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Monthly Magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

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Subscription rates for one year (11 issues): Britain and Ireland £7, Overseas Surface £8, Europe Air £10, Elsewhere Air £13.50 (institutions add £5)
Cheques and postal orders payable to Socialist Review
Socialist Review is sent free to all prisoners on request
ISSN 0141-2442
Printed by East End (Offset) Ltd, (TU All Depts) London E2



The profits of war

Hundreds are dead. Hundreds of millions of pounds worth of equipment are destroyed. The Tories have not hesitated to pay the cost of saving their face over the Falklands.

Despite the fact that no *vital* interests of British capitalism are at stake, ruling class unease has not translated itself into any significant ruling class opposition to the war.

True, Samuel Brittain, one of the chief British propagandists for monetarism, can still use his column in the *Financial Times* to call for an end to the war.

But his voice is very much a minority one. Most of big business has swallowed whatever doubts it may have had and rallied round the flag.

We are not living through a repeat of 1914 or 1939 when British capitalism faced up to another predatory power intent on seizing an empire. The war, however, is not without its benefits for the ruling class.

Victory against Argentina will serve a warning on other countries that British imperialism is ready, willing and able to defend its property. Beyond the Falklands lie other, more important matters like the worldwide profits of BP and ICI.

The Fleet Street hacks are already spelling it out. Here is a particularly vile and ignorant one, Peter McKay, writing in the *Daily Express* of 24 May:

'Like many other South American states it (Argentina) is a rotten place, where rich, corrupt rulers strut around weighted

down by medals they have not won and the bulk of the population are illiterate coolies.

'Fear them? Once we have retaken the Falklands and assembled a garrison there we should make them fear us.

'If this conflict has taught us anything it is that the time has come when our country must say: "No more Mr Nice Guy".

'Today it is Argentina. Tomorrow, it will be some other dictatorship.'

No doubt our rulers would reject the tone of such bombastic ravings, but they would agree with the substance. The Banana Monarchy is not going to stand for any more nonsense from Banana Republics.

At home, too, the war is bringing gains for the ruling class. There is no doubt that it has strengthened the position of the Tory government and made their job easier on other fronts.

The furore about the war has deflected attention from other attacks on the working class. Tebbit is passing through Parliament almost unremarked. The latest unemployment figures, temporarily down but with a rising trend, passed by hardly noticed.

There is undoubtedly popular support for

the war. It is important not to exaggerate its strength. There is little evidence of violent opposition to anti-war propaganda.

The evidence from the opinion polls and the streets, however, is that the chauvinist mood is deepening. As the casualties mount people *need* to believe that it is all worthwhile.

What is also clear is that war fever is nowhere near deep enough to stop the class struggle. There are shameful exceptions, like the National Union of Seamen. Against that, we can point to the fact that the war seems to have no effect on the hospital workers. If anything, the money wasted in the South Atlantic has boosted their confidence in the possibility of forcing more out of the government.

What does the slogan of revolutionary defeatism mean in such a context?

First of all it stands for an *orientation*. We are international socialists but we happen to live in Britain. Our immediate enemy is the British ruling class. Any military defeat for them will create a political crisis in Britain which will undermine their ability to rule.

A setback in the Falklands will make the struggle against Tebbit that much easier. A victory in the Falklands will make it more difficult.

The second consequence of the slogan is more directly agitational. We are for the continuation of the class war irrespective of whether it weakens the ability of British imperialism to fight their war.

What the long term outcome of the war will be we do not know.

Militarily, victory in any war between national states should go to the one with the largest and most advanced economy, but accidents and Exocets could affect the outcome.

Politically, however, things are more complicated. It is possible that Thatcher and Galtieri might be able to patch up a short term deal which leaves them both intact. It is more likely that the result will be much messier.

In the short term, Thatcher will no doubt profit from victory. The prospects of a 'Khaki Election' and a new lease of life for the Tories are very real.

In the longer term, however, things look different. At the very least there is the prospect of a protracted need to garrison the Falklands and to supply them. That will be costly and increasingly unpopular. At the worst, the Argentinian government might conduct a war of attrition which would be even more costly and possibly very bloody.

In Argentina itself it is an open question as to whether Galtieri falls and, if he does, who replaces him. Already influential bourgeois voices like *The Economist* are worrying about that and calling for a generous peace to help him or another butcher to hang on to power.

The possibility undoubtedly exists that the Argentinian working class will settle the issue. That depends on how far Argentinian revolutionaries have been able to argue their own revolutionary defeatism.

One thing is already certain. It is that the USA is in trouble. Two of their main allies are slugging it out. Whoever wins in the South Atlantic, the people of El Salvador are in a stronger position than they would have been without the war. □

The Labour Party

The Labour leadership supported the dispatch of the Task Force on day one. Pete Goodwin brings the story up to date. He also looks at those in the Labour Party who have been less happy about the war, and at the record of *Militant*.

All the way with Foot

On April 30th, four weeks after it had been blessed by Michael Foot, the task force was ready for action off the Falklands.

On May 1, a Vulcan and Sea Harriers bombed Port Stanley airfield. Almost as soon as the news got through, Dennis Healey was on television supporting this 'cratering' of the runway 'without loss of life'. His support was not in the least altered by reports that British aircraft were using cluster bombs, which scatter thousands of pieces of shrapnel. This sort of weapon is only used to inflict casualties.

Only one thing worried Healey—the sinking of the *General Belgrano*. It worried him considerably. For more than a week he kept raising the question in the Commons.

'If the attack was necessary to protect our forces, could not action have been taken to cripple rather than to sink the cruiser?' asked Healey on May 4. He dropped that (distinctly silly) question immediately, but pursued the matter of the distance of the *Belgrano* from the task force when it was torpedoed.

He had to wait until May 13 for an answer, when Nott informed him that: 'At the time she was engaged, the *General Belgrano* and a group of British warships *could* have been within striking distance of each other *in a matter of 5 or 6 hours*, converging from a distance of 200 nautical miles ...' Rather a long way, you may think, but it was worth the wait to put Healey's mind at rest.

Meanwhile however, these doubts took a back seat. Late on May 4th John Nott announced that the *Sheffield* had been sunk. Michael Foot said he didn't want to make any political comments. Nott thanked him, and the Tories proceeded to anticipate any grumbling from the Labour leadership by saying that they were paying 'very careful attention' to proposals from the UN Secretary General.

'I particularly welcome what the Right Honourable Gentleman said about the United Nations Secretary General', said Healey to Pym. 'I thank the Right

Honorable Gentleman for what he said' said Pym. That sort of exchange was to become common.

Michael Foot entered into the spirit of things by asking for an 'absolute assurance that there will not be any deliberate escalation of the military action, any escalation that would injure the prospects that now appear to be much more hopeful of getting a real peace'.

Thatcher didn't answer. She didn't need to. Foot was making two assumptions that were quite enough. First of all, he was only calling for no further *escalation*. He was quite happily accepting the by now regular bombing and shelling. Secondly, Foot's objection to further military escalation was *dependent on the progress of negotiations*.

By May 7, it was the Labour spokesmen who were removing this last qualification. Denis Healey declared: 'It is only the intransigence of the Argentine government which has prevented a ceasefire taking place'. And by May 13, John Silkin was preparing the ground for escalation even more deliberately:

'There is no doubt that negotiations must have the highest priority. However, if during the negotiations the Foreign Secretary should feel at any time that he is being ... led into a trap by those who have the advantage over him ... he should not hesitate in his belief that Argentina is not negotiating in good faith. He should draw that to the attention of the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Defence. At that stage alone, a military solution must be sought.

John 'unilateralist' Silkin was practically writing Thatcher's invasion speech a week early.

On May 20, Margaret Thatcher announced: 'Our proposals have been rejected. They are no longer on the table ... difficult days lie ahead.' Everyone knew what she meant. The invasion was now on.

Michael Foot waffled a reply, but amid the waffle was what Thatcher wanted:

'It was necessary for the Government to send the task force. I still hold that view about the task force ... If our troops are sent in to further escalating military action—whatever it may be—I am sure that it is the desire of this House that it should be as swift and successful as possible.'

Denis Healey made sure there was no possibility of any misunderstanding:

'Inevitably there must be some tightening of the military screw ... The thoughts of the House must first be with the men of

and the war

the Army, Navy and Air Force ... who may soon be risking their lives ... They have our unanimous support in the task that the government now set them.

Some increase in the military pressure exerted on Argentina is now justified, and we support it. The task force commander must now be able to decide on the options that the Government have given him. I do not seek to inquire, any more than I did last week, what those options are.'

Touching faith? No. After three weeks of bombing and shelling, after the raid on Pebble Island, 'some tightening of the military screw' could only mean invasion.

Are the Bennites trying?

On May 20, after the sixth major parliamentary debate on the Falklands, a vote was at last forced on the issue. 33 Labour and two Welsh Nationalist MPs filed into the lobbies against the war. Three days later Tony Benn and Judith Hart addressed a 7,000 strong anti-war demonstration in Trafalgar Square.

So, after seven weeks the Labour left could now claim to have redeemed itself from its disgraceful silence when the task force was sent. Good. But in the very process of doing so it has demonstrated more sharply than ever its lack of resolution and the feebleness of both its politics and organisation.

Take away a handful of maverick right-wingers, and the 33 Labour MPs who voted against the war constitute only about half of those who voted for Tony Benn last October.

After 500 deaths there were still some 'Bennite' MPs, albeit a minority, who still firmly supported Thatcher's 'anti-fascist' war. The same goes for the constituencies, and, more important, the unions. Moss Evans is unchallenged in the T&GWU. The 'Broad Left' leaders of the seaman's union fully support the war.

The majority of Benn's supporters have, however, finally rallied to an anti-war position. In the case of many of the newer constituency activists we have talked to, there is real resentment of Michael Foot's jingoism. But that resentment has found scarcely any public expression amongst the 'leadership' of the anti-war campaign.

At first sight it is quite staggering that Tony Benn and Judith Hart, in numerous statements on the war, have not once specifically criticised Michael Foot, never mind said what many of their supporters feel: that Foot's position on the war is the last straw. On a number of occasions they have gone out of their way to claim that they are in agreement with Foot on funda-

mentals. Scratch a bit deeper and the reasons for this pretence become clear.

It is the most powerful expression yet of the Peace of Bishops Stortford. Any direct challenge to the Labour leadership is now ruled out. The huge Tory lead in the opinion polls, and even firmer backing for the Labour leadership among the trade union leaders, both products of the war, are going to reinforce this prohibition.

But Hart and Benn's refusal to attack Foot is not simply a result of the Peace of Bishops Stortford. Foot supports the war. Benn and Hart oppose it. But there are still real points of agreement between them.

Virtually all the Labour Left MPs agree with Foot that there has been 'Argentinian aggression, which must be resisted.' So, amazingly, they queue up in the House of Commons to call for a *strengthening of economic sanctions* against Argentina. On May 13 Judith Hart, Michael Meacher and Norman Atkinson all argued this. On May 20, so did Tony Benn and Stuart Holland.

When you accept the premise on which the war is being fought, but just object to the means used to conduct it, that doesn't exactly strengthen your argument.

Most of the leading Labour left opponents of the war also share the Labour front bench's obsession with the United Nations. That makes it a lot easier for them not to see their disagreement with Foot as one of principle. And it has made it a lot easier for Foot to lead them along by the nose.

Not only do Benn and Hart agree with Foot about 'aggression' and the United Nations. They also think that this makes it easier for them to mobilise. So obsessed are they about the UN that they made support for this a condition of membership of their anti-war committee.

They are wrong. The fact of the matter is that the United Nations and economic sanctions do not have an honoured place in popular consciousness. Outside the rarified atmosphere of the traditional left ordinary people do not oppose the war because they have faith in economic sanctions or the UN.

And who can blame them! The Labour Left's concessions to Foot, just like the SDP members and clergymen they, and the CP, insist on putting on anti-war platforms, actually hinder mobilisation.

True, the tiny size of the demonstrations against the war is a reflection of the long downturn in economic struggle. To a far lesser extent, it is a reflection of the pro-war feeling.

But even the worst of the opinion polls show at least ten per cent of the population opposed to the war. The best put it a lot higher. There is an audience for even the hardest anti-war ideas, as we have found selling *Socialist Worker*. We have also found how shallow pro-war feeling is. One punch thrown at a *Socialist Worker* seller in seven weeks of screaming anti-war front pages shows how little the *Sun* has managed to gee up its readers.

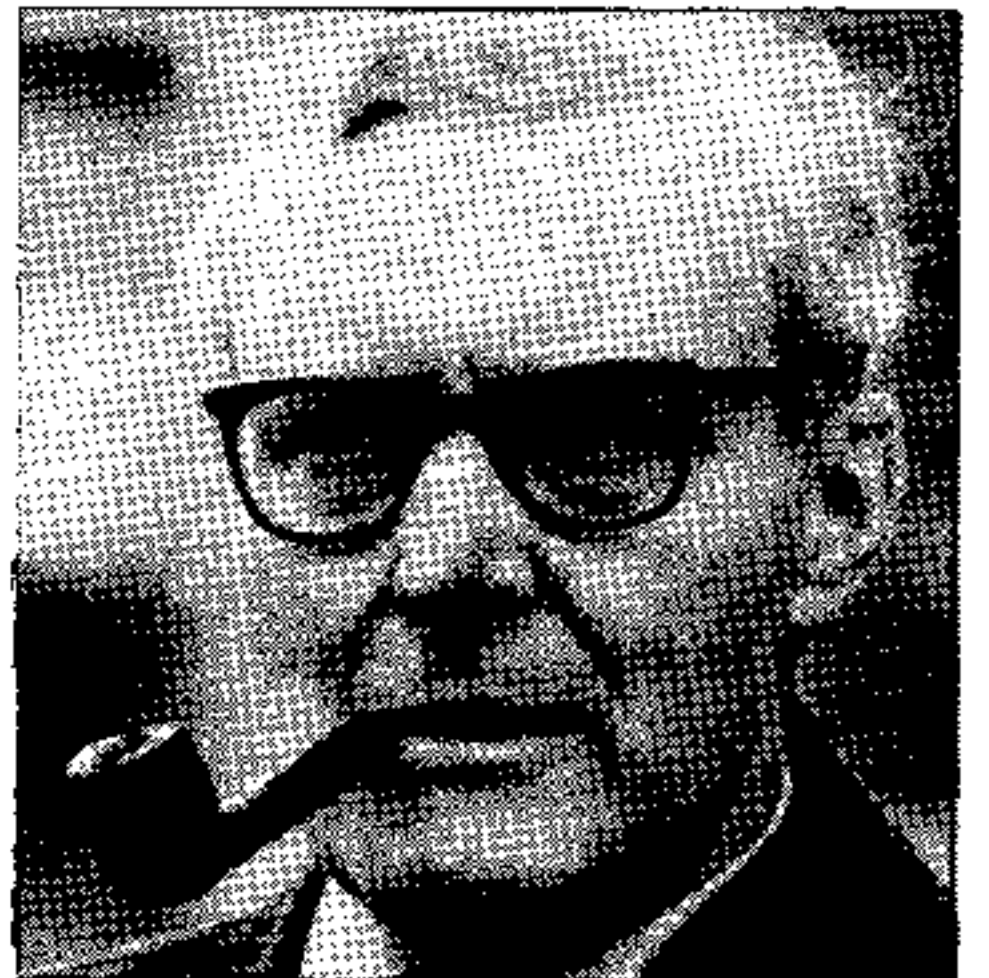
It is impossible to escape the conclusion



Foot



Healey



Benn



Hart



Militant dives for cover

Whenever we have discussed the politics of the *Militant* tendency in the past we have argued: Don't pay much attention to their own distinctive style. Ignore the press hysteria. Take their claims to be 'Marxists' with a pinch of salt. Basically their politics differ very little from the Bennites.

So far as their behaviour over the Falklands is concerned that judgement must be revised. For the position of the *Militant* over Thatcher's War has been *qualitatively to the right of the Bennites*. Indeed that is putting it politely.

To begin with, *Militant* has gone out of its way to *look* as if it is not opposed to the war. Its front page headlines on the Falklands for the eight weeks after the dispatch of the task force are as follows:

'War over the Falklands?' 'Falkland Islands: workers will win nothing', 'Falklands: battle looms closer?', 'Falklands war now likely', 'Full scale war over Falklands', 'Tories attack living standards ... for armed services', 'Arms sharks profit from Falklands war,' 'Stock Exchange profits from "little" war.'

Only the second of these gives any suggestion of opposition to the war. The one about services pay, at a time when the baying for increased military expenditure was mounting, actually gives the impression of supporting the war. It is rather like leading on police pay during last summer's riots.

The last two (now no longer the lead story) give no indication whether *Militant* supports or opposes the war from which the 'sharks' are profiting. The other four are absolutely neutral.

But this is not a case of sober style. *Militant* is quite capable of screaming out from its front page where it stands when it wants to. That it has not done so here must be because its editors have made a *deliberate political choice* not to appear to be opposed to the war.

That conclusion is borne out when you look beyond the headlines. An article on page two of the first issue of *Militant* after the crisis broke is entitled 'No support for Junta — no support for Tories.' In eight weeks that is the best *Militant* has done in large type to highlight opposition to the war.

But even this fudges the issue. *Militant* is of course produced in *Britain*. The 'even-handed' approach is just like a British socialist newspaper at the beginning of the First World War proclaiming 'No support for the Kaiser—no support for Asquith.' *Militant* has forgotten that for socialists the main enemy is at home.

And, having forgotten that, much that they have written is a lot worse. Twice in the same issue they emphasise 'Labour must oppose the invasion by Argentina' and it is a theme they have stuck to since.

To see the significance of this, think again

that the Labour left are hardly trying. Not a single constituency Labour Party banner was on the May 9 anti-war demonstration. One on May 16. Eight on May 23. Not a single trade union branch banner was on the first two demonstrations. Only six, all rather familiar, on May 23.

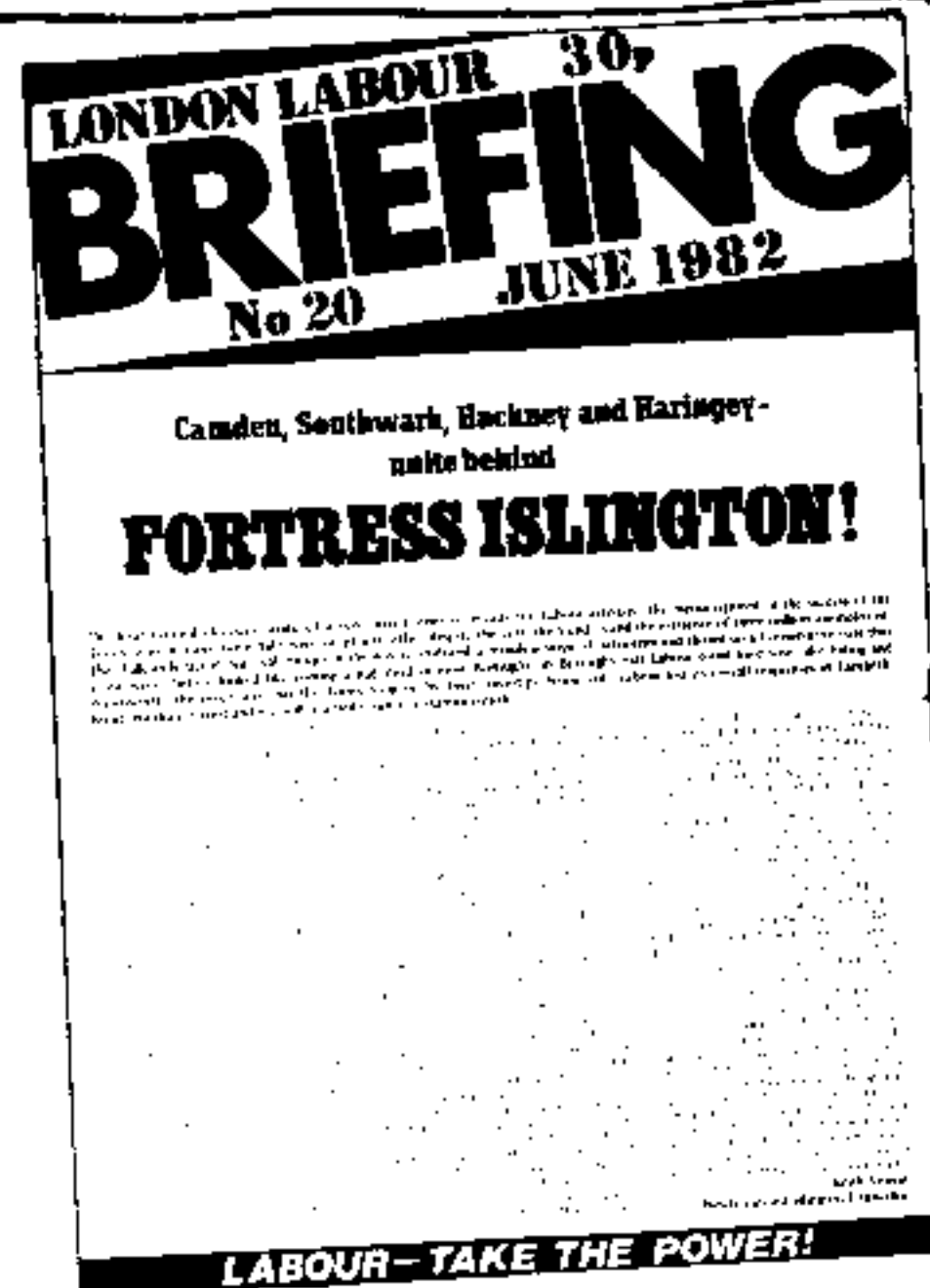
At this time last year Tony Benn was touring the union conferences addressing packed meetings over his deputy leadership campaign. Where is the same tour this year over the Falklands war? Of course the meetings would not be so big. Certainly they would not be so uniformly enthusiastic. But the attempt is not even made.

The fact of the matter is that, however privately disgusted Benn's supporters may be at their party's official stand on the war, they just hope that the issue will go away.

If that seems an over harsh judgement, then take a look at the June issue of *London Labour Briefing*, one of the few places where the Labour left have taken a public stand against Foot. They have an excellent and vicious editorial illustrated with a commendably vicious cartoon. It reads in part:

'The blood that has been spilled is on the hands of those Labour MPs who supported the government as much as it is on the hands of Thatcher and Nott ... Regrettably, Michael Foot's position has been the most pathetic and hypocritical of all ... Only when the Labour movement is united in calling for the return of the fleet and an end to the war will we be in a position to aid the Argentinian workers in *their* fight to rid themselves of the junta and build socialism'.

The problem is that this quite exceptional editorial is tucked away on page fifteen. The



London Labour Briefing: the cartoon (top) is commendably vicious, but the front page (bottom) shows their real priorities.

magazine leads with the headline '*Fortress Islington!*', followed by eight pages of detailed accounts of Labour's triumphs and tribulations in the local elections.

The sad fact is that however much they may rage, *that* is where the Bennites' priorities lie. And when that is your priority you don't go round canvassing saying:

'Excuse me. We are against Thatcher's imperialist war in the Malvinas and for throwing out Michael Foot because of his disgraceful capitulation to social-chauvinism. Can we expect your vote next Thursday?'

about the First World War. Then the pretext for British entry into the war was the German invasion of Belgium. What would we think of a British socialist paper which had on its front page: 'Labour must oppose the invasion of Belgium'? Of course we would say that whatever their subjective intentions objectively they were giving aid and comfort to the war effort.

Having written that they oppose the Argentinian invasion *Militant* adds that Labour 'must not allow itself to be knocked off balance. The crimes of the Junta must not be allowed to obscure the real aims of our own ruling class.'

But that it is exactly what *Militant* has been doing. At the beginning of the crisis it urged 'the British labour movement must take the initiative in calling for the blacking of all trade with Argentina ...'

This really is staggering. It is a demand that could only actively reinforce chauvinism in the workplace. Even *Militant* themselves seem to have recognised this because, having got the LYPS conference to agree to it, they dropped the demand the following week.

But if this aberration was shortlived, in another respect *Militant* has allowed 'the crimes of the Junta to obscure the real aims of our own ruling class, throughout the war. Virtually every one of its articles on the war begins with a lengthy denunciation of the Argentinian regime. To any new reader of the *Militant* the condemnation of the Tories must have seemed to be tagged on almost as an afterthought.

This condemnation has always been there, even if it is almost always the second part of the article and never headlined. It is framed in characteristic *Militant* style. Take the April 23 issue:

'No support for a dirty capitalist war! For a General Election now! Labour must come to power with a socialist programme for transforming society by taking over the banks, insurance companies and the 200 monopolies, with compensation on the basis of need.'

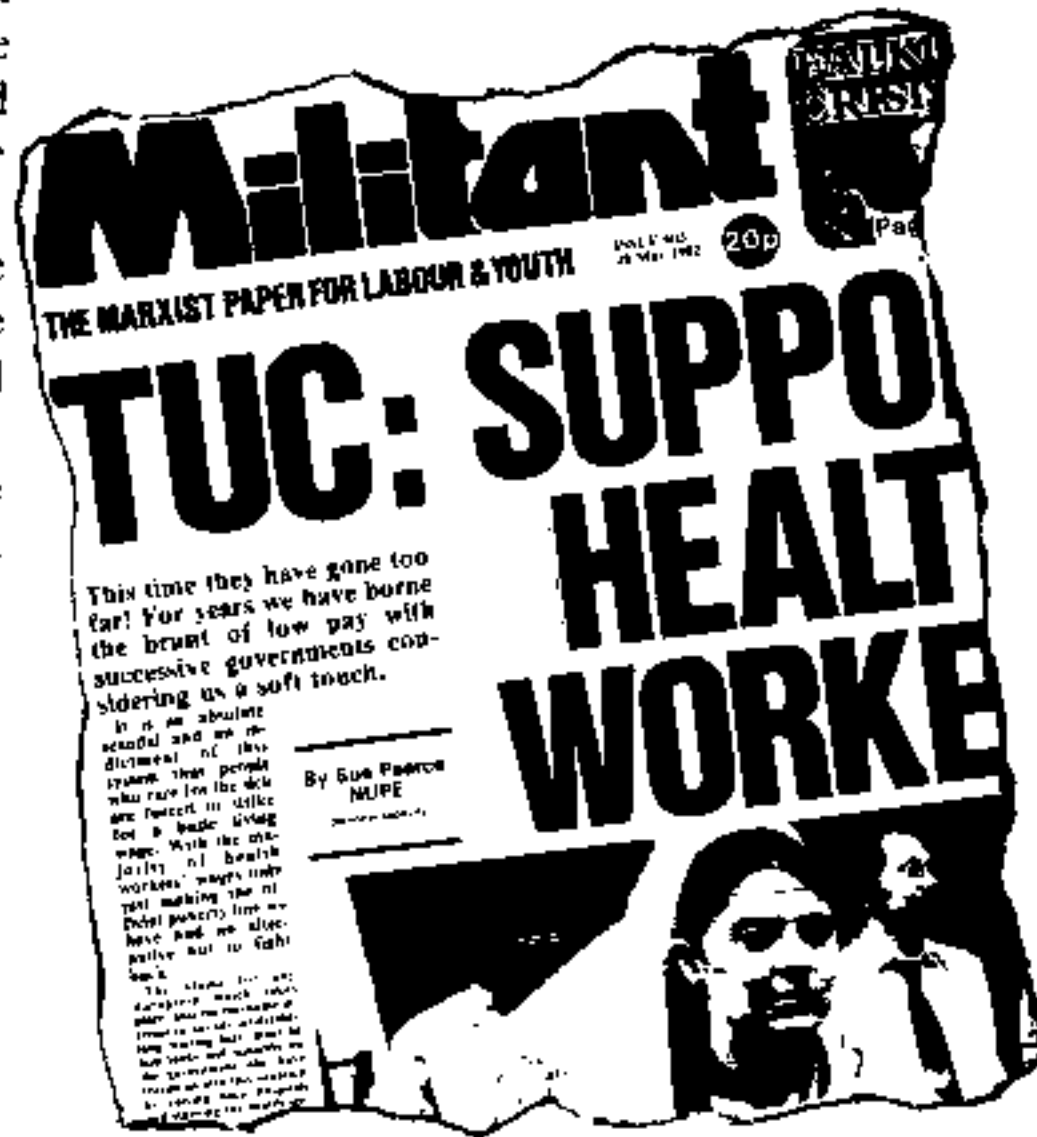
But even as this opposition is being expressed there is ambiguity. Not once do these specialists in the programme include an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities in their formula for a 'Labour government on a socialist programme.'

Indeed in a number of instances the impression is actually given that whereas the Tories cannot be trusted to wage a war against the Argentinian junta, a Labour government 'on a socialist programme' could do the job. Take the same article of April 23:

'By taking over these monopolies which exploit the colonial peoples, a Labour Government, will have clean hands to appeal to the Argentinian workers in the event of war, to end their misery by overthrowing the Junta ... A Labour government committed to socialist policies could end the nightmare of dictatorship in Argentina and South America ...'

This looks dangerously like accepting the Neil Kinnock argument that what we have here is an 'anti-fascist' war, with simply the variation that the Tories cannot be trusted to conduct it.

The argument is however contradicted on



other occasions, so perhaps we should give *Militant* the benefit of the doubt over this. What they cannot be given the benefit of the doubt over is the other use to which they have put their formula of 'Labour to power on a socialist programme.'

Amazingly it is advanced to oppose the slogan 'withdraw the fleet', *Militant's* line of thinking being that it is deluding the working class to put any demands on the Tories! John Pickard puts it like this in the 14 May issue, 'To demand "Withdraw the Fleet" simply begs the question of who will withdraw the Fleet and on what basis.' And a week later Ted Grant devotes a whole page to the issue under the titles 'Demand "to withdraw" is no answer.'

'Such a demand' says Grant 'is completely unrealistic and futile ... If (the Labour leaders) had mobilised the workers against the ruling class policy on the war, the situation would be different. Once the Task Force has been sent, the die is cast. The lefts, by putting forward a negative pacifist position, cannot gain the support of the working class.'

Ted Grant uses Michael Foot's cringing miserable behaviour to justify his own. What makes it worse is that he conjures up the Bolshevik criticism of pacifism to reinforce

his argument. Now, Lenin did say, quite rightly, 'Whoever wants a lasting and democratic peace must stand for civil war against the governments and bourgeoisie'. ('Civil war' note, not a 'general election'). But he also said in the same breath (in *Socialism and War*, 1915):

'The temper of the masses in favour of peace often expresses the beginning of protest, anger and a realisation of the reactionary nature of the war. It is the duty of all Social Democrats (ie, in the language of the time revolutionaries) to utilise that temper. They will take a most ardent part in any movement and in any demonstration, motivated by that sentiment ...'

Militant were completely absent from the 23 May anti-war demonstration. In Brighton their members voted with the right wing against the local Labour Party taking part in an anti-war demonstration.

What, in effect *Militant* are saying is that because there is support for the war and the government are intent on carrying it through, there is no point in opposing it. Indeed *Militant* in recent weeks has been full of pleadings that 'Marxists must understand the feelings of the workers'—unless they happen to have a semi-pacifist opposition to the war!

It is a disgraceful spectacle. And surely one that will have opened questions in the minds of some *Militant* supporters. But why has it occurred?

In small part, *Militant* has a history of it, particularly over Ireland. In larger part *Militant's* trade union strategy has now put it in the traditional Communist Party dilemma of having some of the positions without having the base and therefore trying desperately to avoid offending anyone. In this context it is interesting that *Militant* supporters at the CPSA conference, the scene of their biggest triumph, were opposed to raising the question of the Falklands war.

But it is difficult to escape the feeling that another factor is involved, especially when you see how little there is in *Militant* attacking Michael Foot over the Falklands war. Could it be that faced with a purge in the Labour Party *Militant* are already running for cover? □

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Cost £1.50 plus 25p post, or £6 for 4 issues sub; from IS Journal, PO Box 82, London E2

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The thieves' kitchen

The United Nations is in the news. It is the organisation which Benn and Hart, and sometimes Foot and Healey, think can solve the Falklands crisis. Sue Cockerill looks at what the UN is really like.

Calling in the UN sounds very appealing. It certainly seems much more respectable than revolutionary internationalism. It does not challenge things like the idea of national unity. No wonder the Labour left find it such a useful part of their argument.

The argument might be useful, but the UN is useless. Workers in Britain and Argentina can expect nothing from the UN.

It is nothing but a club of national governments. It is not the British workers or the Argentinian workers who are represented in New York, but Thatcher and Galtieri. Some of the governments which make up the UN are nastier than others, but the UN remains an organisation of the representatives of ruling classes all over the world.

The forming of the UN is such a sordid tale that it is tempting to believe that it is sufficient to destroy any illusions in the organisation which results. Its origins lie in American wartime planning for a postwar world which America would dominate, economically and politically.

It used to be a common explanation of the failure of the UN that it had been wrecked by the Cold War divide between the USA and Russia. In fact, that divide was assumed from the beginning.

In 1943 and 1944, Britain was seen as a powerful threat to postwar American hegemony. The existence of the Empire was a potential block on American commercial expansion. The Americans saw the UN, along with the IMF, the World Bank and so on, as one instrument for beating down Bri-

tish and Russian obstacles to American power.

The Americans had to ensure that the membership of the UN was loaded in their favour. So too with the structure—the two things were linked. The Americans proposed that the only body with any real power, the Security Council, should be made up of four permanent members—the USA, Britain, Russia and China. Roosevelt, the US President, referred to this body as 'the Four Policemen'.

The China the Americans wanted so badly as a permanent member was not Mao's China, but Chiang Kai-shek's. China was at the time fighting the Japanese but it was clear to almost everyone that a revolution would follow the war, and Mao's forces would probably win.

Chiang Kai-shek was known to be a corrupt gangster. This did not upset anyone involved in planning the UN, except that he was a virtually powerless gangster.

The British recognised that the Americans wanted China as an extra vote. So they proposed that France should also be included as a permanent member.

Just as China could be expected to vote with the US on any issue of conflict with Russia. France, with a colonial empire of its own, could be expected to back Britain on those issues where it would fall out with the Americans.

The question of which countries should be invited to sign the UN Declaration was also a subject of intense manipulation. Membership was supposed to be confined to those states at war with Germany or Japan, but at the Dumbarton Oaks planning meeting in November 1944, America proposed including eight countries not at war with the Axis, six of them in Latin America.

The Russians responded by proposing (unsuccessfully) that each of the sixteen Soviet 'republics' should be given a seat. Of the forty-four countries invited to the founding conference, twenty-three were likely to

respond to American 'advice'. After November, the Americans applied pressure to the neutral Latin American states to declare war on the Axis powers before the March 1945 deadline. Six did so.

In spite of this built-in American majority, the Americans left nothing to chance. It was an American idea to have an absolute veto for the permanent members of the Security Council, although no doubt Britain or Russia would have insisted on it anyway.

Two other issues reveal clearly what kind of organisation was founded in San Francisco in 1945. One has to do with the origins of the famous Article 51, the 'right of self defence'.

While the Americans were opposed to other countries setting up exclusive 'spheres of influence', that concern didn't apply to their own: Latin America. This presented them with a slight problem. The UN Charter forbade military intervention by a member country without the approval of the Security Council, except against former enemy states. That, in theory, meant a free hand for Russia against Germany or Japan, while restricting America's 'right' to intervene at will in Latin America.

The Americans wanted their right to interfere in Latin America recognised by the UN Charter, without it giving the go-ahead to Britain or Russia to do the same elsewhere. So they attempted to have the specific military agreement they had just made with South American states written in as an exception to the provisions of the Charter. Not surprisingly, the British wouldn't have this.

The Americans came up with Article 51. This allowed them to intervene under the auspices of the kind of regional military agreement, like the current Rio Treaty, which provides that 'an attack on one is an attack on all.'

In the US Senate discussions of the Charter, it was spelt out that Article 51



The UN's founders, Joe, Frank and Winnie.



The UN in action: British mercenary troops from Nepal sent to the mediterranean to separate Greek from Turk in the interest of NATO

allowed US intervention in South America without Security Council approval.

The other main issue was that of decolonisation. Linked with that was the fate of the possessions of the defeated Axis powers.

The Americans were chiefly concerned with the Pacific islands, which they were determined to hold onto, as bases. They hadn't been able to decide at Dumbarton Oaks whether they wanted a 'trusteeship' system under the UN, or if they would simply annex them. So they postponed the discussion.

The British knew they could use the American desire for these islands to tone down anti-empire American demands. The result was that Britain supported American claims in return for silence on the future of the British Empire.

The trusteeship system which emerged divided the territories into two: 'strategic', over which the Security Council had jurisdiction, and the rest, under a Trusteeship Council, controlled by the General Assembly. The Pacific Islands administration became subject to a US veto.

To placate the British, whose mandated territories were not 'strategic', the Americans put a clause in the Charter allowing a trustee power to ensure that its territory 'plays its part in the maintenance of international peace and security.'

Any measures taken would be reviewed by the Security Council not the Assembly-controlled body. To cap it off, the objectives of the Trusteeship Council were very narrowly defined, allowing no share in administration to the local people. The General Assembly could not even send inspectors to determine if a territory was ready for independence.

To quote Gabriel Kolko:

'No possibility of global unity and common action for peace via the United Nations ever existed, since the controlling

power in the United Nations never intended it ... Moving behind the internationalist rhetoric of the new structure it fully expected to control, the US hoped to define the basic thrust of postwar world politics in a fashion compatible with its national interests.'

The UN action in Korea in 1950-53, proves that the UN at that stage was nothing more than an instrument of US foreign policy. This war, which was to leave 200,000 dead and five million homeless, was a struggle between the superpowers, fought out on the territory of a small Asian country with tragic consequences for its people.

At every stage in this war, the UN accepted and retro-spectively legitimised American actions, from the first resolution which came *after* the Americans had already sent in troops without consulting the Security Council, through every subsequent escalation in the war. The so-called UN forces were under the command of the US general, MacArthur, a man committed to 'roll-back' in China itself.

The 'UN Command' which was a supposedly established by the Security Council Resolution was in reality a unified command of American troops, with token forces from other UN members. It was under US control using the UN flag.

The UN label gave the American intervention a moral force it in no way merited. It allowed complaints and protests about the actions of MacArthur's forces (including the bombing of a Russian airport sixty miles north of the Korean border) to be referred to the UN. The Security Council didn't even receive detailed reports of military action taken, let alone authorise it in advance.

No other 'peacekeeping' operation has been quite so blatant as Korea. It was only possible to use the Security Council in that way due to the absence of the Russian delegate, who was boycotting it because of the

continuing denial of the Chinese seat to the Peking Government. (China was only seated in 1971.) Also the degree of American domination of the UN is less now than at the height of the Cold War.

Later UN military interventions have certainly been just as questionable as 'peacekeeping'.

One of the most ambitious of these was the UN force in the Congo between 1960 and 1964. The Congo became independent in 1960. It was soon clear that this was to be the most nominal kind of independence.

Belgium and other Western powers had a special interest in the province of Katanga. This produced ten per cent of the world's copper, sixty per cent of its cobalt, and half the metal used in making jet engines and radar equipment in the noncommunist world.

The secession of Katanga under Moise Tshombe meant its retention by Belgium. The revolt of the Congolese Army against continuing control by colonial officers led to a massive military intervention by Belgium on the pretext of 'protecting the lives and property' of its nationals.

The government of the Congo, led by Patrice Lumumba, appealed to the UN for assistance in ridding the Congo of Belgian troops and white mercenaries, and restoring its rule over Katanga.

Lumumba himself was regarded as dangerous to Western interests not because he was a communist, though that was how they frequently described him, but because he had too uncompromising an approach to the Congo's relations with Western economic interests.

The Americans were also unwilling to back the old colonial rulers. It was in their interests to create a unified, but subservient Congo, under a leader more pliable than Lumumba. The UN gave them precisely that.

When a coup was staged against Lumumba the UN forces closed down the National Radio and all the airports, except in Katanga. This prevented Lumumba rallying troops loyal to him. The rebels had access to the radio in the neighbouring pro-Western state of Congo-Brazzaville. Cordier, the UN chief in the Congo, allowed UN planes free passage, but forbade all troop movements by the Congolese National Army.

The invasions of Katanga and Kasai (the other secessionist province) which Lumumba had begun, were halted. In the words of Thomas Kanza, Lumumba's delegate to the UN:

'The Congo became rather like a business company in which the largest shareholder could determine how the governing board was to act. By paying most of the expenses involved in preserving peace and order in the Congo, the USA thenceforth took it upon itself to behave as the major shareholders. Resolutions were voted in New York—whether in the Security Council or the General Assembly—only if approved and dictated by Washington in consultation with its western allies ... helping the Congo through UN channels in fact meant interfering in the affairs of the Congo with the approval of Washington.'

Other UN forces have been used only in

situations where it suits the superpowers to have a supposedly neutral force deployed, such as Cyprus or the Lebanon.

A measure of the nature of the UN is what it doesn't discuss or act on just as much as its positive actions. The glaring gap is of course, Vietnam. The alternative to the Korea-style operation was for the US not to have the matter raised at all. So they made sure it was never mentioned. Some may claim that this proves the Americans can no longer be sure of controlling the UN. Those who see the UN as having a major independent function must find it difficult to justify its inaction on the biggest war which has taken place during its existence.

There is an argument which goes as follows: the UN was an instrument of the Americans in its early years, but now it has been transformed by the process of decolonisation, and its members from the Third World now constitute a majority which offers a new and radical direction for the organisation.

It is an important argument, backed by the evidence of numerous resolutions against colonialism, neo-colonialism, apartheid, Zionism and a world economic order which keeps the vast majority of the world's population impoverished.

Regular denunciations of the General Assembly by American governments serve to emphasise that the US can no longer count

on majority support on issues like South Africa, Israel and the North-South 'dialogue'.

Resolution-mongering is all it amounts to. Such real power as there is in the UN rests with the Security Council, and above all with the Americans, whose money keeps the UN going. America pays a quarter of the official funding of the UN, and its voluntary payments are crucial to the survival of the specialist agencies. At present the Americans say they are keeping a record of the voting behaviour of states in the General Assembly—a not very subtle threat to those countries which depend on US aid.

The Namibia saga

And to look at the UN's record on just one issue—Namibia—should surely dispel any notions that anything has really changed. Namibia was originally handed over to South Africa under a mandate from the League of Nations. In 1945, Smuts, the Prime Minister of South Africa, made it clear to the UN that South Africa would resist any attempt to take the mandate away. Britain, and the US supported Smuts.

Until 1966, the UN accepted this position. Then the General Assembly terminated South Africa's mandate and assumed direct responsibility for Namibia. In 1969 the

Security Council supported the move, and in 1970, declared that South Africa's continued occupation was illegal. This was confirmed in 1971 by the International Court of Justice. South Africa took no notice of any of this.

They didn't need to take any notice because they knew very well that the American government would not allow any action to be taken against them. They knew that the uranium and other mineral resources of Namibia were regarded as crucial to the West. The UK Labour government of 1969 signed a contract for Namibian uranium which is still in operation.

By 1976 pressure was building up for something to be done. The situation in Zimbabwe and the independence of Mozambique and Angola convinced the South Africans that they might have to concede some kind of independence to Namibia—so they started setting up a future puppet government.

The UN Commission for Namibia is an offshoot of the full-time Secretariat and influenced by Third World views. Officially the UN regards SWAPO (the liberation movement) as the 'sole and authentic voice of the Namibian people.'

Yet this didn't prevent the Security Council, acting to head off demands for decisive action from the Assembly, from setting up a Contact Group of Britain, the US, France, Canada and West Germany. All these countries have substantial interests in South African and Namibia. All these countries are acceptable to South Africa. Britain has insisted it would veto any attempt to impose sanctions on South Africa.

That this unsavoury gang should be officially designated to find a path to Namibian independence is surely enough to justify the deepest cynicism about the United Nations.

What of the charitable bits of the UN? Can't we even say a good word for them?

Unfortunately not. The agencies which have any money to give or loan are dominated by the countries which have the money. They are under the political pressures of those governments—mostly the United States, since it provides most of the cash. The agencies which the others are allowed to run are mostly irrelevant.

Where an agency treads too heavily on the toes of the American or their allies, retribution follows. The UN Commissioner for Human Rights was sacked last year by the new Secretary General. Why? Because he was investigating the 'disappearances' in Argentina of political opponents of the military regime after the coup in 1976, and the political massacres by the US backed regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala. Those were not the kind of human rights which interested the Reagan administration.

Finally, the most fundamental objection to the 'new UN' position brings us back to the original point: Third World or First World, the UN is a collection of ruling classes. Third World rulers are not inherently more 'progressive', merely less powerful. Many are engaged in vicious repression at home and military adventures abroad.

Lenin described the League of Nations as a 'thieves' kitchen'. The United Nations is no less so for having more thieves as members.

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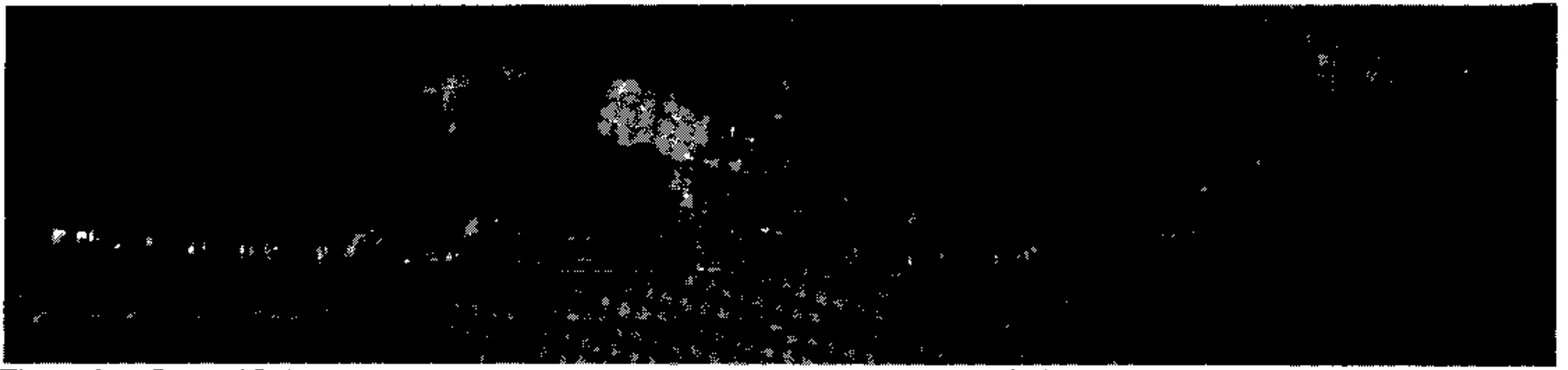
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The cruiser General Belgrano. Picture taken during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.

Dying for Thatcher

'Gotcha' screamed *The Sun* when the Argentine cruiser *General Belgrano* was torpedoed by a British nuclear submarine. Jim Scott looks at the reality of naval warfare.

The spectacle of the gutter press over the last few weeks has been sickening. The chairbound Admirals of *The Sun* are very keen to send young sailors to a horrible death in the South Atlantic. A death very likely in circumstances like this:

'It struck and I was enveloped in flames but managed to stumble and fall across the port side into the sea ... As I entered the sea the flight deck ... was touching it. The next thing I knew was that I felt cool and fresh and was swimming in the warm sea. I did not know that my right shoulder had a gaping wound from a bomb splinter, clogged with fuel oil and that my face, head, arms and feet were badly burned ... the sea was black with oil fuel and strewn with wreckage and corpses.'

This is from Commander E MacNeil Smith's official report on the sinking of the *Hermes* by Japanese bombers off Ceylon, 1941. There is, I suppose, a horrible irony in the fact that *Hermes* was the only carrier lost to enemy aircraft attacks in the Second World War. Just over three hundred seamen, including the captain, were lost in that attack. Dozens of others were terribly wounded and spent many hours in the water waiting to be picked up.

Naval warfare adds its own dimension to the horrors of modern war, for should he survive the enemy military attack, the sailor then finds himself faced with the prospect of trying to keep alive in that most unpredictable and uncontrollable of the elements, the Sea.

We shall come to that aspect later. Let's first consider the type of vessels facing each other in the South Atlantic at the time of writing. Modern warships are killing factories afloat, their steel hulls are crammed with equipment and men. Every available square foot of space is utilised for either machinery, shops engines, boilers, fuel tanks or weapons systems and ammunition. The space for the crew is included almost as an afterthought.

During 'action stations' watertight doors would automatically close, hatches would be bolted down and the crew would be at their

battle positions. That quaint nautical term 'batten down the hatches' takes on a terrible meaning if you are one of those being batted down in a machine space below the waterline not knowing the moment when a torpedo may rip through the paper thin non-armoured hull of a modern destroyer.

Should you quite understandably panic and leave your post for safer climes you'll probably find a marine at the hatch pointing a loaded SLR at you with the safety catch off. Should your compartment be hit and you somehow survive you'd be quite likely left to drown, since the whole theory of watertight compartments is to maintain the ship afloat after holing. Nobody would want this to happen of course but its the way the system works.

After the sinking of the American battleship *West Virginia* at Pearl Harbour salvage crews found the diary scribbled on a bulkhead of three sailors who had been trapped below. It took them sixteen days to die on the bottom of the ocean. For others it would be quicker but no more merciful. Like, perhaps, those German sailors in the *Wilhelm Gustaff*:

'A great hole was torn in the tail hull of the ship. Hundreds of tons of salt water was unleashed on the red hot boilers. The men of the black gang were swept aside like straws many of them flayed alive by boiling steam'.

And on board the British battleship *Recluse* a bomb burst immediately above, one of the boiler rooms bursting some of the steam pipes. Survivor Able Seaman Baxter's report of what happened next is worth quoting, if only to disillusion those who still think there's something glorious in sea warfare.

'During the lull, to our amazement, some of the stokers had managed to climb up through the uptakes or ventilation system and were screaming for us to let them out. These uptakes were covered with heavy wire netting and I remember them trying to tear the wire away with their bare hands. They were like monkeys in a cage. Ginger Wilkinson soon took the initiative and we found a rope and weaved it through the wires and the twelve of us ripped the wire away and helped the poor fellows out. It was only then did we realise they were naked and all badly burned and screaming in agony. It was a horrible sight — they had been burnt by steam from broken steam pipes down below in the boiler room.'

For those who escaped the infernos of the shattered hulls the sea may have provided a short lived relief. Immersion in the warm waters of the Pacific Ocean is one thing, to plunge into the freezing seas of the Arctic was simply to exchange hells. But even the Pacific brought its terrors, for a sailor badly burnt by either fire or steam the salt water must have been agonising.

There are also sharks in tropical waters. Although any sharks in the immediate vicinity of a major sea battle would be well and truly frightened off; seamen who were not picked up immediately and had to spend some days on rafts had this added terror to compete with.

There was also the fact that many seamen couldn't swim or became too weak to hold onto the life rafts, had swallowed large quantities of fuel oil and became delirious. Many of those who were rescued from the seas scalded or flash burned succumbed to shock and died later.

In Northern hemispheres the Battle of the North Atlantic was fought in freezing conditions. Even in the summer the Atlantic or North Sea are not warm waters but in winter survival in the water could be counted in minutes. Many who survived would find themselves permanently disabled by frostbite. The cold plus the frequently mountainous seas made rescue extremely difficult and casualties tended to be higher, particularly on the Murmansk convoys to supply the Red Army.

Here of course the majority of casualties were civilian members of the Merchant Navy and it took a special courage to sail on an undefended tanker carrying thousands of gallons of aviation spirit through the German U-Boat packs of the North Atlantic and Arctic Sea.

It is particularly dispiriting then as an ex-merchant seaman to read of the leadership of the NUS supporting Thatcher's war. They must be aware of the dangers they place their members in by associating themselves with this lunatic adventure, but then they won't be in the engine rooms of the *Canberra*.

So when you read the accounts in the gutter press of the heroic deeds of our lads, think instead of those teenagers who died — died screaming in the machine spaces of the *Belgrano*, of the *Sheffield* and the *Ardent*. Whether they were conscripts of the Junta or of Thatcher's dole queues, they were murdered in the defence, not of their class, or even their countries, but in the interest of profit. As John Reed said about another war:

'We must not be duped by the editorial bunkum about Liberalism going forth to Holy War against Tyranny. This is not our War.' □

France: year of empty promises

Francois Mitterrand has been President of France for more than a year. The comrades of the French revolutionary organisation **Combat Communiste** have sent us a special article on how this model of parliamentary socialism has fared.

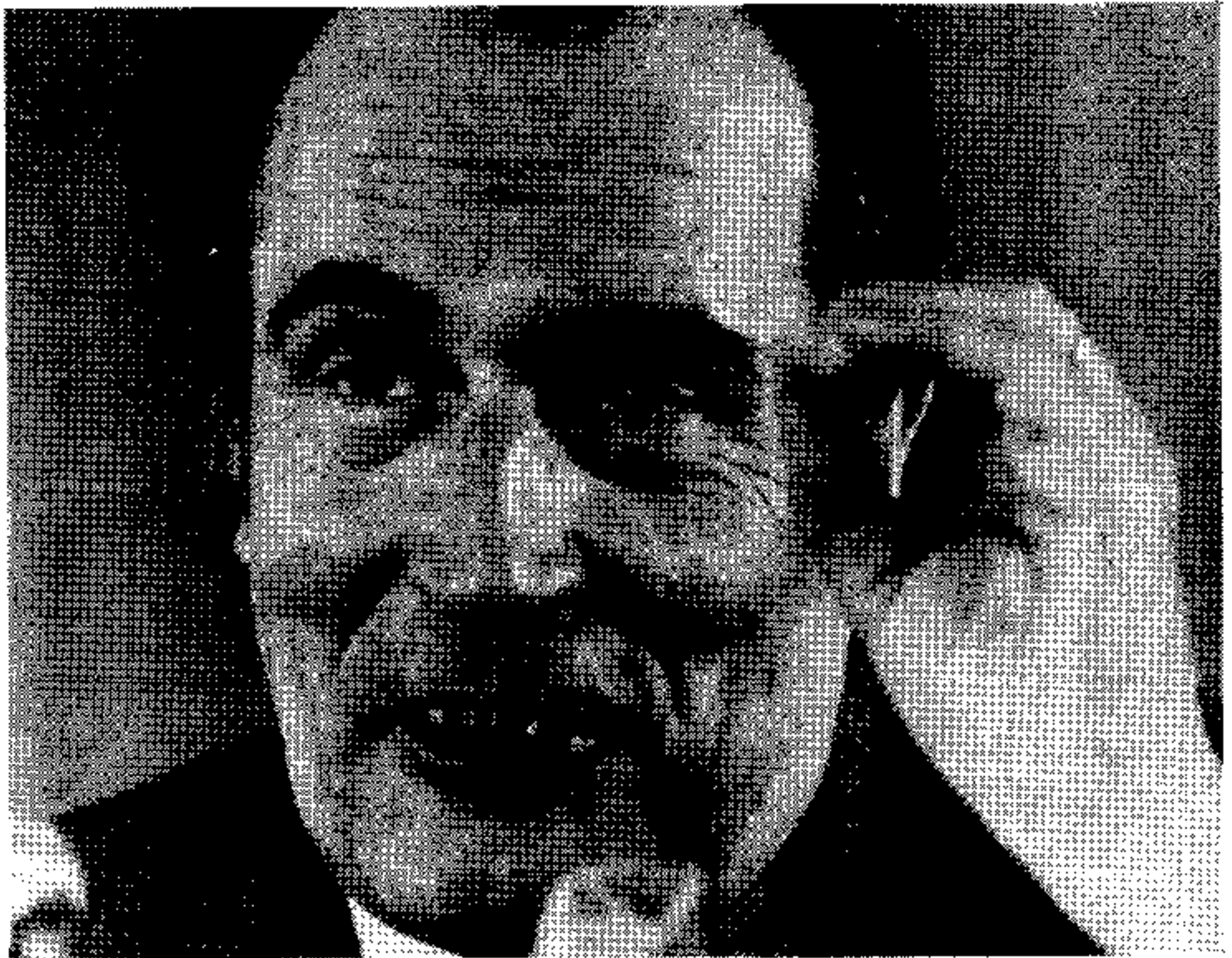
May 1981 saw hope for change among a section of workers. Today disaffection is very visible: confidence in Mitterrand has fallen from 74% to below 58%, and in Prime Minister Mauroy from 71% to less than 57%. The recent cantonal (local) elections showed a setback of 7% for the left in comparison with the cantonal elections of 1976.

The causes of this disaffection, noticeable among both workers and the middle classes, are not hard to understand. Of course the government has put into effect some reforms. The most noteworthy are the abolition of the death penalty, the halting of the extension to the Larzac military camp, and the refusal, for the time being, to allow the extradition of militants from the Basque organisation ETA. Military courts have been abolished; retirement at sixty has been granted, so has the right of association for foreigners in France.

But each time the measures have largely lost their content because of qualifications involved. In the army soldiers can still be sentenced for conduct harmful to the interests of the State by emergency military courts. Even the abolition of first-class compartments on the Paris Metro is only applicable to certain times of day!

All these small reforms, including the raising of the minimum wage by ten per cent, don't go any further than the measures introduced by Giscard after he came to office (for example, votes at eighteen and the abortion law). Essentially they are reforms which don't cost the bosses anything.

Many electoral promises have been quickly forgotten. Abortion will not be free and all the basic limitations on the old law will be preserved. The promise to consult the population about the nuclear programme has not been kept. For the time being immigrants have been refused the right to vote. Temporary employment has not been banned as promised, but legalised with only minor changes. The full list would be a long one.



The changes don't have much effect on the everyday life of workers who are suffering from inflation, massive unemployment and the deterioration of their living and working conditions.

Inflation, which was supposed to be going to fall to 10%, reached in March a rate equivalent to 14% a year (in fact 16% for foodstuffs). The government has brought in substantial increases for essential goods and services since last year – transport, gas, electricity, housing.

As for unemployment, on which 'war was declared', which was the 'overriding priority', it has considerably increased. It passed the two million mark back in November 1981. The economic revival which the left promised has not happened.

White-wash measures

The government has been reduced to taking white-washing measures, and to extending the previous government's plans for youth employment (comparable to YOPs). But the most important attacks on living standards and working conditions are those stemming from social security and the side-effects of the decree on the thirty-nine-hour week.

It was the left which finally put into effect the former government's plan, raising by one point the rate of contributions to Social Security. This system was already profoundly unequal since in 1976 the contributions represented 32.8% of the income of a working-class family as opposed to only 8.6% for the liberal professions. The unemployed will have to pay contributions, which has raised a storm of protest.

It might be thought that the 39-hour week was a positive gain, but the workers have rapidly realised that this was a poisoned 'gift'. Not only did the decree not lay down that wages be fully maintained at the previous level, but there are side-effects such as making it impossible to refuse overtime. Agreements in different industries about

flexible hours can lead to workers having to work on Saturdays and Sundays.

These show clearly that the government is firmly committed to a policy of flexible working hours which fits the employers' needs to increase productivity. Part-time work for women, which the left in opposition called the 'organisation of part-time unemployment' has now become a standard thing. The ban on night-work for women has been lifted.

We can understand, then, why Yves Chotard, Vice-President of the French employers' federation (CNPF) could say that the 'Delors system is the twin brother of the one Raymond Barre wanted to set up', with the additional advantage of having union support. (*Le Matin*, 6 January 1982).

The speed with which the left government has yielded to the various pressures from the employers has surprised more than one observer. It was enough for the Constitutional Council to raise its voice for the government to grant an extra 35 million francs compensation to the shareholders of the recently nationalised companies.

After having granted more than 24 thousand million francs long-term loans to the employers – obviously with no effect on employment levels – the results of the recent cantonal elections led the government to relieve companies of professional taxes – namely to make a present to the employers of more than eight thousand million francs!

It's the same with the police, the army and 'law and order'. Several dozen soldiers who signed petitions demanding democratic rights in the army were interned, sometimes for a month. Following the murder of the Israeli Ambassador (for which no-one has yet claimed responsibility) the most hard-line wing of the police apparatus has made the Socialist Minister of Interior Defferre publicly express reservations about his plans for the abolition of the most repressive laws of the former government.

Only a few days ago police raids were organised in Marseilles, an area with a large immigrant population; several hundred

vehicles and more than two thousand people were checked.

It is getting more and more obvious that the government is implementing a policy of austerity.

In face of all this what is the response of the workers and of the unions? For some years it has been clear that the working class is on the retreat. 1980 was a year with a particularly low level of struggle.

Since the arrival of the left in power the only wave of struggles in France has been a defensive one: the workers defeated a challenge to a number of gains such as seniority bonuses, additional leave etc. But in most cases the different sections of the working class either accepted the situation or reacted in a fragmentary manner.

The working-class's capacity for resistance has been weakened even further by the fact that at present the union leaderships, and especially the CFDT (the pro-Socialist union) are openly moving towards a policy of joint management and austerity.

Recently, for example, the leader of the CFDT, Maire, let it be suggested that the government should not have accepted a reduction in working hours without some compensatory cut in wages for the employers. Showing his 'democratic' spirit, he even, less than two months before the CFDT Congress, proclaimed that the idea that unions ought to defend the interests of wage-earners is 'old-fashioned and false'.

The Communist Party (PCF) has lost more than a quarter of its electorate and is participating loyally in the government. It is trying to make people forget all the zigzags - Afghanistan, Poland - which made it lose votes.

Shifting to the right

It is also trying to carry out a two-faced policy by making the CGT, which it controls, adopt a more radical language, but the results are not always brilliant. The CGT is also showing itself loyal to the government which is offering it some crumbs (union administrators in the nationalised companies, a bigger say in determining the government's economic policy) and has thus lost ground and many members, both after the Polish affair and in certain struggles.

For example at Renault, the stronghold of the CGT in the engineering industry, the CGT lost more than 12% in the union elections at Billancourt, and had a setback at Renault Flins a few weeks ago; it was mainly the local sections of the CFDT that gained from this.

The government's evasions are demoralising workers and making them apathetic. The right meanwhile is profiting from this and going back on to the political offensive.

The logic of the situation is that, in order to placate the discontent which is helping the right, the government is compelled to shift its own policy in an ever more rightward direction.

As a result a section of workers are expressing their discontent, as has been seen in the recent cantonal elections. It was in long-standing working-class strongholds that there was the highest abstention rate among workers who normally vote Com-

munist or Socialist. As a result a vacuum has been formed to the left of the reformist parties.

The central question is whether at least part of the far left will be able, in the coming months and years, to create a focus of resistance in the working class, or whether, because of its failure to do so, the demoralisation will go on getting worse.

The present situation is marked by the almost complete disappearance of the far left from the political scene. Of course each group is keeping up its own activity, but people scarcely speak of the far left organisations any more. Demonstrations called by the far left are few and generally very small.

The Maoist groups (orthodox ones like the PCR and PCFML, as well as the OCT and smaller groups) have disappeared or are reduced to a few dozen militants. Moreover the Maoist-Stalinist organisations - or rather what's left of them - are today openly defending reformist positions.

The anarchist current has melted away without ceasing to exist. It shows itself essentially through ecological, anti-nuclear, anti-militarist and similar movements.

The Trotskyist organisations are still by far the largest and the most solidly organised.

The OCI seems to have kept up its numbers and even claims to have grown. This organisation is completely in tow to the Socialist Party, and is only distinguished from it by the fact that it sometimes supports one tendency of the PS against another. It also intervenes in such activities as the defence of non-religious education alongside the teachers' unions where it is influential.

The LCR (Fourth International) has faded away considerably. It is still running campaigns on Nicaragua and on the reduction of military service to six months, but these are far from having the impact of campaigns run by this organisation in the past. The LCR also tails the left government, which it supports critically and to which it addresses extensive advice.

Lutte Ouvriere seems to be keeping up its numbers, but is only carrying on its traditional activities, apart from an attempt to revive a campaign about public transport users' committees.

None of these organisations has tried to undertake a campaign on themes affecting the working class, such as unemployment. Of course, in the climate of relative social and political apathy prevailing at the present time, it isn't possible to be certain what impact such a campaign would have, but it would be worth trying.

We should also stress the complete absence of the large organisations from the struggles which took place last winter for the regularisation of the situation of illegal immigrants. Certainly these struggles were of limited scope and relatively marginal. None the less, in the absence of other movements or activities which might claim priority, the least that might have been expected would have been for the far left organisations to mobilise to give them active support, which, moreover, might have increased their chances of success.

Despite its limitations the intervention of groups like ours (Combat Communiste) was able to give a degree of concrete assistance

which was not insignificant to certain of these struggles.

But to take an initiative would mean that the far left would have to have a clear and unambiguous attitude towards a "government of the left", which is not the case for any of the large Trotskyist groups, including Lutte Ouvriere.

But for the moment such a desire and ability to take initiatives to capitalise on the discontent which is growing among the working class is lacking on the far left. □

Goons, insults and machine bolts

During the last 10 days struggle, there have been two major disputes in the French car industry.

A month-long strike at the Renault car plant and outside Paris ended in partial victory. There were some concessions over reduced holidays and, most importantly, a promise of no victimisation after an angry confrontation between strikers and supervisors acting as company spies.

A much more bitter dispute at a Citroen factory span on the outskirts of the capital started in late April and is still continuing.

Citroen has long been notorious for its appalling conditions and its strong-arm company union. One of the members of this 'union' was actually responsible for the assassination of a CGT trade unionist in 1977.

The dispute was sparked off as the result of a racist incident affecting workers on the assembly line, the majority of whom are immigrants from France's African ex-colonies. Racist abuse and violence have long been a common feature.

The strike, though, was also about the increased speed of the assembly line, at a time when sackings and non-recruitment have reduced the numbers of the workforce. The unremitting pace of production was guaranteed by continuous harassment from foremen and supervisors, including physical harassment.

Using company union goons (frequently ex-Foreign Legionnaires), management have intimidated the pickets. Insults over the loudspeaker system and attacks with machine bolts are not uncommon.

Management have also halted the bus service that used to collect workers (at a rip-off profit to the company) from all over the Paris region, in an effort to reduce the numbers of pickets. The union is now providing a service.

Management have also attempted to counteract the success pickets have had in stopping food lorries by air-lifting supplies in by helicopter.

Despite these difficulties, solidarity action has swelled the picket line and the dispute has spread to other Citroen factories. Gareth Jenkins



Poland's May days

The class struggle in Poland has once more broken out into open confrontation on the streets of more than a dozen Polish cities. May 1st, 3rd, 4th, 9th, 12th and 13th — all saw either demonstrations, open battles with the police, or strikes. **Kara Weber** reports.

On May Day itself, following a call by Solidarity's underground leadership, alternative demonstrations were held in Warsaw and Gdansk, attracting some fifty thousand people, mostly young workers and students, in each city. Michael Dobbs, of the *Washington Post*, described the scene in Warsaw:

'The official procession was well planned, joyless and silent. It wound its way through almost empty streets, guarded by truckloads of police and soldiers ... The Solidarity procession was emotional, impulsive and noisy. It gathered size and confidence as it moved through the Old Town, but it lacked organisation and a sense of direction ...'

'Free our Lech — Jail Wojciech' chanted the crowd, demanding internment for Wojciech Jaruzelski. Amazingly, the police confined itself to separating the counter demonstration from the official May Day procession and did not attack the workers. The marchers claimed the traditions of May Day for themselves and shouted 'Our holiday! Our holiday!'

Perhaps Poland's bosses were also conscious of this fact and felt that a violent suppression of such a demonstration would be too damaging. Even such apologists for Jaruzelski as the gullible Arthur Scargill might find it difficult to swallow.

No such curbs on state violence operated

two days later, when Poles commemorated their 3 May Constitution of 1791, regarded as the beginning of democracy in Poland. Peaceful demonstrations in many Polish towns were attacked with water cannon and tear gas. Running battles with the police lasted well into the night. In some places, notably Szczecin, the demonstrations extended over two days. The curfew was reimposed in several cities, telephone lines were cut. 1300 people were arrested.

Workers prepared for demonstrations connected with Victory Day on 9 May. The right wing nationalist Confederation of Independent Poland, the KPN, was active in organising some of these, notably in Wroclaw. Farmers prepared to commemorate the registration of Rural Solidarity on 12 May. The underground Solidarity leadership issued a call for a fifteen minute national protest strike together with a general halt of all road traffic for one minute at midday on the 13 May to mark the end of five months of martial law.

In the face of these threats the state responded with massive shows of force. Columns of riot police, water cannon, processions of armoured personnel carriers a mile long, thundered through Warsaw. Riot police stopped pedestrians, checking documents. By 10 May the official total of those arrested had risen to 2669.

More importantly, the leaders of the Church moved in to confine and deflect the rising tide of public revolt. The bishops met at Czestochowa and issued 'rebukes' to both the demonstrators and the state. 'The new disturbances shaking the country are delaying social accord' they wrote, 'halting steps towards normalisation and misguiding youth.' Archbishop Glemp went so far as to make a thinly veiled attack on Solidarity leaders in hiding, calling them 'manipulators with stony hearts.'

It is difficult to gauge the effect of these pronouncements and state intimidation but the peasant commemoration in Warsaw involved no more than a packed mass in St

John's Cathedral. The stoppages and demonstrations called by Solidarity on 13 May were only moderately successful. While a demonstration of several thousand gathered in central Warsaw and a crowd of ten thousand fought police in Krakow, the support for the token strike, although widespread, was not as universal as the workers leaders had hoped.

The tendency for the upper layers of the Church hierarchy to attack any manifestations of fight back may have far reaching consequences. Rank and file priests have been deeply involved in clandestine union activities. There is a general belief, for example, that many of Solidarity's national figures have escaped capture for so long because they have been sheltering on church property. Many of these from their own bishops.

If the bishops succeed in enforcing their point of view this may weaken the underground organisation considerably, but it may also, in the long term, lead significant numbers of Polish workers to understand the dubious role played by the Church in the Polish class struggle.

While the open declaration of war by Poland's ruling class on its workers has made many of Solidarity's leaders admit that their previous hopes of forcing a compromise with the state were built on sand, very often these same people will see no other long term solution to their present impasse ... but to force a compromise with the state. Archbishop Glemp's proposal for Solidarity to relinquish all pretensions to a political role in return for a release of the internees and a lifting of the union's suspension has been backed by an indefinite hunger strike of sixteen internees in Bialoleka prison camp, among them such national figures as Jacek Kuron, Karol Modzelewski, Jan Rulewski and Janusz Onyszkiewicz.

The most important battles in rebuilding the Polish workers' movement are likely to take place out of the limelight of the arena of national politics. The Union must be rebuilt at factory level. This is a problem which has been recognised. Among the communiqués issued by the provisional national leadership of Solidarity, which first met at the end of April, was the following outline:

'First of all, however, we must concentrate on making sure that in every place of employment there are:

- Committees for Social Assistance, extending material help to those employees and Union activists who have been deprived of means of existence.

- Solidarity's discussion clubs with the participation of representatives of all the milieu. These would work on Union tactics.

- Printing shops which would enable us to disseminate information efficiently. In larger enterprises periodicals or bulletins should be issued.'

It is on this local level, involving perhaps local strikes for limited objectives rather than widespread token strikes for distant goals, that workers' confidence could perhaps be rebuilt. It is a process which the ruling class in Poland has already identified as being of prime importance. During a meeting at the Polish Radio and TV the

military commissar, Colonel Wislicki, had this to say to the party cadre of that institution:

'Should any one of you ask how long the state of war will last? I think the answer is quite easy but the solution is quite difficult. The state of war will last until the Party is reborn, and I'm not thinking here about the Party's bureaucracy, for that will be reborn quite quickly — I'm thinking about the rank and file in big enterprises. My reasoning is based upon the following: there is a state of war and the way out of it is either dictatorship or democracy. There is no third choice between these two. If we are talking about democracy — democracy in a socialist state that is — there must be a force around which this democracy will gather. In our situation only the Party can be

such a force. Political pluralism is out of the question. Any sort of opposition, more or less organised, is out of the question. The state of war cannot be lifted until the Party can take over the political direction of enterprises, which means the state of war will continue for some time in this country. It is not a question of months but of years.'

If you strip away all the Stalinist double-think about 'democracy', the situation is very clearly explained. Any opposition by workers to their exploitation by the state is out of the question. It must be crushed, and the most important arena of that battle will be the 'political direction of the enterprises.' The survival of Solidarity in the workplaces is vital if the demonstrations of protest are to be turned into a movement powerful enough to defeat the military. □

All out in Bombay

Barry Pavier looks at a major strike in India.

Readers of this review will be surprised to learn that 250,000 Bombay textile workers went on strike in January. They are still out at the time of writing (May).

Such ignorance is excusable, since there has been precious little coverage of the strike in the Indian press, let alone over here. A demonstration of 300,000 workers on March 11th in support of the textile workers merited just ten lines in one major Indian paper.

Bombay textile workers have a long history of organisation and struggle dating from the beginning of the century. This strike is rather different because it is not being led by an established union, but one organised by a freelance called Datta Samant.

Over the past couple of years Samant has turned the Bombay union scene inside out. He has been able to do so because the established union federations have lost their total hold on the organised working class since the collapse of the Emergency in 1977. This is especially true in the case of workers organised by unions in federations dominated by the Communist Party (CPI) and Communist Party (Marxist)—CP(M).

The CPI initially supported the Emergency, and the CP(M) abstained from organising mass opposition. Workers in many areas of India broke from the political leadership of the communist parties, and formed organisations independent of the established federation. In the Bombay region, the centre of Indian industry, this situation has produced Datta Samant.

Before his rise as a union organiser, Samant was a supporter of Indira Gandhi's Congress party. His position now has been achieved by leading simple wage struggles—large claims and successful strikes, won by the militant actions of workers.

He is as willing to sign productivity deals as the next union official, but unlike the others he does win, and it is this which has given unions organised by him a claimed

membership of 1,500,000 in the Bombay area.

He was able to achieve such staggering successes because his earlier efforts were in high productivity (ie profitable) engineering factories. But to establish an absolute dominance in the Bombay union movement he needed a success in textiles. Hence his current intervention.

For years the largest union in the textile industry has been the Congress-led RMMS, which has operated rather like the EEPTU does here. The other major (although unrecognised) union is the CPI-led GKU. Most other federations also have unions.

Over the past twenty years the Bombay textile workers have suffered all the usual problems of textile workers—job losses, low pay, bad conditions. The RMMS has not wanted to lead a fight and the other unions have been incapable. Samant has been able to move in, riding on the back of success in other industries.

The demand in this strike is simple—a 60% wage increase. Samant entered the field in November, after the existing joint union committee had called off a one-day strike. Eight mills were already out, and in disgust workers from one turned to Samant. Within a couple of days a new textile union with tens of thousands of members had been formed, thus completely out-flanking the established unions.

The RMMS opposed his intervention, while the others trailed in his wake. Samant doesn't go in for protracted negotiations—if a demand is rejected, he moves immediately to a strike. After a short delay, the strike began on January 17th. The millowners have sat this one out this far. There are good reasons for them so to do.

Firstly, they can offset production losses by de-stocking. Secondly, a prolonged strike will drive down the price of raw cotton. Most important is defeating Samant.

His successes have given the local capitalists a nasty jolt since they have not had to face such effective opposition for many years. However, it is unlikely that his influence can survive a major defeat. A lost strike will certainly be a massive defeat for

the textile workers. By breaking Samant's movement in general it would be a severe reverse for the whole Bombay working class.

Samant is a maverick, a free-lance with no political organisation to support him when the going gets rough. Most of the other left parties are giving him support of the 'rope and condemned man' variety. They desire to recapture their lost influence and would take a defeat as their opportunity to do so.

At the end of April a one-day solidarity strike was organised in Maharashtra state, which surrounds Bombay. It was originally proposed by the agricultural workers organisation of the Lal Nishan Party. The LNP, which exists only in Maharashtra, is a mass party which broke from the CPI in 1942, opposing the pro-British 'People's War' policy. It combines a strange mixture of old-style Stalinism, mass organisation, and anti-parliamentarianism.

Samant appeared at their agricultural workers conference, and later toured rural areas calling for the unity of urban and rural workers and for the formation of a new working class party, allied with poor peasants.

This solidarity strike was supported by other independent working class and socialist organisations in rural Maharashtra, but not by the CPI and CP(M). The potential consequences of the strike are considerable. Maharashtra has the most developed working class in India, urban and rural. A new party formed out of this struggle would probably be a mass centrist workers' party in which revolutionaries could make an effective intervention. □



You see Indian workers don't have our tradition of union militancy. They don't have the likes of me fighting for their rights, getting them good redundancy money ... like you lot.

Behind the Spanish goal

The world cup is about to start and will undoubtedly receive extensive media overkill. **Andy Durgan** takes a look at the real Spain, away from the glamour of the football pitches.

THE trial of 32 army officers and one civilian accused of leading last year's abortive coup drags on in Madrid. The accused often appear like the accusers. And the proceedings are at times more like a fascist rally than a trial.

Meanwhile, rumblings of discontent are still heard in the army. Erstwhile democrats in parliament or the press are supposed to keep their mouths shut. Already one liberal journalist has been excluded from the courtroom because his paper was critical of the way the trial was being run.

Those who are expecting any form of justice could have taken little comfort from the appointment of a new military judge a few weeks ago. He is General Alvarea Rodriguez, who participated in the repression of the Asturian miners uprising in 1934. He fought with the Nazis in Russia. He presided over the trial of anti-Francoist officers in the early seventies. He let previous military plotters (including Tejero who led the assault on parliament last year) off the hook.

The right wing Centre Democratic Union (UCD) government stumbles from crisis to crisis, racked by internal divisions. The economic situation worsens. Since the coup attempt repression has increased. Last year around 400 prosecutions were brought or threatened against journalists.

Typical of recent cases is that of well known feminist Jimena Alonso, on trial for supposedly collaborating with ETA. In a radio interview with a revolutionary candidate during the recent regional elections in Andalusia, all references to dangers of a military coup or solidarity with the Basques were completely erased.

A taste of things to come this summer was the May 10 police raid on the Madrid flea market, the Rastro. The aim was to have a 'clean up' before the world cup. In time-honoured style the riot police arrested 510 people completely arbitrarily. After an uncomfortable day in the central police station they were strip-searched, had their details recorded and were then released.

The biggest thorn in the side of the government remains the Basque country. It is here that England will play this June.

The radical nationalists struggle over the last five years has meant a continuation of the reign of terror established under Franco. Practically all demonstrations and political meetings are prohibited. It is estimated that 500 people a month are arrested under the stringent anti-terrorist laws.

An estimated 85% of those detained are subjected to torture and beatings. The number of imprisoned ETA members has trebled in the last three years, to around 340. 117 were transported last year to the atrocious 'high security' prison of Puerto de Santa Maria in the south, 1,150 kilometres from home.

The pro-ETA coalition Herri Batasuna has been subjected to an attempt to criminalise it during the last two years. Over 50 leading members have been prosecuted — usually for being 'apologists for terrorism.' This includes three MPs. Needless to say their parliamentary immunity was removed.

Herri Batasuna supporters have been the targets of the bulk of fascist and police attacks. 'Uncontrollables' — widely believed to be 'off duty' policemen — murdered 37 and wounded 166 people between 1977 and 1981. Few if any have been caught.

Claims by the government that ETA had been defeated were shattered in April. On April 18 ETA blew up the Central Telephone Exchange in Madrid, cutting off 700,000 telephone lines, including the Prime Minister's. Concurrently there have been a series of armed attacks on Civil Guards and police in the Basque Country itself.

***'It is the Communist Party, however, who have suffered most ...
... it is forced to hang on to the socialists' coat tails.'***

ETA have also recently shot dead the director of the Lemoniz nuclear power station. This has led to a suspension in construction work on the station, twenty miles from Bilbao. The socialist, communist and bourgeois nationalist parties responded by organising demonstrations and partial strikes in protest. Although such killings have to be criticised, these parties never protest over the real enemy-state repression. In fact they prefer to blame 'terrorism' for all the country's ills.

The principal opposition, the Socialist Party, has been content to sign social contracts and pacts with the government to avoid 'destabilisation'. Typical was their feeble opposition to Spain's entrance into NATO.

It is the Communist Party, however, who have suffered most in the last year. Committed to a very moderate parliamentary reformism, its electoral support, only 10 per cent, makes even this seem completely out of reach. Instead it is forced to hang on to the socialists' coat tails.

Because of the obvious threat of military intervention even the mildest reformist programme has little chance of success. This

failure of the CP to make any progress in the last five years has led to a great deal of disillusionment among the party's rank and file.

In the Basque Country the local party tried to seek a way out of this impasse by unifying with the left nationalist Euskadiko Ezkerra. The party's leadership was promptly expelled for this deviation. Ironically it was the Basque party's firm belief in eurocommunist principles of less centralisation and more internal democracy that led them to this position. The 'official' party is now even smaller than before in the Basque country.

In Madrid five out of the CP's nine municipal councillors were expelled after signing a critical document, along with 220 other leading members. Again the criticism came from ostensibly more 'eurocommunist' positions than the party leadership itself. As General Secretary Santiago Carrillo has always been a leading advocate of eurocommunism, his bureaucratic response to this opposition has only further undermined the party's credibility.

The worst blow, however, has come in Catalonia. Here the local party, the PSUC, was by far the most important section of the CP in the peninsula. It enjoyed a support similar to the French or Italian parties. After four years of intense internal battles and the loss of over half of the membership, (down to around 20,000) the PSUC has split. A new pro-Soviet party was formed in April.

Interestingly this is a split to the left. What's more it has taken with it not only about 50 per cent of the PSUC's membership, but most of its important industrial base in Barcelona.

In the working class movement as a whole things still look bleak. Trade union membership has slumped to about 10 per cent of the working population, compared to 18 percent two years ago. Even then it was the lowest in Europe. It's not just the less militant workers who have left unions, but also many activists. This was reflected in the recent shop stewards' elections in SEAT, Barcelona, where participation dropped by half in some plants compared with 1980. However a referendum a few weeks before on a union-management productivity agreement was rejected, although closely, with a very high turnout.

For five years the socialist union, the UGT, and the CP-led Workers' Commissions have collaborated with the government and the employers, while wages have fallen and unemployment steadily risen. Even in a formerly 'prosperous' area like the Basque Country there is now 23 per cent unemployment.

Internally the unions have become increasingly bureaucratized and many branches have ceased to function. Coupled with this, in the traditionally more militant Workers Commissions, revolutionaries have been systematically removed from positions



LEFT: Real Sociedad and Athletic Bilbao parade in opposition to the extradition of suspected ETA members from France.

BELOW: League champions Real Sociedad demanding an amnesty for political prisoners.



Not quite like White Hart Lane

of responsibility. In some areas, particularly the Basque Country, significant sections of militant workers are now organised outside the main unions. Not always by choice.

There are some signs of resistance. Examples are the one day general strikes in the suburbs of Madrid and Barcelona against redundancies. In the Basque province of Guipuzcoa, there were four 'right to work' marches leading up to May Day. Three converged on San Sebastian where they were ambushed by the riot police. There have been similar initiatives recently in Valencia and Albacete.

A massive unofficial solidarity campaign resulted in partial victory for three workers brought to court following the bitter Olarra strike last year. The three were sacked and prosecuted by their employer, a known fascist, after leading hundreds of workers in an occupation of the companies' offices. This was a test case and part of a general offensive to smash those remaining sectors prepared to oppose redundancies and fight for union rights.

Like the eleven Bilbao women acquitted in the recent anti-abortion trial, the Olarra workers showed that mass mobilisation could force the courts to change their minds.

Elsewhere the police are not having it all their own way either. In Lugo, in the north west, a thousand peasants demonstrating against unfair taxation turned on the riot police when baton charged. Years of frustration boiled over and many police were wounded in the ensuing battle.

In the Basque city of Pamplona, where the 'official' May Day demonstration attracted only 150 people, the radical left organised one of some 3,000. This was savagely attacked by the police. The demonstrators, however, held their ground and fought for half an hour.

The most inspiring struggle recently has been that of the miners of Cala. This is in Spain's most impoverished province — Badajoz. When threatened with hundreds of redundancies, 28 miners occupied the mine and began a hunger strike. There was an unprecedented wave of sympathy throughout the province. A one day general strike on April 27 saw many towns and villages brought completely to a standstill. Nothing opened and whole families demonstrated their support.

It is this sort of fighting spirit that gives hope for the future.

The great militant traditions of Spanish workers are not dead. □

Football in most countries is a grand jamboree, a good diversion from the everyday problems of life. The England team will play this month in a country where this is not always the case — the Basque Country.

Franco fiercely repressed everything Basque. In turn anything Basque, including sport, became a symbol of defiance. Football matches, especially in the early seventies, became a place where nationalism and anti-Francoist sentiments could be displayed. Matches between the two main Basque sides, Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad (from San Sebastian), were, and still are, days of national celebration: bands, parades and much waving of the then illegal Basque flag.

The players are mostly local and are not untouched by these feelings. On many occasions, both before and since Franco's death, they have quite openly showed their defiance of the regime. Teams have walked on the pitch carrying banners demanding an amnesty for political prisoners, protesting about repression and so on. A scene rather like Manchester United and Liverpool parading before the start of a match calling for 'No Cruise'!

Some players' involvement has gone further. Iribar, Athletic Bilbao and Spain's former goalkeeper, was a founder and leader of Herri Batasuna. This is the radical coalition which supports ETA and enjoys mass support, particularly

among workers.

The media was tightly controlled by Franco and it has remained muted over the Basque situation ever since 'democratisation'. Spanish football, however, is generally shown live on TV and this has created problems for the government. Invariably matches broadcast from the Basque Country have been interrupted by banner-waving fans. Most embarrassing.

Real Sociedad — Spanish league champions for the third year running — have come to be seen as epitomising everything Basque, in the most radical sense. Hence, their hostile reception at many grounds, in particular at the home of the Spanish footballing establishment, Real Madrid. This club has long standing fascist and monarchist connections. Here they are greeted with jeers and cries of 'murderers' and 'España, España'. Ironically 50 percent of the current world cup squad are Basques!

Elsewhere their reception has been different. When playing in 'red' Vallecas, a massive working class suburb of Madrid, they are greeted warmly. It is similar in Seville against the 'poor man's' team Betis. Fans of the distinctly up-market Seville side are less than friendly.

The Spanish authorities will be hoping that none of this is allowed to spoil the summer's spectacle. Because, as we all know, politics and sport should not mix. Militant Basques will, no doubt, have other ideas.

Tony Cliff talks to *Socialist Review* about the downturn and what it means for rank and file organisation.

I want to deal with one issue and only one issue, our work in the rank and file movement. There's no question whatever that there is a fantastic misunderstanding on the issue amongst socialists.

Let's be clear that the socialist principle that the emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class is just that, a matter of principle, for Marxism. But the question of Rank and File groups, or even of a Rank and File movement is a question of tactics.

For Rank and File movements you need three cogwheels: the tiny cogwheel of the party, the middle cogwheel of the Rank and File, and the biggest cogwheel of mass trade union membership. In Russia there was no Rank and File organisation because there was no mass trade union membership. A rank and file movement couldn't be built.

In Britain for a long, long time you couldn't build it either, because there was no possibility of generalising the conflict between the rank and file and the union bureaucracy. There is always conflict between the rank and file and the bureaucracy, but unless it can be generalised you can't have the three cogwheels.

We had a Rank and File movement in Britain in the First World War, and then we had the Minority Movement in 1924. Between the two we had the 1919/21 slump and unemployment smashed quite a lot of the engineering shop stewards' organisations at the time. In 1922 with the lockout of the engineers and the fantastic weakness of the shop organisation J T Murphy simply said you can't have a rank and file movement if the factories are empty. That is the way he put it and he was bloody right.

In 1924 there was an economic revival and the Minority Movement was born, not so much on the engineers as on the miners. What did the miners have? A workplace confidence and workplace organisation.

Now our organisation has always argued for the self-emancipation of workers. But when you read our literature in the 50s and 60s we argued *against* the building of a Rank and File movement at that time. In 1966 I wrote a book *Incomes Policy Legislation and Shop Stewards*, in which I argued really carefully against the building of a Rank and File organisation. In 1966 there were a lot of strikes — brilliant! And they were always in opposition to the bureaucracy. 95 percent of strikes were unofficial. You know what used to trigger the strikes? How to win them before the union official found out about it. The workers were fantastically confident within a fragment, and almost all the strikes were sectional strikes.

You cannot build an organisation from sectional strikes. You cannot generalise from a strike of 500 workers for three days. And most of the strikes lasted for less than one day for heaven's sake. We couldn't build a Rank and File organisation and that was a fact of life.

We built a Rank and File organisation in 1970 and 1974. We were able to build it

'You can't have a rank & file movement if the factories are empty'

because there was a mass movement of self-confident workers, and the struggle was generalised. From the miners, to the Pentonville Dockers to the hospital workers, to the building workers and so on. We had always wanted to build it, but we couldn't until the struggle was very highly generalised.

In 1973 the circulation of a lot of Rank and File papers was high:

Carworker 6,000 copies printed.
Hospital Worker 6,000 copies printed
Busman's Platform 3,000 copies printed
Textile Worker 1,500 copies printed
Journalists' Charter 2,000 copies printed
Nalgo Action News 6,000 copies printed
Rank and File Teacher 10,000 copies printed
Redder Tape 3,000 copies printed
Dock Worker 5,000 copies printed
Building Worker 2,000 copies printed
GEC Rank and File 8,000 copies printed

When you look at this list it is interesting that practically all the manual papers disappeared. Only six are still alive and their circulation is drastically reduced. For example, *NAN* 2,500 copies printed, *R&F Teacher* 3,000 copies printed, *Redder Tape* 1,000 copies printed.

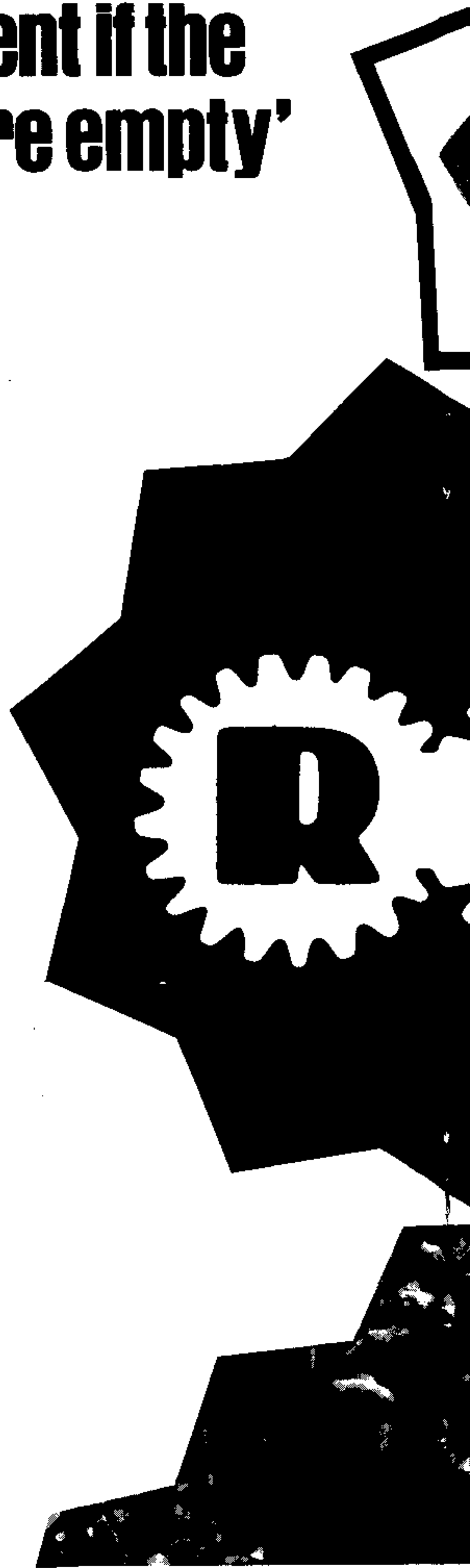
Why was this? I'll tell you why, we empirically reacted to the downturn, we didn't calculate this, we just reacted to the situation. If there is not enough confidence for workers to put the pressure on the Trade Union bureaucracy then they cannot generalise.

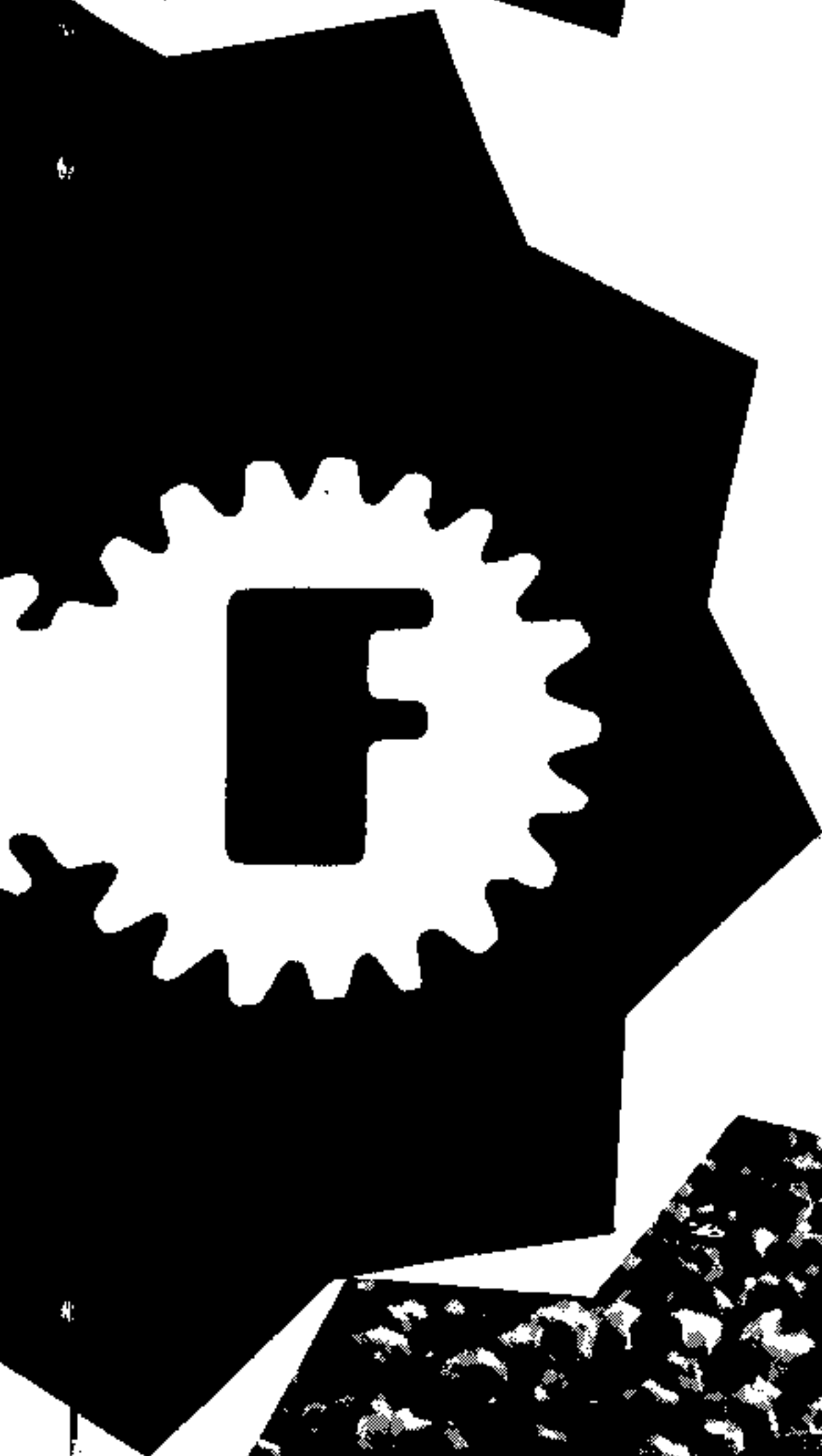
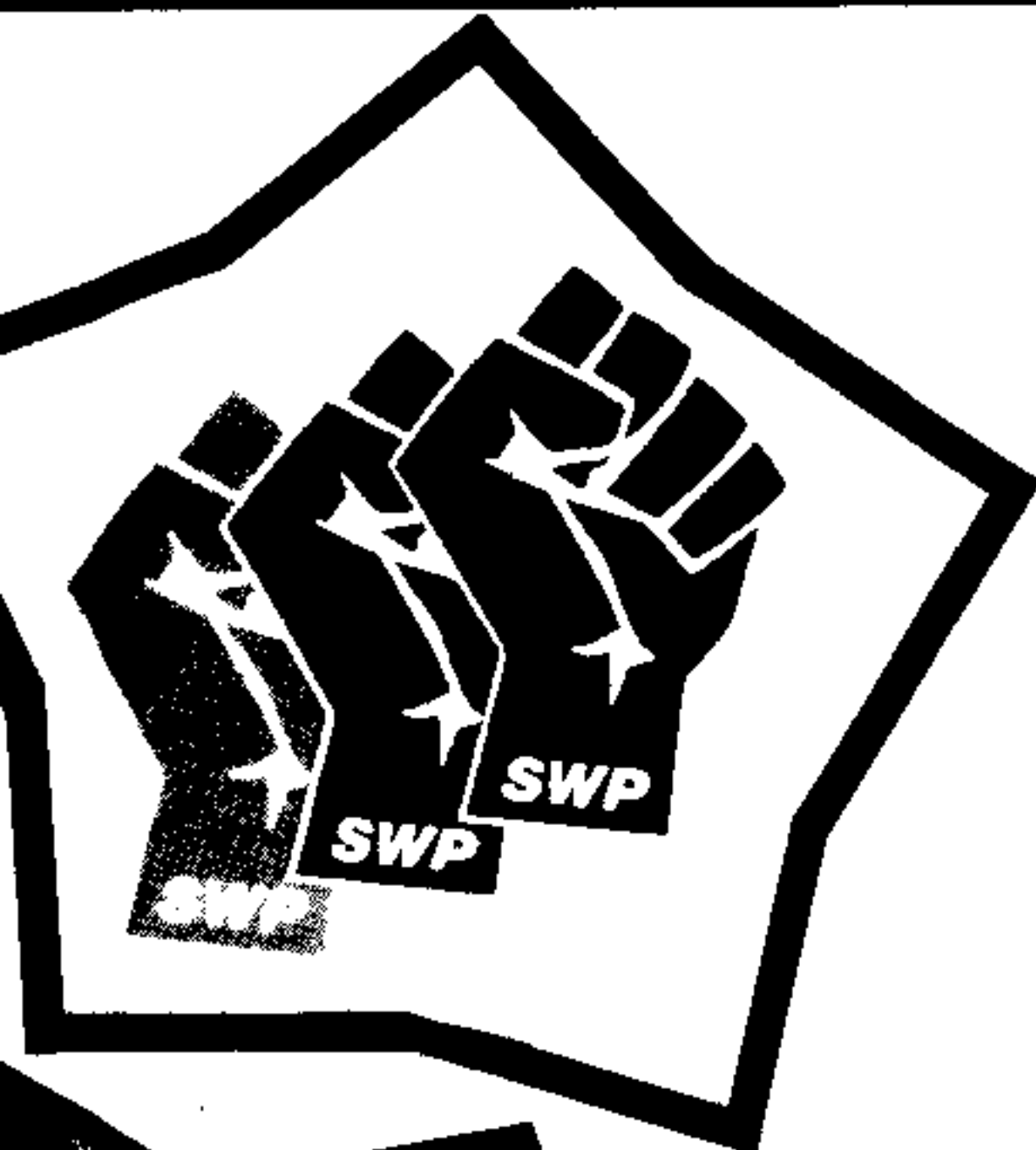
Let's be clear, the union bureaucracy at present is worse than it was ten years ago, it's worse than it was 20 years ago. But the opposition to it is much weaker and more fragmented, just look at the lack of solidarity among workers on strike.

When we started the Rank and File groups we started them as individual groups. Then we launched the national Rank and File Movement. But let's be honest, there were problems.

I saw the problems staring me in the face when we had the R&F Conference in Manchester in November 1977. It was very well attended. The 520 delegates at this conference decided unanimously to call for a day of action in support of the firemen on 7 December 1977. I'm absolutely convinced if I'd been a delegate I would have voted for it.

But on 7 December the penny dropped. Nobody came on strike! How did we make this mistake? Because everyone believed that although things were bad in their workplace, things were good everywhere else. So the dockers, for example, know they can't get the docks out, because they know about the downturn in the docks, but they think that perhaps the Heathrow workers will come out. The Heathrow workers know they can't bring





the airport out, but they think the dockers will come out.

We forgot that the job of the party is to generalise. The individual looks to his own little section, the party must look to the totality.

To me it was absolutely clear by January 1978 that we were wrong. For the following reasons:

- The trade union bureaucracy had moved massively to the right because of the social contract, and had taken many convenors with them.

- The movement from piecework to measured day work — the relationship between the shop and shop steward had been weakened out of all recognition.

- The culmination of these two things means the shop organisation is less confident and less able to generalise.

I'll tell you straight, we're never going back to piece rates. History will not reverse just to make our life easy. But what will happen is that we'll have a new battle, and we'll have it on a much higher level. It will be a battle on measured day work, not on piece rates. Not on a small section of five or 50 workers, but on 5,000 workers. But you cannot build the house of today with the bricks of tomorrow. In revolutionary politics tenses are more important than grammar.

What happened in 1977 and 1978 was that we didn't generalise because we couldn't. And the groups ceased to exist. The majority of socialist trade unionists are not in Rank and File groups because they don't exist. People voted with their feet. You don't get letters saying: 'Where is the *Carworker?* or 'Why don't dockers publish the *Dockworker?*' Nobody asks for these papers.

It makes me laugh that people say we are on the defensive in our factory, but if you take all the factories of the combine then we are much better off. What a lot of rubbish. One of the reasons why Gardners did well was that Gardners was a single factory, they couldn't kid themselves. If you are weak in the locality

then you are ten times weaker in the totality. Its like the story of the Jewish woman — someone says to her: 'How do you make your living?' 'I make cakes: on every cake I sell I lose a penny'. 'So, how do you make your living?' 'I sell a lot of them.'

You see in this the stupidity of the situation. In the individual workplace we know the situation, but we deny that it exists in the totality.

So what's happened to our organisation under such conditions? We become substitutionist, we become self-defeating. Instead of recruiting people from Rank and File groups into the party, comrades disappear into the Rank and File group.

I started off speaking about three cogwheels. But if the two bigger cogwheels don't exist, then the little cogwheel moves on its own. In other words, the Party becomes introspective; it becomes a mess. If there's no struggle people move to the right, and if you create an organisation that has nothing to bite into, you invite passivity and a drift to the right.

So there have been cases where people stopped being revolutionaries and became simple trade unionists. Because once you have substitutionism you start cheating. You say that you represent the wide movement. I tell you straight, if you really represent the wide movement it is excellent, but if you represent nothing, but pretend you represent the wide movement, then it's a catastrophe. What that means is that you simply cover up your politics.

In every specific situation we ask if we can mobilise people or not. If we can, we do, if not we move with our minimal real periphery. We don't pretend.

The downturn means that we must relate politically to everything; not just our own little patch.

If we stop pretending that we are something bigger than we really are, we will actually become more enthusiastic socialists and better trade unionists. □



Living to some purpose

Paul O'Flinn looks at Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*.

Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* is one of the best sellers of all time. First published in 1791 at a time when Edmund Burke had confidently estimated that the total reading public numbered only 80,000, *Rights of Man* sold 200,000 copies by 1793. Claims for sales by 1809 run as high as an unlikely 1.5 million and it's still shifting a steady 5,000 a year in the Pelican Classics editions. *Rights of Man*, in Richard Altick's phrase, "opened the book to the English common reader" and, in E.P. Thompson's view, it became "the foundation text of the English working-class movement."

Paine himself, a former corset-maker, is one of a new range of voices, along with Crabbe the ex-surgeon's apprentice, Blake the engraver, Burns the farm labourer, Wollstonecraft the unemployed governess and Cobbett the soldier, who brusquely interrupted the gentrified tones of late eighteenth-century writing.

Rights of Man is first and foremost a vigorous defence of the French Revolution by someone as well qualified as any to make it. Born in Norfolk in 1737, Paine had lived a life of odds and ends—corset-maker, teacher, member of Lewes Town Council and finally excise officer—before emigrating to America in 1774. He left after being sacked for writing a pamphlet—*The Case of the Officers of the Excise*—in support of their pay claim.

In America his talent as a writer exploded. He found a job as editor of a Philadelphia newspaper and increased its circulation by 250% in three months. His *Occasional Letter to the Female Sex* (1775) incisively analysed the way women are:

'constrained in their desires in the disposal of their goods; robbed of freedom and will by the laws; slaves of opinion which rules them with absolute sway and construes the slightest appearances into guilt; surrounded on all sides by judges who are at once tyrants and their seducers... for even with changes in attitudes and laws, deeply engrained and oppressing prejudices remain which confront women minute by minute, day by day.'

In that same year the American War of Independence started. As well as fighting in Washington's army, Paine wrote *Common Sense*, the first attempt to define the aims of the American revolution and pull together its disparate strands. Estimates of sales— as high as 300,000—are evidence of its impact.

After the American victory Paine returned to England and then in September 1789 he journeyed to France two months after the fall of the Bastille and the onset of the French Revolution. From there he wrote eagerly back to George Washington: "A share in two revolutions is living to some purpose", and that purpose was sharpened in 1791 when, at the urging of French friends, he wrote *Rights of Man* in reply to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.

Burke, paid £1,500 a year by the British Government for his pains and his pen, used all the arts of eighteenth-century rhetoric to make a disgraceful case against the French Revolution and to construct an argument, short on reason and long on emotion, that remains central to English conservatism.

Paine's book broke through this ponderous nonsense like bricks through a window. Within a year his sales panicked the Government into issuing a *Proclamation against Diverse Seditious Publications*. In Leeds hired ruling-class hooligans burned him in effigy and sang 'God Save the King'. By December 1792 Paine had left for France to take up a seat in the Revolutionary Convention and had been declared an outlaw in Britain.

Looking back at *Rights of Man* after nearly two hundred years, I'm struck by three things above all that account for the



fury that the text provoked in the British ruling class. First is Paine's conviction that there is no such thing as an eternally fixed human nature, that men and women are products of their circumstances and so to change circumstances—and systems of government—is to change the way people think and indeed the kind of people they are. And so the book's delight in revolutionary change in France and irritation at the corrupt mess in Britain is prompted not by pious abstractions about human rights but by a deep conviction that forms of government help to make us what we are and, changed, could help to make us better and freer and finer.

But Paine had fought in one revolution and witnessed another, so he avoids sentimental, utopian pieties about the New Man and instead, in Part II of *Rights of Man*, comes up with a list of concrete proposals, costed to the nearest pound, for family

allowances, unemployment benefit, pensions, free education, public works and so on.

Secondly, there is Paine's sense of the limitless possibilities of humanity. Gone are all the constraining prejudices that go with a restricted conception of human nature. Gone, for example, is the resigned acceptance of the waste of human potential as inevitable that characterises one of the most famous eighteenth-century poems, Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'. For Paine, failures and difficulties are the fault not of nature or fate but of Government which, to defend itself and the system it represents, must repress and numb those potentials in its subjects that revolution alone would activate:

'It appears to general observation that revolutions create genius and talents; but these events do no more than bring them forward. There is existing in man a mass of sense lying in a dormant state and which, unless something excites it to action, will descend with him in that condition to the grave.'

And thirdly, there's the question of the way Paine writes. *Rights of Man* is a pamphlet as much as a book, a pamphlet written as fast as possible to counter Burke's arguments and published as cheaply as possible to reach a wide, new audience. Paine had worked with his hands and fought with them; he draws on those experiences and that language as, without descending into patronising populism, he takes on the educated floridities of his opponents.

After Paine, it's clearer than ever before that 'style' is not a matter of aesthetic taste, of adherence to abstract principles of fine writing, but a political choice involving decisions about who you are trying to reach and why and how best to speak to them.

There are limits to Paine's achievement as, granted his convictions about the effect of environment and experience on vision and perception, he must have known there would be. The two revolutions he went through were both bourgeois revolutions and in 1791 the industrial working class was only in its infancy. And so in *Rights of Man* it's forces like "commerce" and "enterprise" that are offered as progressive models.

But for all those inevitable marks of Paine's time he remains a great revolutionary, a man still able to resist the pathetic attempts of Michael Foot to incorporate him as some tame "prophet of democracy" in a *Guardian* article last January. After all, Paine wrote some of the most exhilarating attacks on the monarchy in English letters in *Rights of Man*:

'It could have been no difficult thing in the early and solitary ages of the world... for a banditti of ruffians to overrun a country. Their power being thus established, the chief of the band contrived to lose the name of Robber in that of Monarch; and hence the origin of Monarchy and Kings... From such beginning of governments, what could be expected, but a continual system of war and extortion?'

Some of Michael Foot's best friends would throw you out of the Labour Party if you said things like that. At least, out loud, the week before an election. □

Method in his madness

Reagan is often presented as a madman. Mike Rossiter argues that, in fact, he stands for important sections of US big business. His cold war politics fit their needs.

THE major elements of the new arms race, like Pershing II and cruise missiles, were introduced by Reagan's predecessor, Carter. It was that administration which proposed siting neutron bombs in Europe. The Carter administration proposed the setting up of the Rapid Deployment Force, to intervene militarily anywhere in the world. It is an army, one commentator said, looking for a war.

What really separates Reagan from the military build up of Carter, is Reagan's domestic economic policies. Behind the cold war rhetoric of the Reagan administration is a massive shift of wealth back into the hands of capital, spearheaded by increasing expenditure on arms.

Reagan has launched the largest peace time military build up in the history of the United States. He wants to boost military spending by an average of 8.4 per cent above inflation every year, up to 1986. This huge amount of money, \$1.5 thousand billion (*sic*) that Reagan wants to spend is a bigger shift in Federal funds than occurred during either the Korean or Vietnam wars. This time arms spending is being accompanied by massive cuts in social spending.

President Carter's last budget allocated 24.7 per cent of the Federal Budget to military spending. The budget that Reagan plans for 1986 will devote 38 per cent to military spending. The proposed budget for 1982 added an extra \$25 billion more than previously planned to military spending.

At the same time, domestic welfare programmes are being cut, to the tune of \$35 million. This means that subsidies to public transport systems, food stamps for the poor and unemployed, Medicaid programmes, and a host of other things that constitute the United States welfare state, are being slashed. The price of school meals has been raised, subsidised housing programmes have been cut by \$10 billion.

The day after Reagan was elected, the demand for shares in defence companies on Wall Street was so high that several issues were kept out of trading until noon. This should not be surprising. The shift of resources just outlined really does find its way back into profits.

It does it directly, because the majority of the new money given to arms spending purchases big pieces of equipment like planes, ships and missiles. In fact 75 per cent of the increase is for equipment purchase.

This defence outlay percolates down through the economy, so that most sectors benefit from this arms spending demand.

The Reagan administration is intimately connected with the defence industry. Secretary of State Haig used to be President of



United Technologies — a company with a vast array of defence subsidiaries. Not least of them is Pratt & Whitney, who make the jet engines for many of the US fighters.

Among Reagan's campaign advisors were others of a similar background. General Bernard Scriver was Director of Control Data Corporation and Emerson Electric. Thomas Moorer was a Director of Texaco, and Fairchild Industries, a major military aircraft manufacturer. David Packard, a former Defence Secretary under President Ford, was chairman of Hewlett Packard, a leading Californian electronics company and manufacturer of electronic warfare equipment.

Reagan's home State, California, receives 20 per cent of all Department of Defence spending. In 1981 defence contracts poured nearly \$15.5 billion into Californian companies. They needed it. To echo Donald Douglas, of the Douglas Aircraft Company after the Second World War, the future was as black as the inside of a boot.

California is the base of three of the largest military aerospace companies in the world: Lockheed, North American and McDonnell Douglas. In 1981, orders for civil aircraft were down on the previous year by 11 per cent. Even Boeing, the most successful airliner manufacturer, laid off 3,300 people

in 1981, and planned a further 4,000 redundancies this year. But Boeing's military business went up by 27 per cent, with work on cruise missiles, early warning aircraft, and the B1 supersonic bomber.

For other companies, military spending is even more important. McDonnell Douglas depends on the Pentagon for 62 per cent of its sales. An order for 44 tanker conversions of the DC 10 airliners has prevented the production line closing down at a loss.

It is hardly surprising that Reagan's election campaign was massively funded by arms companies: Colt Industries, General Dynamics, Grumman, Hughes Aircraft, Litton Industries, Lockheed, Northrop, (whose chairman incidentally also donated a large amount of money to Nixon's slush fund), Rockwell International (prime contractors for the B1 bomber programme, worth \$20 billion), to name but a few.

Of course many industries in the United States are being squeezed by high interest rates and the cutbacks in federal spending. Unemployment is rising, and so too are bankruptcies and closures. In this situation defence spending is a way of subsidising leading companies in the economy. At the same time there can be a generalised attack on wages and productivity caused by the overall economic decline.

Recently both Ford and General Motors have successfully pushed through wage deals that effectively mean the work force will take a wage cut in the next year. Chrysler has laid off thousands of workers the past few years, but is being saved from bankruptcy by securing a contract for the new XM-1 battle tank from the Pentagon.

Cold war politics are being used to serve domestic interests. It's not a new phenomenon. In 1948, Truman did it to justify to Congress the Marshall Plan, designed to rebuild Europe. It also contained plans for boosting the ailing defence industries by using part of that Marshall Aid to rearm Europe and create NATO.

The new arms race is as dangerous as it looks. The result is a massive build up in weapons systems that are increasingly unstable, and increasingly deadly. But there is a logic to Reagan's rhetoric. It makes very good sense in ruling class terms. □

After the heady days of the campaign for the deputy leadership, where now for the Labour left? What moves for the embattled Militant tendency? Do followers of Tony Benn just wait in the back rooms till next conference? In THREE LETTERS TO A BENNITE, Paul Foot takes a fraternal look at the dilemmas they face...

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Dear comrade...
Three letters to a Bennite
from Paul Foot

Cartoons by Phil Evans



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Dear Sir, your overdraft is now over

As the crisis deepens more and more nations default on their debts to Western banks. **Pete Green** examines the consequences of this for the world's banking system.

In March 1981 Poland failed to meet the payments due on its 24 billion dollars worth of debt to the West. For the next nine months the world's bankers were in a cold sweat at the prospect of the biggest default in banking history since six Latin American countries went bust in the 1930s.

Solidarity was smashed and the bankers breathed a sigh of relief. But even brutal repression cannot guarantee that they will get paid. Most of the debt due in 1981 was rescheduled (postponed) and only a trickle is now flowing to the West. Another \$10 billion worth of debt falls due in 1982. On the most optimistic of predictions Poland's hard currency earning exports to the West will only amount to \$7 billion.

With Romania in serious arrears on its debt, with lending to the whole of Eastern Europe grinding to a halt, the old umbrella theory—that Russia would always ensure that the debts of its satellites were paid off—looks increasingly dubious. That default could still happen.

If the situation in Eastern Europe is serious, the bankers are terrified by what could happen in South America. There Mexico and Brazil owe around 70 billion dollars each, Argentina 32 billion. The economies of all three are in a bad way. Whether the Falklands war continues or not Argentina will find it impossible to pay what it owes this year (see box).

There have been panics before, and the banks have survived. In 1979 they woke up to discover that the money they'd lent to Zaire had been blown in an orgy of extravagance by President Mobutu and his cronies. In the same year Iran was declared in default during the hostages crisis.

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However, Zaire's debt of \$3 billion, whilst huge for Zaire, was tiny by world banking standards. The Iranian assets lodged in the West which the banks seized were worth much more than the total Iranian debt.

If Brazil, Mexico and Argentina all failed to pay up in the same year, 100% of the capital and reserves of the nine largest banks in the USA would be wiped out. Those same banks are currently faced with the collapse of Braniff airlines, and the mounting losses of a number of other major multinationals, Chrysler, Pan American and International Harvester.

Is another banking collapse on the scale of 1931 likely? The answer is probably no, but the prospects are grim regardless. What follows looks at how the banks got into this situation, and at the mounting pressures on

the debt-ridden countries themselves.

International bank lending began to take off in the 1960s with the growth of the Euro-markets—where the dollar and other currencies could be lent and borrowed outside of their country of origin, and beyond the control of any Central Bank.

In the 1960s most of the lending was to American multinationals operating in Europe. Then in the early 1970s the banks involved began to be flooded with 'petrodollars' deposited by the Middle East oil producers. The onset of the slump meant that lending opportunities in the West were restricted. Third World countries engaged in ambitious industrialisation schemes, but plagued with balance of payments problems, were eager borrowers.

At the same time competition in the world market was intensifying. Governments in all the major industrial countries were desperate to boost their trade with export credits (government subsidised and guaranteed loans tied to specific trade deals).

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The explosion of international lending in the 1970s were breathtaking. Between 1971 and 1981 total long-term debt of the LDCs (less developed countries, not including major borrowers in Eastern and Southern Europe) grew from \$87 to \$550 billion. That figure doesn't include a huge amount of short-term debt. It should anyway be treated with caution. International debt statistics are about as reliable as the crime figures of Scotland Yard.

The share of the commercial banks in that total rose in the same period from 17 to 38% (and in some cases such as Brazil and Mexico was much higher). The Euromarkets as a whole soared from around \$60 billion to \$1,200 billion. By 1977 most of the major US banks were making over 50% of their profits on overseas lending (in the case of Chase Manhattan and Citicorp, over 70%).

The banks' lending was highly selective. The poorest countries, including the most populous, China and India, received very little, although that little could still cause them problems. Most favoured were the high profit rate, newly industrialising countries of South-East Asia and Latin America.

All the major borrowers tended to have one thing in common—highly authoritarian governments capable of ensuring that the benefits of expansion were not wasted on higher standards of living for the mass of the population. After all, only sweated labour on starvation wages could provide the banks with their money back plus interest and still leave the local ruling-class in profit.

The debt explosion helped to prop up the world economy in the late 1970s. Countries such as Brazil and South Korea grew at twice the pace of the average in the West. The loans paid for imports of arms and manufactures from the USA, Europe and Japan. The OPEC surpluses were successfully 'recycled'. The bankers could count their winnings and still tell credulous journalists

that they were performing a public service.

The day of reckoning could not be postponed for ever. The logic of such enormous loans lay in their use for industrial investment which would generate the exports and thus the foreign currency necessary to pay off the debts. The logic was faulty.

For one thing much of the money loaned was squandered on building up the massive military machines which provided such a hospitable environment for Western interest. In the most spectacular case the Shah of Iran managed to spend both the Iranian oil revenues and several billion dollars worth of loans on arms and palaces before he was overthrown. Apart from that, the whole strategy rested on the assumption that the world economy and thus the markets for third world exports would continue to grow ...

Since 1979 the squeeze on the debtor countries has tightened inexorably. First of all they were hit by the second oil price rise, pushing their trade into massive deficit, and forcing them to borrow even more. Since then they have been plagued with falling raw material prices, and the collapse of export markets in the West as the slump deepens and protectionism intensifies.

On top of that rising interest rates particularly in the USA have added to the cost of their debt. Every percentage rise in the cost of borrowing adds, for example, another \$400 million to the debt of Mexico or Brazil. For the weakest countries borrowing is becoming more expensive anyway as the bankers increase the 'risk premium' on certain loans.

The strain is indicated by the rapid rise in debt service ratios (the ratio of interest and debt repayment due in any one year to total exports). Most of these are now well above the 20% level which the World Bank considers the dangerpoint. For Argentina the figure is 67%, for Brazil 65%, and for Mexico 51%, according to one recent estimate in the *Economist*. For Poland the figure is well over 100%.

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Not surprisingly, whereas only 3 countries were in arrears on their debt in 1974, 25 countries were in 1981. Debt rescheduling has become increasingly dependent upon the country concerned submitting to an International Monetary Fund stabilisation programme, with all that that entails—cuts in wages and public spending, complete freedom for the multinationals, and priority use of any IMF loans to repay the banks themselves.

The internal consequences can be horrific. Back in 1976 Cheryl Payer noted that:

'the list of countries under attack for human rights violations is nearly identical with the list of those with imminent debt problems: Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Indonesia, Philippines, South Korea ...'

It is an observation that has been reconfirmed many times since, with each bloody

\$70 billion

coup from Pakistan, through Turkey to Bolivia pushing the credit-rating up a notch or two, and earning the prompt approval of the bankers' bailiff, the IMF. But as with Poland repression alone may not suffice. A large number of countries have now been cut off by the banks altogether. That includes a host of bankrupt African countries, such as Zambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Madagascar.

However, cutting off the largest borrowers is a dangerous business. As Richard Portes, discussing Poland in the *Guardian* on March 30 observed, if a country has no hope of receiving any more money it might just as well default on its existing debts. Current moves towards a freeze on loans to any part of Eastern Europe may well have that effect.

The banks in other words are in a serious dilemma. If they cut back on lending they may well undermine the debtor country's economy to such an extent that it will be unable to pay off its existing debts. If they go on throwing good money after bad they are merely storing up even bigger problems for the future. The sums at stake are colossal. Mexico wants to borrow another \$25 billion this year to cover the fall in its oil revenues.

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The situation is increasingly unstable. A simultaneous combination of crises could send any major bank heavily involved spinning towards disaster. The decisive moment would be if the major international depositors lost confidence in a bank's viability and withdrew their money. Then a return of the collapse of the *Creditanstalt* in Germany in 1931, the crash which reverberated through out Europe and America, would be possible. The vast precarious structure of international lending would come tumbling down, and the ensuing slump would dwarf anything we've seen so far.

Within the major industrial countries the role of the Central Bank as lender of last resort, willing to step in and bail out any bank in trouble, has prevented any serious banking collapse since the 1930s. The big worry over the Euromarkets is that there is no equivalent lender of last resort, the other side of the coin of their freedom from government regulation.

Yet the international bank are still nationally based with extensive involvement in their domestic economies. For that very reason the Central Bank concerned would have to step in to avert a major collapse. It is clear that the Bundesbank for example has already discreetly intervened to help out those West German banks most deeply affected by Poland.

But the consequences of one or two major defaults would still be severe. The debtor country would be cut off from any further borrowing and could take years to recover. The whole system of international lending, already slowing down, would severely contract. The stagnation of the system would become even more serious and prolonged.

Heavy casualties at Lloyds Bank

Soon after the Falklands crisis began the Bank of England froze all Argentine assets held in the City of London, and banned British banks from participating in any further loans to Argentina. The Junta promptly responded by stopping all payment of debt owed to British banks.

Legally that alone could have triggered a declaration that Argentina was in default on all its debt. But the Bank of England and the other banks involved have been very careful to avoid that. Overseas subsidiaries of British banks are excluded from the regulations. More crucially Argentina has also been allowed to turnover its short-term debts.

The immediate impact of the sanctions on Argentina has thus been minimal. Any attempt to toughen them, as the *New Statesman's* Peter Kellner has pathetically urged, would be doomed to failure, and would merely damage the City's already tarnished reputation as a safe haven for international deposits.

The consequences of the war for Argentina's credit-rating is another matter. Its debt of \$32 billion may be less than half that of Brazil but its economy is in even worse shape. Moreover around 50 percent of its debt consists of short-term loans which make it far more vulnerable. Even before the war started Argentina was expected to have rescheduled a good chunk of its debt in the course of 1982.

Already a number of proposed new loans have been dropped. That will add to the strains on an economy where gross output fell by 6 percent in 1981 and manufacturing production by 14 percent. No one knows the exact size of the mili-

tary budget, but it's certainly going to increase. Precious foreign exchange will be used up in replenishing the hardware lost in the war.

With inflation soaring towards the 200 percent mark the Argentine financial structure is also in trouble. The Capozzolo private holding company, one of the largest in Argentina, has just gone bankrupt. Nor is Argentina looking so attractive to foreign multinationals with Ford and Volkswagen making heavy losses on their automobile investment.

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The possibility of a major Argentinian default becomes more likely with every week the war continues. The repercussions are now being felt in the rest of Latin America where the bankers were already extremely nervous over the sheer size of their commitment.

As the *Financial Times* commented on April 30:

'At the very least the Falklands crisis seems likely to add to the serious financial squeeze on Latin America. At worst it could conceivably engender a loss of confidence in the banking system far greater than has already occurred in Eastern Europe.'

The sad irony is that, whilst Argentinian workers bear the brunt of this economic disaster, the Junta will be able to shove much of the blame onto the same British and American imperialisms with which they have been so firmly aligned. The fact that Lloyds Bank could lose half of its profits this year because of Argentina is little consolation.

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What Engels learned from the Iroquois Indians

Alex Callinicos writes on Engel's *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*

It is a common myth that socialism is concerned solely with economic inequality, and that, in focussing on class relations and on exploitation, Marxism has nothing to say about sexual oppression and the liberation of women. That this is a myth, and not fact, will be obvious to anyone who has the slightest acquaintance with the history of socialism.

The French utopian socialists of the early nineteenth century always stressed that their aim was the emancipation of men and women from *all* forms of oppression, and therefore the total liberation of humanity. It was Charles Fourier the greatest of them, who coined the term 'feminism'.

Marx, in his *Paris Manuscripts* of 1844, cited Fourier's famous statement that the degree of general emancipation within a society can best be judged by the position occupied by women within it.

It was, however, Friedrich Engels, a life-long admirer of Fourier, who made the first major Marxist exploration of the relations between class exploitation and sexual oppression in his *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, first published in 1884. Since the book has come under much fire from feminist critics, it is worth asking what significance it still has.

The starting point of the *Origins* was provided by the appearance in 1877 of *Ancient Society* by the American anthropologist Lewis Morgan. This book was greeted with enthusiasm by Marx and

Engels; the latter compared it to *The Origin of the Species* and *Capital*, and made considerable use of the notes on Morgan which Marx left on his death in 1883.

Morgan's importance, Marx and Engels believed, lay in his having outlined the genealogy of class society. He had discovered the fundamental structures of those stages of history which Engels (following Fourier) called savagery and barbarism, in which neither private property, nor classes nor the state, nor the monogamous family existed.

What Engels sought to do in the *Origins* was, using his own considerable knowledge of early German history and of classical antiquity, to weave Morgan's discoveries into the framework of historical materialism.

His aim was to show how the emergence of what Fourier called 'civilization' – class society – involved the destruction of very different societies, in which neither the means of production, nor the means of coercion were monopolized by a minority, and in which women enjoyed far more independence and equality than they did (and do) in later, more economically developed societies.

His discussion of the formation of the state as 'a public power which no longer directly coincides with the population organising itself as an armed force' was a major influence on Lenin's *The State and Revolution*, and has received support from the researches of contemporary anthropologists. But I want to concentrate here on his path-breaking attempt to develop a materialist history of the family.

Engels argued that 'the less the develop-



ment of labour, and the more limited its volume of producing and, therefore, the wealth of society, the more preponderatingly does the social order appear to be dominated by ties of sex.'

In so-called 'primitive' societies, production is organised, and power distributed and exercised within the framework of kinship relations, which regulate who may marry whom, the obligations involved in marriage, which family groups the offspring of marriages belong to, and so on.

Furthermore, there is nothing inevitable about the monogamous family of modern Western society in which one man and one woman are tied to each other for life (remember, Engels was writing a hundred years ago, when divorce was difficult or impossible to obtain).

Engels heaped contempt upon the bourgeois morality which treated sexual relationships other than strict monogamy as 'unnatural' and 'immoral'.

Indeed, Engels, argued, that kinship relations in preclass societies had passed through a number of stages, starting from complete promiscuity, in which sex between even children and parents is permitted, and concluding in the pairing marriage, involving one member of either sex. There is, thus, a 'continual narrowing of the circle – originally embracing the whole tribe – within which marital community between the two sexes prevailed.'

Engels was especially interested in the stage of group marriage, in which all the women in a tribe are married to all the men, except their fathers and brothers, and all the men to all the women, except their mothers and sisters.

It is this form of marriage in which there prevailed what the Swiss scholar J.J. Bachofen called 'mother-right'. Here people's descent is traced through their mothers, and not, as in societies such as our own, through their father. Primitive societies were, in anthropological jargon, matrilineal rather than patrilineal. This arrangement underlay the *gens*, or clan, which Morgan studied among the Iroquois Indians, and which was originally formed of those tracing their

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descent from the same female ancestor.

Group marriage was also accompanied, Engels argued, by absence of sexual oppression. Indeed, women belonging to the same *gens* tended to live together, and to have more power than their male partners, who (because of the prohibition of sex with fathers and brothers) came from other *gentes*.

'The communistic household, in which most of the women or even all the women belonging to one and the same *gens*, while the men come from various other *gentes*, is the material foundation of that predominance of women which generally obtained in primitive times'.

Alas, this happy state of affairs could not last. The development of the productive forces, and, in particular, the domestication of animals and the consequent formation of herds led to the creation of much larger quantities of material wealth than had previously existed.

There followed the emergence of private property, as the men who tended these herds sought to assert their individual control over them, and over the slaves who helped with the herding.

These changes strengthened the men's position within the household, and encouraged them to change the kinship system so that they could pass this wealth on to their (male) children, who hitherto had belonged to their wife's *gens*, and not their own.

'The overthrow of mother right was the world-historic defeat of the female sex. The man seized the reins in the house, also, the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children.'

Sexual oppression was born as part of the same process as private property, classes and the state.

Engels went on to develop a biting critique (heavily influenced by Fourier) of the monogamous family characteristic of class society, in which the woman is subjected to the power of first her father, then her husband. Kinship relations are a means of transmitting private property, and the man is free, as the woman is not, to engage in

sexual relationships outside marriage – adultery, prostitution, etc.

His conclusion is that socialism, by abolishing private property, will destroy the material foundations of monogamy, permitting, for the first time since the suppression of mother right, free and equal relationships between men and women.

The importance of the *Origins* should be clear from this brief summary. It shows how the founders of historical materialism believed there to be the most intimate relationship between the oppression of women and class exploitation. The two are so closely bound up that they can only be abolished as part of the same process.

At the same time, it is also clear that there are important weaknesses with the detail of Engels' analysis. Modern anthropological research does not support his and Morgan's analysis of gentile society. In particular, Engels confused *matrilineal* society with *matriarchal* society. In other words, just because descent is traced through women, it doesn't follow that they control society.

The Iroquois, on whom Engels and Morgan hung so much, turns out to be rather atypical of 'primitive' societies, and even among them, although the women had the right to nominate to the ruling council of elders, this council was composed of men. A degree of sexual inequality, albeit considerably less than in class society, prevails in most pre-class societies.

Of course, this doesn't mean that sexual oppression is inevitable, but such contemporary anthropologists as Marvin Harris and the 'cultural materialist' school explain its existence in 'primitive' societies, in terms of the prevalence of warfare between these societies, and the power this gave the men, who did most of the fighting.

A connected point is that Engels was not very interested in the different work done by men and women. He was aware that women do much of the heavy drudgery in pre-class societies, but argued that 'the division of labour between the two sexes is determined by causes entirely different from those that determine the status of women in society.'

He saw the monogamous family as an instrument for the transmission of wealth, and concluded that, where there is no wealth to transmit, as is the case with the modern working class, it lacks a material base. What this fails to take into account is, as Lenin pointed out, and as many later writers have stressed, working-class women, whether or not they are also wage-labourers, carry the burden of housework and child-care.

Engels' treatment of the family as a property institution was probably influenced by Fourier, who focussed on the relations of circulation – money and trade – rather than the relations of production.

It doesn't follow that Engels was wrong to say that 'the first premise for the emancipation of women is the reintroduction of the entire female sex into public industry.' For while going out to work doesn't free women from their subordinate position within the family, it does take them out of the isolation of the home, and into a collective relationship which unites them with their fellow workers.

Wage-labour for female as much as for male workers creates a common experience of exploitation, and the possibility of collective struggle that can free women from exploitation and oppression.

These criticisms do not affect the fundamental importance of the *Origins*, which is twofold. First, there is the nature of the project – a historical materialist analysis of the connections between classes, the family, and the state. As such, it provides a basis upon which we can build. Secondly, irrespective of the precise origins of sexual oppression and class exploitation, it is clear that Engels was right to say that their futures are inseparable.

Capitalism has brought the productive forces to a level where *no* form of oppression or exploitation is necessary. Nearly half the working class of the advanced capitalist world (over half in the USSR) is female. No socialist revolution could hope to succeed without emancipation – the self-emancipation – of women. And feminism which turns its back on socialism is doomed to failure. □

Make or break in the hospitals

Ray Storey examines the issues behind the current health service strikes.

The government is sticking to the 4 percent limit with all sections in the health service bar the nurses. They have even refused to let the claim go to arbitration. Many union leaders have been hoping for that in the last few weeks to let them off the hook with their members. Now they are faced with accepting humiliating defeat or making a fight of it.

In picking on hospital workers the government has decided to hit perhaps the weakest section of organised workers. It's a policy that has not just come out of the blue.

In the London area recently there have been two very long disputes, by NHS standards, involving the porters being locked out at the London Hospital for six weeks, and at St Barts for eight. In both disputes there was behind the scenes dealing by the DHSS. The way was paved for the settlement at the London after Ron Keating of NUPE had a meeting at the DHSS at which the government offered the local health authority extra money. At Barts local management would have settled much sooner but 'their hands were tied nationally'.

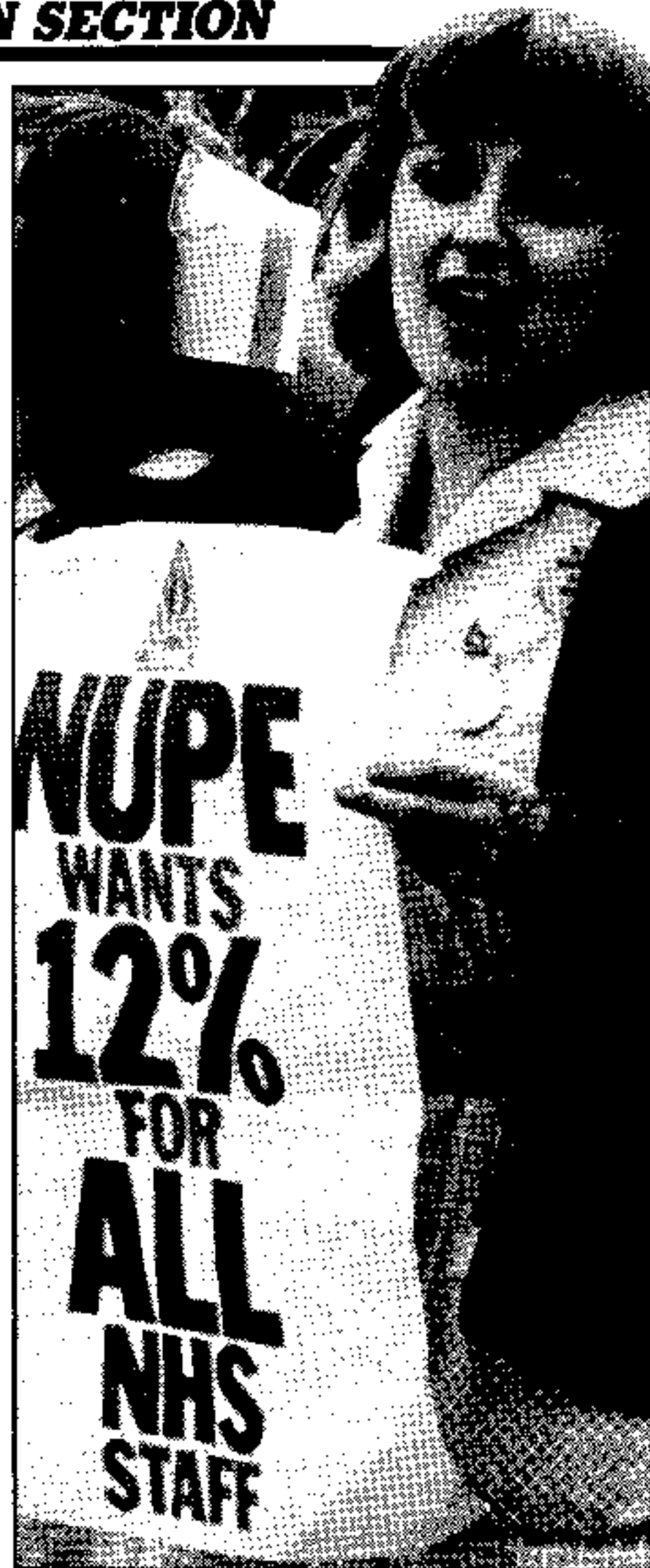
Both disputes were over the changing of rotas which could have led to a loss of jobs and earnings: a familiar story. What's remarkable about the two disputes is that there was a fight at all. In the last five years the NHS has been hit hard.

What's fuelling the present dispute and has forced the union leaders to make a fight is the prospect that the NHS could become the first major casualty in the public sector.

Already staffing in some hospitals has been cut to the bone, particularly in geriatric and psychiatric care. On the first one day strike management at the Bethnal Green hospital in London asked for a level of voluntary staffing higher than they had with all their staff working.

A defeat now over pay will pave the way for the Tories' aim of creating a two tier health service. The NHS will look after the old, handicapped and chronically sick and leave the growing private sector free to profit out of other quick money-making operations.

The idea that inspired the creation of the NHS—that profits should not be made out people's ill health, that health care should be free of charge at the time of need—has all but been lost. Thousands of workers are now



covered by private medical insurance, many in deals signed by trade unions.

The proposals to introduce nationality testing in the NHS in October, besides being blatantly racist, gives the government the opportunity to develop a scale of charges for services offered inside the NHS which can be extended in the future.

It's not just the private medicine that stands to gain enormously in the future. It's also the introduction of the private sector into the NHS. The government has asked local districts to seek quotations from private contractors for such areas as catering, laundry, cleaning and work covered by electricians/engineers departments. It is already happening here and there. The only thing that is standing in their way is the unions.

Loss of members

Privatisation threatens the very life blood of unions through the loss of members and their subscriptions. When that happens even union bureaucrats begin to get worried.

In the present dispute the government hoped to separate the nurses from the rest of the NHS staff, offering them a bit over the 4 per cent. To date they have failed.

It is the nurses more than any other section who have been hit hardest by the cuts of the last few years. This is not just in terms of staffing. They more than anyone see and have to cope with the deterioration of services to patients.

At the same time they have not received a decent pay rise since they took action in 1974. When a number of workers took sympathy action eg, the miners in South Wales, C A Parsons engineers in Newcastle, nurses wages rose by as much as 50 per cent.

Undoubtedly nurses command the greatest sympathy of any section inside the working class. And this time round they are fighting alongside every other section inside the NHS. Potentially health workers are in a stronger position than ever before.

However in 1973/4 the class as a whole was on the offensive, it is quite the reverse now. Since then, ancillaries have been through a bruising pay battle in 1978/9 'the winter of discontent'. Then they got a very bad mauling in the press.

The area hit hardest by the cuts have been through defensive battles one after the other over closures and run downs. Without exception they were left by the union bureaucracy to fight alone, and went down to defeat. At best, they won a few concessions. In London, the list seems endless with Plaistow Maternity, St Leonards, Bethnal Green, Hounslow, Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, St Nick's, St Benedicts, St Georges (Hyde Park Corner).

The failure of the unions, particularly NUPE, to lead a campaign after the 100,000 demonstration in November 1976 has cost health workers dearly. Not just in terms of lost services and deteriorating conditions, but also in victimisations of leading militants. London has suffered most in these respects and that accounts for the relatively low level of militancy this time round, when in 1973/4 London was one of the leading areas.

While the majority of health workers lack the confidence to think they can win, the anger and frustration has boiled over with hospitals in Rotherham and Edinburgh going on all out strike.

For the first time NUPE conference voted for a national all out strike. This reflects a growing minority who want to fight and see all-out action as the only way. However, unless the number of hospitals on all-out action grows then it will remain just that: a conference vote. Union leaders are as afraid of all-out action as privatisation and loss of membership.

A number of districts taking all-out action would put a lot of pressure on union officials and could make all the difference to the outcome of the dispute.

In slightly better areas like Sheffield/South Yorkshire miners took solidarity action on 19 May and have voted to do so on 8 June. But the dangers are already apparent. Following NUPE conference, local stewards voted for all out action only to be told by their full-timer they wouldn't get strike pay. In effect this meant that their action would be regarded as unofficial, despite the conference decision.

Alan Bristow, President of the Yorkshire NUM, has said their action is so that nurses need not take strike action. If that was accepted it would spell disaster for the campaign. Local stewards are being encouraged not to send delegations out to other workplaces but to leave it to negotiations between relevant full-time officials. That is a guarantee for nothing to happen.

Productivity update

The Tories claim their economic policies are working. Stuart Ash takes a look at the reality.

The Government claims that:

- Its new index of output per person hour in manufacturing shows a productivity increase of 8.5 per cent for 1981.

- The increase in average earnings is slowing down and pay increases are well under ten per cent.

- Wage costs per unit of output in manufacturing rose only 2.7 per cent in the year to the first quarter of 1982, down from 18.1 per cent a year earlier.

How far do the government's official indexes reflect reality? Has the employers' offensive really worked so much in their favour? And if they have made major productivity gains, can they be pushed back in a period of economic recovery?

As far as the employers are concerned, they are divided on the answers. Their experience of the recession has been different in their own companies. They have handled sackings and changing working practices with differing intensity. There are two groups—the pessimists and the optimists.

The pessimists say that real wages will start to rise again as the rise in unemployment slows. Management will give way to unions to avoid stoppages as production rises again.

Optimistic employers think that some major changes, particularly in working practices, are here to stay. Wage push will not return and the confidence of 'born again' managements will not readily be lost.

But they are uncertain how workers will respond if a sustained economic upturn comes in 1983-84. The Tories will help them by keeping money tight so as to keep the lid on wages, while pushing Tebbit's law to maintain discipline.

Their main aim is to boost company profitability. They want to keep unit labour costs low and increase productivity. When company income rises they want to be sure that the gains go to profits, not wages or jobs.

The Government is building some of its confidence on shaky statistics. Their indexes of productivity growth are highly questionable. Output per person hour in the manufacturing industries grew last year, but this increase was mainly the consequence of the previous dramatic fall in output, and the shedding of labour in the weakest firms. The index is based on aggregate figures which tell us little about what has been happening in individual companies or workplaces.

It is here that the real struggle over control and organisation has been taking place. While employers have been consolidating gains over the period of the downturn, they do not share the government's confidence of inevitable success in an upturn. The key issue for us is that the upturn should be ours not theirs.

Most of the gains made by employers in

changing working practices, in shifting the balance of power in the workplace, have been built in a period of low output, low demand and dramatic de-stocking.

Many employers were taken by surprise by the degree to which Thatcher plunged UK capitalism further into depression than the world recession required. As a consequence, what started as wholesale sackings through 1979-80 has now become more concentrated, through 1981-82, into major assaults on efficiency, staffing levels, flexibility across skills and the like.

The acute pressure of recession on managements has concentrated their minds on new methods of extracting more intensive use of their available capital, labour and time. A wide variety of methods have been used to raise the level of exploitation. They may start with redundancies, but then involve more intensive use of workers, elimination of demarcation and skill differences and the elimination of breaks in production.

This was revealed most clearly in the employers' response to the union claims for shorter working time and the achievement of the 39 hour week. Management claw-backs on working practices and breaks have, in many workplaces, turned the shorter working week to the company's advantage. This has happened most where capital intensive plant has been utilised more efficiently by increased shiftworking in return for some small reduction in over-all working time.

Different experiences

There is lots of direct experience of particular attacks by the employers in their drive for higher productivity. But there is very little generalisation: and it is the generalisation that is especially necessary now if we are to understand the offensive and find ways of fighting back.

Take BL for example. Everyone knows that Edwardes has attacked the unions: what they don't generally know is that the attack has concentrated on productivity, on speed-up, on increased use of working time... part of a much wider attack on shop floor conditions and organisation of which BL is in many ways just a crude example.

Rolls-Royce has carried out a major offensive: very low wage rises have been forced through over three years during which all increases have been tied to the achievement of new productivity targets. The effect in most plants has been extremely demoralising: R-R has achieved more this way than by all its bluster about lock-outs in the 1979 engineering dispute. Now the company has turned towards changing working practices with a move towards complete flexibility across trades.

Steelworkers have gone through a similar offensive. National wage increases have effectively been scrapped without a fight and local productivity is the only way to get a rise. The workforce has been carved up regionally and between different 'profit centres'. The Corporation now runs lots of

different businesses and steelworkers are being forced to work very much harder. Having let tens of thousands of jobs go, wages in the industry have also shot up. The cost was losing not only jobs but also union organisation in many plants.

In the oil industry the companies have been pushing through new productivity schemes, some of which give a lot of new money on weekly earnings. All involve de-staffing and voluntary redundancies. The TGWU has signed some rotten deals for drivers which involve faster road speeds and turn round times, together with reduced tanker fleets.

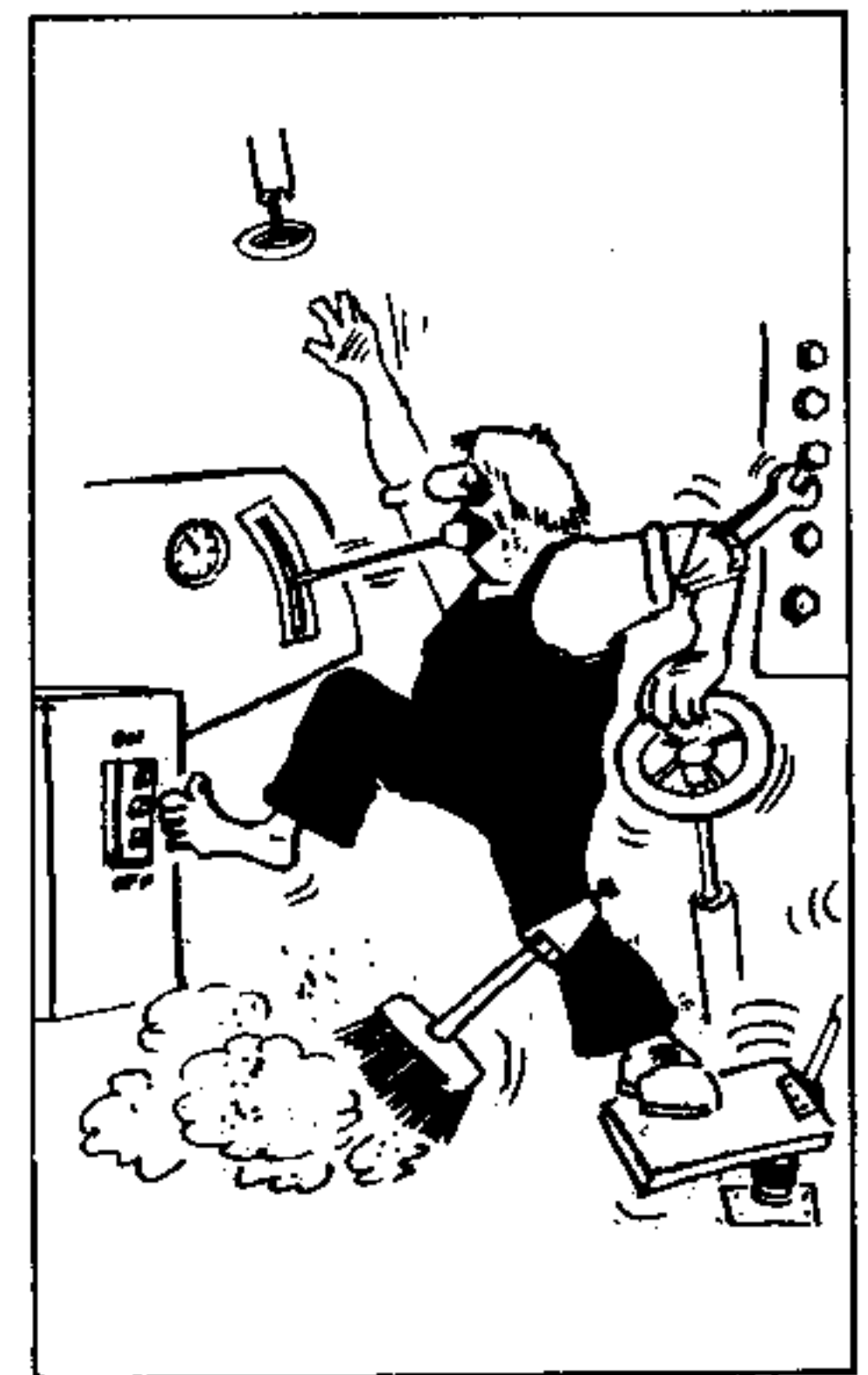
In the refineries, where there has been large scale rationalisation of plant across Europe, de-staffing has come at the same time as new facilities are being built for the next decade. Esso at Fawley, the pioneers of productivity in the 1960s, have spent several months recently trying to get acceptance of an entirely new deal.

At Pilkington's, the major glass manufacturers, an agreement on shorter hours has been accompanied by sackings and rationalisation of plant. For those who remain there are new shiftwork schedules to maintain more intensive continuous 24-hour process production.

The whole offensive by British Rail for flexible rostering—and the proposed job loss that goes with it—arose from the earlier agreement to reduce the working week from 40 to 39 hours on a nil cost basis. BR wants new, extended shifts and more intensive use of a reduced labour force in order to establish higher productivity from drivers, guards and the rest of the workforce.

The move to harmonised conditions—Terry Duffy's prized 'single status'—is not being used to 'reward' workers but to extract a price for staff conditions, either in terms of flexibility alone or sometimes a complete relaxation of protective working practices.

The emerging pattern is one of a thorough-going productivity offensive—an offensive of a very different nature to that of



the late 1960s and early 1970s. There is high unemployment to act as a policeman. Workers have become used to thinking of the welfare, the viability, of their firm alone. It is easy for the employer to force through major changes at a very low cost. Union officials have frequently been keener to agree to increased productivity and inevitable job loss now than they were in the time of 'full employment' (a little known term referring to a time when there were 'only' half a million on the dole).

The employers have consciously been

trying to build on shop floor weakness during the downturn.

To learn from the offensive—to learn how to fight back—we now need much more pooling of experience. *Socialist Review* will be analysing the productivity offensive. We need an input from SR readers, comments, letters, anecdotes and, of course, actual articles. For the Tories and the employers productivity is the name of the game. Whether in the factory or the office, in private industry or public service, it has to become the name of the game for us too. □

using 'our' money. Their election manifesto was a barrage of 'commie-bashing-red-scare' rubbish. This diet of 'do nothing and blame the reds' became untenable after two years of moderate rule. In the end the right-wing were unable to translate their support into votes.

The broad left mounted a large and credible campaign. They put the blame on the moderates for the failure of last year's pay campaign. Although their campaign was high in rhetoric it was low in accuracy. The broad left's role in the last year's pay campaign was not only incompetent but damaging. Up until Conference 81, the broad left had no role. They didn't leaflet. They refused to call for an all out strike. They put their faith in being super-organisers servicing the selective action.

Even at CPSA conference they supported a five day strike rather than an indefinite strike. They only swung behind the all out strike call once the right wing NEC had decided to ballot the membership on it. As regards the unofficial strike action at Aberdeen and Dundee, they campaigned against supporting it. They labelled it an SWP plot to bring down the union.

There have been other factors helping the broad left to win. The executive elections were the third set of elections to take place this year. The previous two sets were for General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary and General Treasurer. In all three the right won. This was before the Falklands war that has taken over all the available newsprint of the popular press. It has had no space left for red scares in the CPSA.

There has been a swing to the left which could be transformed from votes to action. It is vital that we push the broad left to hold to its election pledges and policies. If, or should I say when, their nerve fails and they waver, we must be there to call for independent action. □

A bright red light?

The broad left have won control of the CPSA executive. The *Observer* called it a 'marxist landslide'. **Caroline Conway** writes about the background.

The CPSA election results must have seemed like a bright red light at the end of a very dark tunnel to many trade unionists. The broad left swept to power, winning 23 executive seats and leaving the right-wing 'moderate' group with only four seats. The same shift to the left was echoed in section and department committees throughout the union. *Militant* supporter Kevin Roddy is now CPSA president.

This isn't the first time in CPSA's recent history that the broad left have had spectacular electoral successes. Neither is it the case that previous spells of broad left domination have led to a massive upsurge in union militancy.

The broad left in the CPSA is little more than an election machine. Although a formally open and democratic organisation it is really a coalition of groups and individuals. The only discipline exerted is that of the electoral list. Broad left annual conferences are large, attracting 300-400 CPSA members.

The meat of the conference is always the struggle to control the election list. Policy items are peripheral, debated only formally. Any real exchange of experience and ideas on the way forward is marginalised to the bars and pubs at the close of business.

Last year's broad left conference was dominated by the *Militant* tendency. No-one got anywhere without *Militant* approval. The result is one of the most rightwing lacklustre broad left lists in living memory. Members of other left groups in the Labour Party were systematically excluded. *Militant* got the lion's share of the candidates, including the Presidential candidate Kevin Roddy.

There are several reasons why the broad left won this year. The record of the Moderate group under President Kate Losinska has been atrocious. They ignored the vote for an all out strike in last year's pay campaign. They agreed to sign an interim New Technology agreement which sold out CPSA conference policy, debated and



Kevin Roddy

affirmed for three consecutive years. In fact the only thing they did pursue was a £2 million project for a new Union HQ, complete with a glossy booklet to the members showing how wisely they were

Rich man, poor man— healthy man, dead man

Socialists have long argued that the gap between working class and upper class conditions of health is growing. **Keith Brown** reports on some powerful new evidence.

Sir Douglas Black is President of the Royal College of Physicians and former chief scientist at the Department of Health and Social Security. He was commissioned by the DHSS to chair a research working group into inequalities in health. But the report of his group has received little publicity and Patrick Jenkin, Social Services Secretary, found it 'unhelpful' and its conclusions 'unrealistic'.

Why? Because the Black Report's main findings are that—despite the National Health Service, higher standards of living and improved control of disease—infant mortality, adult death rates and absence from work due to illness or injury were all higher among unskilled and semi-skilled

workers. For every boy from the professional classes who dies before the age of one, there are two among skilled workers' families and four among those of unskilled workers. Working class people in their twenties and thirties are more likely to die than those of the same age ranges in the professional classes.

Figures taken from another Government document, *Occupational Mortality 1970-72*, which looks at death rates for each type of job, also makes revealing reading. About 62 out of every 100 miners live to sixty-five, 73 electricians, 57 steel erectors, 70 toolmakers, 70 rubber workers, 41 bricklayers' labourers and 59 foundry workers. By comparison, 80 out of 100 engineering managers live to sixty-five, 84 construction managers, 79 architects and town planners and 76 insurance brokers. Clearly, if you're a manual worker your chances of surviving to sixty-five are much less than a middle-class or upper class person.

The Black Report found that the difference between the death rates of unskilled and professional men widened significantly

between 1950 and 1970. Similar trends are shown for women. Days lost through ill health or accidents among unskilled manual men were 4½ times that of professional men. Each year, up to 12 million industrial accidents require first aid treatment and more days are lost through industrial injuries than through industrial action. On average, a worker will lose 1½ days a year because of injuries at work.

Further evidence about the poor state of health of manual workers comes from another surprising source. Readers may remember the uproar when the EETPU announced its negotiation of a BUPA private health insurance scheme for electricians. A by-product of this deal has been the large scale monitoring of the health of a group of manual workers for the first time. The results have been astounding. Comparing the electricians screened in Manchester with a group of managers in London Alan Bailey, research director of BUPA, commented, 'we are looking at a group of people who by our comparisons are 12 years older in ill health terms than their London counterparts (the managers) ... a high risk group for disease can clearly be identified'.

The Black Report also highlights the disparity in health service provisions for the rich and poor. Not only do working class people make less use of the NHS facilities but the medical services are worse in working class areas. Expenditure on community health and hospitals is lowest in the regions with the highest proportion of unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

The report's recommendations are that much greater emphasis should be put on preventive medicine so that workers are periodically screened to check for early signs of preventable disease, resources should be concentrated in the areas of greatest need among the poorest and in inner city areas, and that this must be linked to an attack on poverty, especially among children—including improvements in social security benefits, nursery care and housing improvements.

Patrick Jenkin's introduction to the report, in reply to these suggestions for reform, said:

'I must make it clear that additional expenditure on the scale which could result from the report's recommendations—the amount involved could be upwards of £2 billion a year—is quite unrealistic in present or any foreseeable circumstances, quite apart from any judgement that may be formed of the effectiveness of such expenditure in dealing with the problems identified'.

The report was allowed to quietly sink without trace—only 263 copies were printed



Patrick Jenkin (above) found the Black Report 'unhelpful'.

at the price of £8 a copy.

If anything, the awful picture of workers' health shown in this report has probably worsened since it was written. For instance, in the construction industry—a well-known death trap for workers—deaths and accidents on site have gone up sharply despite the smaller number of workers employed due to the severe decline in the industry. This rise was attributed by the Government's own deputy Chief Inspector of Factories to employers cutting costs at the expense of safe working conditions. At the same time the Government have cut back the number of factory inspectors by 20 per cent as part of the cuts in the civil service. There are currently only 830 inspectors out of the 1000 or more previously employed.

Coupled to such attacks on the already pathetic provisions for workers' safety at work, the drastic cuts in medical facilities—health centres, hospitals and day care centres—mean that workers' health and that of their families is also suffering.

Not surprisingly, the decline of the NHS has seen a boom in private medicine. Many companies are now offering private health insurance to their workers as a perk and the pickings for the health insurance companies are rich.

Union opposition to such schemes has been weak even among public sector unions and the two big general unions who represent health service staff. Already 50 local authorities are running private health insurance schemes and a further 25 are considering it despite NALGO's opposition. Union officials who condemn such schemes are not helped in their arguments with members when many of them are members of the Manorhouse Hospital scheme, a special private scheme for union officials. □

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The book also includes a major section on the underlying causes of the Polish economic crisis.

160 pages £1.95 from all good bookshops or (plus 30p post) from IS Journal, PO Box 82, London E2.



Behind the practice

Bookmarks have recently published a collection of essays on revolutionary socialism by Tony Cliff, *Neither Washington nor Moscow*. John Molyneux examines this important book.

Tony Cliff occupies a unique position on the British Left. There is no other practicing revolutionary activist who comes anywhere near matching, quantitatively or qualitatively, his output as a theoretician over the last 35 years. Equally there is no other Marxist theorist who has made a remotely comparable contribution to revolutionary practice in this period. It is the great merit of this selection of Cliff's writings that it takes this unity of theory and practice as its starting point and central theme.

As a theorist Cliff's most important contribution has been his development (he didn't originate it) of the theory of state capitalism as applied to Russia, Eastern Europe, China etc. Until 1947 Cliff adhered to the 'orthodox' Trotskyist view that Russia was a 'degenerated workers state'; but then the contradictions in this position (both internal and with empirical reality) led him to abandon it in favour of the state capitalist analysis.

At first glance it is hard to imagine a more obscure argument - a typical sectarian Trotskyist dispute about what 'label' to give to the Stalinist dictatorship which both sides claimed to oppose. In fact the debate was about fundamental questions of Marxism; the nature and dynamic of capitalism, the nature of socialism and, most important of all, the role of the working class as the agent of socialist revolution.

For if Russia, a society where the working class lacked not only power but also elementary rights, was a workers' state, no matter how 'degenerated', then the *basic*

distinction between capitalism and socialism lay not in the emancipation of the working class but merely in the form of property. And if Russia was a workers state then so were Eastern Europe and China where state property also prevailed, and from this it followed that socialist revolution was possible without the self-activity of the working class - the deepest conceivable revision of Marxism.

Cliff grasped this central point and held firm to it through all the detailed analysis of the Russian and Eastern European economies and through all the endless polemics. It was this that enabled Cliff to produce work which simultaneously reaffirmed basic Marxist principles and scientifically developed Marxist analysis, while his opponents were reduced to logic-chopping and tortuous formulations which would paper over the cracks between their 'programme' and the changing reality.

Cliff's considerable output on state capitalism is represented here by an article on 'The class nature of the people's democracies', by a critique of Max Shachtman's theory of bureaucratic collectivism, and by two pieces on China. Of these it is the first, on Eastern Europe, which is the most important. As always with Cliff, the argument is based on a bedrock of solid facts, but the theoretical questions are also posed with absolute clarity, and, after the experience of Poland, who can doubt the importance for *practice* of this seemingly obscure polemic.

In my opinion the pieces on China are slightly less sure in their grasp, but their importance should not be underestimated. In the 60's when revolutionary rhetoric was streaming out of Peking, the International Socialism group (as the SWP was then) was almost the only left organisation not infected by illusions in Maoism. This was due in no small part to Cliff's pioneering analysis (later developed by Nigel Harris).

The debate on 'bureaucratic collectivism' as an analysis of Russia seems even more

obscure than that on the degenerated workers' state but it's strange how old arguments have a way of coming back. As Duncan Hallas notes in his introduction: 'The idea that Stalinism represents an entirely new mode of production is again enjoying a certain popularity in the writings of Bahro, Rakovski, Ticktin and others', and here, in Cliff's forgotten polemic of 1948, is the basic refutation.

The second vital theoretical question facing revolutionaries in the aftermath of the second world war was the economic perspective opening up for capitalism. The most widespread expectation at the time, on both left and right, was that the second world war, like the first, would be followed by a slump.

Orthodox Trotskyism, Cliff's starting point, held to an extreme version of this general wisdom. Capitalism, it maintained, was in its death agony, locked in an insoluble crisis in which the productive forces had ceased to develop and in which all talk of raising living standards or systematic reforms was out of the question. Reality, however, diverged sharply from this prognosis, and within a few years of the war it was clear that capitalism was booming.

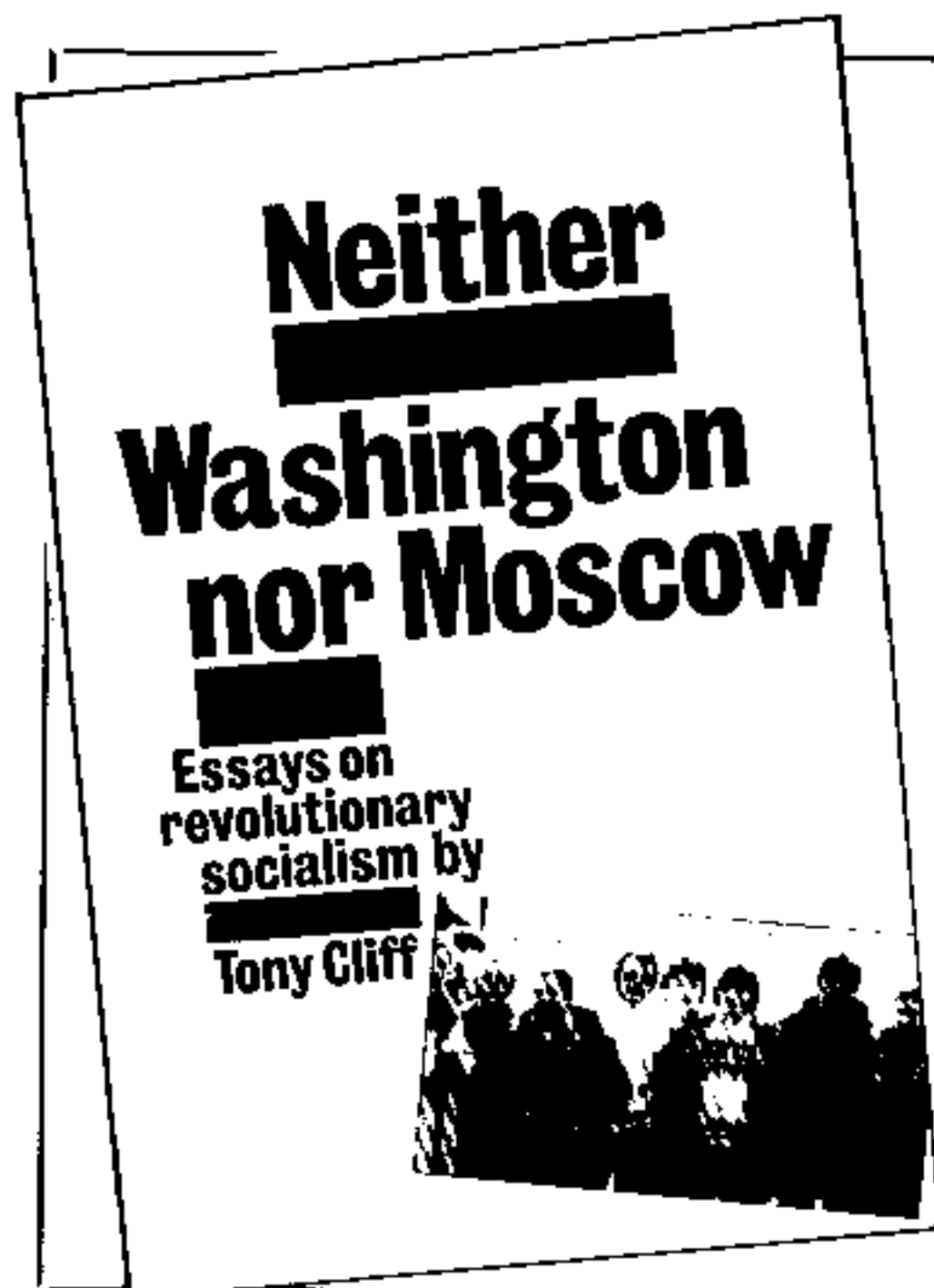
For Trotskyists the problem was to liberate themselves from their sacred texts, in particular Trotsky's 1938 Transitional Programme, and face reality. Unfortunately many of them, and above all the leaders of the Fourth International, were unable to do this. 'All That Glitters is not Gold', is Cliff's demolition job on the then leading spokesperson for blinkers, Ernest Mandel.

The existence of the boom having been acknowledged, it remained to analyse its causes and estimate its duration. This became more pressing as it became clear that this was no minor upswing but a major and sustained expansion of the system. These theoretical questions had absolutely crucial implications for practice.

If, as was the case with Labour Party theorists like Crosland and Strachey, the long boom was attributed to capitalism having overcome its basic economic contradictions this led directly to the abandonment of socialist politics. If on the other hand it was assumed that the causes of the boom were accidental or short-lived, the result was an absurd catastrophism continually predicting crises which didn't arrive. The classic example was the SLL/WRP, who rapidly came to resemble the boy who cried 'wolf'.

Cliff's answer, outlined here in 'Perspectives of the Permanent War Economy' (1957), was that the boom was sustained by the unprecedented levels of arms expenditure (begun by the Second World War and continued with the nuclear arms race) which served to maintain employment and stave off capitalism's inherent tendency to over-production. Cliff also foresaw the eventual decline of the arms economy as a stabilising factor.

No one would claim for this brief article that it was a major work of Marxist economics or even the best exposition of the permanent arms economy theory. On the contrary it has the serious defect of relying on a left-keynesian unconsumptionist explanation of capitalist crisis, rather than



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relating arms expenditure to the declining rate of profit (as was done later by Kidron and Harman). Nonetheless the article's position was important because it neither underestimated capitalism nor apologised for it, and so enabled the IS group to survive the 50's and early 60's with a revolutionary perspective but also with its feet on the ground.

A further contribution to revolutionary realism, dating from the same period was 'Economic Roots of Reformism' which criticised the aristocracy of labour theory, inherited from Lenin, and showed that reformism was not limited to a small upper crust of the working class but was rooted in the improving standards of living for the working class as a whole.

If in the 1950's Cliff played a major role in laying the theoretical foundations of contemporary revolutionary socialism, he then went on to play a no less important part in winning for revolutionary ideas a foothold in the working class movement.

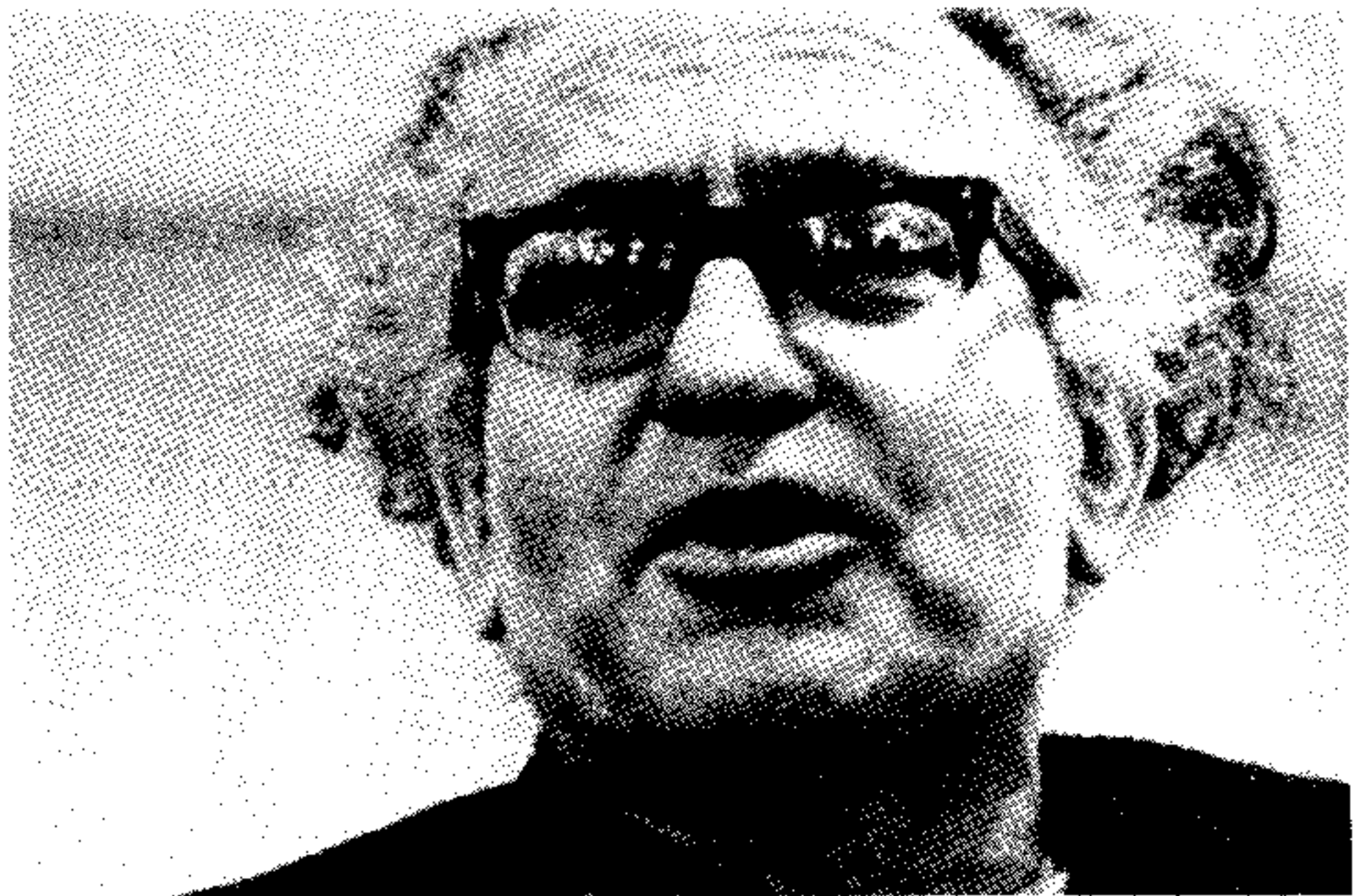
Cliff has always followed the industrial and trade union struggle of the British working class with the closest attention, seeking to learn from workers as well as teach them. This close involvement enabled Cliff to make well-timed interventions in the class struggle with handbooks that focused on major problems facing industrial militants.

The first of these was the 1966 *Incomes Policy, Legislation and Shop Stewards* written with Colin Barker, and the second, in 1970, was *The Employers' Offensive - Productivity Deals and How to Fight Them*. Both sold widely to shop stewards and rank-and-file militants, and both were crucial in transforming the International Socialists from a tiny propaganda group into an organisation with small but real roots in the class.

This side of Cliff's work is not as well represented in this collection as it might have been. But the reader can get the flavour of his industrial writings from 'After Pentonville the battle is won but the war goes on', and 'The Great Incomes Policy Con-trick.' What characterises them is their clarity and concreteness. Cliff was always able to find the particular example to illustrate the general point - the example which would stick in the mind to be passed on to workmates or comrades when abstract arguments would be forgotten. Thus:

'Many believe that it makes sense for better-off workers to practice restraint in order to improve lower-paid workers' wages. But the whole thing is based on a misunderstanding: if ICI workers were to hold back a claim for another £1 a week, would the management of ICI transfer the money they have saved to say, the nurses, or would they transfer it to ICI's bank account? To ask the question is to see the answer.'

Also reflected here is Cliff's role as party leader. Until the mid-'60s Cliff took the view that conditions were such as to make the serious building of a revolutionary party impossible and that in such circumstances it would be 'toy bolshevism' to adapt the full organisational forms of a Leninist Party. The 1960 article 'Trotsky on Substitutionalism' was a product of this period. It emphasised, perhaps overemphasised, the



dangers of a small party trying to substitute itself for the mass of the working class.

But in 1968, as a result of the opportunities presented by the international student, anti-war and workers' movements of that year, Cliff changed gear. In 'Notes on Democratic Centralism' he urged the International Socialists to adopt a tighter and more centralised structure. Cliff once described this as the 'worst document I ever wrote' and certainly it had its weaknesses. Nonetheless, its main purpose was achieved and in the years that followed IS began the difficult process of turning itself into a fighting workers' organisation. 'The Use of Socialist Worker as an organiser' represents one point in this process. 'Why We Need a Socialist Workers Party' was another.

Of the articles written in this vein two in particular stand out. The first is 'On Perspectives', a superb survey of the whole state of the class struggles at the end of the '60s and beginning of the '70s which served as a key address orientating IS for intervention in the great industrial battles of 1970-74. The second is 'Ten Years On: 1969 to 1979', a condensed version of Cliff's analysis of the downturn.

After the Heath Government foundered on the rock of the miners in 1974 revolutionaries of all stripes had high hopes for the continual ascent of the struggle. Instead the years of the Labour Government were years in which the workers' movement sank into deep organisational and political paralysis.

Cliff was the first to recognise and analyse the unwelcome development. It was an essential contribution for without it we would have continued trying to climb a descending staircase and would probably have broken our necks. The two articles complement one another - one a rousing call to seize the time, the other a sober insistence on facing reality - both are embodiments of the unity of theory and practice.

Looking at the collection as a whole two things are especially striking. Firstly the continuity of Cliff's politics: from 1947 to today, whatever the tactical flexibility, the basic principles remain the same. Now, as then, Cliff stands for revolution not reform, for internationalism, for irreconcilable

opposition to Stalinism, for Marxism as the theory of workers' self-emancipation.

Secondly, how well those politics have stood the test of time. This is not to say the critical reader won't find a number of errors of judgement, unfulfilled expectations and so on - such mistakes are inevitable - but take the early '50s as a benchmark and set Cliff's views against those of the leading thinkers of Labourism, Communism, or orthodox Trotskyism and compare how they fared.

The Labour intellectuals thought capitalism had put crisis and class struggle behind it, the Communists thought Russia was a workers' paradise and Joe Stalin a wise but kindly uncle, and the Trotskyists that the system faced immediate collapse. By comparison Cliff stands out as a model of perspicacity.

This collection has its limitations of course, as does Cliff's Marxism. The decision not to include material from Cliff's books or material currently available elsewhere is understandable from a publishing point of view but it means that there are some really major omissions (for example his article 'Permanent Revolution') and that some of his most important work (on Lenin for example) is represented here by rather off hand pieces.

Then there is Cliff's style. He writes clearly and unpretentiously but he is no great writer and there is a certain crudity about his English (perhaps because it is not his first language) which has a political consequence in that it is ill-adapted to expressing nuances and fine distinctions.

Finally there is the total unconcern with such matters as Marxist philosophy and methodology in a period which has seen important discoveries in this sphere, and the absence of any analysis of racial or sexual oppression (except a short piece on supporting gays which adds nothing theoretically).

The real question, however, is not the extent to which Cliff corresponds to some model of the ideal marxist, but the extent to which his ideas, and the presentation of them in this book, are important for revolutionary practice in the coming period. Clearly they are immensely important. Everyone should read this book. □

The making of Alf Garnett

Many thanks for your article 'Labour's Imperialist Past' (SR82:5).

You have pin-pointed something right at the heart of attitudes in this country to nationality, race, and the British state.

The movement which the British working class has voted for, and has represented them in places of paid work has never seriously detached itself from the actions of the British state.

In the House of Commons, Feb 21 1946 Ernest Bevin said,

'I am not prepared to sacrifice the British Empire because I know that if the British Empire fell, it would mean that the standard of life of our constituents would fall considerably.'

Put leadership comments like that alongside the day-to-day experience of British army troops against colonised peoples and you have the makings of a Bob Mellish, Alf Garnett, Robert Relf or whoever.

It would be useful to contrast the whole thing with the great examples of solidarity and resistance expressed by the British left in support of anti-colonialist anti-racist activity, eg the sending of the *Wheatshaf* to support Larkin, Maclean, the conspiracy trial in India in the Twenties, Cable Street and so on.

Michael Rosen, East London

Anti-semitism and Argentina

I must point out a serious misconception in your otherwise very good coverage on the Falklands war last issue.

In *Peron's long shadow* Carla Lopez and Mike Gonzalez refer to Argentina as a 'rabidly anti-working class and anti-semitic regime.'

Argentina's ruling junta are certainly anti-working class. They are not 'rabidly anti-semitic', nor have any previous regimes deserved that label.

I was brought up in Argentina, and my family are Jewish. Argentina has one of the largest Jewish communities in the world.

Although Jews find it difficult or impossible to join the exclusive clubs of the oligarchy, there is no other discrimination against them. They prosper hugely, and many of the country's intellectuals and large (and small) capitalists are Jewish.

During and after World War Two the US and Britain spread the myth that Argentina's governments were fascist—because they refused to join the Allies. After the war several hundred Nazis fled to Argentina. The open door policy had also allowed tens of thousands of Jews in, at a time when 'anti-fascist' Britain etc were deporting

'illegal' Jewish immigrants back to Germany.

These Nazis have had some influence—mainly on upper-class youth in the early 60's. Some attacks on Jews were carried out then. The Argentine people as a whole, and certainly its working class, are not racist or anti-semitic—perhaps because in Argentina everyone is descended from immigrants.

During the last year of Isobel Peron's government and the first period of the military junta there was an attempt at creating a wave of anti-semitism. Some Jews were asked to resign as Heads of Department, there were allusions on television to the 'ethnic' names of fraudulent financiers, etc. It did not last long.

Jacobo Timerman, an exiled journalist, has written a book alleging that he was imprisoned and tortured because of anti-semitism. In fact a few years before he was apprehended he owned the newspaper *La Opinion*, which functioned as the military's mouthpiece.

We must be careful not to repeat, through mis-information, the smears against Argentina which the Tories and the press would like us to believe. Argentina's record on respect and equality for ethnic immigrant minorities is second to none—not only Jewish but also British and many other communities have

carried on their traditions undisturbed.

The Argentine government is *anti-working class*. That is the fact we must emphasize.

Name withheld by request.

What causes men to rape?

If male attitudes to women aren't caused by capitalism, what does Jane Saunders (SR82:5) suggest we blame them on? Something in men's nature which means that rape is inevitable, perhaps? Women are seen as 'available passive objects' because of the way capitalism distorts human relationships. So do all class societies, which is why rape predates capitalism. Only when we end class society will the conditions which produce rape be abolished.

But, under capitalism, working class women are at greater risk from the consequences of distorting human sexuality. They are the women who have to walk home alone because they can't afford taxi's or cars, or who have to stay with violent husbands because they have nowhere else to go.

Women who have been raped do receive a bad deal from the courts and the police. But so does almost everyone else who is unfortunate enough to cross their path. That's because they are there to repress us,

not to help us. Jane comes dangerously close to begging for their support.

This is always the tendency of women's groups or movements which see rape in isolation from the society which produces it. They try to deal with the problem without looking at the cause. They end up by calling for the strengthening of those state forces which in any other circumstances they would be fighting against.

Jane doesn't seem to realise that no-one is offering state brothels as an acceptable alternative to rape. Just pointing out that both are a result of treating human beings as commodities to be bought or taken.

It's no good making vague pleas for women to organise together without being quite clear about what causes men to rape in the first place. Otherwise we will end up calling for more police patrols on the street, and heavier sentences for rapists, rather than fighting for socialism.

Anne Williams, Camden

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BOOKS

A flawed gem

Through the Indian Looking-Glass
David Selbourne
Zed Press £5.50

Indian reality is fantastically difficult to report to western socialists because the horror of capitalism in India completely surpasses our own experience. David Selbourne can convey it in a sensitive and forceful style.

This is a collection of articles mainly written for the Indian and British press between 1976 and 1980. As with his book *An Eye to India*, a crushing indictment of Indira Gandhi's Emergency Regime, reading it you understand the condition of both the workers and the bourgeoisie. It is by far the best book about India available for socialists, and well worth the investment of a fiver.

But as I read further into the book a great unease came over me. Because despite his great qualities of insight and description he indicates no way out of the horror, except a general and romantic idea that 'the people' will overthrow their rulers. His position is that of the outsider, the progressive intellectual who tries, in the Chinese manner, to 'learn from the people'.

This is stated quite explicitly in the article 'On the Condition of the People', where he draws on his

experience in China. The problem is that 'listening to the people' in fact gives a passive role to 'the people' in the rule of their society. Rule is conducted by the humble cadres who have 'listened' and then decided what is to be done. The assumption that the party is separate from the class, as it is in China, runs through all of his political commentaries.

This explains why he goes overboard in applauding the Communist Party (Marxist) and its rule in the state of West Bengal. If there is a future in his eyes it is the CP(M). Now it is true to say that the CP(M) are competent and honest reformists, whose rule is in a different class to the gangster regime they

replaced. But they are no more than that.

Indeed, while reading a long passage on their 1980 election campaign I was suddenly struck with the notion that I was reading about Ken Livingstone and Dave Wetzel. This is no idle remark—the CP(M) spends a great deal of time complaining that its administration in West Bengal is crippled by the central government in Delhi.

In fact this book is a reflection of the political state of the Labour left. For all the long descriptions of Indian workers and peasants there is no article about workers in struggle—and large numbers have been in struggle since the collapse of the Emergency. In the end, this is a book about Indian workers as victims, not fighters, a gem with a fatal flaw.

Barry Pavier

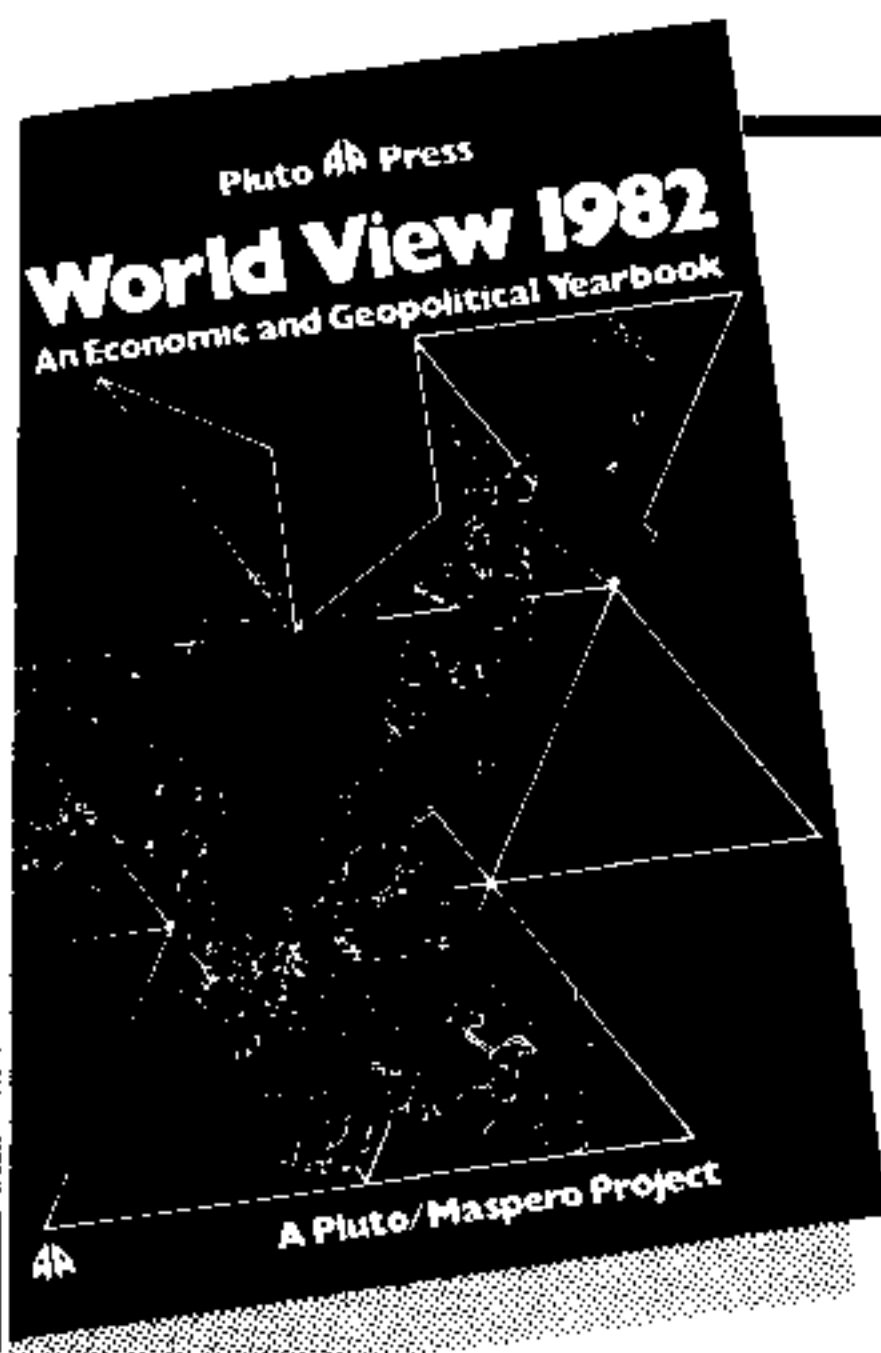
Woolly-headed handbook

World View 1982
An Economic and Geo-political
Yearbook
Pluto £5.95.

'Political yearbooks tend to be monopolised by establishment attitudes. By using an authoritative, factual style they are able to maintain the myth of a reality divided into facts and values.

Meanwhile by what they cover as well as by what they leave out, they present the interests and priorities of the powers that be.'

Pluto have attempted to provide an alternative. Yearbooks usually give extensive tables, details of important people and constitutional synopses. This alternative is divided into three parts—essays dealing with what the



organisation.

The regional descriptions are more useful for they draw together the subordinate economies round their major focus with clear if skimpy maps. But again beyond few simple and easily available facts, nothing like enough information and dubious political conclusions. Page 114, on Ireland says: 'Any sort of settlement seemed as far away as ever,' but page 290 says: 'the 1980s may well bring a British withdrawal and a lasting political solution.' Readers not immersed in politics might well be puzzled.

Other sections dealing with areas I know quite well — Southern Africa, Poland—just do not tackle the political questions or problems nor do they give an analysis of the forces involved, never mind the likely outcome. All through a woolly-headedness which is likely to confuse more than inform. The idea is good, but without a consistent political position only confusion results.

John Lindsay

authors consider major political questions, country by country accounts, and region by region accounts. Unfortunately the essays are without facts or consistent politics. Rather a mash of woolly third-worldism where it is not capitalism which determines world events but 'north-south' or 'east-west' or even religion.

The country by country section fares no better. 'Alternative' facts, facts which we would be interested in to make an analysis of developments, might include level of trade union organisations, level of strike action, political prisoners, legal positions on major social issues and so forth. Instead simply badly laid out tables from UN statistical sources giving no more information than any ordinary yearbook. Granted a problem of space — only 300 pages for your £5.95 but these do not help you to understand the politics of a particular place, nor the general level of workers'

Narrow but good

Capital and Exploitation

by John Weeks

Edward Arnold £4.95

Effects continue long after causes have disappeared. The radical generation of 1968 is long gone. But its impact continues to be felt in terms of what happens in the academic world. And in publishing. Marxist academic texts appear with great regularity.

This is much better than most. The author does not lightly dismiss central parts of Marxist economic theory—like the Labour Theory of Value or the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall. Instead he defends them. And this puts him in a class apart from most other such writers.

What is more, at places he provides insights that advance Marxist analysis and thus make the world more intelligible.

But there are two problems with the book. First is a level of abstractness which sometimes makes it unclear what he is saying (like when he refers to Stalin and Russia) and often means he slides over important areas of discussion. Why did the world economy boom for 30 years? What does happen to forms of competition when nationally based monopolies resort to the state for their competition?

Second, his orthodoxy is of a very narrow sort. He refers to Marx, Engels and Lenin (and Stalin), but not to Hilferding, Bukharin, Luxemburg or Preobrazhensky. And this means he does not grasp whole elements of what 20th century Marxists have to say about the system. Still, this is a useful read if you are already acquainted with Marxist economics.

Chris Harman.

Part of a cultural earthquake

The Republic of Letters: Working Class Writing and Local Publishing

Edited by Dave Morley and Ken Worpole

Comedia Publishing Group, £2.95 paperback.

This is a bit of an uneven, unfocused book, but then it has every right to be when behind its two editors there are half-a-dozen collaborators and behind them jostle the more than two dozen separate groups that make up the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers.

At one level the text is a good, straightforward guide to the

FWWCP — its history, aims, financing and constituent groups — and it incorporates a fair sample of the work produced by people from, say, the Hackney Writers' Workshop or the Birmingham Women and Words group.

Reading through these passages, you are reminded how working-class experience has changed in this century: how some petty layers of exploitation have been dismantled by generations of struggles only to be replaced by others — you are reminded, for example, that once upon a time kids who left school one week found jobs the next...

Where the book goes blurred and unsure is when it tries to tackle its own politics, especially over issues like the role of worker writers and alternative publishers, their relation to the major commercial presses and to things like the Arts Council and the labour movement, the extent to which they should aim to be 'socialist' and so on.

The fuzziness here is a problem that all loose organisations face: feeding into the FWCP are, on the one hand, groups evolving from old WEA classes that still have the stale whiff of tea and McVities and chats about creativity to them and, on the other hand, newer groups that provide a direct channel for working-class, black and female anger and self-expression.

But blurring is bound to occur if you are looking at a real movement rather than, say, something that's been fixed since the death of Chaucer. What this book charts and is worth reading for is the way the class struggle goes on all the time: it may be checked and quelled in some traditional areas by the crude club of unemployment but the old mole burrows away and comes up somewhere else. In the FWCP are people inventing and producing a culture and indeed their own experience collectively, no longer seeing it as something they possess and consume individually. As they do that they begin to unravel the control over ways of seeing that our masters would like to maintain.

The current hysteria in the Tory Party about the BBC's reporting of the Falklands war, laughable though it is in one sense, is only another sign of the cultural earthquake of which this book too is a part and which even the Tory pig farmers are beginning to sense.

Paul O'Flinn

The lepers of modern capitalism

The Politics of Mental Handicap

Ryan & Thomas

Pelican £1.75

'To each according to his needs, from each according to his ability'.

The 'mentally handicapped', of which this book is concerned, make more demands on the humanity implicit in this statement than do any other group of people. This book reveals yet another unacceptable face of capitalism. For any society which hospitalises 50,000 unsick people, must itself be a sick society.

The book contains extracts from a diary of a nursing assistant about everyday life in a large 'subnormality' hospital ward. The diary, which is very funny and moving at times, is arranged around particular topics and events such as, definitions of handicap, care or control, work, ideology, and a way forward. Each being amplified historically and theoretically by the co-author.

This is a welcome contribution to

the current debate (where you may ask is it taking place) about the lives of these current day 'lepers', and those who work with them in hospitals, schools, training centres and hostels.

The book is often illuminating for the new reader, but its ultimate solution, simply asking for a change in attitudes, is depressing to say the least. As Marx said, "Time, is the room for human development". But under capitalism time is equated with money, and as a result these people are quietly disposed of and considered an economic burden.

The tragic thing about it all is that the 'mentally handicapped' are guarded by staff, who although often sincere, share the same fears and prejudices as ourselves concerning this growing number of people. Their demands are often simple — time, patience and understanding.

In the last decade or so, public attention has sometimes been cen-

tered on conditions in these hospitals, often revealing appalling conditions, chronic staff shortages, forced sterilisations, cruelty and shortages. Reports are quickly manufactured for the media, so it is seen that something is being done. In reality, little changes.

David Ennals, Minister of Health in 1975, said he would support any changes in the handicapped services, providing, wait for it, that it wouldn't cost any money! The governments' own reports reveal that, over 1,000 children in Britain each year are born handicapped, simply because enough money is not released for ante/post natal services.

Finally, one hospital resident sums it up, by saying, "I am not handicapped — I can do things"! The question then is not how different they are from us, but how like us. Employers are quick to recognise and exploit this fact. Well worth a critical read.

Owen Gallagher

The execution of Charles Hormon

Books and films are often released together to boost each other. The most recent case is *Missing*. Jim Scott looks at the book. Pete Goodwin looks at the film.

Missing
Thomas Hauser
Penguin £1.75

'There are six of us lost in space among the stars, one dead one beaten like I never believed a human could be so beaten ... slaughter is the badge of heroism.'
Victor Jara 1973

They took Victor Jara and broke his hands, then they suggested that he play his guitar for his comrades. Woody Guthrie had written on his guitar, 'This machine kills fascists'. Victor Jara believed too that music is a powerful weapon in the struggle against barbarism, but in his case barbarism destroyed him and his music. Charles Hormon made cartoon films for the children of the Santiago slums. He wasn't, like Jara, a revolutionary.

Thomas Hauser's book begins with a simple sentence from Charles Hormon's mother: 'Fifty-five thousand Americans died in Vietnam. With numbers like that, nobody cares about two who were killed in Chile'. But it isn't the masses who died who influence us, it is the individuals who we can identify with who affect us most. For millions of people it is 13 year old Anna Frank who epitomises the Holocaust.

This is a book written by a 'liberal' (in the very best sense of the word) about the life and death of a young American 'radical', the sort of American many of us who were active in the Anti-Vietnam campaigns in this country became familiar with. Perhaps that is why it affected me so strongly: Hormon could have been any one of half a dozen friends from the sixties.

Hormon's 'crime' for which he paid the supreme penalty, summary execution, was simply to have been in the wrong place at the wrong time, to have witnessed at the Chilean Pacific resort of Vina Del Mar the involvement of American Naval and Special Forces personnel in the organisation of the military coup against the Allende Government.

The main theme of the book is the search by Hormon's wife and Christian Scientist father for the missing man. As they progress through the nether world of post coup Chile the duplicity of the authorities rings a change in both of them. Ed Hormon, a conservative American business man who has never thought of questioning the policies and actions of his government, is forced by his dramatic personal involvement to admit that

'his Government has murdered his son' and for no other reason than that he happened to be aware, through the loose talk of the US personnel involved, of their role in organising the military takeover.

That the American State Department were involved at every level in Hormon's murder soon becomes apparent, from exiled Chilean witnesses to the testimony of disillusioned American officials, all the evidence points to the fact that Charles Hormon was murdered at the behest of the American Embassy in Chile.

But the tale of Charles Hormon is more than that of an individual, it is the sum of all those 30,000 who were executed by the military in the weeks following the coup.

It was enough in those weeks to have been mildly sympathetic to the Allende Government. Many militants who survived the first few days escaped with their lives but only after the most appalling torture.

That the agents of the Nixon/Kissinger Government were present at many of the torture sessions is brought out vividly in the book, the 'quiet American' was the 'eminence grise' of the Chilean Junta.

There are of course weaknesses in the book's analysis, the author has many illusions in Allende and the parliamentary road, and he regards the MIR (the revolutionary left) as an extremist organisation. These faults can largely be ignored for the evidence he musters of the duplicity and treachery of American imperialism and its cynical murder of an idealistic and peace-loving young American and the incompetent attempts to cover it up make the book required reading for all socialists .. to know your enemy you must first understand him. *'But the Yaks were sneaky sometimes they hid behind one snowdrift. Sometimes they hid behind another. And sometimes they just stood up against a lamppost disguised as John Lennon.'*

Part of the script from 'The Sunshine Grabber', the main 'subversive act' of Charles Hormon in Chile 1973.

★★★★★★

Missing
Directed by Costa-Gavras
In 1969 the colonels ruled Greece. That same year Costa-Gavras, a young Greek director living in France made a film called *Z*. It was a political thriller, based quite explicitly on the murder of the left-wing MP Lambrakis and the subsequent cover up by the authorities.



Jack Lemmon and Sissy Spacek

It was a brilliant film, using the thriller format very skilfully to present a direct and devastating denunciation of the colonels' regime and the establishment that spawned it.

All the rules of the cinema industry say that the young director could never do it again. His films would become more 'arty' or choose less directly political subjects. Or, if by chance he avoided these traps, then he would fade away making paler and paler imitations of *Z*.

Yet somehow or other Costa-Gavras seems to have escaped the rules. He has continued to make very good films on explicitly political subjects, he has kept them committed and he has kept them firmly and successfully aimed at a mass audience. If that wasn't miraculous enough, thirteen years after *Z* he has made an even more brilliant film on almost exactly the same lines.

Missing, like *Z*, is about murder, cover-up and military dictatorship. Like *Z*, it is devastating because it uncovers the torturers through the eyes of someone who starts uncommitted, investigating an individual case, and is only reluctantly forced to recognise the immense and terrible forces that lie behind his immediate concern. And, like *Z*, *Missing* is not only a denunciation of a military regime, but even more a denunciation of the establishment that spawned it.

What gives *Missing* the edge over *Z*, is just one of those obvious features of popular cinema all of which Costa-Gavras uses with such skill. It is the 'human interest' of those who unravel the mystery. In *Z* the 'detective' was a cold professional, a lawyer from the public prosecutors' office. Only his integrity made him any different from the suited and uniformed brutes of the state machine who are exposed by the film.

In *Missing* the 'detectives' are the murdered man's wife and father: the one very nearly a hippie, the other very definitely a conservative, god-fearing, pillar of upper middle class society. These two characters are magnificently played by Sissy Spacek and Jack Lemmon, and the development of their relationship makes compelling cinema.

Indeed, in less skilful and committed hands it could have been so compelling that it turned exposure of the Chilean junta and its American backers into mere backdrop. But Costa-Gavras makes it reinforce his political message.

Missing is a film which every socialist should see. But, far more important it is a film which you should encourage even your most apolitical friends and workmates to see. They won't be quite so apolitical afterwards.

Oi—stalking in the shadows

Trevor Griffith's play *Oi for England* got a TV showing. Now it is opening as a stage play and will be touring youth clubs around Britain. S. Wells looks at Oi, the play, and the issues it raises.

To get things in perspective: Oi is a term originated by one music journalist – Garry Bushell – to describe several third generation punk bands. As a label it is as loose and ill-fitting as ever “punk” or “new wave” was. The bands it covers are usually two guitars, drums, vocals, white male, working class and young.

Their popularity is much less than the tabloid press would have you believe. Even among skins the appeal is patchy. Many Sheffield redskins stayed away from an Infa Riot gig because: “Who wants to see this punk crap when there's Blues (reggae) up road”. Others came and danced themselves stupid.

Oi is political. In that cropping your hair is political, singing about the pigs, the dole, the clap, the bomb, is political. Several Oi groups have done benefits for PROP – that's political.

But Oi is also apolitical. Group after group lumps the NF, SWP and Thatcher crudely together as ‘them’. The Sheffield Infa Riot gig was billed as ‘Oi against Racism and Extremism.’

Despite attempts by *Bulldog*, the Young NF paper, to claim Oi as its own battle anthem, despite the pathetically naive use of BM leadeeguard Nicky Crane on the front cover of the Carry On Oi album, despite the overt nationalism of some of its champions and the manic mudthrowing of the gutter press (here's £5 son, give us a Nazi salute for the camera) most Oi bands have kept enough balance to deny any alliance with the far right. As Garry Bushell informed me, neither *Bulldog* nor *Rebel* gets sold at Oi gigs.

The Labour Party is regarded as having sold out. The left are ‘a bunch of middle class student wankers’. Anarchists are hippies. Thatcher, the police and the media are the class enemy. Oi has fought so hard to escape any political pigeonhole that it's not left with much option apart from Bushell's ‘I'm a patriotic socialist.’ A stance removed from being a ‘Nazi’ or a ‘Commie’ – just working class, British, and proud of both. Oi seems to be bleating ‘we can't change anything’ despite the militancy and anger of its lyrics. This is what Bushell calls ‘having a say.’

The thing is, music can change attitudes if used subversively – The Village People's *YMCA*, the Jam's *Town called Malice* or the Specials' *Ghost Town*. Or within a frame of reference – like *Rock Against Racism*. But that smacks of Politics, and Oi skulks off to shout from the shadows.

Maybe the only alternative to this self-enforced underground chic is to become a slogan machine like Tom Robinson, or the white liberals' Rolling Stones such as The Clash. I just wish more of the Oi groups would use their ability and class consciousness, neither of which they lack, to expand the audience for their music and their (small p) politics.

Media attempts at translating Youth Culture for wider audience are almost always fantastically cackhanded and patronising. With varying degrees of ineptitude, almost every paper attempted ‘A Guide to the Cults’ type article last year.

I witnessed Yorkshire Television's aborted exposé being filmed. Large directors shouting “Can you swagger *around* the cameras lads, not into them”. I was myself strapped into a barbers chair and asked whom in the world I would most like to hit.

So we have *Oi for England*. We got this cellar in Moss Side and these 4 skins, and one's a ‘racist’ who mugs Pakistanis and another's a ‘liberal’ (Irish) who doesn't. Then there's these two ‘Thickos’ (one called S. Wells!) and they're all in an Oi band, see. And then there's a Nazi who sounds like Colin Welland at Nuremburg. The rest of the band ‘bugger off’ to join the ‘riot’ and Flynn (skinhead-Irish-liberal) is on his own when who should walk in but a ‘black woman.’

Circles of guilt

Jon Bearman looks at *Circles of Deceit*.

Beirut, capital of Lebanon, is the most battered and broken city in the world. Gaping shell holes pit blocks of flats and offices in their thousands. Cratered streets and pavements flow with refuse and excrement. Wrecked and burnt out vehicles lie unmoved on the highways blocking traffic. The sheer level of devastation is terrifying.

Volker Schlöndorff's film *Circle of Deceit* is dangerously obsessed by the nightmarish violence and bloodletting of Beirut. He faithfully reproduced the blood, gore, charred bodies and atrocities that have become part of regular life in Beirut.

Faced with the grim realities of the intractable civil war, if you are not clear of your own position you will get lost. Schlöndorff's films gets hopelessly lost.

Georg Laschen, a reporter from Hamburg, is sent to Beirut on a journalistic assignment when the civil war is at its hottest in 1976. It is like a descent into hell. The title of the film — *Circle of Deceit* — is an allusion to one of the circles of hell in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

Laschen finds himself stranded in the underworld. Running gunmen spray buildings with bullets. Fascist snipers pick off the odd civilian for fun, night after night shells drum and pound outside the relative safety of his room at the Holiday Inn. Red tracers light up the sky. Ambulances scream through the

This is one of the best left wing plays I've seen on TV and still we get these moronic cardboard cutouts. I've walked out of a dozen ‘alternative’ theatre productions giggling myself stupid after the man with the pinstripe suit and bowler hat and the big arrow pointing at him saying ‘Rich Tory Pig’ has leapt on stage to a chorus of boos and hisses. *Oi for England* tore away the ‘all skins are Nazis’ label and found a couple more liberal stereotypes underneath.

Flynn knocks the shit out of the band's gear, dressed as an American footballer, after listening to a tape of Irish folk music, apparently to reflect his more lyrical nature under the macho facade. This is half cocked symbolism in a play which ended as weakly as it could possibly have done.

Here we have Flynn, rebel without the correct analysis, in slow motion, smashing amps and guitars like Pete Townsend, and just as pointlessly. The one chance the play had to make any real observation or statement and Trevor Griffith copped out. *Oi for England* wandered between cosy realism and plastic tokenism without ever getting its teeth bloodied.

It left far too many questions untackled. Like why was the far right so successful in recruiting skinheads in 1978-79? How do the left wing skins deal with macho and sexism? How do they feel about being continually stabbed in the back by the left press?

So to keep things in perspective: Oi is a label devised by a music press hack for skinhead punk music. England are a football team. *Oi for England* was disappointing, slot next to *Zigger Zagger*.

streets.

The film revolves around Laschen's psychological reaction to the horrific events surrounding him.

There are very few scenes where the film breaks from Laschen's indulgent introspection, and just one of any merit. After an encounter with black-hooded fascist militia in Beirut he is invited to visit their leader north of Beirut. It is obviously a portrait of Bashir Gemayel.

Over a martini-table in the grounds of his wealthy home Gemayel casually informs Laschen he just wants ‘to get rid of the Palestinians and communists.’ ‘We will not share this country’ he insists.

It is the only occasion when Laschen comes close to identifying with the Palestinian and Leftist cause. It is the only time when politics takes precedence in the film.

The experience proves too much for him. Like so many spectators who pass through Beirut he develops a terrible guilt complex because he can't share the suffering and anguish. Finally, under shell-fire he cracks up and goes berserk.

Guilt feelings like Laschen's — and they have been shared by many left-wing tourists from Europe — don't help matters. Socialists should always be clear why they are fighting and what they are fighting for. We are not fighting because we feel sorry for people. We are fighting because we want liberation and realise the kind of politics that entails.

JUNE 1969

It was Friday night at the Stonewall bar, 27th June 1969. It was packed. The Stonewall was a gay bar on Christopher Street in Greenwich Village in down town New York, then as now the gay centre of town. 200 gays were crowded in, all male, 50 or so of them transvestites.

The Stonewall was a low dive, its clients mostly young and working-class. Like most other gay bars it was mafia controlled, which meant it cost to go in and drinks were expensive. It was open only because of back-handers to the police.

In order to make the payments to the police worth while there would be occasional raids. On that hot night in 1969, 8 policemen raided the Stonewall. There were only 8 because, well it was only a 'fairies' bar. They were not expecting any trouble.

To begin with, the raid followed the usual routine - the police loaded the gay into police vans to go down to the station. There they would be questioned, held for identification and booked if under age, in drag, or wanted for anything.

But unusually a crowd began to gather round the bar, shouting and berating the police. Suddenly the crowd began to get angry. Before they knew what was happening the police found themselves facing a hostile and advancing crowd.

The police retreated, some transvestites ran with guns drawn, back into the now empty bar. The crowd liberated the gays in the police van and laid siege to the Stonewall with its imprisoned police. Trapped inside the Stonewall the cops called for help.

They sent in the 'Tactical Police Force', New York's equivalent of the SPG, normally only used in Harlem. This triggered off a riot, windows were smashed, fire-alarms set off, trash cans used as missiles, police cars attacked etc. etc.

The riot was to last 3 nights, beginning at dusk and ending at dawn. Smaller incidents were to occur throughout the summer up to and after the forming of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in August.

The Stonewall riot took New York totally by surprise. The campaigning and actions of the GLF that were to follow shocked and bemused it even more. GLF campaigned against the mafia/police gay bars, leafletting them and holding meetings on gay liberation, and on the exploitation of gays by the commercial gay scene. They produced their own newspaper *Outcome*. From nowhere, GLF blossomed into a movement with a voice and action to back its ideas.

It organised a day of action on the streets to reclaim Christopher Street from the police, to parade and cruise as open homosexuals. It held alternative discos at the 'Open University' in the Village as alternatives to the commercial bars. It campaigned against the idea that gays were sick or gayness a thing to be ashamed of with public meetings and organised debates.

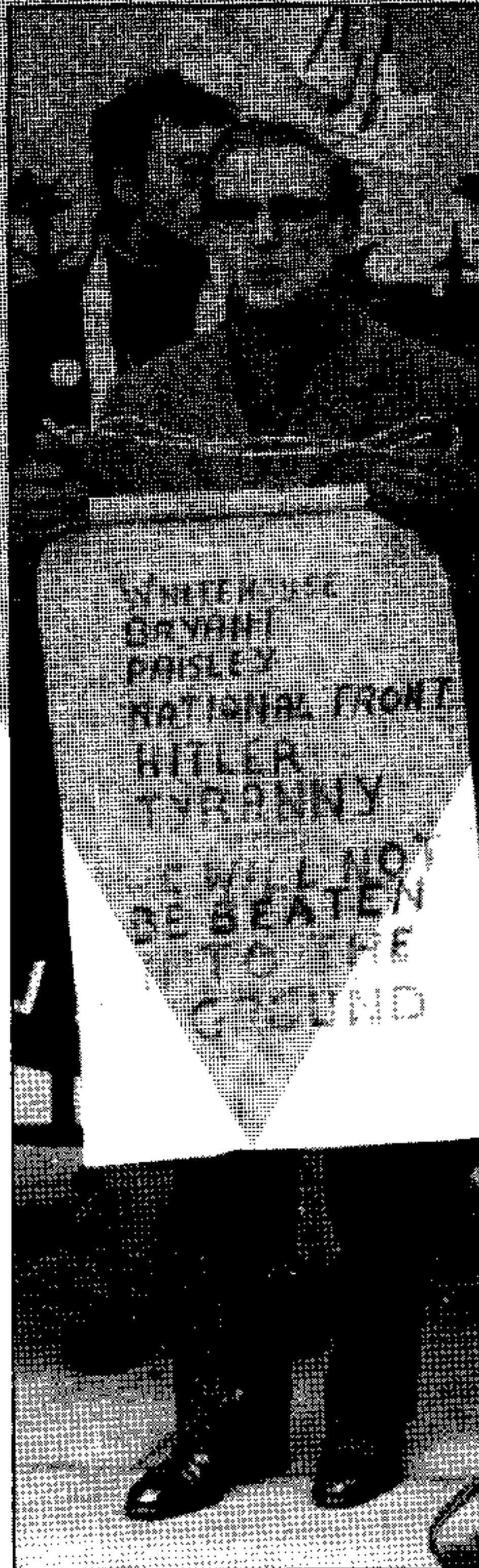
Those were heady days with mass unrest against the Vietnam war and a mood of revolt sweeping the world. GLF was part of that mood, identifying itself with other liberation movements (hence its name) and with the politics of 'revolution now'.

It was much influenced by the hippies of the American 'New Left', seeking to 'live the revolution' and sneering at theory, especially that of the old left. As an organi-

sation it had a brief if brilliant life disappearing by 1972 or 1973.

In Britain the GLF arrived in 1970, again mushrooming into a movement involving thousands in London, but collapsing by 1973.

To the established gay reform groups such as CHE (Campaign for Homosexual Equality) the GLF had a traumatic impact. In Britain the two were bitter enemies seeing each other as reformist establishment creeps or dangerous extremists who gave gays a



bad name. But the effect was to push CHE to a more campaigning stance and to look out from its cosy world of closet MPs and Lords. This stance it now shows signs of retreating from.

For the left the GLF was also a bit of a shock. The sexual politics of the revolutionary tradition that had existed before the rise of Stalin and Hitler had been lost. The work of Kollontai and Inessa Armand's 'New Woman' of the Bolsheviks, the German tradition of Hirschfeld's World League of Sexual Reform that had involved the Communist parties in the late 20's, the work of Reich. All this and more had been forgotten.

Some of the left groups, the SWP amongst them, rediscovered this past and sexual liberation. The Labour party and Communist party also reacted to absorb the new demands, adding them to their lists of reforms to be won - gradually of course.

Internally the GLF was always a mess. Some glorified this mess as a strength, but it led to splits, confusion and rows right from the beginning.

For example: in New York the Gay Activists Alliance split off after an argument with the 'radical effeminates' in the GLF who identified with women separatists and saw the enemy as straight men and 'male power'.

The one strength was that it was a group based on action. In the early '70s there was no lack of action to sustain it.

Stonewall then, and the following activity of the GLF, has left its marks on history, though few that were foreseen or wanted by the GLF. The most ironic change has been the explosion of the 'pink economy', especially in America. There gay capitalism has grown on the market created by 'coming out'. These profiteers are the very people that GLF campaigned against.

In New York this year 100,000 will march to remember Stonewall. In San Francisco there will be 250,000. Few will know that the riot was as much against the gay scene owners, who are now called 'respected leaders of the gay community', as it was against the straight police.

But GLF also has had a different effect. Some people attempted to link the fight against oppression with that against class exploitation. The days of GLF activity in Britain (1970-73) were also days of great labour unrest and class conflict.

In Britain, unlike America, GLF was to be seen on the streets alongside miners against the anti-union law, or outside Pentonville in support of the imprisoned dockers.

The connection between gay oppression and class struggle was easier to see here because the two were fighting side by side.

Very often this relationship was a bit strained. It has never been easy to argue with a sexist miner or docker about sexual politics. But it is possible. And in Britain it is difficult for gay militants to ignore the power of the working class to change society.

Stonewall changed things. Out of the new confidence and determination that it sparked off have come a generation of gay militants who today are fighting against sexual oppression in the workplace. They are fighting, too, against those gays who want to look inwards and forget about the need to change the world.

Noel Halifax