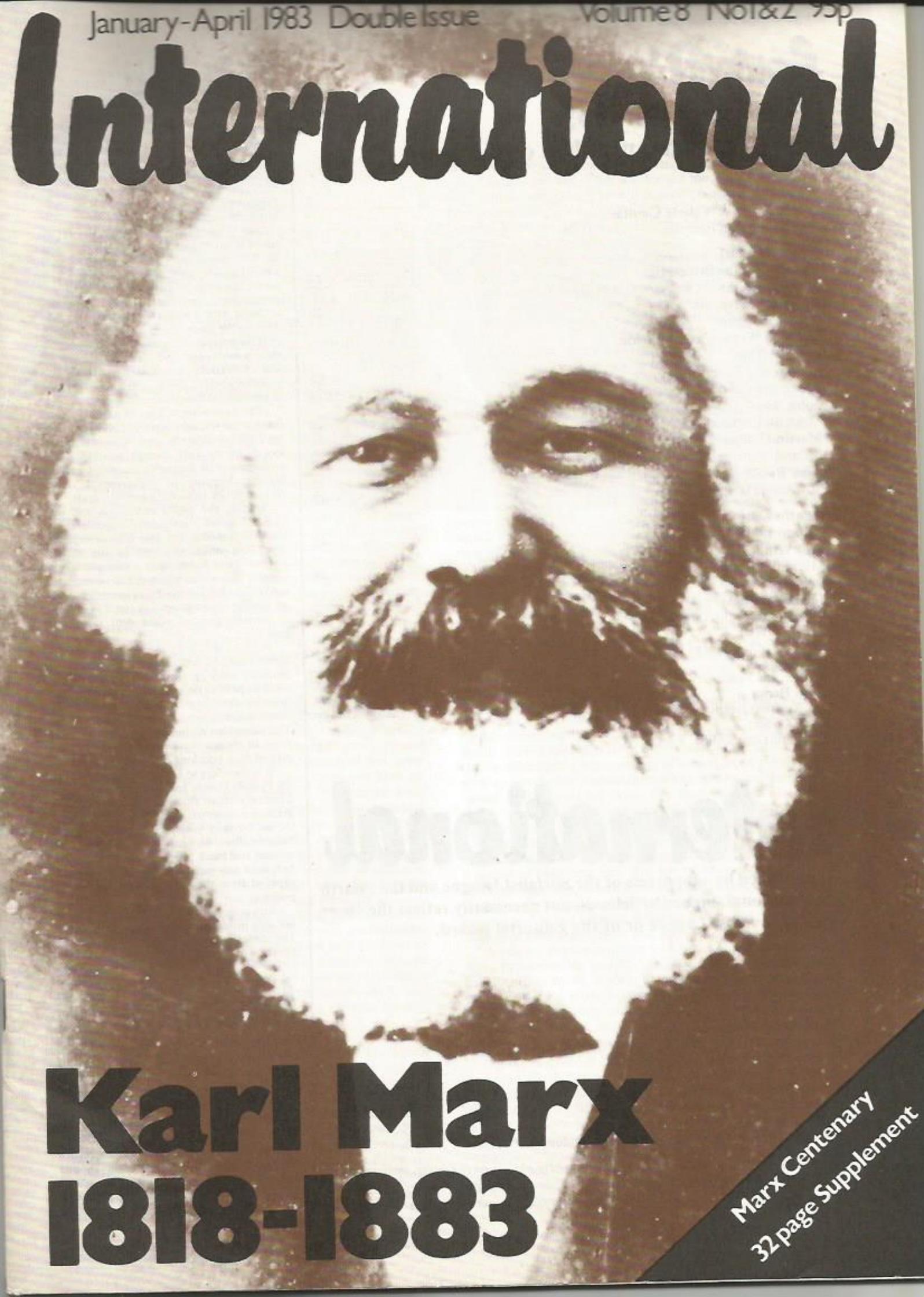


January-April 1983 Double Issue

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International

A black and white portrait of Karl Marx, showing his face from the chest up. He has a full, white beard and mustache, and is looking slightly to the left of the camera. The background is dark and textured.

Jonathan

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Karl Marx
1818-1883

Marx Centenary
32 page Supplement

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Editorial

The day after Bermondsey is a bleak one for the Left. The defeat of Peter Tatchell has been blamed by Labour's right wing on the Left, and acclaimed by the press as a major triumph of common sense over 'extremism'. The reality of course is that it was a combination of the Labour leadership and the Tory press which lost Bermondsey for Labour.

But to recognise the responsibility for the fiasco is not enough — lessons must be learned. The first is the extraordinary lengths to which Labour's right wing is prepared to go to smash the party's left wing. If Labour was elected into government it would immediately be faced with a momentous choice: to bow down to the needs of capital to fundamentally shift the balance of forces against the working class (a *more* right wing version of the Wilson and Callaghan administrations), or to mobilise working people in defence of their interests against the power of capital.

The right wing will go to any lengths to prevent the second course including sabotaging Labour's slim electoral hopes. Hence the assault on the Left through expulsions, the undermining of Tatchell's campaign and the blatant dropping of 'unacceptable' conference policy from the manifesto draft.

Second, the media vilification and bias against Tatchell plumbed new depths even for the British media. But that is to be expected given the stakes involved in the current Labour Party battle. It is a foretaste of the violent opposition which could be expected against any left Labour Party campaign. Only an equally uncompromising stand in support of socialist policies could dent the media hostility.

As the right wing moves in for the kill against Foot, the task of the Left is to turn the minority working class support for radical socialist policies (as seen even in Bermondsey) towards those mass movements which can create majority support for a Labour victory. The Greenham Common women have done more to change mass consciousness in their protest than knocking on a million doors.

It is therefore to CND, the waterworkers, the Peoples March, and a campaign to present a radical socialist alternative based on the progressive policies passed at Labour conference — no incomes policy, the 35 hour week, unilateralism, withdrawal from the EEC, women and black people's rights — that the Left must now turn. And it must defend those expelled from the party for defending these policies.

Any policy of retreat will lead to disaster not only inside the party but also at the polls. The consequences for failure could be drastic for the whole workers' movement.

International

This special double issue of International celebrates the centenary of the death of Karl Marx, the greatest revolutionary thinker of our age. We hope our readers will bear with the increased price. Strictly speaking we should have charged at least £1.25 to cover our costs, but we felt the cost would be prohibitive. We therefore feel no hesitation in appealing to our readers for generous donations to safeguard the future issues of the journal.

HARD TIMES

BOB SUTCLIFFE

The crisis of the capitalist economies shows no sign of retreating in 1983. We reproduce below a chapter on the capitalists' response to the crisis from a forthcoming book by Bob Sutcliffe entitled *Hard Times (World Economy in Turmoil)* to be published in March by Pluto Press, as part of their *Arguments for Socialism* series.

The economic crisis raises vital problems or imposes heavy burdens on virtually all those who live in capitalist society — except maybe for a few clever or lucky profiteers who gain out of the misfortunes of others.

But different social groups see a very different content to the crisis. Most capitalists see first and foremost a decline in their rate of profit and they imagine a whole set of other things to be associated with this: wages rising 'too fast', productivity rising 'too slowly', inflation, high interest rates, high raw material prices, stagnant markets and so on. But as a whole the capitalist class has not arrived at a consistent and unified view of what the crisis consists of and why it is happening, let alone of what to do about it. The old intellectual certainties of Keynesianism, so universally held, have been exploded altogether and the old consensus politics replaced by polarisation. The economically impossible has now happened so many times and in so many places that there is no longer *any* accepted conventional wisdom about the economy except that things are bad and will quite probably worsen before they get better.

Increasingly the bourgeoisie, politically and intellectually, is dividing into two camps. One camp, the radical Right, is dominated by the threat to the overall system of profitable exploitation posed by the economic crisis. Members of that camp see the question ever more clearly in class terms and have set themselves consciously the task of undoing the economic knot tied during the boom years by arranging a fundamental redistribution of wealth and power away from working people and their families. If this involves the creation of mass unemployment and the manifest failure to meet even elementary social needs then, they say, so be it. Virtually all capitalist governments have in the last decade made important inroads into traditional democratic freedoms. And there are growing signs in a number of countries that the kind of solutions envisaged by this section of the bourgeoisie, or even lesser austerity programmes, simply cannot be carried out in the context of parliamentary democracy and trade union freedoms. We can expect that the most determined and perspicacious sections of this part of the bourgeoisie will act on the consequences and move, perhaps in alliance with the erratically growing fascists, towards more authoritarian solutions.

Another section of the bourgeoisie, though not at present imbued with such political prestige or influence, and in Britain referred to as the 'wets', a male-chauvinist term coined by those to their right, recoils in horror at the extreme consequences of the measures which the radical Right tell them are necessary to preserve the capitalist system which they support. Intellectually they represent the remains of Keynesianism. They are to be found both in the 'left' of capitalist parties and in the reformist workers' parties such as the British Labour Party, the French and Spanish Socialist Parties, the German Social Democrats and the 'Eurocommunist' parties. Though they support more state spending to preserve employment, and

more economic aid to combat world poverty, they do not represent a radical current. They are for the most part clinging to old, used policies which have lost prestige because they have been seen to fail. Often, therefore, their hopes, like those of less closeted lovers of the free market, are placed on some semi-automatic upturn in the economy.

The failure of governments in capitalist countries to unite on a strategy to deal with the crisis partly reflects the fact that there are objective differences of interest between distinct sections of the capitalist class. There seems to be no set of economic policies from which all sections of capital can benefit.

A marxist analysis of the crisis helps us to understand why this is so. The process of raising the rate of profit after it has fallen to unacceptable levels consists, according to marxist analysis, of raising the amount of surplus value produced and realised, or lowering the value of the total capital over which it must be shared, or some combination of the two. The important thing, as discussed earlier, is to increase surplus value *relative* to the value of capital.

This means that some sections of capital which may be able to raise the productivity of the workforce in their employ or which may have a buoyant market for their product, will oppose policies which are designed to keep afloat those sections of capital which are not so favourably placed. From the point of view of the survival of the capitalist class the more successful sections of it may well support the idea that the crisis would be helped by the destruction or purge of the less successful portion of capital. Yet obviously those more hard-pressed sections of capital will favour policies which help them to survive, and that almost certainly means policies which, usually via the state, redistribute surplus value. Conflicts over policy within the capitalist class, therefore, very often centre around the question of state expenditure and the extent to which it should be curtailed.

A related source of conflict concerns the question of wages. In one sense all sections of capital will benefit if wages can be curtailed relative to productivity since, other things being equal, this will raise the rate of exploitation of the labour force. On the other hand a whole section of capital depends for its survival on producing commodities which are by and large consumed by the working class. For them any curtailment of wages, therefore, is a curtailment of the market for their products and so of their ability to realise surplus value.

Ultimately for the capitalists as a whole, this is a conflict or contradiction which cannot be completely resolved. It demands a perpetual balancing act. But for sections of capital in the short run there may seem to be no contradiction at all. So the contradiction for capital as a whole gets expression as a conflict of interest and policy between different sections of the capitalist class over state expenditure and wage control in particular.

A related dispute concerns international trade and protection. Protectionism and the shrinkage of markets which it usually brings about, is not in the interests of capital as a whole on a world scale. Nonetheless certain sections of capital, those subjected to the hottest competition and which produce mainly for the home market, may well see protection as a perfect solution to their own immediate problems.

All these objective conflicts of economic interest are part of the cause of the differences over policy which have erupted in the capitalist class since the present crisis commenced. In addition, there are differences which are more political in nature. Even if the economic objectives could be sorted out, there would remain disagreements over how much the necessary strategy to increase the rate of profit should be imposed through head-on political conflict with the potential victims of the policies and how much those victims should be cajoled and persuaded to collaborate in their own fate.

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"... First I was a Keynesian ... Next I was a monetarist ...
Then a supply-sider ... Now I'm a bum ..."

The radical Right — Thatcher and Reagan

The break-up of the economic consensus in capitalist societies has partly been the result of the emergence of new strategies of the 'radical Right' in dealing with the problems which the crisis raises before the capitalist class.

As already mentioned, one of the main differences between the old Keynesian section of the bourgeoisie and the new radical Right has been over the question of state expenditure. Radical Right governments have launched ambitious plans to make major reductions in state-provided services and state support for industry and other subsidies, combined usually with plans for simultaneous cuts in taxation to restore incentives in the private economy and produce a radical reversal in the tendency of modern capitalism towards greater state involvement in production.

'... to help the poor and the middle classes one must reduce the taxes of the rich ...' is the claim of the supply-siders

Closely linked with this attitude towards state spending is a policy of severe control of money supply which many right wingers argue gets out of control and causes inflation mainly through uncontrolled state spending and debt. Though backed up with sophisticated-looking statistics, this monetarism is really no more than old fashioned deflation.

These more traditional right-wing policies of opposition to the big state and financial conservatism have recently been joined by a new variety of right-wing economic doctrine known in America as 'supply-side economics'. Supply-siders argue that policies affecting demand can't work. The cost of reducing inflation by cutting state demand is a degree of slump which even to them is unacceptable. The problem, they say, is to reverse the built-in tendency of the system to discourage saving and investment. And that, they argue, means increasing incentives for the potential investors, that is, the Right and the capitalists. And that, in turn, means cutting the marginal tax rates for higher incomes.

Some of them even maintain that such a policy will actually increase government tax revenue because of the stimulus it

would give to economic activity. But their main point is that supply-side policies of tax reductions for the rich would benefit everybody since they are the only way in which investment, rapid growth, reindustrialisation, the return of full employment and prosperity can be restored.

Of course these supply-siders with their complete opposition to progressive taxes (ie higher tax rates on higher incomes) hark back to earlier right-wing traditions. As one of their American advocates, the journalist George Gilder, has proclaimed: 'Regressive taxes help the poor ... To help the poor and middle classes one must reduce the tax rates of the rich.' A series of similar remarks could no doubt be traced back to Marie Antoinette and beyond.

Supply-siders within the capitalist class, like unreconstructed Keynesians, hold the view that recovery from the crisis can take place without basic opposition between the capitalists and the working classes. They are fond of quoting John F Kennedy's remark that 'a rising tide lifts all boats'.

Although the supply-siders have been gaining influence, in general the purist ones are regarded as cranks even by the capitalist class. But the effect of their one-sided ideas has been to concentrate more attention within the ruling class on the problems which marxists would see as being associated with the production rather than the realisation of surplus value. In this sense they redress some of the imbalance of the traditional Keynesian approach. Their tax policies have often been combined with sections of the bourgeoisie with a more ruthless approach towards the weaker sections of capital to produce some of the new Right policies which have been enunciated by the governments of Margaret Thatcher in Britain and Ronald Reagan in the USA.

But the more far-sighted sections of this New Right maintain an understanding that neither Keynesianism nor supply-side economics are the magic wand they claim to be. Both of them ignore the very basic fact of class conflict within capitalist society and conceal the fact that the resolution of the crisis cannot take place without a major shift in the balance of class forces.

Thatcher and Reagan have in common a knowledge that the implementation of their policies will require a frontal attack on the working class through unemployment, the wholesale destruction of social services and real wage cuts. In order to achieve these it will probably be necessary for big fights to take place between the employers and government on the one hand and trade unions on the other.

A realisation of what is necessary, however, does not mean that it can be easily achieved, as a look at the chequered careers of Thatcherism and Reaganomics shows.

Thatcherism

In Britain the landslide election victory of Margaret Thatcher's radical Right government in 1979 has been described by its chief economic minister Geoffrey Howe as being like the arrival of the US cavalry in a Hollywood western. Initially, indeed, the Thatcher government seemed to be a new authoritative beacon for the bourgeoisie on a world scale; yet by early 1982 it was fighting for its political life with virtually all of its once shining economic policies badly tarnished. It was only able to quench the fires of public discontent by directing at them a hose of chauvinist propaganda and waging war against Argentina. For a time economic opposition to Thatcher could virtually be branded as pro-Argentinian treason. Thatcher's political comeback in mid-1982 certainly had nothing to do with economic success.

The problems of Thatcherism have partly been economic ones in the narrow sense. Efforts to cut the money supply have failed because a good portion of the monetary system is not effectively within the control of the state monetary authorities. Second, efforts to cut government spending and the state sector deficit have failed because what the policies cut from state spending by the ending of health, education and other services, they add on in the form of unemployment and social security

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benefits. A parliamentary Select Committee recently estimated that in Britain the cost to the state of the present level of unemployment was £15 billion a year — one and half times the size of the government deficit.

The sharpness of this problem was not quite foreseen by the Thatcher government. Certainly they intended to create mass unemployment but they probably did not envisage that this would be on the scale that has in fact occurred. That, perhaps, more than anything else, has led to the rapid political disillusionment with the Thatcher government. And the fear of the political consequences for its survival has led a section of the government itself to be increasingly openly hostile to full-blooded Thatcherism and have also led to important retreats by the more hard-core Thatcherites themselves. For example, Minister of Industry, Keith Joseph, continued financial aid to various loss-making nationalised and private industries which should, according to his own criteria, have gone bankrupt and piled even more workers on to the unemployment scrapheap.

In addition, the experiences of Thatcher and now Reagan are revealing another problem with the monetarist aspect of their strategy — that it is almost bound to lead to international divisions within the ranks of the capitalist countries. Recent economic summits at Ottawa in 1981 and Versailles in 1982 found all the other capitalist countries, including Britain, putting pressure on Ronald Reagan to take steps to reduce interest rates in the USA and so reduce the pressure that high American interest rates pile on their own economies. Monetarism has turned out to be necessarily monetarism in one country. Like Keynesianism and protectionism it turns out to be a policy which may do something to alleviate the economic problems of one capitalist nation but only at the cost of worsening those of others.

The bold experiment of Thatcherism then has fallen far short of its objectives. So far it looks as if Reaganomics is not going to fare any better.

Reaganomics — an inconsistent experiment

Compared with its immediate predecessors, Reaganomics is a radical new attempt to solve the problems of capitalist crisis, clearly in the interests of the capitalist class.

Radical and new it may be — but intellectually coherent it is not. In fact, the Reagan administration consists of an alliance, or perhaps more appropriately a scrambled mish-mash, of several economic ideas. First there are the budget balancers, led until recently by Reagan himself. Their main economic objective in the period up to 1984 is, or rather was, the complete elimination of the budget deficit. Given that Reagan was elected on a grandiose promise to cut taxes by 30 per cent during his term of office and at the same time vastly increase military spending, this means that the policy of cutting the deficit implies huge cuts in government spending on virtually everything other than the military.

Reagan's chief lieutenant in his programme of ruthless cuts has been David Stockman, a young former Congressman, appointed by Reagan as Director of the Office of Management and the Budget. From the OMB, Stockman has since 1980 conducted an obsessional drive against every aspect of government spending. The emphasis of this drive has been against what have been euphemistically termed 'non-essential services' (that is, anything which directly affects the welfare of disadvantaged citizens). The consequences of this first major dose of Reaganomics, as of Thatcherism, is that those in society who were disadvantaged to begin with are relatively the worst hit, because they have relied most on the government programmes established during the boom.

Reagan's cuts campaign reached its *reductio ad absurdum* when such proposals were seriously made as the redefinition of tomato ketchup as a vegetable so that the cost of school meals could be reduced while meeting statutory nutritional standards. Public ridicule, and opposition even by a leading member of the Heinz family to the elevation of ketchup, led to the withdrawal

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of this proposal. But the cutbacks have meant the removal or reduction in availability of food stamps and of medical aid to several million needy Americans. And the real value of many state benefits were reduced during the first two years of Reagan's administration.

But the budget deficit was not cut. At first it went on soaring out of control with each successive estimate. This did not greatly worry the second element of the Reaganomics coalition — the supply-siders. In spite of their general opposition to spending cuts, the supply-siders have seen one of their best selling books, George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty*, praised by David Stockman as 'Promethean in its intellectual power and insight' and journalist Gilder at once returned the compliment.

if Nixon's was the administration of expletives, Reagan's is the administration of euphemisms

In *Wealth and Poverty* he endorses the economic theories of an obscure Southern Californian Professor of Business named Arthur Laffer (whose 'Laffer curve' allegedly proves that tax cuts increase government revenue), and endorses the similar ideas of *Wall Street Journal* editor Jude Wanniski, author of *The Way the World Works*. Of the latter work, Laffer has said, 'In all honesty, I believe it is the best book on economics ever written'. Just as they insist that capitalists thrive on unfettered opportunities to make profit, supply-siders themselves appear to thrive on adulation (most of it mutual).

These intellectual (for want of a better word) high priests of the supply-side say that for capital to recover, all assistance may be given to the present and potential entrepreneurs. That means (they say) allowing capitalist investors to pocket more of their earnings — and so, more than anything, reducing taxes, especially on profits and any other form of capitalist income.

The tax cuts introduced under Reagan will make very little difference to the real take-home pay of lower and middle-paid workers. All that can be said is that without the tax cuts, the amount they pay in taxes would have tended to go up. And in 1982 the administration changed tack on the tax question by forcing through Congress an Act which would raise taxes by \$100 billion a year by means of what were euphemistically called 'measures of revenue enhancement'. (If Nixon's was the administration of expletives, Reagan's is the administration of euphemisms.)

Tax cuts were never very popular with the third element in the Reaganomics coalition — the monetarists — whose high priest is Milton Friedman. Though Reagan himself is much less dogmatically monetarist than, for example, the Thatcher government, it is ironically the monetarists who have so far achieved more of their stated policy than any other part of the coalition. And this, also ironically, is due to an appointee of President Jimmy Carter, Paul Volcker, the chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, who has turned out to be so successful at cutting the money supply that the senior members of the Reagan administration, from the President downwards, have been publicly asking him to stop.

One of their worries is that one particular aspect of his tight monetarist policies — the high interest rates — are, just as in Britain, imposing serious financial burdens on those buying a home on a mortgage or goods on hire purchase (in response to falling real wages, credit purchases have expanded rapidly in recent years in the USA). High interest rates have also led many unprofitable, debt-laden firms dangerously close to the edge of bankruptcy.

Hence in the build-up to the Congressional elections of 1982 interest rates were, at least temporarily, reduced. But the problem of massive prospective government deficits remained and threatened to push interest rates up again.

There is a further item of Reaganomics on which all its factions agree — deregulation, or 'getting the Federal government

off the backs of the capitalists'. Deregulation has become another euphemism for turning the whole of the USA into an enterprise zone where capital can behave in an entirely uninhibited way. For instance, it will come as a surprise to the cynical that until Reagan's 'deregulation', Federal regulations had dictated that American manufacturers might not make untrue statements in their advertising!

A much more serious aspect of deregulation is the attempt to dismantle health and safety regulations in industry. Car safety regulations have already been eased. Also the number of prosecutions initiated by the US Justice Department for environmental protection violations has been sharply cut back under Reagan. What dominates the administration's thinking is that at least in the short run a polluted land and an unsafe and less healthy land could be a more profitable land.

On the other hand, despite the obsession and energy which is going into cutbacks and deregulations, there remains a Grand Canyon in Reagan's America between effort and results. Reaganomics retains some credibility in the USA today, like Thatcherism in Britain, largely as a result of the confusion of its opponents and the paucity of the alternatives they have up to now devised.

The results of Reaganomics so far confirm one of the experiences of the Thatcher disaster in Britain: that no matter how hard governments of modern advanced capitalist economies try to cut government spending, it is very hard to achieve. But the Reagan administration seems to have realised, perhaps faster than Thatcher did, the profound obstacle to its programmes which is posed by 'entitlement' — the legal right to receive certain benefits such as free or subsidised health care and education, unemployment pay, old age pensions, and welfare benefits, even though these are still more limited in scope in the USA than in many European countries.

Despite the efforts of Reagan so far most of this entitlement — the essence of the so-called 'welfare state' — is still intact. Yet his programme calls for budget cuts of hundreds of billions of dollars over the next three years. This can only be done by a basic attack on all these kinds of entitlement. And that is what is now being prepared in detail by the agencies of Federal Government.

On its showing so far, Reaganomics is neither consistent monetarism, nor classic deflationism and fiscal conservatism, nor born-again militant supply-side economics. At present its contradictory and, by its own standards, incomplete policies seem headed for the same sorry fate as those of Thatcher in Britain: the aggravation of economic slump without any significant lessening in the travails of capital; the loss in this process of electoral support; and the gaining of a reputation for giving the corporations and the rich what they want while imposing cruel and unusual economic tortures on the poor.

Reaganomics soon changed from decisive and radical sounding oratory to a babble of conflicting voices from the administration and Congressional leaders. And from the President no longer come the confident predictions of 1980 but rather vague and ambiguous conjectures — much like the astrology on which he and Nancy Reagan are said to be very dependent.

The family, the nation and race

The so-called new Right in the USA (a myriad of tiny ultra-conservative groups, many of them religious) have formed a vanguard to propagate reactionary positions on a number of non-economic issues including race, the family, the rights and role of women, homosexuality, patriotism, militarism and so on.

In the light of history these developments are not surprising. When the authority or means of existence of a ruling class have been threatened, as are those of the capitalist class today, these have all been methods commonly used in order to help turn the tide. An obvious way of strengthening the power of rulers is to foster divisions among the ruled. In the 1930s bigotry, discrimination and in the end genocide against Jews in Central

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Europe were used in this way. Today anti-Semitism is far from dead. But the forms of bigotry and discrimination which threaten to grow fastest are against blacks, foreigners, women, gay people and youth. Such groups are prime targets at present because of the way in which they have organised to gain more rights in the advanced countries in the boom years. A particularly common kind of demand in this respect is for the repatriation of immigrants.

Political reaction in our century has also usually gone along with the ideology of the family. When authority at the centre of society is threatened it tends to buttress itself with the most obviously available micro-unit of social discipline — the family. The aspects of the family which get stressed are the authority of men over women, and of adults over children, and restrictive sexual morality especially as applied to women and gay people.

Reaganomics and Thatcherism retain some credibility largely as a result of the confusion of its opponents and the paucity of the alternatives they have up to now devised

George Gilder, from whose best seller *Poverty and Wealth* we have already quoted, attributes the current capitalist crisis to the decline of the authority of men:

'The man has the gradually sinking feeling that his role as provider, the definitive male activity from the primal days of the hunt and on into modern life, has been largely seized from him; he has been cuckolded by the compassionate state.'

The American New Right has partly supported Reagan's economic policies because they seem likely to give women the maximum opportunity to return to where the New Right thinks they belong — the kitchen. The Moral Majority and other religious groups which compose much of the New Right have mounted a massive campaign in favour of what they see as the stabilising conservative influence of the family.

The Family Protection Act — a punitive measure with vast scope directed against the existing rights of women, minorities, youth and gays — has been introduced by supporters of the New Right in the US Congress where, along with anti-abortion legislation, it seems to be gaining ground. Even if not passed, its continual discussion contributes to a change in moral climate. Already the Moral Majority has succeeded in defeating laws at the local level in the USA which would have legalised homosex-

uality and liberalised other laws on sexual conduct.

Some of these same tendencies have been visible in Britain. Faced with a rebellion of especially black youth in British cities in the summer of 1981, the government of Margaret Thatcher blamed parents for their children's indiscipline. And since then Thatcher has stepped up her propaganda offensive on the value of the family, helped coincidentally by the temporary loss of a son in the Sahara desert! It isn't only the Tories who have turned to the image of the family for succour and support. In the 1979 general election the Labour Party published a special broadsheet glorifying the family by James Callaghan. And as Prime Minister, Callaghan, in deference to the Rev Ian Paisley's anti-gay campaign 'Save Ulster from Sodomy' withdrew a plan to legalise homosexual conduct between men in Northern Ireland. In exchange he was rewarded by the Ulster Unionists not voting against his shaky government on issues of confidence.

The various reverends of all these extreme organisations are probably not on their way to political power. But they serve an important function, at a time when the capitalist class is in search of a radical political alternative, of shifting the centre of politics to the right and of undermining the chances of building alliances of the oppressed.

Problems of a capitalist solution

So far then it appears that although the bold-sounding New Right economic experiments of Thatcherism and Reaganomics are heading for failure, and although they have caused millions of people to suffer in the process, the likelihood of a radical capitalist alternative to them in the near future is quite small.

The only other runner currently in sight is a plan based on the ideas of New York financier Felix Rohatyn. He has proposed a scheme to channel vast amounts of state funds through a kind of Industrial Reconstruction Finance Corporation to private industry to finance investment. This might be combined with the cutback of state-provided services and the implementation of wage controls and tax penalties against firms raising prices. Rohatyn used such a scheme to rescue the bankrupt New York City in the later 1970s. Grander versions of it have received support from sections of the US Democratic Party, the British Social Democrats and influential capitalist magazines like the *Economist* and *Business Week*.

It is quite possible that this kind of relatively liberal corporatism has a future, at least as a short-term experiment. Politically it has already excited the interest of some capitalists

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in the USA, Britain and Europe. Some of them see it as duplicating some elements of the Japanese economic model. It also overlaps with many aspects of the alternative economic strategies now so common in the labour movement. So it is not impossible that a capitalist-labour alliance could build up in some countries around a modernised version of Roosevelt's New Deal.

But this Newer Deal would still have to face many of the same economic contradictions as the radical Right or Keynesian solutions; and it would also have to be imposed at an obvious cost to workers. How long it could survive before colliding with these obstacles is hard to say. But it should be recalled that, contrary to a widely-held myth, it was almost certainly not the New Deal which rescued US and world capitalism from the Great Depression — but war.

What makes it so difficult for capitalist governments to come up with a set of policies which can simultaneously solve all of their problems?

can Thatcher and Reagan's strategies be politically implemented within the context of a bourgeois parliamentary democracy?

The answer to that question has two parts. First of all, it is because, as we have seen, the conditions for the successful production and realisation of surplus value are themselves contradictory. For this reason no policies will unambiguously benefit all of the capital class at the same time. At a moment of acute crisis, the reversal of one aspect of economic disequilibrium may exacerbate another. As a result of this the bourgeoisie may be indecisive and erratic in its policy choices. And it may also be divided within itself according to where the balance of self-interest of its particular sections lie. This is why to break out of the stalemate the bourgeoisie requires a strategy which can transcend the special interests of its various sections. Even when a political leadership appears which seems to offer this prospect, however, such as the apparently far-sighted, confident and ruthless governments of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan a further problem arises: can the strategy be politically implemented within the context of a bourgeois parliamentary democracy?

It is one thing to think of what to do; it is another to have the political power to carry it out in a bourgeois democratic country with trade unions, political freedoms and periodic elections. That is why a host of Reagan's early planned attacks on entitlements — such as a reduction in the real level of pension and the ketchup proposal — were proposed and then later withdrawn when it became clear that they could not be carried out politically. This is an inevitable problem because, by their very nature, these policies are liable to be unpopular with large sections of the electorate. In the USA major Congressional elections take place every two years. And hardly any government in the advanced countries can expect more than four or five years of life without the need to please some of the electorate.

This difficulty was highlighted by a perceptive remark by Reagan's axe-person, David Stockman, in a notorious interview in *Atlantic Monthly* in December 1981. The budget, he soberly observed:

'Isn't something you reconstruct each year. The budget is a sort of rolling history of decisions. All kinds of decisions made, five, ten, fifteen years ago, are coming back to bite us unexpectedly. Therefore, in my judgment, it will take three or four or five years to subdue it. Whether anyone can maintain the political momentum to fight the beast for that long I don't know.'

Politically, fighting the beast of public spending means in reality fighting those interests which benefit from it. Up to now in Reagan's America the cutbacks have hit the least organised workers most. If there is no U-turn, then a deeper incision will

strike at more organised interests — in particular the trade-union movement.

The logic of Thatcherism and Reaganomics requires the destruction of the kind of labour strength and solidarity which can defend jobs in the public sector and state benefits. This real dilemma points to a number of missing ingredients in government policies as they are usually conceived. Just to change state expenditure, taxation and the regulations which govern the activities of capitalism, however radically it is done, may have economically perverse results unless the government also engineers a radical shift in the balance of political power between the different classes and groups. In the main capitalist countries, in spite of the undoubted strength of right-wing governments, they have still to break decisively all the capacity for resistance which built up during the years of the post war boom.

The implications of this is that the danger of authoritarian solutions is growing — not in the sense that there exists any fascist movements on the brink of taking power, but because the objective difficulties of resolving the crisis in a way which satisfies the needs of capital and wins elections can be expected to drive more and more of the bourgeoisie towards authoritarian non-parliamentary solutions. Already in most of the major capitalist countries, as well as most of the backward ones, the crisis is resulting in the most intense attack on many democratic rights which has been seen since the second world war. Like Norman Tebbit in Britain, many Ministers of Labour are engaged in piloting anti-union legislation through their respective parliaments.

These are the same difficulties which are leading many of the major capitalist leaders at present to espouse militantly reactionary ideologies and policies on many questions other than the class struggle. Militarism, patriotism, racism and sexism are all in this way growing like maggots in the rotting flesh of capitalism.

Politics and economics are as hard to forecast as the weather. What seems to be the most probable expectation to emerge from this analysis? First, that as long as the bourgeoisie maintains the reins of political power in the major capitalist countries, its governments will tend to move towards the right. But, second, they will still be forced to make periodic major concessions in order to survive politically in the context of parliamentary democracy. And third, alongside these governments, ultra-right wing movements will continue to grow. Major clashes with workers' organisations can be expected to continue.

But in the immediate future we do not seem to be approaching the apocalyptic and historically decisive clash which will resolve the present crisis. Capitalism is heading neither straight towards the resolution of its crisis on the terms of the bourgeoisie, nor towards any final collapse. For some years to come it seems destined to continue in a state of deep and unresolved crisis, whose manifestation may change again as it has up to now.

This, however, is not a prophecy: it is a statement of what seems most likely on the basis of certain assumptions. There are other possibilities, especially if one major capitalist country breaks ranks with the others and attempts a markedly different road to the resolution of the crisis.

But if the bourgeoisie seems incapable of carrying through its own 'final solution' to the crisis — one which would involve untold further suffering for humanity — we must ask what are the possibilities of the crisis being resolved by a radical solution of the left, by a decisive move in the direction of socialism?

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THE GREENHAM FACTOR

HELEN JOHN & VALERIE COULTAS

Few political campaigns in recent years have achieved the tremendous impact of the Greenham Common women's peace camp. Valerie Coultas interviewed one of the best known Greenham campaigners, Helen John.

A lot of people have talked about the particular contribution women have made to the fight against the missiles and how Greenham symbolises that. Can you explain your view of the contribution women have made?

Well I think that particularly in the West the contribution we can make is to challenge our authorities in a way that we know we're not going to lose our lives. Hopefully we will challenge the authorities in such a manner that they will re-examine the position, because they always maintain that they're protecting us. I think it really does need women to say very strongly that they're not being protected, they're being endangered by the measures the government are taking.

Throughout many parts of the world it's not possible to take non-violent direct action. The authorities are very much more in control of their populations, and I don't doubt that in South America for example if we were making this protest, or in Guatemala, we would be dead.

The most important contribution we have to make is that in the West we can reverse the tendencies and perhaps allow people all over the world to get back to being able to make non-violent direct action, rather than having to die by the bullet.

So do you think non-violent direct action is something that the whole of the CND movement should support?

Well it is something the CND movement supports. It made that very clear at the conference. It made it very clear by electing those of us who are very closely associated with the camp onto the National Council and now some of us are on the Executive Committee. I think that proves conclusively that the majority of people in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament support what is happening.

Yes, but I mean rather that non-violent direct action was something that at Greenham only a section of women were involved in. There were far more women that came to the camp for the Sunday demonstration and who supported it than would ever get directly involved in that kind of action.

Well, considering that 2,000 women actually did take part on the Monday, that's a tremendous step forward. Bearing in mind that women are not encouraged to take any direct line regarding their own lives, and the fact that we've only been going for 16 months it shows a dramatic increase in awareness. I don't know whether Margaret Thatcher would be able to get 30,000 women to come out for any of her policies, and I don't think she would get 2,000 to put themselves in direct confrontation with the authorities. It's dangerous to play a numbers game. There's been a shift in awareness and that is having its effect.

All I'm trying to say is that I think that there are different forms of action that people will take in pursuit of their opposition to the missiles. On 12 December masses of women from all sorts of different backgrounds came together to take action. Even though that wasn't non-violent direct action as such it had a profound impact.

But it was non-violent direct action. It was an illegal act. To

surround a military establishment is illegal. But it was done on a Sunday when there was no work going on in the base and so it was allowed. Don't get confused over this. The fact that they were deliberately blocking the base was illegal and they were prepared to do that, and they did it.

But it still seems to me to be mass action ie it's masses of people not just a few individuals going and getting arrested.

Well I'd be much happier if the majority of the people in the trade unions who actually produce the wherewithal to make the base function would stop doing that. But their argument is that if they do that, they'll be out of a job. Our argument to them is if they don't stop doing what they're doing, they won't have any jobs, they'll be dead. I don't know how to make them activate themselves.

That gets to the question of what strategy you have for the trade unions on CND. You've said you think that people in the armaments industry should give up their jobs. I think there's an alternative to that — that is that people in the armaments industry strike to oppose Cruise missiles.

It's no good just striking is it? On a particular day they all go on strike and on the following day they're all back doing the same evil business. It's a mild hiccup in the chain. I want to see the chain absolutely broken.

But Greenham on the 12th was one day, yet it had a tremendous impact. The Tories now are beefing up for a massive campaign.

A one-day strike I think would be beneficial to state to the government that there were people now who were so seriously concerned about the policies that they were very disturbed indeed and wanted them reversed. But after all if you're working every day making bombs what's the point of being concerned?

But it's not their individual decision to make bombs. People need jobs to survive.

But they are becoming aware. If I was to point out to somebody, if I was to say to you that the particular occupation you were doing was harmful not just to you but to practically every man, woman and child on the planet, and then you turned round and said well, that's not my responsibility. Whose responsibility would it be?

Everything that people produce, in a sense, is not their responsibility. Because the way in which production is determined is according to the law of capital and not according to the law of the individual. Therefore they're forced to produce goods because they have to work.

They're not forced. If in this country we had a military dictatorship and you got shot if you didn't work, then I would say that people didn't have a lot of choice. But it hasn't come to that yet. The people who get up and go to work in this country, do so of their own free will. If there are already over 5 million unemployed in this country I don't really want to see the armaments industry protected.

I'd much rather see extra unemployment if you wish. Then we could start looking for policies that will bring alternative strategies into effect, because they're not happening at the moment. Everybody else is unemployed and the armaments manufacturers are happily at work.

The armaments manufacturers are making money out of it, yes, making a lot of money. The problem is the people that work in those industries do not have a choice to say, 'I don't like what I'm producing so I'd rather be on the dole' because that means absolute poverty.

I disagree with you. They have a choice. They're exercising their choice to go to work and look after their own interest and

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they are negating their responsibility of moral choice.

But people's morals are determined to a certain extent by their material livelihoods. It's very good to have morals if people can afford to live. The people whose morals we should be focussing on are the people who control the process of production, not the people that work in the industries. We should be asking them, 'will you take strike action in support of CND's campaign because you're directly involved?' The focus has got to be on the people who take the political decisions to produce arms. I don't disagree that we have to get to those who are the decision makers. But you can make decisions till you're blue in the face. Unless people carry them out your decisions won't be effective. Therefore the workforce is responsible. It's aware what it's doing, and it's aware that in the trade union movement there are people who would rather be out of work on principle than in work and doing anti-social and unacceptable things.

There are people who've arrived at Greenham Common. There were a couple of fellows who travelled up from Wales which has traditionally suffered from unemployment for centuries. When they found out the nature of the work there they gave up the job.

I think that's completely utopian as a strategy. It's utopian to ask the mass of ordinary people who work in the armaments industry to give up their jobs and go on the dole. That's not a strategy that's going to stop the missiles in 1983.

But if they keep on earning their livelihood in this manner, we might stop Cruise missiles coming here but they're producing very different weapons which will ultimately be used. We will have achieved nothing.

I think the main focus should be on stopping Cruise coming. This is what we should concentrate on in the trade unions.

The Cruise missiles aren't here. People in this country aren't manufacturing them, they're only building the silos. It's the building workers that are doing it. Now in UCATT they've already taken the decision not to work on the silos. They won't work on the bases. That's a moral decision by a trade union.

It's a political decision.

Yes, but it's a moral decision. They didn't do this because they thought the wage structure was bad or it was damaging to their health. They did it because of the type of work that it was implying.

But it's a decision to identify with the anti-missiles movement.

Political, yes. Moral, definitely. The fact that they will work on all sorts of other installations but they will not prepare for weapons of mass destruction any longer is a very definite step in the right direction.

But that's as a union, not as individuals.

Yes. But that's why you've got to then persuade individuals, and you say this can't be done, I say it must. You've got to make the individuals honour the decisions taken of that nature for their own well-being.

No. I think getting the unions to boycott particular aspects of the production of nuclear weapons as a political protest is fine. But I think going to individuals is different. It puts the onus on the individual and not the union collectively to act on a political issue.

I think you've got to work at all levels. On the decision-makers, on the unions and on the individuals within the industries.

But the question is what goals do you have when you do this work?

My goal is to survive. To let the planet continue wobbling on. I think that all those people who are trying to earn their livelihood, knowing that what they're producing might not kill

them, but it's probably going to kill some poor sod on the other side of the planet, it is their responsibility. Because they're doing it, they are actively making it possible.

Well I think we should finish this particular point because we're not going to agree. As I said the onus should be on the unions to collectively fight for that.

I don't disagree with you. But if the unions have these policies and they can't persuade their members: a union isn't the leadership, it's the people within it. If you can't persuade the people within it you've got a problem.

Yes, but I don't think the problem on this question is the rank and file. The TUC leaders will support the leaders of the Labour Party who are completely in favour of breaking with conference decisions on unilateralism. The leaders of the trade unions are to the right of their members on this. They cooperate with the Labour Party right wing to sabotage unilateral policy.

Which brings me on to why you're standing as a candidate in the general election against the Labour Party?

I'm not standing as a candidate against the Labour Party. I'm standing against right wing elements within it. That's not standing *against* the Labour Party. It's standing *for* the Labour Party.

This is the most important general election since the war and the prospect of Labour losing means the possibility of implementing unilateral disarmament is put further back. If the peace movement and the women in the peace camps are standing against the Labour Party, or the right wing of the Labour Party, they will be accused of being opposed to the return of a Labour government.

Well, we've been misunderstood from the beginning. Nevertheless, the confusion will settle.

I see no advantage in returning a Labour government that doesn't have the will to bring into effect the policies that have been put before it. I watched what happened at the conference, our policies getting more than a two-thirds majority. There's our friend Hattersley saying: 'Well, it doesn't automatically mean it will go into the manifesto'. And our friend Denis Healey saying: 'It depends what you mean by unilateralism'. There's a great deal of confusion amongst the Labour Party leaders.

There isn't any confusion in my mind at all. The conference made the decision that the Labour Party should pursue unilateral nuclear disarmament. The right wing elements in the leadership have got to be challenged and brought into line with the party.

Absolutely, but it's a question of how you do it. There are large numbers of people in the Labour Party who want to see unilateralism in the manifesto. Will those people support you standing against the right wing?

Well I hope so. We would effectively be supporting Labour Party policy. The right wing are actively fighting against it. Anybody who votes for Denis Healey or Jim Callaghan is not going to get them working for the policies of the party. They're going to be working 24 hours a day to defeat those policies.

But the point is there's a way of taking these people up within the party. You're in the Labour Party and there's been a process of attempting to make these people more accountable. There are ways of fighting both in the unions and the party to demand that policies are implemented.

Given the massive impact of the Greenham Common women on the missiles movement, if you're seen as going with the people that are standing against the Labour Party you'll set back this process of democratisation, not take it forward. But I'm not going in with anyone against the Labour Party. We're standing against people who are challenging Labour Par-

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Photo: JOHN HARRIS

ty policy and we're saying to them: 'If you change your policy, if you pursue unilateral nuclear disarmament, then we will withdraw from standing.'

Do you think your standing against them is going to aid the people that want to fight in the Labour Party or hinder them? I think the effect of your campaign, despite your intentions, will be for people like Healey and Callaghan to turn round and say: 'Well all these people that are unilateralists are complete nutters, they're opposed to the Labour Party, they're opposed to the labour movement, look what they did in the election.'

Look, all I can say to you is — and I'm a member of the Labour Party — do we want to see a Labour government returned in its present form where there is no control over the leadership at all, there is no way of making people do as they are requested to do.

And we see the same thing in the trade unions as well. Sid Weighell was a wonderful example of it — he was mandated to behave in one fashion, he chose to ignore that and there's nothing you can do about it.

Well, there is something you can do.

Fine, but it takes a long time. Now, they're probably going to put Cruise missiles here in April. If you can convince me that you can change the Labour Party in time I won't stand. But until you can do that, I will. And if it means damaging the Labour Party and making it more the kind of party that I want to see, I'll damage it. But I don't think it's damaging it to challenge those who are damaging it, and this is the confusion.

Would you stand in a marginal Labour seat? I think the Greenham Common women would get a large vote.

Well then the Labour Party wouldn't have anything to fear. They've made some awful choices in the past — they've worked in coalitions with the Liberals who ran along with them until it was necessary and then turned on them. I don't think they'd fear anything like that from us because we want them to implement unilateral nuclear disarmament. That's why we're challenging those who don't want it.

We'll be very careful about which seats we choose. We're not going to choose seats, for instance, where there are unilateralist Labour candidates.

We're challenging the right wing, we're not challenging those who want the same as us at all. The main characters we're

challenging are Healey, Callaghan, Shore, Hattersley and all these wonderful people who say the right things and do all the wrong things.

I think we'll just put a sharper focus on what they say and what they actually do.

Did you consider campaigning for Labour on the basis of unilateralism, as a separate campaign?

I did as an individual — by joining the Labour Party. That was my contribution to the party — I gave it all that I could. Having not got very far within the Labour Party I then fortunately became involved in Greenham Common. I think this campaign has got a very reasonable chance of putting a lot of pressure in the right places.

I think that to stand as we intend to under a title of 'Women for Life on Earth' makes that point very clearly.

We're not for all these arguments about whether one set of weapons has got an advantage over another. We're against all nuclear weapons and we want some of the policies that are being pursued and have been pursued by the Labour Party to be dropped, and we want unilateral nuclear disarmament. That's the first demand we have.

But it seems to me that you could have a similar effect by campaigning for a Labour candidate on the basis of unilateralism and pointing out that this particular candidate didn't support it: that this was their contradiction because they weren't supporting party policy from the conference. You could have an independent campaign and you would be making your own political statement while supporting the left wing of the Labour Party.

I think there are a hell of a lot of people who really feel now that women have an important role to play, and I agree wholeheartedly with them. Politicians have had their way for a long, long while — they haven't come up and delivered the goods. It would look as if even at this late hour they're still looking for other avenues to explore before they get down to the real business.

Now we are identified very strongly as women at this time and that is our very first objective. To get a lot of women to state very clearly that they're opposed to these policies.

I think large numbers of women voted for Margaret Thatcher for no other reason than that she was a woman. That proves that there's an ever greater demand for women to be seen to

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be active in this field to encourage others to vote and take part in this debate.

There's a swing now among women in the opinion polls from Tory to Labour, so what you'll be doing by standing against Labour is ...

We're NOT standing against Labour! We'll be challenging all sorts of right wing candidates — in the Conservative Party and the SDP. We are going right across the political spectrum with this, and challenging people who think that nuclear weapons have a place in our lives. We're saying to them, 'you're wrong'.

In Britain, there's always been traditionally a two-party system and now there's a massive economic and political crisis.

All the political commentators are beginning to say, 'what about the SPD, what about a third party, what about a Green party?'

The Communist Party for instance is advocating proportional representation and campaigning for a kind of 'popular front' government. It's beginning to campaign in CND to support the possibility of the SDP and the Liberals being won over to opposition to the missiles. Therefore there is a political context for these elections which is completely different from the usual two-party situation.

In other words, what you're saying is it's going to be even harder for the ordinary individual on the street who has to put their cross somewhere to understand what the hell they're being asked to do.

Well apart from that, if people stand against the Labour Party...

I do keep challenging you on this, and I'll continue to until you change your terminology. We are not standing against the Labour Party.

Well, if some women from the peace camp stand against certain right wing Labour Party MPs, that will be interpreted by a lot of ordinary people as an anti-working class stand.

Not by the time we have presented our position to them — but we haven't been able to do this yet. All the other parties are lining themselves up and saying what they're doing. I guarantee that when we say who we're standing against and why, it will not add to the confusion the electorate have to face — it will clarify the position for them very much.

What I'm trying to say is that I think the ruling class want to crush the Labour Party and I think it would be tragic if the women from Greenham Common were seen to be part of a process of trying to electorally annihilate the Labour Party.

Well, all I can say to you on that is that either you don't want to understand or you can't understand what I'm saying to you, because we have not got the slightest desire to injure the Labour Party, the section that wants to implement unilateral nuclear disarmament and actively want to assist it. That is very definite.

We are not out to injure the party but what we are very clear about is that we are not about to let the Labour Party injure us with its right wing extreme element that has a hell of a lot of power — its present leaders.

I don't see that they are of any benefit to me, to the Labour Party or to humanity in general.

Yes, I think what we disagree on is the effect of you standing. Well, all I can say is that after the election you'll probably have to come back and say: 'I'm sorry, I didn't understand your point very well.'

Will you support people in the Labour Party who campaign for unilateralism even in the areas you're standing in?

Of course! We will be aiding and abetting them in every way we possibly can. We want to encourage them, but we want to make it easier for them to win over the right wing element that's trying to damage the cause.

But you're going to have to leave the Labour Party to do that? Yes. It's ironic isn't it? To leave the Labour Party to pursue Labour Party policy. But I'm sure at a later date I can always rejoin the party — or maybe the Labour Party will join Women for Life on Earth!

I just wanted to ask you one last thing about what you said in *Marxism Today*. You said that the vast majority of women will always be childbearers and carers.

I think that's perfectly true regardless of how one looks at it. I think a lot of women will automatically always wish to care for children. I'm not saying therefore that we won't see an encouraging tendency amongst men to participate actively in this as well.

I don't think every woman in every country all over the world is suddenly going to change and want to take on all of the other roles and put childbearing and childrearing into a secondary category. I don't think you will ever see more men taking up that position than women.

But it's not a question of whether men care for children or women care for children. Surely feminists want to see society caring for children as a whole, the community caring for children, and therefore within that context the burden being shared. It's not a question of individual men, now, must change — although we do want individual men to change. But that's not our strategy. Our strategy is to say society should care for children.

The way the question was put to me and the way I answered it was, did I see this vast change. I see that all sorts of things are changing and that women will always be those most closely involved in the raising of children.

Then women will always be oppressed.

No. I don't think that's necessarily true at all. I think the changes in society actually recognise the value of women in that role and recognising that will stop the oppression.

So if women are paid a lot of money to stay at home and look after children they won't be oppressed any more?

No, that's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that there's a lot of changes to be made and very simply, I can not see, in my limited vision that women will not be largely in a position of raising children, for the foreseeable future.

What you're saying is that you don't expect socialism to happen very quickly. Presumably you don't believe that socialism would leave women in the same position as they are today?

Within the socialist structures that exist today at the moment unless you have evidence to suggest I'm lying, the women are largely looking after children.

That's because a lot of Eastern European countries actively promote the family in a very traditional way. But in certain countries where they've done a lot more, like in Cuba, the division is less sharp. But in general, you're right.

The reason is that there's not a strong women's movement, there's not democracy and therefore that has to be struggled for there too. But that doesn't mean to say that our goal is to leave women to care for children.

I'm not saying that's my goal either. When I'm asked do I see a vast shift, then my answer is, no I don't.

But you have to put a timescale on it. You have to say whether you think things will never change or you don't think they will change very fast.

I can't put a timescale on it, because I have no way of knowing what is happening in society. All I do know is that if we don't stop these bloody missiles coming here we won't have this problem! There won't have to be this tremendous searching about who's doing what, why and when because none of us will have any problems at all.

THE LIVING THOUGHT OF KARL MARX



This special supplement of *International* is our contribution to celebrating the centenary of the death of Karl Marx. Our contributors discuss various aspects of his thought and their relevance for the practice of socialists today.

But much of the writing elsewhere celebrating his anniversary portrays Marx in a very different manner. Among bourgeois detractors the tired old arguments about Marx's alleged 'economic determinism' will be trotted out; at very best poor old Marx will be granted the innovator in social science who, alas, has little to say to us today.

And in the world's great 'Stalinist empires' Marx will be celebrated as the 'founder of the firm', a figure to be deified while the revolutionary and critical content of his thought is ignored.

For revolutionary socialists this anniversary should be the occasion for asking the question: have we gone beyond Marx? Has Marxism stood the test of 100 years as a method of analysis and a guide to action? And what balance sheet must we make of 100 years of attempting to create socialism, the 'free association of the producers' of which Marx dreamed?

Of course, in the most trivial sense we have of necessity 'gone beyond' Marx. The bulk of his work was completed before the advent of the epoch of imperialism, and, before some of the most decisive battles of the world proletariat: the Russian revolution, and the devastation of fascism and world war. Marxists have had to analyse and incorporate these developments into Marxist theory.

But in a more fundamental sense it is literally impossible to 'go beyond' Marxism without the realisation of the Marxist project, the creation of a socialist society. The uniqueness of Marxism is that it is both a science of society and the self-consciousness of a revolutionary social class, the proletariat.

The error of the Marxists of the Second International like Hilferding and Kautsky was to imagine that Marxism was a science like any other, an 'objective' science which needed therefore the addition of a code of 'socialist ethics' to top it off.

The Althusserian school has equally derided the notion of Marxism as the self-consciousness of the proletariat, on the grounds that the self-consciousness of a class

is by definition ideology, 'false consciousness'. What both these schools failed to recognise was the implication of the socialist revolution as the first revolution carried out by a non-property class, the overwhelming majority in the advanced capitalist countries and hence its uniquely conscious character.

Such a class could only become the ruling class by virtue of a 'true' consciousness of its own position in society and that of the other classes. In that light, the task which Marxism set itself — the self-consciousness of the proletariat as a weapon for revolutionary change — remains as relevant as ever.

Marx himself outlined his crucial scientific discovery with amazing precision in the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy in 1859:

'The general result at which I arrived and which, once won, served as the guiding thread for my studies, can be briefly formulated as follows: in the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations which are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness'.

This 'guiding thread' as the fundamental method for analysing the interaction of the social relations of production and the various aspects of 'civil society' and politics cannot be superseded so long as capitalism exists. Marx's crucial scientific discovery, that of the social relations of production as the determining level of social reality — was made during his investigation of the nature of capitalism. But it holds true of all class society.

In the 1980s, a world of economic, social and political crisis, only historical materialism can explain the interaction of the different 'levels' of social reality.

But there is a further and indeed more fundamental challenge to Marxism, which is indeed the root of all the talk about a 'crisis of Marxism' — the fact that Marx's project has

not yet been fully realised. How do we explain that 100 years after Marx's death capitalism is still very much alive?

In our view any 'surprise' that capitalism still exists 100 years after Marx is itself the production of a misconception. The transition from one mode of production to another is inevitably an epochal process, one which has to be effected on a world scale. Moreover, the fact that socialist revolution is a uniquely conscious process means that there can be nothing 'automatic' or 'inevitable' about it. The mistake of the Marxists of the Second International was to imagine that the growth of revolutionary class consciousness would be an upward linear process.

But to carry through a socialist revolution requires a combination of the inevitable and periodic crises of capitalism and a growing class consciousness. The mistake of 'mechanical' Marxists of any school is to imagine that the former inevitably produces the latter.

The whole history of capitalism shows this to be fallacious. Capitalism in the imperialist epoch has repeatedly shown its ability to create objective and subjective conditions for the destruction of revolutionary class consciousness, sometimes through economic growth but above all through the physical and political defeats wrought on the proletariat.

Schematically we can say that since Marx's time the proletariat in the advanced countries has been through a number of great 'waves' of class consciousness — reaching a crescendo in the immediate aftermath of the first world war, and then a crushing defeat in the period 1923-1940. The causes of this 'great defeat' of proletarian class consciousness are well known: Stalinism and Fascism. We are still suffering the effects of these defeats.

Today world capitalism is itself creating part of the conditions for socialist revolution — a gigantic economic and social crisis. The battle for the creation of revolutionary, socialist, and indeed 'Marxist' political consciousness in the proletariat is far from over. Objective conditions make it a real possibility.

For Marxists the 100th anniversary of Marx's death should be an occasion to re-dedicate ourselves to the achievement of the task which he charted, humanity's most important step since the Neolithic revolution 7,000 years ago — the leap 'from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom'.

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THE ROLE OF THE PROLETARIAT

ERNEST MANDEL

Marx carried out a revolutionary transformation of all social sciences. He revolutionised conventional approaches to philosophy, society, history, political economy, politics and the prospects of human emancipation. These transformations can be subsumed under the general formula of 'the theory of historical materialism'. Key to this theory, argues Ernest Mandel, is the centrality of the revolutionary potential of the working class.

Marx viewed history as determined by objective laws which science could uncover. These laws derive from the specific structure and dynamics of each particular mode of production. These objective laws have to be discovered for each particular society. Marx simultaneously stressed the social determination of history as a science and the historical determination of sociology (and economics) as a science. There are no 'eternal' economic laws. There are only particular economic laws for particular forms of social organisation of the economy.

But while endeavouring to discover the laws of motion of each particular mode of production, concentrating on the laws of motion of bourgeois society, dominated by the capitalist mode of production Marx rejected the mechanically deterministic view of history, characteristic for the French materialists of the 18th century (later to be largely recuperated by the vulgar evolutionism which influenced socialist thinkers like Kautsky).

Marx stressed the *active* aspect in history, so typical for human versus purely animal behaviour (this stress can be found not only in the *Theses on Feuerbach*, but also in Vol I of *Capital*, not to speak about the *Grundrisse* and various philosophical and historical comments by Marx and Engels). Marx's philosophy of history — like his philosophy in general — is a *philosophy of praxis*. Historical materialism does not deny that humanity makes its own history, which is not imposed upon it through mysterious outside forces. To be sure, men and women don't make it independently from the circumstances they encounter, in the first place the material possibilities given by the existing and potential level of development of the productive forces, and the resulting possibilities for the extension of enjoyment, and the self-realisation of the producers.

But they *do* make their history themselves. Their level of consciousness and awareness of their own conditions and future, their degree of objective (scientific) approach to reality, the degree of self-delusion they still suffer, all strongly react upon the way in which they will shape their own destiny. Marx believed in the *possibility of humankind to do just that: to shape its own destiny*, not only through understanding the objective laws of motion of society, but also through its capacity to actively attain emancipatory goals. Throughout Marx's writings, there remains the emancipatory purpose: to abolish *all* social conditions which make men and women into oppressed, exploited, mutilated, miserable beings; to realise a society in which the free development of each becomes a precondition for the free development of every individual.

Thus Marx was not only a social scientist. He did not limit

himself to revolutionising the sciences of society, history, economics, and philosophy. He also revolutionised politics and the drive towards human emancipation ('socialism'), which are much older than bourgeois society, in fact, as old as class society itself. While it is necessary to separate methodologically his revolutions in science (which have to be judged from a purely scientific and not a 'class' criterion), from his revolutions in politics and emancipatory endeavours, these revolutions in thought and action constantly interact upon each other. Only if we synthesise them can we understand and represent Marxism in its totality, in its majestic richness, as a *totality in movement*, which has nothing to do with dogma or religion.

For the epoch starting with the industrial revolution, the totality of the theory and practice involved in Marxism can best be summarised through the revolutionary potential of the working class as the only social force objectively and subjectively capable of replacing bourgeois society (the capitalist mode of production) with a higher form of civilisation and of socio-economic organisation: classless society, communism, of which socialism is the first or 'lower' stage. This does not mean that for Marx and Engels the victory of socialism was an inevitable product of the inner contradictions of capitalism. Quite the contrary: they often stressed that human societies can, throughout history, either progress or regress; they can even disappear.

There is nothing fatalistic in Marx's view of history, which asserts as a result of a scientific understanding of bourgeois society, and in light of the lessons of 3,000 years of class struggle, that no other class than the contemporary working class, ie wage labour, has the *potential* to replace capitalism by a socialist society. The fate of humankind is *for that reason* tied to the victory of the world working class (from the *German Ideology* till his death, Marx always viewed the possibility of socialism as an international one, having to be realised on a world scale).

The destructive potential of capitalism, flowing from its very progressive features, in the first place its capacity to develop the productive forces but in specific forms which *cannot* shed its ties to private property, commodity production, competition and disregard for global social rationality, leads humanity to the crossroads: either socialism or barbarism. The awareness of the potential self-destruction of humankind (ecological disaster, nuclear world war, etc) is today growing. But Marx and Engels were conscious of that danger nearly one and a half centuries ago. For them, the dilemma 'socialism or barbarism' (the formula was first shaped in that precise way by Rosa Luxemburg) meant: either the victory in the real class struggle of the existing world working class, ie world socialist revolution, or the decline and fall of human civilisation, if not the disappearance of the human race. What Lenin, the Communist International, Trotsky and later revolutionary Marxists would write on *that* subject is already present in the basic economic and political works of Marx, even if he was not able to include the *imperialist* stage of capitalism in his analysis, as it had not started before his death. For him this dilemma was *not* a result of a given historically limited phase of capitalism. It was a result of bourgeois society, of the capitalist mode of production *as such*.

Scientific socialism, ie the revolutionising of politics and humanity's emancipatory endeavours, involves a series of transformations of traditional social and political practices which are as radical and as fundamental as Marx's revolutions in the social sciences:

1. The reintroduction of consciousness, ie of science, into the determination of political action at least for the social *class* which is not inhibited by peculiar social-material interests (and Marx viewed the working class as the only potentially revolu-

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Marx discusses with Parisian workers

tionary class capable of just that!) and for all those *individuals* capable of reaching the same level of lucidity, through shedding as far as humanly possible, all influences of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois (or semi-feudal) ideologies which hinder that scientific awareness of social problems.

This implies, for Marx, that these individuals at least objectively strive to identify with the historical interests and the concrete struggles of the working class. Before Marx, political activity was seen as a product either of blind passions and greed or abstract Reason. Marx made an enormous leap forward in understanding that as political action is tied to the class struggle in a given society, and as that society can be scientifically analysed in its structure and dynamics, political action should therefore first be seen in the framework of the laws governing the destiny of that society and the dynamics of that class struggle.

2. The lifting of the emancipatory purpose to a higher level, through its fusion with scientific knowledge and revolutionary consciousness.

Contrary to what the Austro-Marxist Otto Bauer said ('Politics is the science of prediction'), Marxists do not limit themselves to 'foreseeing' what is going to happen. Or, to state it more correctly: they do not fatalistically think that the outcome of history, at each decisive stage, is *completely pre-ordained*. The outcome of history in class society is the outcome of the class struggle. And the outcome of the class struggle depends itself, at least in part, upon the *conscious action* of the revolutionary (and of the counter-revolutionary) social class, its average level of class consciousness, its vanguard and revolutionary leadership, its active intervention, the quickness and scope of the class's reactions, its self-confidence, its experience, etc. All these factors are not the fatal and inevitable result of a given set of circumstances, of material conditions. They depend also upon the actual, concrete course of the class struggle now and during the preceding years and decades, ie

they reintroduce the *subjective factor* into the shaping of history.

The Marxist concept of politics is not limited to discovering the laws of motion of a given society and 'adapting' to them. Marxist politics means the understanding of these laws of motion *in order to make the struggle for a given goal* (the building of a classless society, and the necessary preconditions for this: the overthrow of capitalism, the emancipation of the working class and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the sense of the conscious effort of the working class to rebuild society according to a conscious plan) more efficient and *more likely to succeed globally*.

3. The reunification of emancipatory endeavour ('socialism') and the real historical movement (the real class struggle) of a really existing and struggling social class: the proletariat, the class of wage labour, as an objective social category *regardless* of its (varying) level of consciousness.

This was not at all self-evident for all socialists till far into the second half of the nineteenth century. It began to be partially rejected again at the beginning of the twentieth century. The 'Goodbye to the Proletariat' of Andre Gorz is not at all a new discovery; it is the day before yesterday's pseudo-wisdom. You can already find it in Sorel, Michels and many anti-Marxist 'socialists' of pre-first world war vintage. It is interesting to note that nearly all the proponents of 'really existing socialism' (an absurd formula, if ever there was one) reject that basic tenet of Marxism too. For if you have to start from the working class, from the wage earners *as they are and as they struggle concretely in real life*, then of course many of the theoretical and political assumptions of the various 'ruling' trends and bureaucracies inside the organised labour movement get undermined.

How can the role of the ruling Communist Parties in the so-called socialist countries be 'explained' as representing and leading the working class, when, periodically, the overwhelm-

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ing majority of that working class, of the really existing workers, rebel and revolt against that rule, as did more than 80 per cent recently in Poland? How can the western working class be seen as 'bourgeoisified and integrated in existing society'?

revolt against the injustice of class oppression and class exploitation is as old as these social evils themselves

(the basic theoretical and political axiom of all reformist and neo-reformist tendencies, including the so-called Eurocommunist ones) when, periodically, that same working class, through huge mass actions, by the millions, challenges capitalist relations of production, as it did in Spain in 1963-7, in Italy in July 1948, in Belgium in December 1960, in France in May 1968, in Italy in autumn 1969, in Portugal in 1974-75 etc, not to mention the period of 1918-1929?

Through that reunification Marx gave socialism and socialists a *potential* lever of action of gigantic dimensions. His answer to the question, 'is socialism possible?' was *affirmative but at the same time conditional*. Yes, socialism is possible, *provided* in practice, in real life, a fusion is accomplished between the concrete, unavoidable, elementary class struggle of a real social class, encompassing hundreds of millions of people (the modern proletariat) and the socialist project of emancipation, of building a classless society.

4) The reunification of the revolutionary organisation with the self-organisation of the working class.

Revolutionary organisations trying to seize power in order to accomplish a given set of emancipatory tasks are again much older than bourgeois society and the capitalist mode of production. The revolt against the injustice of class oppression and class exploitation is as old as these social evils themselves. *Revolutionary* organisations trying to overthrow capitalism are as old as capitalism itself. The most outstanding pre-Marxist ones were possibly those of Babeuf and of Auguste Blanqui in France. Mass organisations of the working class are also much older than Marxism: trade unions and the Chartists in Britain just to name these two, existed before the *Communist Manifesto* was drafted.

But the revolutionary transformation of politics which Marx achieved was to try and reunify the self-organisation of the working class and the revolutionary activity of individuals. This implied *simultaneously* a separate organisation of communists (of the vanguard, those who are *permanently* active at the highest level of scientific understanding and class consciousness, different from the masses, which under capitalism can be active *only* periodically and at a level of consciousness influenced more strongly by the ideology of the ruling class) and their *integration* in the mass organisation of the class as it is. Trade-unions and independent political mass parties of the working class are useful and necessary stepping stones of that self-organisation. But since 1850, and especially since the experience of the Paris Commune, Marx and Engels understood that the highest forms of self-organisation of the class are those of the 'workers' councils' (soviets), as analysed in detail by Lenin in *State and Revolution* and in many writings of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci (Trotsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Bukharin, Korsch and to a lesser extent the left Austro-Marxist Max Adler, also made valuable contributions to that same understanding).

Socialism can only come about through a successful overthrow of capitalism by a self-organised working class, ie through universal workers' councils (soviet power), because *only through that form of self-organisation of the producers*, can a postcapitalist, transitional society become a society in which the *state starts to wither away* from the very inception of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which the crystallisation

of new material social privileges by a *special* group of people 'in power' can be made impossible. Marx and Engels' writings on the Paris Commune, Lenin's in *State and Revolution*, were lucid and explicit on these preconditions in which the variants of basic economic options can be democratically decided by the masses themselves.

All of these revolutions in Marx's concept of politics and emancipation not only involve a radical transformation of existing doctrines. They are also 'negations of the negation', ie they imply the *conservation* of the 'rational kernel' in what is being transcended: utopian socialists, conspiratorial revolutionists, organisations limited to the elementary massive proletarian class struggle. All these revolutions turn around the revolutionary *potential* of the modern working class.

We deliberately use the word 'potential' instead of the word 'class struggle'. It is obvious that the *real* class struggle of the working class is not always revolutionary. Even less does it lead automatically to an overthrow of the bourgeois state or of bourgeois society. Elsewhere we have explained the reasons for this historical fact-of-life.

What Marx meant was that in the modern proletariat a class was born which *could* periodically reach a point in its struggles, coinciding with a deep social, economical and political crisis of bourgeois society and its state, where capitalism *could* be overthrown and power conquered, under conditions which allowed the building of a classless society objectively and subjectively.

As Marx did not believe that a victorious socialist revolution, not to speak of a victorious building of world socialism, would be the unavoidable outcome of the proletarian class struggle, he never allowed scientific socialism to be *completely subsumed* by that class struggle. Science continues for Marx and Engels to occupy an autonomous place in history. It is

the overthrow of capitalism is a necessary precondition for the successful achievement of human emancipation, but it is not a sufficient one

meaningless, irrational and criminal to suppress certain scientific truths under the pretext that they would 'discourage' the proletariat. Without the maximum of scientific insight, the maximum of truth attainable ('absolute' truth is of course unrealisable for human beings; the 'total identity' of being and consciousness is a utopian daydream), the proletarian struggle for emancipation is hindered, not helped. That is not to mention the immediate effects of such an approach which usually results in one-sided and mechanical interpretations of the possible variants open for working class action and consciousness.

One of the greatest wisdoms humanity has ever formulated is part of Marx's famous Thesis on Feuerbach: '*the educators need themselves to be educated*'. Only if one assumes absurdly the existence of a person, or of a group of persons ('the central committee', 'the party') who are 'always right', can one seriously challenge the wisdom of that statement.

It has, furthermore, not only an epistemological but also a social dimension. The concentrated expression of class exploitation is the division of the social product into a 'necessary product', and a 'social surplus product' appropriated by the rulers of society. Through control of the social surplus product, these rulers impose a frozen social division of labour between those who exercise the functions of production and those who exercise the function of accumulation. A key precondition for the building of socialism is the transcendence of that social division of labour through the *gradual generalisation of real self-management*, conditioned by a high level of development of the productive forces, a radical shortening of the workday, and a growing fusion of manual and intellectual labour. But this is a gigantic process of self-organisation and self-education by huge

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Polish workers rebelled against the 'leading role of the party'

masses of producers. You cannot 'order' or 'command' people to ... lead themselves. You can only *help* them to do that. And you don't know exactly how this can best be done before the process unfolds.

The historical balance-sheet of all socialist revolutions since 1917 should lead revolutionists to modesty on that account. We know more today than Lenin and Trotsky did in 1917, not because we are wiser or more intelligent, but because we have had the advantage of much richer concrete historical experiences than those on which they could base themselves. But even what we do know today on the basis of that concrete historical experience is still pretty limited, be it only because the process of world revolution is far from having matured. It has not yet involved victories in the key countries, those where the proletariat has already become the absolute majority of the population before revolutionary victory. So the 'educators need to be educated' not only because they know too little, but also because they have to be involved themselves in a process of gigantic self-education by the masses, which has already started.

This means that the relation between a revolutionary vanguard organisation, which is absolutely necessary for the victory of the socialist revolution and the building of socialism, and the self-organisation of the mass of the workers, which is likewise indispensable to achieve these goals, is a dialectical one, in which no part can achieve anything durable without the other.

For that very same reason, while the elementary class struggle of the wage earners is insufficient for the overthrow of capitalism, it is absolutely indispensable for achieving the level of self-organisation without which a real social revolution in an industrially developed country is unrealisable. Great masses learn above all from experience, not through literary or oral education (which does not mean that such education is not vital for obtaining class independence on the ideological field). The only way in which they can assemble such experience is through the *actual* class struggle. So how they *act currently* will strongly influence how they think in the next ten or twenty years. That is why specific forms of current class struggles (large strikes, even 'only' for democratic demands, and so on) have so much importance for the development of revolutionary *potential*, ie for the capacity to react in a special way when circumstances are ripe for a revolutionary crisis.

If revolutionists do not know how to intervene efficiently in these actual struggles (eg under the pretext that they are 'economistic' or 'reformist', or that the consciousness of the masses is inadequate or 'wrong'); if they do not conquer

credibility through this intervention, they will not succeed in fusing with the real movement of the class. But if they see their intervention as limited only to adapting to the *given* level of the class struggle, if they do not strive to *elevate* the level of class consciousness and self-organisation through their interventions, they will not succeed in building a *revolutionary* vanguard party; they will only become one of the innumerable factors in bourgeois society tending to *prevent* the working class from transcending the level of its elementary struggles.

Finally, while breaking with utopian socialism, Marx and Engels also stuck to its 'rational kernel' (they never stopped from having the greatest respect and admiration for Charles Fourier, who formulated one of the greatest and most radical critiques of class society of all times). They never narrowed down the purpose of the overthrow of capitalism and the building of socialism to a simply 'workerite' project.

For them, the emancipation of humanity had to be total and global. A relentless struggle had to be conducted against *all* forms of oppression and exploitation of men by men (in the anthropological and not the 'sexist' sense of the word). That is why the emancipation of oppressed races and nationalities, the emancipation of over-exploited colonial and semi-colonial nations, the emancipation of women, the emancipation of youth, all have such an important weight in their political project — even if they themselves were limited by the social conditions under which they lived to understand *all* the dimensions of these struggles. The overthrow of capitalism, of private property, commodity production, and wage labour, is a necessary precondition for the successful achievement of these various forms of human emancipation. But it is not a sufficient one. *Autonomous struggles* of women, of oppressed nationalities and races, of oppressed youth, against innumerable prejudices, will continue long after the victory of the international socialist revolution in order to assist the birth of a really classless society, which roots out all forms of social inequality.

For Marx, the radical revolutionary potential of the working class flows from its specific place in the capitalist mode of production and from the consequences of the latter's laws of motion for that class. Capital's relentless drive to accumulate more capital leads to efforts to constantly expand the production of surplus-value. For there is no other final source of capital accumulation than the *production* of surplus-value in the *process of production*. All processes of surplus-value *appropriation*, eg through 'unequal exchange', can only redistribute what has been previously *produced*. Therefore, the self-expansion of capital implies the constant expansion of wage labour. The modern proletariat is the only class in contemporary society which has the tendency to grow absolutely and relatively as a function of the very laws of motion of capitalism.

Of course, to understand this one has to define the proletariat in a correct way. It is by no means limited to manual labour in industry. *That* segment of the proletariat has long stopped growing and will tend to become weaker. Scientists or political militants who narrowly limit the definition of the proletariat to that segment of the class will sooner or later conclude that the possibilities for the proletariat to change society will tend to decline rather than to grow. For Marx, however, the proletariat was the *Gesamtarbeiter*, the 'total worker', thus including white collar workers, technicians and even some managers, certainly also state employees, except the top managerial and functionary layers: in other words all those who remain *under the economic compulsion* to sell their labour power, whose income does not allow them on an individual basis normally to accumulate capital or to emancipate themselves from that proletarian condition.

The proletariat thus defined has not stopped growing throughout the history of capitalism. Today it encompasses half or more than half of the active population in practically every large country of the world (with the exception of Indonesia and possibly Pakistan). Even in India, this is already

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the case, for there is a tremendous agrarian proletariat or semi-proletariat of landless labourers (peasants) in the Indian village, besides the urban proletariat. In most of the developed industrial countries (including the so-called socialist ones) it has passed 75 per cent of the active population. In at least three countries — the USA, Great Britain and Sweden — it has passed the threshold of 90 per cent.

While this is clearly a case of quantity turning into a new quality it is by no means only that. The development of capitalism creates in the modern proletariat not only a numerically predominant social force. It also creates a social force of tremendous potential economic power.

The proletariat is the only substantial human creator of wealth (independent peasants and handicraftsmen do create wealth too, but on a world scale this is probably not more than

a 'completely robotised' society could never be approached, let alone reached, under capitalism

15-20 per cent of the total annually created new product). The impressive material infrastructure of humankind — the mines, the factories, the railways, the airports, the airplanes, the road network, the machines, the automobiles, the power stations, the other sources of energy, the canals, the harbours, the cities, domestic equipment, the shops, storehouses and the huge mountains of commodities they contain, have all or nearly all, been created by yesterday's and today's wage labour. Inasmuch as intellectual labour becomes more and more proletarianised, an increasing segment of humankind's knowledge, blueprints, patents, inventions, are likewise the product of the proletariat. If workers in that global sense of the word stop working

through collective action, no power on earth can substitute for them and prevent all economic and social life coming to a standstill. Far from 'emancipating' society from the proletariat, the higher and higher mechanisation and semi-automatisation prevalent today makes it more and not less vulnerable to real successful mass strikes, as we witnessed in France and Italy in 1968-69 and in Poland in 1980-81.

This would of course not be true in a 'completely robotised' society. But a 'completely robotised' society would be a society without surplus-value production and without commodity production. It could never be approached, let alone reached, under capitalism.

All other classes in society, independent farmers, including in the Third World, independent handicraftsmen, independent professional people, 'free-floating' (*freischwebende*) intelligentsia, independent entrepreneurs, are condemned to see their relative and absolute weight in production and society tendentially and historically to decline and not grow, as the result of the operation of the very laws of motion of capitalism. Of course this is not a mechanical, linear movement; there are medium-term conjunctural ups and downs; there are big differences between countries and even continents. But the basic secular historical trend is clear and unequivocal. The law of concentration and centralisation of capital has been operating too long and with too clear an outcome for this thesis of the central weight of the proletariat in bourgeois society to be scientifically questioned (unscientific, impressionistic prejudices and straightforward 'false consciousness', are of course another matter altogether).

Finally, through the very development of capitalism, the working class gradually acquires a revolutionary potential in the positive economic sense of the word. In the beginning of the 'purely' capitalistic production of surplus-value, the production of relative surplus value, ie mechanisation, the worker is

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nearly completely subsumed under the machine: a slave of the machine as a slave of capital; and capital develops a *peculiar* type of machinery oriented towards the maximum extraction of surplus-value (quite other forms of technology and of machinery are possible, and were indeed experimented with but not widely applied, because they did not serve the capitalist's goal of separate firms' profit maximisation).

But the very development of capitalist technology, after having reached a certain point, starts to operate in the opposite direction. Fragmentation of labour cannot continue infinitely, without beginning to decrease rather than increasing profits. In a highly technicised economic system, the human producers, as the least perfected 'pieces of the mechanism', make the operation of the whole system more vulnerable. Capitalism itself cannot rely on more and more unskilled, brutalised, indifferent labour, operating with more and more sophisticated and expensive machinery. The costs of maintaining the value of existing fixed capital become outrageous, if everything is sacrificed to the production of new surplus-value (new capital).

So capitalism itself, especially late capitalism, has to start overcoming the fragmentation and atomisation of labour. New labour skills are sought after more than unskilled labour. The reunification of intellectual labour and manual labour is not only the result of the massive reintroduction of intellectual labour into the direct process of production. It is also the result of the higher and higher training of a section of the working class. While the number of 'drop-outs' constantly grows (they constitute the new layer of the sub-proletariat) the number of highly skilled workers, of worker-technicians, grows parallel to the first phenomenon.

This transformation is accompanied by a succession of political, social and economic crises of the system. So the basic attitude of the working class towards the ruling class starts to change as a result of the very operation of the long term laws of motion of the given mode of production. Till the post-first world war period, and to a large extent throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the workers respected the employers, even when they hated them. They thought, by and large, that you couldn't run factories and the economy without bosses and 'experts'. But now, seeing the mess into which the employers and 'experts' have worked themselves (and all of us), they increasingly challenge the capacity and the right of 'those on top' to make things work. At least at factory level, and at the level of the cities, they increasingly feel that they have the capacity of making things run better (we don't say in an ideal way, but better) than those on top. Again these sentiments, which were expressed very powerfully in the big strike wave of 1968-1975 throughout the capitalist world (and in Poland 1980-81 too!) might conjuncturally recede a bit under the impact of the present crisis. But if a first wave of that crisis has reduced somewhat the self-confidence of the working class, a second and harsher wave will make it rise again with a vengeance.

To this *objective* revolutionary potential must be added a *subjective* one which is as important for the building of socialism as is the first. This subjective potential is likewise, for Marx, the very product of the specific place the working class occupies in the capitalist mode of production.

Capitalism not only increases the number of wage earners, their economic potential, and later their skills and levels of culture (the conquests of working class struggles of course contribute more to these latter achievements). Capitalism also concentrates these wage earners in huge work places (mines, factories, office buildings) where they are assembled by the thousands if not the tens of thousands. There, after long painful experiences with the opposite patterns of behaviour, which periodically still break towards the surface because they are 'pure' products of bourgeois society, the working class goes through a permanent practical school of social behaviour based upon co-operation, solidarity and collectively organised action, seeking collective as opposed to individual solutions to the 'social questions'.

No other class can systematically achieve over a long period these patterns of behaviour as a result of its practical day-to-day experience and its overall social interests, as does the class of wage earners, certainly not independent peasants or intellectuals. Lenin can hardly be accused of having 'underestimated the peasantry'. But Lenin was clearer than any other Marxist as to the *basic difference* between the peasant's and the worker's attitude towards competition, commodity production, and therefore social behaviour based upon co-operation and solidarity.

Again, this is not an absolute rule, but a general historical tendency. It can be interrupted by the results of great shocking defeats of the working class, of huge historical disappointments, of extremely unfavourable material conditions (unemployment rates higher than 30, 50 or 75 per cent). But it reappears again and again, like the Hydra's head, because it is rooted in the very socio-economic nature of capital and wage labour.

This social preparation of the working class to base its collective behaviour, its intervention in society, on the non-

Socialism is a possibility, nothing more. But it happens to be the only possible alternative to a collapse of human civilisation if not to a disappearance of the human race

bourgeois 'values' of collective co-operation, solidarity and organisation — the very antithesis of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois competition — gives it a powerful potential for social revolution. And gives it a powerful potential for rebuilding society on the basis of collective ownership of the means of production, of solidarity between all producers, of planned conscious co-operation substituting itself to 'market laws' as the basis of economic life, of the withering away of commodity production, money, economic inequality and the state, all of which are social preconditions for the successful achievement of a classless society, as is a high level of development of the productive forces.

The point is not that the working class is sure to accomplish all that. Nothing is sure in the bad world in which we live. Socialism is a possibility, nothing more. But it happens to be the only possible alternative to a collapse of human civilisation if not to a disappearance of the human race. The working class is the only potential social force which could, under a given complex set of favourable circumstances, realise socialism. To deny the revolutionary role of the working class means to make a giant historical leap backward, ie to condemn socialism to become utopian, to become again a nice dream which will never be realised and which will therefore not prevent humankind from disappearing in a nuclear holocaust.

No proof can be offered, nor ever has been offered that other social forces — an association of intelligent individuals, third world peasants, marginalised sub-proletarians in the imperialist ghettos, 'socialist state armies' — have the social and economic power to take the fate of society out of the hands of Big Capital and to reshape that society on the basis of worldwide massive solidarity and co-operation between the producers. For that reason alone, it would be wise not to revise Marx's concept of the centrality of the revolutionary potential of the working class for emancipating humanity as long as history has not presented us with *definite proof* of such a capacity. It would be equally wise to devote all one's power and energy to helping the working class to realise that potential.

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FOR HUMAN NATURE

NORMAN GERAS

The view is commonplace on the Left that Marx rejected any notion of 'human nature'. Norman Geras examines this view below in a foretaste of his forthcoming New Left Books publication *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend*.

You will not go very far in discussion either within or about Marxism before encountering the view that one of the things bequeathed to this intellectual tradition by its founder was a denial of the idea of a universal human nature. That view, which had already had a good life when Althusser's 'theoretical anti-humanism' imparted to it a new confidence and vigour, has long struck me as being pretty remarkable, and my attendance at a certain seminar one evening in early 1979 led me to want to confront it. The seminar, in fact, was not about Marx or about Marxism. It was on the subject of human needs. I no longer recall the details of the discussion, only that the theoretical and practical viability of a concept of common human needs was received with general scepticism, and this was sustained in part — or so it appeared to me — by impulses of a relativist and idealist kind. Since much of both philosophy and social science is thick with relativist and idealist themes, there is perhaps no great cause for puzzlement here. Nevertheless, the occasion did crystallise in my mind the thought of how surprising it was that Marxists also, would-be materialists amongst them, should often sponsor more or less similar themes in support of a similar scepticism; how very extraordinary indeed, in view of what I had read in Marx, in view equally of some obvious facts about the world, that the claim that he rejected the idea of human nature should be so widely made and believed.

I decided to look and see just what from Marx's work is generally given as confirmation of the claim. The answer is: not very much — actually only a single passage that can be said to amount to anything, though Marx himself did not think fit to publish the text containing it; and, apart from that, a few other odds and ends which, considered for the role of evidence in this matter, amount to nothing at all. The one item of any plausibility is some lines from the *Theses on Feuerbach* and it is with a close and extended analysis of those lines that I chose therefore to begin the essay on this question (*Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend*) which will be published by NLB in the Spring. Some of those who read it may perhaps find this analysis of a few lines rather too extended and wonder why, when so much in Marx's writings can be brought against the claim in question, I was not content simply to appeal to that and to see off the passage from the *Theses* with more despatch.

However, there are already plenty of commentaries on Marx which draw attention to this contrary evidence. Nothing was to be gained by just repeating them. On the other hand, by focusing initially on the best of the textual support for the disputed claim, we square up to the latter on its own chosen terrain, so to speak, meet it at what may be supposed to be its strong point. From doing this, as it happens, there is something to be gained. It may be a few lines only that become thereby an object of detailed attention, but they have been made to bear a heavy weight in the exegesis of Marx. Relying on their support, the legend that he dispensed with the concept of an intrinsic human nature manages to survive in the face of textual evidence that he did not: either this is simply ignored or else, if its existence is conceded, it is treated as the basis merely of one 'reading' of Marx to which however another, alternative

'reading' can be opposed, or else it is said not to represent the real, or the most profound, tendency of his mature thought; and so on. Yet, examination of the relevant lines from the *Theses on Feuerbach* reveals that their sense is not, in fact, transparent. They can be understood in a number of ways. And when the various possible meanings of this passage are placed within the only possible framework for a proper assessment of it — namely, the rest of Marx's writings — the interpretation of him that has been so reliant on it is shown not to be a viable one at all. It is left without even the slenderest title to philological respectability.

Marx — like everyone else — did reject certain ideas of human nature; but he also regarded some as being true. It is important to discriminate the sort that he rejected from the sort that he did not. More important still is it to try to discriminate such of these ideas as are indeed true from such of them as are false. Neither purpose is served by talk of the dismissal of *all* conceptions of a human nature, and I hope I may have contributed something to replacing it by more limited but, at the same time, more accurate statements of what, in this matter, Marx actually opposed.

It should not be thought that I can see no valid preoccupation whatever amongst the factors that have led many Marxists to persuade themselves of this view of Marx. In the final section of *Marx and Human Nature*, when consideration of the textual materials has been concluded, I examine the reasons that dispose people to want to deny the existence of a human nature. Although my main purpose is to show that they are not good ones, I do say, wherever I think there are grounds for doing so, what legitimate concern any particular argument may exaggerate or in some other way reflect. To give one example, whilst I criticise the oft-expressed belief that the concept of human nature is simply reactionary, I acknowledge nonetheless that there are reactionary variants of it, as well as how frequently these are met with.

conservative and reactionary assumptions
about what is inherent in humanity's
make-up are pervasive

This may well be the principal obstacle to a reader acceptance of the concept amongst those committed to fundamental and progressive change: conservative and reactionary assumptions about what is inherent in humanity's make-up are pervasive. That they owe a lot, probably, to the historical influence of the Christian doctrine of original sin, but there are other doctrinal sources aplenty, secular as well as religious, new beside old, for assumptions of innate human wickedness and belief, correspondingly, in the permanence of social malignancy of one kind or another. Such ideas close off the avenues of thought against the prospect of liberation from manifold social oppressions. Their pervasiveness, relative to progressive conceptions of human nature, must perhaps always be the norm while class society survives. A long past and continuing present of exploitation and its associated evils will tend to yield pessimistic generalisations about the character traits and typical behaviour of human beings. Anyone who has tried to present socialism as a serious practical proposition before virtually any audience not already convinced of it, will almost certainly have had to contend with pessimistic argument from 'human nature'.

And yet to attempt to respond to that kind of argument, and to the weight of conservative culture supporting it, by denying that there is a human nature, is to meet a powerful ideological opponent with a weapon that is useless. Not only this or that ideology, but also widely accessible facts and truths

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— some derived from common experience, others the product of scientific research — will tell one's interlocutors that this is foolishness. A proper regard for what are the real basic needs and capacities inherent in our human nature is the only adequate response.

As there are those who will concede the truth of the idea of a general human nature — of some general human needs, capacities and other uniformities — only to deny or belittle its importance, let me suggest a couple of contexts in which this judgement too can be seen to be plainly wrong. A first, immediate and urgent *practical* context, showing why, though this may be obvious, it is nonetheless important that human beings need food, a healthy living and working environment and so on, can be overlooked only by very secluded and comfortable minds. This context is — that 40,000 children die every day; that of the 122 million born in 1979, 17 million (nearly 14 per cent) will die before they are five; that between 350 and 500 million people are disabled, the major cause of this being poverty: about 100 million have been disabled by malnutrition; that 180 million children are not getting enough food to sustain health and minimal physical activity: protein deficiency, which can lead to mental retardation, affects 100 million under five in developing countries, around 6000 children go blind every year in Tamil Nadu alone because their diets lack vitamin A, and there are in Bangladesh something between 50,000 and 200,000 blind children; that over half the people in the Third World have no access to safe water and that water-borne diseases kill some 30,000 people every day and account for about 80 per cent of all illnesses: every year 400 to 500 million are affected by trachoma and six million children die of diarrhoea; that there are 15

million human beings who have been disabled by their work; that in the tin mines of Bolivia a miner's life expectancy is reduced to 35 because of silicosis and tuberculosis; that 375,000 or more people in the Third World will this year be poisoned by pesticides ... And all this is to say nothing of the brutalities directly meted out in many countries by agents of the state: of the beating, the burning, the cutting, the drowning.

It will be urged that these realities are conspicuously *historical* and *political* ones. Of course they are, but they have an irreducible 'human-natural' component: of general and basic human needs, in this case unsatisfied, disregarded, thwarted, sometimes savagely repressed. The moral, if not the sheer numerical, enormity of them has something to do with that. And although they are realities contemporary with ourselves rather than with Marx, they are of a kind with ones he manifestly regarded, and publicised, as important. In what present socialist political perspective could they be regarded otherwise?

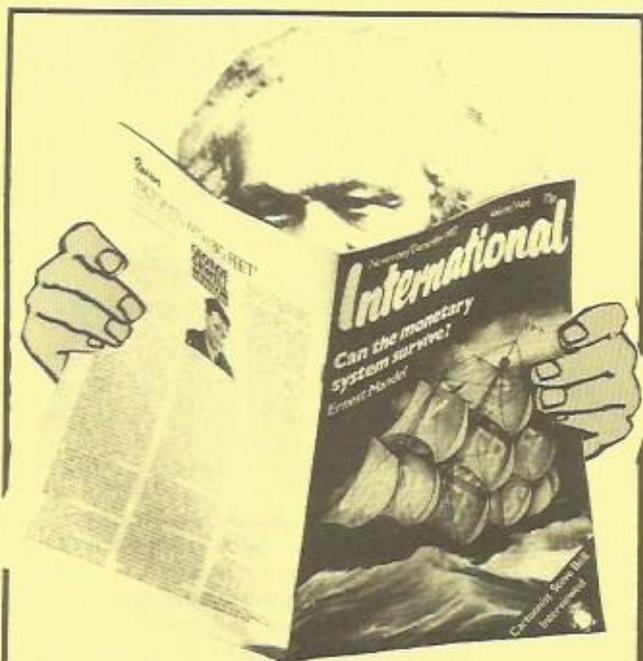
Another relevant context, at once practical and theoretical, is this. Marxists and socialists dismissive of the assumption of an intrinsic human nature are generally committed to the project, and believe in or at least are not dissuaded of the possibili-

just as no fish could have been Mozart
no species could achieve socialism if its
members were incapable of the virtues ap-
propriate to socialism

ty of a radically different social order, however variously they may conceive this. They must believe, consequently, or must allow, that people in their generality can, or might, develop the qualities that will sustain such a social order, whatever these qualities may be thought to be: civic intelligence, interest, responsibility; mutual sympathy or respect, a deep feeling of human equality, the ability to use and enjoy a very extensive individual freedom; and so on (for present purposes, the precise shape of this list does not especially matter; each person may construct her own). The whole weight is placed, with this sort of belief and by this sort of Marxist and socialist, upon the anticipated effect of new social relations and practices. Yet, although much weight properly belongs there, by itself this will not quite do. If new relations and practices are thought able to have the effect in question, human beings must be assumed *capable*, if only in the 'right' circumstances, of developing the necessary qualities. These must be capacities potentially available to members of the human species. Just as no fish could have been Mozart, no species could achieve socialism if the generality of its members were inherently incapable in all conditions of the virtues appropriate to socialism.

Of course, this is exactly how many of the latter's opponents view things: that irrespective of historical circumstances, the generality of humankind will be stupid or ignorant rather than intelligent, apathetic instead of interested, in awe of leaders and not capable of genuine responsibility; and too selfish, greedy and competitive to sustain any wide sense of human solidarity or community; afraid of too much freedom and unable to use it. A string of conservative, elitist and anti-democratic thinkers could here be cited. The point, though, is this. It is quite specious to contend that those only who thus deny, but not also those who affirm, the possibility of socialism, rely upon a conception of human nature. For the affirmation just presupposes the sort of human capacities that the denial disputes. The standard practical commitment within Marxist and socialist belief rests, whether explicitly or implicitly, upon the theoretical hypothesis of a human nature — at least if it is to have a coherent theoretical basis.

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MARX AND WOMEN'S OPPRESSION

PENNY DUGGAN

The work of the founders of the Marxist movement, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, in providing a coherent theory of the development of women's oppression, has provided a reference point for all those, Marxist or not, who have attempted to analyse this phenomenon themselves.
Penny Duggan examines Marx's views on women's oppression.

The influence of Marxist ideas on the theories of women's oppression is absolutely logical. Because the work, brought to fruition by Engels in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, provides a practical explanation for the process of how women became oppressed, and thus indicates at least the first steps that have to be taken for this oppression to be combated and removed.

Although Engels authored the most significant work on the question, as he himself states: 'The following chapters constitute in a sense the fulfilment of a bequest. It was no less a person than Karl Marx who had planned to present the results of Morgan's researches in connection with the conclusions arrived at by his own — within certain limits I might say our own — materialist investigation of history and thus to make clear their whole significance.'

This dedication by Engels also makes clear that Marx and himself did not produce their work in isolation. Other important writings on the question of women, and the historical development of women's position, were being published at the time. The work of Bachofen, who studied the myths and legends indicating that at a previous stage of society descent and heredity had passed through the female line brought to light useful information. However, as an historical materialist Marx used the work of Bachofen in a quite contrary way — rather than attributing the position of women in society to their position in these various myths, he considered these myths as reflecting the actual position of women at the time.

More important was the work of the ethnologist Lewis Morgan. He conducted a study of the family systems in different tribes of American Indians and tried to define the historical process through which the development of kinship systems had passed. His researches were widely used in Engels' *Origins*. The year before the publication of *Origins*, the German Marxist August Bebel published *Woman Under Socialism*. This drew heavily on the ideas developed by Marx and Engels to give an account of the roots of women's oppression, the forms that it has taken over the centuries, the historically progressive role of the integration of women into production, and the need for the socialist revolution to clear the way for women's liberation.

Marx's contribution to a historical materialist analysis of women's subordination within the family provides today the basis for the Marxist movement to elaborate a theory of women's oppression. It also provides a framework for political struggle against that oppression. For the importance of Marx's work is not only at the theoretical level. From the first concise statement of a revolutionary programme, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, the Marxist movement, led by Marx, has

taken a clear stand against the subordination of women. The statement within the *Communist Manifesto* is indeed vague, 'the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production'.² But Marx rightly sees the subordinate status, the oppression of women, as stemming from the relations within the family, and that this has to be done away with. In future debates of the First International Marx was to develop his programmatic positions in relation to the backward notions that still existed among this first generation of communists, and the demands that were being raised by women themselves in the latter half of the nineteenth century; the relation of women to productive labour and the right to vote.

These two points of debate arose at each of the congresses of the First International. The First International was an extremely heterogeneous organisation, formed at a time when the development of workers' organisations in the European countries was extremely uneven. In Germany there already existed the League of German Workers, but in Britain at that time only one trades council had as yet been formed. The impetus for the formation of the International came from France, where trade unions had only just been legalised in 1864.

Thus given this uneven experience of workers' organisation, which obviously also meant political unevenness, it is not surprising that many 'traditional' notions of women's position were present within the International. The early utopian socialists had addressed themselves to the question of women's emancipation as an ideal that could be achieved through effort of will. The movement for women's suffrage was still only in its early stages. Thus it reflects the already advanced understanding of this 'International Workingmen's Association', as it was officially entitled, that a British woman trade union organiser was elected to the general council.

Within the First International there existed a current led by the French socialist Proudhon which aimed for a society based on social co-operation based on the natural division of labour within the family. Thus for them the object of the work of communists was to improve conditions within the family to restore women to their honourable status, and that men should earn enough to keep their women in this situation. This type of approach was also supported by the followers of the German Lassalle who were opposed to the integration of women into the productive forces on the grounds that this would break up the working-class family. At the time the process of industrialisation was indeed beginning to change and destroy the family as it has existed. At the 1875 congress which formed the German Social Democratic Party this current was to oppose the inclusion of the demand for equal rights for women into the party's platform.

The first congress of the International Workingmen's Association in 1866 saw a fundamental debate on the attitude to women. The document put forward by the Marxist wing on work amongst women was rejected, and a wide-ranging debate took place between the Marxists on the one hand and the supporters of Proudhon and Lassalle who argued that the aim of the work of communists should be to restore the honourable place of women in the family; that women in the labour market were in competition with men for work, thus denying men the ability to earn enough to keep their wives and families. In addition this current did not support the right of women to vote, putting forward the formula 'universal manhood suffrage', which was ambiguous as to whether or not women were included in the term 'manhood'.

The 'Marxist' wing was firmly in favour of political rights for women. But on the question of women's integration into the labour force it was more ambiguous. Marx himself was very aware of the degrading and miserable conditions for women at work at that time. The first volume of *Capital* contains many

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references to the condition of women workers, and the effect of industrialisation, involving both women and children in the workforce on the family. At the 1875 Gotha Congress of the International Workingmen's Association the Marxists Bebel and Liebknecht were to argue in favour of women's integration into the labour force but not in 'morally or physically damaging work'. But the Marxists did come out in favour of women's right to work, considering it a necessary part of women's emancipation. This conclusion was most fully drawn by Engels in *Origins*:

'Today in the great majority of cases, the man has to be the earner, the bread-winner of the family, at least among the propertied classes, and this gives him a dominating position which requires no special legal privileges ... And, similarly, the peculiar character of man's domination over women in the modern family, and the necessity as well as the manner, of establishing real social equality between the two, will be brought out into full relief only when both are completely equal before the law. It will then become evident that the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry; and that this again demands that the quality possessed by the individual family of being the economic unity of society be abolished.'³

The debate continued within the First International, surfacing again at the following year's congress, where a debate took place on the role of women and men in society, where speakers were attacked for sermonising and patronising remarks. Finally at the Gotha Congress in 1875 the Lassalleans were defeated on the woman question.

It was at this conference that the Lassalleans and the Bebel/Liebknecht wing united to form the German Social Democratic Party, that was to build the biggest, most influential and politically advanced working women's organisation, under the leadership of Clara Zetkin, in the early twentieth century.

Thus, not only has the women's movement used Marxism as a point of reference because of the theoretical contribution it has made to understanding the nature of women's oppression, but also because the revolutionary socialist movement has been distinguished from its earliest days for its commitment to women's emancipation, however much its ideas seem underdeveloped from our standpoint. There is no denying that much of the polemic against the family in the *Communist Manifesto* is on moral grounds, against the hypocrisy of the bourgeoisie who accuse communists of wanting to introduce a 'community of women' while they are 'not content with having the wives and daughters of their proletarians at their disposal, not to speak of common prostitutes, take the greatest pleasure in seducing each other's wives'⁴.

Thus, in some ways the criticism that Marx (and Engels) made of the earlier utopian socialists like Robert Owen could be applied also to their own work, particularly at this early stage. But between 1848 when the *Communist Manifesto* was published, and 1884 when *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* was published, the analysis of the family deepened, and the repressive effect of the sexual division of labour within the family was recognised more fully. Not only was it institutionalised hypocrisy that had pushed women out of public life into domestic enslavement: 'In the old communistic household, which embraced numerous couples and their children, the administration of the household, entrusted to women, was just as much a public, a socially necessary industry as the providing of food by the men. This situation changed with the patriarchal family ... It became a private service. The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production.'⁵ However, as Engels goes on to explain that modern industry has once again given women the opportunity to participate in social production, but only at the cost of not fulfilling her family responsibilities, we come up against one of the theoretical weaknesses of Marx and Engels.

This relates to their understanding of the nature of the sex-

ual division of labour. In *The German Ideology* Marx discusses the development of the division of labour in human society. He explains how with the increase in productive capacity a restrictive division of labour developed among humans; and how under socialism this division of labour will be broken down, and we will also be able to carry out various activities, physical or mental, according to our own choice, without having to specialise in one or the other.

But, the first division of labour which Marx describes as being 'between man and woman for childbreeding'⁶ is also 'the natural division of labour within the family'. In all the discussion which ensues Marx offers no understanding that 'natural' as the sexual division of labour may be, it is just as restricting as being forced to specialise in any other field of activity. And that the solution is not simply to raise the status of housework to a public function, and to collectivise it among women, but also to state that women too should have the choice as to what pursuits they are going to follow.

It is true today that the advance in technology, particularly with regard to women's control of their fertility, opens new possibilities for the right of women to control their own lives, that could not have been easily foreseen by Marx. Nor should we forget that the first wave of the women's movement, which was still only beginning to emerge at the time that Marx was writing did not have the same understanding of women's oppression as we have today. To Marx's credit we can point out, despite his weaknesses, that it is on the basis of his theoretical and programmatic work that revolutionary Marxists today are in the forefront of the fight for women's liberation.

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THEORY AND PRACTICE

CHRIS ARTHUR

Karl Marx was both a revolutionary thinker and leader of the working class movement. Chris Arthur examines Marx's development of the unity of theory and practice.

In writing to commemorate Marx's death one hundred years ago one must provide an overview of his life, which avoids both the trap of presenting him at the outset fully-formed, incapable of learning anything more, and that of introducing fictitious 'breaks' such as that alleged between the 'young' and the 'old' Marx. I want to show that there is a coherence to Marx's life; that right from the start he was motivated by the struggle to theorise the unity of theory and practice, and to take such steps as were open to him to actualise it; and that throughout his development this unity achieves ever greater concreteness.

Marx first became radicalised when, as a student in Berlin, he joined the so-called 'Young Hegelians' who attempted to draw on the critical elements in Hegel's philosophy to mount an attack on religion and the state. In his Doctoral Dissertation of 1841 Marx already depicts in an abstract way the contradictions that arise when philosophy 'turns against the world' in an attempt to 'realise itself'.¹ On the empirical side, his subsequent experiences as editor of a progressive newspaper in Cologne (1841-43) soon persuaded him of the importance of material interests (such as the struggle between landowners and peasants in the Rhineland). The closure of the paper by the authorities freed Marx to take up the study of political economy. First, however, he wanted to settle accounts with Hegelian idealism. It is in the *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, published in 1844, that for the first time in Marx's thought the proletariat is assigned its revolutionary role. It is worth looking at the way the unity of theory and practice is conceptualised in this text in some detail.

the head of the struggle is philosophy, its heart the proletariat

To begin with Marx takes up the materialist critique of the origins of religion in the human condition already developed by Feuerbach (*The Essence of Christianity*, 1841), but goes beyond the latter in arguing that, if religion is 'the opium of the people' then the condition which makes it necessary must itself be challenged: 'To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions.'² For philosophical criticism of religion and politics to be *practically effective* it must transform the material conditions of their existence. The tasks set by philosophy can be solved only 'through practice'. But how is this to happen? Here Marx embarks on a systematic dualism within which the problem of the relation between theory and practice is posed. However radical philosophical critique becomes, it remains the case, he says, 'that revolutions need a *passive* element, a *material basis*'. But 'will the theoretical needs be directly practical needs?' The theoretical revolution brought about within post-Hegelian philosophy cannot complete itself within the domain of theory. But 'theory is realised in a people only in so far as it is a realisation of the people's needs'. 'It is not enough that thought should strive to realise itself; reality must strive towards thought'.³ We have the theory — but where is the *material agent of emancipation*? Marx answers that it must be a class which is forced to revolt under the compulsion of 'material necessity', whose revolt has a universal character

'because of its universal suffering'; it must be a class 'which is, in a word, the total loss of humanity and which can therefore redeem itself only through the *total redemption of humanity*'. There is indeed such a class without any stake in the existing society and thrown into opposition to it: 'the proletariat', concludes Marx.⁴

So the proletariat is nominated as the material agent of revolutionary change. But let us look carefully at how its struggle is related by Marx to 'theoretical needs'. 'Clearly', he says, 'the weapon of criticism cannot replace the criticism of weapons, and material force must be overthrown by material force; but theory also becomes a material force once it has gripped the masses'.⁵ He finishes the essay with a whole series of such propositions: 'just as philosophy finds its *material* weapons in the proletariat, so the proletariat finds its *intellectual* weapons in philosophy'; 'the *head*' of the struggle is 'philosophy, its *heart* the proletariat'; 'philosophy cannot realise itself without ... the proletariat' and the proletariat cannot liberate itself from its chains 'without the realisation of philosophy'. These are the 'inner conditions' of revolution.⁶

Marx laid the ground theoretically for the internationalist practice of the proletarian party

It is clear from a reading of this text that Marx has broken with his erstwhile philosophical background in so far as he realises that criticism cannot change reality. But it is equally clear that he is simply mechanically *adding* the practical needs of the proletariat to this theoretical criticism. It is a marriage of convenience, not a real union. This is because it is not dialectically *grounded* in a conception of the social totality from which spring both tendencies. Furthermore, in spite of Marx's materialist inversion of the relative priority of state and civil society in Hegel's social philosophy, still in the above formulations it is theory which is the overriding moment. It 'grips the masses': theory is not evolved from the standpoint of the practical struggle of the proletariat. Hence it retains an abstract and moralising character. He speaks of the 'categorical imperative' to 'redeem humanity'.⁷ (Let it be said that one recognises a lumpish caricature of this dualism of theory and practice in some contemporary juggling with the 'subjective factor' and the 'objective factor'.)

In 1844 Marx moved to Paris and became explicitly communist as a result of his contacts with the French socialist movement and his first critical engagement with political economy. In the *Paris Manuscripts* (now justly famous for their elaboration of 'alienated labour'), Marx was able to eliminate the defects of his earlier conceptualisation of theory and practice because for the first time he grasps the central importance of material labour in the production and reproduction of the social totality. This made possible the development of the science of historical materialism. In *The German Ideology* of 1846 Marx (with Engels) sketched a first version of history based on the idea of a sequence of *modes of production* with associated class divisions and forms of social consciousness. Thus ideology loses its semblance of independence and is understood in relation to the material conditions and development of society. People, 'developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life'.⁸

If thought imagines itself to be independent, this too can be explained from the contradictions of material life, for example, from the division between mental and manual labour. Thus Marx explains: 'Division of labour only becomes truly such

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from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc."⁹

At the same time, Marx brings class relations into the picture. 'The ideas of the ruling class are ... the ruling ideas' because 'the class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production', so that its ideas are imposed on the subject classes and all classes share the illusion of the epoch.¹⁰ It follows that 'the existence of revolutionary ideas in a particular period presupposes the existence of a revolutionary class'.¹¹ Their content will reflect the situation of that class in relation to the social totality.

Since the problems faced by the proletariat spring ultimately from the world market, and since communism requires for its material basis the development of the productive forces on a world scale, Marx concludes that the proletariat exists on a 'world-historical' plane, that each nation is dependent on the revolutions of others, and that communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples 'simultaneously'.¹² Thus, for the first time Marx lays the ground theoretically for the internationalist practice of the proletarian party.

Nor did he leave it there. Throughout 1846 he energetically set about establishing a network of 'Communist correspondence committees', contacting for the purpose such peo-

the communism of the proletariat is 'the
declaration of the permanence of the
revolution'

ple as Harney, the Chartist leader, and Proudhon. In a letter to Proudhon he explained that the point was to put German, French, and English socialists in touch so as 'impartial criticism' could take place. 'It will be a step made by the social movement and its *literary* manifestation to rid itself of the barriers of *nationality*. And when the moment for action arrives, it will clearly be much to everyone's advantage to be acquainted with the state of affairs abroad as well as at home.'¹³ It is noteworthy that Marx's first attempt at communist organisation started from the need for it to be international — and this before hardly any national organisations existed! The same internationalist spirit presided over the foundation of the Communist League in 1847. It requested Marx and Engels to prepare for it a Manifesto.

The crucial question to be sorted out in this period was the relationship of communism to the class struggle. Everywhere advanced workers were attracted by communist ideas, but com-



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munism itself was understood as an ideal to be preached to the world at large in a propagandistic fashion. Marx and Engels' theoretical heritage enabled them to grasp the necessity to unify theory and practice. In such texts as *The Poverty of Philosophy* (1847) and the famous *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) Marx took issue with 'Utopian Socialism' on this front. St Simon, Fourier and Robert Owen were all excellent critics of the capitalist system and its iniquities: they counterposed to it the ideal of socialism. However, their activity took the form of preaching the idea to humanity at large, or of setting up small-scale experimental communities. They could not relate themselves to any socio-historical practice grounded in tendencies immanent in capitalist reality itself. This is explicable in the case of these original founders of Utopian Socialism who were working at a time when the proletariat had not organised itself as a class; hence its struggle had not assumed a political character. Thus the Utopians viewed the proletariat only as the most suffering class, who would benefit most from socialism;

but not as the *agent* of social transformation. However, the persistence of the Owenite sects in standing apart from the new class struggle, eg Chartism, became objectively reactionary, as well as theoretically incoherent. When the class struggle becomes a visible reality, science, a product of the historical movement, must cease to be doctrinaire and 'become revolutionary' in consciously associating itself with it.¹⁴ As Marx says: 'Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things'.¹⁵ This movement is the class struggle of the proletariat. The communism of the proletariat is 'the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transition point to the abolition of class distinctions generally'.¹⁶

Marx theory is inconceivable except as the product of specific historical conditions, and experience, which allowed

him to relate socialism to the developing class struggle. He did not view socialism as an eternal truth discovered by his own genius. Rather, his theoretical conclusions 'merely express, in general terms, actual relationships springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes'.¹⁷ Communist workers, therefore, 'do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement'; they are simply the most advanced section who understand theoretically the line of march and ultimate destiny of the existing struggle.¹⁸

It is important to point out that this relation to practice makes Marx's *materialism* a very different materialism from that which preceded it. If one simply counterposes to the idealist claim that all reality is essentially spiritual the materialist standpoint, all one has provided is a different interpretation of the world: but, says Marx, 'the point is — to change it'.¹⁹ Furthermore, it is perfectly possible to be a materialist *and* a socialist, yet still lack an adequate standpoint from which 'to change it'. This was the case with Robert Owen just as much as with Ludwig Feuerbach. These tendencies were materialist enough to see that it was ridiculous to blame people for being as they were (eg selfish, competitive, etc) when their circumstances and upbringing had conditioned this. The solution, clearly enough, was to provide a decent education and better circumstances to promote better qualities in people (eg egalitarianism, co-operation, etc). This leaves the transition unexplained — because if people are nothing but the product of their circumstances whence come the educators who will effect this transformation in people? The educator himself needs education.²⁰

Reality now broke in on the debate. Revolution in 1848, first in France and then in Germany, sent Marx back to Cologne to re-establish his newspaper, which was now called the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. He had used up all his resources on it when, following the triumph of the counter-revolution in 1849

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he received a government expulsion order. On 18 May, the last issue of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* appeared printed in red.

Finally settled in London, Marx spent the next years in dire poverty, quarrelling with fellow exiles. Nonetheless he also gathered the materials for his great work *Capital* (1867) through endless days in the British Museum reading room, and nights labouring to solve the immense theoretical problems involved. (As he wryly observed — never had anyone spent so much time writing about money while seeing so little of it.) By no means should we think of these years of study as unrelated to practice. It is impossible to conceive of *Capital* except as the product of an intransigent adversary of the capitalist system. Its theoretical achievement is to establish scientifically the contradictory, crisis-ridden, character of capitalist production, its ultimate limits, and the dialectical necessity for its overthrow by the proletariat. Although it is a strictly scientific work in which landlords and capitalists are viewed as 'bearers of particular class-relations'²¹ rather than as individually morally responsible for these relations, *Capital* nonetheless represents a *critique* of those same relations and their ideological legitimation. 'In so far as such a critique represents the standpoint of a class', says Marx, 'it can only represent the class whose historical task is the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production and the final abolition of all classes — the proletariat'.²²

never had anyone spent so much time writing
about money while seeing so little of it

Earlier, in 1864, Marx had participated in the founding of the International Working Men's Association whose rules note 'that the emancipation of labour is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries in which modern society exists, and depending for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced countries'.²³ In a letter to Engels (13 March 1865) Marx says: 'Apart from the work for my book, the International Association takes up an enormous amount of my time, for I am in fact the head of this affair'.

In spite of the fact that all members of the International supported the Paris Commune of 1871, it began to disintegrate soon after, largely as a result of the growing struggle between Marx and Bakunin. Marx's last important political intervention came in 1875 with his polemic against the programme adopted at its Gotha Congress by the newly unified German Workers' Party, bringing together Marxists and Lassalleans. Once again we see the questions of theoretical clarity and practical effectivity given trenchant treatment. On the one hand Marx protested in the most vigorous way that his followers had allowed theoretical fundamentals to be compromised in the new programme, and that it was a mistake to allow this in the name of the desire for unity amongst the workers. On the other hand, Marx pointed out that, since 'every step of real movement is more important than a dozen programmes' an agreement for action against the common enemy should have been concluded, while the question of drawing up a programme of principles was postponed until it had been prepared for by a considerable period of common activity.²⁴

After Marx's death the influence of positivism became strongly felt within the Second International. Science, it was held, is a detached and impartial activity — pure theory with no practical implications. Hilferding in his *Finanz Kapital* drew out the logical consequences by arguing that the sole aim of Marxism is to discover causal relationships, including those determining the will of classes. But acceptance of the validity of Marxism, including a recognition of the historical necessity of socialism, has no practical import! 'For it is one thing to acknowledge a necessity, and quite another thing to work for that necessity'.²⁵ If Marxism as science has no practical implications it follows that socialism requires some other ground for the legitimation of its struggle. This must be ethical in

character. Hence a whole tendency of neo-Kantian character emerged which tried to base socialism on Kant's categorical imperative to respect persons.

Today this duality is replayed, except that the double aspect is now instantiated in two parties: the 'scientific' Marxists versus the 'humanists', and the latter draw not now on Kant but on the early Marx.

Others believe that 'scientific socialism' is a contradiction in terms; that what Marx provides is at most 'a science of socialism, an analysis of an existing socialist movement and of the conditions in which it develops' — thus Bottomore and Rubel — for, after all, socialism is just 'a social and political movement striving to bring about a new, and better, system of human relations'.²⁶ They go on to distinguish 'Marx the scientist' from Marx the revolutionary, introducing the latter with the anodyne platitude: 'The combination of scientific analysis with moral judgements is by no means uncommon in the field of social studies'²⁷ — as if Marx was some run of the mill eclectic.

One thing is for sure — Marx, both 'early' and 'late', would have refused the antithesis between theoretical work and practical engagement. For Marx 'science becomes revolutionary' when it becomes adequate to reality because reality is in a constant process of development and change, of which consciousness (including a theoretically informed class consciousness) is a moment. Marxist theory stands in an essential relationship to practice because objective knowledge arises from the standpoint of 'the class that holds the future in its hands'²⁸, the international working class. Since 'the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections'²⁹, no less than for practical effectivity, theoretical clarity and comprehensiveness (freed from local prejudice and national particularism) requires an international organisation of revolutionaries. Hence there is an intimate connection between Marx's two great legacies — *Das Kapital*, and the struggle for the International.

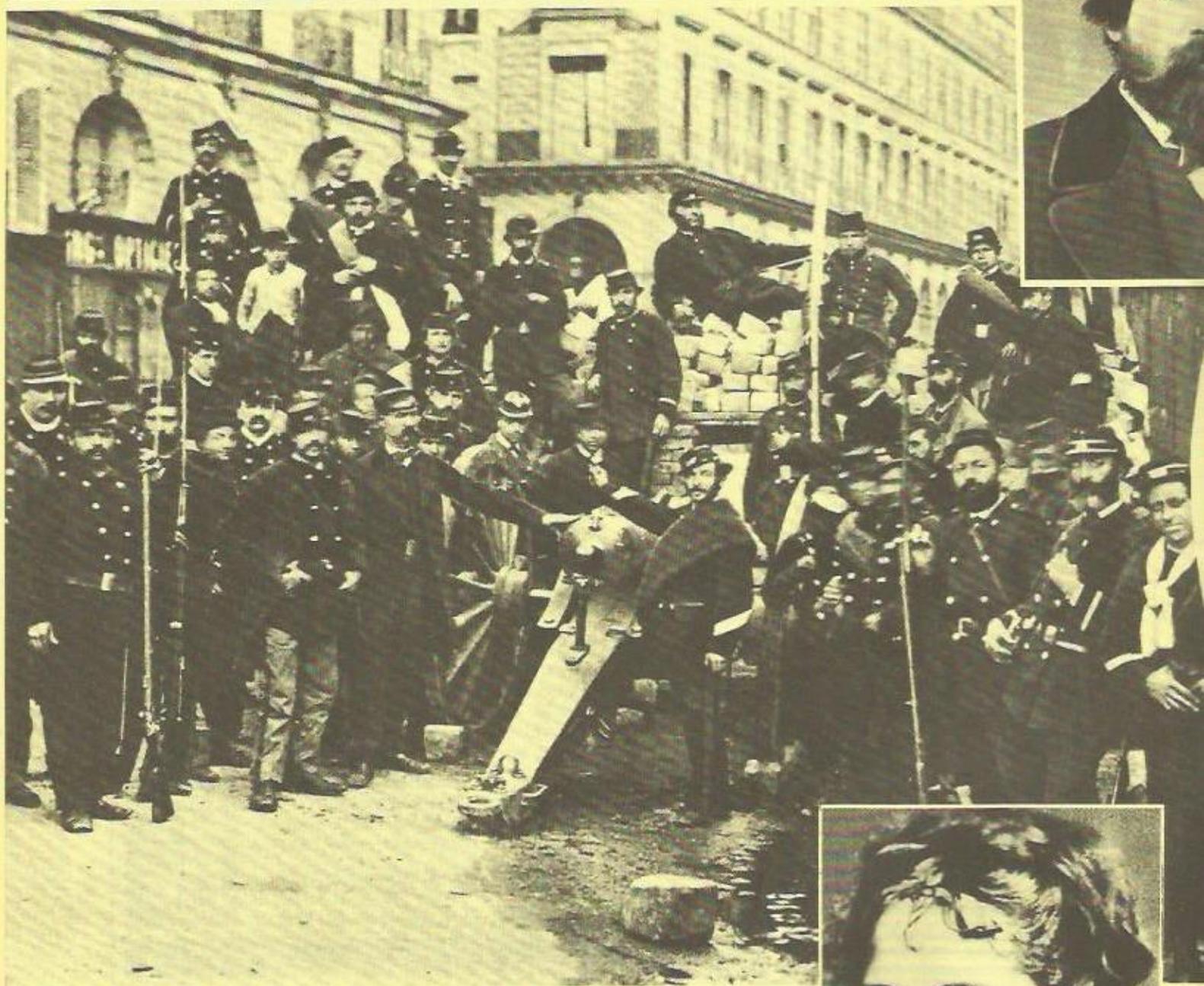
CHRIS ARTHUR is a lecturer in philosophy at Sussex University and editor of the English edition of Marx's *The German Ideology*.

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Friedrich Engels



A barricade in the Place Vendôme



Eleanor Marx

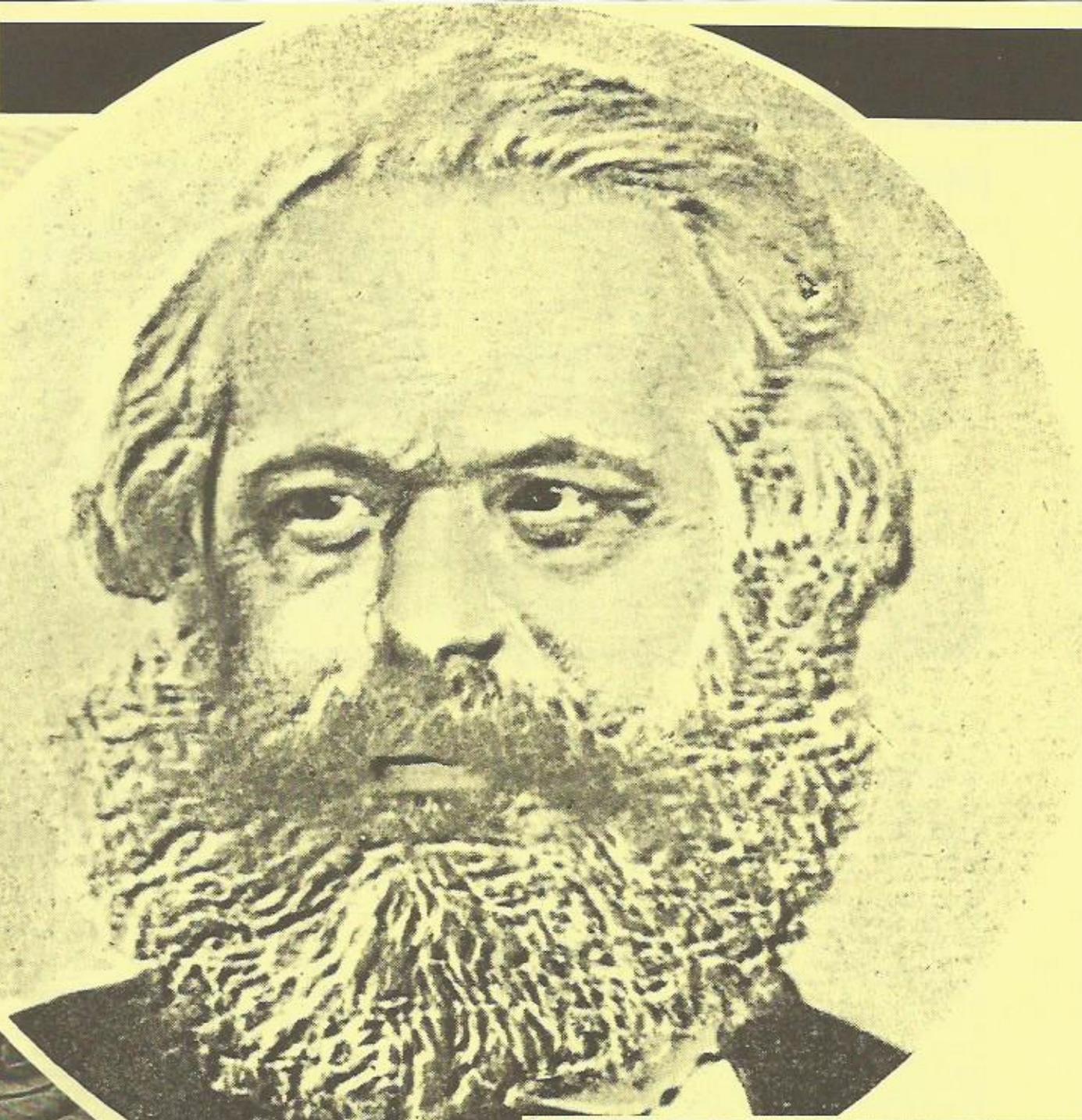


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MARX ON ENGLAND

JOHN ROSS

In the 1960s a major debate took place on the British Left concerning the overall development of English history. The major contributions were Perry Anderson's *Origins of the Present Crisis* and EP Thompson's *The Peculiarities of the English*. One figure was however strangely absent in the discussion: Karl Marx himself. Yet Marx's writings are probably the most striking, original and coherent of all on English history. On the 100th anniversary of his death, JOHN ROSS therefore re-examines Marx's writings on the development of English history.

The nature of capitalist agriculture

Marx held that the most fundamental of all determinants of English history had been the way in which the question of land-ownership had been resolved in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. England in fact constituted the only major country in Europe in which the land question had been resolved in a 'classical way'.¹ It was the creation of large scale capitalist landowning which then laid the basis of the entire subsequent political development of Britain. It totally differentiated England from for example France, where the bourgeois revolution had created not large scale capitalist agriculture but instead a relative parcellisation of the land. As Marx put it: 'The puzzle of why the English revolution was so conservative in character ... is to be attributed to the permanent alliance between the bourgeoisie and the greater part of the big landlords, an alliance which essentially differentiates the English revolution from the French — the revolution that abolished big landownership by parcellisation.'²

Whereas strong elements of pre-capitalist relations in land continued to exist in much of Europe into the 18th and even 19th centuries, serfdom in England was already broken by the end of the 14th century.³ This break-up of feudalism was speeded up by the massacre of the nobility in the civil wars of the 15th century and, most importantly, by the rise of the Flemish wool manufactures. These factors, combined with the policies of the Tudor absolute monarchy, destroyed the military power of the old feudal aristocracy, and also began to create the first nuclei of a proletariat. A further impetus to the whole process was then given by Henry VIII's⁴ expropriation and subsequent resale, of monastic and church lands.⁵ As Marx summarises the results of this process: 'England, at the end of the 16th century, had a class of capitalist farmers, rich, considering the circumstances of the time.'⁶ 'The old nobility had been devoured by the great feudal wars. The new nobility was a child of its time, for which money was the power of all power.'⁷ 'The spoilation of the church's property, the fraudulent alienation of the state domains, the robbery of the common lands, the usurpation of feudal and clan property, and its transformation into modern private property ... conquered the field for capitalist agriculture.'⁸

This whole process of the creation of capitalist landowning

in turn was only made possible because of the mounting wealth of the English ruling class as a whole and its international strength. As Marx put it: 'As soon as rent assumes the form of money-rent, and thereby the relationship between the rent-paying peasant and the landlord becomes a relationship fixed by contract — a development which is only possible generally when the world-market, commerce and manufacture have reached a relatively high level — the leasing of lands to capitalists inevitably also makes its appearance. The latter hitherto stood beyond the rural limits and now carry over to the countryside and agriculture the capital acquired in the cities and with it the capitalist mode of operation developed — ie creating a product as a mere commodity and solely as a means of appropriating surplus-value. This form can become the general rule only in those countries which dominate the world market in the period of transition from the feudal to the capitalist mode of production. When the capitalist farmer steps in between landlord and actual tiller of the soil, all relations which arose out of the old rural mode of production are torn asunder.'⁹

The nucleus of these developments meant that even before the English bourgeois revolution accomplished the transfer of political power from the monarchy, the rising bourgeoisie was no longer faced with any decisive section of landowners based on feudal relations of production. By the 17th century the dominant sections of the landowning class were already themselves based on capitalist relations of production. This situation was in turn the core of all subsequent developments, meaning that the landowners did not come into violent conflict with a rising bourgeoisie but on the contrary were able to merge with them. Indeed the landowners were the dominant element of the rising capitalist class.

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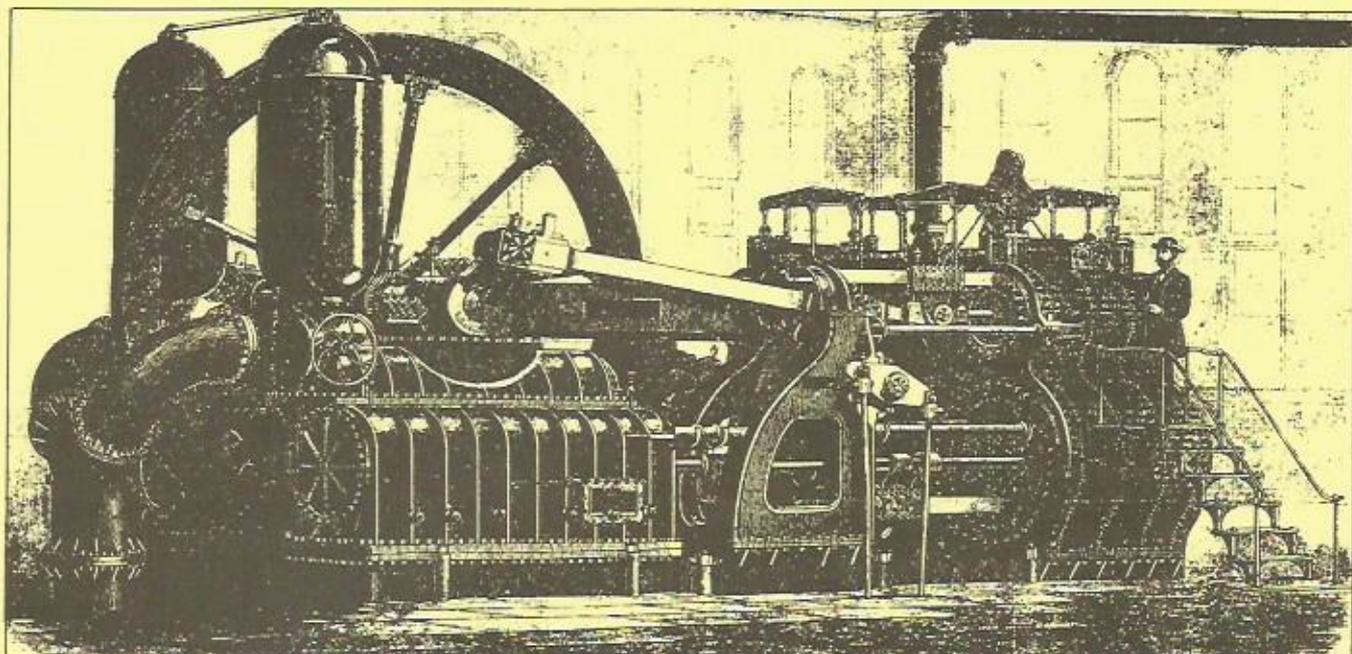
'Unlike the French feudal landowners, this class of big proprietors, which had allied itself with the bourgeoisie and which incidentally had arisen already under Henry VIII, was not antagonistic to but rather in complete accord with the conditions of life of the bourgeoisie. In actual fact their landed estates were not feudal but bourgeois property. On the one hand, the landed proprietors placed at the disposal of the industrial bourgeoisie the people necessary to operate its factories and, on the other, were in a position to develop agriculture in accordance with the state of industry and trade. Hence their common interests with the bourgeoisie; hence their alliance with it.'¹⁰

This alliance of capitalist agriculture with other bourgeois forces continued under the Stuart restoration and the combination was the instrumental force of the 'glorious revolution' of 1688.¹¹ The landowners and the finance and commercial bourgeoisie were able to use the state power gained in the civil war to further develop capitalist relations in the countryside and to secure a massive extension of international trade. Only much later, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, did an industrial bourgeoisie proper arise.¹²

The rise of manufacturing capital

One of the most important aspects of the compromise between landed elements and sections of the finance bourgeoisie which Marx notes was the potential it created for the actual process of governing to be carried out by groups at a very considerable remove from the actual centres of economic power. Indeed Marx held that the distinction between 'the class which rules officially and the class that rules unofficially' was a fundamental

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feature of 'that antiquated compromise called the British constitution.'¹³

This potential for dissociation between economic dominance and political power in turn exemplified Marx and Engel's general point that many different state forms can exist on the basis of the same mode of production — a phenomenon particularly extensively explored in their contemporary writings on 'Bonapartism' in France. Thus Engels wrote: 'In France ... the bourgeoisie as such, as a class in its entirety, held power for only two years, 1849 and 1850. Under the republic it was able to continue its *social* existence only by abdicating its *political* power to Louis Bonaparte and the army.'¹⁴

And for Marx: 'It was not the French bourgeoisie which ruled under Louis Phillipe, but *one fraction* of it: bankers, stock-exchange kings, owners of coal and iron mines and forests, and a part of the landed proprietors associated with them — the so-called *finance* aristocracy. It sat on the throne, it dictated laws in the Chamber, it distributed public offices, from cabinet portfolios to tobacco bureau posts.'¹⁵

Returning to England, Marx saw one of the basic features of the English state system in a similar long drawn out dissociation between economic and social dominance.

'This British Constitution, what is it but a superannuated compromise by which the general governing power is abandoned to some sections of the middle class, on condition that the whole of the real government, the Executive in all its details, even to the executive department of the legislative power — or that is the actual lawmaking in the two Houses of Parliament — is secured to the landed aristocracy? This aristocracy ... subject to general principles laid down by the middle class, rules supreme in the Cabinet, the Parliament, the Administration, the Army and the Navy.'¹⁶

In fact Marx held that neither of the dominant parties until the mid-19th century, the Whigs and the Tories, was a direct representative of non-landowning forces; *both* were based on the landed aristocracy.¹⁷ Only well into the 19th century did a genuine group emerge who in a direct major fashion were based on the bourgeoisie and who directly expressed interests of its dominant layers. Until at least the middle of the 19th century, despite being the first and pre-eminent industrial capitalist class of the world, the British manufacturing bourgeoisie was not even remotely the political 'ruling' class of English society. Two centuries after they had destroyed the absolute monarchy it was still capitalist landowners and the finance bourgeoisie who continued to exercise political dominance. We will consider the subsequent fate of the industrial bourgeoisie below.

The dominant oligarchy

If we now consider in more detail the dominant political fractions of the English ruling class as they existed prior to the 19th century Marx consistently termed them an 'oligarchy'. They were not a class themselves but a combination of diverse fractions of the capitalist class bound together by certain common interests. In order to analyse the developments and limits of manoeuvre of this oligarchy it is therefore necessary to consider briefly Marx's account of how its constituent elements were organised.

The fundamental basis of coexistence of capitalist landowners and finance and commercial bourgeois layers was that until the rise of manufacturing in the last half of the 18th century the only way to invest money made in England in trade was in land. Furthermore capitalist agriculture was by far the richest section of society. Capitalist agriculture created the money for trade, and capital made in trade was ploughed back into agriculture. In England itself the expression of this process was the great agricultural revolution of the 18th century. On the international field the expression of such policy was the creation of the great overseas trading companies — above all the East India Company with its domination of India. This nexus of land, trade and finance dominated English capitalism virtually unchallenged for the century after the revolutions of 1642-1688.

there were three areas of overwhelming importance to the oligarchy: foreign trade, the question of Ireland, and land subsidies and protection of profits of capitalist farming

Within this overall framework there were three areas of overwhelming importance to the oligarchy. These were foreign trade, the question of Ireland, and land subsidies and the protection of the profits of capitalist farming. All required use of political power for their maintenance.

As foreign trade expanded, military power was the decisive instrument both against rival colonial powers and against threatened uprisings. In the initial period this was more to defend sheer plunder and exploitation used to build up estates in England than commerce itself. 'During the whole course of the 18th century the treasures transported from India to England were gained much less by comparatively insignificant commerce, than by the direct exploitation of that country, and by

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the colossal fortunes they extorted and transmitted to England.¹⁸

Later, state power became still more important with the development of commerce and manufacture and the struggle against colonial rivals. "When the Company of English merchant adventurers, who conquered India to make money out of it, began to enlarge their factories into an empire, when their competition with the Dutch and French private merchants assumed the character of national rivalry, then of course, the British government commenced meddling in the affairs of the East India Company, and the double government of India sprung up in fact if not in name."¹⁹ Apart from these major interests there was also the fact that not insignificant groups of the ruling class relied directly on the colonial administration for income. In this situation any small divergence of interest between finance and land could largely be overcome by simple corruption.²⁰

The second area of the landlords concern was Ireland where they had crucial interests. Here Marx could simply note that: "Ireland is the *bulwark* of English landlordism. If it fell in Ireland it would fall in England ... Landlordism in Ireland is maintained solely by the *English army*."²¹ The third, and most direct way in which the possession of political power was used, was to maintain at an artificially high level the income of landlords. In the conditions of the 19th century, when agricultural prices should have been falling, this was achieved by the infamous Corn Laws. These, through an effective tariff, set the minimum price for cereals at an artificially high level compared to world prices. The importance of this was not simply that it created artificially large profits for landowners — for big capitalist agriculture survived the repeal of the Corn Laws easily — but that it ensured the survival of small capitalist agriculture. It thereby was the cement which held together the large landowners, who could survive international competition, and the small who could not. The repeal of the Corn Laws

would therefore inevitably shatter the entire landlord block and alter the political and economic equilibrium of the country — as indeed their repeal did so.

Before the great crisis of the 1840s which forced the abandonment of agriculture protection however the defence of the Corn Laws was *the* most sacred task assigned by the landowners to their political representatives. As Marx put it: "Parliament steadily engaged in working out new and improved editions of the Corn Laws of 1815. If Corn prices proved intractable, if they fell despite the dictates of the Corn Laws, parliamentary committees were appointed to investigate the "agricultural distress". As a matter of fact, the "agricultural distress" was confined, in so far as it was the subject of parliamentary investigation, to the discrepancy between the prices which the tenant farmer paid to the landowner for the land leased and the prices at which he sold his agricultural products to the public — *the discrepancy between the ground rent and the grain prices*. It could therefore be abolished by the simple process of lowering ground rents, the source of income of the landed aristocracy. The latter naturally preferred to "lower" grain prices by legislative means. One Corn Law was superseded by another, slightly modified."²²

If foreign trade, Ireland and the rent of land were the three key reasons why the landowners required to exercise political power themselves, their problem was that on every one of these key questions they were to come into conflict with the rising manufacturing bourgeoisie. Before dealing with this however it is worth analysing more carefully the political coordinates of the landowners' policy confronted with the rise of a true industrial bourgeoisie from the second half of the 18th century onwards.

Relations with the industrial bourgeoisie

The first way in which the oligarchy could attempt to relate to the rising bourgeoisie was to ally with it, by bringing it into the

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old 'compromise', while simultaneously allowing the landowners to attempt to continue to exercise the undisputed dominance of political power. This policy was in particular open to the biggest oligarchs who had the greatest economic room for manoeuvre. As Marx put it:

'The Whigs as well as the Tories form a fraction of the large landed property of Great Britain. Nay, the oldest, richest and most arrogant portion of the English landed property is the very nucleus of the Whig party. What, then, distinguished them from the Tories? The Whigs, are the aristocratic representatives of the bourgeoisie, of the industrial and commercial middle class. Under the conditions that the bourgeoisie should abandon them, to an oligarchy of aristocratic families, the monopoly of government and the possession of office, they make to the middle class, and assist it in conquering, all those concessions which in the course of social and political development have shown themselves to be unavoidable and undelayable'.²³

on India: 'the aristocracy wanted to conquer it, the moneyocracy to plunder it, and the millocracy to undersell it'

It was the fact that they were distinguished not by representing differing social classes, but only by their relation to the rising industrial bourgeoisie, which gave to the Whigs and Tories their particularly unprincipled, loose, and changing attitude. The Whigs, because of their relation to an evolving social class, changed their political positions on subsidiary questions with gay abandon.

In contrast to the chameleon Whigs, the Tories had at least a small element of consistency as they more directly expressed the interests of the landowners as a whole. They initially attempted to maintain their power through an alliance *against*, instead of *with*, the rising sections of the industrial bourgeoisie. The fundamental aim of the Tories for a long period was maintaining in an exclusive form the old ruling bloc — which they inherited from the Whigs.

'The Tories recruit their army from the farmers, who have either not as yet lost the habit of following their landlords as their natural superiors, or who are economically dependent upon them or who do not see that the interest of the farmer and the interest of the landlord are no more identical than the respective interests of the borrower and the usurer. They are followed and supported by the Colonial Interest, the Shipping Interest, the State Church party, in short by all the elements which consider it necessary to safeguard their interests against the necessary results of modern manufacturing industry and against the social revolution prepared by it'.²⁴

The adherence of the Tories to the institutions of the British constitution and the Church sprang from the fact that it was those institutions which supported and embodied the political domination of the landowners. The Church and the Tory domination of it, also represented one of the few direct ways they could influence the masses. The difference of Tories and Whigs was therefore not a division between industrialists and landowners but a difference *within* the landowning capitalists themselves.

The break-up of the oligarchy

Having analysed the basis of the parties and institutions which formed the base of the 'antiquated compromise' it is also possible to see how the entire structure could come apart. A blow against any of the three pillars of the oligarchy — India, Ireland, and the profits of land — would inevitably produce a crisis. If small strains arose they could be overcome by the tactical manoeuvres of the Whigs — whose diverse fractions indeed played that role several times during the 18th century. If more fundamental contradictions arose however the Whigs would be placed in an impossible contradiction. If they resisted the

demands of the rising bourgeoisie they would have to break with it and, in so doing, lose the political positions they had enjoyed by balancing between the different sections of the ruling class. If on the other hand the Whigs sided with the manufacturing bourgeoisie then they would, by acting against the landed interest as a whole, undermine their own social base and thereby cumulatively destroy their positions.

The stability of the oligarchy therefore totally rested on there not being direct and severe conflict of interest between the economic needs of the industrial bourgeoisie and those advantages which the landowners gained from their enjoyment of political power. The 'autonomy' of the British political superstructure in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was based on, and limited by, a very definite relation between political power and economic and social domination. The political instability which set in from 1783-92, and then again from 1825 to the early 1850s, resulted from not one but *all three* of the old pillars of the landlord/finance capital block coming into conflict with the interests of the industrial bourgeoisie. The joint struggle against the French revolution, from 1792-1815, provided a temporary external cement that held all forces together. Once this was removed however serious conflicts of interest broke out within the capitalist class.

The first fundamental area of such conflict was over trade and the colonial empire. Previously in the key area of India there had been no direct conflict of policy between the various sections of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary there was a congruity of interest. As Marx put it: 'The aristocracy wanted to conquer it, the moneyocracy to plunder it, and the millocracy to undersell it'.²⁵ However with the onset of the 19th century trade in manufactured goods with India, and to a lesser extent other countries, increased to a qualitative degree. This rapidly created a considerable clash of interest between the manufacturers and the old oligarchic elements.²⁶ Marx notes this in the most important case as follows:

'The East India trade had undergone very serious revolutions, altogether altering the position of the different class interests in England with regard to it ... After the opening of trade in 1813 the commerce with India more than trebled in a very short time. But this was not all. The whole character of the trade was changed. Till 1813 India had been chiefly an exporting country, while it now became an importing one ... India, the great workshop of cotton manufacture for the world, since time immemorial, became now inundated with English twists and cotton stuffs ... At the same rate at which the cotton manufacturers became of vital interest for the whole social frame of Great Britain, East India became of vital interest for the British cotton manufacture ... The more the industrial interest became dependent on the Indian market, the more it felt the necessity of creating fresh productive powers in India, having ruined her native industry. You cannot continue to inundate a country with your manufactures unless you enable it to give you some produce in return. The industrial interest found that their trade declined instead of increasing ... they found that in all attempts to apply capital to India they met with impediments and chicanery on the part of the Indian authorities. Thus India became the battle-field in the context of the industrial interest on the one side, and of the moneyocracy and oligarchy on the other'.²⁷

In this situation it was only the direct hold on political power which allowed the moneyocracy and oligarchy to maintain their interests. Thus Marx in 1853 could note:

'In April 1854 the Charter of the East India Company will expire and something accordingly must be done in one way or the other. The Government wanted to legislate permanently; that is, to renew the Charter for twenty years more. The Manchester School (the representatives of the industrial bourgeoisie — JR) wanted to postpone all legislation, by prolonging the Charter at the utmost for one year. The Government said that permanent legislation was for the "best" of India. The Manchester men replied that it was impossible for want of informa-

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tion. The "best" of India, and the want of information, are alike false pretences. The governing oligarchy desired, before a reformed House should meet, to secure at the cost of India, their own "best" for twenty years to come. The Manchester men desired no legislation at all in the unreformed parliament, where their views had no chance of success.²⁸

While the conflict of industrial bourgeoisie and oligarchic interest in trade was in full swing by the first half of the 19th century the complete collapse of accord over the issue of Ireland did not come until after Marx's death. Nevertheless the beginning of the conflict could be seen even during the period in which Marx wrote.

The industrial bourgeoisie itself had little trading interest in Ireland. It however had been prepared to tolerate the situation for a long period in order to maintain its alliance with the landowners — who did have vital interests there. However, finally the extremes of landlord oppression in Ireland ruined it even for the few purposes the industrial bourgeoisie could find for most of it.²⁹ Furthermore the increasing deterioration of the situation gave rise increasingly to movements of rebellion which threatened both to undermine political stability and to have major repercussions in Britain itself.³⁰ The maintenance of an increasingly strong army to hold the Irish peasantry was an expense which the industrial bourgeoisie in no way felt inclined to pay for a country from which it obtained no great profit. The result was increasing support for a reform of the Irish land tenure which directly cut into the interests of the landowners. The seeds of the great conflict which was to culminate in the struggle over Home Rule, the split of the Liberal Party in 1886, and the 'Curragh munity' were already present in this clash of interests.

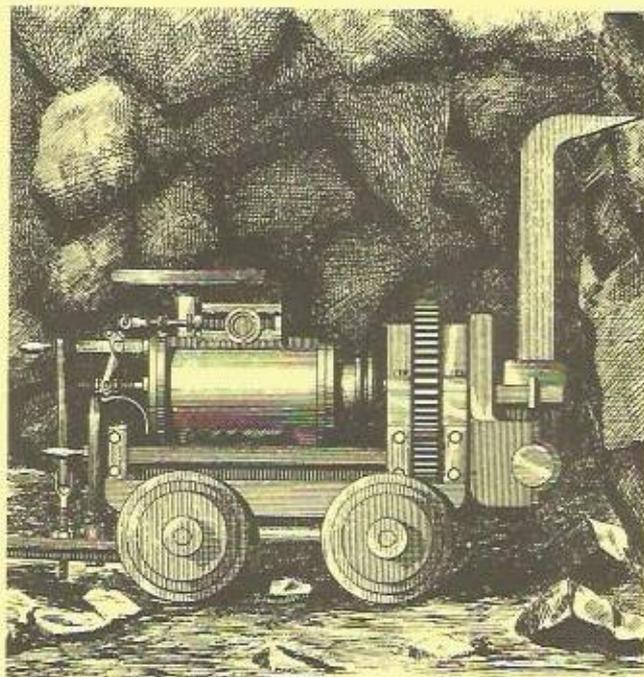
Corn Laws

The third, and ultimately most fearful, clash between the manufacturing bourgeoisie and the old landowning bloc was on the question of rents and food prices — the famous struggle over the Corn Laws. This in turn can only be understood if it is seen not as a clash between different class forces but on the contrary a fight between two different sections of the capitalist class — with the specific feature of the most advanced capitalist agriculture in the world being involved.

the Corn Laws posed an almost insoluble dilemma not just for the Tories, but for the political superstructure as a whole

For the smaller landowners control of political power to maintain the Corn Laws was literally a matter of life and death — a tremendous concentration of capital in agriculture took place following their repeal. For manufacturing capital the repeal of the Corn Laws, and the consequent reduction of food prices, was a crucial means of cutting the price of the reproduction of labour power. As Marx put it: 'The substantial foundation of the power of the Tories was the rent of land. The rent of land is regulated by the price of food. The price of food, then, was artificially maintained at a high rate by the Corn Laws. The repeal of the Corn Laws brought down the rent of land, and with the sinking rent broke down the real strength upon which the political power of the Tories reposed.'³¹

The Corn Laws in fact posed an almost insoluble dilemma not just for the Tories, as the most direct political representatives of the landowners but for the political superstructure as a whole: 'As the question ... concerned "the most sacred interests" of the landed aristocracy — its cash income — its two factions, Tories and Whigs, were equally willing to revere the Corn Laws as fixed stars standing above their partisan struggle.'³² To the manufacturers however, far from being above the struggle, the repeal of the Corn Laws was a question of fundamental concern, 'to the industrial bourgeoisie the abolition



of the Corn Laws was a question of life and death. Lowering production costs, expansion of foreign trade, increase in profits, lessening of the main source of income and hence of power, of the landed aristocracy, enhancement of their own political power — such were the implications of the Corn Law repeal to the industrial bourgeoisie.³³

The Corn Laws in short represented a limit point of the dissociation between political power and economic dominance: if the political superstructure did not meet the demands of the industrial bourgeoisie then they would break politically with the landed interest and no longer accept simple political proxy representation. If on the other hand the landed interest met the demands of the manufacturing interest, then they would undermine their own economic power and political base. This contradiction indeed compelled the bourgeoisie to emerge as an independent *political* force. The manufacturing interests required a complete break with the old ruling bloc in every respect; Marx summed up their political aims as follows:

'The Free Traders (the men of the Manchester School, the Parliamentary and Financial Reformers) are the *official representatives of modern English society*, the representatives of that England which rules the market of the world. They represent the party of the self-conscious bourgeoisie, of industrial capital striving to make available its social power as a political power as well, and to eradicate the last arrogant remnants of feudal society. The party is led on by the most active and most energetic portion of the English bourgeoisie — the *manufacturers*. What they demand is the complete and undisguised ascendancy of the bourgeoisie, the open official subjection of society at large under the laws of modern bourgeois production, and under the rule of those men who are the directors of that production. By Free Trade they mean the unfettered movement of capital, freed from all political, national and religious shackles. The soil is to be a marketable commodity, and the exploitation of the soil is to be carried out in according to the common commercial laws. There are to be manufacturers of food as well as manufacturers of twist and cottons, but no longer any lords of the land.'³⁴

The emergence of manufacturing capital as a direct political force naturally threatened to destroy both the major existing parties: 'The Tories had been aristocrats ruling in the name of the aristocracy, and the Whigs aristocrats ruling in the name of the middle classes; but the middle classes having assumed the rule in their own name, the business of the Whigs is gone.'³⁵

Marx in fact considered the collapse of the Whigs doubly in-

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evitable. Not merely did the bourgeoisie no longer have need of them, but once the landed interests were decisively weakened the old balance between landed interest and manufacturers on which the Whigs had rested would be thrown into fundamental disequilibrium. 'It is clear that from the moment when the landed aristocracy is no longer able to maintain its position as an independent power, to fight as an independent party, for the government position, in short from the moment when the Tories are definitively overthrown, British history no longer has any room for the Whigs.'³⁶ In short *both* Tories and Whigs were doomed.

It was in these circumstances that Peel moved to repeal the Corn Laws and broke up the Tory Party in the process.³⁷ There is little doubt that this is the single most important decision ever taken by the British bourgeoisie. Once it was carried out the entire mechanism of British capitalism for over a century was set in place. Only today are the effects of Peel's fundamental act being reversed.

The retreat of the bourgeoisie

After the repeal of the Corn Law the scene seemed set in Marx's eyes for fierce political clashes to attempt to right the disequilibrium in the political superstructure. Apart from the anticipated bourgeois onslaught it appeared clear to Marx that the landed interest would use the monopoly of direct political power which they still possessed to rigorously reassert their position and even to make attempts at 'counter-revolution'. Marx analysed in 1852 the policy of the Tories as follows: 'What then are they trying to do? To maintain a political power, the social foundation of which has ceased to exist. And how can this be achieved? By nothing short of a *Counter-revolution*, that is to say, by a reaction of State against society.'³⁸

'this movement,' said Harrison, 'is an attempt by the middle classes to gain control of the government, divide among themselves the places and the pensions, and establish a worse oligarchy than that now in existence'

Marx had no doubt as to the outcome of any such moves by the Tories but considered it inevitable that they would provoke a severe political crisis, which could clarify the position not only of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie but of all classes. 'They (the industrial bourgeoisie) cannot avoid fulfilling their mission, battering to pieces old England, the England of the past; and the very moment when they will have conquered exclusive political dominion, when political dominion and economical supremacy will be united in the same hands, when, therefore the struggle against capital will no longer be distinct from the struggle against the existing government — from that very moment will date the *social revolution* of England.'³⁹

Any real clash between landowners and bourgeoisie would also lead to a movement of the proletariat for, given the domination of parliament and the state apparatus by the landed element, only massive extra-parliamentary upheaval could force laws to be passed against the interests of the previously dominant political layers. The very fact that the normal political processes were not open to the bourgeoisie meant that the mobilisation of the masses against the landed elements had indeed become part of standard political practice. As Marx concluded: 'No important innovation, no decisive measure has ever been carried out in this country *without pressure from without*. Either the opposition needed such pressure against the government or the government needed it against the opposition. By *pressure from without* the Englishman means great extra-parliamentary popular demonstrations, which naturally cannot be staged without the active participation of the work-

ing classes.'⁴⁰

This had clearly been the case in the repeal of the Corn Laws: 'Who repealed the Corn Laws? Assuredly not the voters who had elected a Protectionist Parliament, still less the Protectionist Parliament itself, but only and exclusively the pressure from without.'⁴¹ Faced with this actual or threatening pressure the only way the landowners could attempt to defend their position was in turn to seek to gain support among sections of the working class.

'The landed aristocracy having suffered a defeat from the bourgeoisie by the passing of the Reform Bill of 1831, and being assailed "in their most sacred interests" by the cry of the manufacturers for Free Trade and the abolition of the Corn Laws, resolved to resist the middle classes by espousing the cause and claims of the working men against their masters, and especially by rallying around their demands for the limitation of factory labour. So called philanthropic lords were then at the head of all Ten-Hour meetings ... as they feel the approach of their final struggle with the men of the Manchester School, they are again trying to get hold of the short time movement.'⁴² This policy of course found its final conclusion in Disraelian Toryism.

Marx was well aware however that the engagement of the working masses in action by either party, however, carried the immediate chance that the masses might develop their own goals and aims and that the movement might get totally out of the control of the ruling class. This was particularly the case in a country in which there was no reactionary peasant class and where class developments and antagonisms were more advanced than in any other state. The beginnings of such an 'undesirable' dynamic had been clearly visible even at the time of the passing of the Reform Act in 1832: 'The ejection of Wellington from office, because he had declared against Reform; the French Revolution of July (1830); the threatening political unions formed by the middling and working classes at Birmingham, Manchester, London and elsewhere; the rural war; the "bonfires" all over the most fertile counties of England — all these circumstances absolutely forced the Whigs to propose some measure of Reform.'⁴³

The dangers of any mobilisation of the working masses for political action became even greater later in the 19th century when the social structure had evolved still further, when it was the employers themselves who directly had to do the mobilising, and when, most importantly, the working class in Chartism had already begun to appear as an independent force.

As a concrete example of this process Marx gives an account of an 1855 meeting by the radical bourgeoisie to attempt to gain support for a 'National and Constitutional Association' whose aim was to be 'agitating for the overthrow of the oligarchic regime'. Here Marx notes that it was declared that there were: 'Practical men of every class, and especially of the middle classes, with all the attributes for governing the country', and that, 'this gauche allusion to the particular claims of the middle class was received with loud hissing,' following which, 'Mr Murrough, Member of Parliament, now stepped forward, but after considerable opposition was compelled to make way for George Harrison (a worker and a Chartist from Nottingham). "This movement", said Harrison, "is an attempt by the middle classes to gain control of the government, divide among themselves the places and the pensions and establish a worse oligarchy than that now in existence." Then he read aloud an amendment wherein he denounced equally the landed and financial aristocracy as enemies of the people.'⁴⁴

The existence of a mass proletariat, and the degree of advancement of capitalism, therefore, by a curious dialectic, led to a situation in which the industrial bourgeoisie was scared of practically any major reform which might involve a major struggle or opening the floodgates to the working masses. The result was exactly to *avoid* a clash between the different sections of the bourgeoisie. The fear created by the threat of mass social pressure of the working class meant that the bourgeoisie came

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more and more to compromise with the landed aristocracy instead of rushing forward against it. This again had been clearly visible even in the struggle over the Reform Act: 'In 1830 the bourgeoisie preferred to renew the compromise with the landed aristocracy rather than make a compromise with the mass of the English people.'⁴⁵ This set the model for future political development. Instead of radical measures shattering the power of the landed interest, an extremely timid and narrow compromise was reached: 'Never, perhaps, had a mighty and to all appearances, successful popular movement turned into such a mock result. Not only were the working classes altogether excluded from any political influence, but the middle classes themselves discovered that Lord Althorp, the soul of the Reform Cabinet, had not used a rhetorical figure when telling his Tory adversaries that, "the Reform Bill was the most aristocratic act ever offered to this nation".'⁴⁶

Russell, who had introduced the Act: 'Justified the extreme length to which the "Reform Bill had gone" on the plea of barring the possibility of ever going further. He stated coolly that, "the object of the Reform Bill was to increase the predominance of the landed interest, and it was intended as a permanent settlement of a great constitutional question".'⁴⁷ Marx concluded:

'The English middle class are hemmed in by the aristocracy on the one hand and the working classes on the other ... the same industrial wave which has borne the middle class up

the greatest capitalist power in the world had produced an industrial bourgeoisie which was a political mouse

against the aristocracy, is now ... bearing the working classes up against the middle classes. Just as the middle class inflict blows upon the aristocracy, so will they receive them from the working classes. *It is the instinctive perception of this fact that already fetters the action of that class against the aristocracy.* The recent political agitations of the working classes have taught the middle class to hate and fear overt political movements.'⁴⁸

It was a situation, where the bourgeoisie was more scared of the rising power of the working class than it was concerned about its contradictions with the landowners and other dominant political forces, that led to the conservatism and lack of radicalism in the industrial bourgeoisie itself. Thus in the case of the Corn Laws:

'Having obtained, in 1846, a grand victory over the landed aristocracy by the repeal of the Corn Laws, they were satisfied with following up the material advantages of the victory, while they neglected to draw the necessary political and economical conclusions from it ... During all the time from 1846 to 1852 they exposed themselves to ridicule by their battle cry: Broad principles and practical (read small) measures. And why all this? Because in every violent movement they are obliged to appeal to the *working class*. And if the aristocracy is their vanishing opponent the working class is their arising enemy. *They prefer to compromise with the vanishing opponent rather than to strengthen the arising enemy, to whom the future belongs ... Therefore they strive to avoid every forcible collision with the aristocracy.*'⁴⁹

Although occasionally the bourgeoisie might like to threaten the landlords with the working masses, it in no sense actually wanted to mobilise the latter. Thus talking of the methods of the industrial bourgeoisie, Marx concluded: 'Faced with the present oligarchy one would like to speak in the name of the people but at the same time to avoid the people appearing in person when one calls.'⁵⁰ The bourgeoisie understood this as well as Marx and feared that, 'the working men of England (will) arise anew, menacing the middle classes at the very time that the middle classes are finally driving the aristocracy from power.'⁵¹ From this growing cowardice of the bourgeoisie Marx

derived an extremely radical, and far reaching conclusion — that the bourgeoisie was *incapable* of destroying the remnants of the old dominant political layers: 'The feudalism of England will not perish beneath the scarcely perceptible dissolving processes of the middle class: the honour of such a victory is reserved for the working class.'⁵²

The greatest capitalist power in the world had produced an industrial bourgeoisie which was a political mouse.

In conclusion

Following the political crisis of the 1840s British capitalist society entered into a quite new phase of its development — the rise of British imperialism in its full scope. Marx's and Engels' analysis of this forms a separate subject. They however never changed their basic views on the question — as Engels made clear in his classic *England in 1845 and in 1885* which forms the bulk of his 1892 introduction to *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Britain, in short, entered its imperialist phase with an industrial bourgeoisie which had become politically helpless. Most of subsequent British capitalist history falls into place once that fundamental fact is grasped.

This line of argument is of course one which the British Left does not like. It formed the central point of EP Thompson's famous attack on Perry Anderson's *Origins of the Present Crisis*. But for what it is worth, by a rather different mechanism than the one Anderson proposes, it was most definitely the position which Marx himself held.

More important than invoking a name on one side or other of a dispute however is an understanding of Marx's own contribution to the analysis of English history — of which we have only been able to deal with a small part here. It is indeed a superb achievement. A sustained and theorised analysis of the entire history of a society about which he never even had the time to write one sustained book apart from the economic analyses of *Capital*. Judged not by the authority of a name but simply by its penetration and grasp it is the most original and coherent account of English history ever produced.

JOHN ROSS is working on a book for Pluto Press on the Tory Party, and is a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

References in the footnotes below refer to

On Britain — Marx and Engels on Britain, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1962.

Articles on Britain — Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Articles on Britain, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1971.

On Colonialism — Marx and Engels — On Colonialism, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1968.

On Ireland — Marx and Engels on Ireland, Progress Publishers, Moscow 1971.

References

1 'The history of expropriation (of agricultural labour) in different countries assumes different aspects and runs through different phases in different orders of succession and at different periods. In England alone, which we take as our example, has it the classic form.' *Capital* Vol 1, p716.

2 Marx, a review of Guizot's book, 'Why has the English Revolution been successful?' in Marx and Engels *On Britain*, chapter 10, p254.

3 'In England serfdom had practically disappeared in the last part of the 14th century. The immense majority of the population consisted then, and to a still greater extent, in the 15th century, of free peasant proprietors, whatever was the feudal title under which their right of property was hidden.' *Capital* Vol 1, p717.

4 'The prelude of the revolution which laid the foundation of the capitalist mode of production was played in the last third of the 15th century, and the first decade of the 16th. A mass of free proletarians was hurled on the labour market ... Although the royal power ... in its strife after absolute sovereignty forcibly hastened on the dissolution of these bands of retainers, it was by no means the sole cause of the creation of the proletariat. In insolent conflict with King and Parliament the great feudal lords created an incomparably greater proletariat by the forcible driving of the peasantry from the land, to which the latter

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has the same feudal right as the lord himself, and by the usurpation of the common lands. The rapid rise of the Flemish wool manufacturers, and the corresponding rise in the price of wool in England, gave the direct impulse to these evictions.' *Capital* Vol 1, p718.

5 'The process of forcible expropriation of the people received in the 16th century a new and frightful impulse from the Reformation, and from the consequent colossal spoliation of the church property ... The property of the church formed the religious bulwark of the traditional conditions of landed property. With its fall these were no longer possible.' *Capital* Vol 1, p722.

6 *Capital* Vol 1, p744.

7 *Capital* Vol 1, p718.

8 *Capital* Vol 1, p733.

9 *Capital* Vol 3, p799.

10 Review of Guizot, *On Britain*, Ch 10, p254.

11 Marx attributed the overthrow of the restored Stuart monarchy to the 'fear of the new big landed proprietors created by the reformation that Catholicism might be re-established, in which event they would naturally have to restore all the lands of which they had robbed the church.' *Ibid*, p254. 'After the restoration of the Stuarts, the landed proprietors carried by legal means an act of usurpation effected everywhere on the Continent without any legal formality. They abolished the feudal tenure of the land ... The "glorious revolution" brought into power, along with William of Orange, the landlord and the capitalist appropriators of surplus value. They inaugurated the new era by practising on a colossal scale thefts of state lands, thefts that hitherto had been managed more modestly. These estates were given away, sold at a ridiculous figure or even annexed to private lands by direct seizure ... The Crown lands thus fraudulently appropriated, together with the robbery of the Church estates, as far as these had not been lost during the republican revolution, form the basis of the today princely domains of the English oligarchy. The bourgeois capitalists favoured the operation with the view, among others, to promoting free trade in land, to extending the domain of modern agriculture on the large scale farm system, and to increasing their supply of the free agricultural proletarians ready to hand.' *Capital* Vol 1, p724.

12 'First manufacture developed under the constitutional monarchy to a hitherto unknown extent, only to make room subsequently, for big industry, the steam engine and gigantic factories. A more colossal bourgeoisie arises. While the old bourgeoisie fights the French Revolution, the new one conquers the world market.' Review of Guizot, *On Britain*, Ch 10, p255.

13 The Crisis in England and the British Constitution, *On Britain*, p243.

14 Engels, Preface to the Peasant War in Germany, *Marx and Engels Works (ME)*, p241.

15 *The Class Struggles in France*, p28.

16 The Crisis in England, *On Britain*, p243.

17 'The Whigs as well as the Tories form a fraction of the large landed property of Great Britain'. 'The Elections in Britain — Whigs and Tories', *On Britain*, p354. To some extent Marx appears to have considered this a stage in the development of most countries — perhaps because of the old state apparatus giving skill to the old ruling classes or perhaps simply due to the importance of agriculture in the economy. 'Landlords everywhere exert considerable, and in England even overwhelming, influence on legislation.' *Capital* Vol 3, p626. Marx considered the situation in England an extreme case as far as the influence of the landlords was concerned, even after the passing of the Corn Laws.

18 The East India Company — Its History and Results, *Articles on Britain*, p179.

19 'The Union between the Constitutional Monarchy and the monopolising monied interests, between the Company of East India and the "glorious" revolution of 1688 was fostered by the same force by which the liberal interests and a liberal dynasty have at all times and in all countries met and combined, by the force of corruption.' The East India Company, *Articles on Britain*, p174.

20 The East India Company, *Articles on Britain*, p174.

21 Confidential Communication, *On Colonialism*, p258.

22 Whigs and Tories, *On Britain*, p355.

23 'The interests and principles which they represent ... do not belong to the Whigs; they are forced on them by the development of the industrial and commercial class, the Bourgeoisie. After 1688 we find them united with the Bankocracy, just then arising into importance, as we find them in 1846 united with the millocracy.' Whigs and Tories, *On Britain*, p355.

24 Whigs and Tories, *On Britain*, p353.

25 The Future Results of the British Rule in India, *On Colonialism*, p83.

26 Marx gives the following figures: 'From 1818 to 1836 the export of twist from Great Britain to India rose in the proportion of 1 to 5200. In 1824 the export of British muslins to India hardly amounted to 1,000,000 yards while in 1837 it surpassed 64,000,000 yards.' The British Rule in India, *On Colonialism*, p38.

27 The East India Company, *Articles on Britain*, p181.

28 English Property — Strikes — The Turkish Question — India, *On Colonialism*, p42. The unseemly speed was accounted for by the fact that, 'The English oligarchy have a presentiment of the approaching end of their days of glory, and they have a justifiable desire to conclude ... a treaty (to continue the old position of the East India Company) with English legislation, that even in the case of England's escaping soon from their weak and rapacious hands, they shall still retain for themselves and their associates the privilege of plundering India for the space of twenty years.' Affairs in Holland-Denmark-Conversion of the British Debt — India — Turkey and Russia, *On Colonialism*, p28.

29 'English modern industry, in general, relied upon two pivots equally monstrous. The one was the potato as the only means of feeding Ireland and a great part of the English working class. This pivot was swept away by the potato disease and the subsequent Irish catastrophe.' The British Cotton Trade, *On Colonialism*, p250.

30 The War Question — British Population and Trade Returns — Doings of Parliament, *On Ireland*, p68.

31 Whigs and Tories, *On Britain*, p353.

32 Lord John Russell, *On Britain*, p460.

33 *Ibid*, p461.

34 The Chartists, *On Britain*, p360.

35 Political Parties in England, *Articles on Britain*, p296.

36 Whigs and Tories, *On Britain*, p356.

37 'Peel returned to office and abolished the Corn Laws. His act crushed the Tory Party and broke it up.' Lord John Russell, *On Britain*, p462.

38 Whigs and Tories, *On Britain*, p353.

39 The Chartists, *On Britain*, p362.

40 A London Workers Meeting, *On Britain*, p478.

41 Corruption at Elections, *On Britain*, p376.

42 Parliamentary Debates — The Clergy Against Socialism — Starvation, *On Britain*, p382.

43 Lord John Russell, *On Britain*, p452.

44 A Meeting, *On Britain*, p229.

45 The Crisis in England and the British Constitution, *On Britain*, p242.

46 Lord John Russell, *On Britain*, p452.

47 *Ibid*, p454.

48 The English Middle Classes, *On Britain*, p218. (My emphasis)

49 The Chartists, *On Britain*, p360. (My emphasis). It is when this point is grasped that it is also possible to see how such an outmoded group as the Whigs could continue to exist well into the 19th century. Their precise role was to reconcile the landlord element with the rising bourgeoisie under conditions in which both wished to unite against the common enemy of the proletariat. 'In 1831 they extended the political portion of reform as it was necessary in order not to leave the middle class entirely dissatisfied; after 1846 they confined their Free Trade measures so far as was necessary in order to save the landed aristocracy the greatest possible amount of privileges.' Whigs and Tories, *On Britain*, p356. Even after passing the Corn Law repeal they still attempted to carry out this role. Thus in the 1852 elections, 'Whigs, Free Traders and Peelites coalesced to oppose the Tories' *Ibid*, p351. This position however was made ultimately untenable by the fact of the declining economic base of the landowners and by the emergence of independent, and increasingly conservative, representatives of the bourgeoisie. In consequence, with no such role of mediator to play, the social base of the Whigs asserted itself. Thus by 1858 Marx could note: 'Absorption of the Whig faction into the Tory faction, and their common metamorphosis into the party of the aristocracy, as opposed to the new middle class party acting under its own chiefs, under its own banners, with its own watchwords — such is the consummation we are now witnessing in England.' Political Parties in England, *On Britain*, p296. This was consciously prepared by the Tories: 'In order to keep the Whigs out of office, the Tories will yield to the encroachments of the middle class party till they have worried out Whig patience and convinced these oligarchs that, in order to save the interests of their order, they must merge in the conservative ranks and forsake their traditional pretensions to represent the liberal interest or form a power of their own.' *Ibid*, *Articles on Britain*, p296.

50 A Meeting, *On Britain*, p 232.

51 Palmerston and the English Oligarchy, *On Britain*, p426.

52 The English Middle Class, *Articles on Britain*, p220.

KARL MARX 1818-1883

IRELAND: EUROPE'S WEAK LINK

MARTIN COLLINS

'A sore on the face of capitalist Europe'
was how Marx and Engels described Ireland.

Martin Collins assesses the significance
today of their extensive writings on the
Irish question.

You will note, comparing Marx and Engels' Collected Works on Britain and Ireland that one is far heavier than the other. Now both Marx and Engels worked politically in England for a large part of their lives. They argued the fate of the international class struggle would depend on workers in England because that was the centre of the Empire and the strongest point of world capitalism. They insisted that the Workers' International headquarters should be in England so that the whole influence of the world movement could help shape the English section. Yet the Collected Works on Ireland is the heavier. Why?

Marx admitted to being 'preoccupied' by the Irish question. Engels considered taking the time to learn Gaelic to deepen his reading on the history. They wrote extensively and claimed that Ireland was like a 'sore on the face of capitalist Europe'. But when Marx demanded that more attention be paid to Ireland, it wasn't only due to the outrage of over three million Irish starved to death or driven out of their country. He took for granted the commitment of the movement to fight for justice against the savage repression carried out by the English ruling class. What had to be understood, he said, was the direct and absolute interest the English working class had in breaking the connection with Ireland. Until they do, he said, they would 'never accomplish anything'.

Reading Marx and Engels on Ireland is breathtaking. Not only is their analysis in more depth than *any* contemporary writer, finding the roots of historical development with meticulous scientific research; but their advice to workers is based on a thoroughly internationalist conception of struggle and revolution, explaining its implications in clear and precise terms. This article argues that the British Left has torn Marx and Engels' prescriptions away from their strategic context, and left us with a potage of formulae learnt by rote. Nevertheless, those same conclusions properly situated, form an indispensable guide for building a revolutionary party in Britain today.

Traditional Arguments

Marx gave four main arguments to persuade English workers to support the Irish, that are used by the Left today. We can look at how they stand up:

a) Britain's continued occupation of Ireland drives a wedge between Irish and English workers, weakening the unity of the class.

When Marx wrote about a 'wedge' between fellow workers, he said that in all the big industrial centres of England, the English worker *hates* the Irish as a competitor who lowers wages. The bosses realised this, and encouraged the antagonism because they knew it was the 'true secret of their power'. Today, the bosses are able to rely on the collaboration of the labour bureaucracy to hold back the workers' struggles. True, in places like Glasgow the Orange lodges are still powerful, and football fans still fight out battles from the last century on the terraces; but the racist anti-Irish jokes and all the rest only retain a *potential* for a vertical division of the British working class. They are far more important to confirm the boundaries of the British class struggle and to justify the British occupation.

b) By tacitly supporting the occupation of Ireland, British workers side with their rulers, compromising the independence of their class and their political organisations.

Here, Marx was watching attempts to build a workers' party in Britain crippled as Irish workers regularly voted Liberal, supporting their Home Rule policies. All these votes would swing Labour's way, he argued, if only their leaders supported ending the Union. Of course today, Irish voters in Britain vote Labour more consistently than the English. Only in a few areas, like Liverpool, can we trace the remains of Liberal strength based on this phenomenon.

Yet in the battle for the leadership of the Labour Party, where the centre of the fight for class independence is situated today, there are still areas where rightist MPs remain in position because they support British withdrawal from Ireland. The challenge of the Bennite Left would be greatly strengthened by wholeheartedly identifying with the call for getting the troops out.

c) In Ireland the ruling class develops its capacity to confront and contain the struggle of workers which will later be used in England.

The British occupation of Northern Ireland today is a laboratory for testing instruments and techniques of torture and repression to be used the world over. We have seen plastic bullets, CS gas and riot shields brought to Britain. Joint army-police exercises and top brass police chiefs trained in Ireland prepare for the normalisation of the permanent *armed* defence of 'law and order', representing an extension of the strong state. But in Marx's day he viewed the use of an army to enforce British rule in Ireland as a *qualitative* transformation of state power, creating for the first time a standing army which could easily be set against the workers in any area.

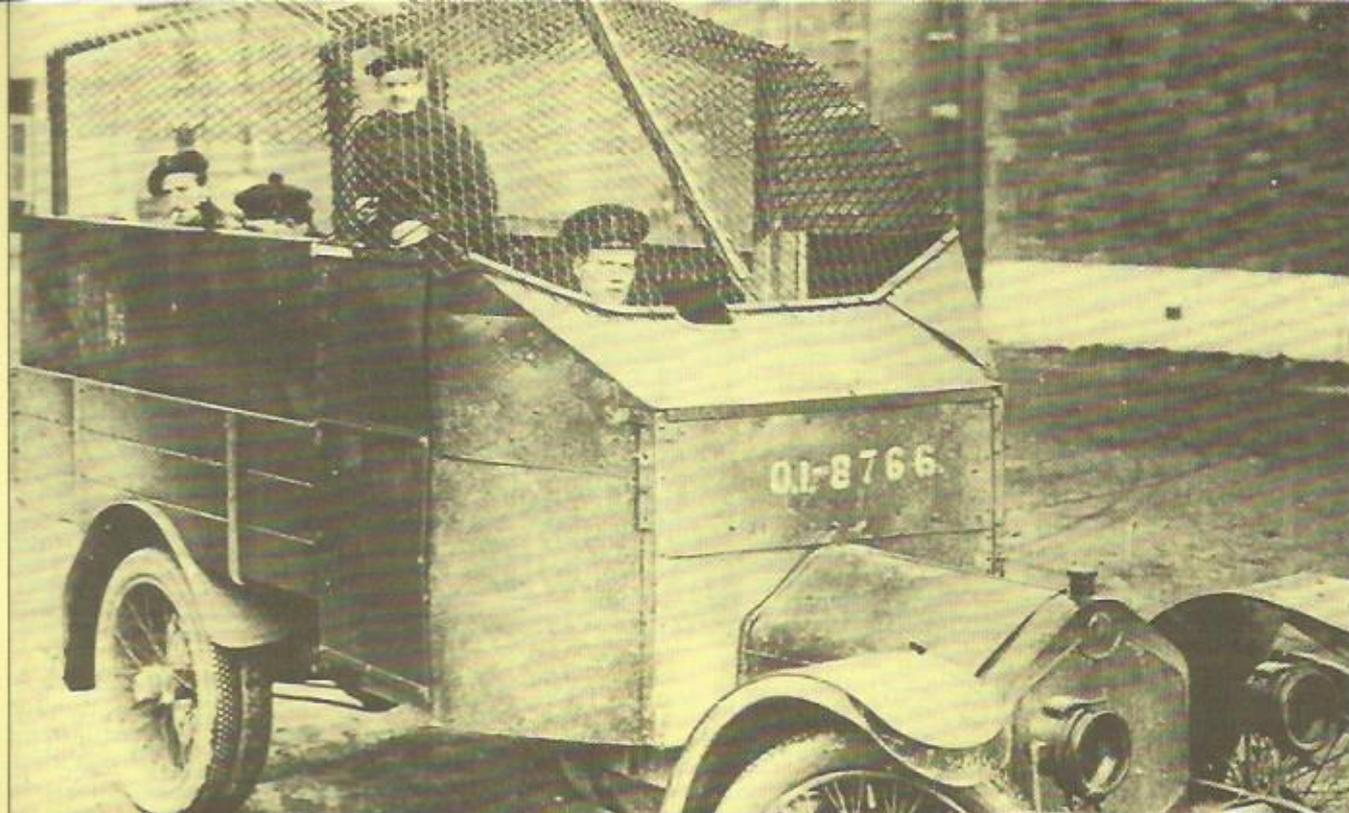
Marx understood the *international* character of the revolutionary process — drawing British tactics from a global strategy

d) The political weakness of the English workers on the Irish question allows the ruling class to introduce attacks on democratic rights which would be otherwise intolerable.

The Habeas Corpus Act was meant to be a guarantee against police arbitrariness. It said that the authorities had to state the reasons for arresting someone, and to release them if they were not brought quickly to court. From the suspension of this Act in 1848, to the introduction of the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act' under a Labour government, the British ruling class has attacked the democratic rights of *all* workers whilst supposedly 'dealing with the Irish problem'. When Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands MP was allowed to die, the British did not want another hunger striker elected in his place. With Labour Party backing, the 'rules' were changed making anyone in prison ineligible to stand for election — thus making it possible for arbitrary arrests to determine who is an 'acceptable' candidate from the ruling class's point of view.

So we see, these arguments still apply today. But although when put together they present a powerful case for British workers to break down the wall of silence veiling the Irish question, they do not in my mind lead to Marx's conclusion that without breaking the domination of Britain over Ireland we can 'never accomplish anything', or elsewhere, 'will never be free'. This was not Marx's fault.

To elevate four arguments which Marx used to illustrate the practical significance of the Irish question 120 years ago to the level of an explanation of his proposed Irish policy is sheer empty-headedness. The most important feature of Marx's work on Ireland was seized upon instantly by both Lenin and



The notorious 'Black and Tans'

Trotsky. Marx understood the *international* character of the revolutionary process — drawing British tactics from a global strategy. Knowing that the political backwardness of the English workers made an appeal for world revolution more of a posture than a practical proposal for action, he concentrated his arguments on raising the existing consciousness of the workers with readily understandable illustrations and examples. This never meant to bypass the strategic tasks of the British workers, but to develop existing struggles in a direction which both gave practical aid to the Irish struggle and strengthened the political organisation of the English workers.

The nationalistic and sectarian traditions of the British Left have led them to extract from Marx only what they want to hear. The first thing they want to hear is that *the* most important job in the world is for *British* revolutionists to raise consciousness of the *British* workers. The second, is that the issue of Ireland assumes such importance that the *actual* struggles of English workers count for nothing. This has two consequences: on the one hand a distorted view on how to aid the struggle in Ireland, because it is looked at through the prism of 'the best way to clarify English workers'; on the other hand a justification of an abstention from the real struggles in Britain substituting imaginary ones. Compare for instance the way large sections of the British Left respond to Benn's call for British troops to be withdrawn from Ireland — what does this mean for them? An opportunity once again to show that Benn (by proposing United Nations troops go in instead) is a muddle-head. Compare this to Marx's advice in a similar situation: 'You should never look for general principles in the speeches of English politicians — only for what is useful for the *immediate* aim'. If the immediate aim is getting the troops out of Ireland, the advice fell on stony ground.

International Strategy

Throughout their lives, Marx and Engels were awed by the determination of the Irish. After every attempt to exterminate them, within a short time the Irish had risen again. 'Give me two hundred thousand Irishmen', said Engels 'and I could overthrow the entire English monarchy.' But it took the experience of the waves of revolution that shook Europe in the mid-nineteenth century to make them realise the potential of that combativity.

It was only in England that the material conditions for a workers' revolution existed. Marx urged the International Association to do all in its power to hasten this, as it would 'throw the decisive social weight onto the scales in favour of social emancipation generally.' Workers' revolution, would, it

was thought, follow the example of the French Revolution, and spread like bush fire, especially to Ireland where the exploited and oppressed were waiting for such an opportunity.

But by the 1860's, Marx began to reconsider this view of how the revolution would develop. He then recognised that the ability of the English ruling class to maintain its position, *rested* on its domination of Ireland. The power of English capitalism at the centre of the Empire and European capitalism dependent on English landlordism, the bulwark of which was in Ireland. This meant, he said 'the only point where you can hit England really hard is Ireland'.

Landlords in Ireland were seen not as the 'local dignitaries and representatives of the nation' as they were in England, but as its 'mortally hated oppressors'. The revolutionary fervour of the Irish made the overthrow of landlordism there 'a hundred times easier'. If landlordism in Ireland could be overthrown, then capitalism could be defeated in England. As long as English workers supported England's domination over Ireland, they made their rulers '*invulnerable* in England itself'.

It was therefore the special task of the Central Council of the Workers' International in London, to 'awaken a consciousness in the English workers that the national emancipation of Ireland was no question of abstract justice or humanitarian concern, but the first condition of their own revolution.' These views represented Marx's first attempts to work out a strategy for revolution that took into account the consequences of the uneven development produced by capitalism as an international system. Later of course Trotsky was to elaborate this further in his theory of Permanent Revolution.

Today of course we are not fighting an English system of landlordism which is the bulwark of the Empire. So, is Marx's conception of a *strategic* link between the Irish and English revolutions outdated?

The hunger strike

Recently, a group of comrades returned from Cuba. They were impressed by the politicisation of the Cuban masses, how every casual remark in a launderette or cafe led to a stream of questions reflecting a thirst for knowledge of the struggle in Britain. 'Ah!', they said, 'you come from Britain. What do you think about the hunger strikes?' A casual remark with an acute comment. To find out about the British struggle, ask about Ireland.

The recent struggle in Ireland, reaching its high point between May and November 1981, affected not only the whole of Ireland. It was a struggle of *international* significance affecting every social class and party in Britain. Anyone today who thinks that the British ruling class will be defeated at home by



Citizen's army surveys Dublin in 1916

any combination of economic and political struggle lives in a dream. The historical position of the British state at the head of the Empire has irrevocably *internationalised* the struggle against it.

Trotsky explained that the contradictions of the world system are concentrated and focused in the imperialist heartlands. So, it remains the case that the *decisive* factor in defeating the British ruling class is the working class in this country; it is still true that the strength of that ruling class flows from its economic, political and ideological role as a *world* power. The British working class alone will not defeat it. It is also true that the British working class is unable to challenge that power whilst dominated by a labour bureaucracy, itself a product of imperialism, and itself having a material interest in maintaining imperialism.

We draw two conclusions from this. First, that wherever people rise up to fight British imperialism they are fighting and weakening *our* enemies, and helping us. Secondly, the internationalist struggle of British workers to support them represents the strongest possible assault on the labour bureaucracy — both in terms of its ideological hold over the workers, and in terms of attacking the material sources of its own power.

It is not true, as some imagine, that Ireland with its Republican traditions going back centuries is a backwater. Ireland is in the *mainstream* of world politics. From the French Revolution onwards, every rise of the world revolution has seen an offensive struggle by the Irish against British rule. Dates familiar to us — the 1780s, 1798, 1848, the 1860s, 1905, all mark decisive periods both from the point of view of Irish history and of *world* history.

economically and politically, Ireland is the weak link in the chain for European capitalism

It was the Irish who first put Lenin's slogan into practice of, 'turning the imperialist war into a civil war', rising for the Republic in 1916. It was the Irish who drew the lessons of the American civil rights movement, the Tet Offensive and the May 1968 events in Paris, creating a force that brought down the reactionary Stormont regime.

In world politics, it is the *British* working class which is in a backwater, isolated by the strength of its ruling class and the stranglehold of its labour bureaucracy. To link our struggles with those of the Irish is not a detour from world events, but the best way of bringing ourselves into line. The imperialist domination of Ireland by Britain ensures that there are objective tendencies working in this direction.

The Irish challenge to the British state

There is no need to dwell on the obvious fact that the high points of the Irish struggle around the national question focus

on the military presence of the British and the policies associated with it. In the North, the entire economic base and political superstructure are underwritten and propped up by the resources of the British state. There is a direct sense in which any form of class struggle is a struggle against the British state.

Applying this to the South remains more contentious in the movement. In terms of strategy, no class in the South can advance without engaging in a national struggle for or against British imperialism. This can be shown quite simply by looking at the two issues which dominate Western European politics as a whole — rearmament and the drive to austerity.

The Southern economy is in complete financial crisis, ranking alongside other dependent countries like Argentina or Mexico more than other European economies. As something like 60 per cent of profits from the South end up in the pockets of British capitalists, the British have a strong interest in getting the economy out of crisis. This can only be done to their satisfaction by the same kind of political and economic attacks we are familiar with in Britain — cuts, unemployment, attacks on union rights, etc. Yet the ruling class in the South is not strong enough to carry them out. Its economic structure has been thoroughly distorted by imperialism — firstly in its formation, when priority investment in industry went to the North, and secondly through partition, after which it was forced to rely on investment induced by get-rich-quick projects tempting enough for American and other international backers. The southern economy could not withstand a fraction of the recession that has occurred in Britain without catastrophic consequences.

The southern ruling class does not have the political strength to do it, partially because its formation came about only through a compromise between the Irish workers and the British imperialists, and partially because of the absence of a powerful trade union bureaucracy that can hold back the workers' struggles. The working class and small farmers (a vital component of the struggle) are strong and have suffered no major defeat since partition. The working class is demographically extremely young which makes for a volatility otherwise lacking. But when it moves into struggle, as it did for example occupying the Tuam sugar plant to prevent a closure, it has only the strength to neutralise the government, winning stays of execution, and so on. To permanently guarantee jobs in the area, it needs a government which can challenge the multinational investors and the unviability of any industry based on one half of a partitioned nation. Neither class can go onto the offensive whilst its horizons are limited to the 26 Counties of the South.

The United States government is putting massive pressure on every European country to participate in the western arms build up. Whilst a majority of investment in the South comes from America, there is big economic muscle behind the drive to incorporate the South in NATO and shore up Europe's western flank. But southern workers regard Ireland's neutrality (despite being compromised by EEC membership) as a political gain of the national struggle. Quite apart from the economic questions

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involved (NATO membership would mean more than trebling arms expenditure), both the southern ruling class and the labour bureaucracy maintain their position through the political demobilisation of the southern workers. A frontal attack on the neutrality issue is too risky. The consequences would be immediate and drastic. We saw in the most recent elections Fianna Fail leader Haughey make *one speech* accusing Fine Gael of collaboration with the British, and opinion polls moved in his favour by 10 per cent within a week. Over the Malvinas issue, the Irish government was politically forced to distance itself from Britain. The united European front broke down.

So, economically and politically, Ireland is the weak link in the chain for European capitalism. It is a weak link we must seize hold of and break decisively.

each time revolutionary ideas have gained influence in the British working class, mass currents have been organised to support the Irish

The whole direction of the Anglo-Irish talks is aimed at holding that chain together. Whilst the immediate priority is joint collaboration to defeat the military/political impact of the nationalist vanguard; behind this lie whole areas of discussion on Ireland's economic structure, its energy and defence policy — a long term strategic view to use the southern ruling class to look after imperialism's economic and political interests.

The urgent need for the Irish workers is to create an equally far sighted political leadership. One that can overcome the debilitating affects of the division created by partition. In Ireland, every struggle, whether it is against redundancies, for CND, for womens' rights, or in support of political status for prisoners, can only be led forward on condition that it becomes an all-Ireland struggle, inevitably confronting both the British state and its allies in the southern government.

In Britain

By looking at the structure of British society, you can see what the effects of linking up the British and Irish struggle would be.

Right from its birth, the Irish question has shaped the formation of the British ruling class. Cromwell's reactionary gesture of paying off his supporters with Irish land meant both the defeat of the Levellers, and the possibility for the King of recruiting for a restorationist force in Ireland, ensuring the maintenance of a parasitic monarchy for another 300 years.

The importance of the remaining Union is that a key section of the British ruling class is still based in the North of Ireland. The stable political party of the ruling class in Britain from Disraeli onwards was the Conservative and Unionist Party. Only in the aftermath of the crisis inside the ruling class when the Stormont government was unable to contain the dynamic of the mass civil rights movement, was the party broken up into its component parts. Since then, the Unionists in the North have fragmented further. This break up of the political institutions of the ruling class can only be positive for us.

But the Unionist bourgeoisie remains the most reactionary section of the British ruling class. It has defied parliamentary rule by taking up arms against it. In 1974 in the Ulster Workers Council strike it managed to win over a section of the army to defy the government, and it is the only section of the ruling class to have a section of the working class armed and ready to defend its interests outside of the 'legitimate' framework of the army.

The preservation of the Union keeps open the possibility of the ruling class as a whole using that power for a counter-revolutionary adventure. Breaking Britain's link with Ireland is not just a good way of avoiding that sort of project. For the Irish working class as a whole, it represents the *only* way that Loyalist workers can be broken from their bosses. The paper

thin 'workers' unity around bread and butter issues' favoured by *Militant* merely prolongs the existence of the sectarian state in the North.

We can look at the formation of the working class in a similar way. As Marx emphasised, a large proportion of the British working class is of Irish origin, its combativity is raised by successes in Ireland. It is indeed unfortunate that the ideology of the class as a whole is dominated, not by Irish workers, but by the labour bureaucracy. But we should note, that each time revolutionary ideas have gained strong influence inside the British working class, there have also been massive currents organised to support the Irish.

The labour bureaucracy in Britain is a product of imperialism, and a product of the Union. Its most reactionary section is based in the North of Ireland. The trade union leadership has a material interest in maintaining its links in the North — financial returns from the province outway expenditure on organising there. But there is also a strong political interest at stake. In powerful industrial unions, the Belfast offices run alongside Loyalist paramilitaries, like fiefdoms which give the right wing bureaucracy a solid base of support. This is particularly useful now when a section of the left bureaucracy threatens to back Benn. We have every interest in breaking up this reactionary block, and the union bureaucracy as a whole — a decisive blow can be struck by backing all moves to break British Labour's links with the North.

The power of the oppressed

Wherever the national struggle of the oppressed threatens to defeat the imperialist power, we can see a political crisis inside the oppressor country of massive proportions. The Vietnamese struggle traumatised American society and ended up changing the balance of forces on a world scale. The struggles of the people of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau toppled the Caetano dictatorship in Portugal, opening up a revolutionary situation there. The struggle of the Algerian people toppled the Fourth Republic and led to the seizure of power by the Gaullist military in France. In all three imperialist countries, the ruling class was not able to go on ruling in the old way. Whether or not a positive outcome to that crisis will result is the responsibility of the working class and its leadership.

Will the working class in Britain be prepared? By following Marx's method, we can see that strengthening the links between the struggle of Irish and British workers by acting to break the Union will take us forward, and weaken our enemies.

Tory MP John Biggs Davidson said: 'What happens in Londonderry is very important to what can happen in London. If we lose in Belfast, we may have to fight in Brixton or Birmingham.' At the high point of the H-Block struggle in Ireland, the British ruling class did find itself fighting in Brixton and Birmingham. Also in Toxteth and Moss Side. It put this down to the 'copy cat tactics of the youth'. The identification of the youth with Irish revolutionaries is *exactly* what we need.

Whilst it is not *easy* to make a revolution anywhere in the world, the fact remains that in Ireland it is one hundred times easier than Britain. Practical support for the development of the struggle in Ireland by campaigns such as that to ban the plastic bullets and for the withdrawal of troops, weakens our enemies and hastens our own revolution.

The message from Marx must be this. No moralistic appeals or hypothetical judgements. Examine the international situation, look at all the classes and see where their struggle is going, attack imperialism at its weakest links, base the building of a workers' party upon the dynamic of the struggle, and lead it to its conclusion. It doesn't date a bit. There is a need in Britain to become 'preoccupied' with the Irish question once more, not because of some special duty but because it holds the key to open a wider perspective for revolution.

MARTIN COLLINS was the organiser of the Ban Plastic Bullets conference held in February this year and is a member of the executive of the Labour Committee on Ireland.

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STORMING HEAVEN

NICK ROBIN

On 18 March 1871, the workers of Paris seized power and ruled for two months. Theirs was the first proletarian democracy in history. Nick Robin reassesses the Commune.

Marx and the First International had counselled the workers of Paris against rising in such hostile circumstances, but they threw their full support behind them when they did. Members of the International participated in the movement with the enthusiastic backing of their Executive Committee. Marx, in London, wrote of this 'glorious harbinger of a new society (whose) martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class'.¹

In 1870, the imperial adventures of Emperor Louis Napoleon, Bonaparte's nephew and the absolute ruler of France since the revolution of 1848, resulted in the defeat of the French armies by Bismarck of Prussia and the capture of the Emperor himself. On 4 September 1870, with the Prussian armies at the gates of Paris, a Republic was once again declared in France. The French army was crushed and demoralised, and Paris was defended by the armed people, known as the National Guard. The French bourgeoisie was frantic to make peace with the Prussians in order to turn on its own insurrectionary subordinate classes. It organised itself in a 'Party of Order' of monarchists, Bonapartists, and as Marx put it 'all that was dead in France' and set up a 'National Assembly' at Versailles outside Paris. The remnants of the army were withdrawn from Paris and regrouped in Versailles. The leader of this decadent assemblage was Auguste Thiers who, according to Marx, 'was consistent only in his greed for wealth and his hatred of men that produce it'.² His was truly 'a regime of avowed class terrorism and deliberate insult towards the "vile multitude"'.³

Armed Paris, the only obstacle to the counter-revolution was besieged and starving. Thiers' Assembly could not deceive the National Guard into giving up their arms and ending their fight for the defence of the republic and for revolutionary Paris. So, on 18 March, with the Prussian armies still stationed at the gates of the city and collecting massive reparations from the National Assembly, the 'Versaillese' sent a battalion under General Lecomte to seize 400 guns — which they claimed as 'state property' — from Montmartre in the very heart of proletarian Paris. The local population fraternised with the troops. The only shots fired that day were those that killed General Lecomte killed by his own soldiers.

The Central Committee, a body of delegates from the National Guard battalions in each of Paris' twenty neighbourhoods (arrondissements), issued a manifesto in the name of the population: 'The Proletarians of Paris amidst the failure of the ruling classes, have understood that the hour has struck for them to save the situation by taking into their own hands the direction of public affairs ... They have understood that it is their imperious duty and their absolute right to render themselves masters of their own destinies, by seizing the governmental power'.⁴ To which Marx adds in *The Civil War in France*: 'But the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for their own purpose'.⁵ This was the prime lesson of the Commune and one well-understood by the Communards themselves; their experience prompted Marx and Engels to make their only correction to the *Communist Manifesto* to include the necessity

of the destruction of the bourgeois state.

The Central Committee immediately prepared elections and on 28 March the newly-elected representatives of the people of Paris declared the Commune and with it the destruction of the old state machine. The standing army was abolished, the separation of church and state decreed and enforced, the police and army were replaced by citizen's militias whose officers were elected and instantly recallable, as were the judges. In the Commune's short life, two chiefs of the militia, Cluseret and Rossel, were both sacked by popular demands. The brutal and authoritarian *Code Napoleon*, a 'parasitical excrescence upon civil society'⁶, was abolished at a stroke. In place of the old state with 'its ubiquitous and complicated military, bureaucratic, clerical and judiciary organs (enmeshing) the living civil society like a boa constrictor'⁷, a completely new form of state was brought into existence.

The Commune was a working body in which legislative and executive functions were combined and delegates, and other state officials, were paid no more than the wages of skilled workers. Nine commissions were set up from among the representatives to oversee the police, labour, education and so on. Factories abandoned by their owners were put to work under the control of the workers. The Mint, for example, was managed by Camélinat, a member of the International. Night baking was abolished, war widows and orphans were provided for, pawnshops were closed as contradicting the right of workers to their tools and to credit. This was the very antithesis of the Imperial state: 'The reabsorption of the state power by society, as its own living forces controlling and subduing it, by the popular masses themselves, forming their own force instead of the organised force of their suppression'.⁸

All this was prosecuted with the maximum order and efficiency while outside the city, the execrable Thiers plotted his invasion and fulminated against the 'unknown' band of criminals which had Paris in its grip. Who were these men and women of the Commune? As Marx had written after the elections: 'Never were elections so sifted, never delegates fuller representing the masses from which they had sprung. To the objection of the outsiders that they were unknown — in point of fact that they were only known to the working classes — they proudly answered "so were the twelve apostles" and they answered by their deeds'.⁹ They were by no means all members of the International; the majority were Blanquists, Proudhonist utopians, and Jacobins, representatives of previous periods in the class struggles in France in which the independent voice of the proletariat was drowned out by the masses of petty-bourgeois, artisans, and intellectuals, all with grievances of their own against the bourgeois dictatorship. These forces were united in the Commune.

There were people like the 24 year old Paul Rigault, head of the Commune police, who started in office by arresting the Archbishop of Paris and whose Jacobin hatred of the clergy is expressed in his questioning of some Jesuit priests. 'What is your profession', he asked. 'Servant of God'. 'Where does this master live?'. 'Everywhere'. 'Take this down', says Rigault to his secretaries, 'So and so, alleging himself to be servant of one God, vagrant'.¹⁰

There was Louise Michel, organiser of women's battalions of the National Guard, who said from the dock after the defeat of the Commune: 'I belong entirely to the social revolution, and I declare I accept the responsibility of all my acts. I accept it entirely and without reserve. You accuse me of having participated in the execution of generals. To this I answer, yes.'¹¹ Gustave Courbet, the well-known painter, was put in charge of the Commission of Education: he was as famous for his 'revolutionary system of absinthe drinking' as for his passionate espousal of utopian socialism.¹² The aged revolutionist, Auguste Blanqui, was elected delegate to the Commune from

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The National Guard on the Commune barricades 1871

two different arrondissements despite his incarceration in the south of France. It was Blanqui who observed of Rigault that he was 'nothing but a guttersnipe, but a policeman of genius'.¹³ There were many veterans of the barricades from 1848 and subsequently of many prison cells, among them Delescuse and Feliz Pyat.

On 12 April, six days after the public burning of the guillotine, the whole of working class Paris assembled to observe the destruction of the chief symbol of the Empire. The enormous column in the Place Vendôme, on top of which stood a statue of Napoleon as the Emperor Caesar, was reduced to rubble by skilful engineering. The column, the epitome of a savage and warlike dictatorship, had been inscribed 'a monument of barbarism, symbol of brute force and false glory, an affirmation of militarism, a negation of international right'¹⁴ and draped with the red flag. To the strains of the Marseillaise the Place Vendôme was renamed the Place Internationale: a fitting tribute to the internationalism of the Communards who accepted as citizens the oppressed workers of the entire world, who appointed as two of its principal military defenders the Poles Dombrowski and Wroblewski, and designated the Prussian internationalist, Frankel, its 'minister' of labour.

The destruction of the Vendôme column was a symbolic act but a powerful one. Lissagaray in his participant account *History of the Paris Commune* (translated into English by

Marx's daughter Eleanor) puts it like this: 'It showed that a war of classes was to supercede the war of nations.' it was not surprising, therefore, that 'one of the first acts of the victorious bourgeoisie was to again raise this enormous block, this symbol of their sovereignty. To lift up Caesar on his pedestal they needed a scaffolding of 30,000 corpses.'¹⁵

To look for a detailed governmental programme in the Commune is a waste of time. Its short existence was absorbed in a life and death struggle against the armies of the bourgeoisie. Yet the International recognised in the Commune the germs of a new society. Sometimes, it is true, it was, in Lissagaray's words, like 'a concert without a conductor, each instrumentalist playing what he liked, confusing his own score with his neighbours'.¹⁶ Yet the Communards taught a crucial lesson to the international workers' movement: 'That the political instrument of their enslavement cannot serve as the political instrument of their emancipation'.¹⁷ The experience of the workers in power was worth a thousand books or articles. The news from Paris spread fast and demonstrations of support broke out all over Europe; throughout the major cities of France, the Commune was declared.

In Paris itself the debt-ridden middle classes aligned themselves with the working class against the predatory bourgeois creditors; the workers championed their demands to be rid of clerical oppression. The middle classes, Marx wrote: 'Feel that only the working class can emancipate them from

KARL MARX 1818-1883

priest rule, convert science from an instrument of class rule into a popular force ... Science can only fully play its genuine part in the Republic of Labour'.¹⁸ The Commune commanded the overwhelming support of all sections of the masses. On 29 March the Freemasons joined the Commune with a demonstration of 10,000 headed by a banner declaring 'Love one another' after Thiers had rejected their attempts at reconciliation.

The Commune legislated the abolition of conscription and the taxation of the bourgeoisie to pay for the war, the key demands of the peasantry. This was another lesson of the Commune, the lesson of Permanent Revolution, that the working class is the only class which can lead the social emancipation and liberation of all the other oppressed classes against their rulers. The Commune also put paid to the ideologies of utopian socialism by proving that the real movement of the working class would be the agent of social change.

But we jump too far ahead; there was, after all, a further lesson of the Commune — the bloodthirsty character of a ruling class confronted by an insurrectionary people. The collaboration of the Prussian army with Thiers and the disorganisation and technical inferiority of the Commune's forces ensured that when the army did enter Paris on 21 May, it took only eight days to destroy the Commune; the provincial Communes by then had already been crushed. As the barricades crumbled, the ruling class and its army indulged in an orgy of massacres and blood-letting. The population of Paris was no more than half a million; yet between 20,000 and 30,000 were killed of whom perhaps only a quarter fell in battle.

In his diary, M. Audéoud, a Paris bourgeois, wrote: 'What a joy to see them lying there, their flesh in rags ... it is a pleasure to bathe and wash our hands in their blood!'¹⁹ 40,000 were taken prisoner. The Commune's final death agony came with the massacre at the cemetery of Père Lachaise where 147 National Guards were slaughtered on the site now known as the 'wall of the Federals'. Engels described the wall as 'a mute but eloquent testimony to the frenzy of which the ruling class is capable as soon as the working class dares to stand up for its rights'.²⁰ Thus was order restored in Paris.

The trials, executions, and deportations to the Pacific colony of New Caledonia, dragged on for five more years. Marx commented: 'A glorious civilization, indeed, the great problem of which is how to get rid of the heaps of corpses it made after the battle was over'.²¹

It is well known that Marx and the International had counselled against a rising of the Paris working class against the bourgeoisie while the Prussian army was still on the offensive. But Marx never placed himself outside the living movement of the working class whatever his detailed criticisms of this or that aspect of their struggle. When the Communards rose, Marx's solidarity and admiration was total. In a letter to Kugelmann, he wrote: 'What elasticity, what historical initiative, what a capacity for sacrifice in these Parisians! After six months of hunger and ruin caused by internal treachery more than by the external enemy, they rise, beneath Prussian bayonets, as if there had never been a war between France and Germany and the enemy were not still at the gates of Paris! History has no like example of their greatness!'.²²

Despite their bloody defeat, the workers of Paris, by 'storming heaven', vindicated in practice many of the central ideas which were Marx's life's work: 'A new point of departure of world-wide significance has been gained', Marx wrote to Kugelmann.²³ The Petersburg Soviet of 1905 was the first confirmation of this and the October revolution its victory. When Lenin left for Finland in July 1917 he took with him two books: Clausewitz' *The Art of War* and Marx's *Civil War in France*. He arrived back secretly in Russia two months later having jettisoned Clausewitz and written *State and Revolution*. Paraphrasing Marx he wrote that the Commune was 'the political form "at last discovered"', by which the smashed state can and must be replaced²⁴ — a revision, incidentally, of his previous position in *Two Tactics for Social Democracy* in



Gustave Courbet

which the Commune is criticised for 'confusing democratic and socialist tasks'.²⁵

The Commune heralded a new era. The dispossessed and exploited took power and governed without bosses or generals. The Communards not only showed the workers of the world the possibility of a new society free of exploitation, they created one. One hundred years after Marx's death, sixty years since Stalinism contaminated the notion of proletarian dictatorship, Marxists should forcibly reassert the true, the genuinely democratic, content that our tradition attaches to these words. With Engels we point: 'Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'.²⁶

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International Features

ORGANISING IN LATIN AMERICA

ADOLFO GILLY

The dictatorships in Latin America suddenly appear vulnerable again to popular mobilisations in defence of democratic rights.

Adolfo Gilly argues that the central task for the Latin American working class is the conquest of political independence from the bourgeoisie.

During the last fifteen years, the economy, society and state of the Latin American countries have undergone profound transformations. These changes took place in large part under the influence of the increasing internationalisation of capital and of the work process. They have opened up — or are opening up — the way for a change in the mode of domination of the bourgeoisie and the bloc of bourgeois fractions in power. Industry, agro-business and wage labour have spread further, while pre-capitalist relations of domination and exploitation have been reduced in importance — although not eliminated. These countries have modernised and the class struggle likewise has taken more modern forms.

The new dominant bourgeois bloc, associated with imperialism through the multinationals and finance, has managed, albeit with some conflict, to keep the initiative throughout these changes. The working class and the wage earners as a whole have had to endure these changes with only defensive battles. These occasionally enabled the workers to defend some of their positions and at other times led to disasters such as that in Argentina in 1976.

The victory of the Nicaraguan insurrection of July 1979 may signal a change of this trend — one foreshadowed by earlier strike movements, and general strikes, in Colombia, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil and even Argentina. However the new trend is not yet marked and generalised on the political level.

It is precisely on this level that the Latin American working class must come to grips with the foremost task which has not yet been achieved in most countries: the conquest of political independence from the bourgeoisie and its state ie the organisation of a *mass workers party*. This is the long-standing task which Engels had described in an 1892 letter to Kautsky: 'In our tactic, one thing is definitively established for all countries and the contemporary epoch: to bring the workers to form their own independent party, in opposition to all bourgeois parties'. Except in Cuba and Chile (or the particular cases of Nicaragua and El Salvador) this goal has not been achieved. This is true in particular for the countries which have the largest population and which are the most industrialised such as Brazil, Argentina and Colombia.

In most Latin American countries, the working class is organised in trade unions, but remains under the ideological domination of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois leaderships. The leaderships of the trade unions and workers' confederations are the main transmission belts for this influence. The Argentine case, with its Peronist leadership, is the most graphic example of the phenomenon. But the Bolivian, Brazilian, Mexican, Colombian and Venezuelan cases are not qualitatively different.

The working class in Latin America thus combines a relatively high level of trade union organisation, rooted in old traditions of struggle (the typical case being Bolivia) with a relatively low level of independent political organisation. The combination of these two factors indicates the level of consciousness reached by the working class which is not the same as

its level of militancy) and therefore represents a concrete starting point for the definition of its political tasks.

In the past some of the socialist, communist and revolutionary leftist currents and parties in Latin America have tended to view the unions merely as instruments of their leadership. They ignored their function as mass organs of the working class which concentrate its organised experience of struggle. Because these currents confuse the unions with the leadership they have drawn the conclusion that they must advance the workers' class consciousness through other paths. These forces set up 'independent', but minority and isolated, trade unions, carried out 'focoist' guerrilla experiments, and practised various types of revolutionary propagandism, in particular among students during the 1960s and 1970s.

These experiences and failures led much of the Latin American Left to change its position and reaffirm the importance of the mass trade unions as historic steps forward by the proletariat. However this originally healthy reaction has led in many cases to the opposite extreme: idealising their leaderships, making concessions to the methods they use in the unions, believing that their periodical verbal radicalisation, which is not a political radicalisation, corresponds to the needs of the wage earners — rather than to the bureaucracies' need to readjust their role as intermediaries for bourgeois domination.

the working class in Latin America combines a high level of trade union organisation with a low level of independent political organisation

An excellent example of this was the prelude to one of the Latin American proletariat's greatest catastrophes, the Argentinian military coup of March 1976. This witnesses a 'turn to the left' by the CGT which, a few months earlier, had threatened general strikes against the preparations for the coup. The Peronist bureaucracy called for a large number of nationalisations and, demanded other gains. At the same time, however,

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Chilean workers demonstrate under the Popular Unity government

they accepted the political leadership of Isabel Peron who was protecting the paramilitary gangs of the Anti-Communist Alliance and acted as godmother for the chaos which led to the coup d'état.

There was in fact a very specific reason for this verbal left turn of the Peronist trade union leadership. There was a genuine radicalisation of the Argentine workers following the momentous general strike against the austerity plan of Isabela Peron, and her minister Rodrigo, in mid-1975. This radicalisation was led by coordinating bodies which emerged from the internal commissions of the large factories of Cordoba, Buenos Aires, Rosario and other regions. This began in the workplaces without breaking with the national trade unions, and built an alternative leadership which, in the concrete circumstances existing at that time, was able to counteract the sabotaging action of the upper bureaucracy allied to Isabela.

But this movement did not develop its own political expression. The workers remained Peronist for historical reasons which we cannot discuss in this article. Paradoxically though, the very strength demonstrated by the proletariat in the general strike accelerated the process to a coup d'état, as an emergency measure designed to lock the process of autonomous radicalisation and destroy workers' organisation at the point of production: ie the internal commissions, the factory delegates, the coordinating commissions and with them, the trade unions. These were the real targets of the methodical and scientific massacre launched and continued to this day by the Argentine military in power. It consciously sees its regime as a system of government and a means of reorganising capitalism.

This specific case of Argentina shows simultaneously both the paths through which the politically bourgeois workers' leaderships can actually be bypassed and the potential of independent politicisation of the working class through their trade union organisations. The coordinating commissions counterposed in a centralised manner the *politics* of the factory internal commissions, of the workers' organs at the workplace (for a general strike is always a political decision) to the *politics* of the upper trade union bureaucracy. The internal commissions were actual organs of the trade unions and not alien, counterposed, or alternative to the trade unions.

Similar processes developed, with different national characteristics, in the Bolivian workers' movement. Here they were centred in particular around the decisions adopted by the miners' union — whose supreme organ in each pit is the general

assembly of all workers. The movements and organisations of the Brazilian proletariat followed a similar path from 1977 until the big strike of the metalworkers and autoworkers in April-May 1980. In this the factory commissions, elected delegates and general assemblies of the workers acted collectively as the prime movers.

The factory organisations (commissions, committees, councils, etc) formed by delegates of work units or departments, elected and subject to recall, and *regular general assembly* functioning as a collective decision-making body, are the common features that emerged in the high points of these broad trade union movements in Brazil, Bolivia and Argentina.

The repressive measures used against the Brazilian metalworkers' strike also demonstrate, as the repression of the Argentine dictatorship had earlier shown in a more terrifying way, that the state and the bourgeois bloc at its helm cannot tolerate the development of such forms of proletarian organisation which grow centralised beyond certain limits. The traditional trade union bureaucracy also dislikes these forms of organisation insofar as they call into question its role as a *mediator* between the bosses and the state and expose it to the deadly threat of democratic control by rank and file organs.

The state, the bourgeoisie and the trade union bureaucracy can coexist with this type of organisation only as long as the expansion of capitalist economies allowed them to make concessions to the workers' movement and thus to maintain the influence of bourgeois ideology on the workers and the control of the trade union leaderships over the factory organisations. This became less and less possible in the late 1970s as capitalism in Latin America entered a new state of crisis.

The reason for the conflict was fairly simple: while the trade unions tends to emphasise the struggle for better wages (a struggle which the bourgeoisie fully accepts in the framework of the market), the factory organs elected by the workers tend to emphasise the struggle over the organisation of the work process within the factory (a struggle which capital cannot accept in the realm of production because it challenges a kernel of its power, the right to decide how and where to use the labour power it has purchased through wages).

The factory committees or internal commissions and the workshop delegates, are the workers' instruments to protest and struggle against the deteriorating working conditions imposed by capital: speedup, increase of workloads, health hazards, cancellation of work breaks, lack of safety and protective

International Features

measures, police control by bosses, and all the countless other aspects of the despotic and dictatorial regime imposed on the workers during their workday (ie during the greater part of their conscious life).

In the new conditions of the Latin American economies, determined by the internationalisation of the labour and production process, industrial growth (and therefore the growth of the proletariat) and the world crisis, we can foresee that the focus of class conflict will be located precisely in this area and it will therefore become the central point for the trade union and political reorganisations of the working class.

In recent years capital succeeded in Latin America in imposing through various means a lowering of real wages (devalorisation of labour power) in most of all countries. It now tends, especially in the most industrialised countries of the region, to emphasise the need to rationalise and intensify the exploitation of the labour force. This means a many-sided increase in the workload of each wage earner. All this is justified in the name of *productivity*.

This capitalist drive clashes head on with the existence and strengthening of workers' organisation in the factory. Capital must therefore secure the political and juridical conditions which will enable it to prevent this organisation or destroy it, where it already exists: the right to fire according to the needs of the firm, no job security, a high rate of 'turnover', a selective system of bonuses for production which substantially complement the wage, political control and repression within the factory, and refusal to accept factory commissions as bargaining partners. Moreover on this last point, the bosses' interests coincide with those of the traditional trade union leaderships who negotiate wages without any concern for the other problems we mentioned.

One of the features of what is called the 'modernisation' of the class struggle is that the modernisation of the economy, and the new priority requirements of capital, force the workers to seek, create or reconstitute forms of factory organisation. These are a weapon against both capital and the trade union bureaucracy. This does not mean it will be possible to sweep away both in one blow. But it does mean that the unchallenged basis for their domination in the factories, and in the consciousness of the workers, will be undermined little by little in a cumulative process. The result of the 1980 Brazilian workers' strike also represents an important experience in this regard.

self-organisation becomes the main dimension and condition for a response to the challenge of the bourgeoisie

Among the reasons that ultimately prevented a victory stood difficulties in extending the strike to other sectors of production and the impossibility of giving it a political expression. The state, an essentially political organ of the ruling class, committed all its strength to supporting the bosses intransigently because the workers' central demands — recognition of the delegates and trade union organisation within the factory, recognition of job security etc — had a political content even though they were put forward officially on a strictly trade union level. It is also precisely this political characteristic which explains the particular attitude of the Brazilian Church — which sided with the strikers against the state.

How can the working class overcome the contradiction which exists and achieve independent political organisation and expression? The experiences accumulated in various stages by the Bolivian, Argentine, Brazilian, Colombian workers and those of other Latin American countries confirm that the working class can only do so by going through its own experience. This means following a road which is not on a straight line, but in which the conquests accumulated by collective consciousness and experience are not lost although material gains may be cancelled or reduced for whole periods.

The working class is going through this experience today precisely within the trade unions. But the unions and trade union organisation involve different levels and realities: they are in every sense an arena for the class struggle. On this terrain, the key is that the working class moves forward from the standpoint of its self-confidence and independence by undergoing political experiences and adopting organisational forms which enhance and strengthen its internal democratic life, its spirit of initiative, and its capacity to elaborate a collective thought and its ability to make decisions autonomously. This is workers' self-organisation.

Confronted with the new demands of capital and the terrain of which it forces the wage earners to fight, self-organisation becomes the main dimension and condition for a response to the challenge of the bourgeoisie. The methods and forms of self-organisation have the following common features. They challenge capital in the very core of its domination in the factory. They challenge the traditional bureaucratic methods and decisions through which the bourgeoisie ideologically dominates the working class organised in the trade unions.

Does this mean that self-organisation automatically creates political class consciousness and independent political organisation of the proletariat? No, such a leap, such a spontaneous development is not possible. But self-organisation can create more favourable conditions for the development of political consciousness and organisation.

Consequently the working class self-organisation process developing from struggles taking place in Latin America today must be combined with a defense of the socialist programme and Marxist theory by tendencies and parties which subscribe to them. These parties' tactics will be correct if they lead the workers to form their own independent parties opposed to all bourgeois parties — the necessary condition for the struggle for socialism. Every workers' party which exists in Latin America proclaims itself to be the party of the working class. *But the working class will only recognise it as such if it can translate the experience undergone in struggle into class consciousness.* In other words if it succeeds in giving a *conscious anti-capitalist and socialist content* to the spontaneous and natural struggle against capital which is taking place. Of course this cannot be accomplished by mere propaganda for socialist ideas; it can only be accomplished by the organisation of the experience of the proletariat. The large mass workers' parties of Europe were born from such an accumulation of experiences, which explains their lasting roots and survival despite their reformist policy and the defeats they suffered.

Latin America today is not Europe but neither is it Latin America fifteen years ago. The struggle for the independent organisation of the proletariat, for its class party must undoubtedly be based on the principles of Marxism. But in each country, that organisation is linked to the history and traditions of national and Latin American organisations: the Mexican revolution, the Bolivian revolution, the Cuban socialist revolution, the mass Peronist movement in Argentina, the Chilean Popular Unity, the Guatemalan revolution, the Peruvian peasants and miners' movement, the anti-imperialist war of Sandino and the current revolution in Salvador, etc. All those who ignore or minimise the fact that the consciousness of the masses retains this legacy which they experienced or inherited, will never organise anything lasting or important.

However neither principles nor traditions will bring about the formation of a political organisation recognised by the working class if they are not translated into policies and tactics suited to the confrontation with capital. They must do this now in the current struggles which are determined by the dynamics of international capital, the acute forms of its crisis and the new modes of domination which the national Latin American states have adopted.

ADOLFO GILLY is author of *The Mexican Revolution*, shortly to be published by New Left Books, and a lifelong revolutionary militant.

Socialist Policy

MILITANTS ON THE HOOF

PHIL WINDEATT

Some 3,000 people marched against animal experimentation in Bristol last October resulting in a mass sit-down in the city centre and 44 arrests. Thatcher was sent a letter bomb from a group called 'The Animal Rights Militia' and animal activists claimed the poisoning of turkeys in Harrods in the weeks preceding Christmas. Phil Windeatt looks at animal liberation and its implications for socialists.

Throughout 1982 there were dozens of pickets of fur shops, hunt sabotages, occupations of government and commercial animal experimentation laboratories by the Northern Animal Liberation League, and constant raids of labs and factory farms to remove animals by members of the illegal Animal Liberation Front, now claiming an active membership of 1,000. There have also been animal liberation demonstrations and raids in the USA, Canada, France, and Italy.

This is not a series of isolated occurrences but the result of a movement which has been steadily growing since the mid-seventies: a movement for animal liberation that is boldly stating that the mass exploitation of animals in modern society resulting in suffering and pain (not so very different from our

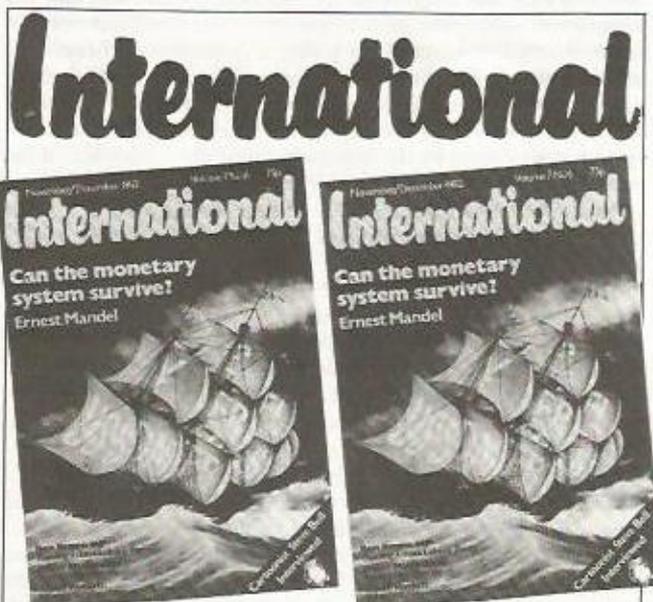
own) cannot be morally justified and has no meaningful benefit for human beings.

There have always been people opposed to animal cruelty ('Hole and corner reformers,' Marx accurately observed). The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was formed in 1824 and has always been very conservative in its activities and respectable in its aims, a moral hobby horse for the British middle classes. The 'traditionalists' are of course horrified by the ascendant 'militants', using radical tactics to inform the public of the plight of animals both wild and domestic, and to embarrass the government into passing reforming legislation.

The animal liberation movement did not just drop out of the sky and there are a number of reasons for its growth. For example, the decision in 1974 by Ronnie Lee and a group of hunt saboteurs known as 'the Band of Mercy', to use illegal methods to liberate animals from laboratories and intensive farms. On Lee's release from prison 'the Band of Mercy' became the Animal Liberation Front. Academics and philosophers began to examine the moral implications of animal cruelty once again, and the best of the bunch, an Australian liberal moral philosopher Peter Singer, published a book called *Animal Liberation* which is still at the top of the animal liberation movement's booklist. It is basically an appeal for animals to receive the same consideration as human beings and argues that animals have fundamental rights not so dissimilar to our own. The most fundamental of these rights being an existence without the deliberate infliction of pain and suffering by human beings.

The emergence of the ecological movement, along with animal lib's first magazine *Beast*, and a succession of articles and items on television, have kept the subject in the public eye. In 1982 animal liberation documentaries hit the TV screens following the limited cinema release of *The Animals Film*. First, BBC's *Forty Minutes* on the hunt saboteurs and the animal liberation movement, then Anglia TV's documentary on vivisection, and finally *The Animals Film* being featured on Channel Four's first week of transmission (although censored by five minutes). It is quite obvious that the media consensus allows television producers to be as radical as they like if the programme concentrates on animal oppression. Nevertheless the IBA demanded cuts from *The Animals Film*, not scenes of animals suffering, but of activists planning and explaining their militant motives and actions.

Why are the activists going to prison and putting their jobs and families at risk? In my experience their actions arise from pure bloody outrage at the exploitation of animals. Although animals or their by-products are all around us as pets or wildlife, the food we eat and the clothes we wear, it's not common knowledge how their by-products reach us, and by what methods. We all have a faint idea — slaughterhouses don't sound too attractive, nor does drug testing on lab animals ('nasty but inevitable') — but a rationale is usually quickly found. The ruling classes' fun 'n' games of hunting anything that moves is only the icing on a very heavy cake. For example, once you are informed how farm animals are incarcerated in darkened and crowded sheds all their lives, or that the vast majority of the millions of laboratory animals die painful deaths often without anaesthesia to test some completely irrelevant substance like a Christmas tree spray and *not* to alleviate human suffering, then you are forced into taking a position, unless you want to turn your back on your responsibilities. Some people explode into using any means possible to take animals from the place of their suffering regardless of the risks they bring upon themselves. It is moral disgust and sheer anger that leads people to the Animal Liberation Front, plus an impatience and distrust of the state's conception of parliamentary reform as the correct method of protest.



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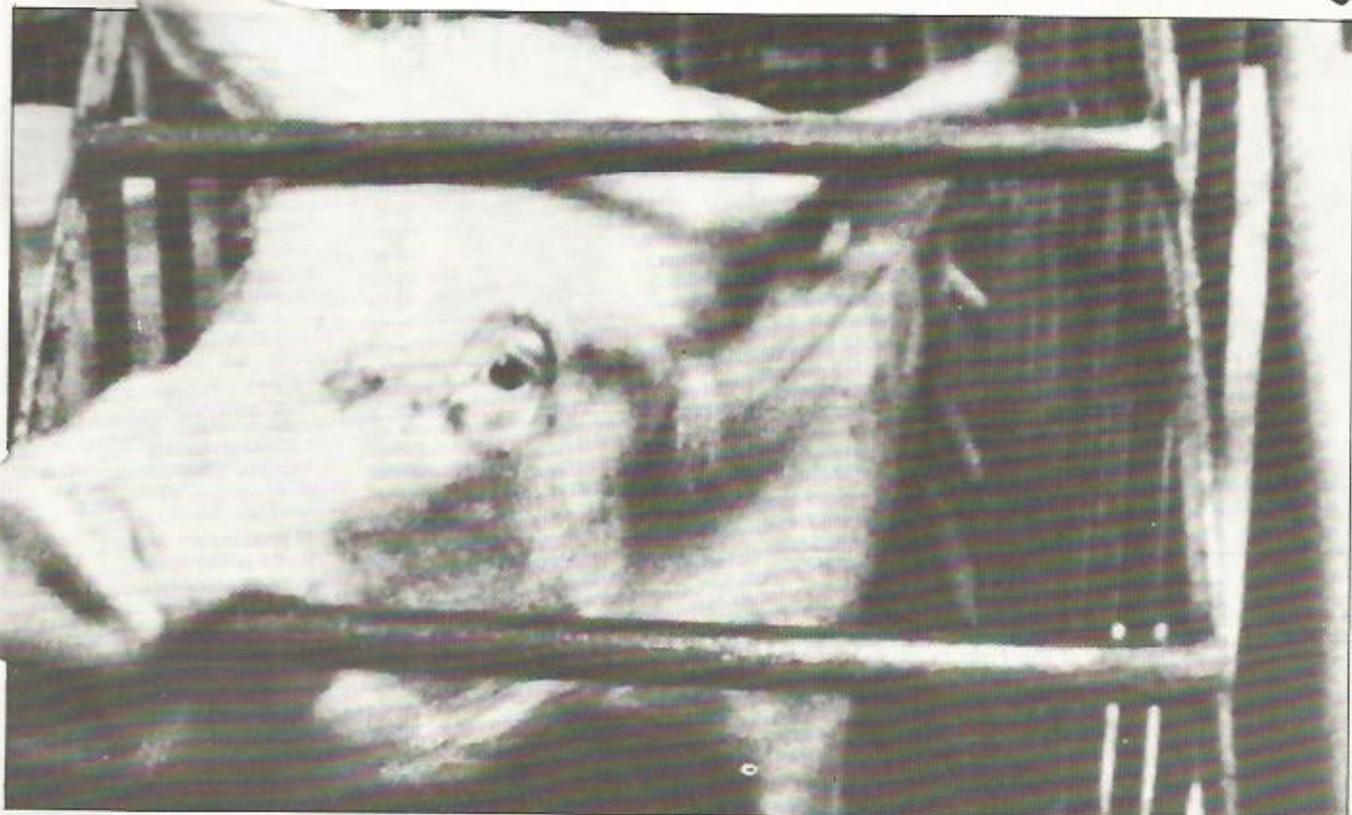


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How then should the Left face up to this growth of new activism on behalf of animals? It is obvious that on one level the desire for a society that does not inflict suffering on animals is as hopelessly utopian as hoping that a few parliamentary reforms and films will convince capitalists to stop exploiting the working class. Animals are basically exploited for one reason — profit (and the totals are enormous). A cursory glance through the pages of *Farmers Weekly* should convince the most soft-hearted rural romantic of the massive capital intensive aspect of modern farming. Our meat comes from pigs, chickens, turkeys, ducks, calves, rabbits and other animals which spend their entire existence until slaughter in temperature-controlled, automatically fed, darkened and crowded hangars. Farmer Giles has been retired. In the USA sheep are the next candidate for the factory farms. In the UK farm animals have no real protection under the law apart from an outdated 1911 Protection of Animals Act that has very little bite. All attempts to reform intensive farming are stamped on by the powerful agriculture lobby in and out of government, and made ineffective by the indifference of the Ministry of Agriculture which issues 'Codes of Practice' for farmers asking them nicely not to mutilate their livestock too badly by de-horning, castrating, de-beaking, de-snooding and so on.

The multi-million pound pet food industry benefits from the over-production of pets. Charles River Ltd, dubbed the General Motors of the laboratory animal breeders, made \$10,839,500 gross profit in 1979 and hundreds of species and sub-species are made extinct every year by the unplanned destruction of jungles and forests. Yet the case against animal cruelty is often put forward, especially in the media, by relatively ill-informed individuals who attack the treatment of a pet animal, or a fox hunt, but disguising the real depth and mass aspect of animal oppression. It is the animal liberation movement that has been campaigning to get the much more complex facts and truth out into the open.

The fight against Thatcher, capitalism and the Bomb will always ensure that animal liberation will be some way down the list of priorities. Nevertheless, that should not stop us considering the validity and implications of those who argue for animal emancipation. No socialist this side of Stalin is for wanton suffering, even for animals. We should not therefore dismiss peo-

ple who are concerned about this subject. After the screening of the animal liberation documentaries on TV last year most will know of the avid discussions that followed in many workplaces. In fact workers have already acted against animal suffering. A few years ago Hull dockers blacked the loading of 'food' animals for export due to inhumane conditions. Liverpool dockers recently 'blacked' the handling of Sperm Whale Oil and most unions have resolutions condemning bloodsports and calling for their abolition. A socialist perspective on animals must condemn the profits made from their suffering and make it clear that this present society will never consider animals to be anything more than pure profit fodder. In a socialist/post-revolutionary society it is totally utopian to expect that workers will continue to work in slaughterhouses, cram livestock into factory farms, put toxic substances into rabbits' eyes and skin. Faced with a choice no one would choose such non-essential 'dirty jobs'.

The animal libbers will be won to the arguments of liberals, 'Greens' and parliamentarians if socialists treat them with short shrift. Recollect the significant numbers of 'Ban the Bombers' and 'brown ricers', starting back in the mid-sixties, who have been won to socialism — and in many ways animal libbers are even more militant. Their analysis, often based on bourgeois morality of *awarding* 'rights' leads them into strange and reactionary positions ('rights' for the unborn), many seem to over-concentrate on vegetarianism and personal lifestyle to the point of paranoia! But they are, nevertheless, open to socialist ideas. They are predominantly young, certainly not mainly middle class, and have already clashed with the forces of the state. Don't write them off!

For details of cinema screenings of *The Animals Film*, narrated by Julie Christie with music by Robert Wyatt contact: Slick Pics International, 60 Farringdon Road, London EC1. Tel 01-251-3885. 16mm prints of the film are available for hire from Contemporary Films, 55 Greek Street, London W1. Tel 01-434-2623, and: Concord Films Council Ltd, 201 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich IP3 9BF, Suffolk. Tel 0473-76012.

PHIL WINDEATT is the author of *The Hunt and the Anti-Hunt* (Pluto Press £1.95). He is also a member of the Socialist Workers Party.

Reviews

WHY MILITANT IS THE TARGET

Judith Arkwright

What We Stand For, Militant, 1981, 20p.

In the period leading to the expulsion of *Militant's* editors from the Labour Party, very little was said from right or left on the policies or activity of the paper's supporters inside the Labour Party.

This 'lapse' on the part of the perpetrators of the witch hunt is unsurprising — since their target was not merely (or even mainly) *Militant*, but the Bennite Left as a whole. However the Left does have a duty to understand why the organisation it is committed to defend from these attacks is today's target for Golding's inquisition, and what it stands for.

The witch hunt which resulted in February's expulsions began in earnest at the time of the capitulation of the Callaghan government to the dictates of the Treasury and the International Monetary Fund in 1976. Callaghan and Healey expected a sharp reaction from the left wing of the party to conditions which finally killed off the fine promises of the 1974 election manifesto. But the acknowledged representative of the Left in the Cabinet, Tony Benn, remained there until Thatcher's victory in May 1979. The Left ducked the issue.

To its credit *Militant* was the only centralised opposition force inside the Labour Party during that time which acted as a focus for the widespread discontent. Its sharply increased recruitment during this period reflected its unwonted prominence. It was vital that the right wing acted to show the rest of the Left that they would strike back hard at any attempt then or later to seek retribution for the great betrayal. Reg Underhill's famous 'report' was the result.

However the growth and victories of the Bennite current from Spring 1980 removed *Militant's* justified claim to be the only force on the Left fighting against the right wing leaders. Nevertheless the witch-hunters only temporarily relented. So why does *Militant* remain the target?

In some ways *Militant* is an obvious target for the Labour Right. Tight-knit and easily identifiable, its control of the Labour Party Young Socialists gives it decisive influence over an important instrument of the party's structure. But what Taafe's pamphlet illustrates is that the politics of the tendency leads it to a stance which is simultaneously sectarian and opportunist. Its isolation from the rest of the Left makes it an easier target than the leadership of the Left; its political weaknesses disarm it in the face of the Right's ideological attacks.

At no time has this been shown more clearly than during the South Atlantic war. *Militant* found itself not only isolated from the best elements of the left wing, but actually in alliance with Foot and Co. The crucial issue was to stop British intervention in the South Atlantic through the straightforward demand for the return of the fleet, which united all those opposed to British imperialism's intervention, whatever their position on the issue of Argentinian sovereignty over the Falklands.

Militant

THE MARXIST PAPER FOR LABOUR & YOUTH

Bermondsey By Election

SOCIALIST POLICIES FOR LABOUR VICTORY



The same day that unemployment reached its highest figure for over 10 years, stock market shares reached a record level.

IN DANGER LONDON'S THOUSANDS OF HOMELESS YOUTH

THE CONVICTION has been handed down for the first time in the history of the Labour Party...



Militant rejected this demand. Arguing the need for solidarity with the workers in uniform (the British expeditionary forces) it argued that the only realistic way to end the war was to gain a socialist Labour government which would conclude an arrangement for a 'socialist federation of Argentina, Britain and the Falkland Islands' (*Militant* 21.5.82). However even this prospect of socialist empire involved more conquest since, as the *Militant International Review* informed its startled readers, socialist Britain would declare war on fascist Argentina.

It may be speculated why *Militant* arrived at such a bizarre conclusion. Certainly there was no clue in the opening sentence of the first major article which considered the Falklands crisis, in which *Militant* urged its readers to study the class relations between the two countries. But this injunction was then ignored by the author who gave no attention to the fact that this relationship is an imperialist one.

The result of this lack of concreteness is that *Militant*, in one of the two main military engagements of British imperialism since Suez, came out on the wrong side. This could perhaps be excused as an aberration under extreme pressure from the right wing of the bureaucracy. But the problem with this argument is that in the other main military commitment of British imperialism the same is true — namely in Ireland.

Now here is a peculiar thing. The question of *Militant's* policy in relation to Ireland does not appear either in the 20 point programme nor in the body of the text of Peter Taafe's 30 page pamphlet. There are two possible explanations for this omission. The first, and most charitable, is that it is a mistake. The second, and the most likely, is that this struggle against British imperialism (another absent concept in the pamphlet) is not considered important enough to figure as a major plank of *Militant's* policy. This is not a mistake but a capitulation to social chauvinism.

Of course the capitulation has its theorisation. Socialism, *Militant* argues, is the solu-

tion to the problems of the Irish working class — which no one from Jim Callaghan leftwards would disagree with. But, in the same way as the Labour Right and (in this case) most of the Labour Left, it counterposes the struggle for socialism to the national struggle. In the past it has sternly argued for; 'Firmly opposing the methods of individual terror used by sectarian organisations like the Provisional IRA and the Loyalist UDA ...' (*Militant* 26.9.80). A campaign for the simple demands of troops out now and self determination for the Irish people as a whole are opposed by *Militant* which ties it instead to the necessity of creating a trade union defence force from a northern Irish trade union movement, which is divided by ... the national question!

It is this pressure on *Militant* to adopt social chauvinist positions which reduces its Marxism to the most mechanical ambiguous and deterministic formulae.

The same disease effects the pamphlet when it addresses itself to the struggle for workers' power. In a passage dealing with a critique of the Alternative Economic Strategy it points out correctly that it is naive of the Labour Party Left to think that even a minimal programme for a 35 hour week and nationalisation of the twenty five top monopolies would be implemented without fierce opposition from the bosses and international capital.

The pamphlet proposes this solution to the problem: 'It is for this reason that *Militant* has put forward the demand for the nationalisation of the two hundred monopolies including the banks and the insurance companies ... these measures would be carried through in parliament by means of an enabling act ...'. It continues that: 'Nothing could stand in the way of a Labour government which campaigned around such a programme.' But this takes us back to where we started; namely that the capitalists will show little respect for parliament when their profits are threatened.

Anticipating this argument the pamphlet goes on to explain *Militant's* attitude to the use of violence in the struggle and whether socialism can be achieved without the spilling of blood. Again correctly it points out that it is the capitalist class which perpetrates violence and terror in order to maintain its rule, as it did in Chile. But having got this far the pamphlet again ducks the issue and argues that the way to combat such ruthlessness on the part of the bosses is by understanding that: 'All the scheming and conspiring of the capitalists can come to nothing on the basis of a bold socialist policy backed by the mass mobilisation of the labour movement ... a peaceful transformation of society is possible in Britain, but only on the condition that the full power of the labour movement is boldly used.'

This of course is the famous debate on the relation between parliamentary and extra-parliamentary action, raised to recent prominence by the Foot-Tatchell dispute. But what must be stated clearly in any such discussion and eventual strategy is whether it is the extra-parliamentary struggle which determines activity in parliament or vice versa. Without this Foot and Tatchell are reunited and the distinction between a reformist and



Militant prospective parliamentary candidate Pat Wall

revolutionary approach blurred over. And this blurring is exactly what happens when the pamphlet refuses to specify how 'the full power of the labour movement' is to be organised and through what institutions it will challenge the institutions of ruling class power. In the Chilean case the crucial issue was the army — an institution which could not be wielded in the interests of the workers but was to be the sword of the bourgeoisie in drowning the Popular Unity 'experiment' in blood. The key issue is whether the 'power of the labour movement' should be expressed as the popular will through *parliament* and the existing mass reformist parties or whether *special* instruments are needed to harness that popular will *directly*. Every single revolutionary situation in the advanced capitalist countries has seen the emergence in some shape or form of workers' councils. Where the armed might of the bourgeoisie has loomed there has been likewise the formation of workers' militias or defence forces — a tendency towards the arming of the working class in self-defence.

But where the pamphlet should explain this as the historical experience of the working class from the Paris Commune to Portugal, instead it proposes that to avoid such circumstances the working class be armed with ... the Marxist programme. Again the argument is circular and ambiguous. What should this programme say about working class self-defence? Taafe has no answer in his pamphlet nor in the 16 pages that appear weekly under his editorship. In fact when debating Shirley Williams in the *Guardian* prominent *Militant* supporter Nick Bradley felt confident to assert unequivocally to her demand as to

whether socialist objectives can be achieved through parliament: 'We answer yes'.

In practice *Militant* relies on the enormous strength of the British working class to intimidate the capitalists. But this ignores the *political* strategy needed by a working class leadership to channel that enormous organisational power to smash the resistance of the capitalists. Instead *Militant* offers a combination of cheering on the economic struggle and socialist propaganda; assuming an attitude of complete hostility towards struggles around democratic and partial demands, which can weaken the political position of the ruling class and win the working class allies from the rank of the oppressed.

This overall approach partly accounts for the isolation of *Militant* from the mass struggles and campaigns. CND in particular is branded by *Militant* ideologues as a petty bourgeois pacifist movement. This is part of a practice in the classic social democratic mould whose programme is not one of action spelling out the steps from here to our future goal of socialism, but a list dividing up what we can do now and what we can do in the future. Hence the approach which says that there is no point in campaigning against the Bomb since it won't be defeated until we get rid of capitalism. The contribution that a movement built against the Bomb can make to the struggle against capitalism is minimalised.

A similar approach informs the attitude of the pamphlet towards divisions within the working class on racial and sexual lines. From its assumption that the working class is already homogenous the pamphlet fails to outline a strategy for winning both class unity and the unity of the oppressed with the work-

ing class as part of the struggle against capitalism. The notion of the working class vanguard as a tribune of the oppressed is absent in Taafe's account. From this point of view the necessity of black or women's self-organisation is seen as inevitably divisive.

This static view of class relations is related to the content of the propaganda line put forward by *Militant*. Economic determinism is presented as an external force leading to a socialist transformation, not the actual relations between classes or the contradictions within them. Thus countries like Syria or Burma are declared workers' states because of the extent of nationalisation in these countries; completely ignoring the actual relationship between these countries and imperialism and their political institutions organising society.

The pamphlet's persistent claim is that it is the policies of *Militant* that have brought down this cowardly bureaucratic attack from the right wing of the party. However this is only true in so far as it *shares* those policies of the Left of the party which are under attack by the Labour leadership. In so far as *Militant* *distinguishes* itself from the rest of the Left it is through a sectarian approach which isolates it and makes it a point of attack for the 'divide and rule' tactics of the witch hunters.

The lesson for fighting the witch hunt is therefore that the attack is not only against *Militant* but against the whole of the Left. That is why the defence of the *Militant* must be the first task for every activist in the Labour Party and the trade unions.

JUDITH ARKWRIGHT is a former women's correspondent for *Socialist Challenge*, and currently a member of the NUR.

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CND: THE CHALLENGE OF 1983

Tony Southall

The CND Story, ed by John Minnion and Philip Bolsover, Allison and Busby, 1983. £1.95 paperback £5.95 hardback.

The Protest Makers by Richard Taylor and Colin Pritchard, Pergamon Press, 1980, £5.75 paperback £10.00 hardback.

From Protest to Resistance, Peace News Pamphlet Number Two, 1981, £1.25.

The massive explosion of CND in the 1980s has spawned a modest growth in the literature on the movement's history. This concentrates especially on the period 1958-65 when anti-bomb activity was headline news, and which produced the biggest mass movement in Britain since the Suffragettes. This period was key in radicalising a whole generation of young people, like myself, for whom it was their first political experience.

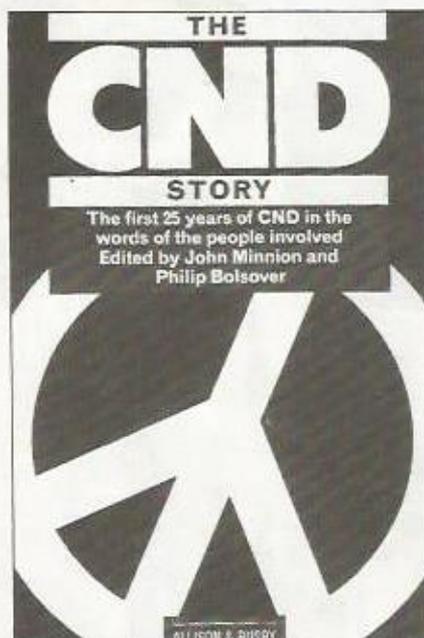
Yet this first wave brought few victories. Perhaps the ending of atmospheric testing by the then 'big three' in 1963 was partly a result of our efforts but there was little else to show. The arms race continued despite the 1972 Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty and has now produced in the 1980s a still more massive escalation in weaponry. Our movement now is bigger. Before we stood almost alone in Britain. Now there are similar campaigns all around Western Europe. Most significantly, the US 'freeze' movement that brought a million people onto the streets in New York last year showed that we have even begun to affect the most politically stable of imperialist states.

In 1983 our movement will do well to analyse its past. That's because this year we have a real chance of breaking the logjam by actually forcing governments in Western Europe to backpedal on the planned arms build-up.

As I write this, US Vice President George Bush is hopping around Europe desperately trying to shore up the NATO alliance. His message is no longer about the need for an armed response to the supposed Soviet threat. No longer are Afghanistan or Poland waved in our faces. No, Bush's trip is aimed mainly at convincing us that the Reagan administration is serious about negotiations, thus hoping to ensure the re-election of Kohl's West German government in March, and to aid Thatcher's forthcoming campaign.

Let us be clear. Two years ago Reagan's line was offensive: Cruise and Pershing were a necessary response to the Soviet threat. In 1983 nine tenths of every utterance is defensive and devoted to proving the West's commitment to peace. That change is down to us. This 'peace offensive' is designed to derail the mass movements of the past couple of years. Now we are the ones setting the terms of the debate. If we can get it right in 1983 we can win victories that will open the road to blocking and even reversing the war drive.

These new books about CND's history must be judged by today's activists from a concrete standpoint. How far do they help us to understand why we haven't succeeded before and prepare us to play a winning hand this time?



By this criterion the most recent and apparently comprehensive of these books is the most disappointing. *The CND Story* is aimed, according to its editors, at giving readers 'a better understanding of the movement's first twenty-five years. If this helps us all to work out our opposition to nuclear weapons more effectively in the years ahead, it will have been worth while'. Unfortunately the desperate intent of Minnion and Bolsover to let everyone have their say and the unwillingness of contributors to draw lessons from their experiences makes it unlikely that this book will help most members of our movement to work out anything at all.

A thirty page introduction is the most substantial and potentially valuable part. It gives a quick, relatively impartial, rundown of the movement's history since 1958. The next one hundred pages consist of thirty three different pieces by the same number of authors purporting to give a broad view of the campaign's development.

Building any mass movement involves a lot of hard work and routine tasks and this selection reflects this reality. But when CND's first major publication in this critical year includes such gems as Jo Richardson's descriptions of the catering arrangements at Aldermaston marches, or Adrian Henri's rambling account of various musical incidents over the ten years, it's surely time to call a halt!

Discussion that has anything to do with how we are going to win in 1983 is limited to a few contributions. Joan Ruddock gives a brief summary of last November's conference decisions. Having explained that we voted to make work around the labour movement a priority and agreeing that this is because 'we must capture a government', she appears unwilling or unable to explain how CND should give resources to this work now.

Similar hesitation comes in David Griffiths' piece 'CND and the Labour Party'. He insists that we need a government to achieve our aims, that Labour is 'the only serious candidate' and that this is a 'vital area of work'. Equally importantly he says that 'the way to win the party and hold it on course in govern-

ment is not to become absorbed in the intricacies of its internal processes, still less to insist that CND must wed itself to socialist politics and enter any kind of formal relationship with the party'. But we have to go further than this. CND should remain outside of party alignments. But it also needs to decide what priority to give to particular areas and projects. We passed such a resolution at conference but little has been done to implement it. Neither at National Council nor at the trade union conference on 29 January were serious steps proposed to prepare for a massive turnout on the projected Day of Action in August. Out of 26 full time staff only one half is currently assigned to trade union work and none to Labour Party work.

A careful reading of this book helps to explain why. CND's leaders are afraid to make political choices and when they get near them, they pull back from the brink. Most of the contributions by influential figures show an obsession with preserving the movement in the 1980s as all-embracing and tolerant. Against this it would be equally wrong to accept Hugh Jenkin's advice that: 'CND's task is to get ... (unilateralism) ... into Labour's general election manifesto and then to get Labour elected. Anything after that ... is ultimately a diversion'.

Such a line would split the movement from top to bottom. It would make it much less likely in fact that we would ever achieve a unilateralist Labour government. The only reason we have got as far as we have in the party is that an independent mass movement, which on certain issues now has majority public support, has existed as a permanent source of pressure. Right now, far from collapsing CND into the party, we have to maintain and further develop mass actions like last year's Glasgow and London demonstrations, Greenham Common in December, and so on. But an essential complement to this will be for CND to strengthen its orientation to the labour movement: that means giving adequate resources to our Labour and trade union sections, having a regular publication that, unlike *Sanity*, can be sold to rank and file trade unionists and party members, publishing pamphlets that educate the labour movement about why it cannot beat Thatcher without a clear unilateralist programme. These are urgent tasks if we are to consolidate our position in the labour movement. At the moment the Right in the Labour Party is manoeuvring to take our programme out of the manifesto. Even if we can defend this position and win the election an even more gigantic task will face us to force a Labour government to carry it out. It is unfortunate that the editors of *The CND Story* have on the whole missed the opportunity to prepare us for these political fights ahead.

Taylor and Pritchard's book was first published at the beginning of the 'new wave'. They have taken the opportunity of its paperback publication to take account of developments over the last two years. The main body of the book is based on a social and political survey of a selection of activists of the 'first wave' twenty years on. These have mostly continued their political activity, but have diversified into wider fields, tending to ignore disarmament. The authors conclude

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that we collapsed because neither of the two competing strategies of 1958-65 measured up to our needs. The Labour Party option failed because its proponents didn't see that conference has never controlled policy. The sit-down strategy was equally useless because it needed quick results. Self-sacrifice of the kind demanded could not be continued indefinitely. While their epilogue acknowledges that the 1980s are different from the 1960s they refuse to see that this is because the labour movement is in a very different state.

Their conclusion is that CND needs to attach itself to a global 'third way, a society bas-

ed on the precepts of humanistic socialism', and that the European Nuclear Disarmament Campaign is the most hopeful way forward to this goal. Although this is a mildly interesting historical account, its pessimistic political conclusions are far removed from the reality of the opportunities open to us in 1983.

From Protest to Resistance contains a series of articles by veterans of direct action from the first wave. It is intended, in its editors' words, to 'give us the feeling that we have to take personal responsibility for lives and actions, not trusting in distant leaders to do it for us'. Most instructive for us is to ap-

preciate the timelessness and the essentially individualistic nature of the direct action. It may be a recipe for inner contentment, it may provide the occasional mass demonstration as at Greenham, but in no way will it win the victory that is in our grasp this year.

TONY SOUTHALL was involved in Youth CND in Croyden in 1959, chairperson of Cambridge University CND 1960-2 and a full time worker for the Committee of 100 during 1961. He is now secretary of Scottish Labour CND and a committee member of Glasgow West CND.

WOMEN AND PEACE

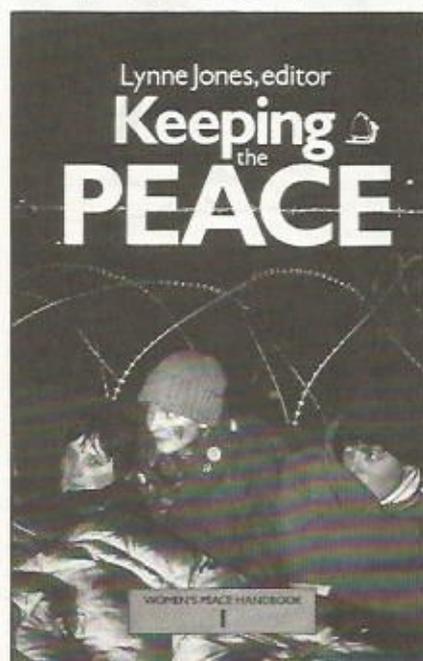
Sue Jessup

Lynne Jones (ed): *Keeping the Peace*, (Women's Peace Handbook 1), Women's Press, 1983, £3.60.

Keeping the Peace is a collection of accounts by women in Britain, the USA, Western Europe and Japan of their involvement in actions for peace: the women who threw blood and wove threads around the Pentagon, the Babies Against the Bomb lobby of Parliament and the Oxford Mother's March, the Greenham Common Peace Camp, and the 45-year old campaign by the Shibokusa women against the occupation of their land by the Japanese and US armies who subsequently encouraged prostitution and forcibly evicted them.

Women's opposition to war is nothing new. In 1870, women protested against the 'pastime of princes' on the eve of the Franco-Prussian war, and in 1889 'Lay Down Your Arms' by Bertha von Suttner was a bestseller, translated into 27 languages. Women opposed the First World War and in the 1950s mailed their babies' teeth to Congressmen to protest against the effects of radioactive fallout.

Why organise separately as women? Some felt compelled to act because of their traditional roles as mothers, or wanted to be assertive peacemakers (*Women for Life on Earth*), to devise imaginative actions, to find new ways of involving women, or to discover feminist working processes and analysis.



Many feminists were initially reluctant to become involved in the peace movement, because they saw it as reinforcing the stereotype of woman as mother and conciliator, or because they were accustoming themselves to the use of violence as a necessary part of liberation. Many sought the positive satisfaction of helping other women

through campaigns around abortion, rape and childcare, issues which mixed groups tended to ignore and which seemed likely to produce more tangible results than taking on the monster of the nuclear establishment and international politics.

The women at Greenham Common discuss the exclusion of men from the camp: their presence would provoke more violence from the police, they would be upset by women being mistreated, the authorities should be obliged to deal with women, the women want to find their own strengths and assert themselves. The camp gives its residents energy and confidence, they feel they are making a positive physical statement, they want passers-by to question why the women have forsaken their normal lives, they ask the construction workers what they think of men who built Hitler's gas chambers.

Some of the campaigns are specifically feminist with analyses of the relationship between women's oppression and nuclear technology and violence, others steer well clear of any identification with the women's liberation movement. However, this is basically a handbook for practical action and there is little political analysis. A major feature is systematic, detailed advice on the organisation of marches, peace camps, blockades and street theatre, and on setting up groups.

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THE RUSSIAN QUESTION

Brian Heron

Workers Control and Socialist Democracy: the Soviet Experience, by Carmen Sirianni, New Left Books, 1982, £8.95.

Since the fateful days of October 1917 the Bolshevik revolution, with its triumphs and failures, has transfixed the world.

The 'Russian question' still dominates any serious discussion of socialism from the loftiest academic enclaves to the factory floor. The degeneration of the revolution still leaves open the biggest question humanity has faced, is socialism possible? Every intellectual and political apologist for capitalism has given and continues to give a resounding 'no' in

response. But, since the 1960s, a new chapter of the revolution has opened. A new generation of workers and intellectuals has begun again to sift the evidence. Ritual rehearsals of Stalin's crimes no longer suffice. The terrain has shifted. We are now examining Lenin and Leninism. What is the balance sheet of the architect, not just the building? We can accept that the materials for construction were in short supply. We know that the building skills were scant. But was the planning flawed?

The latest with an answer is Sirianni. His starting point is the massively popular character of the revolution. He uses evidence from the cities and the burgeoning movement for workers' control to mark at every decisive stage of the revolution the growing support for the Bolsheviks. The decisive turning point of Lenin's *April Theses* is underlined; the

Bolshevik workers were those who pressed for the showdown with all the oppressing classes, and to whom Lenin turned for support for his radical proposal, the proletarian dictatorship. In fact, according to Sirianni, what is revealed by the Bolshevik revolution, is the political domination of the cities.

Despite the undoubted power and authority of the Soviet, and despite the proposal from the Left Mensheviks and others for a 'united revolutionary democracy' which was aimed at encompassing the workers, the peasants in rebellion and radical sections of the urban petty bourgeoisie, the workers pushed for political power to pass decisively into their hands. And this was the historical strength of the Bolshevik Party, re-armed by Lenin. Only workers' power could guarantee the interests of all of the oppressed.

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Nevertheless, despite the fusion between the mass of the working class and Bolshevik leadership in this most revolutionary period, Sirianni argues there were two crucial ambiguities in this fusion which go to the heart of the weakness of Leninism, and which were to prove fatal to the health of the revolution.

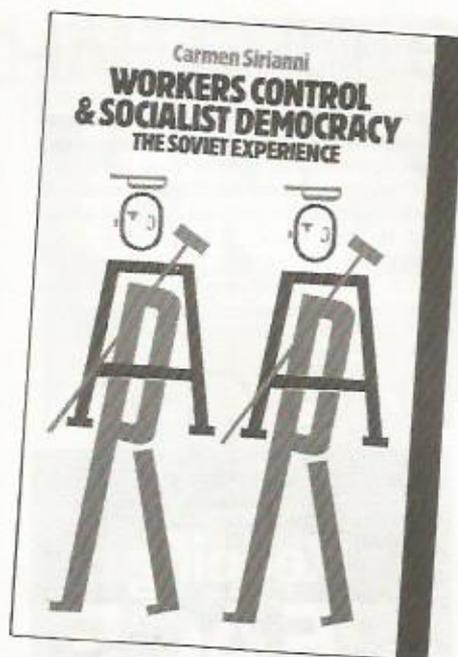
The first, and the least important (Sirianni himself explains later that this was a generalised development in Europe, and likely to remain the pattern) was the effective tendency to subordinate the workers' committees to the control of the trade unions. This is important, not so much for its own sake, but because of what it illustrates about the Bolshevik and Leninist approach to all the expressions of popular power, from the workers' committees in the factories, to the Soviets, to political and economic power in general.

Sirianni's central idea is that Lenin was entirely instrumental in his approach to the revolution. This is not to subscribe to the risible notions of Lenin popular in schoolbooks: the power-hungry schemer who had no principle except the establishment of his own dictatorial power. Rather it is Lenin's blinkered vision of socialism and communism that the Bolshevik revolution finally fell foul of. In essence Lenin is accused of denying any independent role in political life for the working class outside that led directly by the party. Soviet and other political institutions were viewed with suspicion unless under party control. Fundamentally this approach dovetails with Lenin's notions of the economic and social relations of socialism and of communism. Lenin has elevated a 'positivist determinist' strand in Marx and made of it a 'productivist evolutionism' in his theories of socialist transformation: 'The questions of socialist consciousness and cultural transformation were subsumed under those of administrative organisation and technical control.'

Everything flows. Socialism is simply proletarian political power on top of the most advanced available capitalist technique. Lenin never supported workers' control, or later workers' management because he saw only 'things' produced in factories, not social relations. Naturally he was disarmed in the face of the rise of the bureaucracy. Quoting from Lenin in 1920, 'as soon as the question of property was settled practically, the domination of the class was assured,' Sirianni goes on: 'Later developments were to prove otherwise.' As indeed they were.

The fundamental fault lies with the theory of politics and communism. Sirianni's view challenges the state as simply the regulator of relations between antagonistic classes. He explains that there are *political* relations between sections of the same class. He denies that communism could ever be simply a condition of the administration of 'things'. (Naturally, again according to Sirianni, Lenin never understood relations within the working class. He took them as a whole, whose interests were unilinearly represented by the party.) Consequently politics will not die out with communism. It is rather a question of defining new politics, appropriate to the dissolution of the power of oppressing classes. Part of the answer, he seems to imply, comes out of the struggle for workers' control and management.

Sirianni's theoretical edifice is a sophisticated cultural economism. In the course of its construction it does great



violence to Lenin. Even at the most rudimentary level, was it not Lenin who first identified and explained the divisions within the working class? His theory of the labour aristocracy and its relationship to imperialism explained both the material roots of bureaucracy in the labour movement and the consequent political differentiation among the oppressed. He also proposed and built a solution. Was it not the case that the Leninist party was designed to overcome such divisions in the working class, fostered materially and politically by the ruling class? The *form* of centralisation of that party may differ according to conditions (Czarist dictatorship to mass revolutionary upsurge) but its essential political *content* remained constant in Lenin's thought and action. It was designed, through discussion and clash of ideas (war of contending factions, as Trotsky was later to put it) to *summarise* the experience and orientation of the whole of the working class.

From this perspective was it the extension of Leninism which gave life to the Stalinist monstrosity? Here is the key political conclusion of the Sirianni book. But surely the contrary is true. Stalin's bureaucracy rose *through the defeat* of the Leninist party.

The facts are not in dispute. Sirianni lists them. By the summer of 1918 one third of Russia's industrial proletariat had vanished. By 1920-21 (despite the rises in production at two points, noted by Sirianni) four fifths of the Russian working class had 'disappeared'. The remainder of that workers' movement of February and October 1917 had been seconded to the new state. It was administering and organising out of chaos and civil war. This meant that the Bolshevik party *no longer centralised* the experience and action of the actual and living working class. That working class, as a historical agent, had been destroyed. The only place where that workers' movement was still alive *was in the cadre and formations of the Bolshevik Party itself*. Many of those cadre now administered the revolutionary state.

It was this reality which underlined the massive drives to centralise in the early Soviet state. For a temporary period, first under conditions of invasion and civil war, and then

under the conditions of the ebbing of the international revolution, *the Bolshevik Party itself* became the fulcrum of the future of the Russian revolution.

For writers like Liebman (*Leninism under Lenin*) there was a contradiction between the 'libertarian' Lenin of *State and Revolution* and the hyper-centralising and administrative Lenin of later years. Sirianni views the former as hardly surfacing at all, extinguished at birth by 'production evolutionism.' But this apparent dichotomy owes more to partial appreciations of the revolution than Lenin's contradictions. Viewed as a totality, the 'administrative' and semi-internalised struggle which Lenin conducted in these years was part of the same process, with the same political content as his views in 1917. The reality was that class relations and relations *within* the oppressed classes had become narrowed and concentrated in the relations *within* the state and party. Lenin's insistence on the expansion of production at all costs *was* the immediate material route out of this dangerous situation. It is an obvious and material reality that such an advance could only be established on the basis of importing advanced western technique: a position recognised as temporary and a retreat.

It was Lenin who in 1921 first characterised the Soviet state as a 'workers' state with a bureaucratic twist.' 'All the departments are shit', he commented. The struggle Lenin conducted in the party *was* the political struggle against the forces lining up around the bureaucratic Thermidor. But the working class base and cadre of the party, that base to whom Lenin had appealed when the party was re-armed around the *April Theses*, no longer existed in the same way. The exigencies of the division of labour in early Soviet Russia had separated the Bolshevik worker cadre from production, from life in the factories. The Leninist party was on the way to destruction.

It is in this context that a crucial mistake was made. The banning of tendencies and factions in 1921 could only reduce the party's capacity for self-reform — and given its specific weight in the early Soviet society — had a disproportionate effect on the struggle to defeat the bureaucracy, as Trotsky was to freely admit in later years. (See his comments on the French Socialist Party in 1936.) Nevertheless it was possible to win the fight against the bureaucracy. But it did mean the party winning a new layer of workers (the actual number of wage earners increased in Russia by 50 per cent from 1923-36.) It also meant re-opening the democratic life of the party, so that these new layers would have their experiences and perspectives democratically centralised. These, together with a rational plan for industrialisation, were key planks in the programme of the Left Opposition.

It is strange that this programme, together with the years of analysis and struggle against the Stalinist bureaucracy conducted by the Opposition and its later followers, never features in Sirianni's text. It is the only existing coherent Marxist analysis of the development of the USSR and its global effects, and yet it is never contrasted with Sirianni's own findings. Instead it is the importance of the cultural and ideological revolution in tandem with the struggle against authority at the point of production which provides the only shady outlines of an alternative to Stalinism. Sirianni's book is deeply flawed and pessimistic.

DATES AND GOAT'S MILK

Upali Cooray

Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* is certainly an interesting and entertaining film. The producer has cleverly put together a sequence of incidents and events calculated to make the maximum impact on the audience. Some of the scenes are truly breathtaking. And with the wide acclaim it has received in the British press and the television it will no doubt be a big commercial success.

The film's popularity is not merely due to technical efficiency, cinematic skills, good acting and so on. In my view it is popular largely because the film maker has succeeded in highlighting certain qualities of Gandhi which appeal to a wide cross-section of people. Foremost amongst them was Gandhi's rejection of the life style and comforts enjoyed by the Indian elite under the British Raj; his readiness to 'live among the people' and to lead a life of poverty.

In the days of the British Raj the big landlords and capitalists of India who were at the helm of the Indian National Congress aped the white man and slavishly adopted his customs and values. And there was a wide gulf between these 'leaders' and the vast mass of peasants and workers they sought to lead. Gandhi recognised that unless the Indian elite succeeded in bridging this gap, they would never be able to mobilise the Indian masses or to win political power.

Today this message and example of Gandhi, of leading a simple and austere life, appeals to certain sections of the western world who feel that society has become dehumanised because of its excessive obsession with material goods and comforts. Of course they little realise that Gandhi's emphasis on a 'simple life' and 'traditional values' was a powerful weapon in the hands of the Indian ruling classes to dampen the class struggle and to build a powerful multi-class bloc under the hegemony of the Indian property-owning classes.

Secondly, Gandhi was and is admired for his readiness to march with the people and often at the head of them, and to face all the consequences of the strategic or tactical line he advocated. Unlike many leaders and gurus in the Third World and elsewhere, including those who call themselves socialists, Gandhi did not egg on the masses from the rear. He did not accept the division of labour between leaders who merely show the path making sure that nothing untoward happens to them, and the led who must face the batons, guns and prisons. The film highlights the way Gandhi faces baton charges and unrepentantly marches into jail for the cause he is supporting.

Finally, a large number of people who have seen the film would have been impressed by the manner in which this frail, 'half naked kafir' defiantly stood up to the high and mighty particularly at a time when the British Raj appeared invincible. Although the film does not depict it, Gandhi and the Congress leaders continued their struggles even during the war whilst Stalin's followers in the Communist Party of India were supporting the British war effort and betraying their own members to the Raj. This defiance heartens

many blacks and Asians, compelled to fight against racism and racial discrimination day in and day out, who are encouraged by Gandhi's determination and courage.

All this of course does not detract from the fact that Attenborough's film is not so much about Gandhi — quite apart from it being a critical assessment of the role Gandhi played in Indian politics — as a public relations exercise designed to prop up the legend of Gandhi and the myth of Gandhism. In order to achieve this object Attenborough suppresses and distorts historical facts.

Since there is no space to deal with this method exhaustively I will give a few important examples. First, it creates the impression that India gained her political independence primarily or solely due to the actions of Gandhi and the campaigns he initiated. Gandhi, by his stubborn commitment to non-violence and by his appeals to the British Raj's 'inherent sense of justice', managed to persuade the British to grant independence! Nothing could be further from reality. The decisive weakening of British imperialism after World War Two, the war weariness of the British working class, and above all the Indian mutiny which threatened to destroy the only instrument the British Raj could rely on (namely the army) to maintain their grip on India, has been totally ignored by the producer.

The Social Democrats under Attlee, who were the managing agents of British imperialism at the time, understood the danger signals emanating from the Indian mutiny and recognised that it would be impossible for the Raj to contain an increasingly rebellious population of 350 million people by old methods. Therefore they devised the strategy of neo-colonialism — ie the transfer of political power to the local property owning classes whilst maintaining the economic interests of imperialism. It is this specific conjuncture coupled with the treachery of the Communist Party of India that brought about the transfer of political power to the Indian ruling class.

Secondly, the producer does not wish to depict the British in too bad a light; thus the Hindu-Muslim clashes are not the result of British machinations and intrigues designed to divide India, but the outcome of policies pursued by extremists on both sides. And power hungry politicians fall prey to these groups.

Attenborough covers up the criminal policy decision of the British Raj to partition India and by the same stroke manages to side step one of the most damning criticisms one should make of Gandhi's policies — or lack of a policy — concerning the oppressed minorities and nations. Apart from meaningless platitudes about giving a 'fair deal to the minorities' Gandhi could provide no solution to this problem. He did not even comprehend its seriousness. Gandhi did not even dream of putting forward a solution based on the right of self-determination, and thus, he blindly walked into the trap set by British imperialism, resulting in a bloodbath and the partition of India.

Thirdly, the film also avoids any mention of yet another weakness of Gandhi — that is his signal failure to eradicate untouchability



or even to project a meaningful programme of socio-economic changes that would have removed a caste oppression. He confined himself to moral exhortations which fell on deaf ears. The leader of the untouchables, whom Gandhi patronisingly referred to as 'Children of God' (Harijan), Dr Ambedkar soon became disillusioned with the Congress leadership. To date the Indian bourgeoisie has not been able to resolve this age-old problem.

Finally, despite his loin cloth and a daily diet of dates and goat milk Gandhi had neither the will nor the desire to break the elitist power structure of Indian society. Gandhi did not seek to promote self-organisation of the Indian masses. On the contrary the moment the masses began to take things into their own hands Gandhi put the breaks on it. Mass mobilisations were alright if they were tightly controlled by the guru. Gandhi did not even consult the masses on the strategy and tactics of fighting the British; at best he would consult a few leaders of the Congress. Personal example and individual heroism were the essence of his method. Gandhi's adherence to 'traditional values' also meant the maintenance of the status quo of women. Here too he prescribed no fundamental changes in the social structure.

Therefore it is not surprising that his disciples in the Congress and other bourgeois parties working within the narrow confines of Gandhi's vision have not been able to solve any of the major problems of the Indian masses in the four decades that have elapsed since his assassination.

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