

international

A journal of Marxism in the Labour Party



Fighting the **UNION BUSTERS**



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A journal of Marxism in the Labour Party

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The Tories' crisis and working class resistance

SINCE THE last issue of *International* the political situation has been dominated by two events: the Westland affair and the print strike. While the Tory government has been in open political crisis, one of the best organised sections of the working class has been struck some fearful blows at the hands of a union-busting employer and the courts — not without a helping hand from the timidity and inaction of the print union leaderships.

How can we square these developments? Why, if the Tories are in such crisis, is the working class still on the defensive? To answer that we have to look at the meaning of the Westland affair, and what was behind the resignation of Heseltine which threw the whole Tory party into a panic. Heseltine's resignation was manifestly not about the constitutional questions, the future of a small company in Yeovil, or even mainly about the future of the European defence industry. Rather, it was Heseltine's bid to stake his claim to the succession to Thatcher. Such a move would have been totally irrational without a certain calculation — that either the Tories would lose the next election, or in a panic would ditch Thatcher as a 'liability' before the elections took place.

Such a calculation was unthinkable for the Tories even a year ago, now it is commonplace. The reason is simple: despite all the defeats which the Tories have inflicted on the working class, it is becoming obvious that seven years of Thatcherism have done precious little to stem the economic crisis, and indeed it is becoming clear to even ruling class observers that the main planks of Tory policy like privatisation are absolutely irrelevant to a solution.

A further decrease in the price of North Sea oil, which is on the cards, will expose the weakness of British capitalism and the frailty of the Tories' economic strategy even further. The fall in the price of oil will put simultaneous pressure on inflation and public spending as tax revenue slumps. Thatcher is learning a hard lesson — that inflicting defeats on the working class does not immediately and directly translate itself into boom and prosperity for capitalism.

The political crisis confirms what the editors of this journal thought at the time of the defeat of the miners' strike — that the outcome was a victory for the ruling class but not necessarily a political victory for the Tories. To some extent the Tories are still paying a price for their actions during the strike.

Opinion polls are showing a slump in the popularity of the Tories, and a significant lead for Labour and the Alliance. psephologists are having a field day working out the permutations involved in an election in which no party has an overall majority, which now seems the likely outcome. It is not easy to conjure up a Falklands war for every election, and at the next one the real relationship of forces in British politics is likely to assert itself much more than in the freak election of 1983. A hung parliament has one obvious likely political result: coalition. The chair of the PLP has made it clear that 'we must be prepared to do business with the SDP' and that 'although Neil Kinnock can't say as much, I can'.

In this of course there lies a massive danger and a trap for the working class movement, the danger that Kinnock would opt for a formal or informal coalition with the Alliance. The price for such a coalition would be the scrapping of every last vestige of radical policies and a governmental agenda determined by the SDP/Liberal Alliance. The precondition for making Labour a party which could be pulled in behind either coalition or a right wing Labour government is the weakening of workers struggles and the marginalisation of the militant left wing in the Labour movement. The leadership

of both the TUC and the Labour Party are currently engaged in this.

In the Labour Party, in addition to the escalating witch hunt against supporters of the *Militant* and other left wingers there is a furious assault against left wing policies. Hattersley's pledge that the priority for a Labour government would be the 'fight against inflation' rather than tackling unemployment is a sure sign of what a Kinnock/Hattersley government would represent, even without a coalition. In a coalition, or a re-run of the Lib-Lab pact, nuclear disarmament would be out, abolition of the union laws in question, and incomes policy a near-certainty.

The move to the right in the Labour Party is paralleled by the utter capitulation by the TUC leadership to the Tory trade union laws and the Hammond and the EETPU leadership's scab unionism. The TUC general council has done nothing to force the EETPU to get the people it recruited for 'wapping out of the plant, and together with the SOGAT and NGA leaderships has adopted a 'softly, softly' attitude to the whole dispute.

Tony Dubbins himself has eloquently explained that it is 'impossible to defend our members within the law'. Exactly — but what conclusions do you draw from such a statement? That trade unionism is impossible, that 5000 printers should be left to the dole queue while the union leaderships exercise 'moderation' and try to get public sympathy through being reasonable? The truth is that the News International printers have been abandoned by the TUC, their own union leaderships, and especially by the Labour Party leadership who have run for cover like frightened rabbits.

The irony is that Murdoch could be beaten rapidly and the trade union laws faced down through decisive action by the TUC. The first thing needed was an all-out strike in Fleet Street. Thousands of SOGAT and NGA members in Fleet Street wanted to take action to support the sacked News International workers. They know that they are next for the chopping block. Second the mass pickets should be built to blockade the plant and stop either workers getting in for work in the morning or the papers getting out at night.

All the power of the print unions and their supporters is needed to do this, especially against the riot squad tactics of the police. But the mass pickets have been organised on a rank and file level without any official call. Third, the EETPU should be expelled from the TUC and an attempt made to organise an electricians union within the TUC of those who remained loyal to the principles of trade unionism. Such a move would galvanise mass support inside the union movement to aid the printers, and strike a blow against a union leadership which is openly becoming the organising centre for business trade unionism.

Against this background of scabbing and betrayal by the leadership of the working class, the combativity of the printers and other sections of the working class thrown into struggle has been amazing. Far from being demoralised, there remains a continuing willingness to stand and fight. The problem is precisely the lack of organisation and leadership which prevents rank and file militancy being turned into victories.

The problem for the militant left wing of the labour movement is how to respond to this situation. First, and obviously, we have to strain every muscle to support the printers and build the widest possible solidarity. But more than that, in order to fight the shift to the right we have to organise the left — both in the Labour Party and the unions.

The question which now dominates British politics is the outcome of the Tory crisis and their probable electoral defeat. The 'hard' left in the labour movement has every interest in trying to fight the alternatives of either a right wing Labour government or a coalition, which is the effective choice given by Kinnock and the TUC leaders.

Of course, there is some doubt to say the least as to whether we can prevent a negative outcome. But the left has to prepare the ground for a left wing fightback if the Tories are replaced with another right wing government.

Elsewhere in this issue we discuss the sorry outcome of the Mitterrand government in France, which has demoralised the working class and created the basis for the upsurge of the extreme right in French politics. Such an outcome of the defeat of the Tories must not be allowed to occur in Britain.

The Sellafield syndrome

IN A LITTLE over a month there have been four major leaks of radioactive material from the Sellafield nuclear fuel reprocessing plant in Cumbria. Each time the Sellafield management, British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL), have tried to obscure the real nature and extent of the accident.

On 24 January 440 kilogrammes of uranium nitrate were released into the Irish Sea. Two days later BNFL said 'a couple of kilos' had been released from Sellafield's sea tanks. On 5 February a faulty pump in the main reprocessing plant was the cause of the contamination of fifteen workers. There was, according to BNFL, 'no positive indication that any employee had been contaminated because of the incident', but one worker received a year's permitted dose of radiation in a single exposure.

The third leak occurred on 18 February when 250 gallons of cooling pond water escaped from a drain pipe. BNFL stated that the water was only 'slightly contaminated', the same turn of phrase they used to describe the exposure suffered by a further two Sellafield workers. BNFL's regard for the truth is well appreciated by at least some sections of workers at Sellafield. After the accident on 5 February 800 construction workers walked out over fears for plant safety.

The latest and perhaps the most serious leak happened on 1 March when radiation was released through a punctured seal while workers were mixing plutonium and uranium oxides to make fuel for Britain's only fast breeder reactor at Dounreay. Twelve



people were exposed and five suffered skin contamination. At the time of writing, it is possible that some if not all breathed radioactive air — a very serious hazard to health.

Sellafield, formerly Windscale, is notorious for accidents. The worst was in 1957 when a fire caused a plume of radioactive iodine as far as Leeds and the dumping of thousands of gallons of radioactive milk from cows which were 'safely grazing' in the fallout area.

Nuclear establishments and cover-ups seem to go together like muck and brass. A recent report on the incidence of leukaemia in the Sellafield area suggested that this disease was forty times more prevalent than expected from the official local radiation measurements. Using official figures, Sir Douglas Black, a former doyen of the BMA, gave a 'qualified reassurance' to the people of Sellafield that they did not suffer a serious additional health risk from the nuclear processing site. Was Sir Douglas being credulous or was he being used? Dr Derek Jakeman who worked at Sellafield has revealed

The fact of the matter is that there is a force, albeit embryonic, which represents an alternative to the politics of Kinnock and Willis.

It is represented by such groupings as the active core of the Campaign group of MPs, the Scargill wing of the NUM leadership, Labour Left Co-ordination, Women Against Pit Closures and all those forces which have rallied around the printers' strike. In the next period these forces need to raise their voice, harden their organisation and regain the offensive against the Kinnock-Willis leadership of the labour movement. The supporters of this journal will do everything in their power to see this happens.



that the releases of radioactive material were over forty times the level officially reported for the years studied in the Black report (1945-1975). Had the anti-nuclear movement suggested that Sellafield was an explanation for the increased leukaemia in the area they would have been told to 'keep to the facts'. But it is exactly the facts about the scale and effects of pollution from Sellafield that BNFL want to hide. If Sellafield is shown to be unsafe the whole of Britain's nuclear programme could be in jeopardy.

Over the past few years the Government has used its cuts in public spending to push research institutions to seek the more direct patronage of Government departments and industry for funding particularly for research in radioactive pollution. It is an old story — those who pay the scientist can calibrate the geiger-counter. Recent results of Government sponsored research into the levels of radiation in the environment show clear signs of being laundered of unpalatable problems. But worse, the purse strings of state funding are pulling a muffle over the publication of research findings. Only ten per cent of this type of sponsored research has been published to the scientific community, let alone to the public. Worries about the effects of nuclear sites are, according to Con Allday of BNFL, 'born of ignorance'. It is an ignorance that the Government cherishes. Public knowledge would be a much more serious threat to the continued operation of Sellafield.

But charges of scientific censor-

ship and fraud are a trivial price for the state to pay for the vital role that Sellafield has for Britain's nuclear programme. Not only does Sellafield process fuel for nuclear reactors (a NUM-free source of energy) it also provides weapons-grade plutonium for both British and American nuclear missiles as well as a profitable sideline in reprocessing spent fuel from nuclear plants in Italy, France and Japan. Sellafield is not just a symbol of the risks of nuclear energy but occupies a crucial place in this country's nuclear programme. That is why it should be closed down.

Closing Sellafield is not the demand of the Kinnock leadership. John Cunningham, the party's environment spokesperson, calls only for better safety measures. This is of little surprise. The Labour Party inaugurated Britain's nuclear energy programme in the late 1940s and the right wing have always been enamoured of this oasis of British technological and industrial expertise. Under a capitalist state the nuclear energy programme is like an atomic bomb exploding in extremely slow motion — thousands of people will be killed but over tens of years instead of a few seconds. The left in the Labour Party has been at least muted on this. The European Parliament is for once right. Sellafield must be closed down and the workers now employed there should be asked and employed, as the Friends of the Earth say, to render the site safe — a task of years.

(SIMON MAY)

international UPFRONT



FMLN guerrillas in San Miguel.

Unions reorganise in El Salvador

SIX YEARS ago the people of El Salvador's cities were living through an immense popular struggle — street demonstrations, general strikes and armed self-defence followed one after another in a tide of mass action that was probably more intense and prolonged than anything seen in the Americas since the Mexican revolution.

Three years later the peace of the graveyard held sway over those same towns. Trade unions had been all but demolished by the murder of activists at a rate reaching thirty mutilated bodies a night. The struggle continued, but its focus had shifted, along with most surviving militants, to the war in the countryside.

In January 1986 the first labour movement delegation from this country to visit El Salvador found a situation that had changed again. The trade unions had reorganised, and workers begun to regain their confidence. The previous year had seen more than 65 strikes, involving some 60,000 workers in over 46 different unions, especially in the

public sector. In five years wages had lost more than half their purchasing power whilst nearly 70% of the workforce had no regular income at all. Now most strikes were winning significant, if still woefully inadequate, improvements in pay or conditions. Many had won on important issues of labour and civil rights: health workers and post office workers had both secured the release of arrested leaders, and in a long drawn-out dispute the water workers' union won the provisional return of legal recognition for its executive committee, but is still fighting for the reinstatement of 250 workers sacked earlier in the dispute.

Direct physical repression has not stopped. In the first eleven months of 1985, 53 trade unionists were arrested, ten were murdered and four disappeared. But such repression is now more selective, and it is combated with a whole armoury of quasi-legal instruments for breaking up the most militant role of trade union regroupment. In this situation, cross-union solidarity action has

proved crucial. It was out of such support for a catering workers dispute that the private sector Co-ordination of Workers Solidarity (CST) was first formed. Similar support for postal workers led to the formation of a State and Municipal Employees Co-ordination (CCTEM). Both came together with re-emerging agricultural workers' and students' unions to form the 1st May Committee. When civil servants from unions that had previously supported President Duarte's Christian Democratic government went on strike last autumn, several unions from these militant co-ordinating bodies took solidarity action in their support.

Several things should be noted about this process. First, although the particular forms of these co-ordinating efforts are fluid and may well change as circumstances demand, they are all energetically supported by what is certainly the backbone of this resurgent trade union movement, the FENASTRAS federation. Secondly, the kind of unity which these

co-ordinating initiatives embody is superior to any that has existed before, even in the insurrectionary days of 1980. This is because it is unity based not on a paper agreement at the top, but on extended experience of common action among rank and file union members.

Most importantly of all, this new militant trade unionism by combining its own immediate demands with the global political demand for talks with the FMLN and a negotiated solution to the war, has seized centre-stage in a critical new *political* phase of El Salvador's six year old civil war. The connection is obvious in everyone's daily experience. As the FENASTRAS posters all over San Salvador put it, "WITHOUT PEACE, THE CRISIS WILL NOT END". Equally obvious is the fact that the present regime and its US masters will not willingly engage in any serious sort of negotiations. Nor can either army expect to gain a decisive military victory in the foreseeable future. Already Duarte has opened 1985 by winding the war economy up another notch — a classic IMF balance-the-books package that has sent the price of basic commodities spiralling further out of most people's sight. As the Christian Democrats dance this grotesque military jig further rightwards, to the tune of the army high command and the US embassy, their own electoral base has disintegrated. The space is open for a return of *mass* politics on a scale unseen for years.

This urban mass movement does not yet exist in the full sense. The real level of organisation and participation is impressive, but still incipient. Many problems have yet to be tackled. One decisive factor will be the extent of international solidarity, both as a guarantor of trade unionists' physical safety, as a source of financial aid, and as moral support. When the British delegation joined a march in January against the austerity measures, the message was loud and clear — 'we need to know we are not alone'.

(STUART PIPER)

● If you want a speaker from the delegation for your TU or Labour Party branch, or other organisation, contact El Salvador Solidarity Campaign 01 928-3403/12.

Sinn Fein election setback

AS USUAL the January 23 bye-elections were a tale of two contests in the six counties: one orange, the other green. The orange vote almost equalled the total Unionist poll in the Westminster 1983 General Election. Although this was 80,000 below the ridiculous target of 500,000 set by Official Unionist Party (OUP) leader Jim Molyneux, it was a convincing demonstration of Loyalist opposition to the Anglo-Irish Deal.

It was a different story with the green vote: Sinn Fein lost heavily to the SDLP. Sinn Fein spokespersons explain this as a 'temporary' setback, in some cases the result of 'tactical' voting, in others caused by nationalist abstentions. We are left with the idea that the storm will pass.

Gerry Adams, for instance: 'Rejected any suggestion that the election was a defeat for Sinn Fein...' 'Rumours of the death of Sinn Fein are greatly exaggerated...' as people came to realise that the [Anglo-Irish] Agreement will not change the Northern state, the SDLP gains will be drastically reduced' (*Irish Times*, January 25 1986). Unfortunately this is false. The loss of 12000 votes, and a gain for the SDLP of 11000, is a defeat. This has to be faced in order that an urgent and realistic assessment of current revolutionary strategy can be made.

There was some 'tactical' voting for the SDLP, some nationalist abstention, and some SDLP gains at the expense of Alliance and the Workers' Party. This is a negative factor, however, and not something we can feel comfortable about. Sinn Fein thought by stressing the SDLP's refusal to enter a pact, Sinn Fein's vote would hold steady. This prediction was proved wrong. Why?

The answer lies in the origins of Sinn Fein's electoral strategy during the H-Block/Armagh



campaign. Then, demands were put on the SDLP to support the prisoners. With a mass movement growing in all 32 counties, the SDLP was forced to leave Bobby Sands a free run in Fermanagh/South Tyrone. In those areas where bourgeois politicians openly opposed the prisoners, they were thrown out of office — like Gerry Fitt in Belfast.

This was a major step forward for republicans consolidated by Sinn Fein's subsequent electoral offensive. It was described as 'the ballot-box and armalite' and it worked. Unfortunately there was a missing element: the mobilisation of the masses. The longer the mass movement was demobilised, the more Sinn Fein were going to face problems. The high tide of the electoral advance was June 1983. In the two subsequent contests — the EEC poll in 1984 and the local elections in 1985 — Sinn Fein's electoral advance was frozen, and the 1986 bye-elections show a breakthrough has been made by

the SDLP. We have witnessed the end of the electoral momentum generated by the H-Block/Armagh campaign. There is no way forward but rebuilding the mass movement to once again squeeze the SDLP collaborators and their allies in the Leinster House parliamentary parties.

In fairness to Sinn Fein, the proposal for a pact with the SDLP demonstrated their awareness of this problem. To boycott the election, when a challenge was thrown down by a name would have been worse — a reversion to the apolitical 'Me Fein' (For Myself) position of the 1970s. The resistance movement has to put forward transitional proposals which appear credible to the rank and file of the SDLP and the Leinster House parties without compromising revolutionary principles.

Sinn Fein's error was to put *no conditions at all* on a pact with the SDLP. This made it easy for Home to say 'get lost'. The SDLP had the Anglo-Irish Deal, and it

was making an impact.

The People's Democracy argued for Sinn Fein to place these conditions on unity with the SDLP.

- An Amnesty for Political Prisoners
- Disband the UDR and RUC
- End the Diplock Courts.

Of course the full republican/socialist programme goes beyond points like this. And it would have still been necessary to denounce the SDLP for its collaboration. But these are concrete demands: for the destruction of the Northern state and repressive apparatus. On this basis we should unite with any other political party which has nationalist aspirations.

Time has to be given to rebuilding a mass movement on a scale similar to the H-Block/Armagh campaign: the next 26 County elections provide an opportunity to begin that process.

(JAMES GALLAGHER)

Willis' surrender at Fortress Wapping

PAT HICKEY

THE STRIKE by the National Graphical Association and SOGAT '82 against Rupert Murdoch's News International Group of newspapers is one which has the gravest implications for the trade union movement in Britain. The sacking of 5,500 printers and their replacement by members of the EET-PU (Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union) is the most important union-busting operation since the 1920s. It is a further significant step in the process which began with the split in the NUM and the emergence of the UDM as an openly scab trade union.

A coalition of forces has emerged which includes the most class conscious warriors of the bourgeoisie, and the most reactionary and collaborationist wing of the trade union bureaucracy. The mass sackings and the razor wire should not delude anyone into thinking that Wapping is an aberration in the normal course of industrial relations in Britain — a case of a maverick and particularly ruthless employer confronting a particularly archaic and bloody minded group of trade unionists.

Events at Wapping underline the problems now hitting the trade union movement as a result of mass unemployment, industrial decline and anti-union legislation. The print industry is a clear example of the way in which a combination of technical, political and legal changes have undermined the traditional basis of the unions — and the failure of the trade union leadership to develop an adequate strategy to deal with the problems.

News International is not alone among Fleet Street employers in seeking to break the power of the unions in the industry. The Mirror Group has secured agreement for 2,100 redundancies ('in the British manner', as Maxwell puts it). The Express Group is seeking 2,800 redundancies — about 35%. Associated Newspapers has similar plans, as has the Guardian, and the Telegraph. Even these cuts are only an interim stage. All of the major employers have plans for introducing the kind of new technology used by News International.

Most of the Fleet Street employers are not yet ready to go as far as Murdoch. They do not have the facilities at the moment, but the cut-throat competition between the newspaper barons of Fleet Street will force them on to the same path. After all, it was Eddie Shah's decision to move into the national newspaper scene that provided the catalyst to current developments in Fleet Street.

Shah has already demonstrated his ability to take on the unions — and the TUC — and



win. The Warrington dispute was the first major demonstration of the decisive importance of the anti-union laws in defeating the unions. The dispute cost the NGA nearly £2 million in fines, damages and legal costs. The NGA appealed to the TUC to honour

'Warrington was the first demonstration of the decisive importance of the anti-union laws in defeating the unions'

its decisions to oppose the anti-union laws and to support any union penalised under the laws. The TUC refused. The NGA's own policy of confining the strike to the Stockport Messenger and refusing to call a national stoppage contributed to this defeat, as did the failure of the print unions to present a united response.

The ruling class drew two lessons from this strike. The first, and most important, was that the TUC had faced the first big test of its Wembley conference decisions, and had failed. This was undoubtedly a major factor in the decision that the time was right to attack the NUM.

In the print industry, the employers decided it was opportune to open a major assault. Shah announced plans for a new daily, and did a deal with the EETPU ignoring the print unions. Provincial newspapers also moved in. The Wolverhampton Express and Star, The Kent Messenger, the Birmingham Post and Mail, and the Portsmouth and Sunderland Group all introduced the new technology. The unions in the industry showed little unity in the face of this attack. SOGAT '82 and the NUJ both came into conflict with the NGA, which was the main loser from the new technology. It has pursued a 'follow the job' strategy, which meant NGA members moving into departments

traditionally dominated by the other two unions. The result was SOGAT and NUJ members crossing NGA picket lines at the Kent Messenger, and NGA members crossing NUJ picket lines at the Portsmouth News.

This disunity opened the door to the employers — and to the EETPU. In this, the print unions mirrored the TUC. The print unions face an industry-wide attack, demanding an industry-wide response. That will mean a major confrontation with the anti-union laws which in turn means calling on the TUC for support.

The Warrington dispute and the miners' strike are not encouraging experiences for this strategy, however, not to take this course means defeat at the hands of the employers and the law. It also opens the door to those unions which see opportunities for themselves through collaboration with employers and the law.

The print unions have not adopted this course. On the contrary, their strategy has been to limit the dispute to News International and to have the minimum possible conflict with the law. Picketing is kept to a minimum. The aim appears to be to win public sympathy and to pressure Murdoch into being more reasonable. Murdoch has responded by indicating that he may be prepared to make some concessions on redundancy payments on 'humanitarian' grounds.

This approach has the complete agreement of the TUC which also was involved in an offer to Murdoch which gave him all of his demands except a legally binding no-strike deal. The offer was rejected because Murdoch does not believe in the ability of the Fleet Street unions to discipline their members in the way the EETPU can. In any case, why stop half way when complete victory is within one's grasp?

If this is true for Murdoch, it is also true for the right wing in the TUC. Using the threat of the creation of a rival right wing federation, which would include the EETPU, the AUEW, the UDM, and the PTA — at least — they are effectively determining TUC policy on cash for ballots, anti-union laws, single union deals and other key issues.

This is the nub of the problem. The TUC has been moving to the right since the Tory victory in June 1983. The process was begun with the September 1983 Congress and its policy of 'new realism'. It was interrupted by the Warrington dispute later that year, and even more of course, by the historic struggle of the NUM. Since those defeats, however, the rightwards move has resumed. The main victors from these defeats were the centre/right bureaucracy. The extreme right of the TUC has seized the opportunity to accelerate the process, by exploiting the central contradiction in the TUC's policy — that while the TUC has a policy on paper of opposition to the anti-union laws, in practice all of the unions are taking steps to comply with them. The right has proclaimed publicly what the others are doing privately, albeit more slowly and more reluctantly. Each time the need and opportunity arose to fight, the TUC has backed off.

This point is essential. It would be wrong to see the dispute between the EETPU and the majority of the TUC as similar to that which led to the split in the NUM. In the NUM the right wing split because the left leadership of the union, the forces around Scargill, insisted on mobilising the struggle forces in the ranks. The left did not expel the Notts miners who form the overwhelming bulk of the UDM. It was the right who decided to split, basing themselves on those who had actively scabbed throughout the dispute. Even then, the choice was posed for the Notts miners on whether to leave the NUM.

The left in the TUC has not followed the policy pursued by the NUM. The division over Wapping is not one between those who have actively pursued a class struggle policy and those who have scabbed. Undoubtedly, the EETPU has scabbed — but not in the way that the current membership of the UDM has done, as we shall see. Equally, the TUC has not pursued a policy of class struggle as did the NUM leadership.

'The print unions face an industry-wide attack, demanding an industry wide response'

The UDM was created from those who consciously decided to leave the NUM because of their hostility to the struggle. The same cannot be said of the 350,000 members of the EETPU. It would be wrong simply to expel the EETPU, and not deal at the same time with the failure of the TUC leadership to provide a lead on the major issues facing trade unionists — or even to live up to their own promises, policies and declarations when the chips are down.

The bureaucracy poses the problem in terms of the EETPU's incursion into areas which are traditionally the sphere of influence of other unions. They ignore the case of Shah's deal with the EETPU. They are less concerned with the scabbing of the EETPU than with the Bridlington agreement. Hence, the farcical 'instructions' to the EETPU. They condemn not the class character of the EETPU's actions, but its breach of the bureaucratic conventions.

While overall trade union membership is declining the pressure on the bureaucracy is tremendous, and will increase. Their response is a more cautious policy, avoiding costly strikes and even more costly brushes with the law. The concern is to preserve spheres of influence, and this is the central objective of the TUC's present stand. The EETPU itself, has not been slow to take advantage of this policy. In 1983 it brought in the TUC to prevent its 1,500 Fleet St electricians joining SOGAT '82.

Although these questions are important, they are not fundamental. The EETPU, under its present leadership, and in alliance with the AUEW and other right wing led unions will exert political pressure on the TUC whether in or out of the TUC. Its main

objective, whatever twists and turns may occur en route, is to win a solid right wing majority in the TUC. The threat of an alternative right wing federation is a powerful weapon in this project. But they do not, at this stage, intend a permanent breach with the TUC. As Hammond put it, 'Why get off the ship when it's going in our direction?'

It is noteworthy that no major section of the bourgeoisie is pushing for a split in the TUC. They do not wish to see their companies become the arena for open inter-union warfare. They consider that to a considerable extent the unions have been tamed — figures for 1985, if the miners are excluded, show the lowest number of strikes for 50 years. They have noted the TUC's unwillingness to put militant talk into action. And they consider that the right wing is doing a very good job on their behalf within the TUC. A split which removed the right, leaving a weakened but still powerful TUC in the hands of the left is not in their interests, at this stage.

The question for the left is how to deal with a right wing which is determining the policy of the TUC, and how, if a split is to occur will it be carried through? Our answer must be a policy of open warfare against scab leaders. In the case of the EETPU there should be no question of expelling all 350,000 members along with Hammond. He and the other EETPU leaders should undoubtedly be expelled — but he should not be allowed to walk away with his union intact. The left does not regard the union as the property of its leaders. The TUC, and certainly the left should be helping the left in the EETPU to organise against the leadership to remove it, and in any case to remain loyal to the TUC, and their fellow trade unionists. The onus for splits should be placed where it belongs — on the right.

This of course means breaking the bureaucratic protocol that one union leader does not interfere in the domain of another. It will, however, mean that the threat of a split ceases to be a useful blackmail weapon. Moreover, to give such a policy teeth the TUC will have to start delivering on its policies, which currently mean the TUC declaring its intention to give full backing to an all-out strike by the print unions and to confront the law in order to defeat Murdoch.

Such a course has real prospects of success with the government weakened and under considerable pressure. For the current retreat by the TUC is occurring when there is genuine opportunity for advance. Similarly, in the Labour Party, where the leadership has adopted a range of policies which could well be embraced by the Alliance, avoiding putting forward a radical alternative and relying on 'style' and appeals to public sympathy rather than struggle.

Rather, the labour bureaucracy is waiting for the Tories to lose, than fighting to win.

If these policies become the basis of a future government, (and the general election draws ever closer) then the increasingly fragile unity of the TUC will come under even greater strain. In the meantime, every retreat and concession will make it harder to win the inevitable battle.

The Heseltine affair

The Empire strikes back?

What lies behind the Westland imbroglio? Heseltine's challenge for leadership of the Tories and also Star Wars, argues **OLIVER MACDONALD**. And behind Star Wars lies the British state's client relationship to the US. Any left strategy that fails to break the Washington connection will be nugatory.

THERE IS NOW overwhelming evidence that what ended as a Heseltine exocet square amidships of the Thatcher faction, began as a Thatcher Goose Green against a besieged Heseltine, aided, as so often, by Reaganite logistic support. And the real source of this winter war was not Westlands at all but Star Wars.

In the autumn, the Thatcherite faction knew they faced a growing threat within the Tory party and the capitalist class. The devastated industrial base, big city wasteland, growing electoral threat and the beginning of the decline in oil output all pointed towards a Tory assault on Thatcherism in the name of state-led domestic capital accumulation and technological regeneration. The heavy defeat inflicted on the trade union movement removed a key obstacle to such an assault. Who would lead it or be ready to profit from it? There was an obvious answer: Mr State Capitalism himself, son of Heath over at the Ministry of Defence, otherwise known as Goldilocks.

Heseltine made no secret of his loathing of Thatcher's anti-industrial, anti-Europe policy, pro-banker, retailer and rentier policy. In all these fields Thatcher fitted perfectly with US interests. Heseltine did not. He made his disagreements clear at the Tory conference. But contrary to subsequent myth, he is not a rash politician. He was moving cautiously. Only something that would put his entire career at risk could have made him engage in the all out war that he launched in December.

That something was not Westlands — a minor issue — but Star Wars. We now know (thanks to an article in the *Times* by David Watt, former chief of the Royal Institute of International Affairs) that Goldilocks was strongly opposed to Star Wars. So was the Foreign Office, in the spring at least. Leaving aside the military and political objections, the hostility from pro-European technological and industrial nationalists like Heseltine was all too obvious. But the last thing you do in the Tory leadership these days is flatly oppose the central plank of



Heseltine inspects the troops.

Reagan's foreign policy. Even Howe's ever-so mealy-mouthed attempt to pose a question mark on SDI last Spring brought a holocaust of abuse, much of it public, down upon him from Washington and the Reaganite group here. So instead Heseltine put a condition on any Star Wars deal, a condition he knew Washington would never accept: he demanded a billion dollars on the table before he would put pen to paper.

'...the last thing you do in the Tory leadership these days is flatly oppose the central plank of Reagan's foreign policy.'

That was where matters stood in late November as the Geneva summit came: no deal. But as soon as the summit was over, the Reaganites turned nasty and started putting the heat on. Continued MoD stubbornness led them to cast diplomatic niceties aside and ridicule Heseltine in London's Anglo-American press. Meanwhile Thatcher got a briefing from Reagan on the summit. Then another one from Schultz. Then another from Weinberger and no doubt many others.

And then lo and behold, Goldilocks was sitting there next to Weinberger signing the Star Wars deal he had been fighting. As Watt explained, Heseltine had been out-

manoeuvred by Thatcher: she had done her own deal with the Americans and then used the cabinet committee system to defeat Heseltine.

This must have seemed to Thatcher like one of her most brilliant operations; she had offered her enemy only two options, one crippling, the other suicidal. To resign, rather than sign the deal, was suicidal. This would have meant public opposition to Washington's central plank at the Geneva summit, an opposition using language similar to much of what Gorbachev was saying. A Tory Minister of Defence wobbling towards the enemy! How about a joint press conference with E.P. Thompson? Yet not to have resigned here would cut Heseltine off from many of his allies in Europe and undermine his credentials as a future champion of technological and industrial nationalism in the fight for the Tory leadership.

What Thatcher overlooked in that triumphant second week of December, was Heseltine's third option, namely all out war against *part* of her Star Wars deal with the US — the Westland part of the package.

This is where we come to the real core of Downing Street's cover-up operation, the inner secret that paralysed Thatcher in the face of the Heseltine offensive. Because the facts are hidden we can rely only on circumstantial evidence. Yet the case is overwhelming:

One, Thatcher was centrally involved, on her own behalf, against Heseltine, in the Star Wars negotiations.

Two, these negotiations, though formally with the Pentagon, were really with the big

US corporations doing the Star Wars work. One of the biggest of these corporations involved in Star Wars is United Technologies (UT), the seventh-largest company in the USA. When the Star Wars talks were going on, UT had already put in a bid to get hold of Westland.

Three, after the Star Wars deal was signed, it emerged that UT was offering Westland Star Wars work.

Four, it was not the Department of Trade and Industry which was championing the UT link-up with Westland and opposing a European bid, it was Thatcher who intervened in the second week of December to block the European option.

All this points in one clear direction: during her Star Wars talks with Washington, Thatcher committed herself to the UT bid for Westland.

This gave Heseltine his opening, for he already had unambiguous MoD policy that ruled out any deal with UT, the government was expressly committed to buying its next three types of military helicopters from West European design and production units. When Kohl was in London for a routine meeting with Thatcher, he took the opportunity to pop in and see Heseltine. They decided to strengthen the line against UT by arranging for the National Armaments Directors to meet and recommend no West European purchase of American helicopters.

'Thatcher was centrally involved, on her own behalf, against Heseltine, in the Star Wars negotiations.'

Thus was Thatcher paralysed: she could not *oppose* the European bid that Goldilocks put together, yet she was already *committed* to the American link up. In this way she was led into the morass of publicly insisting she was neutral while working behind the scenes for the American deal. The more Heseltine made the struggle public, the more difficult her position became, until the blow-out of 9 January.

Thus the so-called Westland affair sprang from the mixing together of US pressure over Star Wars and the struggle between the Thatcher faction and its enemies within the Tory party and within the wider institutions of the ruling class. This may seem like a random combination of factors, but there is nothing random about them at all. For in fact both the rise and the crisis of the Thatcher faction has been the story of a very special kind of politics, still too little debated and analysed on the left. To grasp its nature we must return to the origins of the British state's transformation into client status.

The British political establishment, Labour as well as Tory, sought client status piecemeal, often in the face of US reluctance to get involved in some British ruling class project. We can briefly summarise some of the main stages:

One, terrified of the strength of the mass Communist parties on the continent, Labour



Thatcher: Atlanticist above all else.

wanted to drag US military power back across the Atlantic. So it gave Washington an open door for military bases in Britain in the late 1940s.

Two, after the Suez debacle, Macmillan reversed Eden's efforts to defend the Empire (sterling area) against US encroachments, and turned it into a British controlled sub-system *within* the American sphere. This obviated the need for empire-based British capital to painfully restructure.

Three, the failure of the British rocket programme in the late 1950s, led Macmillan to turn to Washington for 'British' missiles.

Four, in the 1960s British efforts to protect the Sterling area militarily from internal threats and from budget crisis at home collapsed and led to the sterling area's demise. British capital operating in this area, however, simply adapted to living under the dollar, and sought to ensure that British domestic and foreign policy did not involve steps that could anger Washington and lead to reprisals against their own interests.

Five, partly as a by-product of the imperial orientation, the domestic economy declined steadily to the point where the state was far weaker economically than either the West German state or France and its ability to operate as a political force in Europe depended increasingly on its military status, above all its possession of American nukes. This international status, as a nuclear power, was also vital for the ideology of the Tory party domestically as the party of 'Great' Britain.

The trade off for succumbing to client status to the US was that Washington would pretend that the British state was a mighty and much respected partner. This fiction increasingly evaporated as London could not be an important element even in the ceremonial side of US diplomacy. The domestic legitimacy of the British state still requires the US not demonstrate just how impotent and subordinate the state is in the face of US muscle.

'...international status as a nuclear power was vital for the ideology of the Tory Party domestically'

The one serious attempt to reverse the drift towards ever closer dependence on Washington came not from the left but the right, and from within the state bureaucracy — the Heath-William Armstrong partnership at the start of the seventies. It was the catastrophic defeat of that effort which produced Thatcherism. The replacement of Heath by the semi-Poujadist Thatcherites is usually seen on the left as a move towards all-out onslaught on the trade union movement by revanchistes in the Tory party. This is right, but only part of the story. Thatcher's victory in 1975 was also used by those in the capitalist class who loathed and feared aspects of Heath's policies to stage a comeback. What these people hated was Heath's switch from the US connection towards a new close alliance with France, his switch from sterling stability to all-out efforts at domestic industrial growth, and his readiness to drag on industry into corporatist structures while ignoring City interests. All those forces that had blocked rapid domestic capital accumulation in the past and who had been pushed aside by Heath were ready under Thatcher in 1979, to rebuild Anglo-American capitalist links, to re-assert City interests, the interests of the large importing retailers. They have made a killing in the last seven years, hammering the industrial base harder than ever they had done in the fifties and sixties. And their economic interests fitted perfectly with the political frenzy of small business people wanting war against labour the more they were hit by big capital.

By the late 1970s, the US was taking its post-war gloves off in its relations with Western Europe. The US wanted to restructure Western Europe so that it would fit into America's planned new global international division of labour and social system. The



Ernest Bevin, Labour's Foreign Secretary. After the war, he allied with Washington against the Soviet Union and established the Atlanticist framework for future British governments

enemies of these US plans were the corporatist bureaucrats of Western Europe with their penchant for nationalised industries and protectionism as well as the social democratic parties with their similar instincts, fueled by welfare state constituencies and links with unions worried about jobs.

Here was the basis for a beautiful friend-

ship between Thatcherism and Reaganism — down with British protectionism, free the capital markets, free the people from nationalised industries and from local government bureaucracy, free the City, free the workers from trade union dictatorship. The *National Westminster Bank Quarterly Review* sounded the clarion call in 1979 with a warn-

ing of 'how far Britain has slipped from liberty towards totalitarian dictatorship'. Thatcher picked its boss, Leigh-Pemberton to take over the Bank of England. (He, by the way, is the person responsible for picking Cuckney to run Westland, last summer).

Now Thatcher's winter crisis over Westland and more recently BL has arrived, in the wake of the devastation of the lives of millions and with the prospect of a horrendous and explosive economic and social crisis as the oil money runs out, in the next few years.

The history of the transformation of the British state into a client imperialist apparatus shows that its source has lain in deliberate action by factions within the British ruling class and today its effects are to hamstring any attempt at reconciling the interests of working class people with the requirements of capital. Thus, any attempts to follow a serious full employment policy will involve taking measures which will bring Labour into conflict not just with the City but with Washington and attempts to follow a policy of strengthening the welfare state will mean a struggle not just with the British military-industrial complex but with Washington. The same is true even in fields such as civil liberties, and of course in all aspects of foreign policy.

'...any attempts to follow a serious full employment policy will bring Labour into conflict not just with the City but with Washington'

What the Labour leadership hope is that they can find a way of reconciling class interests despite everything by finding support from two types of people: a national industrial bourgeoisie here, ready to go with Labour against the groups of capitalists that have made a packet out of Thatcherism; and secondly a grouping of people within Washington which is at least not actively hostile to social democratic government in countries like Britain and West Germany.

There are, of course, sections of industrial capital hostile to Thatcherism. But they are with Heseltine and all he represents: corporatism of the right, anti-trade unionism, expelling workers from production and removing Labour from its post-war position as a key pillar in the political system. As for people in Washington ready to live with social democracy in NATO Europe — who can come up with a single name anywhere near the centres of power in the US? For the capitalists of the 1980s Labour's only role is to prevent the labour movement from fighting effectively in defence of its interests. The power of the American state within British politics is a key instrument for protecting the British ruling class from unwelcome efforts by Labour to protect workers' interests. A policy for jobs and for welfare has to be an anti-capitalist policy and a policy challenging the American connection.



South Africa: workers again

With every day Botha's apartheid regime lurches further towards terminal crisis. One of the most remarkable features of recent South African history has been the resurgence of black trade unions. The aspirations of this young black workers' movement, argues **CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN**, will not be merely anti-apartheid but anti-capitalist.

RECENT EVENTS have highlighted the crisis which is rending the South African ruling class. An important section of the ruling class — that section connected with finance capital — looked forward to Botha's speech at the opening of the tri-cameral parliament in January 1986 for some sign of a radical change. These hopes were summed up last November by the governor of the country's Reserve Bank, Dr. Gerhard de Kock. Expressing his concern at the mounting economic crisis which faced South Africa, he said that in the face of mounting foreign pressure for tangible evidence of reform as a precondition for debt rescheduling, capital was still draining away from the country and that it would continue to do so unless perceptions that South Africa was in an Iranian-type pre-revolutionary period changed. He went on to say that he expected the Government to introduce political and constitutional reforms at the next parliament that would go far enough to win support of 'moderate opinion, black and white', in the republic and in some African states.¹

In the event Dr. de Kock must have been sorely disappointed. True, President Botha did say that 'We have outgrown the outdated conception of apartheid.' He also said that the pass laws would be abolished. It was not long before the reality of these 'reforms' began to impinge on the rhetoric. In the very opening session where Botha made his second attempt to get his feet muddled in the Rubicon, 'coloured' members of the tri-cameral parliament were refused admission to the restaurant in the whites-only chamber of that parliament. More seriously, four days after Botha spoke, the Minister of Education, F.W. de Klerk (favourite to succeed Botha), declared that racially segregated education and residential areas, as well as political representation on the basis of race, was here to stay. He emphasised that there would *never* be integrated education — shades of Ian Smith's 1000 years of white rule in Rhodesia and Hitler's thousand-year Reich. When Foreign Minister 'Pik' Botha, whose task it is to make South African politics acceptable to the wider world, took

the President's words seriously, that Blacks would be brought into the decision-making machine and that South Africa was a country of all its peoples and that no one group should be able to dominate others, and said that inevitably, one day, South Africa would have a black president, he was sharply ticked off.

Now — it's pieces for everybody

The abolition of the hated 'dompas' also turned out to be a mirage. Minister of Home Affairs, Stoffel Botha — yes, another Botha — explained that the pass law legislation will be replaced by a uniform ID book for all, which is expected to contain fingerprints. So now we are going to have passes for whites as well as blacks. In practice, of course, this will not bring much solace to the blacks. No South African police officer would dare to stop a white citizen and ask for their ID book or summarily arrest him or her should they fail to produce it. But this will continue to be the fate of South Africa's blacks.

There can be no doubt that the Botha programme of reforms has been a deep disappointment to an important section of the white ruling class. This is reflected in the resignations from parliament of Dr. van Zyl Slabbert, the leader of the white opposition Progressive Federal Party (PFP) and of his designated successor, Alan Boraine. The

'the very growth of South African capitalism, its rapid expansion during the boom years, had produced its gravedigger — the black proletariat'

PFP, is the parliamentary representative of the major capitalist and imperialist interests in South Africa. Their opposition to apartheid springs from the need for South African capitalism for a more mobile and stabilised workforce than the apartheid laws allow. They also realise that the continued violence in the townships is an effective deterrent to capital investment from abroad. This section of South African capitalism, backed by the multi-nationals, genuinely seek a road away from apartheid but which will leave the capitalist economy intact.

There is also a section of the ruling National Party, under the spur of the growth of Afrikaner capitalism, who have moved away from the crude Verwoedean concept of apartheid and who are prepared to see drastic changes. 'Pik' Botha and the Nationalist MP, Wynand Malan, who sought a dialogue with the ANC, are representatives of this faction. De Klerk and Stoffel Botha are fearful that they will lose their base to the right wing Conservative Party and the Herstigte National Party (HNP). President Botha is trying desperately to sit astride both camps.

Botha, of course, has been pressurised into his programme of 'reforms' both by internal and foreign capital, and by the growing resistance movement, which has created the gravest crisis in South African history. Last year he promised to restore South African citizenship to black people living in South Africa but deemed to be citizens of the 'independent' homelands. He further undertook to negotiate the return of South African citizenship to people living in these so-called 'independent' states. This has not stopped the move toward 'independence' of KwaNdebele, a tiny 'self-governing national-state' north-east of Pretoria.

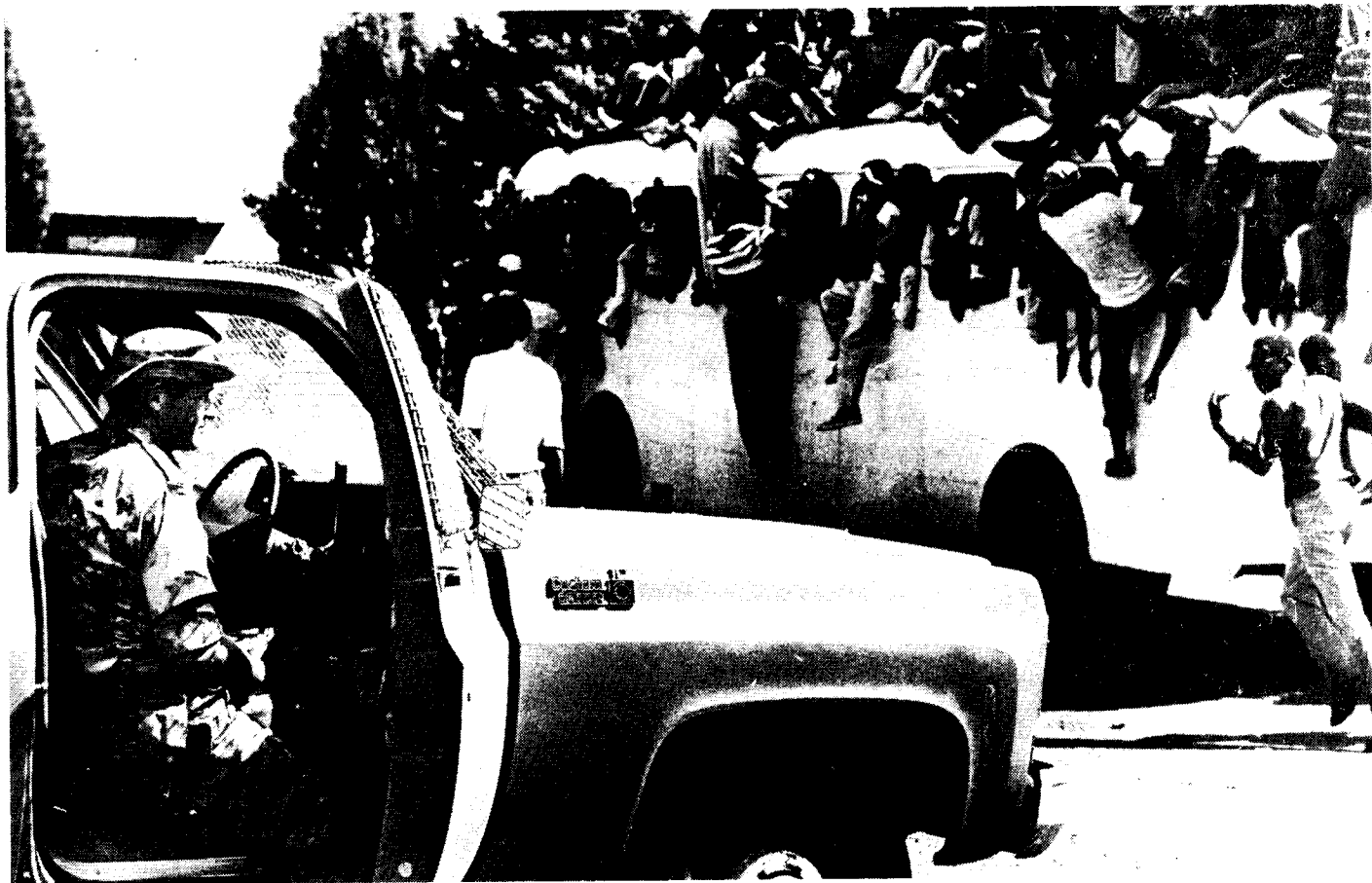
Botha still has a very long way to go if he wants to give any substance to his declaration that South Africa has 'outgrown the outdated system of apartheid.' Citizenship for all is not being interpreted as equal voting rights to a unitary parliament. He is not even contemplating the merging of the present tri-racial parliament, in which each race has its own chamber, into a single legislative assembly. This means that the Population Registration Act, under which each group in the population is identified as black, coloured, Indian or white, will remain on the statute book.

Apartheid's crisis

The picture emerging from South Africa is a contradictory one. On the one hand, the regime has been doling out the minimum of reforms, on the other, it has strengthened the apparatus of repression. Even before Botha's speech made the headlines, black people were dying under police bullets in the townships. We have to look at the background to the situation of the past two or three years which has compelled the regime to embark on the 'reform' exercise and which has also determined the limits to which Botha is prepared or able to go.

The past two years have been marked by violent resistance to the regime and all it stands for throughout the length and breadth of South Africa. The structures of racial oppression have been challenged by a national liberation movement on a scale unprecedented in the history of the country. Among all sections of the oppressed there is a united demand for a non-racial democratic state, a one-nation state with equal rights and opportunities for all. This has led to a revival of popular national movements, after two decades of quiescence since the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan-African Congress (PAC) following the Sharpsville massacre in March, 1960. The most widely supported of these national movements is, undoubtedly, the ANC. The Freedom Charter, which is the programme of the ANC, embodies the immediate demands of all sections of the oppressed. But the ideological and political aims of the Freedom Charter are shared by several, perfectly legal organisations in South Africa. The United Democratic Front (UDF), Na-

t apartheid



South African riot police watches a defiant crowd during a funeral in Orlando, a district of Soweto.

tional Forum (NF), Azapo and even, to some extent, the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) are all committed, at least on paper, to the establishment of a "united democratic South Africa, free from oppression and economic exploitation."

Enter the working class

While the media headlines have concentrated on the battles in the townships and the growing influence of the ANC and the UDF, the real source of the developing struggle has to be sought elsewhere.

After 1963, with the suppression of the national liberation movement, and the economic boom of the years 1963-73, the regime had a decade of relative political tranquility. White South Africa felt safe. It not only enjoyed one of the highest living standards in the world but it was surrounded by a number of so-called 'buffer' states — the Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique and the settler-ruled Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). The economies of all these countries were closely integrated with, and dependent on, South African capitalism. They supplied South Africa's mines and industries with labour power, raw materials and services (such as transport). Inside South Africa all appeared quiet under the rule of the sjambok and the machine gun. Its frontiers were guarded by trusted allies. The only irritant was the increasing activity of the SWAPO guerillas in their Namibian colony. All this was to change in the decade which followed.

The initiative passed from the ruling class to the masses. It was now the apartheid regime and the ideology which it was based on, which was on the defensive.

The victory of Frelimo in Mozambique, the collapse of Portuguese rule in Angola; the successes of Mugabe's guerillas in Rhodesia gave a tremendous boost to the self-confidence of the masses in South Africa. The whites were not invincible. Their superior military and technical equipment could not ultimately prevail over the aroused wrath of the people. Smith's '1000 years' of white rule was to last only a few more years. South Africa's capitalism was stronger and its armed forces more powerful than its neighbours' to the north. But the very growth of South African capitalism, its rapid expansion during the boom years, had produced its gravedigger — the black proletariat.

The wave of strikes which began in Durban at the end of 1972 and the beginning of 1973, marked the re-birth of the black/independent trade union movement in South Africa. Starting spontaneously as strikes for higher wages to meet the sharp rise in prices caused by the world economic crisis of the 1960s, it was not long before the need for organisation began to emerge. Hitherto black workers who were unionised had been accommodated in the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), a multi-racial as opposed to a non-racial national centre.

TUCSA's attitude toward organising black workers was highly ambivalent. At times, to conform to government legislation, which prohibited 'mixed' unions, it expelled its black workers, only to take them back later. In the 1970s, TUCSA allowed blacks to affiliate in exclusively black 'parallel' unions, which remained highly dependent on their parent 'white' unions for finance and administration. These TUCSA unions were quite incapable of meeting the rising expectations of the black workers following the successful strike actions in 1973. By 1975 black workers were putting forward the demand for the right to organise as well as demands about wages and conditions.

Born in combat, the fledgling unions overcame the restrictions of government legislation. Firmly rooted on the shop floor, the unionised workers were also able to give cohesion and leadership to the struggles of students and the petty-bourgeoisie which began to wrack the townships and culminated in the great Soweto uprising of 1976. At this stage, the dominant ideological form of these struggles was the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM); but from then on the working class began to place its own distinctive mark on the future evolution of the struggle in South Africa.

The road to unity

The growth of the trade union movement in South Africa is almost unique in the annals



of international working class history. Among the unions which have affiliated to the new Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) has over 100,000 paid-up members, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) 120,000, the Commercial, Catering & Allied Workers of South Africa (CCAWSA) 42,000, Food & Canning Workers Union 28,000. Altogether 500,000 organised workers are affiliated to the new confederation. There are powerful groups of unions grouped under the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions (AZACTU) and the Confederation of South Africa Unions (COSU) who have, only for the time being, we hope, remained outside the Confederation. When we appreciate that two decades ago all these unions were non-existent we get some idea of their phenomenal growth. More remarkable, this expansion of the union movement and the gains they have wrested from the bosses, have coincided with a severe economic depression in South Africa — against a background of retrenchment and rising unemployment.

This explosion of working class power, culminating in the unification of most of the major union federations and some unaffiliated unions, has, inevitably, made its mark on the political organisations engaged in struggle against the apartheid state. The ANC, UDF, AZAPO — all refer to the 'leading role of the working class' although in the case of the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) this appears to be merely a recognition of workers' numerical weight in the population. But once the working class enters the political scene, while supporting the struggle for national liberation, for elementary democratic rights, as incorporated in the Freedom Charter and in the Manifestos of the National Forum (NF), AZAPO and others, it adds its own imprint — specific working class, anti-capitalist demands.

The workers and politics

One of the factors which has prohibited the majority of trade unionists organised in the major unions from affiliating to the UDF is the fear of losing one of their greatest gains — workers' control. Most of the unions are organised with effective shop floor control over the leadership. The constitution of the UDF, where every affiliated organisation, whether it be a small community group or one with a mass base has one vote, seems to the workers to counteract this principle, painfully built into the union structures through years of struggle. Hence, Cyril Ramaphosa, secretary of the powerful NUM, in his keynote address to the opening of COSATU's founding conference stressed that while COSATU must contribute to the liberation struggle it must not be 'at the expense of building up support in the factories.' He went on to say that it was 'vital to ensure that whatever alliances are struck with political movements are made on terms favourable to workers'. It was clear from this and other contributions that when the organised workers join forces with the

political wings of the liberation movement to overthrow the apartheid state it would not be simply to replace the white bourgeoisie with a black bourgeoisie.

This should come as no surprise to anyone who has followed the evolution of the trade union movement in South Africa. Faced with growing unemployment, the unions have identified government policy and the capitalist economic system as the final causes of unemployment. Thus the 1984 May Day demands were for immediate social security and full employment policies, *as well as* for fundamental social transformation in the interests of the working class.

return on their labour and that the system has been based on the denial of their political rights. In addition, it holds that the free enterprise system cannot solve the present economic crisis.

COSATU has also vigorously denied Buthelezi's allegations that it is a 'front' for the African National Congress (ANC). It maintains that all its decisions are based on democratic mandates from members. While defending its right to involve itself in politics, and to demand the unbanning of political organisations.⁴

This is, of course, not a repudiation of politics or a retreat into economism or

All the armies that ever marched
 All the parliaments that ever sat
 have not affected the life of man on earth
 as much as one solitary life
 I am proud to be what I am
 The storm of oppression will be followed by the reign of my blood
 I am proud to give my life, my one solitary life.

BENJAMIN MOLOISE, a South African poet sympathetic to the ANC, was executed in 1985, age thirty, by the South African government.

The unions have, in many cases, gone beyond the immediate programme of the Freedom Charter and put forward transitional demands which challenge the hegemony of capitalism in the workplace. Thus in the dispute between OK Bazaars and CCAWSA and that between Foshini and the same union in 1985, they forced the employers to open the books, to disclose financial information. Management has also been challenged successfully on the right to hire and fire at will. Thus Coca-Cola was forced to reduce the number of planned retrenchments from 203 to 63.

When the government-sponsored Wiehahn Commission argued in favour of granting trade union rights to Africans in 1979, it was on the assumption that by giving the new unions a role in the industrial relations machinery and at the same time introducing a small package of 'reforms', they would be able to satisfy the political aspirations of the blacks without granting them meaningful rights. How singularly this dream of the ruling class has been frustrated! A recent survey states, '...there is now clear evidence that all emergent unions not only accept that they have a political role to play, but are willing to act accordingly...'⁵

At the first meeting of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of COSATU, held in February, the new Confederation once again distanced itself from any of the existing political movements. It resolved: 'that COSATU would not affiliate itself to any political organisation so that it can maintain an independent political position'.

COSATU's stand on free enterprise is that blacks in SA have not received a fair

syndicalism, as some critics of the independent trade union has maintained but a re-iteration of the deeply-held conviction that the programme of none of the existing organisations, UDF, ANC, Azapo, National Forum, give adequate expression to the aspirations of the workers *as a class*. This was, perhaps, most clearly expressed in an interview with Moses Mayekiso, secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers' Union in the Transvaal (one of the most important and powerful FOSATU affiliates), in the *Socialist Worker Review* last year:

'At present the FOSATU shop stewards' councils, and also MAWU, are discussing the political set-up. We are looking at the crisis and the solutions to the crisis. The general feeling is that the workers must have their own party and their own freedom charter

'The Charter (The Freedom Charter) is a capitalist document. We need a workers' charter that will say clearly who will control the farms, presently owned by the capitalists, who will control the factories, the miners and so on. There must be a change of the whole society. Through the shop stewards' councils people are opposed to this idea that there will be two stages towards liberation. That we must clean up capitalism first, then socialism. It's a waste of time, a waste of energy and a waste of people's blood.'

The debate continues

It is precisely on this issue of workers' control, on the nature of the class which will take power in South Africa when the hated apartheid regime is finally overthrown, which is

the subject of debate in the working class and liberation movements today. These debates are not academic exercises, but are taking place in the heat of the struggle which itself will give the final answer. All the demands of the Freedom Charter can be met within the framework of a welfare-state capitalism. While such a state could be a million-fold improvement on today's South Africa, in Britain, we know the nature of such a state: what the capitalists can give today — or be forced to give, they can take away tomorrow. There can be no guarantee that a Nelson Mandela or Oliver Tambo will not one day be followed by a Margaret Thatcher.

Nationalisation of key industries, as outlined in the Charter, is an absolute prerequisite for any socialist economy, but these nationalisations are also feasible under an economy which is basically capitalist. What is key is the class nature of the state. Which class is in control? The Charter's answer is that 'The people shall govern, that every man and woman should have the right to vote, and take part in the administration of the country, regardless of race, sex and colour.' Demands which the workers will support but again it is not clear who controls and how. Nothing short of a system of government in which the people have not only the right to elect their representatives but the right to recall them if they should prove unsatisfactory will satisfy the workers of South Africa. This has been learned from building their own organisations, the working class will not accept less from the state which they will help to bring into being.

'Nothing short of a system of government in which the people have not only the right to elect their representatives but the right to recall them if they prove unsatisfactory will satisfy the workers of South Africa'

The South African masses are engaged in a struggle which can only end in the overthrow of apartheid. It is going to be a hard and bitter struggle with victories and setbacks. In this struggle the South African revolutionaries will need help. Speaking to the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid on 11 October 1985, Dr. Neville Alexander said: '... it ought to be clear that anti-apartheid forces throughout the world have to do everything in their power to assist in altering the position of the exploited and oppressed Azanians inside and outside the country.

'One of the most important of these tasks is that of helping us to forge unity in our movement for national liberation. South Africa is one of the most complex social formations in the world today. Not for nothing has it been called a microcosm of the world. It is a place where all the major contradictions and divisions that tear apart the world



Seven kilometres from the centre of Johannesburg.

Jillan Edelstein/Reflex

at large are to be found in miniature. In such a society it is unlikely that any one political tendency or organisation can adequately represent all the currents that flow through it. What is possible and necessary in one set of conditions is not necessarily correct for another set of conditions.

'Yet unity is one of the pre-conditions of victory. While it may be an ideal to strive for unity of all forces of liberation in one organisation or party, this situation has not yet been reached. Any premature claim to being the sole authentic representative of the oppressed people made by any tendency or organisation, no matter how large and socially resonant it may be at any given moment, holds within itself the seeds of devastation, defeat and even betrayal... The correct policy for international anti-apartheid solidarity forces at the moment, whatever the ideological and organisational preferences of any particular group, must be to support the entire liberation movement. It is, given our circumstances, one of the most dangerous acts of levity to declare any particular anti-collaborationist current to be "an enemy of the people", no matter how irksome its presence might be.

'An atmosphere has to be created in which all genuinely anti-collaborationist organisations and tendencies can agree to work together on tactical and strategic levels until community of struggle makes possible ideological and theoretical convergence and even agreement. In practice this kind of co-operation is already taking place inside South Africa. Local organisations affiliated to the United Democratic Front or adhering to the position of the National Forum, as well as various trade union tendencies, have on many occasions planned actions jointly and/or executed them in consultation with one another... It ought to be a matter of self-evident necessity that solidarity forces should eliminate and not deepen divisions within South Africa's liberation struggle...'

While Botha tries in vain to convince the outside world that he is really on the road to reform, the facts confound him. Repression has intensified. The daily death rate tells its own story. Over the last two years, the average number of deaths in township up-

surges has been 1.68 per day. After the declaration of the State of Emergency in July 1985, this increased to 3.69. Since media coverage was forbidden on 2 November this has gone up to 4.10. The death rate for January this year, the month in which Botha made his Rubicon II speech, was higher than for any other since the unrest began — 5.47. (These figures are supplied by the South African Institute of Race Relations and have been eclipsed by massacre in Alexandra on February 18. Liberation sources estimate as many as 80 people were killed by security forces.)

The Botha regime has also intensified its pressure on neighbouring regimes. Raids on Botswana and Lesotho — in the latter case resulting in a change of government more favourable to the apartheid regime — increased aid to the MNR in Mozambique, making a mockery of the Nkomati concord, are symptomatic of the government's desire to re-create the 'Cordon Sanitaire' which cushioned South Africa from guerilla incursions when Mozambique and Angola were still Portuguese colonies and Zimbabwe was still Rhodesia.

Great pressure is being put on the Angola government to try and halt the growing successes of SWAPO in the battle for the liberation of Namibia. This is taking two forms. Foreign Minister Botha is engaged in talks in Geneva with the US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Dr. Chester Crocker to cover 'bilateral and regional issues'. Undoubtedly increased American aid for Unita, South Africa's spearhead in Angola will feature high on the agenda. Washington would like to see a nominally independent Namibia but are fearful that a SWAPO regime allied to the MPLA in Angola, would be too powerful a catalyst to the South African revolution which they fear above all else.

Footnotes

- 1 *Financial Times*, 27/11/85
- 2 Lewis/Randall, "Survey of the state of the unions," *South Africa Labour Bulletin*, Vol 2, No 2.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Financial Mail*, Johannesburg, 14/2/86
- 5 Quoted from *Azania Frontline*, No 12, January 1986.

Statement of the Fourth International Solidarity with the Filipino people

FIFTEEN DAYS after dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier took flight from Haiti, Ferdinand Marcos had to flee ignominiously from the Philippines. US helicopters had to come to rescue him, together with his entourage, so that he could escape from the presidential palace, which was surrounded by the insurgent population.

After huge and continual mobilisations, sometimes of a million people, Manila was occupied by hundreds of thousands of demonstrators for several days. They were determined not to give up before achieving the departure of the man who had thought himself master of the country for twenty years. Growing numbers of soldiers showed no will to break up these mobilisations, and even a readiness to join the crowds themselves.

We owe the overthrow of Marcos in the first place to an extraordinary popular and democratic mobilisation. Without this, the moderate opposition would have remained powerless, the White House would not have let its protégé fall, and the officer corps would not have become divided as it did.

For the last few years, growing sectors of US imperialism, of Philippine big business and the middle class, and of the Catholic hierarchy in the country had sought an orderly transition towards a regime that would more adequately serve their interests.

The political instability of the Marcos regime accelerated after the assassination of opposition leader, Benigno Aquino in August 1983. The system of power established by Marcos under martial law was undermined by a deep economic and social crisis. The pro-imperialist elite in the Philippines was more and more deeply divided.

A popular mass movement of workers, urban poor and peasants came into mounting conflict with the regime. The revolutionary left and the guerrilla forces led by the Communist Party of the Philippines — the New People's Army — experienced rapid growth.

In the eyes of imperialism, it was vital to reunify the ruling elite and reform the army officer corps — which was corrupt and hated by the population — in order more effectively to combat the upsurge in the democratic and anti-imperialist struggle. It was all the more vital because of the key strategic importance of this southeast Asian archipelago, which houses the two main US bases abroad — Subic Bay and Clark air base.

This policy was a failure. Marcos rejected any meaningful compromise. The US administration was not able to overcome its internal divisions. The 7 February 1986 elections, which were supposed finally to create the conditions for a restabilisation of the regime and the start of an orderly transition, led to a face-to-face confrontation between the Marcos regime and the opposition forces.

It was thus in a situation of a major, open political crisis that the departure of Marcos came to be seen — in Washington and in Manila — as the only solution.

Around the charismatic personality of Corazon Aquino, new president of the Philippines, there is a bloc of conservative forces that is reflected in the composition of the new government. Won over at the last minute, Juan Ponce Enrile, who was the moving spirit in the martial law policy, is again minister of defence.

Jaime Ongpin, new finance minister, president of the Benguet Mining Corporation, is one of the main spokespersons of the business world. Salvador Laurel — vice president, prime minister and minister for foreign affairs — was a longtime ally of Marcos and represents UNIDO, a conservative political formation linked to the landowning oligarchy. Many presidential advisors are Jesuit priests, advocates of reform but deeply anti-communist.



Cory Aquino: too many old faces in the new government.

As for General Fidel V. Ramos, chief of staff of the armed forces, he is well known for his links with Washington and the Pentagon. The role of a few personalities known for their defence of human rights in these conditions, can only be seen as marginal.

US imperialism, strengthened by the pro-imperialist character of the new regime and the support of the powerful Catholic hierarchy, will do anything to restabilise its domination over the country.

The democratic and anti-imperialist movement is thus going to have to continue to organise and struggle for its aims. The Philippine army is divided. The policy of President Reagan — which supported Marcos right up to the eleventh hour — has awakened a deep nationalist feeling in the Philippines against the longstanding colonial power.

The population has experienced what its strength is when the masses mobilise. Marginalised during the election period and the weeks that followed the 7 February elections, the popular forces of the left and revolutionaries remain deeply rooted. The economic and social crisis requires a mass struggle independent of government.

The democratic and anti-imperialist struggle continues. The Fourth International reaffirms its support for the popular, democratic, anti-imperialist and revolutionary forces in the Philippines. Alongside the Filipino people, we demand the immediate and unconditional release of all the political prisoners — without any exceptions — who have courageously fought against the dictator Marcos; the repeal of all anti-strike laws and decrees; the recognition of independent trade unions; the dismantling of the repressive apparatus and the various landlords' private armies in the countryside; the bringing to justice of those responsible for torture and summary executions; the re-establishment of all democratic freedoms; and the removal of the massive US air and naval bases from the Philippines.

February 28, 1986



Recruits of the Philippine New Peoples Army training in the mountains to wage armed struggle against bourgeois state power.



US troops on manoeuvres in the Philippines.

Piers Cavendish/Reflex

Piers Cavendish/Reflex

i UNTIL NOW British Trotskyism has not been well served by its historians — if that is not too kind an adjective to bestow on those who have attempted to chronicle its history. Their alleged impartiality has generally been nothing more than a literary fig leaf worn to disguise their ignorance of their subject in particular, and the labour movement in general.

Well, we can be grateful that Sam Bornstein and Al Richards, authors of *Against the Stream* do not come from that line of 'disinterested' observers. Their inscription in the fly leaf which reads: 'To the British Bolsheviks, supporters of the International Left Opposition, in admiration' leaves no room for doubting that they are partisans, whose sympathies and antipathies are bared for their readers to see for themselves. It is because they write as committed Marxists that they do justice to their subject. They have studied the facts concerning the early formative years of Trotskyism in this country and they have made them available to the reader, and like all serious historians they have interpreted those facts and drawn conclusions. They have performed a service which we should demand from all historians, in that by rigorous study and research — there are 1161 footnotes to the ten chapters — they have produced a work which seeks its vindication in the information it provides, not in some alleged neutrality.

No socialist worthy of the name could possibly read this book without joining the authors in their admiration of those British 'supporters of the International Left Opposition'. These were the people who along with

the best militants in the workers' movement had come together, inspired by the great October Revolution, to build a communist party in this country. In a country that lacked a tradition of revolutionary Marxism, and whose labour movement was permeated through and through by reformism, this was a daunting task indeed. It was a task that could only be completed with the aid of a revolutionary international, which the early rise of Stalin and his clique prevented. The young, politically immature Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was from the beginning a compliant tool in the hands of the Comintern's apparatchniks. 'The CPGB was so small and its general political level was so low, that practically alone among the Communist Parties of the world (not excepting that even of the USA) there were no factions within it.* This enabled the Stalinists to use the CPGB in the international fight against the Left Opposition — it was CPGB representative J.T. Murphy who moved Trotsky's expulsion from the Comintern — and made the fight for Trotsky's ideas in such a party difficult indeed. Added to this was the problem that Trotskyism was born out of a period of defeats for the international working class which actually strengthened the grip of Stalinism. As Bob Edwards — a member of the ILP — said: "Stalin was right about the need to build socialism in one country. I had a row with Trotsky when he said that defence of Russia lay in the imminent revolutions in Britain and Germany. I had just come from the General Strike and I knew it wasn't on." ' As the authors say: 'A better illustration of the Marxist theory of the relationship between ideas and material conditions could not be made'. Given such obstacles it is little wonder that not more than about twelve members of the CPGB had come out for Trotskyism by the end of the twenties. By then Stalin had decisively defeated the opposition tendencies in the USSR and was steadily and relentlessly gaining full control of the Third International. The *Daily Worker* of 5 January 1932 was writing that Trotskyism was "the advanced troop of the bourgeoisie," which was simply echoing the line of the CI.

Added to their other difficulties the Trotskyists now more and more confronted a systematic campaign of lies and slanders backed up by the Soviet state internationally, and the apparatus of the CPGB at home. The aim of this campaign was to isolate and demoralise the few and tenuously based Trotskyists. It succeeded inside the CPGB. Their old friends from inside the party: '...passed them with faces turned away, some making hostile gestures. It was a way of life, a whole series of friends, workmates and acquaintances that was turned away from them.' Outside the CPGB: 'Political life had dwindled from the wider horizon of a party into the suffocating confines of a small group.'

Again and again Trotsky's analyses were to be born out during the thirties. His warnings against the ultra-left lunacy of the



JT Murphy (in centre with son) with lead

Third Period were confirmed when German CP collapsed before Hitler and western Europe's most powerful labour movement was prostrated under the boot of fascism. Likewise in Spain, warnings that the policies of the Pop front would aid Franco and lead to the defeat of the revolution were again proved to



Reg Groves canvassing at Aylesbury, 1938

THE MILITANT

"UNITY" MONGERS SURRENDER!
Now For A Real Left Wing!

On The Anti-Fascist Front.
A LETTER FROM GERMANY

The RED FLAG

FOR LENIN AND TROTSKY!
Why The RED FLAG Appears.
TO REGENERATE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT.

British Bolsheviki

early history of Trotskyism in Britain is not widely known. But it is history and there is much we can learn from it. **BOB BRINGTON** reviews a new book which covers frankly, justly and from a marxist perspective the origins of British Trotskyism.



David King collection

of the Comintern including Stalin. The British CP was one of the most quickly Stalinised.

true. But being correct did not mean that the Trotskyist movement could break out of its isolation. Historic defeats do not build great movements. The lessons of a defeat were learned by a few people, and often such people did (after seeing what had gone on in Germany and Spain) join the ranks of the newly formed Fourth International. In

general, though, the defeats strengthened the Stalinists. If the revolution could not take place in Germany, if it was being crushed on the battlefields of the Spanish Civil War, then many reasoned that all they could do was defend the USSR, even at the expense of the class struggle at home. Meanwhile in Moscow the regime's purge and legalised murder of the old Bolsheviks signalled that 'if Stalin's policy was not revolution, then he did not need any revolutionaries.' Midnight had arrived in the middle of the twentieth century.

It was against this background of defeats, of Stalinist terror, and social democratic betrayals that Britain's early Trotskyist pioneers tried to build a movement. At first they fought inside the Communist Party to save it for the revolution. Then they struggled inside the Independent Labour Party to win what they could of its left wing. Later they entered the Labour Party aiming to win to the idea of revolutionary Marxism those in its ranks who were opposing the policies of the right-wing leaders. Inside the Labour League of Youth they opposed the supporters of the Young Communist League who were organised around the paper *Advance* and led by Ted Willis, now Lord Ted Willis, author of *Dixon of Dock Green*, and his colleague Jim Mortimer, the last general secretary of the Labour Party.

This history is faithfully documented in *Against the Stream*, from the start of the battle inside the CPGB, until 1938. It is a history

that had more tears than victories, but it is our history and belongs to us just as much as the Paris Commune, the October of 1917 and all the other great events of the international class struggle. It is incumbent on every serious Marxist to read and study that history because it is part of their heritage. We are therefore indebted to the two authors for making it available to us. That does not mean that we will necessarily endorse all their interpretations or conclusions. In their preface for example they write: 'Whatever differences then, there was a general consensus about the superiority of the United Front over the Popular Front; of the crucial role of the working class in the struggle for socialism; and of the primacy of questions of class over those of sex or colour.' I may say that this magazine does emphatically stand for the United Front against the Popular Front, and we do consider the working class plays the crucial role in the struggle for socialism. We also stand in the traditions of Kollontai and Zetkin who as Marxists understood the need for an autonomous women's movement and we think the Women Against Pit Closures movement is just one vindication of what the early women Marxist pioneers fought for. By the late twenties the big radicalisation that affected working class women was ebbing away. The Stalinised Comintern was more interested in resurrecting the family, than in building an independent women's movement, and the idea of an autonomous women's movement was anathema to the Labour right. The question of women's autonomy was also not an issue discussed by the early Trotskyists and this is probably explained by the decline in women's radicalisation, the strains of activity already bearing down on such a small group and quite frankly by the theoretical weakness which it had inherited from British Marxism.

It is not a good thing that early Trotskyism in Britain failed to see the need for independent and autonomous movements among women and black people, although it is understandable. If they had had such positions, the relationship of forces arraigned against them would still have been overwhelming. But it is likely that they could have won just a few more women leaders and laid the foundations, both theoretically and practically for dealing with the emergence of movements of the oppressed in the post-war years.

I suspect that this difference we have with the two authors will raise its head again when their next work appears, which deals with British Trotskyism from 1937-49. But like the reviewer I am sure that the readers of this book will look forward to their next instalment of Trotskyist history.

*The six references are taken from the book.

Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson, *Against the Stream A History of the Trotskyist Movement in Britain 1924-38*, Socialist Platform, (Available from Housmans Distributors, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1). £5.95 net.





RACISM is a fundamental and inevitable feature of the crisis of British capitalism. Britain is a declining imperialist power which has, in proportion to the size of its economy, much greater overseas investments than any other major capitalist economy. The profits of these investments are very important to British capitalism. It is precisely because Britain is a *declining* imperialist power that racism is important for the British ruling class. British capitalism is desperately and violently trying to retain its investments abroad and rebuild its profit rate at home, and it requires racism and jingoism to justify its foreign policy and to hold together its fragmenting social base, diverting workers from seeing themselves as part of a class to seeing themselves as part of an illusory nation.

In the wake of the youth rebellions in Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham, racism in Britain is intensifying and becoming even more central to British politics. The Tories are giving a free rein to the police to step up their harassment of black people.

The media has played its now characteristic role in whipping up the racism which has deep roots in British society. This has been legitimised by statements from government ministers and by the Tory party's decision to make law and order one of

the main planks on which to rebuild its fading popularity. The Tory campaign on law and order is bound to rely on stirring up racism given the way the issue has become increasingly intertwined with race over the last 15 years with the publication by

'An immediate task for Labour is to build support for the youths (black and white) arrested in and after the recent rebellions and to combine this with an implacable campaign to stop the Public Order Bill and the tooling-up of the police with repressive equipment'

the police of racially-based crime statistics and the identification in the media of 'mugging' with black youth.

It is now more urgent than ever that the labour movement confronts racism and gives real assistance to black people fighting racism. This is not just a question of moral duty, nor of



Carlos Augusto Guarina/Reflex

Black liberation and socialism

Racism is on the increase in Tory Britain. The urban uprisings of recent years show that black youth are organising to defend themselves.

WALID HADDAD shows why the autonomous organisation of black people is necessary to fight for liberation not only in society at large but in the inert and often racist structures of the labour movement. While the Black Sections movement is one of the most advanced expressions of black people's fightback, the road to liberation passes both inside and outside the Labour Party.

demonstrating a commitment to an egalitarian and just society, but essential for the defence of the labour movement itself. The Tories have already given the police vastly increased powers with the passing of the Police Bill in 1984. The lack of seriousness with which the Bill was viewed by the labour movement as a whole, and the failure to challenge the testing of new police tactics on black people and in the north of Ireland, left the labour movement vulnerable — physically and politically — to the brutal police tactics used in the miners' strike.

In the face of the Tories' economic, political and social attacks on the working class, unity is a necessity. Racism is a major tool of the Tories to break any united working class resistance: anti-racism has to be a fundamental tool to build and preserve that unity. This message rings out loud and clear from two recent negative experiences. In Liverpool, the *Militant* led council has done all it can to alienate black support over the Sam Bond affair, at a time when it urgently needed that support. In Haringey, the council workers who staged a one-day strike to demand Bernie Grant's resignation were attacking the very people from Broadwater Farm who had previously marched in support of the council's attempts to defy rate-capping legislation and defend the council workers' jobs.

The intensification of racism also poses a series of strategic questions for the black community. How are they to defend themselves? How should they organise? Who can they rely on for support and how can alliances be built?

This article outlines the main features of an anti-racist strategy. It argues that racism is more than just the sum of individual attitudes and prejudices, which can be educated away. It is a system of ideas which are institutionalised in society and which have a large effect on black people in all facets of their lives. In particular, racism is institutionalised in the state, and state racism plays a critical role in reinforcing racism in society in general.

An anti-racist strategy has to be anti-capitalist because the history of racism is intertwined with the history of capitalism. It has to be based on two solid pillars. Firstly on autonomous black organisation and secondly on an alliance with the labour movement. But this alliance will only succeed if the first of these pillars is built as well.

To explore these ideas more fully it is necessary to say more about the nature of the beast. What does racism actually mean for black people in Britain today, and why is it still so strong?

GOVERNMENT THREAT



The roots of racism

It is widely accepted that the roots of racism lie in Britain's imperialist past: as an ideology to justify slavery and the plunder and exploitation of Asia and Africa, as a 'science' to justify a hierarchy of races. Racist ideas seeped into and shaped every facet of British culture and society. However racism is not merely a legacy of an imperialist past, for Britain is still an imperialist power, albeit a declining one. Precisely as a consequence of this decline, the growth of racism is intertwined with the concept of nationalism.

This linking of racism to nationalism is a particularly strong feature of the Thatcher wing of the Tory party. It can be seen in Thatcher's infamous 'rather swamped' statement in the 1979 election campaign; in the Malvinas War and in her support for the Botha regime in South Africa. This racism which was a product of the birth of British capitalism, is now reproduced in its slow, painful decline.

From this analysis we can conclude that an anti-racist strategy must also be anti-imperialist and internationalist.

Black people face not only racist attitudes but suffer discrimination in employment and living conditions. Black people were brought to this country to fill jobs with the worst pay and conditions — on nightshifts, in the foundries, textile industry, health service, on the buses and on rail. Little has changed — except that now black unemployment is at least twice that of white; black people are more heavily concentrated in semi- or unskilled manual jobs and are more likely to be working on shifts or part-time.

Black people face discrimination wherever they go: in hospitals, social security offices and schools. They are subjected to racist immigration laws which deny even elementary human rights. Stereotyped as 'illegal immigrants' or 'muggers', the colour of your skin puts you automatically under suspicion, continually risking the special attention of the police. In addition black people are suffering a rising tide of racist attacks.

Black women

In this situation, black women suffer most of all, oppressed by both racism and sexism. The specific experiences of black women cannot be discussed here in any detail and will be the subject of a future article in *International*. Suffice it to mention the experiences of Asian women attempting to come into this country treated as appendages of their husbands while simultaneously degraded by strip searches and virginity tests, black women stereotyped as sexually available and simultaneously degraded as immoral. Given the worst pay, often part-time, sometimes in sweat shops and night shifts, doing home working

However black women have recognised the need to organise autonomously from men, and a number of black women's groups now exist. In addition black women have taken the lead in the workplace, fighting for union recognition and against racist discrimination. Examples such as Grunwicks and the Citix plant in Slough where Asian women led the strike, overturned at a stroke the stereotype of the passive, law-abiding Asian woman.

Black autonomous organisation

In response to this all-pervading racism black people have long organised themselves as black people. The Indian Workers' Association, the West Indian Standing Conference, the Black Peoples' Alliance, Blacks Against State Harassment, Asian Youth Movement, the Organisation of Women of Asian and African Descent, the Black Movement and more recently the Labour Party Black Sections — these are just some of the varied organisations.

Autonomous black organisation is absolutely necessary in the struggle against racism; as the victims of racism and therefore the best fighters against it black people are the only ones who can define racism when it occurs.

Only when the question is taken up by the black community itself, is anything done about it.

Unfortunately the vast bulk of the Labour movement does not support self-organisation. One of the main arguments against it, put most vociferously by *Militant* supporters, but ironically also argued by the Labour leadership, is that autonomous self-organisation divides and weakens the working class. What the *Militant* supporters fail to recognise is that the working class is already divided, by gender as well as colour. Racist oppression experienced by black workers and reflected in the lack of representation of black people in labour movement structures, the failure of the movement to take up the specific demands of black workers, simply reinforces that division. Not only that but experience shows that when black people go into action against racism, without waiting for white support, the effect is to strengthen not only the fight against racism, but the labour movement as a whole.

The problem, therefore, is not that black self-organisation splits the working class, but how to overcome the divisions which exist and on what basis to build unity.

Black self-organisation and positive action are needed to overcome the division in the class. Black workers need to organise as black people to ensure that they have a powerful, independent voice which can push white workers into recognising racism and supporting the specific demands of black people. Simultaneously supporting positive action, white workers will be

saying we want to build unity not on the basis of black people accepting their lack of representation and their worse position in the labour market, but on the basis that special measures have to be taken to overcome centuries of racist oppression and exploitation. Indeed, support for black self-organisation is a litmus test of an understanding of racism and how to fight it.

The role of the labour bureaucracy

A factor behind the continuing hold of racism which cannot be ignored is the role of the leadership of the labour movement which accepted imperialism and national chauvinism in return for some of imperialism's super-profits being used for social reforms. The leaders of the labour movement not only acquiesced in the rise of racism, but often actively encouraged it.

This is clear from an examination of the record of the Labour party over the last 20 years. Such an examination also exposes the scale of the problems faced by black activists and anti-racists in the labour movement. For the Labour party has, not only a racist past, but a racist present, and until black people and anti-racists really make their mark, a racist future.

The Labour party's duplicity on race has been starkly shown on immigration and nationality legislation. It opposed the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act introduced by a Tory Government and then within one year of resuming power introduced a bill which restricted immigration further. In 1968, when it appeared that Asians in East Africa, who had been given British citizenship, might try to come to Britain, Labour passed an act which deprived them of their right to reside in this country.

Out of power, Labour again opposed the 1971 Immigration Act which gave white Commonwealth citizens rights to reside here, while simultaneously removing that right from black people. In March 1974 Labour returned to power, but didn't repeal the act; indeed it was under this government that the virginity testing scandal was exposed. They also introduced a Green Paper on Nationality which formed the basis of the Tories' Nationality Act. A virtual bi-partisan policy operated through this period, just as it did on the question of northern Ireland.



The Labour party passed laws which were to make life a misery for thousands of black people, laws which blamed black people for Britain's economic and social problems. Blaming black people for lack of jobs and inadequate housing diverts attention away from the real causes.

It is a step forward that the Labour party has agreed to include repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 Nationality Act in its manifesto. This would carry more weight, however, if the whole of the labour movement were to campaign now for the repeals and against deportation. The role of NALGO in backing the campaign against the deportation of Muhammed Idrish, which was successful, needs to be repeated with greater strength throughout the labour movement.

In addition, the Labour party's position of replacing these Acts with non-racist versions needs to be challenged. Any immigration law, given the racist nature of the British state and the continued existence of imperialism, would be racist in practice. Any immigration law would encourage the idea that 'foreigners' caused unemployment and would be contrary to the democratic right of freedom of movement.

Anti-racists should campaign for an immediate amnesty for all 'illegal' immigrants and for an immediate opening of the borders to divided families. These demands could be conceded on day one of a Labour government.

Labour also needs to take action against the growth of racist attacks which have terrorised black people in their homes and on the streets. This means a package of policy measures including supporting black self-defence, funding groups which can give support to victims of racist attacks and which can pressurise the police to arrest and prosecute the racists, and evicting the perpetrators of racist attacks and harassment from council housing.

'Labour didn't repeal the 1971 Immigration Act; indeed it was under their government that the virginity testing scandal was exposed. They also introduced a Green Paper on nationality which formed the basis of the Tories' Nationality Act'

The Labour party's record in other areas is equally awful — its failure to support anti-imperialist struggles and the acquiescence in a toughening of policing and the police protection of National Front members who marched through areas where black people lived. It was under a Labour government that Southall was held under siege by the police while the NF marched, leading to the murder of Blair Peach by an SPG thug. The notorious Sus law, used to criminalise Afro-Caribbean youth who were arrested under it because a police officer *suspected* they might be about to commit an offence, was only repealed after the Tories won the 1979 election. Given such a record it is a wonder that the vast majority of black people in Britain still vote Labour.

An immediate task for Labour is to build support for the youths (black and white) arrested in and after the recent rebellions and to combine this with an implacable campaign to stop the Public Order Bill and the tooling-up of the police with repressive equipment. The importance of this for the labour movement's own future has already been argued at the start of this article.

In addition, Labour should campaign around the motions passed at the last two Labour party conferences and include a commitment to disband the Special Patrol Group in its manifesto, disarm the police, repeal the Police Act (and the Public Order Act if it is passed) and take measures to reduce the repressive powers of the police.

A key demand that needs to be taken up is for police accountability. Marxists in the labour movement have been slow off the mark on this question, leaving all the initiative to left reformists and either mouthing the same phrases or dismissing the demand as one which will create the illusion that the police can be reformed. We should argue that this position is wrong and police accountability can be a transitional demand, because of its objective and subjective dynamic. Objectively accountability could reduce police powers of repression and would be in contradiction with the prime role of the police force in capitalist society as a force which preserves social order for capital. Imagine the difficulties which would have been faced in the miners' strike if the police had needed permission for their activities from a host of elected police authorities.

Subjectively, the demand is a popular one (in a London Weekend TV poll following the youth rebellions, a majority of adults, black and white, said they wanted to see the Metropolitan Police made accountable to an elected body) which raises questions about the class nature of the police force.

However, rather than simply repeating the slogans of the left reformists parrot-fashion, Marxists need to discuss how and in what form the slogan should be raised. A couple of thoughts



on this: first an essential part of the demand must be that the police are made accountable for their day-to-day operational decisions and not just a bland accountability on broad policy questions. Secondly, the demand for the police to be accountable to the committees of local councils is fraught with difficulties. What if right-wing Tories or racists seize control of the council? They would use accountability to direct police repression at black communities.

Unemployment

Racism has been strengthened by the massive rise in unemployment in the mid-seventies, and in particular since 1979. This reinforces racism in two ways. First, in times of crisis people look for explanations and solutions. Racism provides a simple explanation — 'the blacks are taking "our" jobs' — which fits in very cosily with existing racist ideas. Secondly capitalism is characterised by competition between all sellers of commodities, including those selling labour power. White workers compete with black workers (and men with women) for the diminishing number of jobs and for better jobs amongst these diminished numbers. The more desperate the competition the greater the tendency for white workers to view black workers with antagonism. The importance of a socialist economic policy for combatting racism cannot be stressed too much. One only has to look at the French experience where the failure of the Socialist government has allowed a tremendous growth of Le Pen's openly fascist party.

In Britain following the success of the Anti-Nazi League and the capturing of the overtly racist vote by Thatcher, fascist organisations have fragmented and turned away from open political activity towards semi-clandestine terror attacks on black people. However, if a Labour government did return to power and once more, failed to deliver the goods, it would create the basis for the rapid growth of fascist groups.

Labour also has to fight for an extensive programme of positive action to alleviate the discrimination which exists in employment, housing, health, education and so on. Without positive action these disadvantages cannot be removed. However positive action by itself is not enough, particularly at a time of economic recession. The removal of racial discrimination requires an expansionist plan to remove the unemployment in the lifetime of a Labour government. 'One Million Jobs a Year' is as necessary for black workers as it is for white workers. Labour's current economic programme is simply not enough. Reducing unemployment by half a million or one million is meaningless for the black youth in Handsworth, Brixton and the inner cities. They know that given the level of discrimination, there will not be any jobs for them in that 1 million.

Black self-organisation in the labour movement

The explosive growth of the Labour party Black Sections has prompted a big debate among black activists. This article argues strongly in their favour, but before examining the arguments, two points need to be made.

First, the black community in Britain is overwhelmingly proletarian, much more so than Britain's white population. In addition, a larger proportion of black workers are unionised than white workers and a huge majority of them vote Labour. (If they don't vote Labour they generally don't vote). Given the history of autonomous black existence, it was therefore only a matter of time before black workers began to challenge the labour movement's racism from inside the movement and when this happened it would have a mass impact. The growth of the Bennite left and the battle for democracy in the Labour party acted as a catalyst in this process.

Secondly, the Black Sections movement in its short life has been astonishingly successful in forcing the labour movement to discuss the question of race and in raising the issue of the need for autonomous black organisation in front of a mass audience. They have created the climate which has ensured that three black candidates have been selected in safe Labour seats to date, and a small number of marginal seats. Following the impact of the excellent stand taken by Bernie Grant, leader of Haringey council, on the arrests at Broadwater Fram it can hardly be

argued that representation is irrelevant.

Many black activists still react in horror to the idea of Black Sections because of the racist history of the labour movement and the fear of 'careerists'. However the movement's racism is a challenge not an immovable obstacle.

Black people cannot succeed in the fight against racism on their own. As four and a half per cent of the population in Britain they need to win allies, and in particular they need to win the labour movement as an ally. (At the same time, as already argued, the labour movement needs to fight racism and keep black people as allies). This alliance can only be forged by black people organising autonomously and taking action without waiting for permission from the labour bureaucracy. It can only be forged by challenging racism in the labour movement and this cannot be done just by organising outside the labour movement. The challenge has to be taken into the trade unions and into the Labour party. Links have to be forged with workers in struggle as was done in many cases during the miners' strike. Particular effort has to be put into building black caucuses and support for Black Sections in the trade unions, given their economic strength and political weight in the Labour party.

The success in drawing white workers into struggles against racism in anti-deportation campaigns, defence campaigns, the recent strike in Islington over deployment of racist workers, the strikes in East London schools — all prove that it is possible to make alliances inside the labour movement.

Black Sections are also important because of their role in building a broader alliance of black people. A problem which repeatedly confronts black socialists is how to expand support beyond the activist base of defence campaigns, anti-deportation campaigns and so on. Black Sections provide a national framework for uniting black people not just around a case or issue but around racism in all its manifestations. In particular at a time when the state has put resources into stressing 'ethnicity', Black Sections have forced the question of black unity back onto the political agenda.

Black Careerism?

The fear of black careerists among black activists is a genuine one, but is used by many white people to justify failure to support any struggles against racism. This careerism is related to the 'race relations industry', used by the state to buy off black activists. However it is necessary to examine the Black Sections movement more concretely. The bulk of Black Section activists represent a new layer of black people in the Labour party who are prepared to challenge racism in the party rather than accept the cosy, corrupt relationship between so-called 'community leaders' and the Labour right which has been the main feature of black involvement in the party in the past. Many Black Section activists have been involved in black struggles in the past and still.

In addition, while it is true that one of the initial motivations behind the Black Sections movement was the frustration of some black Labour party members, whose careers were blocked by Labour's racism, when these people organised black people against it, then it was essential for black socialists to unite with them in this struggle attempting to broaden it out to take on the whole of Labour's racism. Too often the potential for building broad, united campaigns against racism has been squandered.

It would be a mistake for black socialists to solely focus on self-organisation in the labour movement. This would carry the danger of being absorbed and contained in a fight for a few positions in the labour movement. A strategy for black liberation must also rely on the long and rich history of black self-organisation in campaigns, self-help groups and so on. This organisation strengthens the will and ability of black people to resist racism and also puts pressure on the labour movement and others to support the fight against racism.

An understanding of the importance of this needs to inform the approach of Black Section activists to organisations within the black communities. Whatever the views of these organisations towards them, Black Sections need to act as their voice in the labour movement and thus build up a network which hammers labour's racism from within and without.

The Tories political project has offered youth 'no future'. Yet Labour has failed to inspire young people. **DAVID SHEPHERD** argues that to win back the support of youth, the labour movement must genuinely champion youth rights. As part of this process the left will have to ensure the LPYS is transformed into a mass campaigning organisation.

IN FIGHTING FOR youth the labour movement is fighting for its future. The Thatcher Government has thrown an entire generation of young people onto the scrap-heap. Today over 25 per cent of 16-19 year olds are either jobless or on youth training schemes. The figure for those aged between 20 and 24 is just as bad. Schools and colleges have been deprived of resources to such an extent that the whole educational system is now in crisis. On some inner city estates, unemployment is the rule rather than the exception and the alarming increase in heroin addiction and solvent abuse among the young is testimony to the hopelessness and despair that Thatcher's policies have brought in their wake.

Black youth and young women have suffered doubly through racism and systematic police harassment (resulting in the summer rebellions of 1981 and 1985), and the sustained ideological offensive for 'Victorian family values' breeding attacks on reproductive and employment rights in particular.

In addition, the crisis has exacerbated the specific oppression of youth within the family. Economic independence is the necessary foundation for young people's self-respect and autonomy. It is this they are being denied. Unemployment, low wages, and pitiful YTS allowances reinforce young people's economic and social dependence upon the family. Those youth who nevertheless decide to leave home find that the young, single person goes automatically to the bottom of the council housing list. For many, getting married or pregnant provides a 'solution' to this problem. For others, joining the ranks of the young homeless is the only alternative to a family situation which has become unbearable. Even those able to leave home through getting a place at a polytechnic or university find that the Government assumes they are still their parents' 'responsibility' and expects sizeable parental contributions towards grants, even from those on average or low incomes.

The desperate situation faced by youth today is not the result of an uncaring Government blindly pursuing nonsensical monetarist dogmas. Neither should the labour movement fight this situation purely out of altruism or compassion for the hard-done-by younger generation. No. The attack on youth has been a central feature of the



Tory policy for youth: a 'short sharp shock' at Kirklevington Grange detention centre in Yorkshire.

Tories hammer youth

And that means you, twinkletoes

Tory offensive against the labour movement since 1979.

The disproportionately high levels of youth unemployment are a by-product of the Tory economic offensive against the organised labour movement. Clearly, if there is a general decline in the number of jobs created, youth looking for a first job will be hardest hit by unemployment. However, it is the Tories' response to youth unemployment

which reveals their strategy.

The Youth Training Scheme is an attempt by an increasingly unpopular government to improve the unemployment statistics and present an image of concerned action for Britain's young people. Anyone seeing the advertisements showing happy school leavers signing up for the soon-to-be-introduced two year schemes will have no doubt that this is true. But it is only part of a

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story which has huge implications for the working class movement.

YTS is in fact at the very centre of the Tory offensive against the labour movement. Hundreds of thousands of youth are being 'trained' to work for a pittance in conditions where in the overwhelming majority of cases they have little or no contact with the organised labour movement. We are witnessing the attempted creation of a generation of workers whose expectations in terms of wages and conditions of work and whose attitudes towards trade union and workplace organisation are qualitatively different from those of previous generations. Mass unemployment and frontal attacks on the trade unions to brow-beat today's workers into giving up hard won conditions and accepting falling real wages is a start, next tomorrow's workers are 'trained' to fit into this situation without any fuss. Indeed, it's far easier to educate young school leavers in the new spirit of industrial slavery than it is to take away hard-won trade union rights and relatively high expectations about wages and conditions of work from older workers.

In the long term, if this strategy were to be

'The attack on youth has been a central feature of the Tory offensive against the labour movement since 1979'

successfully implemented a young industrial 'fifth column' could be created within the working class whose existence would aid hugely attempts to inflict decisive blows on the organised labour movement. This would not of course be a conscious, organised fifth column in the sense in which the EETPU is today, but it could be more dangerous as it would consist of the best part of an entire generation of the working class rather than one or two organised sections.

It is not only the YTS project that could have disastrous consequences for the labour movement for mass youth unemployment itself is similarly dangerous. One of the effects of mass youth unemployment is the removal of any contact with the organised labour movement and radicalism is certainly not the necessary response of youth in this predicament. The 1983 General Election results demonstrate quite clearly that apathy, despondency and withdrawal from any interest in politics are equally possible responses to the desperate situation of youth. More young voters (in the 18-24 age group) voted SDP/Liberal and Tory than voted Labour and the majority of youth didn't bother voting at all. This was not merely the result of Labour's inadequate alternative to the 'Falklands factor' -- young people were probably the group in society least affected by this wave of chauvinism -- above all it was a reflection of the alienation of a generation abandoned by society and by the political system associated with it.

What of the opportunities which youth offer for the left? First, if mass radicalisation is not



Unemployment in Barnsley

the automatic response of youth to the effects of Thatcher's austerity policies it is not ruled out. Young people are a social group with least to lose and most to gain from the overthrow of capitalism and the building of socialism. In every major trade union and social struggle since the Tories came to power young people have been prominent and often central. Two examples should suffice: the mass actions for disarmament have been overwhelmingly youthful in composition, and young people have been in the forefront of this movement; and in the year long miners' strike, it was the young miners who in many areas were the militant backbone of the strike -- the front line pickets and the most dynamic class fighters, this was repeatedly referred to by Scargill and other leaders of the NUM.

The second area of opportunity for the labour movement lies in the nature of youth radicalisation. Youth are less hampered by memories of yesterday's defeats, and are impatient with bureaucratic structures and procedures. Whether in a trade union struggle or a mass movement, or indeed in a political party, youth tend to be among the most militant and radical forces involved. They are more open than older generations to looking at radical solutions to particular problems at the level of society as a whole. Whereas the labour bureaucrats have comfortable careers, limited horizons and the best part of a lifetime of pragmatism and opportunism behind them, youth tend to have no vested interest in maintaining the bureaucratic status quo. In attempts to transform the unions and Labour party into organisations

that really fight for the working class youth will be to the fore.

It is partly the threat youth pose to the labour bureaucracy which accounts for the labour movement's pitiful response to the Tory attacks on youth since 1979. This is illustrated in the trade union response to the YTS and youth unemployment and the Labour Party's policies for youth and approach towards winning the youth vote. In the unions, on the key issues of fighting for full trade union rights and rates of pay for trainees, ensuring that trainees are given a decent training rather than being used as cheap labour and of guaranteeing a job at the end of the scheme, the majority of trade union leaderships have fallen down. They have collaborated in administering the schemes on the government's terms and in

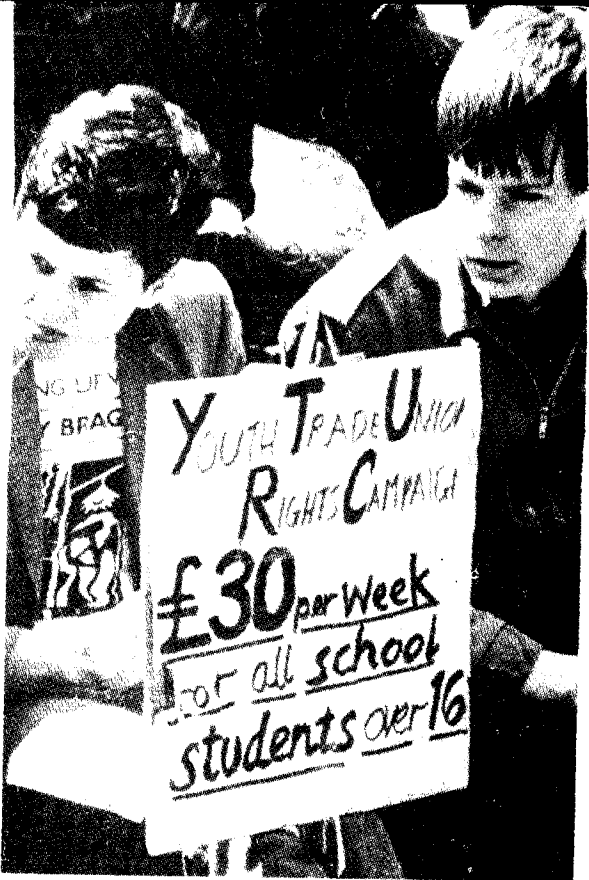
the Government's framework. This is a criminal betrayal of both a generation of working class youth and the entire labour movement.

In line with this, the Labour Party's official 'Charter for Young People' is probably the least inspiring document on any topic produced by the Labour Party for many years. The only concrete policy advanced in relation to YTS is the magnificent offer of £10 extra per week for trainees! This is combined with vague promises of improving the schemes. In effect, if a Labour Government was elected and operated on this basis, what we would see would be a continuation of the attack on youth and on the labour movement that YTS currently represents. On every other area of policy relevant to young people, the 'Charter' offers only vague promises

micks and trendy public relations — at the expense of advancing positive policies for youth. Their treatment of the Labour Party Young Socialists, Labour's youth wing, is evidence of this.

Neil Kinnock, since his election as Party leader, in alliance with his acolytes in the leadership of the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS), has launched a serious offensive against the LPYS. Recently £5000 was lopped off the LPYS annual budget, leaving it with £8000 per annum, and given instead to NOLS. Its paper, Socialist Youth, and its full time worker, Andy Bevan, may well soon be chopped. More than anything else this reveals the Labour leadership's attitude towards youth. Those who slavishly support the leadership are amply rewarded, those who show any sign of independence and radicalism are stamped on.

In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that the LPYS has declined in size and influence over the past year. At last year's national conference there were sixty less branches represented, last year's summer camp was one third smaller and this year's



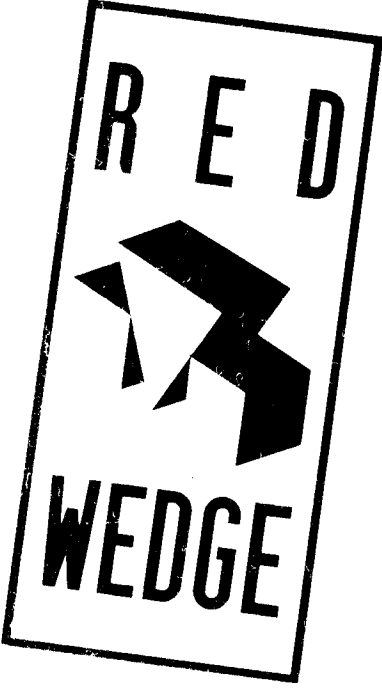
Philip Garçon/Reflex

'Neil Kinnock has launched a serious offensive against the LPYS in alliance with NOLS'

regional conferences have been small and singularly uninspiring. While it is obviously difficult to build the LPYS in conditions where it is under continuous attack from the Party leadership, the LPYS leadership itself must bear some responsibility for the current condition of Labour's youth organisation. It has sought to build the LPYS on the sectarian and propagandist politics of *Militant*. It has refused to engage with the left in the Party, going so far as to condemn potential allies such as the Black Sections, voting against them along with the right wing. In defending and building the LPYS the *Militant* is in many ways its own worst enemy.

So how can the labour movement defend itself from the dangers posed by the Tory attacks on youth? First, the labour movement must become the champion of young peoples' rights, acting now to defend young people and developing policies for the next Labour government to decisively reverse the current dire situation faced by youth. Moves in this direction will be resisted by the current trade union and Labour leadership, so the left should organise to fight for youth as an inseparable part of a fight for a Labour Government committed to socialist policies.

Secondly, if the labour movement is to fight against Tory attacks on youth, then it will be youth who are at the forefront of that fight. While the unionization of trainees and other young workers is essential in this regard, the building of a mass campaigning youth wing of Labour is also. The school students strike last May, called by the LPYS and the Youth Trade Union Rights Campaign, shows what can be achieved. Tens of



of 'improved' this and 'better' that. This is the case in relation to education, housing, anti-racism, women's rights, lesbian and gay rights and disarmament. It is certainly not an adequate basis for reversing the disastrously low Labour vote by youth in 1983.

Socialists should welcome the involvement of personalities such as Paul Weller and Billy Bragg in 'Red Wedge', designed to interest young people in politics and encourage their involvement. The Anti-Nazi League and Rock Against Racism in the late seventies demonstrated the role that popular music can play in the radicalisation and politicisation of youth. But there should be no illusions about the intentions of the Labour leadership. Their aim is to increase Labour's popularity among youth by means of gim-

thousands of youth took to the streets to protest Tory plans to make YTS compulsory by stopping benefits to school leavers not on schemes. The Government backed down. Unfortunately, the LPYS leadership has failed to build on the success of that mobilisation. Admittedly, it was hampered in its attempts to do this by YTURC's ejection from the Labour Party's offices at Walworth Road by the Labour leadership. By turning outwards towards those youth who are radicalising under the impact of the crisis and by linking up with the left in the fight for socialist policies the LPYS could begin to help win back the youth vote for Labour.

All this might sound like a tall order. No doubt it will be difficult to achieve. But the seriousness of the stakes involved makes an attempt to do so a priority.

Kinnock's new coalition

Marxism Today and others are busily arguing for a latterday form of popular front as the way to get rid of Thatcher. By purging Labour's programme and witch hunting the left, Kinnock strives to make the Party 'fit to govern' or suitable for coalition. **JANE KELLY** outlines the issues that confront Marxists in the Labour Party.

WHO WILL WIN the next election? From all directions the talk is of a coalition. The *Economist* poses the question in relation to the current government crisis. With appealing honesty in the final paragraph of their article, they propose to use Thatcher as a bargaining counter in post-election discussions with the alliance: 'Mrs Thatcher is the best leader the Tory Party has on offer at present. If its members of parliament want to ditch her, they should wait until she has lost the next election. The Alliance might then help with the ditching, and still keep most of them in power.'

The Euro-communists, in the pages of their ill-named theoretical journal, *Marxism Today*, approach the problem from a different angle. In 'Hung Parliament: the Choices For Labour', Michael Rustin argues against principled opposition (wrongly identified as the choice of the left), against forming a minority government, correctly assigned as the choice Kinnock has already staked out (but incidentally also the option of the left), and in favour of coalition with the Alliance. So, the long campaign, argued in the pages of *Marxism Today*, of the need to build an anti-Thatcher alliance as the only way to defeat the Tories, bears its fruit — a popular front government for Britain. Though the article uses leftist demands to cover up its pernicious strategy, the anti-working class nature of such a government is spelt out by Sam Aaronovitch in the next article on the economic policies of a future Labour government. A Labour/Alliance coalition would be more of the same, but worse.

Rustin calls on Labour to retain its commitment to full employment, to the right to work and to a strong public sector — all policies which Hattersley has publicly rejected — in order to hold onto its 'core constituencies of class and region' while developing 'more polycentric and diverse ways of speaking' for its other constituencies. But talk of polycentrism can not disguise the nature of this project. Aaronovitch spells it out in all its gory detail. The trades unions will have to formulate their own wages policy in order to hold back 'an irresistible wave of expectations and



Neil Kinnock

militancy by all those who have been held down and from those who see new possibilities of advance.' Such a government will be obliged to carry through *substantial redistribution amongst working people.*'² (my emphasis).

The use of pseudo-feminism to include demands on combating low pay and achieving equal pay for work of equal value, in the context of a wages policy, is particularly obnoxious and continues the work of Bea Campbell who argues that such improvements for women can only be achieved at the expense of the male working class. No wonder she also says that women should not look to the 'men's movement' for support in their fight for liberation.

Another version of this 'Pact That Could Sink The Tories' is penned by Anthony Barnett on the 'Agenda' page of *The Guardian*³. He uses leftist arguments but comes to the same conclusions as Hobsbawm, Hall, Rustin et al, that Labour cannot win on its own, and so must make an electoral pact to kick out Thatcher.

The openness with which *Marxism Today* and others are now discussing coalitionism as an electoral strategy, is of course made possible by the defeat of the miners' strike and the subsequent rightward shift of the majority of the labour movement, leaving the hard left relatively isolated. Although the Kinnock leadership deny any intention of moving towards electoral pacts or post-



New realists Kinnock and Willis.

election coalition, it is clear that their present policy of winning back the middle ground from the Alliance, if it fails, will make coalition that much easier. It remains their fall back position.

It is ironic that in the present Tory crisis, resulting partly from their failure to deal with the economy, and with such authoritative journals like *The Economist* proposing coalition, the Kinnock leadership's response to people in struggle is to urge they wait for the return of a Labour government. Failing to take advantage of the government's great discomfort he calls on trade unionists fighting the vicious attacks on their right to organise to 'keep within the law'. In his pathetic attempt to make Labour 'fit to govern' he offers no support to miners victimised during the strike; no support to the printworkers sacked without any redundancy pay, to be replaced by scab workers organised by the EETPU 'bosses union'; no sympathy for black youth in the inner city; no support for local councillors facing surcharge and dismissal from holding public office for trying to stand up to ratecapping, or to Labour Party members who attempted to carry out party policy on local government.

Inside the Labour Party Kinnock continues his attack on left wing policies. The defeat of the miners has speeded this up, but it began well before the strike with the dropping of the commitment to withdraw from the EEC. Another era of bi-partisanship on Ireland has been inaugurated, with the Anglo-Irish accord. And Hattersley, spokesperson on the economy, having steered through a thoroughly refor-

mist economic policy at the last conference, has watered it down even further in public speeches; there is now no question of tackling unemployment as a priority — fighting inflation is the central task and the five million unemployed will have to wait, some of them for ever, as unemployment is here to stay.

The other element in Kinnock's road to making Labour 'fit to govern' is the attack

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on the left in the party. Ostensibly this is against the 'undemocratic' *Militant*; in reality it is an offensive against the whole left, all those who refuse to allow Labour's policies to be jettisoned in the search for votes. The witchhunt is centralised by the enquiry into Liverpool District Party, and despite the minority report will lead to attempted expulsions of between ten and sixteen Liverpool members. There is also the campaign to withdraw the parliamentary whip from MPs Dave Nellist and Terry Fields, the refusal to endorse the reselection of Pat Wall in Bradford and in the constituencies the attacks on members of Black Sections, the Labour Committee on Ireland, and supporters of *Labour Briefing*.

Kinnock's strategy attempts to place class politics outside the parameters of debate, to make them illegitimate, to recentre the party placing the hard left outside the boundary. A campaign which simultaneously tries to make Labour fit for government while preparing for possible coalition is seen in microcosm by the witchhunt in Exeter. Here, *Briefing* supporters have been charged with 'bringing the party into disrepute' because they publicly criticised the local city council for power sharing with the Alliance.

In this situation the soft left is very exposed. Livingstone, for example, claims to oppose expulsions from the party for political beliefs, but can also be heard calling for Hatton's dismissal from the deputy leadership of Liverpool Council. Blunkett votes for the enquiry into Liverpool, against the expulsion of a Sheffield councillor on the NEC, but moves his expulsion from the Sheffield Labour Group. The soft left/LCC project of 'saving Kinnock from the clutches of the right' is propelling them into support for expulsions, support for an increasingly right wing economic policy, support for a Labour government which is dropping every pretence of socialist policy, and which could easily be transformed into a coalition with the Alliance. In reality 'saving Kinnock from the right' is giving him a left cover — a cover that is increasingly flimsy, but a cover none the less.

How should Marxists counter all this? The SWP in Britain suggests building a revolutionary alternative to the mass party, and abstains from the battles which are being fought out in the Labour Party. Making helpful suggestions from the sidelines is a

version of sectarianism. *Militant's* strategy inside the Labour Party is sectarian too. Their inability to form united fronts with others is both sectarian and opportunist, placing the building of their own group above the needs of the left as a whole. This is nowhere more clear than in the fight against the witch hunt. In recognising that the attack against the *Militant* is an attack on the whole left there should be a united campaign to oppose it; but *Militant* insist on organising their own, separate, offensive.

The left in the party have to mount a five-fold counter-offensive. First, against the *Marxism Today* defeatism, we have to argue that the support for Labour has not disappeared, that far from the 'middle class' vote having defected to the SDP, white collar workers are becoming increasingly proletarianised. The economic crisis has already meant that groups like the teachers and low paid civil servants are having to fight to maintain their living standards, and in doing so they turn to their trades unions for support.

Secondly, against the Kinnock camp, and the New Realist right in the TUC, we must argue that the best way to build towards a Labour victory, is to fight the Tories now. The support for Labour increased during the miners' strike, as working class confidence was strengthened, despite the cowardly role of the Labour leadership. Similarly with current disputes. The leadership of the labour movement, both wings of it, should stand up and fight — fight for the Silentnight workers, for the teachers, for the printworkers. Defending jobs and conditions now, outside the law if necessary, is the way to convince people that labour is committed to defending the interests of the working class.

Thirdly, confidence is increased by organisation. The left in the Labour Party and the trade union movement desperately need some sort of national organisation. No one current or group can do this on its own, for none has the organisational strength or capacity to successfully carry it out. An organisation like the Labour Left Co-ordination which links groups and campaigns in the Labour Party can provide the beginnings of what is needed. But in order to consolidate its success so far, it must develop firmer roots in the constituencies as well as with the Labour Party at Parliamentary level, with MPs in the Campaign Group.

The fourth aspect is to stand firm against the witchhunt. Expelling socialists from the party is not going to produce a united party, is not going to build support in the election and anyhow will not exclude socialist ideas. The use of accusations like 'bringing the party into disrepute' and 'undemocratic practices' should be exposed for what they are — a way of getting rid of people whose ideas do not coincide with the present leadership.

Lastly the left must continue to counter attacks on policy questions. The discussion started by the Campaign Group pamphlet by Andrew Glyn on the economy should be continued. Unemployment is a key issue for most people and the left has to develop a

credible alternative both to Thatcher's monetarism and to the policies of the labour right. In particular we should integrate the relationship between the economy and oppressed groups. The first draft is weak on the role played by women and black people, the role of part-time work, capital's increasing use of homeworkers. A new draft will have to take account of the different, but equally important position such groups have in the economy. The next pamphlet planned by the Campaign Group is on NATO. In the face of likely changes to policy on unilateralism, the left should argue the case for unilateralism but also point out the contradiction of this and remaining in NATO. It is common knowledge that any hint of



Derek Hatton, victim of the witch hunt.

closing down US bases in Britain would result in attempts at economic sabotage. We should try and popularise withdrawal from NATO as the only possible way of ridding Britain of nuclear arms. The success of the anti-NATO campaign in Spain shows that this is possible. Similarly on Ireland: Livingstone, in the early days of the GLC, showed how it is possible to popularise radical policy on withdrawal and Irish unity. Despite the setbacks we should continue to develop and make popular the way to self-determination.

'a class struggle current will only arise if it is fought for and organised'

The right to work and the right to choose whether or not to have children are two ideas which have been widely accepted thanks to the women's movement. The proposal by Kinnock and the Labour Co-ordinating Committee to have a ministry for women's rights is therefore a good one and we should welcome it. We should beware of repeating the experience of Mitterrand's ministry, which proved incapable of fighting for women in the face of the austerity programme introduced by the government. So in welcoming the idea we should also place a series of policies such a ministry should carry out if Labour wins. Along with a woman's right to work and a woman's right to choose, we should put the right to equal pay for work

of equal value, the right of freedom from sexual harassment, free child care, the provision of women's health clinics with proper follow up procedures for cancer screening, the right to choose where and how to have a baby, the provision of door to door transport for women alone at night on the agenda.

The left should also be making sure that conference commitment to repeal racist immigration laws and the Nationality Act, also previously areas of bi-partisanship, is put into the manifesto for the election.

We have to say loud and clear there is no answer to the economic crisis for the working class other than socialist policies. The idea that you can replace a radical Tory government with one based on the consensus politics of earlier decades in the present economic situation is just pie in the sky. If the Labour Party continues its present course of dropping all policies with any hint of benefit to the working class about them, when in government it will have to mount a massive attack against the very people who voted them into office. It will be an attack, not just on the scale of the Wilson and Callaghan administrations, but much worse, because of the accelerated decline of industry and the plight of British capital.

Of course, there is no chance that Kinnock will follow our advice, and in all likelihood there will be no overall majority for any party after the election. Faced with a hung parliament we should remain adamantly opposed to coalition, demanding Labour form a minority government and fight to carry out its policies. In the present economic climate, however, it will be very difficult for Labour to carry out even very watered down policies. What happens after that is open to conjecture. It is possible, even likely, that the anti-working class policies Labour will be forced to introduce will provoke an open revolt in the ranks of the labour movement. This will probably not be as circumscribed as the revolt in the party after the defeat of 1979, when the attempt to make the leadership more accountable concentrated on constitutional changes like the election of the leadership and reselection of MPs. The militants of the movement will have gone through the political experience of the miners' strike, with the education it provided on the role of the state, the police, the courts and not least the Labour Party and trade union leaders in betraying the strike. If and when Kinnock capitulates to the demands of national and international capital, there is likely to be enormous disaffection throughout the working class. We should be careful not to see the development of a strong left wing current as an inevitable consequence. Such a left, a class struggle current like the Minority Movement of the 1920s, will only arise if it is consciously fought for and organised. Just as the Minority Movement was organised and led by the Communist Party, so today any such developments will be the result of the conscious leadership by Marxists in the Labour and trade union movement.

Footnotes

1. *The Economist*, 15th-21st February 1986.
2. *Marxism Today*, February 1986.
3. *The Guardian*, 24th February 1986.

AU SECOURS! LA DROITE REVIENT.



French Socialist Party election poster

Revenge of the right

The Mitterrand years in France illustrate the dilemma of social democracy in the eighties. **NICK WOLFE** outlines the choices for the European labour movement: socialist democracy or capitalist austerity?

WHATEVER THE RESULTS of the general election due in March this year, it is clear that there is no hope of the Socialist Party (PS) repeating its 1981 victory. At best, Mitterrand is hoping for 30 per cent of the vote, which will enable the PS to try to put together a parliamentary coalition with the Right, relying on the fact that these elections are for the Assembly and that Mitterrand will continue to be President until 1988. In 1981 the Left had a thumping overall majority; now while the PS dreams of under one third of the vote, and the Communist Party (PCF) faces the very real danger, under the new system of proportional representation, that it will fall below the ten per cent threshold. The clever money is still on a victory for the Right.

For socialists in Britain, with two Labour governments in the last 20 years to look back on, the story of the Socialist Party in power is depressingly familiar. Yet the anti-fetters of the Mitterrand experiment came to France with the expectations of the French workers, who brought it to power and indeed the pro-

cess of the first year of the PCF government. The reconstruction of the government was the culmination of a long process, which began with the formation of the PS-PCF-UDF Radical alliance in the *Renouveau de la Gauche* in 1967-72. In the preceding years, a right wing government, led by De Gaulle and Pompidou, working class politics was dominated by the UCF (which could command more than 20 per cent of the vote) and its control of the largest trade union confederation, the CGT. Only the Communist Party could claim to be the 'mass party of the working class', with the Socialists confined to a niche. During the pre-revolutionary explosion of May-June 1968, the PCF exerted its control of the most advanced sectors of the working class to define the struggle.

Mitterrand, a veteran politician who had been the Minister of the Interior during the Algerian war, saw that the road to the reconstruction of a mass Socialist Party such as had existed before the war, was to ally his small forces with the Communists in an overall government campaign. Hence the Union de la Gauche. By engineering this alliance Mitterrand lured the Communists, led by Georges Marchais, into a trap. The alliance made the possibility of a re-entrance of the left more realistic. It also made the reconstructed Socialist Party more credible, and in the early 1970s, cleverly using the changes of socialist social freedoms and slogans of self-management, the PS recruited votes both to the right of the PCF and to its left.

Mitterrand, however, actually wanted a government of the left, which would be of

course a left reforming government, it wanted to be the senior partner. By the early 1970s Mitterrand had made this an impossibility. This development rather than any major programme or political difference, led the PCF to break up the Union de la Gauche in 1977. PCF from the point of view of the hapless Georges Marchais, the drama was done. The PCF was tied to the Socialist fight for governmental power, which, if the alliance formally existed or not, Mitterrand mobilised the party faithful round rather than of a left government there was no way out of the trap. The PCF also suffered from being one of the most openly Stalinist parties among the Western CPs, and was vulnerable to PS denigration on the questions of individual freedom and progress.

Even in the Paris 'red belt' working class voters deserted to the Socialist Party. The victory of the left in 1981 nonetheless opened up huge working class expectations of major social change. The PCF was brought into the government, the door for the government to maintain working class loyalty. In the first year, some important reforms were implemented: a reduction of one hour in the working week, the institution of a fifth week's paid holiday, an increase in the minimum wage and retirement at 60. In addition there were reforms of local government and the criminal justice system, notably the abolition of the death penalty. There was an enlargement of the state industrial sector and the nationalisation of those small banks which still remained in private hands.

But within one year, on 13 June 1982,

i
Mitterrand's prime minister Mauroy introduced the *plan de rigueur* - the austerity plan. The first year's expansion of the economy was abandoned. Why? Mitterrand had utilised state-led Keynesian pump-priming techniques to reflate the economy, but did so at a time of world economic recession. Inevitably the result was a jump in inflation and balance of payments problems. Lacking any overall socialist strategy, the government turned to deflation and austerity. With the PCF in the government, the feelings of betrayal engendered among the workers resulted in demoralisation and a strengthening of the right.

Right-wing mobilisation

Out of government, the bourgeois parties - most notably the Gaullist RPR led by Jacques Chirac - turned to street mobilisations against the government in 1982-83, bringing on to the streets tens of thousands against the proposal to integrate church schools with the state school system. There were also right-wing led mobilisations of students and the medical profession which led to clashes in the streets. Most dangerously, the right took up the themes of immigration, aimed against the large immigrant and especially North African population in France.

The main beneficiary of this was not however the Gaullists or their allies, but the newly emerged National Front, led by ex-paratrooper and long-time fascist thug Jean-Marie Le Pen. The National Front won a sensational 10 per cent of the vote - nearly as many as the PCF - in the 1984 European elections. It was clear that among these voters were not only the kind of petty-bourgeois *enragés*, mobilised by the right over issues like state schools and abortion, but also a considerable number of former adherents of the PS and even the PCF.

Both the working class parties crumpled under the racist upsurge, indeed in some PCF-controlled municipalities the local mayors were at the forefront of the anti-immigrant hysteria. This was all the more criminal in that immigrant workers were beginning to play an important role in many workers struggles, most notably the Talbot car factory occupation in 1984. Many black workers in France are second generation and born in France - there are more young black workers than there were students in 1968. Both the PCF and the PS showed themselves totally incapable and unwilling to launch any counter-offensive against the racist upsurge. It was only after a series of particularly brutal racist murders that the organisation *SOS-Racisme*, a broad coalition involving many members and ex-members of the extreme left, began to mount a counter-offensive in 1985. Many of its activities, especially its ubiquitous badge '*ne touche pas mon pot*' (hands off my mate) resemble those of the British Anti-Nazi League.

Meanwhile the right wing parties began to debate the possibility of a more-or-less formal alliance with the National Front. Both in the 1983 local elections and the 1984 European elections the left did badly, with hundreds of thousands of working class abstentions.

...And confusion on the Left...

The turn of the government towards austerity cast the French left into confusion and even despair. The Socialist Party leadership has always been a hotbed of factional warfare, but no grouping has been able to put forward any coherent left-wing alternative to Mitterrand. In fact the most dynamic force to emerge inside the PS has been the right-wing faction headed by Michel Rocard, formerly leader of the far-left PSU. Rocard represents the view that the PS should transform itself into a French version of the German SPD - extreme right-wing social democracy. He argues that the market and capitalism should be openly embraced. On the 'left' of the party the CERES grouping, has itself moved perceptibly to the right. Today it puts forward a project of protectionist state capitalism, based on prioritising the 'independence' of French capitalism against the multinationals.

'Both the PCF and the SP showed themselves totally incapable and unwilling to counter- the racist upsurge'

Doubtless there are thousands of dissident PS members who want a left alternative, but given the weak structures of the PS and its domination by the pronouncements of the party 'tops' there is none on offer. The PCF is a party which does not know which way to turn. In 1984 it left the government reluctantly, no longer wishing to take responsibility for Mitterrand's policies, but neither does it want to take the responsibility for an all-out mobilisation against austerity, and apart from demagogic statements and a few adventurist actions to show its 'militant' face, the CP-led CGT union federation has held its members in check. PCF leader Marchais has talked openly of the advantages for the working class in having the Right back in power, which only adds to the mood of demoralisation and defeat.

To the left of the major parties, revolutionary groups like the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire*, faced with widespread demoralisation and an ebbing class struggle, are fighting against the stream to construct an alternative to the betrayals of the PS and PCF. Until there is a turn in the political situation there seems little hope of any major breakthrough.

Force de frappe

France under Mitterrand has been a stalwart of the Western alliance and has, Gorbachev's visit notwithstanding, been a pillar of anti-Communism in world politics. France is not formally a member of the military structure of NATO, and has attempted to utilise its 'independent' position to increase its weight inside the Western alliance - trying to construct a bloc with West Germany (a bloc which the Americans are trying to disrupt) and using its powerful role in Africa. Despite surrounding himself with 'anti-imperialist' advisors like Régis Debray, Mitterrand has played the strong man in Africa, sending troops to Chad, and

giving backing to a whole number of reactionary regimes.

Alas, among the major political forces in France there is a broad consensus on international questions. Virtually alone among Western European countries there is no major peace movement, despite the CP's feeble attempt to create one on the basis of support for international détente, and around such militant slogans as '*J'aime la Paix*' (I love peace). Neither the PCF nor any other major political force has challenged the French nuclear deterrent - the '*force de frappe*' - nor the alignment with the Western alliance.

Thatcherism with a vengeance

The betrayals of Mitterrand of course do not come as any surprise to Marxists. But perhaps the absence of an broad left-wing revolt among the working class and its parties does. Any illusions that Mitterrand would be rapidly outflanked to the left, as was the Popular Front government in 1936, have been dispelled. Two things need to be brought out here. First, the Mitterrand government came to power at a time of relative working-class retreat, and not in the middle of a major workers upsurge. But quite central has been the absence of any authoritative challenge from the left from within the working class parties and unions. The main explanation for this lies with the role of the PCF which, basing itself on a reformist perspective, has gone along with austerity. The PS and the PCF between them have discredited socialism in the eyes of millions of French workers. Such conflict as there has been between the PS and the PCF has not been on fundamentals, but has consisted of transparently manoeuvring for position and influence. The revolutionary organisations, despite their much larger size than in Britain and their better implantation in some key factories, have lacked the strength to provide any alternative governmental perspective.

Nonetheless, recent opinion polls have shown a small increase of support for the PS in the run-up to the election. This represents a basic class instinct to rally to defeat the right. Certainly, if Mitterrand represents the misery of austerity, the right wing wants to overturn all the gains made by the working class in the early period of the Socialist government. A new right-wing government in France will be Thatcherism with a vengeance.

The failure of the Mitterrand experiment poses a basic political challenge to socialists and one which needs much debate in the European labour movement. The French CP-PS government opted for austerity as the 'only alternative' once its expansion of the economy had led to economic instability. Acceptance of this false choice - either inflationary expansion or deflationary austerity puts the labour movement in a vise - either a capitalist devil or a capitalist deep blue sea. The common wisdom on much of the left that Mitterrand failed because he was too radical has to be challenged. Tony Benn once said that capitalism's crisis was socialism's opportunity. Mitterrand has proved that the crisis of the labour movement gives every opportunity to the most reactionary forces in society.

British peculiarities

CHRIS BERTRAM

Ben Fine and Laurence Harris, *The Peculiarities of the British Economy*, Lawrence & Wishart, £7.50.

THERE IS a common view on the left about the causes of Britain's decline. The 'origins of the present crisis' (to use Perry Anderson's phrase) lie in the class compromise of the seventeenth century, in the fusion of landed aristocracy and the proto-bourgeoisie. This alliance set the scene for some of Britain's greatest triumphs — such as the Empire — but in the end, the weight of the dead came to impede the progress of the living. An archaic superstructure clogged the cogs and wheels of the productive base and decline set in. The murky haze of English public life seeped into the lungs of the infant labour movement, which, unable to support itself and born before its ideology (Marxism), could only aspire to an adulthood of incorporation into the status quo and developed a congenital inability to exercise hegemony. As time goes by the ruling class (abetted by the state) develop an addiction to financial speculation and international adventure while back at t' mill the rusting machinery turns more and more slowly and the proles' phone in sick.

This picture has to go, say Fine and Harris. But what is to replace it? Rejecting any fatalistic picture of Britain's economic decline, they insist that there have been a number of key moments in recent British history — such as 1945 — when the state, the City and industrial capital could have intervened to reconstruct British capitalism on a rational basis. The reasons for this failure seem to have to do with the relations between these three elements, on the one hand, and their relation to the British labour movement, on the other.

The City has not 'starved industry of funds' in any straightforward sense, rather the need for

the City to compete as an international financial centre has led to it (through the Bank of England) to insist on policies — such as the convertibility of sterling and the freedom to borrow and re-lend foreign currencies at will — that have blocked the development of any coherent industrial policy by the state. These requirements of the City have remained stable while the focus of its attentions has shifted sharply from the Sterling Area to a more broadly international perspective.

The banks have lent to industry, although industry has often preferred to be self-financing, but the form of lending has been the overdraft secured by charges against a company's assets. This has had the consequences that banks have chosen to play almost no role in the development of long-term strategic planning of industrial companies, in the knowledge that they can, if the worst came to the worst, simply trigger bankruptcy and get their money back. In other West European countries the banks have played a quite different role. Through their lending to industry they have become forums for the development of a long-term industrial perspective — in Britain the City has refused to play such a role and has made it impossible for the state to do so.

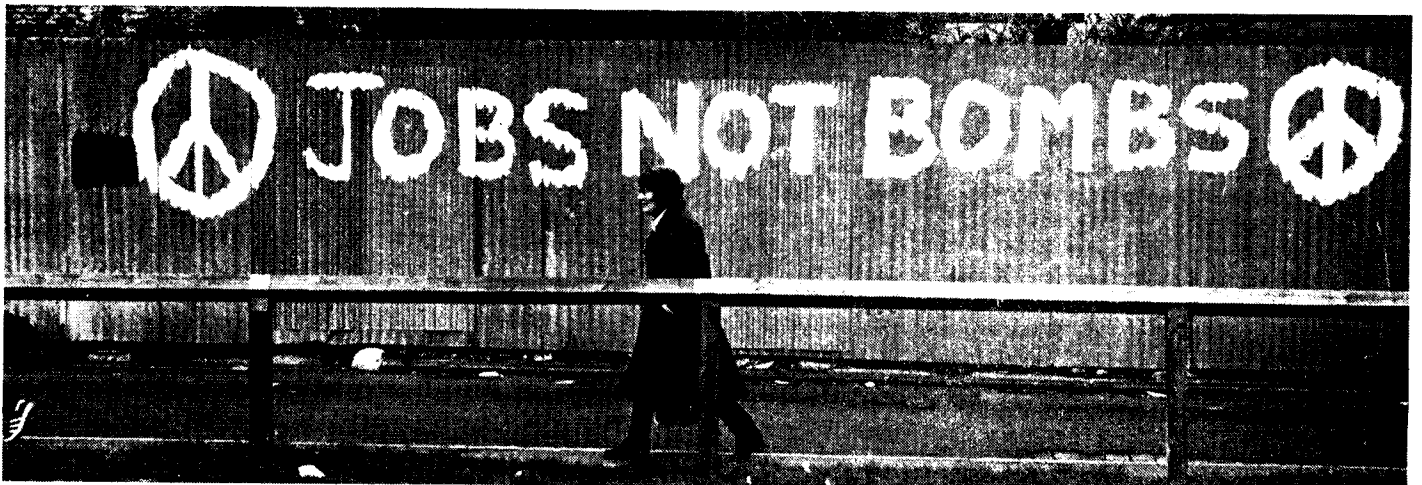
The capacity of government to develop an industrial strategy has been further undermined, according to Fine and Harris, by the weight of both British and foreign multinational corporations in the economy. The power of these corporations and their ability to shift production from one country to another is identified as a major source of government weakness. Far from attempting any sort of fightback, British governments have tended to adopt the multinationals own view of the world and have pursued policies that aid the internationalisation of capital. The Alternative Economic Strategy is supposed to be the remedy for all this.

Much of the book is devoted to the relation-

ship between the state and industry in specific sectors. Coal and nuclear power are singled out for special attention here. The central argument is that the labour movement has repeatedly failed to use its strengths to impose a coherent industrial strategy on the state and on specific sectors. Groups of workers in particular industries — such as the miners with *Plan for Coal* — have proved too isolated to do this, it is a task for the labour movement as a whole, with a united trade union movement giving a Labour government the will to use the capitalist state machine.

So what, if anything, is wrong with all this? Fine and Harris seem to be looking for some outside agency — state, City or labour movement — to impose a coherent and rational strategy on Britain's myopic industrial capitalists. It seems to me that they hanker after some corporatist solution, perhaps on the model of Austrian tripartism, although such an imputation would no doubt upset the authors. All this from the supposedly 'hard left' *Morning Star* wing of the Communist Party. The Alternative Economic Strategy as envisaged by Fine and Harris seems to have all the disadvantages associated with a full blooded socialist policy and none of the benefits. If the labour movement were ever in a position to impose a 'rational capitalist solution' in the form of a coherent industrial strategy, its very strength would already have panicked the capitalists (of all sorts) into sabotage and flight.

All of this is not to deny that there is much that is valuable in the book. I did get the feeling though, that far from being antithetical to the Anderson-Nairn thesis, Fine and Harris are (in the words of JS Mill) 'climbing the hill from the other side'. It is, I think, possible to take on board much of their analysis while retaining an understanding of the cultural and political determinants of Britain's economic decline.



Socialist Register

JULIAN ATKINSON

Editors: Miliband, Saville, Liebman and Panitch *Socialist Register 1985/6: Social Democracy and After*. Merlin Press £6.50.

THIS DOUBLE issue of the *Socialist Register* has a clear theme — social democracy and what the left has to do to transcend it. The texts on social democracy contain a series of essays on the experiences in different and mainly Western European countries over the past years. The central core of this section is comprised of pieces contributed by the editors that attempt to analyse the current impasse of European social democracy, and to then suggest how to move beyond reformism. This project, let us leave on one side for the moment their conclusions, puts the *Register* into the same camp as *International*. It also decisively puts them into the opposite camp to that of the legion of ex-leftists who have lurched to the right in pursuit of the fatuous holy grail of a 'Kinnock-Atlee' government. The dregs of this accommodation include Ben Pimlot who enthuses that the next Kinnock government is unlikely to disappoint in that it promises so little — politics, in an imitation of art, founds a minimalist school.

The editors make the point that a few years ago it would have seemed indecent to question the necessity for going beyond social democracy. Now the issue has to be debated. The crisis of the labour movement in Western Europe has made a layer of leftists question revolutionary socialism. A very interesting essay by Panitch turns this on its head: 'the impasse ... pertains far more to reformist gradualism precisely because this has been — and remains — the primary practice of Western working class parties'. Panitch describes how social democracy contributed to the present crisis. During the fifties the socialist parties moved away from social ownership to state intervention based on welfarism and Keynesianism. The emphasis was on tripartite indicative planning and incomes policies. In the seventies, due to stagflation, this approach shifted to monetarism and, to placate the union leaders, legislation to strengthen union rights and to plan investment in production rather than to marginally reform distribution of wealth. This was seen in Sweden with the Meidner plan for employee investment funds while in Britain it manifested itself in the National Enterprise Board and the Bullock proposals for parity trade union representation on company boards. Panitch argues that the latter caused manufacturers to go into the Thatcher camp. The effect of this process and the austerity measures was to demoralise the electoral base of the Labour Party. Labour was



Carlos Augusto Guartã Reflex

Portugal: Socialist Party leader Mario Soares, representative of the new right wing in European social democracy.

associated with the alien bureaucracy of the state and was wide open to a Thatcherite populist and market oriented 'anti-state' riposte.

Panitch contributes a useful dismantling of the 'new revisionism': the market socialism of Nove and the supporters of a new social contract like Hirst, Purdy and Hodgson. His major polemic is launched against Hobsbawm and includes a very spirited and necessary defence of Benn. Some of the ground has been worked before but Panitch concentrates his fire on a vital weakness of Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm systematically glosses over the failures of the Wilson/Callaghan governments and virtually lays the electoral defeat of 1983 at the feet of those who opposed wage restraint and the cuts, who fought for the demands of women and blacks and wanted to democratise the Labour Party. Panitch argues that the alliance that Hobsbawm is desperate to achieve is with the Labour right. But the right are not so dedicated to unity, will oppose all the reforms of the left that are necessary to win back broad support from working people and is hell bent on a witch hunt. Hobsbawm's

alliance precludes any socialist advance. This — the reviewer now pops out to wag his finger and draw a moral — is the fundamental problem of left Labourism. The Labour Party has a dual class nature and any socialist progress within it precipitates a crisis and splits which threaten the immediate electoral opportunities of Labour.

The torrent of analysis in the *Register* trickles into the sand when the issue of what is to be done is posed. There is agreement that themes such as workers' control and democratic control of social decisions seem to be the most promising path. Miliband and Liebman attempt to spell out the organisational conclusions. Social democracy has failed. The revolutionary left is rejected for its vanguardist awaiting a revolutionary crisis and the smashing of the state — which has never happened in Western Europe. This left is characterised by manipulative leaders and bad internal regimes. Without wishing to act as an apologist for the faults of the revolutionary left, their treatment by the editors is sloppy and superficial and fails to take seriously the contribution in practice and theory made by the majority of that left. For Miliband and Liebman an alternative is needed. 'That alternative entails a firm revolutionary commitment, namely the wholesale transformation of capitalist society in socialist directions. But it also involves a "reformist" commitment, in so far as it also seeks all reformism which can be seen to form part of a larger revolutionary purpose.' Well, so say all of us. But how are we to get this 'alternative'? Apparently the embodiment of this 'revolutionary reformism' is the Communist parties, fundamentally flawed as they are by Stalinism and democratic centralism. We are told that the process of building healthy parties beyond social democracy will differ from country to country. 'In some, Communist parties may come to shed their negative features and form the basis for a socialist realignment on the left; in others, that realignment will have to come from other left sources. However it comes to pass, the process is likely to be protracted: serious socialist parties cannot suddenly be conjured up out of nothing.' And that, very sadly, is as far as the editors take us. A rather less cursory analysis of the far left might have taught the editors that there are theories of how to intervene in fundamentally flawed mass workers parties, both social democratic and communist. These theories do not rely on a spontaneous shedding of 'negative features' but rigorously probe the limits of left reformism and explore, as to a degree Panitch has done, the incompatibility of socialist advance within such parties with their continuing organisational integrity.

Kiss of the Spiderwoman

PETER PURTON

Kiss of the Spider Woman. A film by Hector Babenco, starring William Hurt, Raul Julia, Sonia Braga.

KISS of the Spider Woman has been hailed as both a magnificent film and as a deep and serious study of human relations and of sexuality. Its central theme is the relationship which develops between Molina, an effeminate gay man, and Valentin, a very definitely straight revolutionary, as they share a Latin American prison cell. The staging, the drama and the acting (especially William Hurt as Molina) are superb. But politically, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* is far from being as 'right-on' as some have claimed.

If unity of the most extreme opposites was what Babenco wished to create, in order to explore an evolving relationship and to question the basis of male sexuality, then those extremes are certainly presented. The problem is, that they are demonstrably stereotypes of the most predictable form. Valentin is strong, bearded, silent, wedded to the revolutionary cause. Human enough to show fear of torture, he nonetheless withholds the names of his comrades. For him, expressions of emotions such as love and affection are out of order. Molina is the full gay stereotype. A former shop window dresser, his public identity is with great film actresses, he camps everything up outrageously, from dress to speech. He dotes on his elderly mother, his dream is of meeting a 'real man' to whom he can be passive 'wife'.

How do two such characters come together? The process is actually quite predictable. Through shared hardship and through heated arguments Valentin's cold exterior is broken down. Yes, he does know fear; yes, he has a girl friend, and she does matter to him; but his first girl friend matters more, still. He recognises a deep human kindness in Molina which overcomes his prejudice, and he understands that it is not impossible to be a devoted revolutionary and a loving human being. Molina's evolution is different. A running thread of the film is his recounting, as episodes between current events, a slushy romantic film he once saw, in which his identity is totally with a romantic, doomed heroine. It soon transpires that the film was a wartime German propaganda exercise, to Valentin's (initial) fury. This is an occasion for more stereotypes: notably the attractiveness of 'blond young Nazis'.

Yet in dramatic contrast, it is Molina who first becomes the 'strong' man in this menage, taking his companion through his crises. Then, of course, the reverse occurs, and Valentin, having been converted from fanatic to human,



comes to Molina's rescue as he movingly recounts the miserable tale of his own life, a tale of persecuted and unrequited love, of deep loneliness and an uncaring and superficial 'scene'. The causes are thus levelled off: the selfless revolutionary (who just happens to be from a comfortable background...) sacrificing himself for the cause of humanity, and the self-centred, poor, homosexual, struggling in his own heroic way against a mighty oppression.

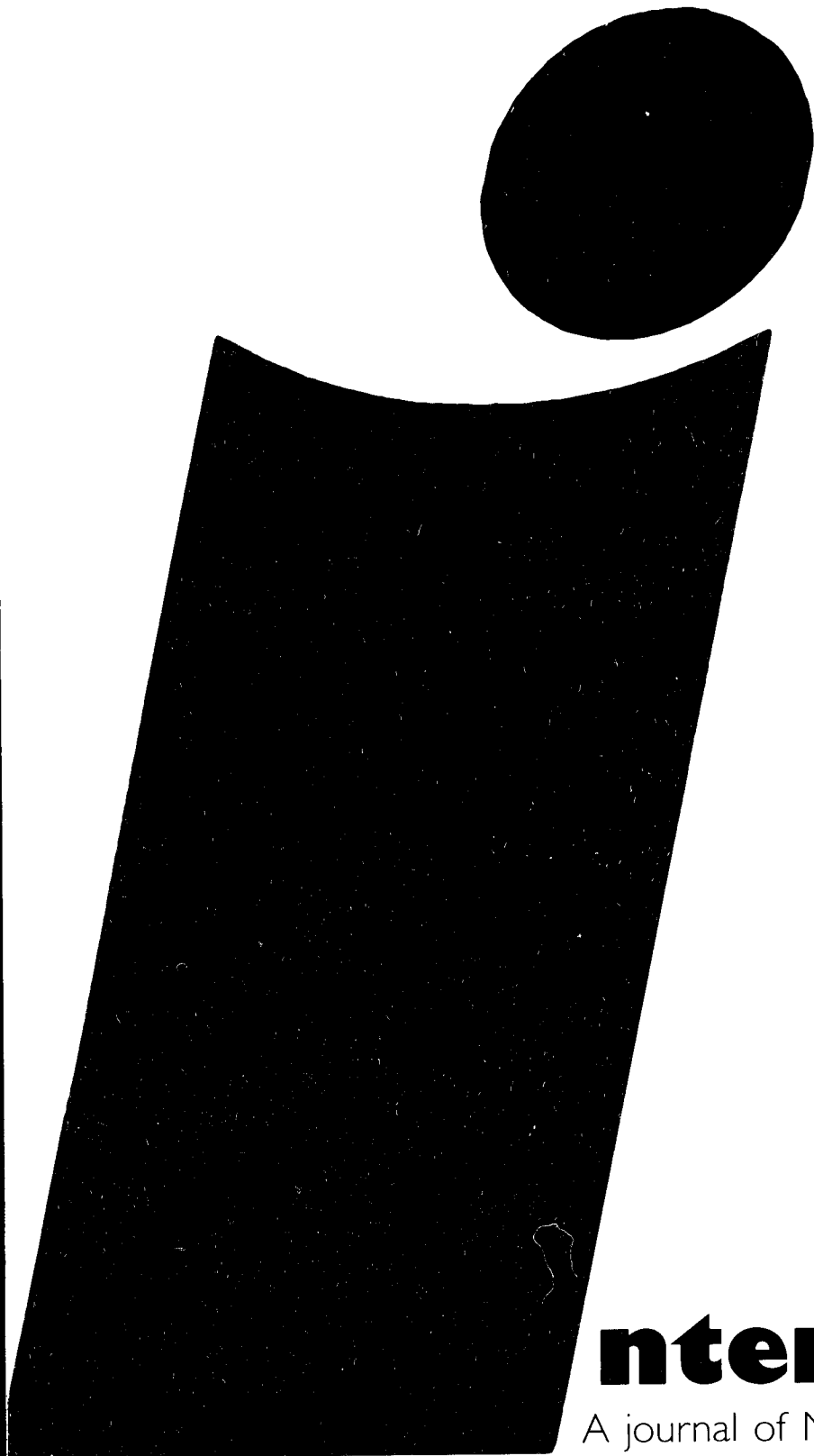
It is only to be expected, of course, that Molina falls in love with Valentin and that they end up in bed together — a scene touchingly and convincingly done.

So what is wrong? Stereotyped characters are never convincing, even when played as strongly as there are in this film. And if the stereotype of Molina is a problem then so is that of Valentin, but made to seem less so, both because Hurt's performance is so overpowering, and because *his* stereotype is perhaps far closer to the real thing, and certainly far more 'acceptable'.

The fundamental problem is with the role of Molina. Throughout he is the receptacle of weakness and corruption. We find out well into the film that he is acting as an agent for the prison warden, trying to find out from Valentin what the torturers cannot extract, in return for an early parole. Soon, of course, by falling in love he becomes useless for this plan. So they let him out anyway, hoping that he will lead them to Valentin's associates. Of course,

Valentin has indeed asked him to pass on a message. And so our poor, weak, helpless gay, having finally decided to take up just a small piece of the heroic revolutionary cause, dies in the process, running from the police and shot, symbolically, by Valentin's current girl friend.

In the final sequence, Valentin falls into a morphine-induced sleep after another bout of brutal questioning. He dreams of being spirited out of prison by his first girl friend, his real 'true love', and of embarking on a little boat to row away into the moonlight. So what have we proved? Valentin, through the medium of his gay friend, and briefly lover, has rediscovered his real love; he becomes the 'real man' of Molina's vain longings. Molina, in abandoning for once his self-centred search for beauty and affection in favour of the Cause, has lost his life. It is once again the gay as catalyst, the gay as victim. There *can* be a connection between gays and revolution. It is a connection which comes about through lesbians and gay men fighting for their liberation and through socialists (from whatever part of the world) recognising that these causes are not contradictory but related. *Kiss of the Spider Woman* does not make these connections. The cause of gay liberation has no need of more victims and martyrs or 'straight' liberal sympathy. And that, in the end and despite its pretensions, is what *Kiss of the Spider Woman* gives us.



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