

*socialist*  
**REVIEW**

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Poland, Miners,  
Crisis in the  
car industry.



El Salvador the 13,000th  
political murder



**'In Britain  
you will find  
an ally, valiant,  
staunch  
and true'.**



**Margaret Thatcher  
to Ronald Reagan  
February 26th 1981**



Nato's new line

**Valiant,  
staunch,  
and true**



Thatcher's visit to Washington underlined how a new policy is emerging within Nato. Stridently self-confident both of its own strength and Russia's weakness, it seems determined to extend Nato's terms of reference from Europe to the whole world, especially to Central America and the Middle East which were particularly referred to and no doubt there are other areas in mind too.

The basis of this new stridency is not difficult to fathom. The western three quarters of the globe is certainly in the midst of a huge economic crisis, but the crisis itself is a product of *world* capitalism and it has plunged the economies of Russia's allies into an indebtedness that only the Western banks can bail out.

Escalation of the West's world-wide military stance and the development and deployment of new weapons will force the Russians to follow suit, despite their lack of resources and technology.

According to the Reagan-Thatcher camp, this will lead to an increasing ability by the West to intimidate Russia, perhaps even leading to a complete collapse of its political structure.

The new Reagan administration has therefore begun to make moves in several areas that were suspended under Carter—most notably over the neutron bomb and chemical weapons, but probably more importantly elsewhere. The science fiction nightmare of death-ray weapons has moved a little closer by last month's announcement that the US has successfully built an air-mounted high energy laser weapon. How long will it take before dozens of computer-guided weapons such as these are put into orbit around the globe?

### The Neutron Bomb

It is the neutron bomb that will attract the most concern over the coming months.

What are the implications of this weapon?

It is an atom bomb in which most of the power of the bomb appears not in blast, but in the form of a huge dose of short-term radiation from sub-atomic particles—mainly neutrons. It kills people, even penetrating concrete and steel to do so, but leaves most of the hardware intact.

Its supporters claim that as a 'limited blast' weapon it will make an all-out nuclear war *less* likely. They argue that it will merely replace existing tactical

nuclear weapons which possess a larger blast and give out much more long-term fall-out. Therefore it will not so easily lead to escalation—or so the argument goes.

There are several things wrong with this argument. First of all it is based on an unreal assumption of a massed Russian tank attack in central Europe. As we have shown elsewhere (in the SWP pamphlet *Missile Madness*), the Russians do not at present have the strength to undertake such a blitzkrieg. Secondly, even if they did, the West's *current* provision of more than 200,000 precision-guided weapons would be more than enough to stop them. Finally, it is an attempt to divert attention from the real role of Nato's tactical and short-range nuclear weapons, which is not so much to stop a mass tank invasion as to break up any mass armoured force before it could be got together in the first place.

In which case the tactical nuclear weapons would be used not *after* an attack and on Western soil, but *before any attack was possible* and on *Eastern* soil. Such attitudes can only fuel the Kremlin's tendencies to adopt more and more desperate measures.

### Split in the Alliance

So far the fruits of the new Reagan-Thatcher line are confined largely to rhetoric. It is one thing to proclaim things and quite another to be able to carry them out. And that contrast has begun to be exposed very starkly in recent weeks.

For a start the much-heralded December 1979 Nato decision to up defence expenditures by at least 3 per cent in real terms for member countries has so far been largely ignored.

*Flight International* (7.2.81) has revealed that so far only Britain, Luxembourg and the USA have followed the recommendation. France too has increased its arms bill but only slightly, while Belgium, Canada and Germany have ended up with more or less static sums spent.

In no fewer than *five* member countries Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal and Turkey (and almost certainly in Denmark too when the figures become available) a *smaller* percentage of the Gross National Product was devoted to arms in 1980 than in 1979.

This will undoubtedly produce major strains within Nato and a marked reluctance on the part of many to go along with the Reagan-Thatcher proposals to extend Nato's role west to El Salvador and east to the Iranian Gulf.

The strains are appearing everywhere. In Germany a significant section of the Social Democrats are openly at odds with Schmidt over deploying cruise and other medium-range nuclear weapons and over the nuclear power programme. The state's violent attack on February's huge 30,000 plus demonstration against nuclear power can only deepen this rift. Meanwhile the industrialists—particularly in machine tools—are increasingly worried by the moves to initiate a trade embargo against Russia. West Germany is at the hub of an increasing volume of East-West trade and supplies Russia with much of its advanced technology. They will fight tooth and nail to preserve this trade—against the new Reagan-Thatcher line if need be.

Even in Britain sections of the ruling class are in revolt over certain aspects of the new militarism. Faced with the possibility that the Trident submarine programme could cost as much as £7000 million, the *Economist* has for instance been leading a chorus of ruling-class complaints that if it is taken up then other more important objectives may have to be abandoned.

In short, the new Reagan-Thatcher line will produce huge tensions within the Nato alliance. Stressing the importance of getting out of Nato could become an increasingly important dimension for revolutionaries within CND, and one in which solidarity with the victims of Thatcher-Reaganism, such as the revolutionaries in El Salvador, is increasingly necessary.

Pete Binns



Straight from packed houses in Washington. The film to end all films. Now you can buy the poster. 60 pence including P&P from Socialists Unlimited, 265 Seven Sisters Road, London, N4.



## Losing friends

An unpleasant budget is nothing new from this government. The raising of taxes on things like beer, fags, petrol is something we've grown used to. What is new is the bewilderment, even hostility in ruling class circles. Two years ago the CBI led the cheers for Howe's measures. Now its criticisms differ little in tone from the Labour opposition. And it seems that privately half the Tory MPs and half the cabinet agree. For they can see that although continuing along the path of monetarism and deflation will hurt workers still more, it can no longer help big industrial capital to cope with the world crisis. So what has gone wrong with Howe's strategy from big business's point of view?

'A thoroughly disorganised government'. A *Financial Times* headline a fortnight ago summed up the feeling in ruling class circles that things are far from going right. That was shortly after the miners had delivered a considerable body blow, proving that although the working class movement has been lying low it is far from defeated. And it was shortly before ICI announced a massive cut in profits. The budget has done little to alleviate the feeling of unease.

From our side of the fence, watching the heart searching in government circles is a strange experience. We know only too well that the miners and the water workers have been exceptions. By the end of last year, one manufacturing job in nine had been destroyed, and yet there has been nothing like the UCS struggle which sent a Tory government reeling, a decade ago. The CBI has been able to boast that wage settlements are running at half the figure in last year's wage round, and in engineering average settlements are below the government's 'private sector norm' of 10 per cent. Within days of the miners' victory, the teachers' union had put a knife in the back of the civil servants

and hospital workers by accepting 7½ per cent.

The Tories' difficulty is not our resistance but their system. The economic crisis is so serious that the cuts in living standards, jobs and social services pushed through so far cannot alleviate it.

The government programme of two years ago assumed that holding down the supply of money and cutting government spending could force companies, nationalised industries and public authorities to 'cut the fat (anything that provided more than the minimum necessary to keep profitable production going) from their operations. Subsidies to industry would be slashed, social services put in a straitjacket, 'excess' workers sacked and wages kept down so as to preserve profitability.

The half of this programme which damages us has been carried through with a vengeance. But inflation is still close to the figure when the Tories came to power, and in the meantime profitable firms have been hurt to the point where they can no longer keep quiet.

The government has discovered the hard

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**Edited by** Chris Harman  
**Assisted by** Colin Sparks, Simon Turner, Pete Goodwin, Norah Carlin, Sue Cockerill, Stuart Axe, Jane Ure Smith, Dave Beecham, Gareth Jenkins, Jill Poole, Jon Bearman, Christine Kenny, Jim Scott, Andy Durgan Peter Court.

**Films:** Jane Ure Smith

**Inside the System:** Henry Brandler

**Business** Pete Goodwin, Jane Ure Smith

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## Inside the system

The Council for Social Democracy (CSD) has finally spluttered into independent life. The issue it chose for its first public appearance was, significantly, defence of British nuclear weapons. This is a subject dear to the hearts of its leading figures. They have a long history of working together. George Brown, William Rodgers, Roy Jenkins and Shirley Williams were all members of something called the Campaign for Democratic Socialism (CDS). This was set up after the Scarborough Labour Party conference of 1960, to win the party back to support for the extinction of humanity.

The new party is being presented as the last hope of those who believe in decency, liberalism and democracy. The late lamented Sue Slipman (who still writes that she accepts 'the politics of the British Road to Socialism') claims it can create a 'new political space' for these values. Polly Toynbee is telling readers of the *Women's Page* of the *Guardian* that the new probomb party is the place for them—although the same Polly Toynbee announced only last autumn that she had rejoined the CND.

But a quick look at the records of the leaders of the grouping show that they are neither decent, liberal nor democratic. William Rodgers was the key figure of the original Social Democrat Grouping. At the first meeting there was much gloom. Meeting in the flat of a journalist called Ivan Yates (now dead) who worked for a paper called *Reynold's News* (now dead) they faced an immediate problem of funding. £150 was donated by Lord Diamond. £150 was donated by Lord Longford. £75 came from the rest. They all agreed that this was nowhere near enough and unless much more was found the new project would be stillborn. At the very next meeting William Rodgers announced that he had secured an adequate source of funds. When pressed to name his patron he refused. All that could ever be established was that it came from Certain Individuals Anonously.

Roy Jenkins poses as the parlour liberal sipping claret in his home in Holland Park or down on his farm in the Home Counties. In fact, when Home Secretary it was he who authorised the setting up of the Special Patrol Group and appointed Sir Robert Mark as the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. A good deal of the increased political autonomy of the police dates back to his little reign. He was also an unprotesting member of the government when James Callaghan gave the slide towards legalised racialism a massive boost by changing the law to keep Kenyan Asian refugee British passport holders out

of this white little island.

Shirley Williams is presented as the new group's evidence of its honest commitment to improving the position of women. She is said to epitomise a new political attitude that has learnt 'openness' from the women's movement. Yet one of the crucial struggles of the women's movement has been to secure the right to safe and legal abortions. The struggle has been fought around the 1967 Abortion Act. Shirley Williams voted against the third reading of this Act. Since then, on this vital feminist issue, she has always refused to vote on any subsequent bill. So much for the principled defence of women's rights.

Another example of her fine principles is that when she was Education Minister she waived certain provisions of the Race Relations Act in order to push up discriminatory fees for overseas students.

David Owen might seem to be the odd one out, since he is too young to have been directly involved in the squalid deals of the sixties. However, this man of principle is the Social Democrat MP most likely to get re-elected. He is very popular with the Naval Dockyard workers who form a large part of his Plymouth Devonport voters. According to the *Financial Times* this is due to the fact that, when he was at the Ministry of Defence, he arranged for special buildings to be constructed to allow them to work indoors. It would be a slander to suggest that this bears any relation to the practice known in America as 'pork barrelling', by which politicians buy the votes that keep them in office.

Perhaps it is because he is the youngest of them that it was Owen who was chosen to lead the defence of nuclear weapons. He is the one who had to prove his loyalty. It would be a monstrous slander to suggest that any of these activities, either back in 1960 or today, have anything at all to do with CIA. It is just an accident that, then and now, the policy objectives happen to coincide. There is no connection at all between the Central Intelligence Agency and Certain Individuals Anonously.

Doctor Owen also has a fine mind. His concern for democracy is such that the vote at Wembley giving the unions 40 per cent of the votes in choosing the Labour leader was the straw that drove him out of the party. He followed the debate with close attention. Chris Mullin of *Tribune* reported his response thus: 'When it was over, I asked David Owen what he thought of the result. "Just what I said all along ... 40 per cent for MP's" ... I broke the news gently.'

way that you cannot solve the capitalist crisis simply by intensifying it, so as to drive inefficient parts of the economy to the wall. Under modern, state monopoly capitalism the different parts of the system are too dependent on one another. If you damage an unprofitable British Leyland you also damage a highly profitable GKN. If you run down an unviable British Steel completely you damage the national Coal Board—potentially one of the most efficient energy sources in Europe. State funding becomes integral to the whole operation of the 'healthy core' of any modern capitalist economy.

This need to keep industry—private and public—afloat through state largesse is half the reason why despite everything, the level of government borrowing keeps rising—60 per cent more than planned last year. The rest of the reason is of course, that the recession itself forces up state borrowing, to cover the gap between falling tax returns and rising dole and social security payments.

### Missed targets

The final blow to the government's self-confidence has come from the realisation that the one thing on which its whole policy was supposed to rest, the supply of money, is out of control. This awful news was broken to Thatcher by the monetarist professor, Alan Walters, she had recently paid £50,000 to advise her.

The reasons seem obtuse and technical. But they really amount to this: the government's attempts to control the money supply have forced up interest rates; but this has led industrialists to borrow more from the banks, increasing the total amount of credit throughout the economy; in modern capitalism bank credit counts as a form of money, since it can be used to buy things so long as the government does not compel the banks to call in their loans—and the government is frightened to do that for fear of driving some of the very biggest firms to the wall (indeed, through the bank of England it has been encouraging the banks to lend more with 'life-boat' arrangement for firms like the British branch of Massey Ferguson).

Big finance has benefitted from these arrangements, since high interest rates mean high bank profits. This is why the financial institutions of the City of London remain enthusiastic supporters of Thatcherism. There have, however, been none of the magical effects promised by the Tories to the great industrial capitalists.

The worries of big business seem to be creating something like panic among some of the Tory leadership. They had expected the 'short, sharp, shock' of the recession to be followed by a boom that would guarantee them victory at the next election. Instead, the next election can hardly be much more than two and a half years away, the boom still looks a very long way off, and the behaviour of the miners show that any economic upturn could mean a tidal wave of industrial militancy.

Yet they don't know what to do to get out of

the mess they are in. They want to cut interest rates. But the US government's policies are making this difficult by keeping up interest rates throughout the world. They want to reduce the foreign exchange value of the pound. Yet not only does North Sea Oil make that difficult, but success could only increase the rate of inflation. They want to cut the cost of energy to industry—but the only way to do that is to allow the gas, coal and electricity boards to borrow more.

So what are they going to do?

Indicative of the scale of the crisis are the two solutions offered them by the advisors of the ruling class: they are diametrically opposed to each other. On the same day the 'interventionist' Institute of Economic and Social Research and the London Business School gave advice. One called for an increase of government spending of three billion; the other for further cuts of three billion.

### Impasse

Each is able to prove that the other's solution will lead to disaster. Raise government spending by three billion, say 'monetarists', and you will get a small reduction in unemployment, a limited boom of very brief duration, a flood of imports and an escalation of inflation to 20 or more per cent. Reduce government spending by three billion, say the 'interventionists', and you will get even greater unemployment, still less demand for the output of industry, more big business losses and even greater state borrowing.

Both approaches have their supporters within the government. But the monetarists seem to be losing support quickly. Their credibility has been damaged by Keith Joseph's realisation that he has to fork out huge sums to industry (apparently, some of the more hard-line monetarists are now demanding the head of the mad monk: they seem to have forgotten that the death of Rasputin did little good to the image of Czarism). But those opposed to monetarism the 'wets'—have nothing really credible to offer in its stead, except a repeat of the experience of the Edward Heath U-Turn of 1972—a few months of boom followed by a collapse (under a Labour government that time) in to monetarism with a vengeance as inflation got out of hand.

The *Economist* has aptly summed up the difficulties from the 'wet' point of view.

'The long list of woes (of the 'wets') does not exactly add up to a policy. When asked what they would do differently from Mrs Thatcher, the wets are in trouble'.

What applies to the wets applies equally to the Labour leadership (which is why on the gigantic unemployment demonstrations called by his party, Michael Foot quotes Shelley, but does not say anything about what *he* would do), and, of course, to the renegades of the CSD.

With capitalism so obviously in crisis, you might have expected a flourishing of the socialist alternative to it within the labour movement. But the anger within the Tory leadership within recent weeks has been



Learning the lesson from the miners on the Glasgow demonstration.

Photo: John Sturrock

matched by a certain shift to the *right* among the left parliamentarians.

### The left-moves-right show

We predicted this after Wembley: in order to stop the Social Democrats from stealing Labour votes, Foot would move to a close alliance with the remaining right wingers within the Labour Party, and the bulk of the Labour left would be frightened to criticise the man they so recently elevated into the leadership.

This has been precisely the pattern. Foot is even dropping much of the socialist rhetoric and saying things indistinguishable from Healey. On the economy he demands no more than the Tory wets. On the bomb he deliberately refuses to commit himself to the unilateralism which he once preached. On the issue of internal Labour party organisation he is openly for the right's tactic of reversing the Wembley decision at Brighton in the autumn.

But more interesting than Foot's moves have been those of some of the tribunes. Peter Shore has become one of the more rabid supporters of the new 'centre' body, the Labour Solidarity group—alongside the former pals of Shirley Williams and Roy Jenkins, Giles Radice and Roy Hattersley. Neil Kinnock has been voting with the right in the shadow cabinet to water down the

reselection of MPs. And even Tony Benn felt able to attend a commemorative dinner for Callaghan, explaining to the TV how much he appreciated what the man had done for the Labour Party over the last 30 years.

The drift is apparent outside the parliamentary party as well. Typically, the advertisement for the CND Labour Movement conference at the end of March is a paean of praise for Foot. And the welcome call of the North West TUC for a march against unemployment seems to be more and more turning into a coming together of people of goodwill, stretching from Communist Party union officials right across to bishops, nuns and Liberal MPs (perhaps even CSD MPs?). The danger, of course, is that this initiative, instead of building anti-Tory hatred, can end up giving credibility to those who would, as Michael Foot did after the miners' victory, praise the government for beginning to make a U-turn.

None of this gives socialists any excuse for not whole-heartedly building for such events. But in doing so we must insist that the way forward does not lie in U-turns and 'alternative economic policies', but in linking the struggle against the bomb with the struggle against the dole queue, the struggle of the unemployed with the struggle of organised workers, and all of them into a struggle to bring down the government.

# Uncle Sam's Backyard

The bloody road to El Salvador

There have been at least 75 US military interventions in Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean in the last century and a half.

The US has used every dirty trick in the book to promote and maintain its interests in the region: direct and indirect military intervention (eg. Guatemala 1954, Dominican Republic 1965), covert operations and destabilisation (eg. Jamaica 1976-80), assassinations (eg. the now-notorious CIA plots to kill Castro), economic manipulation, blackmail and diplomatic manoeuvres (eg. the so-called Alliance for Progress which in the early 1960s aimed to promote reform from above in order to prevent revolution from below), as well as military training and aid programmes.

There is reliable evidence that the CIA were behind the setting up of ORDEN, the right wing paramilitary organisation in El Salvador responsible for the kidnapping, torture and murder of thousands of peasants and workers. The CIA undoubtedly know a great deal about the activities of the right wing death squads in Guatemala, where at least 25,000 peasants and workers have been murdered in the past fifteen years.

For those who have monitored the history of US imperialism in its 'backyard' the present sabre rattling of the Reagan administration is of no surprise whatsoever.

## **El Salvador**

**population 4.3 million—very highly concentrated, with 505 people per square mile (the average for C. America is 100)**

**Area about the same as Wales.**

**60 per cent of people live in the countryside. In 1960 12 per cent of these owned no land; by 1975 40 per cent owned no land.**

**2 per cent of the population own 60 per cent of the land.**

**One million people live in the capital city, San Salvador. And there are 400,000 urban workers in the country, of whom half are industrial workers.**

**13,000 political murder were committed last year by the armed gangs of the right. These are known to be organised by the US trained and armed army.**



Direct military intervention may be a very last resort and may not prove necessary, but the parallels between the build up of the American presence in El Salvador and the way the US became involved in Vietnam have escaped no one's attention.

Some people may find it difficult to understand why the US is so concerned about events in the tiny Central American republic of El Salvador. Its significance lies not so much in the country itself but in the geopolitical importance of the region.

### **Strategically key**

The US considers Central America as part of the strategically key area of the Caribbean basin. While there is no doubt that the Persian Gulf is politically the most important area in the world today, the Caribbean basin is of much more significance than its rum and reggae image suggests.

The basin is located on key routes from the world's richest oil regions—the Middle East, North Africa and Venezuela to the two major consumer markets of North America and Europe. It has the advantage of deepwater ports suitable for oil tankers, and the basin has become one of the five major refining centres in the world. In 1979 of the 1858 barrels per day of refined oil entering the US, 1032.9 were refined in the Caribbean. All the major oil companies as well as the US government have a strong interest in maintaining 'stability' in the region.

The Caribbean itself is believed to have significant off-shore fields of oil and gas, while Mexico, Venezuela and now Guatemala are already major producers. The region possesses some important raw materials such as bauxite, used to make aluminium, a key material in the manufacture of planes and missiles. Of even greater significance are the sea routes through the Caribbean, the busiest of which skirt Cuba taking cargos of important raw materials from Africa and Latin America to the US.

These routes have military as well as commercial significance. In the event of war in Europe, the preferred trans-Atlantic supply route would pass through the Leeward and Windward Islands in the Caribbean. The ability of Soviet submarines to use Cuban or other Caribbean ports would be a serious threat to the US.

There are of course economic as well as strategic US interests in the region. These are not great in El Salvador itself—total US investment in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica is \$704 million, of which the majority is in Guatemala and Costa Rica. But US investment in the Caribbean, excluding Puerto Rico, is \$4.5 billion. It is interesting to note the close economic and personal ties between the Guatemalan and US business communities.

US imperial interests require different policies according to particular circumstances, these being influenced by internal and external factors.

The defeat in Vietnam and the Watergate scandal made direct interventionism politically unacceptable for a few years. The Carter administration was a useful transition period, giving time to restore legitimacy both nationally and internationally to the US presidency. It also provided time for the reorganisation of the US Armed Forces, now capable of making strategic strikes wherever US imperial interests are threatened.

In 1979 a 100,000 strong Rapid Deployment Force was established in Key West in Florida: it is capable of moving within hours to any part of the region.

As usual the US claims it is merely defending its interests against Soviet and Cuban aggression, hence the recent propaganda exercise on the supply of arms by the Soviet bloc to the guerrillas in El Salvador. Such tactics are merely used to disguise US imperialism's own aggressive designs.

**Jenny Pearce**

# Fighting back in Belgium

Belgium, with the highest unemployment rate of any country in the Common Market, has been shaken by a series of massive strikes over the last few months. There have been two causes: the Belgian government's wage-freeze and the threat of large-scale redundancies.

The strikes have mainly broken out in the French-speaking, southern half of the country, Wallonia. With its concentrations of heavy industry—coal and steel—together with textiles and engineering, it resembles many areas of Britain, and like them has been devastated by the world crisis.

## Forced to react

The Belgian government's response (it is a coalition government with 'socialists' in it) has been to try to overcome massive budget deficits by cuts on the one hand and a two year wage freeze on the other. It is also reducing unemployment benefit in a way that particularly discriminates against youth and against women.

Pushed by the rank and file, the leaders of Belgium's two major trade unions have been forced to react to these draconian measures. Potentially, the trade unions wield enormous power as 80% of the workforce belong to them. But they are divided along political lines (Christian and socialist), and the socialist one, which is the larger of the two, is compromised by its links with the socialist politicians in the government.

Each trade union has led its own campaign, and action has been on a rolling basis, depending on region and type of industry. The only united call for a general strike came in respect of the day the government's package was voted on. The near total stoppage showed how workers' strength could be used.

## Huge lay-offs

As in Britain, the steel industry is faced with huge lay-offs. The two major steel groups, one based at Liège, the other at Charleroi, faced with combined losses of £152 million and accusations of unfair government subsidies, have decided to merge. This would cut their combined capacity by 20% to 8 million tonnes a year—and the labour-force by between four and five thousand jobs (about 10% of the total).

This immediately provoked a general steelworkers' strike involving 40,000 people, which in turn led to some concessions: the planned continuous casting complex at Liège is no longer to be scrapped, and some extra investment (by the government) in Flemish steel-making will be made.

Unfortunately, these promises have sown division among the steel workers. The reprieve of the casting complex has been enough for those at Liège to return to work (on the grounds that hardly any jobs would

now be lost), leaving those at Charleroi to battle on. The trade union leaders are, in any case, prepared to accept some redundancies, but want them shared equally between Liège and Charleroi.

The promise of extra cash for steel-making outside Wallonia prompted the president of the metallurgic section of the socialist trade union to complain that the French-speaking area of Belgium was being deprived of what is needed in order to give the Flemish-speaking area something superfluous. In a country that has long been wracked by conflict between its two linguistic communities, this kind of talk is a particularly dangerous diversion, from which the Belgian steel bosses can only benefit.

Textiles have also been suffering from the crisis. Unmodernised and facing competition from the 'Third World', this sector has steadily lost 73,000 jobs since 1973. Recently, however, the financial collapse of several major firms has pushed the workers into action. Occupations, blocking the railways, kidnapping ministers, and, as a last resort, hunger strikes, have forced the government to make funds available and promise planning changes. But the future of the textile industry remains bleak.

Of particular interest to readers in this country is the fate of the British Leyland factory. Anyone who imagines that protectionism is the way to fight the multinationals should bear in mind what 'our' multinational is up to in Belgium.

British Leyland intends to sack 2,000 of the workforce engaged in production and keep

the remaining 500 to handle its European distribution centre. Unfortunately the trade union officials in charge have done nothing except negotiate the best possible deal for those made redundant. There have been no moves to resist the closure—no strikes, no occupation. Even when the numbers of finished cars stored inside the factory went down from 7,000 to 1,500 in a single month, no action was taken. Preventing their departure would have been a splendid weapon in the hands of the workers.

However, the agreement reached between the trade unions and BL has not yet been accepted. The agreement is intended to sugar the pill by offering increased redundancy payments, supplementing unemployment benefit and enhancing pensions, amongst other things. But at an angry meeting designed to sell the package to the workforce the officials were denounced for having gone back on their promise 'to make the English cough up to the maximum', and for not having tackled the question of alternative employment. The tumult was such that the meeting had to be closed before a vote could be taken.

## Memories

In response to the ever-increasing threat of unemployment, and the government's austerity measures, there have been strikes in other parts of industry, noticeably the public sector. For the moment the first wave of strikes has passed and an uneasy calm reigns. But at the back of everybody's mind is the memory of the round of strikes two years ago that destroyed the previous austerity plan—and ever further back the gigantic general strike that shook Belgium in the early 60s. The prospects for class struggle in this part of the Common Market look very bright indeed.

Gareth Jenkins.



Juan Carlos: media's miracle monarch

The image of a modern King single-handedly guiding a nation of volatile Spaniards out of dictatorship into democracy has been peddled with insistent monotony in the national media since the death of Franco, and the coverage of the recent coup attempt forms a part of the same tradition. But what this mythological version of Spain's political 'evolution' tends to conceal is the *continuity* in the key areas of the state machine from the time of Franco down to the present. It is in the context of these continuities that the recent putsch must be placed.

## Out of step generals

Dave Johnson looks at the background to Spain's failed coup

The most glaring example of continuity is in the Francoist repressive machinery, the police and armed forces, which have remained intact, if not strengthened, since the death of Franco in 1975.

There have been changes in the political system as a whole, of course—notably the integration into it of mass reformist parties and trade unions. But the military hierarchy is still dominated by officers who rose to the top under Franco's regime.

Both direct and indirect military pressure on the 'centre' government of prime minister Suarez last autumn brought a new 'anti-

terrorist' law onto the statute books which stretches the definition of 'terrorism' to include picketing, occupations, the writing of articles favourable to terrorism, and the somewhat nebulous 'crime of omission'. The law provides for detention by the police for up to ten days without charges being brought or any possibility of redress. The use of torture to extract confessions, though never really dropped, has escalated since the passing of the law. Consistent with their policy of appeasement and of winning respectability, the Socialist and Communist deputies all voted for the law in the Spanish parliament.

Public criticism of the Armed Forces has led to the appearance of actors, writers and journalists before military tribunals where they have been sentenced to often hefty terms of imprisonment.

### Coming unstuck

The policy of minimal democratic reform coupled with continued repression of working class opposition which the government of Suarez had been following with the tacit approval of the Socialist and Communist parliamentary opposition began to come unstuck in the second half of last year.

The employers' organisations, having developed a taste for workers' blood in their onslaught on jobs, began to demand still harsher anti-working class measures from the government. And the Francoist extreme-right within the army, emboldened by the military take-over in Turkey and the election of Reagan, began to make ominous noises about the need for military intervention to defend the 'unity of the Spanish nation'.

In January it became clear that King Juan Carlos was no longer in favour of Suarez continuing as prime minister, and faced with a right-wing rebellion within his party, UCD, he resigned, to be replaced by Calvo Sotelo who is generally considered as more receptive to pressure from the army.

### Tip of the iceberg

The coup attempt enjoyed greater support among the military than has generally been recognised:

The arrest of the deputy chief of staff and several other generals represents only the tip of the iceberg, but the King urged that no attempt to purge the army should be undertaken.

Nevertheless, it must be made clear that all the important sections of the ruling class were decidedly against a return to open military rule. The behaviour of the King was an expression of this opposition.

It was the failure of the dictatorship in the last year of Franco's rule to hold down the increasingly organised working-class and the growing revolutionary challenge that swung the bourgeoisie behind a move towards a democratic reform to the regime. The advantage of allowing the Socialist and Communist parties to hold back the working class through their union organisations in the face of a bigger employers offensive is

not something the capitalist class would be willing to give up lightly. The backlash that a return to military rule would inevitably provoke represents a much greater threat to bourgeois order than say, the freedom of workers to join unions.

### Working class reaction

The immediate reaction of working class organisations to the coup was varied. In Catalonia and Andalusia rank and file members of the CP-dominated Workers' Commissions came out on strike, though in Andalusia this action was condemned by the bureaucracy. UGT, the Socialist-dominated union, urged calm to avoid 'provoking' the armed forces on the night of the coup attempt, and called for a token two-hour stoppage the following day. On the Friday following the military rebellion an estimated million and a half people demonstrated in Madrid under the slogan 'For Freedom, Democracy and the Constitution.' The fact that the organisers of the demonstration who range from the Communist Party through to the ultra-conservative party of Fraga, Alianza Popular, disallowed any other slogan and refused to push for the

purging of the army, indicates that no initiative can be expected from the reformist parties against the steady gallop to the right and towards greater military influence on the government.

Once again it has been left to parties of the revolutionary left to fight for the sort of democratic reforms one might have expected from the Socialist and Communist parties. A separate demonstration calling for the guilty to be tried, their actions publicised, for the purging of those involved and for the disbandment of the repressive bodies was organised by the radical nationalist and revolutionary parties and unions of Euskadi. It remains to be seen whether rank and file workers will go against the reformist leadership of the union and pressurise for similar demands to be raised in the rest of Spain. But the version of events being peddled now by the 'reformists' is that it was precisely because the workers kept calm and did nothing provocative that the coup failed; in other words that the only way to maintain 'democratic' gains is to refrain from exercising them.

Dave Johnson



Robert Mugabe

## Going the wrong way

Zimbabwe one year after victory

'Mr Robert Mugabe, prime minister of the Republic of Zimbabwe, sat under a canvas shelter as a succession of local politicians were introduced ... The political commissar from the Wedza district, some 75 miles south of Salisbury, pumped his clenched fist in the air as he led the crowd through the litany of slogans. "Forward with ZANU!" ... "Forward!" the crowd responded. "Down with Nkomo!" "Down!" came the enthusiastic answers.

'Mr Mugabe looked on impassively. Earlier that day he had been talking to university students about 'reconciliation' with Zimbabwe's 200,000 whites.

When the grey-haired slightly stooping gentleman entered the VIP lounge at Salisbury airport he was cordially greeted by the senior government officials 'He explained that he was flying to the United States, where he felt he would be uniquely placed to persuade the right-wing lobby of senators and congressmen that Zimbabwe deserved more aid Before catching his plane Ian Douglas Smith was introduced to the incredulous Mozambique visitors, whose country was regularly pounded by Rhodesian bombers while Smith held power.'

These two anecdotes, both of which appeared in the *Financial Times* convey the most striking fact about Zimbabwe one year after the elections which swept Mugabe to power. It is that the ruling party, ZANU-PF, having led a bitter guerrilla struggle against Ian Smith's settler regime, is now more interested in destroying its nationalist coalition partners the Patriotic Front (formerly ZAPU), than in dismantling the structure of economic and political power they inherited from the whites.

Particularly noteworthy is the way in which the self-avowed socialists of ZANU-PF are taking over and adapting to their own purposes the machinery of repression and control originally created by Smith and his predecessors to crush African aspirations for majority rule.

What's at stake in the battle between the two ruling parties? Although the PF leader, Joshua Nkomo, has long-standing links both with British capital and with conservative African regimes such as Zambia and Nigeria, the issues do not seem to be ones of political substance. Indeed, PF has been attacking ZANU-PF for being too slow in implementing measures such as the land reform promised in Mugabe's election manifesto.

There is little doubt that the differences



are to a significant degree ethnic. Nkomo's support comes almost exclusively from the two south-western provinces of Matabeleland, while ZANU-PF enjoys massive popular support among the Shona, some 77 per cent of the African population.

### Mugabe's problem

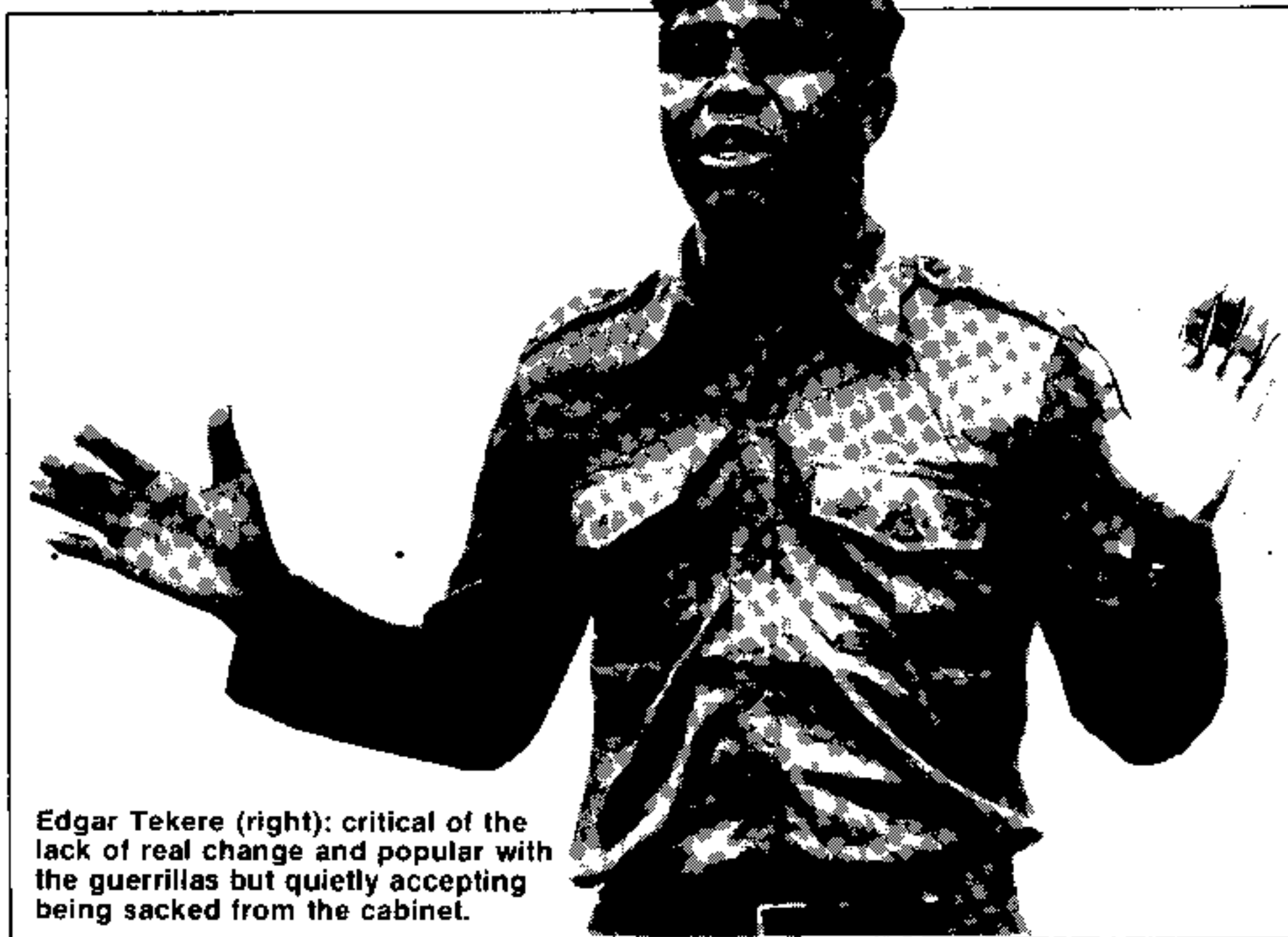
Naturally enough, Mugabe's priority has been to secure military control. The settler forces no longer represent any serious threat. The white conscripts have been stood down, and the elite units—Rhodesia Light Infantry, Selous Scouts etc. have moved en masse across the Limpopo to sign on with the South African Defence Force, only to be sent almost immediately to take part in another brush war in Namibia, where their expertise and experience are at a premium. Mugabe's chief problem is represented by the Russian-equipped and Cuban-trained guerrillas of ZAPU's military wing, ZIPRA. British instructors are busy turning former guerrillas into soldiers of the new national army. So far 9,000 have gone through the 'sausage machine' as the training programme is called, and Mugabe plans to process another 24,000 by August. He will then have an army vastly overblown in size by African standards, but hopefully subservient to his will (He has been careful to keep control of defence and security in his own hands and that of his minister of state, Emmerson Munangawa).

### Ethnic division

Until the night of Saturday 7 February, Mugabe's strategy appeared to be working admirably. Then a brawl broke out in a beerhall near Ndabazinduna barracks, 20 miles from Bulawayo, between ex-ZANLA and ZIPRA members of No 12 Battalion of the new National Army. Ironically, this battalion had held together when used to put down an earlier factional gunbattle between guerrillas housed in Bulawayo's Entumbane township in November.

The fighting spread to two other National Army battalions, at Glenville outside Bulawayo and Connemara near Que Que, and to guerrillas not yet integrated into the army housed at Entumbane. Rather than provoke full-scale civil war by calling out other National Army troops or his own ZANLA guerrillas, Mugabe ordered the Rhodesian African Rifles, black soldiers commanded by white officers who formed the backbone of Ian Smith's professional army, to 'smash' what he called the 'dissident elements'. This they succeeded in doing after several days' savage fighting in and around Bulawayo which left 300, mostly ZIPRA men, dead.

ZANU-PF's factionalism seems to have shattered the National Army, even though nine of its 12 battalions had not been drawn into the fighting. The only reliable instrument available to Mugabe is the Royal African Rifles ('I'm always happy when I'm stonking gooks', one white captain cheerfully told Martin Meredith of the *Sunday Times*). His tendency to rely on the apparatus of repression created by the settlers has been re-inforced.



Edgar Tekere (right): critical of the lack of real change and popular with the guerrillas but quietly accepting being sacked from the cabinet.

ZANU-PF's main achievement so far, then, has been to divide the Zimbabwean people along ethnic lines. The divisions existed before, but there is no doubt that the drive to create a one-party state and to remove PF as an obstacle to achieving this objective, has exacerbated the conflict. There are reports of ZIPRA soldiers killing Shona township dwellers in Entumbane, Midlands province, where Shona and Ndebele have intermarried and lived together in comparative harmony, could suffer even more dreadfully should tribal divisions become worse. The effect would be completely to muffle the issue on which ZANU-PF fought and won the election—the demand for genuine majority rule, involving economic as well as political liberation. Perhaps this as well for Mugabe, since very few steps have so far been taken in this direction.

### Powerful economy

Zimbabwe has a powerful and diversified economy—manufacturing accounts for nearly 30 per cent of gross domestic product and real growth last year probably amounted to six per cent, ending six years of decline and stagnation. The post sanctions boom has been especially marked in mining and manufacturing, which rose at annual rates of respectively 15 and 50 per cent in the first six months of 1980. Even agriculture, much worse hit by a combination of war and drought, is recovering.

Land remains the crucial issue. The most fertile land is still in the hands of some 6,000 white farmers who account for the bulk of agricultural output and exports. They are outnumbered a hundred to one by African peasants in the Tribal Trust Lands, who occupy the same amount of land (although it is much poorer in quality).

None of the benefits of growth will necessarily seep down to the African masses, the economy is still dominated by settler and multinational interests. Foreign loans and investment have not been very forthcoming, and Mugabe has been careful to avoid any

steps that would antagonise big business, been done to implement the promises of large-scale resettlement ZANU-PF made during the elections. Mugabe needs the white farmers to keep the existing rural economy going. Their numbers have actually increased since the elections, at a time when the total white population has been gradually falling.

So the great swell of hope which swept ZANU-PF to power has been betrayed.

### Like the rest

While Mugabe's control of ZANU-PF is far from total, there is no sign of an effective left opposition developing within the ruling party. Edgar Tekere was sacked from the cabinet in the January reshuffle, despite the fact that he is party secretary-general and an old friend of Mugabe's from the times when they were in Que Que prison together. Although critical of the lack of real change and popular among the guerrillas, Tekere seems to have accepted his demotion quietly.

ZANU-PF is likely to become, like ruling parties in the rest of Africa, the framework within which a black bourgeoisie competes for patronage. This transformation will mean that ZANU-PF will cease to be the agency of revolutionary change that it was in Zimbabwe's rural areas during the war. The urban working class, despite increases in the minimum wage, has got almost as little out of independence as the mass of the peasants. Yet it is the only social force in Zimbabwe with the potential to continue the struggle begun by the guerrillas. Whether it breaks out of its submergence in the broad nationalist movement and wins the leadership of the popular masses will depend in part on the willingness of Zimbabwean socialists to break with the phantoms of the past. The next phase in the struggle is likely to see ZANU-PF on the other side of the barricades.

Alex Callinicos

# THREE DAYS THAT SHOOK THE TORIES

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**'We are creating the conditions to bring about an early general election to get rid of this Tory Government once and for all.'**

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Thus Arthur Scargill to an audience of 500 cheering miners on 12 February. Ten days later the last pits in Kent went back to work, the coal board and the union working together on a £400 million plan to keep the pits open, and Thatcher was still sitting in Downing Street.

It was, no doubt about it, a famous victory. The spectre which has haunted the Tories since the fall of Heath in 1974 had so terrified the hard persons in the government that they backed down without a fight. They could see, only too clearly, that if they slogged it out with the miners it would change the whole mood of the working class, including a confrontation over Prior's laws on picketing. It made sense for the government to live and fight another day.

For them, the price was much too small to lose any sleep over. Estimates for the cost of keeping open the threatened pits range from £50m to £200m, but even the £400m plan, which is aimed to expand outlets for coal as well as keep pits open, is chickenfeed compared to the £5,400m rescue plan for British Steel announced on 25 February.

The ban on imports is, again, a minor concession. Strip-mined coal from Australia and the USA enjoys a slight price advantage only at estuary power stations, and there are physical limits to the amount of coal which can be landed. Only last year the government turned down a Central Electricity Generating Board plan to spend £150m on a new deep-water terminal designed to handle 15 million tons of imports a year. And, in fact, plans drawn up before the strike called for Britain to become a net exporter of coal in the coming year. For the major consumer, the CEGB, the main use of imports is as a weapon to beat down coal board prices.

No doubt the government would have liked to win, and their plans were drawn up on the basis that the miners

would not fight, but the speed and strength of the opposition was such that they were forced to think again, very quickly.

The bare record of the dispute is worth recording. Last June the miners' union annual conference decided, by a unanimous vote to resist any closure attempts other than those which the union agreed were the result of exhaustion of coal reserves. Two months later, the government announced that it was phasing out production subsidies over the next three years. At the same time, it raised the Coal Board borrowing limits and allowed the Board to defer some interest repayments. It was prepared to consider a programme of investment running at around £700m a year. The aim was for the Board to break even by the 1983-4 financial year.

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**Why was the response so swift?**

**Why was the strike over so quickly?**

**What was the outcome**

**How does this leave things?**

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All of this took place against a background of a shrinking market for coal. Although imports account for some of this shrinkage, the largest single factor is the recession, which has not only cut overall consumption but has also held up plans for conversion from oil to coal amongst industrial users. In addition, the CEGB plans to shift to nuclear power will mean a major drop in the largest single market for coal.

The overall strategy was clear to the government, the coal board and the union. Taking advantage of the whip of the depression and the downturn in general working class militancy, the less productive pits were to be closed, pro-

duction was to be concentrated in a handful of large mechanised pits, productivity per shift was to be jacked up and miners' jobs were to go. The wave of closures would end mining at up to fifty pits. It was planned to shed 25,000 jobs, roughly ten per cent of the workforce, while cutting production by five million tons—around a four per cent fall.

But this national figure would hit some areas much harder than others. Thus, in Kent the closure of the Snowdown colliery was seen by militants as the thin edge of the wedge leading to the complete closure of the tiny three-pit coalfield. And in South Wales, of course, any closure at all means the certainty of unemployment for miners and their children.

The general mood amongst miners was indicated by the 85 per cent in vote for industrial action in the Yorkshire region. Against that background of pressure the national union executive voted unanimously to ballot for a national strike at their 12 February meeting. Even the hard right wingers knew that they could not get away without at least a show of fight, and Gormley's strategy was clearly to spin things out and hope for talks and concessions. He said on TV: 'If the government stands firm, I can only warn them that my lads are pretty firm too.'

These plans for moderation were quickly scuttled. The South Wales miners walked out at 6 am on Tuesday 17th—five pits had jumped the gun and walked out already and the South Wales president Emyln Williams said there would be a complete withdrawal of labour 'until the threat of closure in all parts of Britain had been withdrawn'.

Kent went out later in the day and Yorkshire announced its intention of coming out the following Monday. But already some pits there and in Scotland had walked out. Even in the notoriously right-wing Nottinghamshire field officials were making it plain that they would stop if picketed, and Gormley announced to the press that he 'had lost control'.

With the number of miners on strike growing by the hour, the government brought forward its meeting with the Coal Board and the union to Wednesday, and a hurried deal was patched up.

The next day the national union Executive called for a return to work. In fact, nearly 50,000 miners stayed out. All of South Wales, all of Kent, half of Scotland, three pits in Durham, four in Yorkshire and one in Nottingham remained closed. The strike was still being spread as late as Friday the 20th, when the South Wales miners picketed and stopped the two collieries in North Wales.

At first, Gormley's public pleas had little effect on the leadership of the more militant areas. Scargill announced on Thursday the 19th that the planned call for a total stoppage the next Monday would go ahead:

'We believe that there should be firm assurances on the table which are not present at the moment. The Coal Board should declare that these pits will not be closed. I shall be recommending our members to come out on strike on Monday as planned.'

Mick McGahey, Scottish president, said: 'We will remain solid until we have firm guarantees, and until then I am unable to recommend a resumption of work.'

Jack Collins, Kent president, said: that a return to work now, 'would give the government a breathing space. Then, once the dust has settled, they will pick us off one by one.'

Only Des Dufield, South Wales vice-president, argued differently:

'We would be a lot happier with something in black and white that had safeguards written in. But should there be a return to work decision we will keep in mind a continuing mandate of opposition to closures.'

Quite clearly, the left leaders, let alone the best of the rank and file, did not trust the government and the Coal Board. Nevertheless, that defiance was to collapse very quickly indeed. On Friday 20th, all of the regional executives except Kent folded up. Two days later, the isolated 3000 miners of Kent voted to end their action. The strike was over.

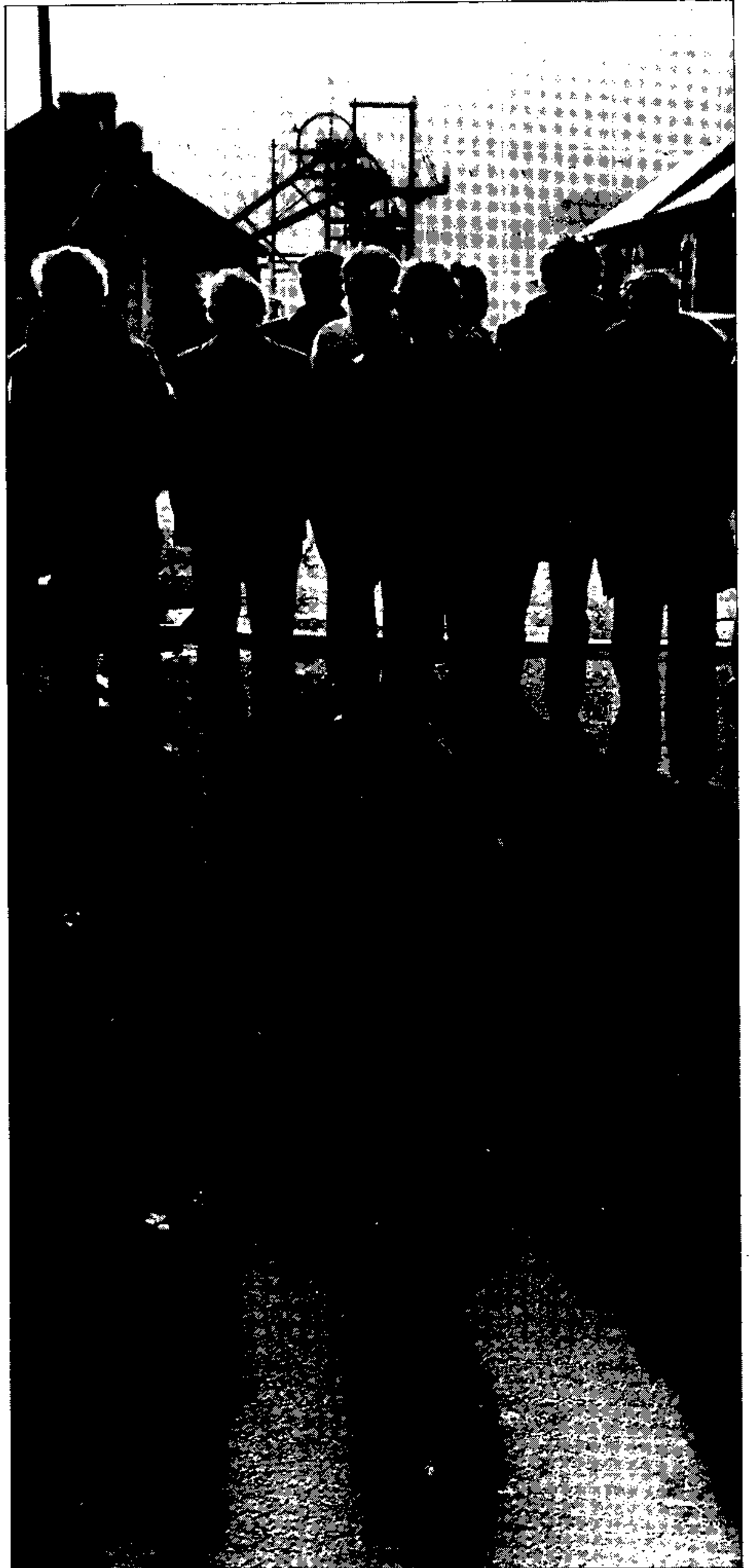
That switchback week raises three important questions:

One: Why was the response so swift and immediate and how was it organised?

Two: Why did the strike end so quickly?

Three: What was the final outcome and lessons of the strike?

The storm centre of the strike was in South Wales. They were the first out and the only large area to come out entirely. Yet most remarkably, it is only a year since the local leadership had failed to win pithead votes for strike action against closure plans. *Socialist Review*



Pickets at Penrhilweiber

Photo: John Sturrock



**'If it was anarchist to send the boys off to North Wales to pull those two pits out, then I'm an anarchist. But what I think they should have done was send cars to every pit in Great Britain.'**

**Mike Griffin (left)**

talked to two South Wales militants to try to find some answers.

Mike Griffin, Lodge Secretary of Penrhiwceiber Colliery, argues:

'Last year we decided to have a strike over jobs, took a vote on it, and then when we wanted the strike to happen we took another vote on it. In between the two votes there was a tremendous propaganda by the Coal Board and the Establishment, and we lost the second vote. This year we took a vote in June 1980 and that became a mandate for strike action at a future date. We kept up a bit of a campaign. When the crunch came on the Monday what started the strike off so effectively was that we took action immediately. Everyone within the organisation and in the country was shocked because of the way we said we'd come out, and we came out.'

'After the disaster last February a lot of us realised that the structure of the organisation left a lot to be desired from a rank and file point of view. So we pressed for, and got, district meetings. All the activists, well, all the ones on the Lodge committees, would meet once a month. As a result the rank-and-file activists were involved every month. When we knew the strike was coming up we formed strike committees immediately. They had the power to do exactly what they wanted to do in the strike.'

'The medium of communication from the district meetings to the rank and file was the general meetings. A general meeting means you put your bills up in the place of work, with the agenda, calling on the members to attend. You won't get everyone to a general meeting but at least they have the opportunity to attend. You get a representative collection of men. We also had meetings in the colliery, and the men were aware of what was going on, were involved, were asking what we were doing, because we put up notices saying we were preparing for the strike, and that they should come and talk about the preparations.'

'In addition to the organising, we have been taking part in demonstrations

of all kinds. Thatcher won't come into Wales without we're there. She came in twice, and she went in by the back door. And she knew we were there; she knew quite forcibly that we were there. That in itself was another method of retaining in the front of people's minds what it was all about.'

That picture of much improved organisation is not confirmed all over the South Wales area. Peter Thomas of the Nantgarw coke works argues that:

'There was little or no discussion in the pits prior to the strike. It was really a bolt out of the blue. For example, the delegates to the national conference were not given any sort of proper report back to give to their men. It was when the first pit came out that things really started to happen. It was a *spontaneous* response from the other pits.'

There is no doubt that, if the militants had learnt a lesson in terms of organisation from the debacle of 1980, the rank and file had learnt a lesson in bitterness and determination from another twelve months of deepening recession and Tory rule. The mood for a fight was there, and once things got off the ground then the strike was one hundred per cent solid even in those pits which have a good chance of expansion in the next few years.

### Coal hasn't got legs

Once the pits were closed, picketing inside the South Wales area was determined and effective and support from other workers was good. Mike Griffin describes it:

'There was stacks of coal in the country, but coal hasn't got legs, so it can't walk, it's got to be moved. The first object was to stop that.'

'We set out straightway for the coal yards, the marshalling yards. I went down to Radyr on Tuesday morning to see the NUR chairman and see what he was doing about the coal on the marshalling yards. He said in the marshalling yard they'd not heard anything about it. "Well", we said, "that's why we've

come down". And the phones start going now immediately, he said the miners are on the marshalling yard - don't move any more.'

'There's the open-cast up the top of the valley here, they're producing thousands and thousands of tons of coal. And on the Tuesday, we heard there were about a hundred lorries up there filling up with coal, and nobody to say a word to them. Immediately we got out there it was different. The Transport and General people were saying, "Well, we haven't heard nothing, we were waiting for somebody to come. So far as we're concerned, there's no coal will come out now." We put a picket there in the morning, just to remind them there were miners about.'

'The classic was down in Port Talbot. It's out of our area, and they didn't have any picketing in '72 or '74. Port Talbot steelworks is immediately on the coast. The coal comes in and it's unloaded inside the dock. Well, there was a picket on the gate, but there was a ship, 24,000 tons of coal, being unloaded on the dock. So we sent the boys down there. When they came to the ship they were wondering what the dockers would say, because we fell out with the dockers last year. The dockers said, "Well, where have you been till now? We've been waiting to see you." They stopped unloading and promised not to unload any more coal.'

### Don't be anarchist

The major reason for the collapse of the strike on the Friday was that the majority, at least of the local leadership, felt that they had won and that there was no point in continuing the strike. Three pits, Tower, Macrady and Penrhiwceiber, voted to stay out but the rest wanted a return to work. Mike Griffin tried to argue for continuing the strike, but quickly found himself out on a limb:

'They said, "Militancy is alright, but don't be anarchist about it." If it was anarchist to send the boys off to North Wales to pull those two pits out, then I'm an anarchist. But what I think they should have done was send cars to every pit in Great Britain.'

Mike's reason for wanting to stay out is that he does not believe that there has been a real victory. As he argued with Gormley on the Thursday of the strike: 'You've been telling us to go back to work before we even came out. Now you say *we've* won a major victory. Put it in black and white just what that victory is.'

And he also thinks that whatever concessions have been made will turn out as useless for working miners. More than that, the ending of a short sharp strike means that future action is much less likely if the Coal Board takes the gloves off again: 'I don't think we're going to have any more action. I'm satisfied of that, because they stopped us in our tracks, that was the purpose of

it, it was successful. There's going to be another time, and it's not going to be next week. They'll fix up a form of words and the appearance of the fruits of victory for the miners. We'll have the appearance of financial easement, but nothing will happen in reality.

'But I think the action's over. You can't get people out any day of the week. They say striking's easy. No way, it's not. To get a strike you have to really work.'

That mood of long term suspicion about the deal is echoed by other militants outside of South Wales. Pete Carr, from the Snowdown pit in Kent, argues:

'The Tories knew what they were doing backing down. Someone in Whitehall has worked out that they can't take us on yet... But we've still got no guarantees. The closure notice could come back in three months. The Tories are well organised. They'll try to isolate us as best they can. They're talking about £28,000 redundancy payment per miner. Some people will find it hard to turn down that much cash.'

So, in the minds of the best militants in the most threatened areas, the outcome of the strike was far less rosy than could have been expected given the readiness for a fight on the part of the membership. There is widespread suspicion that the deal will be broken the moment that the Tories and the Coal Board think that the mood has died down enough for them to get away with it.

### Assurances

The crucial collapse was on the Friday. All three of the main left-wing areas—South Wales, Scotland and Yorkshire—voted to go back at more or less the same time, despite the fact that leaders in each area had said only the day before that they needed better assurances before they were ready to recommend a return.

It is not possible, with the limited sources open to *Socialist Review*, to work out exactly what happened and

which of the local leaders was the first to back down. It seems that McGahey in Scotland was the most determined of the left leaders since, even after selling the deal, he went on record as saying:

'I still feel that the action should be escalated but I could not have the Scottish miners isolated.'

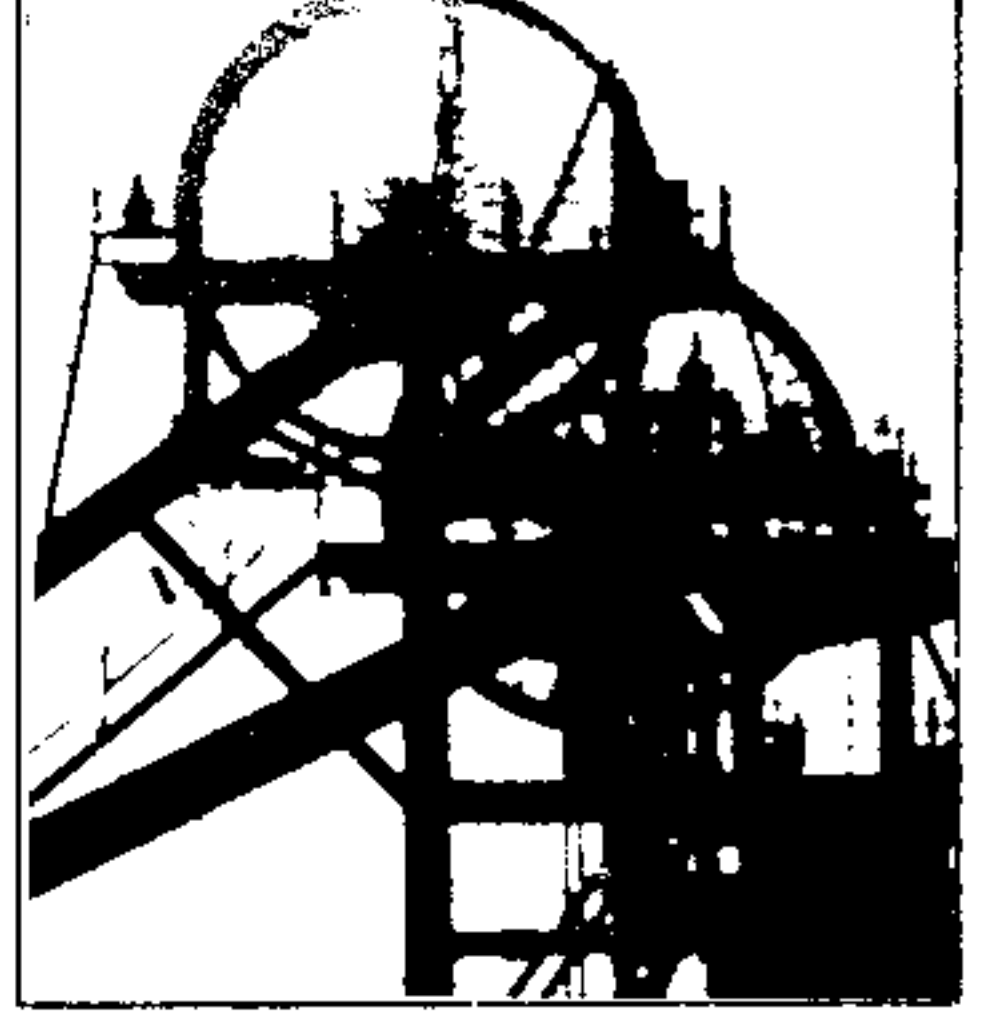
In Yorkshire, on the other hand, Scargill, who had previously been demanding further assurances, recommended the deal on the basis of a telephone conversation with Coal Board chairman Ezra which extracted the concession that there would be test drillings around the threatened Orgreave Colliery to see if there was additional coal which could be profitably mined. He claimed in his defence that he had been phoned by Des Dufield of South Wales telling him that they were definitely going back.

On balance, it seems as though the left leaders reached agreement that they could not hold out on their own, that the feeling of their members was not behind the continuation of a strike, and that they therefore needed to back down. The decisive decision seems to have been that of the South Wales leadership, who have been haunted by the danger of being out of step with their members ever since last year.

In describing the role of Emlyn Williams in the build-up to the strike, Mike Griffin said: 'Emlyn Williams is basically a fighter. He's conditioned by the pressures around him, the executive, etc, but Emlyn Williams has never been afraid of a strike. I assume you've the general SWP attitude that the leaders are holding the rank and file back all the time. But that wasn't the case in South Wales. We had the lead last year, and it was rejected by the rank and file; and that's a blow for leaders who pride themselves on their judgement and working class ability. Emlyn was in favour of a strike, the men rejected him, and he's been influenced by that ever since.'

If that was the underlying attitude of

# THREE DAYS THAT SHOOK THE TORIES



the leadership, it is hardly surprising that they caved in when the pressure went the other way.

Any decision to continue the strike at that point would have raised very severe difficulties. There clearly had been major concessions from the government and the mass of miners, as opposed to the militants, were clearly half-convinced by the promises.

The origin of the problems with the strike really go back a bit further than the day of the compromise decision, and they lie in Yorkshire rather than in South Wales. In every way, Yorkshire is the decisive coal field. It is by far the largest, with around a quarter of the total miners working in it. It had previously won an 85 per cent majority to strike against closures. It has a reputation for militancy and, of course, it is Arthur's kingdom. But despite all of this, there was no massive walk-out in Yorkshire. Instead of giving a lead to his members, after South Wales had struck, Scargill stuck to the date of Monday 23rd for the Yorkshire stoppage. So the strike did not have the added momentum of the Yorkshire miners behind it when the Tories offered their compromise.

The feeling that Scargill should have called Yorkshire out immediately is quite widely shared by militants. Mike Griffin argues: 'I think Scargill dragged his feet. He should have come out, he had the authority to come out.'

We have argued in this journal before that the one of the consequences of the worship of Scargill has been that the rank-and-file organisation which existed in the early 1970s has withered into a cult of the personality. Officials right down to pit level have become rather out of touch with their members and they have no real organisation other than through Scargill himself. In the run up to the ballot, they in fact worked very hard and got an excellent result, but they were not able to respond



**'There was little or no discussion in the pits prior to the strike. It was really a bolt out of the blue ... It was when the first pit came out that things really started to happen. It was a spontaneous response from the other pits.'**

**Peter Thomas (left)**



**'Scargill (left) stuck to the date of Monday 23rd for the Yorkshire stoppage. So the strike did not have the added momentum of the Yorkshire miners behind it when the Tories offered their compromise.'**

quickly to the changing situation. The bureaucratic timetable was set and there was no mechanism which could speed things up.

When the Welsh miners walked out, there was total confusion in the Yorkshire coal field. The area delegates had kept things very much to themselves. There had been no canteen meetings, and no branch called a local meeting off its own bat. Although the militants wanted to come out, and the mood even in the moderate pits was for a strike, there was no organisation which could hold things together and pull people out.

The threatened pits walked out and started to picket other places. Armthorpe, one of the most militant pits, came out as soon as they were asked and joined in the picketing, but elsewhere things were not so simple. Miners from the threatened Orgreave colliery picketed nearby Treeton, but the workforce of a notoriously 'moderate' pit crossed the line. Every miner who was not really keen for a fight had the ready excuse that they were waiting instructions from Scargill. Those instructions never came.

With a firm lead, Yorkshire could have followed South Wales and Kent, and the written assurances would have been on the table straight away.

Much more importantly, a strike in Yorkshire would have shifted the balance in the local area. For some months now the Yorkshire management have been carrying out a stealthy offensive. In Treeton, for example, about 40 miners have been sacked for little things like bad time-keeping and have not been replaced. The same has been going on in other pits. There has been nothing dramatic to point to, but the workforce has been chipped away at, and at the same time production levels have been raised.

These sort of things point to an alternative strategy that the Coal Board can use. It does not have to get its way by means of dramatic confrontation. It can go at least part of the way by means of attrition and stealth. In Yorkshire, in the profitable pits, it can constantly squeeze

the workforce man by man and introduce new mechanised methods which will lead to job losses. In South Wales it can, as Mike Griffin points out, starve pits of investment and then come back and argue that they can't be made workable. In Kent the bone of contention at Snowdown is that the Coal Board claims that it has geological difficulties while the miners claim that with sufficient investment there is plenty of good coal to be won.

So the criticism of the left leaders is not that they failed to argue for staying out when the government had made real concessions, but that they, and in particular Arthur Scargill, did not seize a golden opportunity earlier in the week to really rub the faces of the Coal Board and the Tories in coal dust and thus give themselves a stronger position in the months ahead.

#### Scargill's motives

Using these sorts of tactics and by buying out jobs with lavish redundancy money, the Coal Board can still come out the victors. What a full walk out in Yorkshire would have done would have been to shift the balance back to the union and make it that much harder for the Board to get away with it in the most important area in the country.

It is not difficult to guess why Scargill acted, or rather failed to act, the way he did. Joe Gormley is due to retire and there will be an election for the national presidency. It is very dear to the heart of Arthur Scargill that he should win that election. There is very little doubt that he will be the left-wing candidate. And he knows that, however much he might brown off the militants in Yorkshire or elsewhere, come election day everybody from the CP to the *Collier* will have to buckle down and work to get out the left vote. They will have no choice, their votes are already sewn up and so they don't matter to Arthur.

The votes of the soft centre are another matter. They have to be wooed. So Arthur has to convince people to his

right that he is a responsible and suitable candidate to lead the union for the rest of his working life. He needs to shed the image of the wild and firebreathing militant. Above all, he must respect the rules and constitution of the union. So he did not call for unofficial action, which is what a strike call on the Tuesday would have been. He waited for the ever-so-respectable machine to grind through the procedure. If he came out of it all with an angry but powerless left but with new friends on his right, then for him it was a big victory.

All of this is very much the sort of thing that any clued-up militant would expect from a former left-wing leader on the way to higher things. But it is an ominous pointer to the future.

And there is another, much more ominous pointer to the future. If the best of the left leadership were unable to take advantage of the situation, then so was the rank and file.

Despite the strength of the strike in South Wales and their ability to tie up the movement of coal in their own area, they sent very few pickets to other coal fields. Some went to Yorkshire, Kent, and Scotland, but there was no massive attempt, early in the week, to bring out the other areas. This interference in someone else's patch is something that an official will only do under great pressure, but which the rank and file can do off their own bat. It did not happen because there is not a strong enough movement in the South Wales area prepared to act independently of the local leadership.

And what is true of South Wales is even true of Yorkshire. There was a clear vacuum of leadership there, with the mood right for action but nobody strong enough to fill the gap. If there had been an active movement which could have campaigned in the pits the way the old machine around Scargill would have done ten years ago, then there would have been a complete stoppage. The chaos and confusion which reigned during those four days was a product of a collapse of leadership at the local level.

The truth is that the downturn has hit the miners too. The situation may not be as desperate as it is in engineering, and the left may have a good chance of winning important official positions. The miners may retain much more of the basic trade union traditions than other groups of workers. But still there is no doubt that the old broad left has suffered greatly in the last few years, and the new opposition is not yet strong enough to fill the gap.

Yes, it was a famous victory but it was not an occasion for euphoria. If that short week showed up the strengths that the miners have, then it also showed up their weaknesses. Unless a lot of hard work is done pretty quickly, then, another time and on another issue, the Tories might just get away with it.

**Reporting: Christine Kenny, Marta Wöhrlé, Colin Sparks.**

# A lesson for us all

The national officers of the NUT have victimised and suspended from the union the six officers of the Lambeth Teachers Association. Their 'crime' was to respond to the Lambeth Council Workers 'week of action' against Tory cuts by calling a half day strike on February 4th.

The local Lambeth branch of the NUT had voted overwhelmingly to support the action at a general meeting. The officers sought the necessary 'approval' of the national action committee. However even before the national action committee met, the national officers intervened and instructed the Lambeth officers to call off the proposed strike. Under a rule brought in by emergency resolution at the annual conference in 1974, no member or body of the NUT can 'initiate or engage in action without the prior approval of the national executive' (the now infamous rule 8) The Lambeth officers felt that the democratic wishes of the Lambeth members could not be ignored and carried on with the call for action. Despite numerous letters and telegrams Lambeth teachers responded well to the call, and over 150 joined the march on the day.

## Vicious sentences

A disciplinary body has since met and imposed vicious sentences on the Lambeth officers. They have singled out Dick North, SWP member and NUT executive member and Lambeth Treasurer. He is suspended from the union for 12 months and barred from holding office in the union for a further 18 months. The other officers, John Esterson, Gary Jones, Jackie North, Hilary Tarr, and Vanessa Wiseman, are all suspended for 6 months and barred from office for a further 18 months. In addition Dave Picton and Bernard Regan who were standing with Dick North at the time in an elec-

tion for the officers of the Inner London Teachers Association (the people with 'negotiating' power for all London teachers) have been 'reprimanded'. Their 'crime' along with Dick was refusing to withdraw a section of an election leaflet, even though the publication of the leaflet was found to be in itself not a breach of rule!

It is estimated that over 3000 teachers have 'broken' rule 8 since its introduction, so why did the officers feel it necessary to act at this time? There are two explanations. First it was a deliberate attempt to interfere in the London election at its crucial closing stages by creating a 'red' scare. A strong challenge was being made by standing Dick North against Bob Richardson who has been London general secretary for over ten years. Last year the left won two of the officers' positions and this time was fighting hard for all three. The final vote was very close—less than 300 votes for one position, yet 375 votes remained uncounted because the union claims they cannot be validated. For the first time in the union's history a 'validation process' was undertaken, so that before the votes were counted, every ballot form was checked against a membership card. It is the teachers on insecure contracts and younger teachers who move around schools more who are the most likely to vote for the left and it is these votes that remain uncounted.

More importantly, the officers of the national union are trying to stem the tide of support for strike action against the cuts. They have taken a lot of criticism for their failure to take on Nottinghamshire when it sacked nursery teacher Eileen Crosbie. They fear that members will take matters into their own hands as the national leadership fails to respond to growing calls for action, and so they felt it necessary to demonstrate



**Dick North**

that rule 8 was not a dead letter. So instead of confronting the real enemy of public sector workers, the Tory government, they have turned on their own members who are prepared to join with other trade unionists in a campaign of resistance. In doing so they weaken the whole trade union movement.

The particular treatment given to Dick North is designed to remove from the national executive the only voice of dissent to the sell out on jobs, conditions and salaries. Dick has represented Inner London continuously since 1974. His political opponents have made regular attempts to remove him 'bureaucratically' after failing to remove him at the ballot box. An appeal is being lodged, but the appeal body is the national executive of the union—and Bob Richardson and the other officers who brought the original charges are members of that body!

## Right to strike

It is also significant that the harsh sentences came in the same week that the union negotiated a 7.5% cut in the real purchasing power of teachers salaries, and was designed to deter any attempt to link teachers and civil servants in a joint attack on Tory public sector pay policy.

In the light of these victimisations the TUC week of action against the cuts in April takes on a new significance. Rank and File teachers will be urging all London teachers to join the March on April 8th called by South East TUC to show that we will not be intimidated and will continue to join with other workers in fighting the cuts.

This is not just an internal matter for the NUT: it is about the right to strike, the right to stand for election free from interference, and it effects all trade unionists fighting the cuts. Please send motions of support and financial donations to *The Defence Committee, 12 Albion Rd, London E8*, and motions of protest to F. Jarvis, NUT Gen Sec, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, WCI. In particular all trade unions, councillors and Labour MPs who supported the Lambeth conferences should be approached to give their support.

**Jeannie Robinson**  
*Hackney NUT*



**The ILTA 8 on the steps of the NUT HQ before their disciplinary hearing.**

# More blood on the street

The deal agreed with Murdoch at Times Newspapers is a serious defeat for the workforce and a setback for the fight against job loss and the erosion of chapel organisation in the whole of Fleet Street.

563 jobs are to go. The three supplements—Education, Higher Education and Literary—are being moved out of London. Wages will be frozen for three months and then tied to the miserable Newspaper Publishers Association agreement. The new disputes procedure, involving ACAS, will choke off unofficial chapel action to get local wage increases on top of the NPA or to fight further job cuts and new working procedures which are likely to follow with Murdoch's plans for new technology.

To see how this deal was agreed, it's necessary to look back at the ten-month lock-out which began in November 1978. The union response to Thomson's attacks was almost totally passive; enough organisation was achieved to provide pay or alternative jobs for those locked out, but it was all done bureaucratically. There was no attempt to organise blacking of other Thomson enterprises or solidarity action. Picketing began only at the very end, and then was totally ineffective in preventing equipment or people moving in and out of the Grays Inn Road building. The rest of the Fleet Street workforce was involved only minimally, in paying a levy. The union leaderships merely sat it out.

When the end came, many people hailed it as a union victory. True, Thomsons didn't win what they wanted. They backed off from the NGA leadership, who would not concede to the demand for direct input of copy by journalists and clerical workers,



**Murdoch (right) reaping the gains from a passive and bureaucratic union response to the 1978-9 lock-out (above)**



because conceding that would mean a serious threat to the very existence of the NGA. To say this is not to under rate the very real willingness of many of the rank and file to resist Thomsons' demands, and the solidarity that was shown, here and there, when it was not sat on from a great height. But the members were ill-served by their leaders, in ways that are only now becoming clear. The verdict on the lock-out is really that the bureaucracy won, but the rank and file lost.

Because there was no real fight, the second round was much easier for Murdoch. With a March 14th deadline for total closure of the papers, the union leaders fell over themselves to embrace Murdoch, sweeping aside objections over job loss and opposing any reference to the Monopolies Commission.

Murdoch's negotiators put a series of swingeing demands to be agreed within three weeks. Staff cuts ranging from 27.5% of clerical workers to 45% of the composing room; a year's wage freeze; a disputes procedure including cash penalties for unofficial action; for the clerical staff, the ending of the nine-day fortnight won the previous year; and the removal of the supplements from London.

In fact, all these demands were prepared by Thomson, and handed over to Murdoch as his opening shot. The negotiators caused deep anger in the chapels with these demands, and especially by the references to whole departments being 'terminated'. The union leaders, on the other hand, seemed quite happy to discuss anything, so long as Rupert bought.

The national officials got a rough ride from the rank and file for their cavalier attitude to job loss at meetings of the NGA and of the NATSOPA machine and clerical branches. But it soon became clear that a few 'concessions' from Murdoch would be enough for local officials to swallow their rhetoric and help to sell the deal to the members.

It now appears from documents drawn up by Thomsons's bankers, Warburgs, last November for potential bidders, that profit

projections for the papers assumed a deal with the unions which involved the loss of 576 jobs, wage rises of at least 12% a year, and no changes in printing, (*Private Eye* 13.2.81). Even allowing for the fact that the documents were designed to attract bidders, Thomsons' bankers were forecasting a profit of over £14 million in 1983 on the basis of a deal which extracted less from the unions than the one they've actually finished up signing. So much for Murdoch's concessions.

### ... and why

Murdoch has paid a pathetic £12 million for a highly profitable business plus acquiring property and assets worth about £25 million. If he sold out tomorrow, he would have made a tidy amount. That fact represents an axe hanging over the heads of the remaining workforce.

How did he get away with it?

Firstly, there were weaknesses ready to be exploited. For example, the two clerical chapels, with a total of 780 members, had been sitting on over 100 unfilled vacancies. (The chapel leadership's contention that no jobs were lost during that period was, to put it mildly, misleading.) This at a time when there were 300 unemployed clerical staff on the union's books after the *Evening News* closure. The truth about the vacancies only came out after the Murdoch deal which wrote them off.

Secondly, Murdoch didn't demand direct input (ie setting of type) from the NGA. Many newspaper bosses have come to the conclusion that it is stupid to pay journalists to be typists: the NGA can be allowed to retain the monopoly of keying-in. The new technology makes it possible to produce a paper without them, anyway, if the management want to deal with a dispute that way.

Most importantly, he got away with it

## Inside the system

In the last week of February ICI announced its final results. These were bad—a huge loss although it still managed to pay a reduced dividend. This was 'bad news' since ICI is the largest and most modern of British manufacturing companies. It caused a tremor on the stock exchange, but not among all firms. The shares of the manufacturers of pottery rocketed. The reason for that was the announcement of the Royal wedding, which means a rich harvest of memorial plates, mugs etc—the sort of thing that used to be on the mantelpiece when you were a kid. And we always thought that the only function of Royal events was to take our minds off unemployment.



because there is a real fear of risking a fight among many of the rank and file, as there is in the class as a whole at the moment. It seemed preferable to settle with Murdoch and save some jobs than to risk total closure. The alternative presented by the BPC occupation, for example, made too little headway, though proposals for an occupation were raised on a few occasions in various Times Newspapers chapels. The NATSOPA clerical branch secretary ironically expressed the correct view of defeatism over jobs when he said that he was fed up with being accused of living in cloud cuckoo land for wanting no job loss. He also foresaw other jobs going in Fleet Street if any were lost at the *Times*, making nonsense of the 'save some jobs by selling others' approach. Yet that was exactly the kind of 'realism' which won the day.

The fear springs from general demoralisation following defeats like the *Evening News*. But attempts by the union leaderships at local and national level to blame the rank and file, are as always, only part of the story.

If there had been a real fight against Thomson in the first round, or against Associated Newspapers over the *Evening News*, confidence in chapel strength would have been there to draw on. If other Fleet Street chapels had been consistently informed and involved, Times Newspapers chapels might have been readier to fight, knowing they wouldn't be left on their own. Instead, they are facing Murdoch from a position of weakness. That weakness can only be overcome by the first step of honestly confronting the facts, and trying to learn the lessons.

Jane Bernstein.

already being made. The world of George Weber, the poly lecturer hero of Posy Simmonds' *Guardian* cartoon strip, suggests that sociology lecturers as whole are an underworked bunch of trendies. True, the satire is fairly gentle (after all, a good proportion of the readership must come from the polys) but that was not the case with the recently televised version of Malcolm Bradbury's *The History Man*. (The fact that Howard Kirk is a university as opposed to a polytechnic lecturer is not relevant: he's a sociologist all the same).

**Radicals**

Where George Weber is a bumbling, harmless trendie, Howard Kirk is a vicious one, a radical who stirs up dissatisfaction and screws his students (in every sense of the word). Clearly, anyone that nasty is enough to give *all* radicals a bad name—and justify their dismissal.

Finally (and at a serious level), in Dr Colin McCabe, the real structuralist (as opposed to George Weber, the mythical one), we have a genuine case of victimisation. The goings-on in the Cambridge University English Faculty are too well known to need repeating. But the fact that the media have chosen to give such wide coverage to his case, and not to the equally deserving one of Mr David Ingleby, an assistant lecturer in social psychology at Cambridge who has also not been upgraded, give rise to the suspicion that we are meant to view the fact of a structuralist (and the papers have been busting a gut to define structuralism) as the satirical subject of yet another TV serial.

That precisely is the problem. Other things being equal, structuralism should be vigorously attacked as trendy rubbish. What the media have done (with their unnerving instinct for the weak spot) is to highlight ideas that are difficult to defend as a means of putting down all radical ideas. If structuralism, with its obscure jargon, is useless and irrelevant—and it is—then so, it is implied, is Marxism. Of course, McCabe himself must be defended without reservation and the growing attack on left-wing ideas resisted.

**After the comedy**

Fortunately, so far the right-wing have hardly mustered any very stunning intellectual arguments: one Cambridge don recently wrote to *The Guardian* to suggest that because Karl Marx had been born before Queen Victoria, Marxism was out of date.

Hitherto, the attack on progressive ideas has been more comic than serious. But it's part of a softening up process that will suit Tory purposes well as the government recasts public sector higher education in the 1980s. When the sackings start coming thick and fast, there won't be any distinctions made between real and trendy lefties, between what is worth defending and what is not.

Gareth Jenkins

**Purge in the poly**

The fate of the polytechnic sector of higher education is not likely to figure largely in anyone's calculations of the balance of class forces in Britain in the next few years.

Yet the government is out to make swingeing cuts: one job in six is to disappear by 1984 (4,300 in all), leaving a depleted service with fewer opportunities for working class youth than ever. That may be small beer compared with job losses elsewhere, but the way in which the government intends to recast higher education has important consequences for all of us: the climate will become even more hostile towards progressive ideas than it is at present.

The problem for the Tories hitherto is that merely by financial squeeze under the present system they have not been able to shed enough labour from public sector higher education. Instead of an intended 13% drop, the numbers of polytechnic and college lecturers have remained constant over the last two years.

The reason lies with the present indirect control the government has over the service. The government provides a 'pool' of money, but does not control the way it is distributed or supplemented—that is the business of the local authorities, who have, in effect, the major say in what goes on in 'their' polytechnics and colleges of higher education.

**Complex blunting**

Not that local authorities have protected the polys against cuts—quite often the reverse—but the very complexity of the system has blunted the government's attack. It is also the case that the hybrid nature of these institutions—half national, half locally-oriented—has meant that their precise function has never been defined. So they have developed largely along their own



lines. In part, they have, like the universities, offered traditional academic subjects, particularly in the social sciences; in part, they have offered 'vocational' subjects, closely geared, through sandwich and block release courses, to the 'needs' of industry (i.e. management), especially in engineering and commerce.

**Vocational courses**

All this will be changed if the government has its way. It wants to remove local authority influence and fund public sector higher education directly, just like the universities. This will have two advantages for the government. First, the process of slimming down the polys can take place much faster. Secondly, it will enable the government to define the function of public sector higher education to suit its philosophy.

That philosophy is already clear: apart from an elite of institutions (mostly the universities) to serve an elite, the only purpose of higher education after the school-leaving age will be to provide vocational courses. If these appeal to employers, then state money will be forthcoming. Anything else (and especially anything that implicitly or explicitly challenges government assumptions) will be redundant (literally).

So it is easy to see where the proposed loss of 4,300 jobs will come from—not the 'useful' vocational areas, but the 'useless', 'irrelevant' ones, like sociology and the humanities.

At a jokey level that kind of point is

The announcement that Peugeot-Talbot intends to close its Linwood plant at the end of May — a mass meeting is due to be discussing possible resistance to the closure three days after we print — has focused attention yet again on the world wide crisis of the car industry. The threat to Linwood takes place as BL makes a similar threat to its Belgian plant and soon after Fiat's success in getting rid of 24,000 of its workforce. *DAVE BEECHAM* looks at the prospect for the industry internationally in the next two to three years.

# The car crisis

On 3 February General Motors, the world's largest manufacturing corporation, with sales of nearly \$60 billion, announced a loss for 1980. The money itself was a trifling \$763 million—not much compared to profits of four times that amount the year before. But it was GM's first recorded loss since 1921. The world crisis in the car industry had affected even the untouchable lord of the jungle in Detroit.

The scale of the cars crisis has reached a stage where the participants increasingly resemble snarling animals, each firm holding its corner of the clearing, only to be pushed aside by a neighbour and to attempt to return to the fray, snapping at the other's legs in effort to regain its position. The names of the animals that matter today are GM, Ford, Toyota, Nissan, PSA, Renault, Volkswagen, Fiat...Some of them are already looking bloody. Other weaker specimens are deeply wounded or panting exhausted trying to keep within the shrinking circle of opponents. They have names like Leyland or Chrysler.

These firms are fighting for survival in a really deadly game. What is perhaps the world's single most important industry has reached a point where the weak are inexorably being forced to the wall. The demand for accumulated capital to compete with is so great that only a handful can survive the next few years.

The almost unbelievable scale of the crisis was summed up by an American analyst last summer who coolly predicted that the 'Big Three' in the US—GM, Ford and Chrysler—might not even be

the 'Big Two' by the mid-80s. Ford's share of the American market might fall to 20 per cent in the face of GM's overwhelming superiority in terms of investment and new models and the sleeker competition of the Japanese.

When the world's second largest producer is squeezed in the very heartland of car production, it is a sign that the crisis is nearing breaking point.

There is a world over capacity for producing cars. A huge level of investment is needed to stay in the game. And the emergence of 'world cars', produced by a tiny handful of world firms—for example, Ford, GM and Volkswagen—means that even large producers like PSA-Talbot, are now vulnerable.

Some facts and figures provide a helpful illustration of what is happening. The Tory Government has just bitten its tongue and given BL £990 million to produce a new car, the LC10, and has declared itself willing to finance BL to the tune of £3.25 billion in the next five years or so—a huge state subsidy. But GM is spending £3.4 billion this year alone on re-tooling and new machinery.

From another angle, look what is taking place in Brazil, now Latin America's most dynamic car market, with output exceeding the UK's. Competition is forcing the producers into new moulds. Volkswagen has 50 per cent of Brazil's market, but its success depends on how much it can export. Its Brazilian exports rose from \$247 million in 1979 to \$325 million in 1980, but it needs an even bigger rise this year. It aims to integrate its giant Mexican and US plants with part of its Brazilian out-

put and its Argentinian operations, so as to maintain its market share—not so much in those companies, but in the US, in Europe, in Germany itself.

Volkswagen's output can now hardly be identified with any one country. Cars produced for the US market or Germany have Mexican engines, German and South American components, even if they come out of the gate of the Pennsylvania assembly plant.

The two US-owned giants are, however,

still out in front in terms of international integration. The Ford Escort in the US is made up of components manufactured in Mexico, Brazil, Britain, France, Spain, West Germany, Italy and Japan. Other companies are trying desperately to keep up. Fiat's Brazilian



production is now imported into Italy to provide engines for diesel versions of its Italian-assembled cars. And Fiat has gone one further than even Ford, by attempting to integrate production of some components in Brazil, Argentina, Italy and Poland.

### The GM Giant

It is, however, GM that is exerting massive domination internationally. While Ford was first in the field with world integrated production, GM's forthcoming model, codenamed J, is the development that currently terrifies the other Western motor industry bosses, whatever they say about the Japanese. Ford's investment in the Escort, after all, was 'only' \$3 billion, while Ford's total investment plan for 1980-85 involves an estimated \$18 billion. But GM now intends to spend about \$40 billion over the same period (approximately five times the maximum expenditure allowed for by BL, incidentally)—and GM starts from an enormously stronger base. It plans five new models in the crucial period to 1983; Ford plans only two launches. Ford is having to shut down plant; GM is due to open seven new factories in the US and nine abroad.

In this light the view that Ford could

be crucified by GM by 1985 does not look so bizarre. GM's strength is illustrated by the almost casual decision to invest another £100 million or so at Vauxhall, Ellesmere Port, even though the plant probably won't be doing more than assembling Opels after next year. This is after all only about 3 per cent of its total 1981 investment intention.

### Japan

The Japanese producers are really the only ones that can still be identified nationally. This is about to change for good. First of all because the Big Two, Toyota and Nissan, are rapidly moving to establish production across the world; secondly, because the smaller fry Honda, Mitsubishi, Toyo Kogyo, Isuzu — are forming partnerships with other European or US firms.

The reasons for Japanese development on a world scale are fairly obvious. The stakes are rising rapidly, particularly with GM's expansion, with the international clamour for import controls from different nations (eg. France, Germany); different cartels of nations (eg. the EEC) and different producers (above all Ford).

Japan's fantastic expansion from a

world market share of 0.7 per cent in 1964 to 19 per cent in 1979 was built on a policy of tremendous protection against imports, plus virtually a form of state capitalism in the way state and banks linked up to develop key firms. This era is coming to an end. In its place we now have the first Japanese car plants built in the US for Toyota, the announcement by Nissan of its first European manufacturing base on a new site somewhere in Britain, its Nissan links with Alfa in Italy and Motor Iberica in Spain (a share purchased from Massey-Ferguson!) and the likelihood of Toyota following GM's example and setting up production in Spain, possibly with a takeover of the old Fiat partner, SEAT, which already exports half its production. For the first time, the Japanese big two are exploring the idea of producing cars in Brazil and Argentina, and there is a components link with Mexico.

This all adds up to the emergence of fitter and hungrier additions to the narrow circle of the pack that will survive. The others will fall—or they will have to link up.

### Emerging Partnerships

If the arrival of world producers on the scene did not in itself show how fruitless the idea of campaigning for import controls is, the emergence of international partnerships surely would. By 1981 we have the following series of links: GM/Isuzu; Ford/Toyo Kogyo; Chrysler/Mitsubishi/PSA; American Motors/Renault/Volvo; Nissan/Motor Iberica/Alfa Romeo; Fiat/Lada/Polski Fiat; Honda/BL; Saab/Lancia. This list is not exhaustive, it leaves out possible Toyota/SEAT and Toyota/Ford links, and the probable Volkswagen/Nissan deal.

The partnership is the emerging form in which firms without the capital to compute link up. But partnerships bring their own peculiar problems. Most of BL's disasters stem initially from ill-digested mergers, national and international. Peugeot SA is a huge car producer, but heavily centred on Europe. When PSA took over Chrysler Europe we were told how this was the Euro-car producer that would take on Ford. Not only has this not been the case, but PSA is being severely squeezed world-wide.

The important Spanish operation is menaced by new production by GM and probably Toyota.

In Latin America

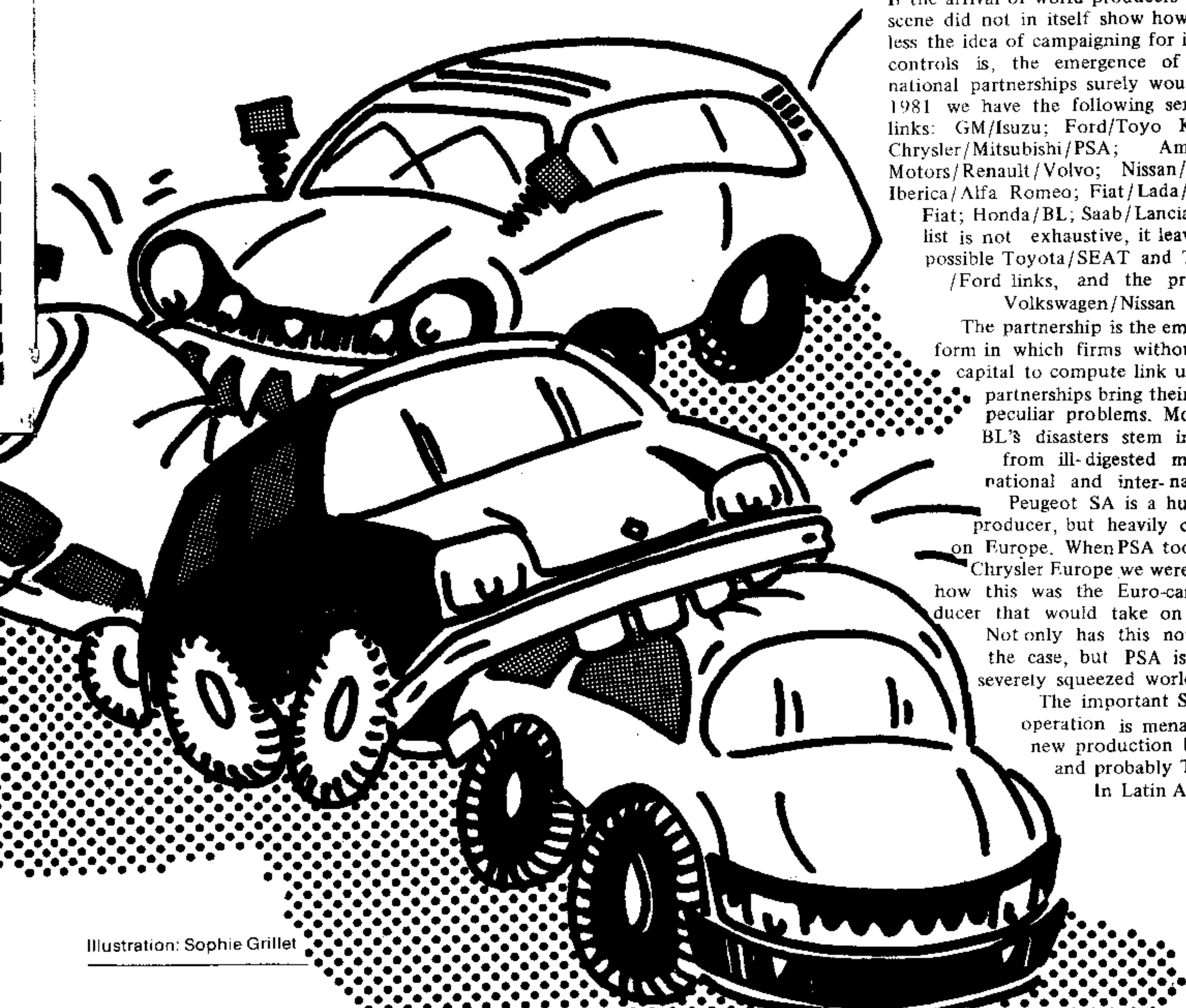


Illustration: Sophie Grillet

its formerly strong position has been hampered: it pulled out of Chile and Argentina in the form of Citroen, merged Peugeot with Fiat Argentina in a desperate attempt to try and get into Brazil, and sold out to Volkswagen in the form of Chrysler. Even more significant PSA has almost nothing in the US, even compared to Fiat, let alone its main 'European' rivals, Renault and Volkswagen.

PSA is a classic example of potential disaster and it is still the world's fifth-largest producer of cars after the Big Two US-owned and Big Two Japanese-owned firms. It is not much fun being fifth-largest: the options PSA has are basically reduced to one, taking over redundant Chrysler plants in the US, of which seven are modernised. The cost of this little lot would be about \$1.2 billion, about three times as much as PSA's rivals, Volkswagen and Renault, paid for their American sweethearts.

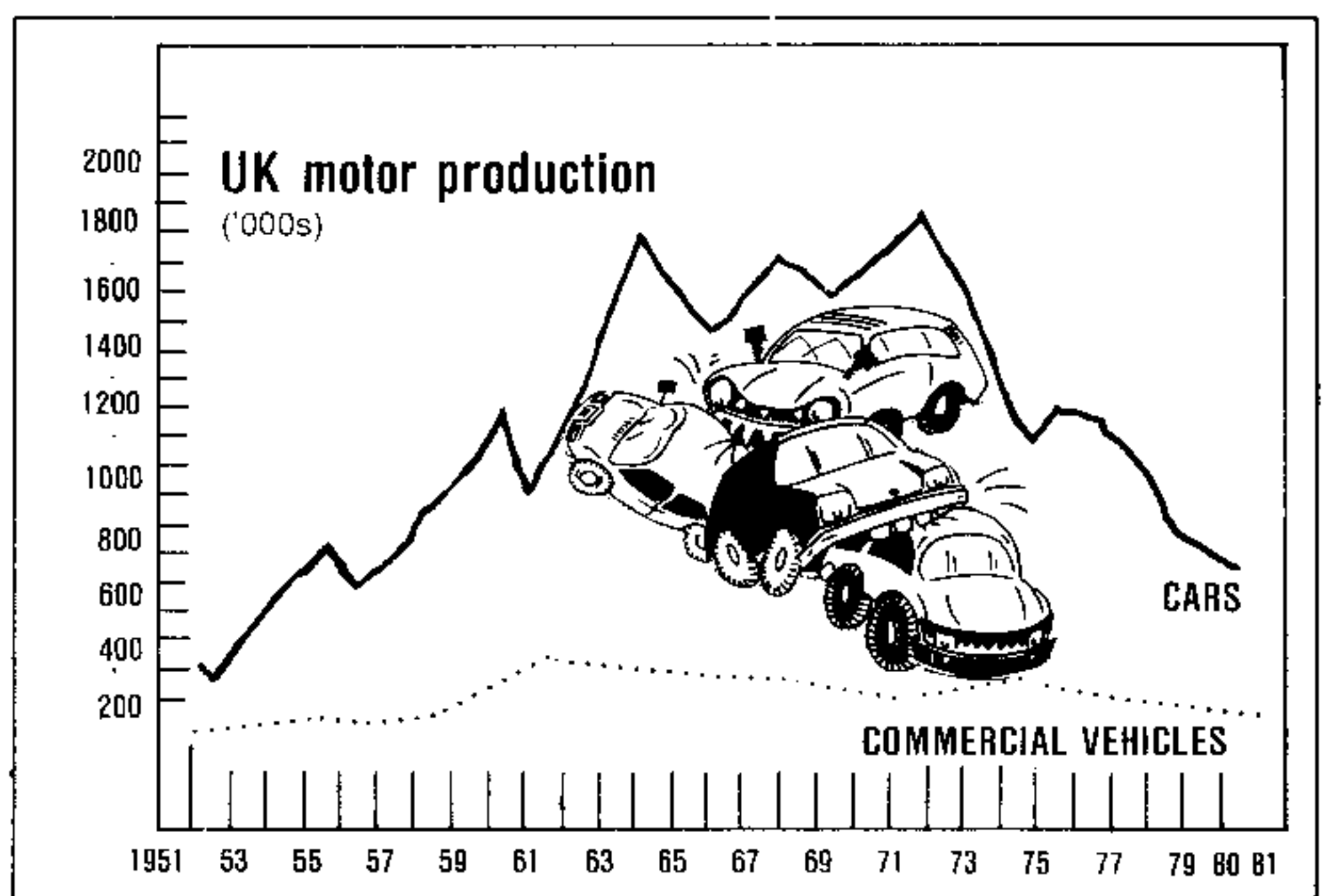
### The State to the Rescue?

Up till now, both states and bankers have prevented individual firms from being torn apart by the pack.

Chrysler is of course past master at extracting funds from the state, the £125 million to 'save' Chrysler UK being the most notorious example. In the US, Chrysler extracted \$1.5 billion in loan guarantees to survive last year while it launched its K-car 'rival' to Ford and GM, which was an almost total flop. The Reagan administration now seems to be giving Chrysler a breathing space in which to try and merge - either with PSA (see above), or with Mitsubishi, which had an engines and components agreement with the Americans. But the state is propping up Chrysler in another way - arms. Existing defence activities are worth only about \$50 million. But there is a potential \$1 billion order for NATO tanks on the cards, for which Chrysler would be a prime candidate. It is hard not to imagine Chrysler chairman, Lee Iacocca, praying at night that the Russians invade Poland.

### Imports Lobbying

The 'paradox' is that as the companies race each other to become more and more international, the states pursue a more and more nationalistic role. The lobbying for import controls comes largely from governments and worried capitalists like PSA or Ford. It is a cynical exercise designed to whip up nation-



alistic fervour and to allow the 'French', 'American' or 'German' company to get on with rationalisation, sacking workers and extracting more and more money from the state in order to compete in a dwindling world market.

The absolutely classic version of this is the Edwardes regime at BL, where the programme to 'save Leyland' is just a device to ensure its survival and rationalisation for long enough to make it an attractive partner for an international merger. There is no way BL can survive as anything but a partner a junior one - in an international conglomerate, however many mythical Japanese landing craft the Mini-Metro fights on the beaches.

Workers in every country are being fed the same junk propaganda about imports and international competition, and are being cajoled or bullied to accept an invitation to slit their own throats. While BL feeds us nationalism here and Edwardes-robots attack the shop floor, PSA management in France, for example, fuels an anti-American, anti-Japanese lobby and takes its foremen on three-month training courses at Sochaux, half of which are spent learning how to deal with the unions.

In this context it was to say the least pathetic to read the comment of one of the British T&G delegates at the Ford workers World Auto Council meeting last September who 'called for more government assistance to the car industry

and import controls'.

### Some Thoughts on Anarchy

If ever there was a case for socialism, for a democratically planned world economy, for an end to the anarchy that sets worker against worker - it is the car industry. The industry is now worldwide; it does not recognise boundaries, seas, nor the iron curtain. It is the clear proof of the inevitability of internationalism, and of the nationalistic anarchy of capitalism. There is a spiral of vicious competition where billions are being spent to destroy jobs, to drive out competitors and lock producers of components and other supplies to the industry tightly into a world market dominated literally by a handful of firms.

The world car is by now a well-known concept - world components are on the way. Much of the same madness as is taking place in car production is now spreading through the engineering industry. Lucas, ZF, Bosch and a few others have been spreading out on a world scale and creating their own hysteria about imports and 'fake parts'. The same crisis is spreading through the glass and rubber industries, which supply much of their production to the car industry.

But the real lunacy of what is going on is still mainly in the sphere of actual car production and assembly, where economies of scale are enormous and the struggle to get and keep a sufficiently large slice of the market is all-important now.

One amazing example of the anarchy involves Fiat. Its position in Italy has been cushioned by an unofficial but very firm government policy restricting Japanese imports to about 1,500 cars a year. With the emergence of European 'Japanese' production this will end. In South America, Fiat has failed to produce big profits and has run into technical problems, so Fiat has been exporting Fiat engines to Italy and sourcing com-

**'The history of the world is made up of long periods when nothing much happens, and then times when great changes take place very quickly. The motor industry has left the first phase and entered the second.'**

Bernard Vernier Paillez, Chairman, Renault, September 1980

**'History is Bunk'.**

Henry Ford

ponents in South America and Eastern Europe. In the East, Fiat has a unique position, both in Poland and Russia, and its new model, ironically named Zero, is planned to be built in Poland. But this in itself involves further problems as the state capitalist regimes' aim is to export and earn foreign capital. Hence the weird spectacle of a Yugoslav car, the Zastava 101, a variant of the Fiat 128, suddenly appearing in the Western market in January this year, competing directly, and more cheaply, with other Fiat cars.

An example on a different scale is the potential link-up now under discussion between Ford and Toyota, which would be about the only event that could worry General Motors. Ford, meanwhile, with its 25 per cent share in Toyo Kogyo has a potential line into Japan and has done a deal with TK to tie up the Asian market. As a result, there is a car called the Laser in Australia, which appears to be an Escort, but is in fact a version of the Mazda 323, which is one of two Japanese versions of the Escort (the other is called Lynx) exported to the West.

Not to be outdone GM Australia (known as Holden) has launched the Gemini, which is sourced from Isuzu; and Isuzu is also one of the many, many companies building the new GM 'J' car. Both Nissan and Toyota have Australian investment plans totalling around \$1.5 billion to compete with all this.

The punchline is that the entire Australian market totals only 600,000 vehicles. The reasons for the desperation of the smaller producers who can only stand and watch while this carve-up goes on are abundantly clear.

### Limitless Struggle

Finally, what is the way forward for those trapped in this horror? Even from this quite brief look at only part of the developing crisis, it's clear there is absolutely no chance of a 'British' independent car industry, of successful 'alternative plans' or import controls doing anything other than dividing workers from each other. This is even before the revolution in technology takes place. The Japanese producers are something like five years ahead of even the most advanced US operations in terms of introducing robots and integrated, automated plants. Nissan for example proposes to produce 200,000 cars a year with 5,000 workers in its British plant—so much for all those desperately trying to attract Nissan to invest in 'their' area.

Instead of pinning hopes on anything to do with viability, the emphasis has got to be on unceasing and limitless struggle against the companies. Most of them are not 'viable' in any real sense anyway, even the largest as we have seen.

Viability in the car industry today and even more in two or three years time—means the sacrifice of every trade union gain of the past four decades, it

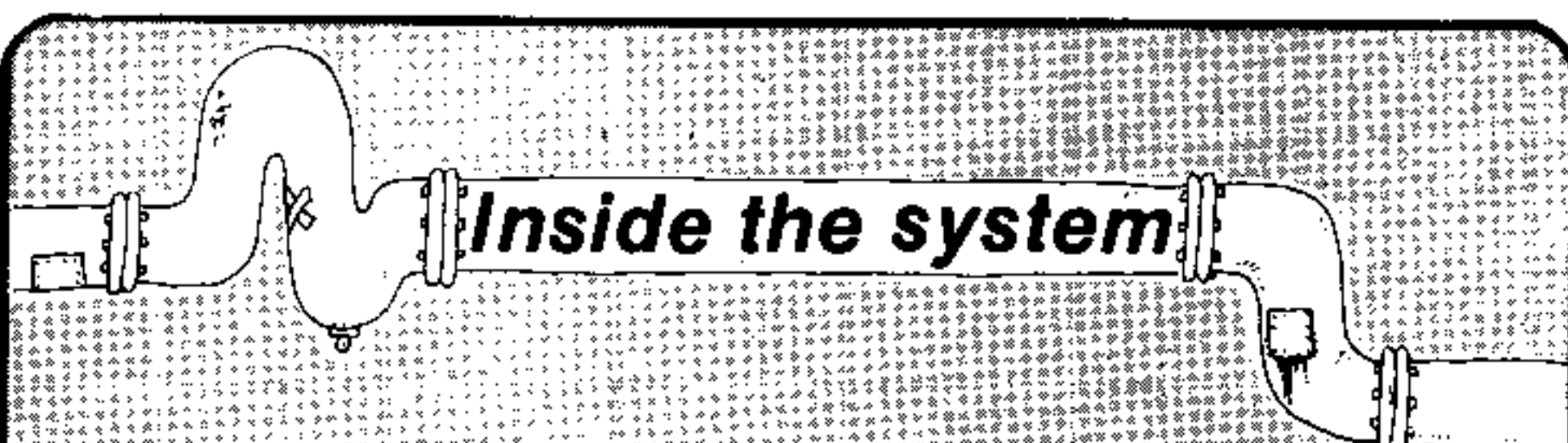
means the destruction of literally hundreds of thousands of jobs. 'Alternative plans' mean that workers will have to do it to their mates, or go under. Import controls are a cynical joke in a world where no car firm can afford to recognise national boundaries and survive for long.

Against this we know that struggle can force companies to give ground and, more important, states to intervene. We know that car production is now in a ridiculous world, where fewer and fewer giant firms fight over the spoils in order to be able to invest enough next

time round to stay in the charmed circle. Accepting capitalist logic now in the car industry means certain destruction.

To come back to the image we had at the beginning, the car producers are increasingly like a circle of vicious and desperate animals closing in on each other—except that this is an insult to the entire Republic of Animals. They are like ordinary capitalist firms in an ordinary capitalist crisis—but their arena is now the world and the stakes are very high.

Dave Beecham



A recent lecture by Dr H P Jost and Dr J Schofield argued that a great deal of the cost of car maintenance could be eliminated by better design. An example is the universal coupling which, even in its simplest form, takes considerable energy to produce and which also contains nickel, a high energy material. Unlike its lubricated predecessor, which lasted the life of a car, the current version of the coupling with its one charge of special lubricant which cannot be replenished has a limited life—say two to three years.

As a replacement item, it has excellent short-term financial benefits for manufacturers, distributors and garages. It is, however, an energy and material waster.

The authors go on to list a vast range of similar areas where existing design is motivated not by technical considerations but by profit.

Hierarchical divisions within the workforce designed to retain management control are not a new trick. In fact, the practice extends to unemployment, where the Professional and Executive Register offers better terms to people like me than to the proles without qualifications. Recently, the principle has been extended even further—into the so-called Youth Opportunities Project. Leicester City Council is advertising for a 'Project Coordinator' in the PER weekly *Executive Post*.

The advert announces that 'applicants should normally be unemployed'—which sounds like a bureaucratic joke. But it also offers £6,750 (under review) salary to the lucky member of the reserve army of labour who get the post. This rate of £130 a week compares to the pittance of £23.50 a week paid to the lucky 85 kids who will get the benefit of a 'good administrator'. Since they are looking for someone with a 'construction type background' (another bureaucratic joke?) they presumably want a slave-driver who can make sure the lucky

little bastards earn their few bob by hard graft in unskilled jobs.

We have remarked before that culture is an expensive business. This is not a new thing; music, in particular, has for most of its modern history depended upon sponsorship from more or less enlightened despots, archbishops and, later, the state. An orchestra, for example, costs a very great deal of money. Even a completely sold-out concert in London will lose a lot of money. So finding sponsors is a big job for the professional vendors of high culture.

The Philharmonia Orchestra is very good at this. Not only does it get £180,000 from the Arts Council and £120,000 from the GLC this year—which means that every devotee of UB40 and Misty are paying rates and taxes to keep alive the pleasures of the ruling class—but it gets £300,000 a year from Du Maurier Cigarettes. In addition to that, it will get another £200,000 for a series of eight concerts from: MSL, NCR, Conde Nast, Trust-House Forte, Datsun UK and Merrill Lynch. Despotic patrons gave us music we know as 'The King of Prussia Quartets' and 'The Brandenburg Concertos.' We wonder what sort of music we will get from the makers of posh cancer sticks.

Everybody is affected by the cuts, even the generals. The next financial year will see them get £200 million less than they wanted.

That figure is misleading, since their budget will actually rise by around £1 billion to £12.5 billion. In real money terms, it will have risen by 8 per cent since the Tories took office. The defence secretary, Mr Nott, said: 'This fully accords with the government's expressed determination, which I re-affirm today, of giving the highest priority to our defence.' Meanwhile plans are afoot to cut the number of teachers in higher education by 17 per cent.

# British Nationality Bill

## A B I L L

To make fresh provision about citizenship and nationality and to amend the Immigration Act 1971 and to make provision in connection with the above.



## Racism by degrees

The passage of the new Nationality Act through parliament has focused attention once again on immigration controls and the racist presuppositions underlying them. In our last issue Lin James looked at the early controls of the Aliens Act. Now Bipin Patel looks at how succumbing to waves of racist agitation, the Tory and Labour parties produced the immigration acts of the last two decades.

After the Second World War and the independence of India, both Labour and most Tory politicians supported the principle of the open door for immigrants from the Commonwealth, if for different reasons. This consensus lasted through to the late fifties, a period of demand for labour to fuel the post-war boom.

From the beginning of the sixties, the clamour for control of immigration (and this *always* meant black immigration) grew louder. At first the Labour Party (under Gaitskell) continued to oppose all controls, and fought the 1963 Immigration Act. Since then, Labour and Tory governments have rivalled each other to bring in more restrictive and more racist legislation.

The justification for these measures by politicians who don't openly admit to racism has always been that controls are in the interest of 'better race relations'. In reality, the reasons for control lie in the economic system. In times of boom, capital brings in labour which it would like to get rid of in times of slump, bearing none of the cost of reproducing the labour or giving benefits to the unemployed.

### Vouchers

Thus, Enoch Powell, as Minister of Health from 1960 to 1963, encouraged the recruitment of medical staff from India and the West Indies.

The first controls came in the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962. This restricted entry for settlement to those Commonwealth immigrants who had been issued with vouchers. The vouchers were chiefly available to those who had jobs to

come to (A vouchers) and those with skills or qualifications likely to be useful in this country (B vouchers). A third category, C vouchers, for unskilled workers, gradually disappeared. Dependants of those admitted were still unrestricted.

In August 1965, the Labour government made further restrictions on black immigration by reducing the number of vouchers in the A and B categories to be a ceiling of 8,500 a year, and abolishing the C category.

In 1967, the issue of the Kenyan Asians provided the chance racist and opportunist politicians like Powell had been waiting for.

### New Commonwealth

As part of the independence deal for Kenya, Tory politician Sandys (later one of the most vocal of the 'keep them out' brigade) had agreed that the population of Kenya would have two years to choose to take out Kenyan citizenship or British. Out of about 200,000 Asians, only about 100,000 chose to do so, and when increasing Africanisation caused many Asians to want to leave Kenya, not all of them wished to come to Britain. But the true facts in no way prevented the then Labour government from responding to the hysteria by pushing through the 1968 Immigration Act in eight days flat.

This tried to exclude black people while keeping open a side door for white immigrants by inventing the nonsense of a 'New Commonwealth' (India, Pakistan, East Africa, West Indies) as opposed to the old Commonwealth (Canada, Australia etc).

Far from 'improving race relations' this

act only made things worse. In what Paul Foot called the game of 'Immigration Poker', the stakes went on rising. Powell made his most openly racist speech to date, spoke of the destruction of the British nation by a 'black disease'.

The response to the speech was horrifying, not least to liberals who believed that controls would dampen down racism. Worse, Smithfield meat porters and dockers from London marched to Westminster in his support.

### Savage controls

With the 1965 and 1968 acts, mass primary black immigration came to an end. The overwhelming majority of black people entering Britain since then have been dependants of those already here. The numbers were tiny, but the smaller they were, the more savage the controls. And the more powerful was the braying of right-wing politicians, clamouring for more blood. The result was a steady increase in racialism, culminating in the most racist Act yet, the 1971 Immigration Act. This allowed the government to fix quotas as it chose for any nationality.

It also denied the previous right of black Commonwealth members to citizenship after five years' residence. This created the situation where any black person on the street might be a post-1971 Act entrant. The police, empowered by the Act to stop and search people or to break into private property without a warrant if they suspected the presence of illegal immigrants, naturally viewed the act as *carte-blanche* to harass black people.

This they have done: the latest instance being the 'fishing expeditions' early this year.

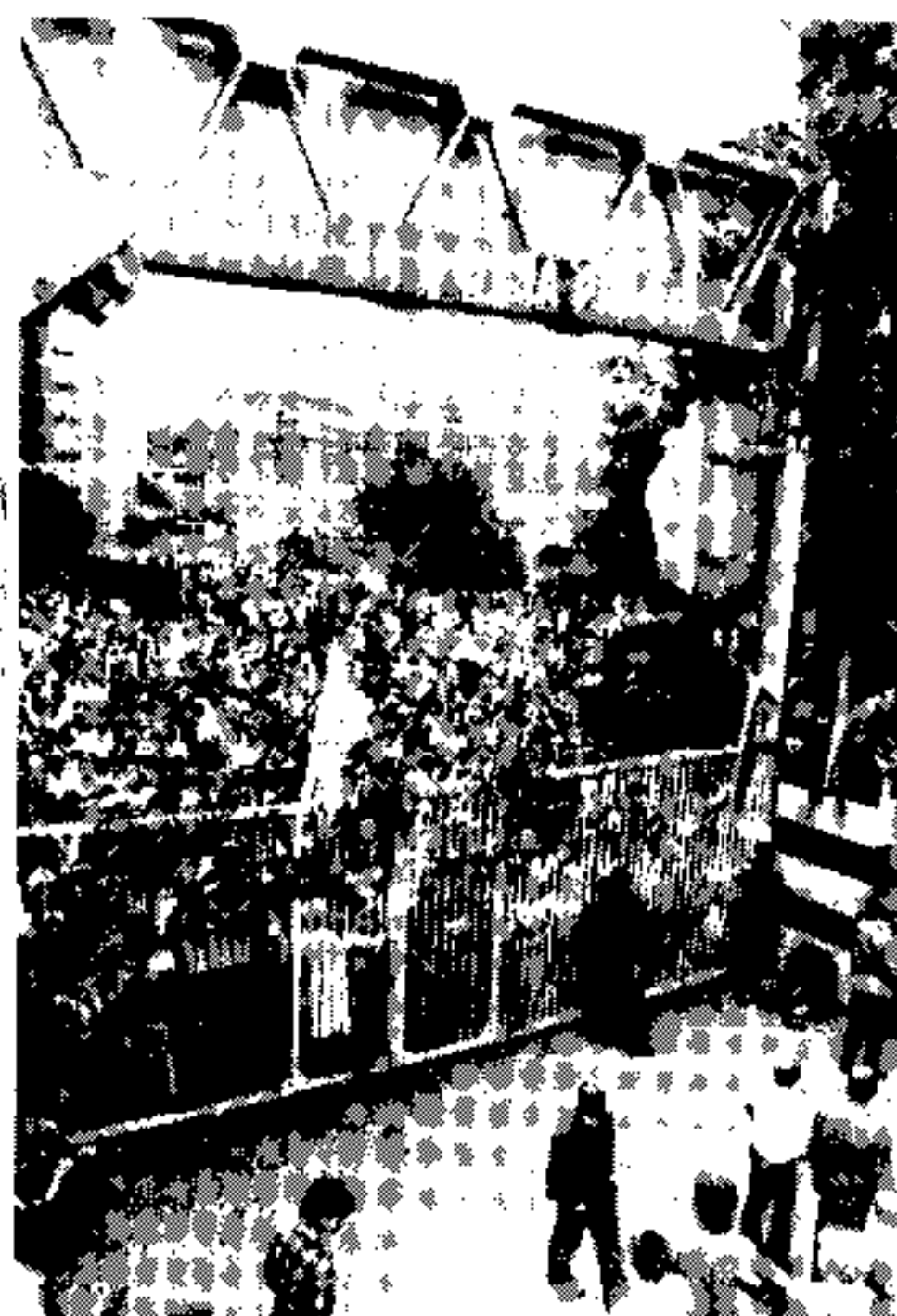
### Immigration officers

The Tory election victory gave a new boost to the immigration officers. Deportations and detentions at Heathrow increased as racism became respectable. In 1979, there were 1300 deportation orders. In the first half of last year there were 900—an increase of 50%. In January 1978 port refusals were running at 1000 a month. This figure is now running at 1600 a month.

The chief effect of the 1971 Act was to create a position where whites from the Commonwealth would find it easier to enter the UK than blacks, by separating 'patrials' (whites) from non-patrials (blacks). It is on that act's categories that the new Nationality Act is to be based.

Finally, now all the loopholes have been plugged, only one area remains: repatriation.

For if there is one thing which clearly emerges from the whole disgusting story of immigration laws, it is that opposition to racism must be based on rejection of *all* immigration controls. Concessions to control are concessions to the idea that immigrants are a 'problem', that *they* are to blame for bad housing, reduced social services, unemployment, and not the capitalist system



# POLAND

## THE TRUCE THAT COULDN'T LAST

The last weeks of February saw an attempt at a 'social truce' in Poland. The ninety day truce had been called for by the prime minister and informally accepted by the national leadership of Solidarity. But it was broken on 10 March as half a million workers in the country's second city, Lodz, began protests against resistance to unionisation in interior ministry hospitals with a one-hour strike. Strikes are also threatened in Radom, centre of rioting against the regime in 1976. Frantic attempts are being made by part of the Solidarity leadership to head off the new upsurge of struggle. But it does not seem that they can be successful for long.

The ninety day 'truce' has not been the first attempt to bring the strikes and protests to an end.

The regime and the Catholic hierarchy hoped that the Gdansk agreement of 31 August last year would do that. But hardly had Gdansk returned to work than the Silesian miners—until then viewed by both the regime and most dissidents as 'labour aristocrats' who would back the system—struck to demand the application of the Gdansk points to themselves. The storm then raged right through to the end of November, as group after group of workers aligned themselves with Solidarity, leaving the old state-run union as an empty shell and forcing the government to retreat on its attempts to curtail Solidarity's power. The second attempt at a truce came in December. Pressure was applied from three different directions to get Solidarity's leadership to restrain further extension of the strike movement. The Russians did their bit by making explicit threats: a Warsaw Pact summit meeting on 4 December insisted that 'the primacy of the Party' be respected in Poland.

The Catholic bishops did their bit as well, warning of the dangers that further agitation might hold for the 'security of the nation'.

'The Roman Catholic church in Poland yesterday threw its weight behind the authorities and condemned provocative actions by dissidents ... church spokesman Father Orszulik told a news conference that the bishops had specifically aimed their remarks at the self defence committee, KOR' (*Guardian*, 13 December).

Finally, the regime did its bit by claiming to share many common aims with Solidarity. The apparent unity of purpose found expression in mid-December when, in front

of a crowd of half a million, the head of state, Jablonski, and the archbishop of Cracow joined with the best known leader of Solidarity, Lech Walesa, to unveil a Gdansk monument to workers shot down by the forces of the state exactly ten years before. Only a few 'extremists' disturbed the tranquility by heckling the head of the Gdansk district of the Party when he praised the Russians.

But that truce barely survived Christmas. It was no more than a lull in the conflict, during which the authorities prepared themselves for a new onslaught on the gains Solidarity had made, while in towns and villages throughout the country those they ruled polished up the lists of grievances to which they expected an urgent response.

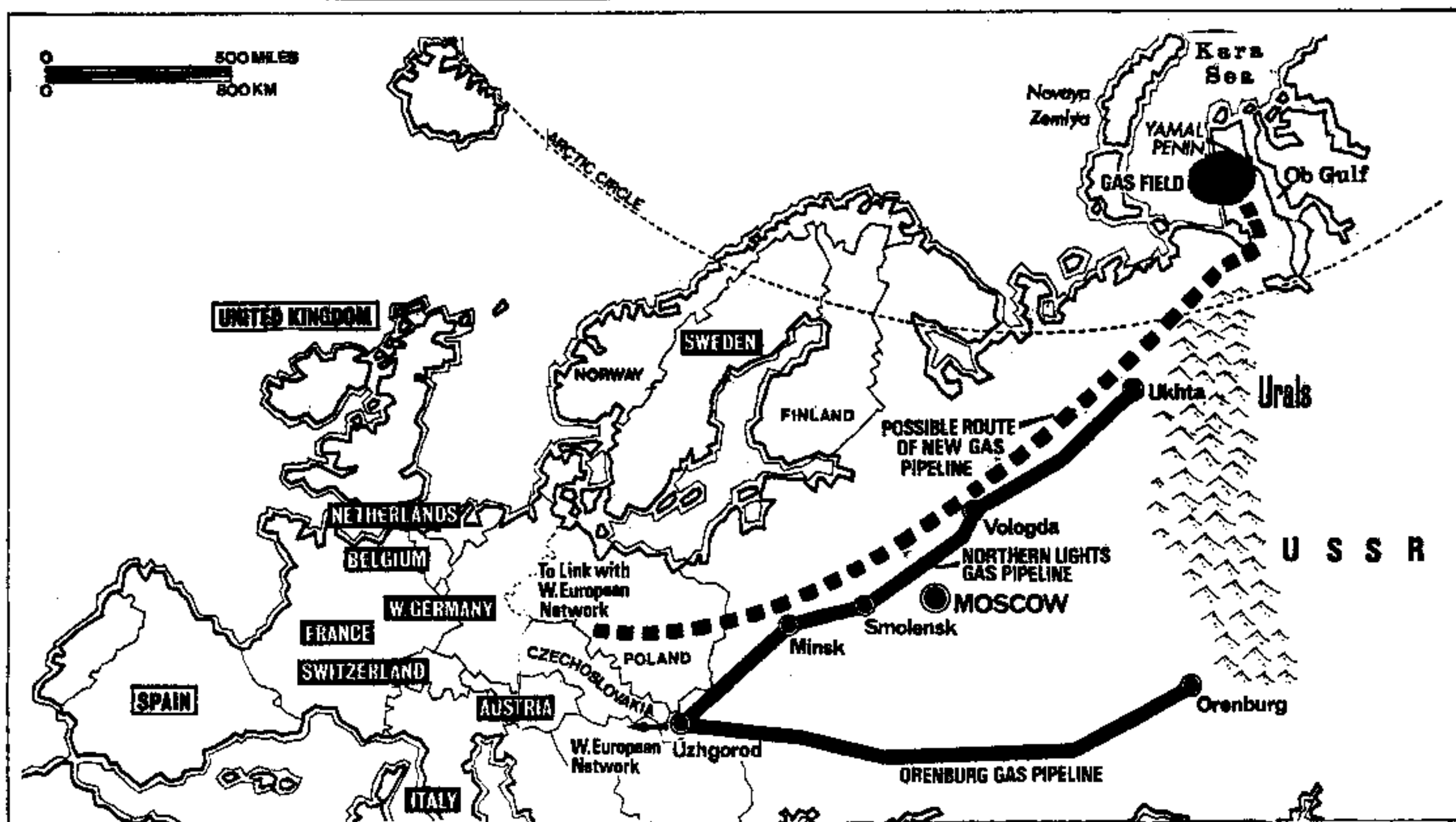
### The breaking points

When the storm resumed in January, four issues were crucial:

(1) The question of what was to happen to the attempt by militant peasants to form a national organisation, Rural Solidarity, linked with the workers' union.

For the regime it has been important to prevent such an organisation taking roots and receiving legalisation. Not so much because it would lead to the peasants being able to gain certain of their economic demands, but because it would mean the peasants identifying organisationally with the worker opposition to the regime. The regime hopes to keep the peasantry as a conservative force, resisting any massive social change and capable of being whipped up by some of the more demagogic—for instance General Moczar—anti-semitic elements in the Party in opposition to the workers and dissidents of the cities (as happened to a certain extent in 1957 and 1968).

The peasants have plenty of reason to hate the regime. The same accumulation of heavy industry at the expense of living



One reason why the Russians have been worried about the cost of moving into Poland. The dotted line shows a planned new \$11 bn pipeline to carry gas from Kara Sea in the arctic depths of the USSR to Western Europe. It would be the biggest investment ever carried out in Russia, and could only be financed by loans from Western banks to be repaid through the supplies of gas. The Americans and some West European commentators (for instance, the *Economist* magazine) are unhappy with the project—they claim it would make West Germany too dependent on the Russians and thus an unreliable ally for the US. But the scheme is crucial to the whole of the Russian five year plan. If Russian tanks roll across the Polish border and are met with mass resistance, the international climate will be such that the pipeline will never be built.

standards which has hit urban workers has hit them; the prices the state pays them are minimal; they have repeatedly been put under pressure to abandon their holdings for state farms and 'collectives' where they can be super-exploited; they do not have the pension rights enjoyed in the cities, and housing, educational and health care facilities in the countryside can be abysmal.

The peasants are easily divided against each other. They compete among themselves in selling their produce; each hopes to expand his holding at the expense of his neighbour; it is the individual who has to find the means to increase his yield and improve his land. Under such circumstances the state can always buy for itself allies and influence in the countryside—providing that its Party is the only nationally organised force in the villages (apart from the church with which it now has a live-and-let-live arrangement).

And so at every great crisis in Polish society in the last 35 years the regime has been prepared to make *material* concessions to the peasantry. But it has done its utmost to prevent the consolidation of any national focus for peasant aspirations independent of itself. It is almost as if the only tenet of Marxism that the regime remembers is that the peasantry can only be organised by some urban-based class—and is determined above all to prevent that class being the working class.

(2) The question of implementing the economic points in the Gdansk agreement—especially that of the five day week.

The economic crisis has now reached catastrophic proportions. Western bankers say that the regime is now able to satisfy its foreign currency needs on a day-to-day basis: it is having to borrow just to make the minimal debt repayments needed to avoid formal bankruptcy. The bankers, meeting in Paris over the last week, have suggested that only a cut of living standards by 30 per cent could restore the economy—and that might take five years. Faced with such pressures, the regime sought in January to maintain the level of exploitation of workers by resisting implementation of the five day week agreed in Gdansk.

(3) The third issue creating new antagonism was that of the regime's attitude to any form of political opposition—it recognised that it had no choice but to accept, for the time being, the existence of independent unions, but did everything possible to keep that as a non-political trade unionism which could not discuss the broader questions of social organisation. It was encouraged in these hopes by the way in which some of the local Solidarity organisations were hostile to the influence of the political groups like KOR—a hostility encouraged, as we have seen, by the church.

For a time, it seemed that the regime's tactics might work. It arrested a few members of the nationalist opposition group, the Confederation for Polish Independence, in December without provoking more than token protests from Solidarity: it continued to censor Solidarity's statements to the press; it arranged for a top Soviet press offi-

cial to lay down the line to meetings of staff of the Party paper *Trybuna Ludu* and the best selling Warsaw paper, *Zycie Warszawy*; it banned the showing of a film, *Workers 80*; it kept putting off the granting to Solidarity of facilities to produce its own weekly paper.

But the ties linking the political dissidents with the workers' union were too strong to be broken just like that. Protests by the Warsaw area of Solidarity forced the bishops to retract their criticism of KOR, and complaints against the censorship and the delay with the union paper grew stronger.

(4) The final, and perhaps most explosive issue was that of local 'corruption'. It raised the question of the whole complex of petty privileges that bind to the regime the mass of functionaries, police officers, managers,





foremen and party officials who implement the decisions of the top bureaucrats. Estimates by Polish dissidents suggest there are between 300,000 and 800,000 of these (the figures are from an attempt at more-or-less Marxist analysis of the regime by Marek Tarniewski, translated in *Survey*, Winter 1980).

These privileges exist everywhere—and everywhere they are resented. As one informant told an inquiry into the condition of Polish society two years ago:

'The problem is one of injustice and inequality. This is how everyone feels nowadays. There are hospitals without bandages and in which members of our families are dying in the hall ways. But then there are isolation wards with intensive care facilities in every room. We pay fines for crossing the solid white line, but there are people who get away with killing someone while driving under the influence. There are better stores and better vacation houses; there are enormous fenced-in houses that are off limits to ordinary people. People can see all this, and know what it is about. Everyone can plainly see that high ranking civil servants and officials ride around in luxury cars' (*Report on the state of the republic*, translated in *Survey*, Winter 1980)

The enquiry itself points out the growing inequality in Poland:

'The last ten years has turned out to be a period of growing social stratification... Incomes grew fastest in the upper income strata of our society, which led to the emergence of a wage gap ratio of 1:20.'

Workers in Bielsko Biala built up a dossier of complaints about such privileges. They showed that 'Party officials misappropriated funds to build luxury villas, hotels and weekend retreats, allocated free flats to friends and relatives'. Significantly, key demands of the workers of Jelenia Gora were the turning over to the whole community of a hospital built for the private use of police officers and the return of 8000 acres of land expropriated by the state for use as a hunting ground for officials.

Such demands for the socialisation of 'nationalised' property undercut all the calls for 'national unity and sacrifice' in the face of the economic crisis, and by doing so lay the basis for deepening the political and economic protest movements in the direction of social revolution. And they are demands that make sense in every factory and office, every town and village. One 'moderate' leader of Solidarity indicated the explosiveness of the issue when criticising the struggles in Jelenia Gora and Bielsko Biala: 'We want to stop these anti-corruption strikes. Otherwise the whole country would have to go on strike.'

The truce began to break down in the last days of December. Peasant activists and their worker supporters in the South of the country were not prepared to remain passive

after the supreme court had deferred making a judgement on rural Solidarity's appeal for legalisation. In Rzeszow (close to the Russian border) they occupied the building of the old state union, and at Ustrzyski Dolne the town hall, providing focuses for the national movement.

Then in the first week in January, Solidarity called upon its ten million or so adherents to impose unilaterally the five day week. That Saturday, 10 January, workers stayed off work at thousands of enterprises throughout the country.

### The January struggles

The regime decided the time had come for a show of strength against the union. It refused to make serious concessions, gave the go-ahead to local managements to cut the pay of those who had stayed at home, and then, on the 12th and 13th did something it had not dared to do since before the summer—it sent the hated militia (police) to attack the occupations in the South.

While Kania, the Party leader, denounced Solidarity as 'being led by outsiders with anti-socialist, counter-revolutionary views,' police in gas masks evicted occupiers at Ustrzyski Dolne, and the transport authority in Warsaw announced it was docking the wages of its workforce.

The regime had calculated that Solidarity was weak outside the major industrial centres and that even in Warsaw the pressure of the church would prevent it taking serious counter-action. But Kania had misestimated the mood. At Rzeszow the union prepared a two hour general strike throughout the region. Workers at Poland's biggest aircraft plant at Mielec announced they were going on indefinite strike. At the garrison town for Soviet troops, Legnica, 270 enterprises employing 130,000 workers struck for four hours, and in Warsaw all public transport ground to a halt.

Kania told party officials on 15 January.

'There is no room for two power centres in this country. Double power has never been and could never be a system of organisation in public life. History knows of no such thing ...'

But he was impotent to prevent the workers of the country identifying with another power in opposition to his own. Over the next fortnight the tempo of struggle grew to a higher level than it had been since the Gdansk and Silesia strikes the previous summer. On 21 January for instance, there were strikes in ten major industrial centres—including Gdansk Bydgoszcz, Czestochowa, Kutno, Poznan, Legnica, Kielc. In Jelenia Gora the union announced an indefinite strike unless the government sent a commission to settle the complaints over corruption. The union leaders at the huge Ursus tractor plant outside Warsaw announced they were 'determined to strike'. The next day there was another transport strike in the capital, backed by 40 enterprises.

The national coordinating committee of



Eduard Gierek



Jacek Kuron



Lech Walesa



Solidarity was 'strongly critical of the government's failure to honour commitments made last year.' At stake, it pointed out, was not just the question of Saturday working, but all the other unfulfilled demands: Lech Walesa listed, 'the drawing up of new union legislation, relaxation of censorship and the release of political prisoners.'

In the week which followed the struggle spread still further. In the South all-out general strikes against corruption began in Bielsko Biela (by the Czechoslovak border) and Jelenia Gora (in the corner of the country next to East Germany and Czechoslovakia), where the Polski Fiat car plant is located. In both cases hundreds of factories and about a quarter of a million workers were involved.

#### Intransigence then retreat

Meanwhile, in Lodz thousands of students had occupied their colleges in protest at the official indoctrination in their courses and for recognition of the independent students' union (although the old official union went along with the occupation). And the Polish film industry, centred in that city, was closed down by a strike against the refusal to distribute *Workers 80*—apparently there were interruptions too of film showings throughout the country (*Il Manifesto*, 28 January). In Warsaw thousands of prisoners staged protests demanding food rations as large 'as those provided to police dogs'.

The regime responded by taking an even more intransigent stance. At Jelenia Gora the general strike had been suspended for negotiations to take place—but the local union had to threaten to resume it as the authorities refused to give ground on key questions. And in Bielsko Biela the offer of the governor to resign so as to bring the strike to an end was overruled by the authorities in Warsaw. The government announced that new regulations would cut workers' pay by 50 per cent for days when they were involved in strikes. Rumours were spread suggesting that Solidarity leaders had been misusing funds. And a preliminary judicial inquiry into KOR—which reported that it was pursuing illegal 'anti-state activities'—was given enormous publicity by the press and on TV. It became clear that the supreme court ruling the next week would deny legalisation to Rural Solidarity.

The mood of the regime was such that direct measures to suppress Solidarity in the Southern border areas seemed likely. National Solidarity issued a call it had not made at previous moments of tension—such as when a lower court denied it legalisation or when the government would not budge on the five day week. It declared there would be an all-out national general strike of unlimited duration if police were sent against the Southern strikers or if the areas were sealed off from the rest of the country.

The confrontation did not come. The regime had gone to the brink—but it did not yet dare go over it.

At the Party's Central Committee meeting in the second week of February, the

prime minister Pinkowski was replaced by General Jaruzelski. He was the first military figure ever to take the top state position anywhere in Eastern Europe—and it soon became clear he was appointed so as to give in to the immediate demands of the workers while using his military connections to keep the police and army intact for possible future use.

Within days the demand of Bielsko Biela and Jelenia Gora had been granted, a compromise had been reached over the issue of Saturday working, and the peasants had been promised material conditions and the right to form local associations, although still denied a national organisation.

The independent student union was legalised and the attacks on KOR were toned down—for the time being at least.

Having ended the strikes and occupations by retreating before the storm, the new prime minister then issued a call for a 90 day moratorium on such struggles. Although this does not seem to have been formally endorsed by Solidarity, in practice it was accepted. By the time the Russian congress on the one hand and the Western banks on the other met at the end of February, the strike wave was over.

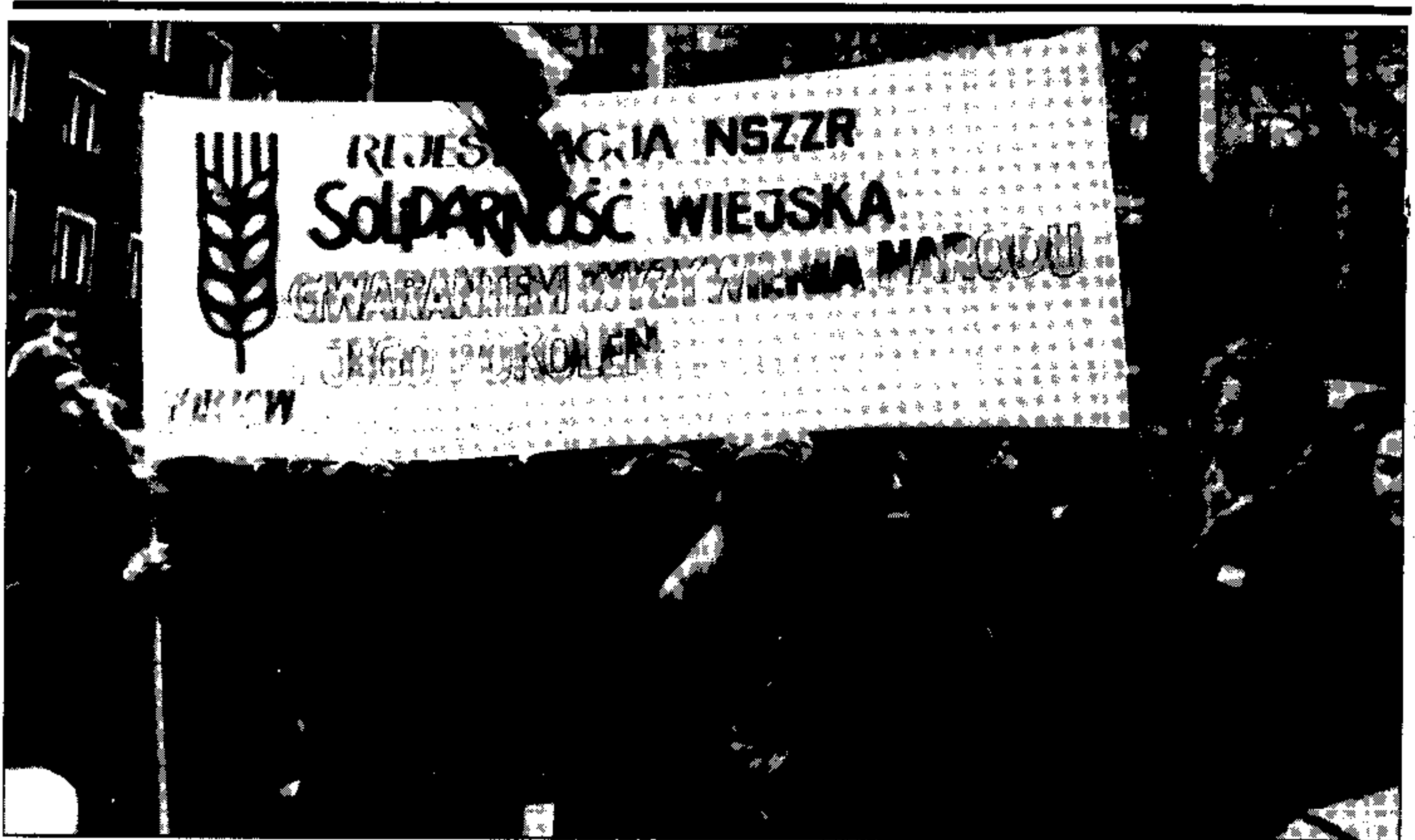
Yet the lull is likely to be only temporary. The scale of the economic crisis is such that the pressure on the regime is immense—from West and East—to go back on its concessions to the workers the moment Solidarity drops its guard. The different elements of the regime will still quite cynically switch from a hard position to a soft one or vice-versa according to the way it will help their personal careers, and not on the basis of any rational view of what will resolve the social crisis. Meanwhile the workers will be arguing and discussing with each other the lessons of the January struggles, will be watching carefully to see what happens about their grievances, and will feel confident to take action again as they find these are not satisfied.

Already the components of new struggles can begin to be seen, as, for example, the official press criticises the contents of the union's weekly paper and the regime proposes a union law that would ban any strikes considered to create 'emergency conditions'.

#### Inside Solidarity

Part of Kania's strategy has been to work with the church to create a stratum of 'moderate' union officials within Solidarity who will hold the workers back and dissipate the momentum of the movement.

There is no doubt, for instance, that when Walesa went to Rome he was advised by the Pope to bring the strikes to an end. This was precisely as the agitation over Rural Solidarity and the shorter working week was gathering strength. And the first thing Walesa did on his return to Warsaw was to go into secret negotiations with the then prime minister, Pinkowski. Throughout January, the Western press continually portrayed Walesa as the 'moderate', holding back the more militant people on Solidari-



**Rural Solidarity: the organisation the Government fears could give an independent focus for peasant aspirations.**

ty's national coordinating committee.

But this was not sufficient to prevent the movement going forward. The union leadership in Poland is still a long way from being a homogeneous privileged bureaucracy sharing a common interest different from that of the mass of workers.

Within Solidarity some commentators have seen three currents as existing: one close to the bishops and disposed to collaborate with the 'open' sections of the regime; one close to KOR with a secular and more overtly political stance; a third intermediate between the two, influenced by the independent Catholic intellectuals.

At the time of Walesa's return from Rome, the Italian left daily *Manifesto* said:

'Yesterday the tensions exploded within Solidarity, with a public attack on Walesa and other leaders by Solidarity spokesman Karol Modzelewski... who is noted for his secular orientation. He criticised Walesa for deciding on the visit to Rome despite the opposition of many leaders'. Modzelewski went on to criticise Walesa's meeting with the prime minister on his return, 'which was made by Walesa alone, without consulting other leaders...' (24 January)

The division could not have been a simple one over the issue of more or less militancy. For the KOR group itself has argued for controlling the extent and tempo of the mass movement, so as to prevent clashes with the police which might lead to all-out confrontation and possible Russian intervention. The best known KOR leader Jacek Kuron, long ago abandoned his earlier revolutionary views, and has argued for a movement from outside the party to do no more than push through reforms, which, he claims, could lead to a democratised Poland being able to

coexist peacefully with Russia in the way that Finland does.

Where this differs from the position plugged by the church is that it does mean keeping the pressure up for reforms, and not putting one's faith in the regime. As Kuron expressed his perspective in an 'open letter' to shipyard workers in the autumn:

'We have to organise ourselves democratically and take the affairs of the country into our own hands. Yet full independence is impossible: we have to take into consideration the external forces guarding the leading role of the party in the state. We consciously give up a part of our independence and concentrate on the trade unions which will truly defend workers' rights, on self government in industry, on farmers' organisations, and on a genuine cooperative movement, and independent student

movement and independence of research, culture and education ....' (translated in *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* Spring/Autumn 1980).

But the arguments inside Solidarity cannot be reduced to debates between 'currents' at the top. For what the January events showed was that the structure of Solidarity is bound to reflect the involvement of ever deeper social layers in agitation and action.

The *Guardian* could report on 21 January:

'Mr Pinkowski (the then prime minister) is known to have serious doubts about Solidarity's structure under which regional commissions are given autonomy to pursue their objectives ...'

The organisation is built like a federation of geographical units, with the local bran-



**Russian troops in Poland: more than just window shopping**



ches able to act independently of the national centre. At an early stage people like KOR member Modzelewski objected to this, thinking it would be easy for the authorities to intimidate and isolate the more remote provincial branches. In fact, the experience has been the opposite—it has been the branches in the smaller industrial centres, where the whole community knows the extent of local corruption/which have made much of the running recently.

An Italian trade unionist who visited Poland was told how

'The administration of funds is only minimally at the provincial level. The funds remain in the hands of the enterprise committees who only send a minimal per capita amount to the centre. In other cases the wages of the union centre's employees and officials are the responsibility of the factory organisations, which give them a wage equal to that in the place of work ...' (*Il Manifesto*, 11 February 1981)

### What Next?

Poland displays all the symptoms of a society in a pre-revolutionary situation. The old ruling class is more and more losing faith in its ability to pull society out of chaos. The mass of peasants and workers are only too willing to follow the lead of the working class opposition to the regime. The workers have created organisations that can unite virtually the whole of society behind them.

The 'dual power' of which Kania has complained is real enough. Yet it is impossible to be confident about the future.

Partly this is because of the Russians. Military intervention is a real possibility.

Yet this does not mean that one has to view it as an external limit on what can be done in Poland, about which nothing can be done. Brezhnev has been frightened to move into Poland.

Last summer the Russians called up all military reservists under the age of 35 in the Trans-Carpathian region close to the Polish border. According to reports reaching the *Financial Times* (13 February)

'The call up of reservists proceeded amidst scenes of near chaos. Residents in the area were dragooned in the street, cars were commandeered on the road, and reservists deserted assembly points en masse ... Mobilisation took two weeks to complete because of repeated desertions on such a scale that it was impossible to punish individuals ...'

'The desertions of reservists were said to reflect the low morale of people in the area, who are well informed about events in Poland'.

That does not mean the Russian army would crack the moment it entered Poland. It does indicate that prolonged resistance in Poland could have an even greater effect in tearing Russian society apart than the Vietnam war had on America in the

late 1960s. Brezhnev knows this, and will do all he can to avoid that danger.

But there is an 'internal' limit to developments inside Poland. There does not yet exist any serious revolutionary current prepared to lead the workers' movement from being an attempt to check the bureaucracy to making a bid to replace it—to thoroughgoing social revolution. In the last days of January it does seem that the workers' feeling did approach breaking point, but they were persuaded to be 'patient' for a little longer by those who advise Solidarity, from the Catholic church to KOR.

The trouble is that in a situation of extreme social crisis, like that of Poland today, the mass of people will not wait indefinitely. They will eventually lose faith in their own ability to achieve things through struggle. The regime is hoping to break the links which have bound peasants and students to workers; if it can do that, it then will hope to break the links between the more isolated workers in the smaller factories with those in the big industrial centres like Gdansk and Warsaw. It will attempt to use economic reform—perhaps with the stick of unemployment—to turn one big factory against another. It will not be easy for it to do this. But it cannot be ruled out in advance as an impossible aim.

The very scale of the crisis demands urgent solutions. And if a revolutionary trend does not develop in the workers' movement offering these, then the regime, with its press monopoly, its weapons of bribery and intimidation, its alliance with the church, its nationalist, anti-semitic demagogues, may be able to convince people that its solutions will work.

Chris Harman.





## Afghanistan impasse

**It has taken the junket by three Labour MPs and dying in Afghanistan. One year after the invasion, it is time we looked at the consequences of the Russian intervention and the tragic impasse which now grips Afghanistan.**

Immediately after the invasion the Russians installed Babrak Karmal as President. He was no puppet: he had long been the leader of the more moderate wing of Afghan Communism, the 'Banner' group. He pursued a strategy of trying to appease the rebels: he opened the prisons, he appeared on the television with mullahs, he began all his speeches with the name of God, he promised a gentle halt to the reforms.

All this gained him very little. The rural resistance grew to include almost everybody. The mullahs had been saying that the civil war was a war against infidels and foreigners: the invasion proved them right. The different ethnic groups and tribes in their own mountain valleys fought against the Russians. Not, it would appear, in large set piece battles, but in small attacks on a patrol here, a tank there.

Moreover, the urban resistance was on a much larger scale than before. It started in the spring of 1980 in Herat. There they followed the example of the Iranians, just over the border when fighting the Shah. The bazaar shops closed down on strike. At night the people went up on the roofs of the city and shouted 'God is great'. The Russians could not gun them down for piety, and the point was made.

### Fighting their base

The lorries and buses spread the news from Herat to Kandahar in the south, which saw similar demonstrations. And then the news came to Kabul. But Kabul was a different sort of city, with a tradition of mass demonstrations. There the bazaar struck, and the students and the civil servants and some of the workers followed them. The students demonstrated on the streets in broad daylight. Somebody shot them down. Rumour variously names the Russians, the Communist militia, the police. Nobody is rushing forward to claim the credit. It doesn't matter much. What does matter is that the Communists were now fighting their own base. For the student movement

had provided the cadres who fought the feudal government and Muslim reaction on the streets. The civil servants had provided the cadre for the Communist leadership.

The urban demonstrations eventually subsided. But the Communist's base in the army continued to erode. Some units rebelled as a whole. But more commonly soldiers deserted as individuals and ran for Pakistan. And young men became refugees too to avoid the draft. By this winter the government had to extend the period of conscription and face draft riots as a result.

### Army of occupation

The government has had to run to Russian troops to do most of the fighting. This cannot but mean that the Russians are seen as ever more of an army of occupation. And the Russians face the usual problems of a guerilla war. So far they have reacted in classic imperialist fashion. They bomb and burn out villages in retaliation for attacks. And along the Pakistani border and in some inland areas they have driven the population out to create free fire zones. There are constant rumours of mass atrocities. I don't believe them (partly because I would rather not). But there is a logic to guerilla war which will eventually drive the Russians to such atrocities.

The Communists themselves are in disarray. Babrak Karmal's moderation has not worked. The more militant, and larger, faction is the People group. They claim to have opposed the Russian invasion and regard Karmal as a puppet. But although there are constant rumours of them going over to the rebels they would not last long without Russian support. Still, tension is rising between them and the Banner group.

The rebels are also in disarray. In the countryside the resistance is chaotic and localised. People fight for tribe or valley or language group. They do not fight as nationalists or even united Muslims. And the 'leadership' in Pakistan is split into many

squabbling factions. Some are feudal lords with bandoliers, some sincere reactionary clerics, some modern Muslim bigots with clean white robes. All of them are different from the Afghan peasant, fierce but sloppy in both religion and clothing. The peasants doing the fighting regard these leaders with contempt, and in fact they are little more than groups of men organized to receive foreign aid. That is why they cannot unite: they do not really have anything to unite.

### Helicopters

At the same time the resistance is stymied in military terms. The Afghans have never fought a modern war against helicopters and tanks, and their heroic traditions have proved of little use. What they need now, they say to anybody who is listening, is surface to air missiles and anti-tank bazookas. These they are not getting, and without them they feel helpless.

The Americans are not supplying such arms because they now have the Russians just where they want them. The UN disapproves, the Muslim world is appalled, and Afghanistan is a constant military and economic drain for the Russians. But were the Afghan resistance to win, the Americans would find themselves the sponsors of a government which would make the Ayatollah look like Mary Poppins. And one which would rapidly fragment under the centrifugal pressure of tribal and ethnic rivalry.

The Iranians have bowed to Islamic piety by denouncing the invasion. But they must stay friends with the Russians as long as they are enemies of the Americans. And along the border with Afghanistan sit the Turkoman and Baluch peoples who would like nothing better than to secede from Iran. So the Iranians do not smuggle arms across that border. They do not set up refugee camps near the border, provide offices for the resistance, or organize the million or so Afghan workers in Iran.

The Pakistanis do provide refugee camps and a nod and a wink to the resistance. They have little choice, since they do not control their own border tribes. But they cannot afford and do not dare to provide arms for the rebels.

### The impasse

So the Communists cannot win the political battle and the rebels cannot win the military battle. The consequences are tragic.

Over a million refugees now sit in UN camps in Pakistan. They swelter in white tents, telling heroic stories and competing with the local poor for what few jobs there are. Another million have flooded into Kabul to escape the bombs.

They can largely still afford bread, but heating must be a problem in the mountain winter. And in the countryside there is the spectre of famine, for it is hard to raise your crops in the middle of a war.

This impasse could continue for years. Many things the Russian invasion may have been. It has not turned out to be a blow for socialism.

Jonathan Neale

# Fading Star

Pete Goodwin looks at the crisis in the CP's daily paper

'The *Morning Star* is facing the most serious financial crisis in its history. At stake is the very survival of the paper. Only an increase in circulation of several thousand copies daily can now save the *Star*.'

These were the words of *Morning Star* editor, Tony Chater, to the Communist Party Executive Committee meeting in the second weekend of January.

Chater is not bluffing. The figures he quotes prove it.

The circulation of the paper has been steadily declining for many years. The decline has largely been in domestic sales. (Another 14,000 without which the paper would have folded long ago, are sold abroad, almost entirely in Eastern Europe). These domestic sales are now down to 19,000, a further 1,232 daily readers having been lost between January 5 1980 and January 5 1981. According to Chater,

'The stage was reached in the middle of 1980 when the slender reserves of the paper began to be eroded. That is what is qualitatively new in the situation today.'

There is no reason to doubt him. Indeed, given that the paper has to support a journalistic, printing and administrative staff totalling some 200, it is perhaps surprising that the decline in circulation has not produced this crisis long before.

The announcement of the paper's desperate situation prompted speculation in some of the non-CP press. Writing in *Tribune* on 23 January, Joan Stile claimed that the CP executive committee had discussed seriously the possibilities that either the *Morning Star* should go weekly or that the party itself should wind up so as to maintain the paper as a

daily.

In *Time Out* a week later a letter from two Labour Party members who are *Morning Star* journalists argued that the paper's real problem was content. They observed that 'over the years many (Communist) journalists have left the *Morning Star* after finding that the party would rather sacrifice their skill, initiative and imagination than have its views challenged', and argued that the only way to save the *Star* was to open it up away from Communist Party dominance.

All of this produced an angry response from the Communist party leadership and the People's Press Publishing Society, the formally non-party cooperative which owns the *Morning Star*. They denied vigorously that they had given any consideration to turning the paper into a weekly or to dissolving the party so as to turn the *Star* into a Broad Left paper.

Some *Socialist Review* readers might be tempted to regard these denials with scepticism and suspect that there is some skulduggery afoot. They would however be wrong. The CP leadership are being more or less honest when they deny that the party has discussed these alternatives. But, that still leaves one group of people who the CP leadership are kidding—themselves.

The Communist Party basically has two possible rationales for existence. Either as a pro-Soviet sect or as a disciplined industrially oriented spine to the Labour Left. The first option would be in no position to support a daily paper and would be an admission of retreat into the irrelevant margins of political exotica. The second option has always implied a political contradiction. The spine, after all, should be inside the body, yet for historical reasons the CP is debarred from affiliating to the Labour

Party and, as Jon Bloomfield recognised in a recent *Marxism Today* article, is going to continue being debarred for the foreseeable future.

Traditionally the party has managed to escape from this contradiction by its industrial orientation and its pretence to a political clarity which the Labour left's lacked. Today both of those assets look distinctly tarnished. The CP's industrial muscle has withered badly, most notably in the AUEW. There now exist a number of broad lefts in which the CP has a negligible or minority influence. There are a large number of union activists linked in loose networks who feel that they already have precisely what the CP has traditionally offered.

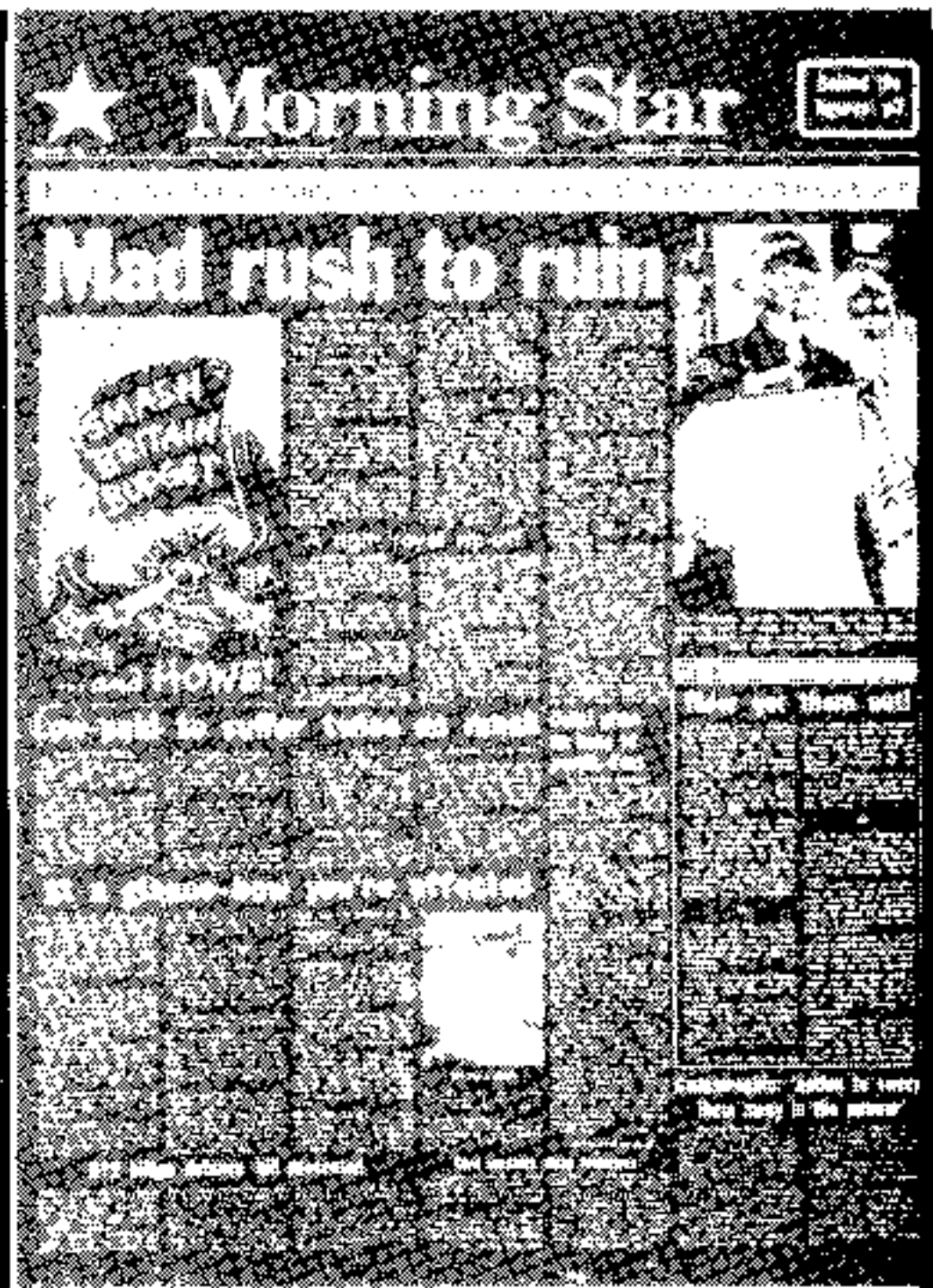
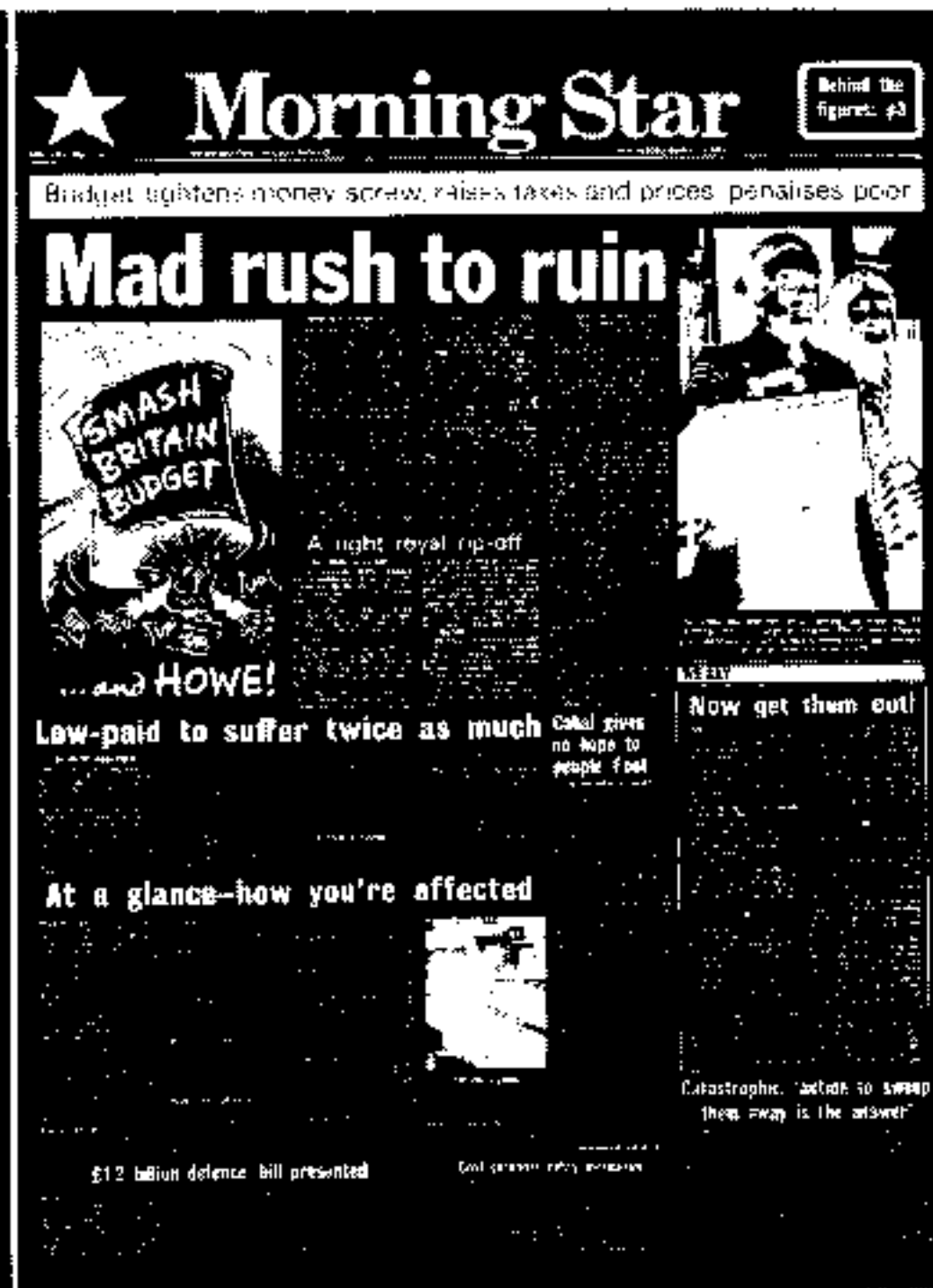
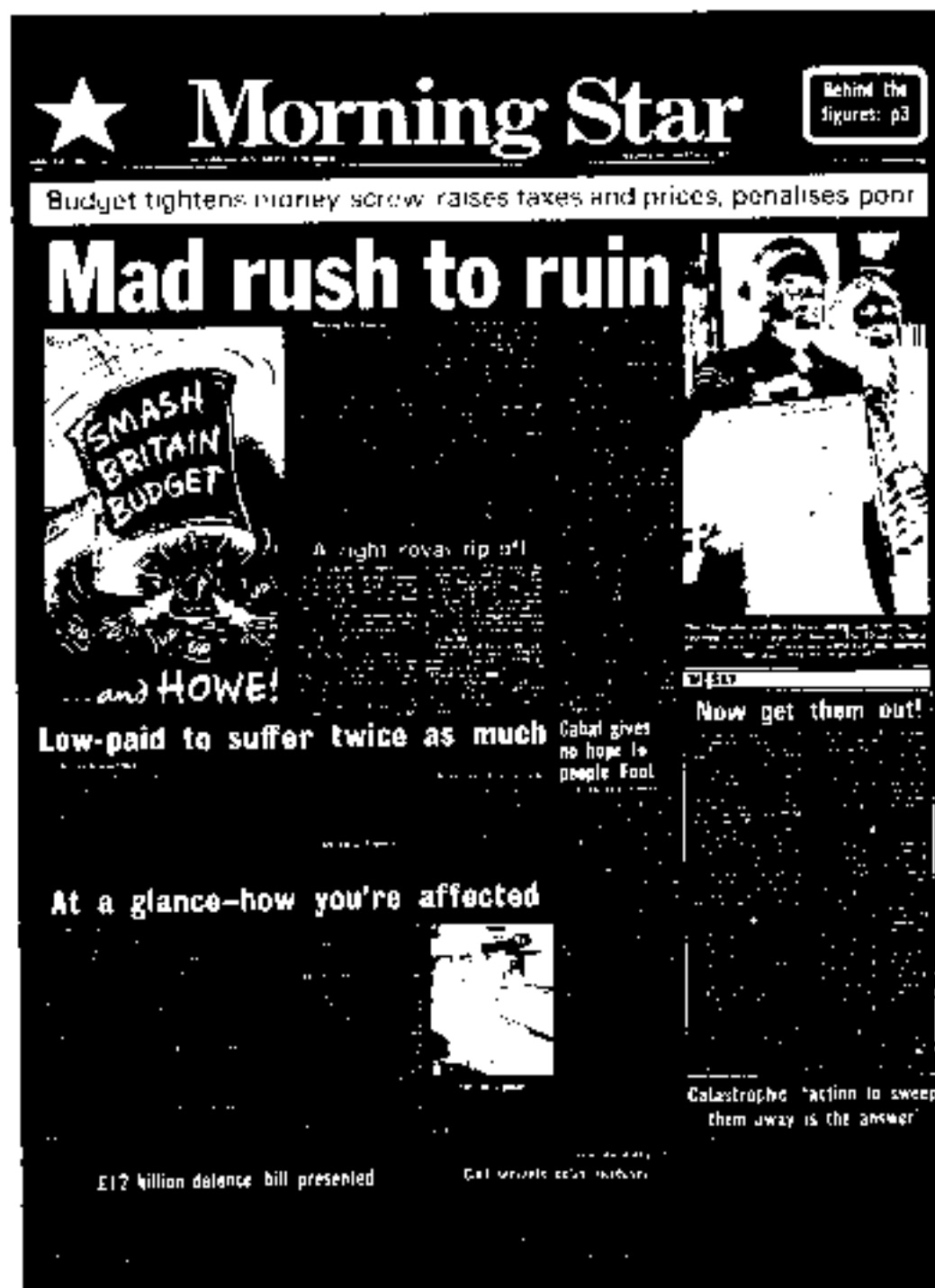
On the political front the CP's position is even worse. The CP has a spectrum of political positions now just as wide as that of the Labour left and if anything its political centre of gravity is to the right of that of the new Labour left.

But an organisation's loyalties—and especially its full time apparatus—can take an interminable time in dying. And in the meantime, political logic is ignored.

This explains some of the more curious facts about the *Morning Star* crisis.

The first is the question of the content of the paper.

At the 1977 party congress, the Eurocommunists' high-tide, the platform was unexpectedly defeated by a resolution calling for a commission to be set up to look into how to improve the *Morning Star's* content and format. But the commission when reporting recommended no change of any significance, save one—an eight page (the *Star* is normally six pages) Saturday edition with the aim of winning new weekend readers. The special Saturday edition was launched at the beginning of 1979 with the target of winning an extra 10,000 weekend readers. Apart from increased length it did not look any different and by the summer the extra weekend sales were only 800 and the experiment was wound up with, judging by the



letters page of *Comment* (the CP fortnightly), considerable bitterness.

Since then, so far as the CP leadership is concerned, the content of the paper has remained quite irrelevant to the circulation decline. 'The paper we are producing is the paper we want to produce,' was what *Time Out* reported the paper's deputy editor, Chris Myant, as saying.

To most people on the left who have ever studied a copy of the *Star* this must seem amazing. For, to be frank, it is a stunningly boring paper.

It attempts to extricate itself from the squabbles of its friends in the trade union bureaucracy by a studied 'objectivity' that ends up telling you nothing (see the coverage of the Isle of Grain dispute for instance). Defeats do not exist for it (remember the headline 'Significant gains for Broad Left in AUEW poll' to caption a report of Duffy trouncing Bob Wright.) The Soviet bloc is a cue for boredom and disinformation. The list could go on and on.

So why on earth does it go on like it is? Especially when, according to the letter from the two Labour Party *Star* journalists referred to earlier, much of the staff are dissatisfied and when, if Tony Chater's poor showing in the elections to the CP executive is anything to go by, so is much of the party's cadre.

The answer is partly to do with the nature of the dissatisfaction in the party with the paper. The main criticism in the past few years has been from a Eurocommunist lobby which is particularly concerned with feminist coverage but is also hostile to the coverage of the Eastern bloc and to the CP's traditional propensity to ignore inconvenient stories.

Yet these critics are the very people who would shy away from the sorts of serious attacks on the monarchy or the CSD (which includes some of their old friends) which could give a reformist paper life.

On the other side there is also a powerful 'traditionalist' lobby which thinks that

coverage of the Eastern bloc is either insufficient or sometimes downright anti-Soviet and which regards incursions into feminist or gay politics or mentions of the 'ultra left' as simple middle class trendiness. As the backs press to the wall it is a lobby the CP leadership feels it can ill ignore. And indeed it is probably right in thinking that—it makes up a substantial, though ageing, proportion of the readership.

**'But an organisation's loyalties – and especially its full-time apparatus – can take an interminable time in dying.'**

And so far as coverage of the Eastern bloc is concerned there are also material interests. After all, those 14,000 overseas sales are vital for survival and a fair chunk of them were taken off the stands when Chater 77 was mentioned. A good deal of the advertising is for Bulgarian holidays. And not just holidays: a recent issue had a whole page of apparently editorial copy on the 26th Congress of the Russian Communist Party; above it was a little heading 'advertising feature'. Who, I wonder, is the client?

But all this does not explain the whole of the *Star's* mediocrity. Even given the same political mixture it would still be possible to make substantial improvements way beyond Tony Chater's wildest nightmares. And that these are not made or even recognised as necessary, can only be put down to the fact that the party has now reached the stage where any change would draw into question the inertia that alone keeps it in existence. If the party is carrying on only because it has always done so, it should come as no surprise that blind conservatism has an even more visible grip on the editorship of the *Morning Star*.

Blindness is manifest in the circulation campaign itself. Chater's long report to the CP executive in January stressed the need to

win 'several thousand' new readers by November to save the *Star*.

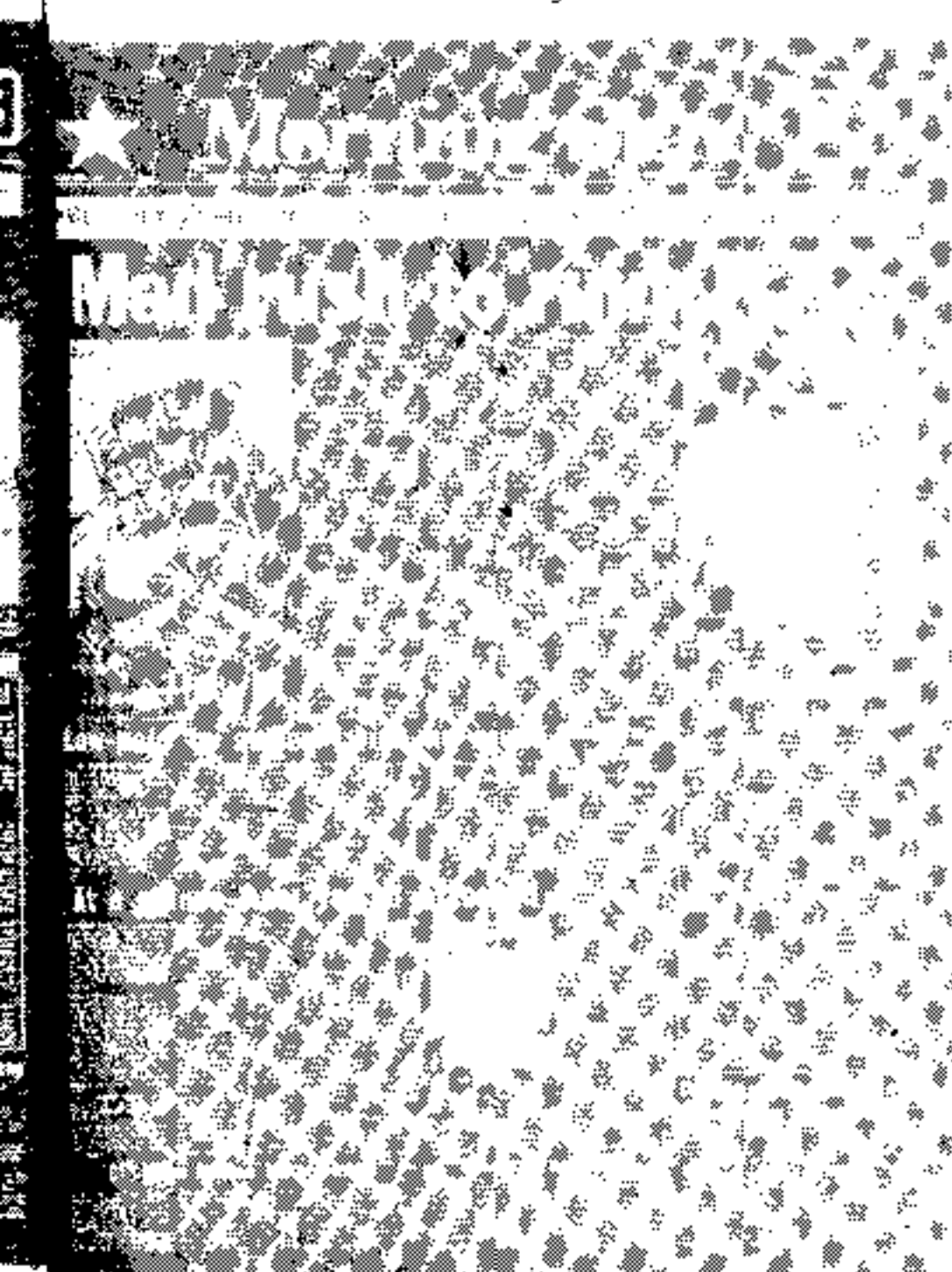
What is astounding about Chater's proposals is that they are *exactly the same as the proposals he made in September*. Then he revealed that circulation had dropped by 921 since the beginning of the year and announced a three month campaign to recover these 900 sales and add another 300 by January. The net result was as we have seen absolutely zero. Not only were none of the 900 lost sales recovered; but another 300 were lost. In other words despite the 'campaign' the decline continued at exactly the same pace.

The only difference with the present campaign is the amount of ballyhoo and the admission that the *Star's* survival is at stake. It is an attempt to stop the rot by sheer will-power.

But will power is exactly what the CP is short on. A glance at its membership reports indicates that its already flabby organisation is still withering. In the years of Labour government it underwent a massive haemorrhage: from 29,900 in July '73 to 20,600 in July '79. A year of Thatcher slowed down the loss but even so by July '80 over 600 more members had been lost, and membership was down to just below 20,000. The 1981 card issue is now well under way (it starts in September of the previous year). By January the CP national organiser was reporting in *Comment* 'Only three districts are in advance of their position at the same time last year... The rate of recruitment is also significantly down.'

In these circumstances it is difficult to see a *Star* circulation campaign based on sheer will power achieving much.

The collapse of the *Morning Star* would signal the CP's entry into a stage of terminal decline. And unless the CP makes quite unexpected gains out of May's 'People's March' against unemployment (in which some of its activists are playing a key role) then that collapse will be a very close by the time the party congress meets in November.





## Lenin's children

**Little Moscows, Communism and Working-Class Militancy in Inter-War Britain,**  
Stuart Macintyre, Croom Helm, £11.95.

**A Proletarian Science, Marxism in Britain 1917-1933,**  
Stuart Macintyre, Cambridge University Press £12.

A recent reviewer of *Superman II* expressed reluctance to divulge any details about the film for fear of spoiling the fun for potential viewers. I cannot help feeling the same about *Little Moscows*.

*Little Moscows* examines three of the working-class communities of inter-war Britain that earned the notoriety/distinction of being so dubbed by a hysterical press, a label worn with pride by many of the Little Muscovites. In such communities, whose street names were more likely to honour Lenin than Lloyd George, the only significant line of political demarcation was that between Communists and Labourites. The examples Macintyre studies are two mining communities—Mardy in South Wales and Lumphinnans

in Fife, Scotland—and the Vale of Leven in Scotland, a string of villages obliged to provide labour power for the textile dyeing firms of the United Turkey Red Company.

The book is studded with gems of proletarian defiance. Consider, for example, the case of the Communist magistrate who, after severely reprimanding a miner for venting his aggression on his wife instead of on the Fife Coal Company, bound him over on condition that he attend the May Day demonstration the following day to hear the speeches about the company and sing the Red Flag. Consciousness-raising as punishment was obviously appropriate in a court based on 'simple working-class morality as interpreted from the Communist viewpoint'. The same magistrate told a girl brought before him for coal stealing that what she had done was right.

Macintyre outlines many other forms of resistance that reveal the extraordinarily deep-rooted nature of the oppositional culture. For instance, the anarchist communist miner of Lumphinnans who called

his children such typically Scottish names as *Germinal*, *Armonie*, *Libertie*, *Autonomie* and *Anarchie*. And he captures well the frantic mood of the established authority.

As a description of the deprivations of working class existence, *Little Moscows* almost attains the pathos of *The Road to Wigan Pier*. We are ever reminded of the grim round of poverty, police brutality, the indignities heaped on recipients of the dole, the debilitating effects of unemployment, the hassles of victimisation and, of course, the arduous nature of the labour-process itself. And the double oppression of women is recognised, epitomised by the classic dilemma of the beaten wife: to press charges meant a fine for her husband, an unacceptable diminution in the tight budget she was expected, miraculously, to rear a family on.

Macintyre also makes important political points. Labourism is roundly indicted for its inadequacies, for its enthusiasm for administering savage social service cutbacks and sticking to the letter of the law. Yet he avoids hagiography of the Communists. The lunacy of the sectarian excesses of Third Period Stalinism, the folly of the tactic of dual unions, are highlighted by concrete examples of the deleterious effects of such strategy on working-class organisation.

### Intransigence

In *A Proletarian Science* Macintyre exposes the supposed 'peculiarities of the English'—the non-revolutionary character of the British working-class and its lack of interest in theory—as figments of historiographical imagination rather than as truly immutable characteristics of the working-class communities in such areas as the old industrial regions of Central Scotland, South Wales, the North East, and parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire. The hallmark of the militant and anti-capitalist tradition of these areas, of which Macintyre's Marxists are merely a part, is 'a certain stubborn intransigence, a rejection of both the mores and the institutions of the existing social order combined with a deep suspi-

cion of the respectable path to social reform'.

But this tradition is almost subterranean. Macintyre's task therefore is that of a labour archeologist concerned to unearth not just the ideology of an articulate minority but that practised in a material form within working-class communities. The most impressive results of this excavation are details of the richness of the self-educated tradition of the British working-class, that obsessive desire on the part of many individual workers since the Industrial Revolution to be able to interpret the world so as to change it. One is forced to marvel at the strength of character of those who studied such 'grim fare' as Joseph Dietzgen's *Positive Outcome of Philosophy* after a ten-hour shift down the pit or in the factory. In contrast to the dominant mode of thought in contemporary British life, this working-class philosophical tradition was non-empiricist, metaphysical, systematic and highly dogmatic.

### Culture

Marxist education, carried out primarily by the labour colleges and the Communist Party, was rooted in this wider self-educated culture. In the 1920s, and this is the point behind the book's title, these cloth-capped intellectuals were also the leading lights of Marxist theory. But then the Fall: in the 1930s university-trained intellectuals assume responsibility for Party orthodoxy, while the self educated tradition itself declines. Macintyre attributes the decline to the provision of remedial civic education, such as the WEA, in a conscious bid to combat the pernicious effect of Marxism, and to the incorporation of bright working-class children into state-controlled secondary education, en route to a non-manual occupation.

There are two objections here. Firstly Macintyre surely overstates his case: worker intellectuals are alive and well in leading theoretical positions on the British left today, though not, presumably, in the Cambridge University branch of the Communist Party. Secondly he

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does not satisfactorily explain why Moscow preferred to employ middle-class intellectuals to enforce the new orthodoxy. Can only such people be entrusted to nourish the substitute nationalism of Stalinism? Presumably the Kremlin's aversion to any form of working-class self-activity at home had its reflection

abroad.

Macintyre rightly mourns the increasing estrangement of Marxism from its former working-class base, but argues nevertheless that the decline of working-class Marxism reflected an advance in Marxist doctrine. In formal terms this is correct: the Marxism of the 1920s, as he

reveals, was dogmatic. But he has underemphasised its strong points such as its understanding of the importance of rank-and-file industrial struggle, which probably owed more to the legacy of the pre-war Socialist Labour Party than Macintyre would admit.

Verity Bergmann

Mugabe could have based his strategy instead on the development of a mass movement of workers and peasants. As it was, the Zimbabwean masses were called on to participate within ZANU structures under the party's leadership. Their role was an essentially passive one—of support for the guerrillas and the central committee. The possibility of the masses acting on their own and developing their own independent organisations within which different parties could contend for leadership was not envisaged. The model of socialism adopted by ZANU-PI\* was one in which the state controlled the economy and a benevolent party controlled the state and managed affairs *on behalf* of the masses. Mugabe's aim was a one-party state.

Meanwhile South Africa, since the election of Botha, is moving away from the crude repression evident during Vorster's period. Political power is now concentrated in a small number of people—mainly the State Security Council, a committee of senior ministers, civil servants and generals. The centralisation of power and the militarisation of the state apparatus is justified by the claim that South Africa is fighting a 'total war' which required a 'total strategy'. The generals have studied the Vietnam, N. Ireland, Algeria and other wars, with a special interest 'in the case of Brazil, where after the 1964 coup the army had created a 'national security state' committed to the promotion of growth and the suppression of disorder...'

Externally this means a policy of the bullet and the cash register.



## The bullet and the cash register

### Southern Africa after Zimbabwe

Alex Callinicos  
Pluto £2.95

With the ascendancy of generals and Reagan the word 'scenario' has become a trendy word and scenario-gazing a popular pastime. So let's examine South African prime minister Botha's scenario as he goes into an election.

The 'reforms' he had planned for black trade unions lie in ruins due to a fantastic strike wave, probably the biggest in South African history. African National Congress guerrillas have stepped up attacks against the regime, further stretching the white defence forces which are already bogged down in Namibia. Sooner or later there will have to be an election in Namibia—an election in which SWAPO will win.

Despite the high price of gold on the international market the economy is sluggish. The plans for creating a black middle class, composed of black businessmen and skilled workers in whose interest it would be to keep the status quo, aren't bearing fruit. Finally, his own power base within the white lager is small, and he faces a stiff challenge from the right-wing.

The last decade hasn't been very good either. With the exception of Namibia, the white-ruled buffer states don't exit any more. The West can't be expected to give unconditional support any more. Pure business logic has seen to that.

Black Africa provides copper, cobalt, manganese and a host of other minerals for the West's industries, supplies coffee and cocoa to its people and 38 per cent of US crude petroleum imports; US trade with Nigeria surpassed that with South Africa as long ago as 1973; in 1978 Nigeria took UK exports worth £1.133 million—compared to South Africa's £667 million.

But is it good news for socialists? Following his landslide victory, Robert Mugabe has failed to live up to his 'people-oriented' and 'socialism-is-our-byword' manifesto.

As Callinicos says:

'The white monopoly of political power was merely the crystallisation of a web of social relations involving, crucially, land, cheap labour and foreign capital. Without the expropriation of the big plantations and other multinational interests, 'national democracy' in Zimbabwe would be meaningless.' And any hope that weaker economies such as Zimbabwe can, in an international economy, succeed 'where Poland or Brazil has failed is a feeble one'.

Mugabe's supporters argue that this policy is forced on him by circumstances: pressure from front-line states and fear of war with South Africa. But it is less a

matter of individual tactical choices than of the overall strategy of which they are part. From the beginning Mugabe placed his hope on a guerrilla army based in Mozambique. This choice forced him into dependence upon the front-line states. Was there an alternative? Callinicos:

'We believe there was.

*socialist*  
**REVIEW**

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First the cash register: South African manufacturing industries suffer from the restricted nature of internal demand caused by low wages which makes its manufactured exports uncompetitive in the world market. So the most obvious local markets for these goods are those of Southern and Central Africa. The bullet: when front-line states have stepped out of line they have been ruthlessly attacked—the most recent being the raids in Angola and Mozambique.

Internally, the economy is being restructured and, more fundamentally, the apartheid system is being reorganised. One of the first moves were the reports from two commissions dealing with the influx of labour and black trade unions. The Riekert commission advocated among other things tightening up influx control by making employers, rather than Africans themselves, liable for breaches of pass laws. Overall, the homelands, 'the bantustans', are to continue to perform their function as a dumping ground for 'non-productive' or unwanted blacks.

The Weihahn commission reported that black workers are a permanent part of South African economy. They are no longer mainly unskilled but have achieved a far greater degree of employment stability and industrialisation. His proposals were to bring the black unrecognised unions into the fold and to control—not strengthen the unions.

However these moves, along with

measures to help black businessmen, have antagonised the highly privileged white working class. The effect of this has been to drive them rightwards into opposition to Botha. For support Botha relies on the military and big business, both English speaking and Afrikaans, while the narrowness of his popular base remains a problem.

Also 1980 saw a massive strike wave, consumer boycotts by blacks in support of strikers and a schools' boycott. Botha now faces 'a crisis of ruling class hegemony, serious divisions within the power bloc and a serious challenge from the popular masses'.

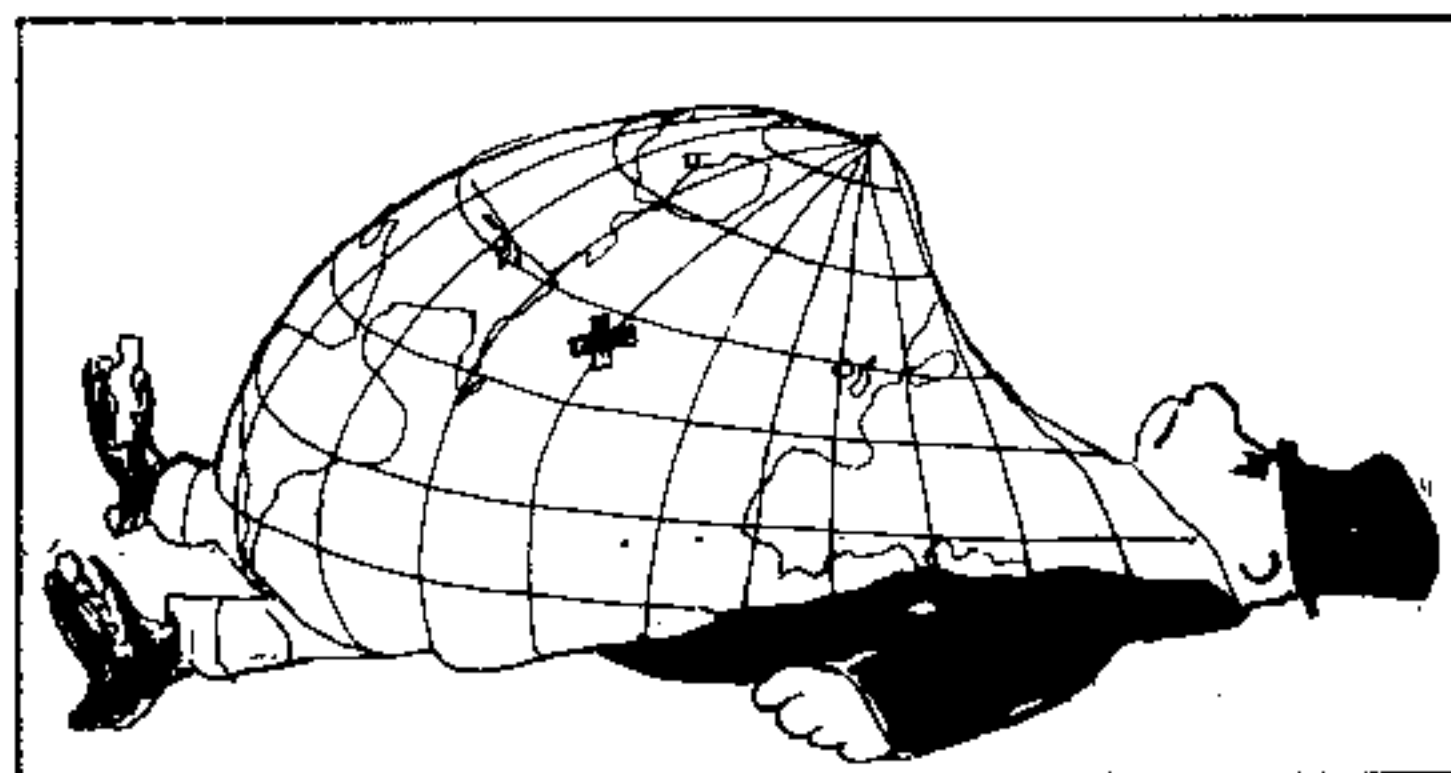
This book is vital in the understanding of Southern African politics. For me, the last chapter dealing with the strategy and tactics of the black opposition is the most important. ANC and the South African Communist Party advocate a two-stage strategy—first the national-democratic revolution against apartheid, then the socialist revolution against capitalism. As Callinicos argues this strategy is clearly wrong.

... Such a perspective presumes that national liberation can be attained in South Africa within the framework of capitalism. The interweaving of capitalist relations of production with apartheid makes this impossible. Even the bourgeois-democratic demands of universal suffrage etc are likely to be attained only through the

expropriation of the white bourgeoisie and the destruction of the state machine which defends their interests. Socialist revolution is the precondition of national liberation in South

Africa, even if the development of national consciousness among the black masses provides a stimulus to the formation of class consciousness'.

**Bipin Patel**



**Useful but...**

**Crisis in the world economy**

*Andre Gunder Frank*

*Heinemann Educational Books, £4.95*

**Capitalism, conflict and inflation**

*Bob Rowthorne*

*Lawrence and Wishart, £3.95*

If you want to know facts about the development of the world economic crisis in mid-to-late 1970s, then Gunder Frank's book is useful. It contains a mass of statistics and newspaper cuttings showing how each part of the world—the Western states, the so-called Communist states and the third world—was hit.

Particularly interesting is his account of how the Eastern states have been increasingly integrated into the world market. He shows how they treat the third world states with which they have 'aid' and trade relations just as Western firms and states do.

'For the socialist countries, investment links with the state sector of the underdeveloped countries are beneficial, particularly in so far as these relations provide the basis for exports of not highly competitive products of heavy industry. For the underdeveloped countries these relations are not particularly more favourable than those with a capitalist supplier.'

Gunder Frank's weakness is that he cannot provide a theoretical explanation of what is happening. So when it comes to trying to find a cause for renewed crisis in the last ten years he falls back upon talk of 'long waves'—a spurious notion borrowed from Ernest Mandel who in turn borrowed it from the Menshevik theorist of the 1920s, Kondratieff, and the bourgeois economist of the 1930s, Schumpeter.

Again, despite Frank's excellent description of the practice of the Eastern states, he does not draw the logical conclusion that they are

state capitalist and the Russian bloc as a whole imperialist, driven by its internal economic dynamic to partition and repartition the world, even if this threatens war with its rivals.


Rowthorne's book stands at the opposite extreme to Frank's. It is a collection of essays that are, by-and-large, theoretical, without attempting to provide much empirical material to deal with the crisis as a whole. They look at certain aspects of Marxist economic analysis only.

The result can be useful—as with the discussions of Marx's theory of wages, of the role of skilled labour and of the labour that produces skilled labour (eg that of teachers), of inflation as a response by capitalists to declining profits, of the contrast between the world role of many British firms and the difficulties the state has in strengthening British-located capital. But such useful analyses only make sense if they provide building blocks for a larger edifice of Marxist explanation—and of this there is no sign.

The nearest he comes to it is his attempt in one of the essays to justify the 'alternative economic strategy'. The best comment on this essay (written in 1974) is a point made in an earlier essay (written in 1971). There Rowthorne talks about the possibility of 'big capital' in advanced industrial countries acting as a 'nationalist force' so as 'to support an indigenous path of economic development' out of world crisis. 'Where this is the case', he warns, 'the danger exists of a new 'social imperialism', whereby in return for the benefits of indigenous development, the working class accepts the capitalist system...'

The later Rowthorne would do well to remember the earlier Rowthorne's warnings. For talk of an 'alternative economic strategy' for 'Britain', with demands for import controls, is precisely a call for the labour movement to persuade big capital to follow a nationalist path.

**Chris Harman**



## WHY IMPORT CONTROLS WON'T SAVE JOBS


**In the face of growing unemployment and ever-falling living standards, the call for import controls—particularly from some sections of the trade union leadership—is rising to a hysterical chorus. But would import controls save jobs? Would import controls improve living standards? Would the prices in the shops go up or down? This pamphlet answers these questions.**

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A SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY PAMPHLET

# Enter the women

Jane Ure Smith looks at some surprising new films

The critics keep telling us that 1980 was a bad year for the movies. As far as the portrayal of women is concerned they are right. Horror-movie thrillers were said to be the only guarantee of financial success and they emerged time and again as variations on the same theme: *She Asked for It*.

These films didn't go by unopposed. They were seen as part and parcel of the media's treatment of women which crystallised around the Yorkshire Ripper case, and on more than one occasion women burst into cinemas and hurled paint at the screen. Thankfully this cycle of films seems to have run its course.

And now, rather unexpectedly, as if they had been waiting in the wings for a year or more, a whole army of strong independent women are marching across our screens as the central characters of such films as *Gloria*, *Nine to Five*, and *The Lady in Red*. Tony Garnett's film, *Prostitute*, also places women in the centre of the screen but in a rather different way.

Both *Gloria* and *The Lady in Red* rework the gangster film in new and interesting ways. Gone are the shadowy, mink-coated beauties, whose allegiances were never quite clear: the seducers of men who were their victims as well. (Anyone who remembers the scene where Cagney pulps a grapefruit into his girlfriend's face in *Public Enemy*, or the boiling coffee that gets splashed over Gloria Grahame in *The Big Heat* will know what I mean). In both *The Lady in Red* and *Gloria* it is the women who wield the guns and shape the action.

When the FBI gunned down Dillinger outside the Biograph he is said to have been accompanied by a woman wearing a red dress. *The Lady in Red* (with Pamela Sue Martin in the title role) is a fictional account of this unknown woman. She starts life as an innocent farm girl to become, by the end of

the film, Dillinger's avenging angel, outgunning them all, having passed through sweat shop, whorehouse, prison and hamburger joint on the way. The film borrows shamelessly from *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Norma Rae* and probably a whole host of other films, but never mind, for class consciousness and a sense of solidarity amongst women it is a definite winner.

*Gloria* plucks the gangster movie out of the thirties and sets it down firmly in the eighties. Former mistress of the Mob's big man, Gloria (played by Gena Rowlands) is comfortably sinking into middle age, when suddenly the family next door are blasted to bits by the Mafia.

She is left as the unwilling custodian of their six year old Puerto Rican kid, and the Mafia account book that belonged to his father.

The film is really too long and the plot is rather too thin, but it is saved from dullness by its intriguing, at times disorienting camera style, and by an amazing performance by Gena Rowlands.

*Nine to Five*, though not a gangster movie, is also about power, or rather the lack of it. It takes as its starting point the oppression and exploitation of women office workers. But it quickly slips away from being a film about class struggle in the office to become an amusing and inventive fantasy/comedy.

All sorts of criticisms can be levelled at the film for taking this particular course. Changes happen in the office not because the rank and file fight for them, but rather because the three main women characters send out memos with the boss's signature forged at the bottom; no one tries to do away with the changes the women make because it is apparent to all, including the benevolent chairman of the board, that really they have shown how capitalism can work much more efficiently.



Gena Rowlands—no ordinary gangster's moll

In other words the film shows a clear understanding of the problems women working in offices have to put up with, but it shows no understanding of how to fight back.

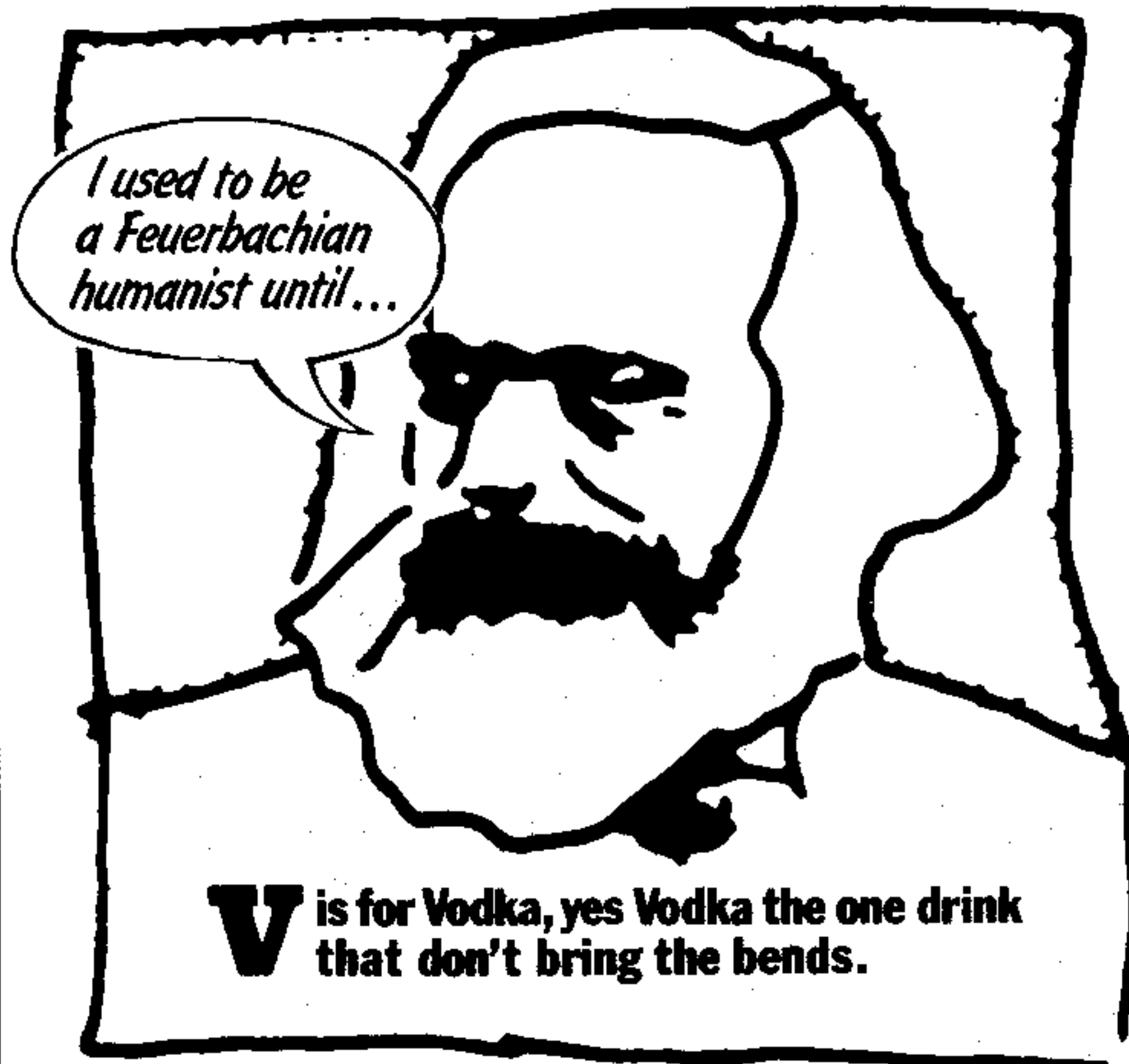
But you can't have everything, I guess, and the film is admirable in other ways. It has a good grasp of how women actually *feel* doing boring office work, and it shows clearly that things could be different. Dolly Parton and Lily Tomlin give high-powered and very funny performances, while Jane Fonda remains disappointingly grey.

Tony Garnett's *Prostitute* also takes up the question of how things could be different for women; in this case it is a question of organising to get the laws on soliciting changed. Using the gritty documentary style familiar to us from earlier Loach/Garnett films, *Prostitute* opens up to us the world of a Birmingham woman on the game called Sandra. The film has its lighter moments, but they are quickly crowded out by images of degradation and disgust, and ultimately by the overriding image of Sandra's helplessness in the face of the police, her more threatening clients and the matriarch who employs her in a London massage parlour.

At the same time Garnett tries to insist that prostitution is just another job, a message which is undermined visually time and again by the film. Granted that prostitutes need to organise to fight for their rights, and a change in the law, the way forward in this respect shown by the film amounts to no more than lobbying MPs and the odd petition in the street. The film is a disappointment because it seems to have no direction. The possibilities of digging beneath the surface or arguing a hard political line are rejected in favour of saying nothing substantial at all.



Lily Tomlin taking on the man at the top



Alex Glasgow's right again. Vodka is the drink least likely to leave with you that morning-after-the-night-before feeling. This has been proved by Dr Gaston Pawan, of Middlesex Hospital. His hangover-index makes brandy and bourbon top with 6.2 points each and other figures are: red wine 5.9, rum 5.0, sherry 4.9, whisky 3.0, beer 3.0, white wine 2.2, gin 1.9, and vodka 1.0.

Not, of course, that excessive Vodka drinking is harmless. At the height of the Russian civil war Trotsky found time from his duties as commander of the Red Army to write an article against alcoholism. Apparently, many 'good' Communists continued the habit developed under the Czar, of getting drunk and beating their wives. The brotherhood of man did not extend to women.



In this country, the industrial revolution was borne along on a rising tide of booze. Living and working conditions were so hideous people simply wanted to escape. The quickest way out of Manchester, it was said, was through the door of the nearest public house. You could get drunk for a penny, dead drunk for tuppence.

From the outset of the British working class movement, the drink question presented it with an awkward divisive question. On the one hand, there was the enjoyment and conviviality to be derived from having a jar with friends. Indeed, many of the political discussions and union meetings—then as now—were held in public houses. On the other hand drink-sodden workers, their minds befuddled and only concerned about the next pint, would never become an army to revolt. For progress to occur, they had to be raised from the gutter, their mental hori-

zons expanded, and higher values accepted.

The first miners' national union proudly proclaimed its social functions to take place in a friendly and peaceful atmosphere, not spoilt by the brawls and drunkenness that used to disrupt such gatherings before the union had been created. This nailed the employers' argument that behaving like animals workers deserved to be treated like animals. An influential section of the union leadership pushed this argument the whole way to total abstinence: instead of favouring drinking in moderation they opposed it altogether. They could point to many evils that arose from drink. Wives were denied sufficient housekeeping money to obtain food and clothing for the family. Men, still intoxicated, were going to work and endangering themselves and their fellows.

The temperance movement developed a wide appeal and grew exceedingly strong. Strange to relate, it played a prominent part in the formation of working men's clubs. These were originally intended to be rivals to the pubs; they were to be places where a respectable man could take his family, enjoy a drink, preferably non-alcoholic, and read uplifting books.

The Independent Labour Party (the precursor of the Labour Party) belonged very much to the same tradition. A lot of the pioneers of the ILP developed their Christian Socialism with a strong puritanical streak. They regarded alcohol as 'the devil in liquid form'. In his youth Keir Hardie had acquired the pass-time of bricking up the entrances to public houses.

Not that anti-drink was a purely ILP phenomenon—members of the Socialist Labour Party, Britain's first revolutionary socialist group, held the identical view. Although becoming convinced atheists,

they still maintained their old line. The SLP even refused two Edinburgh socialists membership because, as J C Matheson explained to James Connolly, they 'ran a horrible drinking club'. Much later Tom Bell accused London left wingers of deliberately corrupting young comrades by taking them to public houses.



When, in 1920, the Communist Party was formed, an attempt was made to perpetuate this attitude. At its inaugural congress the Socialist Prohibition Fellowship proposed the CPGB should demand 'the complete suppression of the manufacture of alcoholic liquors'. After being moved and seconded the resolution was referred to the party executive for action. As James Klugmann, the CP's official historian tactfully explains in his book published in 1968, 'the executive has not yet taken action'.

Perhaps its somewhat dilatory approach is somewhat understandable. For ever since the young Karl Marx was imprisoned in a German police station for 'disturbing the peace of the night with drunken noise', there have always been socialists who enjoy a drink. Even in my Labour League of Youth days, many years ago, I well recall singing after a few drinks with Duncan Hallas.

'When Labour comes to power  
We'll buy the pubs for the nation  
What we want to organise  
Is mass intoxication.'  
For tonight we'll merry merry be, in constant urination.



It must have been very much in this frame of mind that Karl Marx and some companions embarked one night on a pub crawl. It was intended to start out in Oxford Street and drink in every hostelry until they reached Hampstead Road. But their plans went awry when they came to the Oddfellows Arms at the end of the Tottenham Court Road. There they made friends with some strangers and many drinks were drowned. Then the conversation turned to politics and fists were raised. Marx's party managed to make 'a passably dignified retreat', though one of them stumbled over the pavement. The evening ended at two o'clock in the morning with the smashing of four or five street lamps. Karl Marx and his comrades ran off, hotly pursued by the capitalist state in the form of three burly London policemen.

Clearly Karl Marx's attitude to drink (if not to vandalism) has much to commend it. Most of us today are socialists because the present system possesses the inhuman power to transform the delights of life into its miseries. Creative work becomes soul destroying drudgery, love becomes loveless marriage and prostitution, a pleasant pint and a chat can become gulps simply to forget. But it doesn't have to be like that. See you in the Drifter's Bar at Skegness.

Ray Challinor