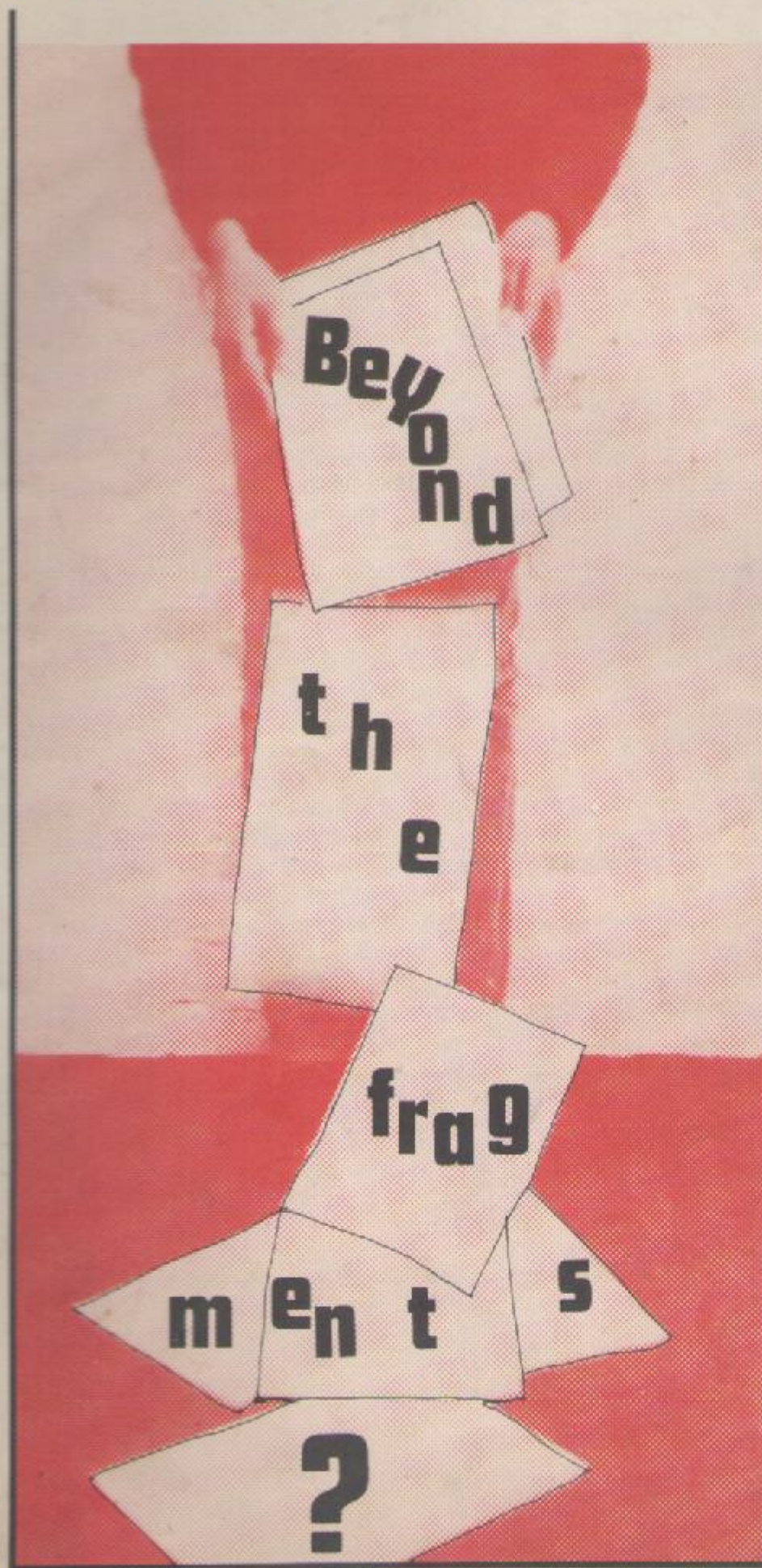


INTERNATIONAL

Theoretical Journal of the International Marxist Group



Inside

**Analysing
the
Tories**

**Beyond
the
fragments?**

**The Labour
Left's
'Alternative'**

**The Italian
Communist
Party at the
end of the
War**

**Crisis of the
European
Far Left**

**Vol 5 No2
Spring 1980**

INTERNATIONAL

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Beyond the Fragments by Sheila Rowbotham, Hilary Wainwright and Lynn Segal seeks to provide a critique of orthodox Leninism from a socialist feminist point of view. In this issue of *International*, we present the first sustained reply to a book which has generated fierce debate among feminists and socialists. Valerie Coultas challenges the authors' one-sided presentation of Leninism and shows that some of their arguments can be interpreted as a rejection of all political parties. She also suggests that Leninism and feminism are not incompatible, and that socialists must challenge both male domination and bourgeois power.

In the second of our major articles, Alan Freeman scrutinizes the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' (AES) popularized by the Labour left, and the particular version of it proposed by Stuart Holland, one of Labour's major theoreticians. Freeman highlights the inadequacy of AES in tackling the economic power of the monopolies, and argues that the exponents of AES underestimate the political reaction with which the bourgeoisie will greet even the mild anti-capitalist measures contained in AES programmes.

Anna Libera's study of Italian Communism, *The Bitter Fruits of the Historic Compromise*, traces the history of the class collaborationism of the Italian PCI, of which the Historic Compromise is only the latest expression. We present an English translation of the chapter dealing with the failure of the Italian Communists to seize power at the end of the Second World War. Libera describes the debates and divisions within the PCI during the Forties, making an important contribution to recovering the real history of that organization.

Finally, in a provocative essay, David Tettodoro examines the nature of the Thatcher Government, and argues against some of the more alarmist analyses fashionable on the left. Tettodoro points to the similarity between some of Thatcher's policies and those of Heath's early administration.

Contents

Analysing the Tories

By David Tettodoro.....2

Beyond the fragments?

By Valerie Coultas.....6

The Alternative Economic Strategy: a critique

By Alan Freeman.....14

The Italian CP at the end of the war

By Anna Libera.....26

Crisis of the European left

By P. Lawson.....35

Review of recent left publications

By Ric Sissons and Ron Ward 37

'The Bolsheviks come to power'

By Dave Bailey.....39

Vol 5 No2
Spring 1980

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Analysing the Tories

By David Tettodoro

The election of a Tory government headed by the infamous 'milk-snatcher' of the social services and the 'iron maiden' of the Cold War, with its industrial policies under the direction of an ideologue of the 'new right', has given rise to widespread apprehension on the left that we are about to face an all-out onslaught against the historically accumulated gains of the workers' movement.

This view is clearly expressed by Martin Jacques, editor of *Marxism Today*. Resting his interpretation upon a view of Thatcherism as 'a new kind of global rightism' expressing a resurgence of middle class, populist right-wing sentiment, he writes:

'Already it is clear that the Tories meant what they said. A wide-ranging attack on the position of the working class and on the democratic achievements of the post-war period has commenced, the ferocity of which will overshadow anything we have witnessed since the war.' (1)

Sentiments like this, based on the ideological significance of 'Thatcherism', are rarely very clear about the *relationship of class forces* constricting the action of Thatcher and her supporters. But this is decisive, for if the expected attack is launched in an unfavourable context — if the working class is able to resist as it was under the Heath government — then Thatcher may well face crushing defeat.

Implicit in the view of those who warn that a right-wing offensive is imminent is that the government is not short-sighted, that working-class strength has been seriously eroded over the past five years. Defensive struggles for basic rights would then seem the task of the hour. Jacques and other contributors to *Marxism Today* go further, calling for 'a new kind of mass politics', 'a new set of alliances' that will 'champion a new kind of national alternative, a new type of democratic modernism for British society, with broad popular appeal.'

The content of this prescription remains unclear (reflecting, I suspect, the authors' uncertain and confused conception of the present government). But the intent seems to be something like a 'new version' of the popular front of the 1930s whereby the labour movement is to undercut Thatcher's populist rightism by evincing a greater sensitivity to the concerns of its middle-class base.

It is my view that the Thatcher government cannot be understood as the product of a new right-wing sentiment in the country reflected in a fortified Tory middle-class base that has imposed its will on the party leadership. Nor was Thatcher's triumph the outcome of a battle between competing ideological factions in the party. Both these factors may be *elements* in the situation, but neither is dominant. In essence, the Thatcher government represents a new tactical course for the Tory leadership and the ruling class as a whole; the lessons of the Heath government have been drawn, and the new context analysed. Underlying this new course is a far more perspicacious assessment of the relationship of class forces than that upheld by many on the left, for the ruling class has understood that the working class has lost none of its potential combativity since the fall of Heath. But the rulers are equally well aware of the weaknesses of the British working class and its organizations, and the aim of the new course is to manipulate these weaknesses 'taking due account of the strengths' in the interests of British capital. Thatcher's 'radicalism' thus enjoys a very wide consensus among the Tory leaders, but it is strictly circumscribed by the prevailing pattern of class relations.

Those who interpret this government's policies primarily in terms of the ideological pronouncements of its leading figures have short memories. The most cursory examination of the programmatic roots of the Thatcher government finds them firmly implanted in the early years of the Heath administration, when 'Selsdon man' set out to cull the 'lame ducks' of British industry. Reinvigoration of the market economy, reduction of the public sector, tax cuts, curtailments of 'trade-union power' — all these are watchwords of the pre-1970 Heath opposition and of its first period of office.

The dominant political influence on the Thatcher administration is the trauma of Heath's retreat in the face of the unexpected strength of working-class opposition to his policies. The result was that a government ostensibly committed to lifting socialism's foot from the neck of the free-enterprise economy presided over one of the sharpest increases in the weight of state spending in total national output since the end of the war. Public spending for

'counter-cyclical' objectives did not prevent the economy from plummeting into a deep recession, and the share of GNP accounted for by the public sector consequently soared towards the magic 50 per cent threshold.

Resentment at this abandonment of deeply held political aims was considerable among Tory back-benchers, but the very nature of the parliamentary system and the relative flexibility of the Conservative Party kept it effectively bottled up until Heath's policy came to grief and resulted in electoral disaster. Heath's ouster and Thatcher's victory represented the ascendancy of those who wanted to return to the Tory fundamentalism of Selsdon Park and who felt that the mid-term reversal of Tory policies had been unwise and unnecessary. (2)

Margaret Thatcher, the one member of the Heath cabinet to have mounted any serious resistance to Heath's change of direction, and front-bench figures like John Biffen (now first secretary at the Treasury), one of the most persistent back-bench thorns in the side of the Tory whips over such issues as state aid to industry and incomes policy, rose rapidly within the party as a result of the shift in the political balance. But it must not be forgotten that this was but a change in the relationship of forces within the party — not a dramatic upheaval in its structure or leadership. As the *Economist* pointed out in the wake of the formation of the government: 'If she (Thatcher) was ever inclined to create an administration of the radical right — and we doubt she ever was — there were clearly not the ministerial resources to do so. The upper echelons of the Conservative party remain a coalition and this was the material from which she had to build her team.... So, despite the apparent radicalism of the Thatcher revolution, her 22-member cabinet contains 18 of Mr. Edward Heath's ministers.' (3)

The early period of the Heath government was analysed incisively at the time by Robin Blackburn. His words are worth recalling here, for in general they apply equally to Thatcher:

'Because the Left has not yet understood the new political formula which Heath is developing, it postulates that some fundamental mutation in the form of bourgeois domination is imminent. What is

argued in this article is that the innovation involved is at the level of fundamental policy options, not at that of the political form of the state....

'With Heath the Conservative Party has produced a leader who promises to defend effectively and coherently the interests of a major sector of British capitalism and to develop a new formula for both foreign and domestic politics. In formulating a strategy for restoring the fortunes of British capitalism, he intends to *jettison* the backwardness of British bourgeois politics — its sentimentalism about old friends and old customs — and to *exploit* the backwardness of the British working class — its parliamentarism and economism.' (4)

Blackburn correctly pointed out that

of the origins and ideology of 'Thatcherism', (5) attempts to explain Tory policies in terms of counterposed factions in the Conservative Party. He is thus compelled to posit a chasm between the 'traditional Tory' (Heathite) and 'new right' (Thatcherite) wings of the party and thereby minimizes the distinctive features of the Heath government. He notes that 'the Seldson Park conference in 1970 and the manifesto that followed it showed many concessions to the weight of New Right opinion. It is also true that the early period of the Heath Government is often seen as marking a sharp break with consensus politics and as a harbinger of Thatcherism'. But he then dismisses this view: 'This was radicalism, however, in pursuit of

some ideological revulsion to unemployment and economic stagnation — that obliged Heath to change direction sharply. After the bitter resistance to the Industrial Relations Bill, the liquidation of UCS, the National Industrial Relations Court, and the 1972 miners' strike — all initiated by the very rank-and-file trade-union organization the Tories most wanted to undermine — it would have been impossible either to ignore the problems of mounting inflation and unemployment or to have tried to enact an incomes policy without making concessions to the trade unions in spheres other than wages.

Gamble also finds it necessary to magnify the degree of antagonism within the present government, calling it 'more divided than at any time since the 1930s'. This claim is based on his contention that the 'prospect of policies that seek to dismantle Social Democracy by "rolling back" the state in economic affairs, and rolling it forward to confront trade union power, fills many of the present Conservative leadership (Gilmour, Pym, Prior, Carlisle, Walker, and Whitelaw among them) with alarm'.

It is certainly true that there are political differences in the government, some of them potentially important. But they operate within a certain framework. For example, the right agrees that the relationship of forces compels a cautious approach, and is thus willing to leave such areas as trade-union relations to a Tory 'centrist' like Prior. At the same time, although Thatcher has pulled back from the European connection to a certain extent, drawing closer to Washington, this shift represents a response to changing circumstances more than a break with established policies. The heady optimism of the early days of the EEC has proved largely unfounded. The 'European Community' has actually become little more than a 'common market', political integration remaining limited to the symbolic constitution of a parliamentarian's kindergarten in Strasbourg. On all decisive matters — foreign policy, defence, energy, monetary policy, etc. — the respective national governments retain a tight grip on their power and have even shown unwillingness to coordinate policies. Indeed, the economic crisis is throwing governments back towards policies in which domestic considerations predominate.

The ruling class has always understood the intimate relation between politics and economics. And the failure of European political integration has two consequences: Britain has some scope to bid for 'great power' status once again; and the position of the United States as the key imperialist power, despite its political and economic difficulties, remains unaltered. London's aspiration for a 'world role', important for material and ideological reasons, therefore implies a turn to Washington. The problem of Britain's 'independent nuclear deterrent' sums up the situation. The present Polaris system is thoroughly outdated. In the



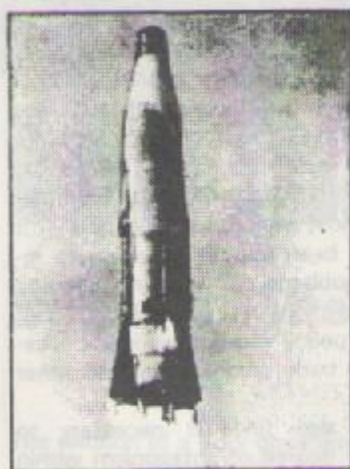
Heath

Heath's outlook entailed the reorientation of Britain's international ties from America to Europe and the replacement of the 'consensus' politics of Toryism in the fifties and sixties by a sharp prosecution of the class struggle in the interests of the bourgeoisie. These were two sides of the same coin, for the success of the 'European' project depended upon British capitalism's overcoming (or at least reducing) its historic weakness relative to its EEC partners; this, in turn, required that the workers shoulder the social burden of rebuilding British capitalism, with the inevitable erosion of the traditions of steadily rising real incomes and full employment.

These objectives are not incidental policy goals, but fundamental coordinates of any capitalist government in contemporary Britain, whether headed by Heath, Thatcher, or even Callaghan. Failure to understand these basic class coordinates and the unity of purpose they impose upon bourgeois politicians leads to misunderstanding of the dynamics of contemporary British politics. Andrew Gamble, for example, in an often perceptive analysis

the central objective of the postwar Social Democratic state — a prosperous national economy. The Heath Government, after the frustration and the failures of Labour's administration, experimented with measures to make the economy more efficient and productive without questioning the real fundamentals of Social Democracy or Keynesianism. It continued to fund high levels of welfare spending and to accept responsibility for the level of unemployment and the rate of growth.'

This analysis, however, cannot stand up. To begin with, a 'prosperous national economy' is not the desire solely of 'the postwar Social Democratic state' but of all capitalist governments — the problem is how to achieve it. Moreover, Gamble ignores the fact that the relationship of class forces forced the Heath administration to introduce its policies somewhat selectively (but it must be said that any government prepared to introduce the Industrial Relations Bill, the 'lame duck' policy, and the Housing Finance Bill was a good deal more 'radical' than Gamble allows). More important, it was this relationship of forces — not



absence of a coherent European defence strategy, and given their present outlook, the Tories will surely want to renovate it. But that will almost certainly mean acquiring a new American system, which may bind Britain even closer to Washington, since Moscow may insist that the British missile component be included with the American for the purposes of SALT.

But none of this amounts to a real reversal of Heath's European option. All areas of government responsibility having a special 'European' significance remain in the hands of 'loyal Europeans': Carrington and Gilmour in the Foreign Office; Peter Walker in Agriculture; John Nott in Trade.

At the same time, the Tory 'centre' shares many of the conceptions of the Thatcher circle. Sir Ian Gilmour, one of the most articulate of Tory moderates and a staunch defender of Macmillan's 'middle way', expounded his views in considerable detail in 1977. He expressed himself as follows on the unions: 'The trade union leaders are as unrepresentative of their rank and file as was the medieval Church of the laity, or as were the bishops of the inferior clergy.... Finally, much as Luther believed that the Church of his day was a barrier between the Christian and his God, so trade unions are now an obstacle to the prosperity of their members.... Whatever the other reasons for Britain's economic failure, strong trade unions are certainly one of them. Although they did so in the past, these costly antiques do not now further the interests of their members.'

'Nevertheless Britain is heavily unionized and likely to remain so.... The political task therefore is to make trade-union activity less self-destructive and to bring home to the average trade-unionist that union power is only legitimate within limits, that it should be subject to the rule of law, and parliamentary government, and that he has an obligation to his country, to the community, and to his family as well as to the union.' (6)

On economic policy: 'The eclectic Conservative... is not averse to governmental intervention in the economy. He sees it as a fact of life throughout the Western world. But he does not believe that a government can now unnecessarily spend itself out of a recession without unacceptable inflation. In

the last three years he has seen high public expenditure in conjunction with both inflation and unemployment. He accepts that monetary policy is important, and he considers it to be an essential weapon against inflation.... He agrees with Keith Joseph that "monetarism is not enough".' (7)

'Finally the Conservative will help industry by mastering inflation.... in tackling inflation no tool of economic management should be discarded. To conquer inflation the British government will need to maintain strict control of public expenditure and the public sector borrowing requirement; it will need a strict monetary policy; it will need some form of incomes policy; and it will need to develop its policies in consultation with all sides of industry.' (8)

And on foreign policy: 'The international outlook is much bleaker. There has been what the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, General Haig, has called "an explosion" in Russia's military capabilities.... They have been turning Russia into a vast arsenal because they wish to increase Russian influence and eventually dominate the world.... The Conservative will restore the faith of our allies in Britain's will to resist by seeing that our armed forces are once more properly equipped to fight. Only a strengthened and united West will be able to ensure that Russia pursues a non-aggressive course.' (9)

What we see here are certainly important areas of divergence from the Thatcherite wing of the party — especially over the need 'for some kind of incomes policy' — but nothing like the sort of deep split Gamble suggests. It is ironic that those who exaggerate the extremism of the Thatcherites and the current government are led to *overestimate* its weakness. What makes a genuine working unity within the government possible is awareness of the urgency of the situation and of the need for *some* policy that can move towards breaking the political deadlock, whatever that policy might be. The Tory moderates are thus quite prepared to give the right considerable rein to see what they can do.

Least it be thought that to ascribe a deep sense of urgency to the Tory leadership is to distort the real situation, it is worth while to quote Lord Gowrie, himself a junior minister throughout the Heath administra-

tion: 'While there does exist a threat to the survival of our democratic institutions, it comes less from the unions than from the tendency of all governments to offer the electorate a number of irreconcilable alternatives simultaneously: stable prices; full employment; a steady rise in consumption; ever-increasing welfare benefits; significant personal liberties. So long as governments, and I have to include Conservative governments, go on trying to square the circle, our economy will be in danger of collapse. Collapse will not involve simply a change of administration or leadership, a period of belt-tightening or dusting down of the Dunkirk spirit. It will put an end, for the rest of the century at least, to the relative improvement which our time has made to mass living standards and expectations. It is hard to see how the kind of personal choices and democratic freedoms we enjoy could stand an immediate and permanent (so far as our own lifetimes are concerned) reduction, to some quarter or half of present levels, of the standards of working people's life in this country. We would be in the position of East Germany, say, in 1950; and with rather worse prospects.' (10)

In a remarkably perceptive analysis founded on bourgeois class consciousness he went on to pinpoint the weaknesses of Heath's strategy and recommended what has become the course of the present government: 'But tempting as a permanent wages policy may appear, it nevertheless remains a chimera. Workers of all kinds are at least as interested in differentials and special rewards for special skills as in what TUC rhetoric calls "fair shares". We have, too, the evidence of the referendum on Europe, as well as of all Conservative electoral victories, to show that the political aims of union leaders are very often at odds with those of their rank and file. It should not be part of Conservative industrial relations policy to *politicize* the trade union movement further. We know from experience that a wages policy has special dangers for the Tories, since for political rewards in the short term, and no economic rewards in the long term, it brings the leadership of a party opposed by Labour in Parliament into direct confrontation with the leadership of the labour movement in industry.... What a government can do,

and what a Conservative government should do, is allow free collective bargaining but offset the effects through cuts in its own expenditure.'

(emphasis in original) (11)

Lord Gowrie then advocated a 'withdrawal of government' far more extensive than that contemplated by the present government and suggested counterbalancing it by a system of 'negative income tax' allowances to the poor. But the basic approach is clearly in resonance with Thatcher's.

This policy builds upon the lessons of the Heath administration and subsequent events. It grasps the economic and political weakness of the British working class, which was able to defeat the Heath government's economic policy but was incapable of constituting any alternative to the Wilson/Callaghan leadership, which accomplished through stealth much of what Heath failed to accomplish with force. The Tories therefore propose to minimize confrontation on the economic terrain by accepting 'free collective bargaining' and taking a cautious approach to trade-union 'reform'. They will rely instead on a combination of manipulation of market forces and political control of social expenditure to attack working-class living standards in the interests of profit. The working class, they reason, will be unable to respond to this on the industrial level, and the traditional political response, through the Labour Party, will be confined to parliamentary channels that pose no threat to a government that commands a secure majority.

Certainly this approach will have serious consequences on the social scene and bring results more slowly than an incomes policy. A return to an annual inflation rate near the 20% mark and an unemployment figure on the order of 2 million would be inevitable, with all the agitation that would be generated within the working class. But Britain has now been through this before; the shock will not be so great after the experience of 27% inflation and 1.5 million out of work under a Labour government. Moreover, the labour movement has shown no sign of an effective fight against unemployment. And as long as wage rises can be held at least marginally below the rate of inflation, there will be scope to raise profits through redistribution from public

spending (spending and tax cuts) and through increased productivity (once the international recession eases). Indeed, a labour shake out from less productive sectors combined with productivity bargaining can provide significant gains for British capital. In this sense the steel dispute is meant to serve as a model for all British industry.

Undoubtedly, the Tories expect a stormy time, but if it can be ridden out during the early years of the government, then the results — greater profitability, renewed investment and growth, slower inflation — will be reinforced by an upturn in the international economy before the next election. The government could then claim to have made the first dent in solving the country's economic problems. That the gains were small and transitory, and that they had been scored at the cost of squeezed real wages, deteriorating social services, and mounting unemployment, might then be overshadowed, especially if the Labour movement were in sufficient disarray because of its inability to halt these attacks. A Tory government with a renewed mandate would then deepen this sense of demoralization in the working class, and then some of the more dire predictions about Thatcherism might come close to the truth.

What are the possibilities for resisting this rather bleak scenario? They are not inconsiderable. For one thing, the rigid division between the 'economic' and 'political' in the British labour movement has tended to become blurred during the past decade. Just the sort of *politicization* Lord Gowrie warns about is now becoming part of the tradition of the labour movement, and a change of tack by the Tories cannot wipe the slate clean. A significant section of the labour movement — though still a minority — will understand the content of the Tory attack and the need for a centralized and coordinated struggle against it. The Tories are not unaware of this — it is no coincidence that the Prior proposals are so preoccupied with 'secondary picketing', a weapon that grants the ranks, as opposed to the bureaucracy, key power in industrial struggles.

Even if the deviousness of Tory policy makes it more difficult for ordinary workers to identify the enemy (is it the boss who is

going out of business? the Labour council that puts up the rates and rents? the hospital administration that tells you to wait a year for an operation?), they will be in no doubt that *something* is wrong. If those hundreds of thousands of trade-union militants who do understand who is behind it all are organized, with a coherent programme that explains what is wrong and what must be done, then real mass action of the sort that plunged the Heath government into crisis is possible once again.

The steel strike has shown that the government cannot avoid deep involvement in serious tests of strength. All it can hope to do is to hold such struggle to a minimum. The left, on the other hand, must link every struggle to defend wages against inflation, every fight against redundancies and closures, every battle to defend social services, with the actions and intentions of this government. At the same time, these struggles must be connected to the debates going on in the Labour Party; when the mass of working people instinctively turn to Labour as the crisis bites, they must find something there that encourages them to fight for an alternative to Tory austerity and to avoid the dead-end of parliamentary manoeuvring.

The central problem is not to modify the policies of the left in an attempt to drive a wedge between Thatcher and her middle-class supporters. The Tories themselves are quite clear about the central problem they face. It is to undermine the combativity of the working class. If they cannot do this, their electoral base — a decisive portion of which comes from the working class — will fall into disarray as it did in 1974, and will then begin to seek an alternative.

As Martin Jacques correctly stresses, the left must 'demonstrate its breadth, practicality and vision' through 'popular, practical alternatives'. But these cannot be hazy schemes for 'a new type of democratic modernism for British society'. They must be *socialist policies* that expose the roots of the present crisis and project the anti-capitalist measures needed to extirpate them. Above all — and this is another side of the same coin — they must constitute a *programme for struggle*.

Footnotes

1. Martin Jacques, 'Thatcherism. The impasse Broken?', *Marxism Today*, October 1979.
2. For an expression of the sense of betrayal many Tory backbenchers felt at Heath's turn, see Jock Bruce-Gardyne, M.P., *Whatever Happened to the Quiet Revolution?*, London, 1974; for a Thatcher supporter's view of the part this played in her election to the leadership, see Patrick Cosgrave, *Margaret Thatcher, A Tory and Her Party*, London, 1978.
3. 'Cabinet-maker', *The Economist*, 12 May 1979, p. 13.
4. Robin Blackburn, 'The Heath Government: A New Course for British Capitalism', *New Left Review*, no. 70.

5. Andrew Gamble, 'The Decline of the Conservative Party', *Marxism Today*, November 1979.
6. Ian Gilmour, *Inside Right*, London, 1977, pp. 238-9.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 252.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 258-9.
10. Lord Gowrie, 'Industrial Relations', in Lord Blake and John Patten, eds., *The Conservative Opportunity*, London, 1976, p. 140.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 143, 149. Emphasis in original.
12. *Ibid.*

Beyond the fragments?

By Valerie Coultas

The women's liberation movement has had a powerful impact on society. It has transformed the lives and aspirations of millions of women. It has forced governments to introduce laws to promote women's equality. It has made trade union leaders go on demonstrations calling for an end to restrictive abortion laws. Above all it has made men realise that the days of male superiority are numbered. The fight for women's liberation has become a central feature of the class struggle world wide.

In Britain the debates in the women's liberation movement have not been confined to feminist issues. As many feminists realised that women alone could not bring about the massive social changes needed to end their oppression, they began to discuss the relationship between feminism and socialism. *Beyond the Fragments*, written by Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, breaks new ground in this discussion by tackling the thorny problem of how to build a movement that integrates the insights of feminism with the experience of organizing for socialism. While the authors have different views on how such a broad socialist movement could be built in Britain today, they share common ground in stressing the positive contributions which have been brought to light by the feminist approach to politics.

Their views have stirred up a hornets nest both on the left and in the women's movement. The first edition sold out extremely quickly. It became an important focus for debate all over the country. Now a new edition has been produced by Merlin Press which draws on these discussions to clarify the ideas of the authors, both where they agree and where they disagree.

One theme that unites all three authors is a suspicion and even rejection of the Leninist party. Sheila Rowbotham expresses this succinctly: 'We have shed the lurking assumption that Leninism provides the highest political form of organizing and that all other approaches can be dismissed as primitive antecedents or as incorrect theories.' (p. 148.)

What, then, are the alternatives to the Leninist party that Sheila, Lynne and Hilary would have us put in its place?

Strategic alternatives to Leninism

Sheila Rowbotham's alternative

Of the three writers Sheila is the clearest in her rejection of Leninism in any form: 'I

have been edged and nuzzled and finally butted towards believing that what we have learned can't be forced into the moulds of Leninism without restricting and cutting its implications short.' (p. 148.) 'If Stalinism made it impossible to challenge aspects of Leninism, the growth of Trotskyist and neo-Trotskyist groups since 1968 has postponed this by appearing to provide the solution.' (p.149) She suggests we need to look elsewhere: 'to the utopian socialists in the early nineteenth century, or to the Socialist League in the 1880s, or Spanish anarcho-sindicalism.' (p. 147.)

Her alternatives to Leninism are suggested tentatively but she insists strongly on the need for what she calls a 'post-Leninist revolutionary tradition'.

Much of Sheila's disagreement with Leninism has to do with the role of the party as the purveyor of socialist consciousness into the working class movement: 'For Lenin the lessons of consciousness through struggle remain generally subordinate to the leadership of the party. Here he (Lenin) broke with Marx's view of consciousness and adopted the position of the German social-democrat Kautsky ... (that) ... "modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge." (p. 114.)

In fact, Lenin and Kautsky were not alone in holding the theory that socialist consciousness originates with the intelligentsia and is brought to the working class from outside, whether by a political party or by some other means. Marx himself, the great leader of the First International, held a similar view. In 1870 he wrote that 'the English possess all the necessary material prerequisites for a social revolution. What they lack is a spirit of generalization and revolutionary passion. That the executive board (of the International) can remedy.' Even Bakunin, the father of anarchism, and Marx's great opponent in the First International, appreciated the role of the intelligentsia and urged 'the young folk of the educated classes to preach and lead the revolution'.

Sheila argues that in the late nineteenth century, the working classes were only just being given elementary education. It was only out of this temporary circumstance that Lenin created a 'law' of all marxist organisation. Sheila casts doubt on the idea that intellectuals can have an understanding superior to others and she cites the

women's movement experience over the last decade as an example of the spuriousness of the argument.

Perhaps the best answer to Sheila's argument is provided in an essay entitled 'Women's Liberation and the New Politics' written in 1969, in which Sheila herself explains the process by which the oppressed come to a more radical consciousness: 'It is possible to trace a dialectic in the breaking of silence. Most important at first have been those among the rulers who cut themselves off from their own kind to take up the cause of the 'inferior' people in an ideal or moral sense. For instance, the enlightened aristocrats before the French revolution, the intellectuals in the Russian and Chinese revolutions, the white liberals in America. They are able to communicate possibility to the oppressed ... Then there is that section of the subordinated who break away under their encouragement ... Such a dialectic can be seen working in the making of the proletariat, in the struggles for national liberation, in the history of the black people of America.' To her list of intellectuals who have historically aided the development of socialist theory we must add ... Owen, Bakunin, Marx, Engels, Luxemburg, Gramsci, Malcolm X, Trotsky, Lenin and Sheila Rowbotham. The modern women's movement has drawn on these thinkers to develop its own ideas. Of course, with universal education, workers themselves can become intellectuals as Gramsci pointed out. But Sheila plays up the mystique of the 'party intellectual' in *Beyond the Fragments* in order to give substance to her suspicion of all forms of political parties, social democratic, Stalinist, or Leninist.

Sheila's strongest political sympathies appear to lie with revolutionary syndicalism. Indeed she was strongly influenced by her association with the International Socialists (now the SWP) during its syndicalist period. Syndicalism begins with the idea that revolutionary trade unionism is sufficient to overthrow the bourgeoisie. If a party is needed at all, its main job is not to wage a political struggle for power but to unify the struggles of the oppressed. Sheila cannot understand why the IS 'ostensibly committed to learning from workers' struggles, the initiator of rank and file groups, opposed to bureaucracy in the labour movement ... balked at extending these ideas into wider issues of everyday life or at

applying them within their own organisation.' (p. 35.) Or why the IS 'which had historically broken both with Stalinism and orthodox Trotskyism on the issue of socialist democracy and workers control (should) be more incapable of digesting not only feminism but issues like gay liberation, radical psychology, struggles around cultural and community life and personal discussion of what it meant to be a socialist. (p. 35.) Sheila cannot confront this seeming paradox. Nor does she even attempt to explain why the SWP, as it has again become more 'orthodox' in its politics over the last decade should have started taking questions like sexism and racism more seriously rather than less.

In emphasizing the role of trade union militancy and playing down the importance of issues not immediately relevant to the workplace, it is very unlikely that a syndicalist approach would recognise the importance of a movement like the modern women's movement. The SWP has begun to recognise the importance of feminist issues today at the same time as it has moved away from syndicalist dogmas towards both a more orthodox Marxist analysis of the class struggle (as penetrating all aspects of social relations and not just those of the workplace) and of the role of the Leninist party.

Sheila points to the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists as having a positive alternative to Leninism. However, a study of the record of the anarcho-syndicalists in Spain, where anarcho-syndicalism had its strongest following, reveals the weaknesses of the syndicalist movement. The Spanish workers who followed the National Confederation of Labour (CNT) in the 1930s were libertarian communists. Approximately half the Spanish proletariat were supporters of the CNT. As libertarian communists they were opposed to all political parties although they were in favour of an armed insurrection of the working class to overthrow the capitalist state. Between 1917 and 1937, the CNT was involved in as many as a dozen armed uprisings designed to introduce communism.

The intentions of these workers were unquestionably revolutionary. During the revolution of 1936-7, for example, the areas of Spain under CNT control, especially Catalonia and Aragon, witnessed wholesale expropriation of the capitalists. Even small businesses were nationalised. Landowners were driven off, sometimes killed, and their lands re-distributed to anarchist communes and collectives. Churches, which were seen as enemies of the poor, were burnt down and the clergy sometimes killed. The Spanish anarcho-syndicalists hated the ruling class passionately.

Following the butchery that accompanied Franco's uprising in July 1936, the anarcho-syndicalists participated in a red terror during the months of August and September which took the lives of leading bourgeois figures. One of the leaders of the CNT, Durruti, had long been wanted throughout the world for his terrorist 'crimes' yet enjoyed immense popular support. The anarcho-syndicalists also opposed bureaucracy in the labour movement.

There was only one paid secretary in 1936 despite a membership which numbered over one million. They were fiercely critical of Stalinism in Russia: one of the reasons why a number of their leaders were assassinated in 1937 by the Spanish Stalinists.

These workers rejected the idea of building a political party. The radical ideas of anarchism (in the formation of which, incidentally, intellectuals played an important part) reached them largely through their trade union, the CNT, rather than by means of a political party, as happened in other European countries. The principal reason why the workers rejected the idea of a party was because they opposed all forms of government. They thought it would be possible to introduce communism *immediately after* the overthrow of the state, without passing through a transitional phase of proletarian dictatorship. Why build a political party then, reasoned the workers? It would have nothing to do. Unfortunately, this was to prove an illusory perspective.

In July 1936, the Spanish working class rose in arms against Franco. They took over the factories, the land, the arsenals. The bourgeois state was all but destroyed in large parts of Spain. But the workers parties failed to take over the government, leaving it in Republican hands. 'We want no more dictatorship' cried Santillan, the anarchist leader. This, however, failed to stop the Republicans continuing with *their* dictatorship and sabotaging the revolution in the rear — which they did by vacillating in the face of Franco politically and militarily. When the workers leaders finally decided in September to take over the government, they joined a coalition with the bourgeois ministers. A Popular Front government emerged. Two months later, the anarchists who at first refused power, accepted a seat in the government. This government represented the dictatorship, not of the proletariat, but of the bourgeoisie and laid the basis for the counter-revolutionary repression of the workers movement in 1937.

It may be possible in exceptional circumstances for workers to organise an insurrection without a mass revolutionary party. But it has never been possible to carry through a programme of anti-capitalist measures simply from the base up. You must have a strong socialist government to lead from the top as well as self activity at the base.

This is not to say that Leninists should have nothing to do with anarcho-syndicalism. The Third International, in its early days, was eager to enlist the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists. Andres Nin and Joaquin Maurin federated the CNT to the Third International while in Moscow (although they were later repudiated by the CNT after the Kronstadt affair). Syndicalists in other countries, like the Wobblies of the IWW in the United States were also regarded as part of the revolutionary movement by Lenin. The early British syndicalists came together with other revolutionaries to form the British Communist Party. Victor Serge was the Secretary of the Third International when it was formed in 1919.

But despite the subjective intentions of its proponents, syndicalism is inadequate to the tasks of revolution. If the Spanish working class with its massive revolutionary enthusiasm could not make a revolution without a working class party, what chance has the British working class got without one?

Sheila is right to point towards the breadth of ideas that contributed to the formation of Marxism. She is right to highlight the positive experiences of British socialism — the Socialist League, the Chartists, the revolutionary syndicalists of the Miner's Next Step — although it is well to be aware of recurring weaknesses in British Marxism too (economism, chauvinism, academicism).

But Sheila's creative energies, rather than being directed to recreating a mass socialist tradition in Britain through the building of a revolutionary socialist party are concentrated on denying the need for a political party. In so doing, she bends to the ideas of anarcho-syndicalism and fuels the hostility of feminism to parties in general.

Lynne Segal's alternative

If Sheila's contribution bears the imprint of her years in the International Socialists, Lynne's shows the strong influence of her experiences in the Islington Socialist Centre and Big Flame.

Lynne is very critical of the attitude of the 'traditional left' to feminism. The left, she writes, only responded to feminism when they saw the impressive pro-abortion march against the James White anti-abortion Bill in 1975: 'They weren't laughing at the 'women's libbers' any more, though of course they did say we were all middle class, or at least that's what their middle class leaders were saying.' (p. 180.)

Earlier Lynne takes the IMG to task for a different crime — trying to dominate the National Abortion Campaign (NAC). 'In 1975 ... many women were suspicious of the national structure (of the NAC), saying that it was not feminist. They saw it as dominated politically by the International Marxist Group (IMG) and objected to its main focus for activities being that of lobbying MP's, seeing this as reformist.' (p. 174).

I would have thought that Lynne would have been more willing to recognise the



positive aspects of the work of groups like the IMG in the NAC which has been consistent and has yielded good results overall, especially during the recent campaign against John Corrie's anti-abortion bill. It's a shame that Lynne wants to have it both ways.

Lynne alleges that 'while the IMG has accepted the organizational autonomy of the women's movement, and indeed have now set up women's caucuses within their own organization, I don't think that they accept the political autonomy of feminism as adding a new dimension to the nature of class politics.' (p. 185) But what is meant by the political autonomy of feminism? If Lynne believes that arguing for Marxist ideas within the women's movement is tantamount to rejecting its political autonomy then we plead guilty.

The women's movement is not a political party. It is a partial movement representing the interests of a particular sex. It has a political programme to win women to its side. But women alone can not overthrow capitalism. Women need to ally with other groups, particularly the organised labour movement, in order to win concessions now and secure their future liberation. A movement of women that fails to win the support of broad sections of the labour movement, particularly working women will, in the present economic situation, find itself driven towards individualism and elitism and eventually side with the ruling class very much like the right-wing leaders of the suffragette movement did in the First World War. The IMG makes no apology for suggesting that the women's movement should direct its energies towards the mass of women particularly those in the organised labour movement. We reject the idea that women can win their liberation any other way.

Lynne is quite right, however to emphasize the importance of a movement of women existing outside the official structures of the labour movement to take up every aspect of women's oppression, in the home and the community as well as at work. But she downplays the impact that feminism has had on women as trade unionists: 'women are not strong in trade unions today, and are not getting any stronger, even if their membership is rising numerically'.

How does Lynne explain the number of trade unionists on the anti-Corrie march, the women's groups in white collar unions, the militancy of women at the Meccano factory in occupation in Liverpool? Lynne's stress on community issues blinds her to the impact that feminists are having at the point of production. It also leads her to make exaggerated claims for the role that local groups like the Islington Socialist Centre and the Islington Gutter Press can play in the class struggle. She does, however, admit that organizations claiming to be libertarian can be authoritarian and she sees well enough the dangers of women's centres becoming a focus for 'unpaid social workers'.

Lynne's main suggestion is that feminists should take up local work, and that the main arena for women is in community issues: 'More importantly, we also

knew that apart from Big Flame, they (the traditional left) did not take seriously our politics, which emphasized local work and attempts to organize on an area basis, which differed from their focus on industrial activity or particular national campaigns'. (p. 193)

We are in favour of work at a local level. But why must we choose between locally based alliances and building national campaigns? Women in Edinburgh, for example, took the June Greig case, which raised the issue of violence against women, into the local labour movement. But they also demanded that the Domestic Violence Act be extended to Scotland. Why not build a women's movement that takes up women's oppression everywhere? Somehow Lynne seems to imply that being involved in community issues and local campaigns is more 'feminist' than industrial activity and national campaigns. This I would fiercely contest. Why can't we do both?

Lynne explains at the end of her essay why she decided to join Big Flame: 'a group which in its theory and practice seems to put the class struggle before its own organizational development, which recognizes the need to fully support and help build the autonomous organizations of women and other oppressed groups, and in general strives for a vision of socialism which includes a theory of personal politics'.

Big Flame's critique of Leninism and Trotskyism is that, because of the complexity of late capitalism and the rise of Stalinism, it is not possible to build a party of the Bolshevik type today. It is absurd for small groups of Trotskyists to pretend they have all the answers for every struggle. They argue that revolutionary leadership should come from the struggle itself, from the 'base up', as it were. While we can agree with some of the criticisms Big Flame make about needing to learn from the self-activity of the masses and not being arrogant. I think that deeper differences lie behind these particular points.

Lynne seems to be torn between arguing for some kind of socialist organization on a national scale and at the same time rejecting such an attitude as sectarian: 'The fact that some of us may not have joined a revolutionary organization which we feel has not adequately taken up and integrated the insights of feminism does not mean that

we are not part of the struggle to build one.' (p. 185). Of course many people outside the far left groups are revolutionaries and are part of the overall struggle for socialism, but this is not the same as actually building a socialist party. A salutary example of the consequences which can follow if you equate the two is provided by the experience of Lotta Continua in Italy.

Lotta Continua combined a certain brand of far left politics with support for Maoist ideas. A lack of understanding of feminism and democracy led in 1975 to the all male stewards of its *servizio d'ordine* breaking into a women's demonstration against restrictive abortion legislation because they argued that it was an issue for both men and women. Feminists in Lotta Continua and other far left groups began to draw the conclusion that the 'male left' was not for them.

All the political battles in Italy in the spring of 1976 had been centred around the question of abortion. It even brought about the fall of the Moro Government. The election campaign shifted the terrain of struggle to solutions at the level of government. The women's movement refused to associate itself with the 'traditional politics' of elections and refused the offer of Proletarian Democracy to run candidates on its slate. Feminists in PDUP refused to campaign for their party. Eventually, they resigned. 'Women's obligations are those they set for themselves' they argued. Rather than seeing the battle to transform human relations within the framework of a battle for political power, these women saw it as an end in itself. A woman member of the CP in Rinasca, referring to the Italian women's movement, wrote: 'There are no longer any frontiers to cross. Instead, what we have to do is transform this society — day by day and institution by institution. By transforming society, we will transform daily life and ourselves as well.' Reform not revolution was the order of the day.

At the 1976 conference of Lotta Continua, women, many of whom had actually already left the organization, demanded that they feminise socialism. Workers at the conference were denounced for sexism. The leaders of Lotta Continua who had been manipulative ended up not wanting to give any guidance at all. The conference ended in a shambles of sec-



Big Flame

Zimbabwe's Future



tional groups arguing with one another. The 'movements' were allowed their full autonomy. Lotta Continua ceased to exist.

Lynne does not in fact *fully* accept the political autonomy of the women's movement, as Lotta Continua did in the end. She comes down in favour of a national organisation of some kind. Big Flame does have certain political ideas and goals of its own. It does emphasise some forms of work rather than others. It does argue for women to join Big Flame. It supports the right of women to control their own struggles and their own movement, but argues that women can not win alone and that feminism is not separate, autonomous from class politics.

Big Flame supports autonomous movements but believes they should link up with other groups of the oppressed. Its view of the party is similar to that of the IS in its early days: that groups should federate to a national organisation to swap experiences rather than to develop a programme to take power. Because it sees 'politics' as sectarian it has failed to clarify its strategy for building socialism. Without having a clear view of where you are going you can get muddled on the way. One clear example of Big Flame's confusion is provided by its failure, under the influence of Mao-centrist ideas, to take a position in favour of returning a Labour government in the last election.

The IMG would argue that as long as the left groups are too weak to form a government, given a choice between Labour and Tory, we vote Labour not because we have any expectations that they are 'a lesser evil' than the Tories but because the Labour Party is tied to the working class through its trade union affiliations. A vote for Labour is a class vote against the Tory party, the party of big business. Having Labour in office is preferable to allowing them to pontificate in opposition. It is easier to demonstrate what they really stand for when they govern and easier to explain the need for a Socialist alternative. (4)

Big Flame hides its muddled politics behind a smokescreen of 'non-sectarianism'. If they came out more openly and honestly with their overall ideas it would give women a better opportunity to decide what kind of socialist strategy they wanted to support.

Hilary Wainwright's alternative

Hilary, whose experience of the far left was provided by her years as a member of the IMG, is more willing than either Sheila or Lynne to concede that a mass political party will be vital to building socialism in Britain. 'The solution', she writes, 'lies in bringing together all those involved in the different movements and campaigns who agree on a wider programme of socialist change, based on the demands of the different movements in the context of organizing for social ownership and popular political power.' (p. 6). She strongly rejects the idea of trying to reform the Labour Party and explains how the power of the Parliamentary Party, combined with the right wing trade union leaders, has always thwarted left opposition in the Labour Party. She dismisses the Communist Party because it subordinates its own profile to the left trade union and Labour leaders.

But Hilary fails to clarify whether she wants to build a new socialist party, a socialist alliance, a trade union type organization, a movement, a one-off united front, or indeed just exactly what she does want. This confusion runs throughout her two essays, and is evident, for example, in her indiscriminate use of the word 'organization' to describe totally different things.

Hilary does not see the existing far left groups as the basis from which to start the project of building such an 'organization': 'the pretensions and disciplines of democratic centralism tend to produce an arrogance and sectarianism which make the Leninist groups unable to contribute to and encourage the *many* sources of socialist initiative and activity.' (p. 2). Instead, she sets up her own plan for creating a mass popular 'organization'. Local alliances are to emerge composed of socialist feminists, trades councils, socialist centres, activist Labour Party wards and branches of the Communist Party. It will be through such alliances that socialist consciousness will be raised. The role of the far left groups should be to act as 'catalysts' in the process. They should not see themselves as the nucleus of a future mass party.

It is true that the far left groups, some of them with less than a hundred members, must not assume that they and they alone have 'sorted out' all the problems facing the British revolution. It is obvious that they have not. It is also clear, as Hilary says, that there are many sources of socialist initiative today. Because of the weakness of Marxism in Britain and the relatively small size of the far left there are many revolutionaries who are non-aligned and actively engaged in introducing socialist ideas into their women's group, tenants group, trade union. Too few far left groups recognise this. But the whole drift of *Beyond the Fragments* seems to endorse this situation rather than providing a way out.

It is here that Hilary's lack of distinction between political parties and other forms of working class organization becomes critical. If Hilary's local 'alliances' actually develop into a nationally organized

'alliance' without a clarification of the politics involved, what will ensue is a party based on a compromise between reform and revolution. Political parties have different programmes because they offer different solutions at the level of government and the state; they behave differently when in power. The Labour Party, for example, as it has shown each time it has taken office, wants to reform the capitalist system. The far left want to overthrow it. It is not sectarian that these two types of parties do not drop their differences and 'unite'. It would be dishonest to do so, although many members of the reformist parties can be won to revolutionary ideas.

If a centrist party, like the Independent Labour Party, emerged from debate inside the Labour or Communist Parties then clearly revolutionaries would work hard to win it to revolutionary positions, either by unity in action or possibly by joining its ranks. But that's a different matter from what Hilary suggests: that the far left should be more 'open' to the many sources of socialist initiative and support the creation of ongoing alliances with the CP, LP and Trades Councils, not just on one particular issue but with a view to forming a joint 'organization'. Hilary writes: 'It is as if the different parts of a piece of cloth — a political organization — were being woven creatively and with *ad hoc* contact between the weavers, but without anyone having a master plan.' (p. 225).

Yet, why is it difficult for socialist centres to do more than *discuss* socialist issues. Why, despite the claims that Hilary makes for the women's movement that '(it) has taught us how to unite as a movement on the major practical issues of the day while debating and respecting each others political differences ... without jeopardizing the single movement'. (p. 252), have we not had a national conference of the WLM for two years? Why did the experiment in New Left Clubs that developed after the split in the Communist Party in 1956 fail?

The answer to these questions is that within movements, locally based alliances, and loose associations there is only a *limited* basis for unity. Trade unionists unite to wage the economic struggle. A socialist centre involves debates and co-ordination of activities. The women's movement involves unity in action around the oppression of women. A political party, however small, is different. It has an ideology, a revolutionary or reformist ideology. You cannot turn a socialist centre or a women's group into a socialist party without confronting the problem of ideology and of programme, of reform and revolution.

Hilary puts the cart before the horse. Of course, a mass revolutionary party would differ from the IMG, the SWP or the WRP. It would be far more heterogeneous politically. Neither could it demand of thousands of working men and women the same 'hyperactivity' that is demanded in left groups today (a point that some left groups are beginning to understand). It would have vastly more resources for education. It would be able to force a far wider range of debate in its press. It would be able to initiate festivals, concerts, bookclubs. It would have more intellec-

tuals, more feminists, much more party life. It would be able to launch mass campaigns in the trade unions and Labour Party.

But there are no short cuts to building such a mass party. Hilary's schema is entirely the wrong way round. By giving us false hopes of locally based 'alliances' now, she diverts us from the task of re-grouping the far left and building a popular revolutionary party to take political power.

Why we are Leninists

We reject the alternatives to Leninism put forward by Sheila, Lynne and Hilary. However tentatively they are put forward, none of them stand up to close examination. All of them — anarcho syndicalism, libertarian communism and a kind of loose centrism — have been tried before and found wanting.

But we do think that many points the authors raise about the problems of organising for socialism in Britain today are important ones. Their ideas reflect the feelings of many non-aligned socialists who were inspired by the political developments in Britain and worldwide in the late sixties and early seventies, and who feel let down by the performance of the far left over the last ten years. The women's movement has given that dismay a particularly critical framework.

Below we explain our conception of Leninism, our ideas about the relationship between Leninism and feminism and our view of how the far left can go beyond the fragments towards the creation of a mass socialist party.

What is Leninism?

Lynne Segal caricatures the Leninist view of the party when she says that Trotskyists 'see the *only* way to get power in the class struggle as that of fighting for more and more money, through a wages offensive'. (p. 169). It may be that at sometime someone in a far left group said something like that. Lenin, however devoted a whole essay 'What is to be Done' to an attack on 'economism' — the idea that socialist consciousness would arise merely by struggling vigorously for higher wages or better working conditions. Lenin was adamant that such consciousness arose only from an understanding of the relations between the social classes and their ramifications at all levels of society — economic, social, cultural — but particularly at the level of the state. One expression of this is the Leninist view that a revolutionary party should centralise the experience of all the partial and fragmented struggles in order to combat the highly can-

tralised bourgeois state, both at the level of ideas and ultimately to confront the 'armed bodies of men' through leading an insurrection to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. This has little in common with economism.

Lynne's view that Trotskyism is economic is contradicted by Sheila, who attacks Leninism precisely because of its concentration on seizing power: 'The weight of Leninist theory (Gramsci apart) and the prevailing historical practice of Leninism is towards seeing the "Party" as the means by which the working class can take power and these "means" have a utilitarian narrowness.' (p. 146). Leninists have indeed stressed the importance of the party in the revolution but Sheila is mistaken in expecting Gramsci. It is true that in 1919 Gramsci tended to see workers councils as a sufficient weapon for taking power out of the hands of the ruling class. For this view he was opposed by Bordigha and other Marxists, and he rapidly adopted the orthodox position: that a socialist revolution could not be completed without the violent overthrow of capitalism and the formation of a workers government, for which the working class needed a political party.

What appears to lie behind Sheila's positions on the Leninist party is a denial of the views of Marx and Lenin on the dictatorship of the proletariat. Sheila writes that she is in favour of overthrowing the state: 'It is evident that the coercive power of the state must be contested'. (p. 137). But she nowhere makes clear what kind of government or what kind of society she expects to see immediately after the bourgeois state has been successfully destroyed. Lenin, following Marx, believed in the necessity for a transitional period during which the state would be the dictatorship of the proletariat, which would begin the work of destroying all relations of oppression and paving the way for a classless society. Sheila, however, appears to believe in the possibility of moving immediately a communist society, without such a transitional phase. By ignoring the need for revolutionary government she arrives at the rejection of parties.

Hilary believes in the need for a revolutionary party, but only in the future when the insurrection is necessary. Yet you cannot put together a revolutionary party at the eleventh hour. People learn fast in time of revolution. But most of the skills and human qualities needed to lead a revolution can only be formed over many years of struggle; they do not miraculously spring into being the night before the revolution. Nor will the working class fight for a party

which has no record in the class struggle.

The importance of political parties is fully understood by the ruling class in country. Not only do they have a very conscious representative of the interests of capital, the military, and the church in the form of the Conservative Party, but they also understand the importance of reformist parties of the working class like the Labour Party. Parliament itself is continually used by the ruling class as an avenue to divert the self activity of the masses into 'safe' and 'responsible' channels, where antagonisms can be resolved in the most favourable way for the bourgeoisie.

Political parties are not new. Political groupings emerged when large numbers of people first began to exercise some kind of political power. In small village communities and tribal assemblies it was possible for everyone to express an opinion and carry out decisions. In the democracies of antiquity it became necessary to have some kind of structured and coherent options, some kind of political programme, so that people could express a choice. (In many of these societies women were regarded as non-citizens and were not allowed to participate in politics.)

A modern society without political parties or with only one political party (as in many Eastern European states and under fascist dictatorships) reflects a lack of democracy, a lack of choice for the mass of the people even though the Eastern European states guarantee other freedoms that a state like Britain denies, e.g. the right to work.

In Britain working class people welcomed the rise of the Labour Party. Having a party to represent labour in parliament was an extension of democracy. Americans have less choice than in Britain because they don't have a party of labour. The first wave of feminism in Britain, and in many other countries, concentrated on winning the vote for women so that they could exercise choice over which party should represent them in parliament and government. Lack of suffrage had to be contested if women were to play a part in determining their fate. This is not suggest that the vote solved the problems of women, but if women turn their backs on politics, on questions of government, wars, and revolutions, they have less choice about how they live their lives not more.

After capitalism has been overthrown and the transition to socialism has been completed it will be possible to abolish parties, for social classes will no longer exist and the state, having no interest to defend, will wither away. Politics will disappear. But



Lenin and Trotsky with delegates to the Third International

in a capitalist society or a transitional society like Russia, China or Cuba, political parties remain vital.

Of all the countries in the world, Britain more than any other demands a working class conscious of its power and armed with a programme that breaks completely from gradualism. The working class will not overthrow capitalism in the way the bourgeoisie overthrew feudalism. The bourgeoisie in Britain developed its own economy, its art, its religion, its own schools and its own philosophy before it overthrew feudalism. The working class confronts a much more total social power than the rising industrial and financial bourgeoisie did. A social power that is highly developed at home today, that exports its social relations abroad, and penetrates deep into our personalities (through the family, the media, schools and the church).

Because of this it is impossible for the working class to build its own society, its own culture, within capitalism. It must first seize political power and then enter upon the task of building a socialist economy. There is no other road to socialism. Only a working class schooled in the ideas of revolutionary marxism, practised in fighting the bosses on every aspect of oppression, can have the strength to overthrow the mighty British state.

Sheila disputes whether a Leninist party is adequate for fighting reformism: 'Let's pretend for a moment that there was a revolutionary party in real life which did bring together all the elements most 'advanced' or developed in their opposition to capitalist society. Why does it follow from their bringing together in this pretend ideal party that their limitations are transcended rather than partially reflected and reproduced?' (p. 83).

Of course, it isn't possible for individuals in a capitalist society to escape entirely from bourgeois ideas like sexism and racism. As society throws up movements that articulate their oppression more vociferously so a revolutionary party should respond to those developments and help build them. But Sheila avoids explaining the real differences between mass organisations like trade unions and the women's liberation movement on the one hand and political parties on the other. A trade union defends its members' economic interests. The women's liberation movement attempts to advance the interest of women as a sex. A mass political party does not simply exist to swap experiences of the different oppressed groups in society but to develop the consciousness of the working class in relation to socialism and revolution.

Should the women's liberation movement and the trade unions adopt the same goals as a revolutionary party? If they did so they would immediately exclude those who do not at the present time agree with the idea of the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism but who do want to fight for their sexual liberation or defend their living standards. The women's movement is a more complex case than that of the trade union, but by its nature and composition the women's movement is a specific and

partial movement, unless you believe that is the vanguard force for change as some revolutionary and radical feminists do. The authors of *Beyond the Fragments* reject this view.

If the overall political role of the party is that it strives to relate the day to day struggles of the oppressed to the goal of transforming society by revolutionary means then such a party is neither economic nor necessarily at odds with the development of mass movements. Political parties do not exist because they are good things in themselves (although I concede the point that there are some people on the left who think it is wrong to make them as pleasant as possible). They exist because they are necessary.

As Trotsky wrote in *Art and Revolution*, in a society where there are no classes there will no longer be political struggles and 'people will stop seeking in Marx's Capital for precepts of their practical activity and Capital will have become a historical document, together with the programme of our party.' Only when socialism is established will parties be abolished. Until then they are an indispensable part of the struggle between classes. In order to abolish parties it is necessary to abolish classes, and this cannot be accomplished without wading in the muddy waters of the class struggle. No-one has ever succeeded in overthrowing capitalism without building a party.

Leninism and feminism

Sheila, Hilary and Lynne argue that feminists have been urging the need for a form of politics which enables people to ex-

perience different relationships: 'A Socialist movement must help us find a way to meet person to person — an inward as well as an external equality. (p. 146-7). The women's liberation movement has indeed considerably widened the scope of politics. In confronting collectively the seemingly individual problems of women it has widened the scope of political action.

been possible, for example, to win the support of large sections of the community to give council grants to a Women's Aid refuge for battered wives where the women themselves ran the refuge. Nor did the left expect to learn from a sectional movement about the connections between, for example, sexual and racial oppression and the consequent need to oppose racist population control policies.

The demand for women's caucuses in the IMG was seen by some comrades as outrageously anti-Leninist, particularly the demand for unfettered caucuses (ones that could decide themselves what they discussed and be convened at any time). Hilary writes: 'one reason why socialism has become so sterile and dead to most working class people in the post-war years is because it has not, until recently, become open to the understandings arrived at through the movements of the oppressed groups and classes'. (p. 7). By entering into areas of life that were previously conceived of as private and personal 'who does the housework, the way children are brought up, the quality of our friendships, even the way we make love and with whom' (p. 13), the women's movement has shown the left that it has more to learn from the oppressed than it was previously prepared to admit. Women have to challenge male domination in their own lives if they want to be politically active. As a woman you have to fight to be taken seriously at work, in your Labour Party branch, in a far left group. You have to confront sexism within your relationships if you don't want to be trodden on, even though you know it's difficult always to succeed. Sheila Rowbotham quotes



perience different relationships: 'A Socialist movement must help us find a way to meet person to person — an inward as well as an external equality. (p. 146-7). The women's liberation movement has indeed considerably widened the scope of politics. In confronting collectively the seemingly individual problems of women it has widened the scope of political action.

Ten years ago abortion and women's sexuality in general, was not something that you would expect to hear discussed in a Labour Party ward or a trade union branch meeting.(8). Neither would it have

Sarah Benton on the importance of living feminism as well as fighting for it: 'It's not enough for the individual woman to 'know' she is possessed or dominated; in order not to be possessed or dominated, indeed in order not to want to be, there must be an alternative culture in which such values are seen to be dominant and to be practised (in however erratic a way) in relation to which she can see herself' (p. 129). The women's movement, especially because it was a pioneering movement, gave women that culture, and those values. Sisterhood is powerful.

But does this fly in the face of the Leninist approach to politics? I don't see why it does. The women's movement is beginning to change men's attitudes in society at large. But it would be strange if the parties of the left were unaffected. Men on the left thought they were 'above' capitalist conditioning about sex roles before they confronted feminism. Women in left groups pointed out that it wasn't enough to have read about the 'woman question' but that feminism meant challenging assumptions of male superiority, questioning arrogant and dismissive practices, taking the problem of childcare seriously, looking at structures anew to see if they were oppressive — 'seeing the world through the eyes of women' as Trotsky once said.

The women's movement was a source of strength for women in left groups because it meant that we had a new frame of reference in which to approach Marxism and Marxists. We could define politics much more broadly. We tried to look for the essentials of Marxism and get rid of the 'holy tablets' approach. Not all women in left groups were necessarily sympathetic to the 'organised' women's movement but it had a powerful impact on every woman nevertheless.

None of this, however, should lead us to reject left wing parties as such. Of all the institutions in capitalist society, workers' parties will probably prove to be among the least resistant to the feminist critique of social relations. Hilary underestimates the impact of feminism on the parties of the far left. She thinks it has been limited to 'sectoral' issues and not to the principles of revolutionary politics. I think things have gone further. Feminism has reasserted the importance of not being dogmatic and economicist, faults to which many so-called Leninist parties in Britain have been prone. If you refuse to listen to problems thrown up in a new form in the class struggle — women's oppression, national oppression, nuclear power, the problems of youth, racism, the defence of welfare services — then you are dogmatic. If you refuse to look outside the 'point of production' and see the importance and validity of politics as a whole, and particularly the role of the modern state, then you are economicist. Feminism has made Marxism in Britain less dogmatic and less economicist — neither of which it should have been in the first place. It has not simply taught Marxism more about women. It has taught Marxism more about oppression.

Rosalind Petchesky puts this well in *Dissolving the Hyphen*(1). 'Clearly, forms of organization and protest that arise out of women's 'reproductive' work and collective consciousness as reproductive workers — like food riots and rent strikes and school sit-ins — are not inherently more or less radical than other forms of struggle like trade-union organizing. In both cases, the extent to which such forms are revolutionary in content and effect will depend upon their historical context, the quality of their leadership, their connection to a mass base, their adoption of a long range strategy for transforming all of society, and so forth.'

Yet the dialogue between Marxism and feminism has not been a *one way* dialogue. Marxism has had a beneficial effect on the women's movement. Sheila argues that women have come to socialism 'without, indeed often despite, the intervention of parties.' (p. 117). Of course, women reach socialist consciousness in various ways. Some come into contact with socialist ideas through their feminist activities, without the 'intervention' of any far left groups. But Sheila's suggestion that the process is a completely spontaneous one is untrue. A comparison between the American and British women's movements shows this clearly.

In the American women's movement there are women who identify with the ideas of socialist feminism (both in and outside NOW — the National Organisation of Women) but the dominant trend within the movement is not as radical as in Britain. Unfortunately, (like the black civil rights movement), the leaders of this movement have adopted a perspective of winning equal rights, not liberation for women, by sponsoring Democratic senators for Congress, supporting a capitalist party and getting co-opted in the process. They have even tried to avoid the problem of lesbian women and the issue of abortion because it might compromise their relationship with the Democratic Party. Nor have they taken up the problems of working class women in a systematic way. The comparative backwardness of the American women's movement is related to the weakness of American Marxism and the political weakness of organised labour in general. In Britain the women's movement has gained strength from marxist ideas.

Marxists reject the view that creating alternative lifestyles is an adequate political practice in itself. Women have every right to live how they choose, with or without men. Women are quite capable of enjoying themselves socially when men are not present. But 'cultural feminism' cannot be a *substitute* for attacking the institutions that structure the oppression of women as a group. Only a tiny section of the population can afford to create a totally alternative lifestyle. Most women have to work with, or often 'under' men. Many women cannot afford *not* to marry or live with a man, or stay with their parents, even today. While feminism involves challenging our subordination as women, in whatever walk of life we find ourselves, personal solutions *alone* cannot win liberation. We need to create a new society, a society based on social planning to free women from domestic drudgery, to create the collective structures that are necessary for society as a whole to take the responsibility for childcare.

Many women including the authors of *Beyond the Fragments* agree with this view of women's liberation. That is why so many of the 'campaigners' in the women's movement, in the abortion campaign, the cuts campaigns, the Women's Aid Federation, identify themselves as 'socialist feminists'.

Of course, not only socialist feminists involve themselves in campaigns. Radical and revolutionary feminists have, for example, consistently taken up the issue of violence against women. But because of

their hostility to working with men they downplay issues that force them into alliances with the labour movement, such as abortion. This was graphically illustrated by the recent anti-Corrie demonstration where Revolutionary Feminists chanted the slogan 'Not the unions, not the state, women must decide their fate'.

There is no contradiction between Marxism and feminism if personal changes are placed within a context of fighting for structural changes in society, one complementing rather than contradicting the other.

Conclusion: Going beyond the fragments

The history of the marxist movement is richer and more heterogenous than many marxists believe. Hilary explains this in the introduction to *Beyond the Fragments* and Sheila refers to the discontinuity that our generation has with the past. The rise of fascism, the domination of the labour movement by Stalinism and the cold war broke into the continuity of the ideas of classical marxism. In re-establishing revolutionary politics as part of the mainstream of socialist tradition it is necessary to look at other brands of socialism and assess the contribution of the revolutionaries.

Sheila, Hilary and Lynne launch a big attack on 'Leninist' parties. They place them in a completely separate camp, as if they are much more pernicious than parties such as the Labour Party. Many people's idea of a Leninist party is coloured by the Stalinist models of the past, and unfortunately all too many far left groups have imitated these models (the Worker's Revolutionary Party of Gerry Healey is only the most grotesque example). But what Lenin himself argued for was a mass working class party that was internally democratic (though united in action) and possessed of a revolutionary programme.

On the other hand, experience has shown that a democratic and disciplined party regime is almost impossible for parties that are not revolutionary. The Labour Party, for example, is corrupt to the core, a living self-contradiction. It claims to be socialist, yet betrays socialism at every turn. That is why the Labour Party leaders encourage a large inactive membership that can be used to support the right wing. And that is why the party is run bureaucratically. Labour MPs are not accountable to the party, nor true to the manifesto on which they are elected. The parliamentary deputies have even formed their own *separate* party, the PLP, which is beyond the control of the membership of the parent party. Labour MPs and cabinet ministers flagrantly violate every norm of democracy and party discipline. The 'liberality' of the Labour Party is in reality a cover for rule by a clique of gangsters. Making people feel powerless, stupid and inarticulate is the hallmark of reformist politics. Reformism is elitist to the core.

What made it necessary for revolutionaries to build separate, communist parties was the support that the parties of the Second International gave to the imperialist war. Later, the Third International commit-

ted comparable betrayals. All this destroyed the unity of the labour movement. Leninism, in principle, stands for a mass workers party committed to revolutionary politics, to an activist membership, and to internationalism, free debate and united action. All political parties require certain norms. Labour Party members for example are rightly demanding that MPs argue for the party programme in Parliament and be subject to re-selection by the party.



In the IMG we demand a greater activist commitment and a more critical membership. But we do not see a Leninist party as an infallible mystic entity as Hilary, Sheila and Lynne seem to suggest. On the contrary, it is because we know that mistakes will be made that we insist that certain democratic rights must be guaranteed within a workers party. Of course, everyone knows ex-IMG members who complain that the model doesn't always correspond to reality. But then neither does the model of sisterhood that the women's movement projects.

Members of a workers party must have the right to debate out any issue they choose at conference. They must have the right to form ideological groupings both on particular issues and to organise to change party leaders if a grouping thinks such a step is necessary. (The IMG respectively uses the terms tendencies and factions for such groupings.) They must have access to bulletins to put forward their views. There must be reports of discussions on the leadership at branch meetings. Minority viewpoints must be represented on leading bodies elected by national conferences. Clear simple structures are necessary where people know who makes what decisions. These facilitate control.

I do not see why, in continuity with classical Marxism, Leninists should not be able to learn from movements of the oppressed, as they did in the nineteenth century. I do not accept the barriers that Sheila puts between 'Leninism' and the Chartists or the Revolutionary Syndicalists.

It is true that the modern far left had no real understanding of the culture of subordination, 'of the emotional components of consciousness' before the women's movement, and, to an extent, the black

movement, brought these issues to the surface.

Feminism was indeed unexplored territory for Marxism, and many Marxists at first refused to set out on the journey. It has taken over a decade for many Marxists to understand that male domination of women is a living relationship and has to be tackled both in everyday life and at the level of political priorities. Some Leninist groups have refused to learn but not all. Feminism has had a more profound impact on the far

left than the authors of *Beyond the Fragments* admit. Few far left groups in Britain today ignore the question of women's oppression although many of them refuse to support the 'autonomous' movement of women.

The reaction of the left to the women's movement highlights the problems facing Marxism in Britain. Despite opportunities for growth and collaboration the far left remains small and sectarian. This paralysis, combined with defensiveness about theory, has left the situation open both for 'workerism' which disregards new movements at one extreme and the 'abstruse high theory which has become a form of practice among academic Marxists' (p. 32) on the other. Many far left groups in Britain today face problems of competitiveness, dogmatism, factionalism, ridicule, intellectualism, workerism. Partly because they are young organizations, partly because they are so divided, they are not self-conscious enough of these weaknesses.

The IMG is not immune from these pressures. But, the IMG perhaps more than any other far left group, has attempted to confront these problems by its commitment to open debate, unity in action, and revolutionary regroupment, abortion, Ireland, socialist democracy and regroupment, to say nothing of its long-standing participation in the debates in the women's movement. The IMG suffers from other weaknesses. It has a very long way to go in developing Marxist theory in Britain, and more women, black and working class comrades in the IMG as well as many socialists outside the IMG must play their part in this work. Despite all our weaknesses, I would suggest that the democracy of the far left is immeasurably greater and more real than that of the

CPGB where the federalism of the intellectuals is contrasted with the centralism of the trade unionists and where the membership has no real influence in deciding party policy.

As Hilary points out, the main problem facing the left is the tremendous staying power of the Labour Party. Even today, after five years of a reactionary Labour government, we see many erstwhile revolutionaries joining the Labour Party seduced by the prospect that perhaps this time it might be possible for the left to win a real victory against the right. At the back of their minds lies the vain hope that the Labour Party can be transformed. The myriad of Trotskyist groups, incapable of containing their differences within the framework of a common party organization, does not enhance the attractiveness of the far left as an alternative to the Labour Party.

The fusion of the two largest far left organisations, the IMG and the SWP, would have a dramatic effect on the evolution of Marxism in this country. It would be a very powerful pole of attraction to feminists. It would have a far wider influence than the sum of the two organisations together because it would challenge the idea that Leninism is monolithic. It would base itself on the idea that parties are not built around this or that tactic, but should group together all those who fight for the interests of the working class, all who defend the politics of revolution not reform, and all those who want to see the working class take power.

We, too want to go beyond the fragments. We want the far left in Britain to gather its fragmented forces and build a socialist party broad enough to link all the revolutionary traditions that the British labour movement has produced, including socialist feminism, with the experience of revolutionaries internationally. This is why we are committed to building a revolutionary international — the Fourth International — at the same time as national parties. We do not think this can be done by dissolving ourselves into the mass movement. We do not think revolutions can be made without parties, or without a programme. We think movements and parties have different jobs to do and both can contribute to the building of socialism if they are prepared to learn from one another.

Footnotes

1. Rosalind Petchesky, 'Dissolving the hyphen', in Zillah R. Eisenstein (ed.) *Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism*. New York, Monthly Review Press, 1979. p.386.

References to *Beyond the fragments* throughout the article are to the revised edition: Sheila Rowbotham, Lynne Segal and Hilary Wainwright, *Beyond the fragments: feminism and the making of socialism*. London, Merlin Press, 1979. Revised edition.

The Alternative Economic Strategy: a critique

By Alan Freeman

The British left faces a deep crisis of policy and orientation. Between 1974 and 1979 the expectations of the labour movement were dashed under two successive Labour governments, its previous victories against the Tories undone by its own government and leaders in one of the worst attacks on living conditions since the war. The subsequent electoral defeat has delivered the workers into the hands of a Tory government that makes Selsden man look like a pinko socialist.

In this context the Labour left, particularly the wing led by Tony Benn, developed the idea of an Alternative Economic Strategy (AES), cutting edge of their challenge to the policies of the party leadership. At the October 1979 party conference, the Bennite *Labour Activist* (no. 7, October 1979) featured the following, fairly representative platform:

1) Britain should act in advance of other countries to expand her economy and return to full employment.

2) There should be an explicit plan for reflation and a return to full employment, including increases in public spending of £3000 million a year, financed not by personal tax increases but largely by savings on unemployment benefits and higher tax yields from economic growth.

3) To prevent a flood of imports that these policies might create, Britain will plan a growth of imports broadly equal to its growth of exports and will plan an increased share of trade with the Third World within this total.

4) The government should specifically make full employment its first priority. By full employment, we mean a reduction to 750,000 unemployed within two years, as a result of expansion and import planning, and to under 500,000 within two years after sustained implementation of the industrial strategy.

5) Companies should be required to enter into planning agreements with the government of the day, and in co-operation with the unions. The government should have the power to take big companies into public ownership wherever necessary.

6) These proposals make our aim of democratic accountability even more important. We must make a reality of industrial democracy, bring in a Freedom of Information Act, and make the government accountable to Parliament.

With the fall of the government,

programmes of this type have become (along with the issue of inner-party democracy) a focus of struggle in the party, the left's answer to the Tories' monetarist policies and to Callaghan's austerity. Many variants, both left and right, have appeared, but all have prominently featured four main recommendations.

1. The government should respond to the economic crisis by stimulating expansion, augmenting public expenditure and ending restrictive monetary policies.

2. Investment should be channelled towards domestic industry, in leftwing variants by an extension of public ownership into key industrial sectors, in the more mainstream versions by planning agreements with the big monopolies.

3. The power of financial institutions and big business should be curbed by a combination of determined government action and an extension of industrial and popular democracy.

4. Rigid price and import controls — and, in some versions, incomes policy — should be used to offset the effects of such policies on inflation and the balance of payments.

The exponents of such policies as these boast of their realism. But can the recommended measures actually offer the working class lasting reform in the framework of a 'mixed economy'? How far can such policies take the working class if they are put in practice by a left government? These questions, which I will try to answer in this article, are far from idle. The Allende government in Chile tried to implement a very similar package. As European capital sinks deeper into the mire, governments that try to tread the 'middle road' of an AES may well be propelled to power. Theoretical considerations about Alternative Economic Strategy would then become eminently practical.

Theories and bases of AES

Two figures have been especially prominent in shaping AES policies. Anthony Wedgwood-Benn, now heading the Labour left's leadership challenge, has been the major popularizer. But the most consistent theorist is undoubtedly Stuart Holland, who has produced the most detailed and coherent blueprints. He was instrumental in shaping the 1974 manifesto, which he defended in *Strategy for*

Socialism (Spokesman, 1975) and the more elaborate *The Socialist Challenge* (Quartet, 1975). In his recent works, including *Beyond Capitalist Planning* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1978), he has developed and extended these ideas in the light of the experience of the 1974 Labour government. Further reflections on this experience appear in his essay 'Capital, Labour and the State,' in *What Went Wrong* (Spokesman, 1979), a collection of essays on the failure of the 1974-79 government.

Holland's is not the only argument for the AES, nor the only version. Brian Sedgemore of the *Tribune* group has presented his own version, including a stronger commitment to incomes policy and selective import controls, in *The How and Why of Socialism* (Spokesman, 1977, p. 30). The views of the Communist Party-influenced left may be founded in an article by the London CSE group in *Capital and Class*, no. 8. Geoff Hodgson has defended his own version in the pamphlet *Socialist Economic Strategy* (ILP, London, 1979); his views have been further developed in another pamphlet entitled *'Militant' and the Alternative Economic Strategy* (Clause 4, 1979). He has upheld the important idea, which we will discuss below, that the AES should be supported as a transitional strategy towards socialism. The TUC leaders also have their own AES, well to Holland's right, and the Bennite left has consistently fought for alternative strategies close to those of the trade unions.

Any serious critique of the AES, however, must begin with Holland's ideas, which embody an approach that merits the title of a 'theory' of the AES. Other advocates, like Sedgemore, Hodgson, and Benn himself, draw primarily on Holland's work, and most criticisms of his ideas apply equally to other versions of the AES. Holland's basic argument may be summarized in four parts, as follows.

1. In the 1950s the Keynesian revolution seemed to have 'not only solved the problems of mass unemployment, but had made feasible an indirect control of the economy itself. It was argued that if the State secured control of the level of aggregate demand, the profit motive and private self-interest would ensure the response of an efficient supply of goods and services in the public interest'.

(*Strategy for Socialism*, p.13.)

Keynesian policies thus became the basis of a new orthodoxy, popularized in the writings of Anthony Crosland, according to which the State could compensate for the deficiencies of private capital and the market without abolishing either. 'It (Keynes' theory) not only swept academic thinking, but also challenged the socialist claim that only public management of supply could ensure economic efficiency and social justice. It implied that, subject to a general role as umpire, spender and planner, and within a general framework of progressive taxation, the State could achieve the ends of socialism with only a limited degree of socialization of ownership. This provided a fundamental link between Keynesian thought and postwar Social Democratic thinking.' (*Strategy for Socialism*, pp. 13-14.)

2. But the experience of the 1964 and later governments shows that this thinking is no longer valid. 'Since 1970, the Labour Party has come to question the permanence of the Keynesian revolution. The awareness of this need stemmed partly from the deflationary package of July 1966, which ended the expansionary hopes of the National Plan, and with it most of the hopes for a planned re-distribution of income and increase in welfare on which the 1964 government had come to power. But the new awareness stemmed also from the patent failure of the efforts of the 1970-74 Conservative government to promote a sustained increase in investment supply through management of demand, and a realization that the British economy was facing a degree of crisis unprecedented since the early thirties.' (*Strategy for Socialism*, p.16.)

3. The failure of state intervention was not the result of temporary or accidental factors like the increase in oil prices. Neither, however, was it the product of any intrinsic weakness. New factors have come into play, neutralizing the effects of traditional policy:

'This present and continuing crisis in the British economy reflects a fundamental change in the structure of modern capitalism both at home and abroad. The main reason for the crisis has not so much been the misapplication of Keynesian techniques of demand management as their erosion by a new mode of production which has divorced macro policy from micro structure.' (*The Socialist Challenge*, pp. 14-15.)

Most important is the rise of *large-scale business*, or 'meso-economic sectors', to the point that national states can no longer control the economy:

'Our economies have been subject to the rapid growth and increasing influence of very powerful large firms described here and elsewhere as the "meso-economic" sector, a new phenomenon between micro-economics and macro-economics. This sector does not respond to overall demand

management by the public authorities in the same way as an economy based on small firms. The structure of competition itself has been transformed and operates under new "rules of the game".'

4. This calls for a new approach. The government must involve itself directly in decisions that affect *production and supply*, with the aim of countervailing monopoly and multinational power. It must force big power-centres to comply with socially determined needs.

Holland's strategy

Holland's solution is often hard to interpret. His abundant socialist rhetoric suggests that he stands for the abolition of private capital, even for a revolutionary attack on it. At the beginning of *Strategy for Socialism* he defines capitalism as a class society and reiterates that the goal of socialism is the abolition of class division and inequality: 'Class bias is no accident. It stems essentially from the structure of power and unequal incomes necessary for the functioning of a capitalist system based on massively unequal rewards as the so-called incentive to efficiency.

'This cannot be overcome through more fiddling with tax rates and indirect incentives by the government. It can only be transformed through a radical equalization of wealth, a socialist programme for public ownership and control of the means of production, and new social controls of the expenditure and use of enterprise in the transformed system.' The very next paragraph, however (written in 1974), tells us, apparently without irony, that 'in practice, such a socialist programme for new public enterprise and social control lies at the heart of the new direction in Labour Party policy since 1970, as any reference to the published texts of Party documents or this book will clearly demonstrate.'

Closer study shows that Holland's proposals fall far short of a socialist takeover of production in the accepted sense. In *The Socialist Challenge* (p. 154) he describes his project as one of 'revolutionary reforms' aimed principally at the meso-economic sector: 'It (the meso-economic sector) is so deeply entrenched that nothing short of a transformation of the mode of production, distribution and exchange *within this sector* can put a socialist government in a position to master economic policy and radically increase social expenditure.' (Emphasis added.)

The emphasized phrase is the key to Holland's picture of socialist transformation. His new 'mode of production' amounts not to the overthrow of capitalist ownership of production, even in the monopoly sector, but simply to the reversal or counter-action of the *new power* of the big firms. This is spelled out as follows (pp. 159-160): 'any such strategy must, in the first instance, secure a transformation of the mode of production

in the multinational or mesoeconomic sector of the economy... such a transformation of the mesoeconomic mode of production does not need the extension of public ownership and control through the entire sector. But it does need decisive action to bring individual leader firms in the main industries and services into public ownership and control....

'Such an extension of public ownership into some rather than all of the mesoeconomic firms clearly need not exclude further extension of public ownership.... But it is important to distinguish between the scale of the initial extension of public ownership that is necessary to reverse the imbalance of public and private power in the meso sector, and the further extension of the same or different forms of ownership and control. Essentially, no transformation will be possible unless a critical minimum of leading firms in the meso-sector is brought into public ownership and control. On average, four to five firms control the upper half or twenty of the twenty-two main industrial and services sectors of the economy. *One in four to one in five* of these firms must be socialized through new public ownership and control if we are to begin the critical transformation of private mesoeconomic power. This was part of the analytical case behind Labour's Opposition Green Paper on what came to be known as the "20 to 25 companies".' (Emphasis added.)

This is far from socialist transformation as we understand it. 'One in four to one in five' in the meso-economic sector means about one-tenth of the capital in the economy. What is seen as important is not to end capitalist ownership but to 'change the mix' between public and private ownership.

How can this bring such dramatic change? It will work because it is only part of a much more general assault on meso-economic power. The attack, Holland argues, must come from two directions: the government and the workers.

The government should oblige all major companies (those with £50 million or more turnover) to enter into *planning agreements*. These create a mechanism whereby investment can be planned in accordance with public need, so as to control investment and supply. This would create a 'systematized bargaining process between the government and the giant private and public corporations' (p. 231). Although company management 'would be left free to initiate its own programmes' (p. 232), the state would intervene with carrot and stick to 'determine whether or not these programmes conformed with its economic and social objectives' (p. 230). Its method of intervention would be 'less than wholly imperative, but more than indicative'. It would have power to offer discriminatory incentives: grants, assistance, access to planning information, etc. And it would have limited, rather vaguely defined, veto powers.

Industrial democracy and planning agreements

It could be argued that this is exactly what governments have been trying to do for the past thirty years with regional policy, using Industrial Development Certificates as a stick and regional subsidies as a carrot — with appalling results. Holland argues that two things will help avoid past mistakes.

First, public ownership will allow government access to detailed knowledge of the conditions under which business operates — cost structure, technical knowledge, etc. This will stop business 'blinding the government with technical and commercial knowledge'. This is very much the role the British North Sea Oil Company was seen as playing. Public enterprise will also be able to act as 'leader', going into areas where monopolies have been unwilling to commit themselves, and so showing that investment possibilities exist and even spearheading their exploitation. This will also threaten big firms with loss of markets and opportunities if they do not follow such a lead.

Second, the relation between workers and industry must be changed by a very widespread democratization: 'there is a crucial step in the process of transforming the present hierarchical and oligarchic structures of decision-making throughout British society. This is the exercise of state power in the area of industrial democracy and workers' self-management through "opening the door" on both information and decision-taking. The central government will decisively the extent to which it is prepared, literally, to open the corridors of power to working people from firms, industries and services of strategic importance in the economy as a whole. It will also do so by the extent to which it "opens the books" on key areas of decision making which involve no state security in any legitimate sense of the term, nor commercial security concerning the future viability of firms and enterprises. These are the kinds of changes ... which have been anticipated in *Labour's Programme 1973*.' (*The Socialist Challenge*, pp. 161-162.)

What emerges is a programme of government economic reforms, enacted by the existing state machine and backed up by popular democracy at grass-roots level. This will change the basis of the economy, counter meso-economic power, and put the government and state back in the driving seat. Nationalization of the 'twenty-five firms', planning agreements, and popular democracy — these will place workers in control of the transformation process and launch us on the socialist road. Perhaps the most important question to consider at the outset is the cause of the present economic crisis. Holland maintains that because of the rise of the multinationals, governments are no longer able to master the economy. The implication is that government intervention was responsible for postwar prosperity in

the first place and that this prosperity is breaking down under the impact of a basically new element: monopoly domination. As we shall, neither of these suppositions stands up to analysis.

The postwar boom and state intervention

Let us begin with the postwar boom. Not only Holland but also Hodgson, who ought to know better, makes much of the alleged 'Keynesian solution' to capitalism's problems, which is supposed to refute 'vulgar Marxism' and its forecasts of inevitable economic crisis. But both consistently fail to mention one small point: before Keynesian methods of state intervention were adopted, the world passed through twenty years of slump, fascism, war, and counter-revolution. Keynes's genius must be measured against such factors as the destruction of the organizations of the working classes of Japan, Germany, and Spain, and their severe dislocation in nearly all other major countries; the division of the world into 'spheres of influence' between the world's biggest imperialist powers and the first revolutionary socialist power, quarantining the revolution and guaranteeing long-term stable investment prospects; the restructuring of the major capitalist economies through the slump, rearmament, and the postwar application of military technology; and last but not least, the emergence of the United States as a new hegemonic world power able to act as policeman and banker for the imperialist powers.

These *political* factors scarcely figure in the economic accounts given by AES supporters. But this seriously undermines the pillar of Holland's scheme. If Keynesian methods were not the cause of postwar stability but rather a consequence of a much wider phenomenon, then what guarantees do we have that they will work now? In this context, it is certainly relevant to our analysis whether Keynesian methods were *imposed* on the capitalists by the state or deliberately developed and applied by the leading capitalists. If these methods were usable only because they were acceptable to the capitalist class, then it may well be much more difficult to apply them if the capitalist class resists.

Who really pioneered Keynesian methods? Most Social Democratic writings suggest that they were first formulated by the postwar socialists in the wake of the climactic triumph of the 1945 Labour government. The suggestion is wholly illusory. Sweeping state intervention was first introduced in the wartime economies of 1914-18, and developed to its fullest extent by the Italian and German fascists. The bourgeoisie learnt state intervention in the school of fascism and war.

The basis of the welfare state in Britain was laid not by the Labour Party but by the wartime coalition. The Education Bill was passed in 1944, the Beveridge reforms were well mapped out before the election, and for the most part Labour implemented an *agreed* arrangement with the capitalists of the day. Attlee writes of the wartime coalition: 'I have very pleasant memories of working with my colleagues in the Government. It was very seldom that any Party issue arose to divide us, until the last stage, when I think they were designedly fomented by certain persons. Usually applying our minds to the actual problems which faced us, we came to an agreement as to what was the best course... quite naturally, in war, when the public good must take precedence over private interests, the solutions had a strong socialist flavour.' (Cited by R. Milliband in *Parliamentary Socialism*, p. 275.)

In fact, the capitalist class imposed clear limits on what the 1945 government could do. In 1948 the government foolishly embarked on the nationalization of the iron and steel industry, in a sop to the left, frustrated by the wholesale retreat from the rest of its programme. As Milliband comments, 'of all the Labour Government's nationalization measures, the nationalization of iron and steel was the only one which entailed a serious threat to the "private sector".' (*Parliamentary Socialism*, p. 288) Attlee writes of this measure: 'there was not much opposition to our nationalization proposals. Only iron and steel aroused much feeling.'

This bill became the target of an intense anti-nationalization campaign. By September 1949 the insurance companies 'had set up 400 anti-nationalization committees up and down the country on



which 4,000 employees were working after office hours to publicize their objections to the Labour Party proposals. Insurance agents also constituted a ready-made army of canvassers.' (Nicolas, p. 72, cited by Miliband, p. 302.)

Tate and Lyle organized a campaign based on the figure of Mr. Cube. His picture and anti-nationalization slogans appeared on two million sugar packages, 100,000 ration-book holders distributed free to housewives, and on all delivery trucks. Material was sent to 4,500 schools. More than 3,000 speeches and lectures were delivered in factories and working men's clubs; £200,000 was spent on advertising.

Even the House of Lords sprang to life, stopping the government making any appointments to the Iron and Steel Corporation until 1 October 1950, and prohibiting the transfer of any properties until 1 January 1951 — after the general election.

When these 'purely electoral' tactics failed to prevent the election of a second Labour government, the steel bosses systematically sabotaged the bill, organizing a deliberate policy of non-cooperation with the Iron and Steel board among middle and lower management. On 19 September 1950 the minister of supply explained that when he invited representatives of the steel interests to submit the names of 'experienced men who would be acceptable to their fellow industrialists for inclusion in the Corporation', the Executive Committee of the Iron and Steel Federation refused to respond, 'on the grounds that in their opinion the government had no mandate to carry out the Iron and Steel Act'. 'They warned me', he continued, '...that the Corporation, deprived of such people, would be unable successfully to plan the steel industry. Further, I was informed that every effort would be made to dissuade any important man I might approach from serving on the Corporation.... In short, these people decided to threaten, and indeed they did carry out, a political strike'. There was 'a gentleman's agreement throughout firms in the industry not to serve on the Corporation'.

In other words, when the capitalists' interests clashed with the government, they did not hesitate to call on the solidarity of the entire class to sabotage the most elementary attempt at state control — and they succeeded.

The policy of the postwar state was quite consciously tailored to meet three central purposes. First, a homogeneous, relatively well-provided and literate semi-skilled labour force able to service high-technology productive capital was required. The state therefore assumed functions like health, social security, and education, which individual capitalists could not support. Second, the state intervened directly in the cycle of capitalist accumulation. Government expenditure became a major element of the economy, moving into sectors like coal, transport,

and energy, that were essential for capital as a whole, but could no longer generate sufficient profits to attract investment by individual capitalists. The state used its augmented economic weight to deflect the growth of capital. 'Indicative planning' was inaugurated in an attempt to persuade entrepreneurs to invest in accordance with the general interests of national capital. Mergers were encouraged. Grants and subsidies were distributed to alter the patterns of employment and wealth in an attempt to improve the competitive position of British capital on the world market.

Third, for the first time in the absence of war, government loan-expenditure was used to dampen the capitalist boom-slump cycle and to maintain full employment. The state would intervene to prevent slumps running their course, going into debt during recessions to buy capitalist produce that would otherwise have failed to find a market. The technique is known as 'creating demand'. The government and the large financial institutions also 'officially sanctioned' and took part in *debt creation* as a principal means of finance. Commodity money (such as gold) was gradually replaced by paper money, which in theory was backed no longer by real commodities but by capitalized or expected future income.

In theory the state would also retrieve these debts in time of boom, thus preventing the economy from preparing to produce more than it could sell. But this simply did not happen — and here lies the crux of the present crisis of state intervention. Debt, both public and private, rose constantly. The result was a continuous, irreversible, and ever-increasing *inflation of paper money*. As the years wore on, government expenditure proved less and less able to hold back slumps. The amount of expenditure required called forth more and more horrendous rates of inflation and generated ever more massive debts, on such a scale that real risks of the bankruptcy of big banks and even whole states began to loom. Successive governments came to face a stark choice between inflation and unemployment, between unacceptable levels of loan expenditure combined with inflation rates of 15-20%, and a return to the unemployment figures of the thirties.

Until recently, however, this policy met the needs of the dominant capitalists, for whom widespread price-cuts during slumps were increasingly unacceptable and who wanted to buy social peace by taking the edge off the effects of recessions on the working class. The proportion of capital tied up in large units of fixed capital became very large. It became ever more imperative that this capital not suffer sudden and disastrous devaluation, or the capitalists would not be able to risk expansion. Demand management to keep prices up and prevent bankruptcies, far from conflicting with monopoly interests, was the perfect counterpart to their

conservative policies of price-fixing through restriction of supply and of maintaining profit levels adequate to keep the most backward producers afloat.

Three basic conditions must prevail if this state intervention is to be acceptable to and effective for the leading capitalists.

1. The average profitability of the capitalist class must not suffer. State intervention must *increase*, and not *decrease*, the growth opportunities of the capitalist class as a whole. In a *crisis* of profitability like the present one, the state must actively transfer income from workers to capitalists, which is exactly what the 1974-79 government did. Not only did it impose an incomes policy that cut real wages by 12 per cent in three years, it also pumped more than £3,000 million directly out of the social services and into the hands of the capitalists in the shape of grants and subsidies.

2. The motor of capitalist growth — surplus or super-profit — must remain intact. If capitalists are to explore new prospects for investment, they must be assured not only of the average rate of profit, but the possibility of a *higher* than average profit such that they can enrich themselves at the expense of other capitalists. They need control over the *movement of capital*. This is not an incidental feature of capitalist behaviour, but the essence of bourgeois power. Capital that cannot be spent where its owner wills simply ceases to be capital, because it ceases to be generally convertible, can no longer be used to make surplus profits, and loses its value as anything except a source of unearned income, at a fixed rate, or a simple store of value, in which case it might as well be put in a bank or a bedsock.

3. The capitalists must be satisfied that the political climate can guarantee stable profits, at least over the accounting or turnover period of fixed capital (generally seven to eight years, but as much as twenty years for an investment in new technology). This requires proper military defence of the foreign and strategic interests of all capital. And it calls for guarantees against unwelcome interference by the working class. Amongst big business's strongest objections to Benn's economic policies, which would make perfect sense under a fascist government or with a weak and disorganized working class, is that Benn would be unable to control working-class resistance to the profitable reconstruction of industry. They do not fear Benn — what they fear is what the working class might do if it took him seriously.

In conclusion, state intervention is neither a socialist invention nor a universal answer to capitalism's problems. Full-scale 'welfare state' intervention, coupled with full

employment, can be used only under very specific conditions. It is thus very important to decide whether these conditions prevail today, and whether they can be brought into existence.

The crisis of state intervention

Holland explains the failure of Keynesian methods as follows: 'such a crisis (as the present economic one) reflects a fundamental change in the structure of modern capitalism The competitive firm of micro-economic theory was too small to influence macro-economic aggregates such as national investment, trade and employment. Even in collusion, it was generally held, they could not seriously influence the price level set by sovereign consumers. Such theory still has relevance to the thousands of small companies which the giants are squeezing into the bottom half of industry. But *in between* these micro-economic firms and the macro-economic level of government policy, the new giants have introduced an intermediate or *meso-economic* sector Raising prices has always been the prerogative of the monopoly. It is a key feature of their private power and public irresponsibility.

'Under the capitalist structure of the turn of the century ... the consumer could choose between many firms in the top half of any given industry or market, and this tended to keep prices down.' (*Strategy for Socialism*, pp. 17-18.)

This is simply false. Monopolies do not have unlimited power to raise prices; all capitalists try to do this, and what stops them is not consumer freedom of choice but competition between capitals; and monopolies have not escaped competition between capitals.

The key determinant of competition is not the number of firms present in the market but whether fresh capital is *free to move in* and take advantage of high profits. Once we realize this, we can see that the classical effects of monopoly came to dominate world capitalism no less than half a century earlier than Holland claims, because even quite large numbers of producers were able to combine and associate to prevent new entry. No qualitatively new stage of monopoly was reached in 1964, because not even the mightiest world conglomerate is able absolutely to restrict new competitors. Every big league firm knows full well that it must set prices at levels such that it can maximize total profit without provoking the entry of new competitors, or can at least limit newcomers to an acceptable market share. Such firms thus garner above average, but not unlimited, profit. They form a privileged sector of capital, but they do not stand above it.

To give only one well-known example: in 1931 three American cigarette trusts controlled 97 per cent of US production. They raised their prices by 10 per cent. By November 1932 — just over a year later — independent tobacco firms selling cut-price cigarettes had captured 22.8 per cent of the

market. Modern computers offer an equally graphic example, for high-priced main-frame products of big firms are continually undercut by smaller and cheaper products of new competitors, often composed (like DEC, for example) of disgruntled employees of the old, large corporation.

It follows that if we want to understand monopoly, we have to study not the situation of the consumer, but the institutional, economic, and political factors that restrict the free movement of *capital* in monopoly-dominated sectors. Classical Marxist analyses of monopoly, from Marx's own studies of ground rent onwards, have always adopted this starting-point.

How are super-profits obtained and stabilized by big capital? Holland describes only the most developed form of monopoly power: a unified manufacturing concern dominating a national market. It is true, and his figures prove it, that the market and output shares held by such giant concerns have risen quite rapidly during the last twenty years. It is also true that national states are under particular pressure from the best-known type of such firms: the modern multinational.

But the formation of a single, integrated, and possibly multinational company is only the last stage of a process that already dominated world capitalism as long ago as 1916, when Lenin defined imperialism as the monopoly stage of capitalism.

The first phase in the centralization of capital — the formation of cartels to restrict output and keep prices up — was well under way by the turn of the century. In January 1901 the chairman of the British Soap Makers Association noted that it had become 'impossible to make profits without association and combination'. (Charles Wilcox, *Unilever*, Volume 1, p. 66.)

The second phase was the pooling of capitals to form integrated blocs, the formation of *trusts*, and their eventual fusion with large sections of banking capital to form what Lenin termed 'finance capital' — the amalgam of banking and industrial capital that typified the monopoly stage of capitalism. Because finance capital controlled large amounts of mobile capital, it could lend much greater weight to the restrictive practices of the cartels by *refusing* to lend capital to dangerous competitors in spheres in which existing investments might be threatened. This was already a major factor in the time of Engels, and by 1916 it was decisive in determining world movements of capital. Between 1897 and 1904 the number of US trusts rose from 38 to 257. By 1897 the annual capitalization of mergers had reached \$2,244 thousand million in the United States. (Ernest Mandel, *Marxist Economic Theory*, Merlin, London, 1962, Volume II, p. 403.)

It was finance capital that played the major role in financing and organizing imperialist expansion, and it was with this phase that capitalism finally ceased to play any progressive role on a world scale. With

the sole exception of its role in extending the world market, finance capital acted as a fundamentally conservative force. It failed to bring about the industrial development of the colonies and condemned them to backwardness; it put preservation of monopoly privilege above the expansion of production in the imperialist countries. It created new parasitic classes living off interest, military conquest, corruption, and monopoly rent, and fortified decaying classes such as landlords and aristocracies. It leant on these decadent classes for support against the working class rather than sweep them away when they restricted progress.

The *essential* features of this system have not changed. What we are seeing now is a logical development of what has gone before. It is the international extension of a third phase of *direct merger of already oligopolized interests* to form unified productive enterprises. In short, we are seeing a major surge in the *international centralization of capital*.

This has a double function. First, the giant firms consolidate the gains they have already scored through colonial exploitation and collusive control over financing. The superprofits thus amassed are now manipulated directly by the unified command of the merged firm, and no longer indirectly through myriad clandestine deals and connections.

Second, the most characteristic feature of postwar monopoly — the control of *technology* to restrict new entry and maintain super-profits — is truly brought into its own. This calls for the fusion of previously diverse units into a single, homogeneous entity that shares out the tasks of research, development, and manufacturing entirely within its own confines. These tasks are farmed out internationally to take full advantage of local labour and product markets, typically concentrating low-skill assembly operations in the Third World or depressed regions, and centralizing administration in the financial and commercial centres of the owning nation; research installations are located wherever skilled technical and scientific labour can be found.

Successive British governments have been desperately aware of this general situation. The wave of mergers provoked by the first Wilson government under the slogan of the 'White Heat of Technology' was intended to forge a productive base for British capital that would not be completely bypassed by European, American, and Japanese capital. This was the function, for example, of the government support that has been poured into the computer industry. The attempts to create a 'European' aerospace industry serve a similar aim. Any British government faces a redoubtable problem in this respect in the development of a semi-conductor or microchip industry. It is reckoned that Japanese industry has sunk some £500 million into semi-conductor research and development, while the British government

proposes to spend a piddling £50 million!

This phase of merger has contradictory effects. Within certain limits, productive capital has begun to transcend national barriers. Capital has not ceased to operate from a national base; it is generally *owned* within a single nation. (See, for example, Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, London, NLB, 1975, p. 310ff.) But the large companies have begun to set up an international system of production.

However, contrary to Holland's view that this has ended competition between capitals, it has actually increasingly shifted it to a *world* arena. A single company, like ICL, may well dwarf its British competitors, and we might wrongly conclude that the British computer market is monopolized. But on an international scale ICL is in turn dwarfed by IBM, and stands at best on a par with CDC, Burroughs, Honeywell, and the other 'seven dwarfs' of the industry.

The rational kernel of Holland's tirade against the multinationals is this: national states are now drawn into international competition between capitals and are used as instruments in the fight for survival. The national states are forced to offer ever more favourable grants, guarantees, and facilities to multinationals in search of factory sites. If they reject the demands of the multinationals, they don't get the investment. Conversely, large companies like Lockheed and Leyland have become systematically involved in bribery and corruption as a normal instrument of company policy, as recent scandals have shown.

This competition between states, however, ultimately reduces to a *competition to defeat the working class*; the most successful states will be those that can extract the greatest surplus from their workers and promise the most docile work force. The ultimate development is the 'free trade area' in countries like Hong Kong and Ceylon, which is a zone in which the host country is forced to drop virtually *all* restrictions, legal and fiscal, on its rapacious and parasitic invaders. The truth is thus the diametrical opposite of what Holland maintains. It is not the absence of competition, but its international extension and the consequent greater involvement of national states in it, that renders the

modern interventionist state 'powerless' in the face of the multinationals.

We may summarize our conclusions as follows:

1. Big capital has not forged a new mode of production. Above all, it retains its *private* character. The monopoly sector is a privileged layer of capital as a whole that relies heavily on its relative control over the movement of investment capital. Any strategy based on trying to persuade the big league firms peacefully to relinquish their control over capital movement is utopian.

2. Neither monopoly nor the interventionist state has resolved the basic contradictions of competitive private capitalism, which have simply been removed to a higher level. The present crisis represents a manifestation of the same contradictions in a new form. Postwar capitalism is not immune to the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. It continues to suffer periodic over-production crises. Inequality has continued to grow. The system is still plagued by massive excess capacity. It has created, and sustains, enormous social obstacles even to its own progress: the nation-state itself, parasitic and reactionary classes, socially irrational investment patterns, and so on. Most important, *it is incapable of overcoming these obstacles to its own progress by any but the most extreme violent means.*

3. The efficacy of state intervention as a means of offsetting the worst effects of the boom/slump cycle has reached its limit. Increasingly enormous sums are needed to 'prime the pump' of depressed economies, and this generates greater and greater inflationary pressure. The capitalist class is increasingly forced to return to mass unemployment. Previous cycles of state intervention have accumulated a backlog of inefficient and socially unnecessary capital that has not been 'shaken out' by the normal mechanisms of the capitalist slump.

4. All these factors have combined to produce an intractable and worsening international crisis of capitalism,

characterised by:

i. The re-emergence of synchronized world slumps, signalling the exhaustion of the postwar boom;

ii. The end of American economic hegemony and the opening of a new period of fresh inter-imperialist rivalry;

iii. The breakdown of world monetary stability;

iv. Deliberate political attempts to attenuate the crisis at the expense of the working class: narrowing the state's welfare functions and transferring income to the capitalist class; reconstitution of an army of unemployed; attempts to restructure industry through brutal policies of closure and redundancy.

v. Efforts to dampen working-class organization and combativity in nearly all imperialist countries, since the workers have resisted every effort to offset falling profits by driving up the rate of exploitation and have (so far) prevented any major economic restructuring.

vi. A wave of revolutionary challenges to imperialist control of production and investment in the semi-colonial world, and the first rumblings of revolution in the West, opening with the events of May 1968 in France, followed by the Portuguese revolutionary upsurge of 1974-75.

vii. The more general destabilization of world politics and a sharp increase in the preparation of and the tendency towards war.

No capitalist 'solution' to this crisis could be purely 'economic' or 'governmental', and still less purely 'national'. No government economic policy could be effective unless the basic conditions for successful state intervention were first restored: profitability, guarantees of investment stability, freedom for private capital to enrich itself, and a reorganization of the world economy on the basis of a new international division of labour corresponding to the objective development of the productive forces. But the capitalist class can bring about such conditions only if it inflicts a debilitating defeat on the working class on a world scale, effects a sweeping reorganization of the present system of national states, and somehow settles accounts among the three



GEC - part of the '60s mergers and rationalisations

main continental blocs of capital: American, West European, and Japanese and Southeast Asian. Finally, to bring about such cataclysmic upheavals would be very difficult without major conflicts with the workers' states in an effort to reconquer substantial portions of the globe for capital.

AES in practise

It is not our purpose here simply to decry the AES. The labour movement needs a sober appraisal of it, and more particularly of what would happen if it was actually implemented.

Britain is a declining imperialist power, heavily dependent on world trade. It has not developed domestic industry, but has relied instead on amassing super-profits through control of foreign markets. It has thereby landed in a double bind. When the economy expands, imports are sucked in; but Britain's declining position in world markets prevents it from generating extra demand for its exports.

Attempts to expand the economy, particularly in a recession, quickly run up huge debts. The fortunes of every Labour government since the war can be read through this simple equation. Recently released cabinet minutes show that American financial pressure forced the Attlee government into devaluation and spending cuts of £256 million just before the 1950 election. Wilson records in his memoirs that immediately after the 1965 election, he went to see the governor of the Bank of England, who told him point-blank that he could not carry out the programme on which his government had been elected. And the 1974 government was more than £3,000 million in debt by the end of its first six months in office. The IMF told it, in no uncertain terms, not to be so silly.

There is an underlying problem that runs even deeper. The British economy is plagued by persistent failure to invest in domestic industry. This is a consequence of its imperial past. An article by R.E. Jones published in Lloyd's bank review compares investment per employee in a number of countries. The figure for Britain now stands at £7,500 — compared with £23,000 for West Germany and more than £30,000 for Japan. Jones calculates that an investment of more than £100 thousand million would be required to bring Britain into line with its major competitors.

A comparison between this amount and actual investment points to the depth of the problem. New plant in manufacturing, the key indicator of productive investment, has not risen above £4,000 million in any year of the past decade, even when industry was receiving nearly that amount from the Labour government in grants alone.

This is not a trivial problem to be solved by some fresh government policy. The fact is that the British ruling class, imperialist to the core, has substituted foreign for domestic investment. British capitalists

tend not to invest at home, because they have a much wider and safer range of opportunities abroad. And this has been further aggravated with the advent of the multinational corporation. Britain is the second-largest home of such companies after the United States, with over £18 thousand million in foreign holdings by MNCs. More than twice as much production by British-based companies is carried out abroad as at home. To ask British-based capital to invest at home is to ask it to invest at a *lower rate of profit* than it can obtain through its traditional channels. The problem is not the average rate of profit, but the rate of profit on new investment opportunities. Any attempt to impose domestic investment therefore meets, and will continue to meet, implacable opposition from an ancient and entrenched network of foreign investors, financiers, and ex-colonialists, now supplemented by the new monopolists, whose *class interests* are opposed to such measures.

Finally, it should be noted that British dependence on world trade and investment makes it especially sensitive to world recessions, as the 1974 Labour government discovered to its cost.

We can therefore outline the probably effects of implementation of an AES in Britain as follows:

- i. A short-term consumer-led boom leading to a substantial increase in employment and living standards and some improvement in social services.
- ii. A flight of capital abroad and a widespread refusal of foreign credit.
- iii. A rapid balance of payments crisis, aggravating the problem of foreign credit and leading to trading difficulties and shortages of imported materials.
- iv. A wholesale refusal by capital to invest in new production, and an attempt to run down or wind up existing productive investment.
- v. Widespread shortages and inflation, as a result of the above factors.
- vi. An organized boycott by the bourgeoisie of both political and economic planning, orchestrated by big business and particularly by British imperialist capital, coupled with an attempt to blame the economic chaos on government policies.
- vii. Preparation for the overthrow of the government and a repressive assault on the workers if the less extreme measures do not produce a government retreat.

This is not abstract speculation. We have sound evidence in the fate of the 1974 Labour government, particularly the results of its first six months in office.

We have already noted that Holland himself points out that his thinking 'underlies Labour's 1974 manifesto'. And so it did. Labour was elected in February 1974 on a programme all of whose essentials represented an AES policy. It called for an expanded economy, greater social services, a significant broadening of public ownership, an industrial strategy based on planning agreements, and a wide



extension of popular democracy. The Social Contract was to be an exchange, workers agreeing to slower wage increases in return for these benefits.

The government more or less held to this policy for its first six months of office, amidst a worsening international economic recession. The results were spectacular. After an initial boom, the balance of payments went £3 thousand million into the red; the trade deficit was even worse. The annual inflation rate reached 30 per cent. Industrial production fell 10 per cent, and as much as 20 per cent in some sectors, like construction.

Government policy became the target of a furious political onslaught in which nearly *all* capitalist forces joined: industrialists, financiers, and the state apparatus. The course and results of this offensive are very clearly traced in a book recently produced by representatives of the Labour left itself (*What Went Wrong*, Spokesman, 1979).

Two aspects of the attack deserve special attention: the role of the state bureaucracy and attitudes to Benn's industrial proposals. Far from remaining aloof or neutral, the state was intimately and directly involved in the campaign. This is most sharply exposed in Michael Meacher's article in *What Went Wrong: 'Whitehall's Short Way with Democracy'*. He enumerates no less than five ways in which Whitehall subverted government policy. Interdepartmental co-ordination constitutes a 'government within the government' that is so powerful that Crossman can write: 'I have yet to see a Minister prevail against an interdepartmental official paper without the backing of the Prime Minister, the First Secretary, and the Chancellor'. The senior echelons of the Civil Service are 'enmeshed in the business-finance power structure outside' (p. 179). Meacher writes: 'the source of information provided by officials — and also of the interpretation placed upon it — is invariably the CBI, top managements of individual companies, the Bank of England or particular finance

houses ... it is *their* policy slant rather than that of any other group (since the TUC is not regularly consulted) which permeates the documents put before Ministers.' He goes on to say, somewhat naively, that the 'close symbiotic relationship with leading representatives of industry and finance must inevitably raise questions of the impartiality of civil service advice ... not that any implication of conspiracy is intended'.

Conspiracy or not, John Pardo reported in 1976 that he had reliable reports that 'a number of people from Britain representing both Treasury and City interests had at that time told the US Treasury that it would be better if Britain were to get no more loans from the IMF or the international financial community'. And Joe Haines, no friend of the left, records that in June 1975 the Treasury and the Bank of England let the pound slide in order to force the government into statutory wage controls. He describes this as an attempted 'civilian coup against the government'.

Most significant of all, however, is the special attention devoted to Labour's plans for the control of industry, the linch-pin of Holland's strategy. This is graphically described in Tom Forester's contribution in *What Went Wrong*, entitled 'Neutralising the Industrial Strategy'.

Throughout 1974 a big campaign was waged against 'Bennery' in general and Labour's industrial proposals in particular. It opened in February with a statement from Sir Michael Clapham, president of the CBI, that his organization was 'hostile' to the government's 'interventionist line'. Wilson personally assumed command of the Cabinet committee concerned, and announced: 'Private industry must have the necessary confidence to maintain and increase investment to do their duty by the people. And confidence demands that a clear frontier must be defined between what is public and what is private industry.'

Wilson was merely expressing the nearly universal hostility of Whitehall and the business community. Ray Tuite, the DTI press officer, remarked that 'the CBI made it clear that they would pull out of the NEDC and break off all working relations with the government if companies were forced into investment commitments'. Forester writes: 'The Civil Service, too, were wholly opposed to an interventionist strategy.' Adrian Ham, Healey's special assistant, speaks of a 'Whitehall-wide conspiracy to stop Benn doing anything'. Whitehall's devout respect for parliamentary democracy was demonstrated by Benn's own Departmental Secretary, Sir Tony Part (now chairman of Orion Insurance and a director of Debenhams, EMI, the Life Association of Scotland, Metal Box, Savoy Hotels, and Lucas Industries), who is said to have greeted his supposed superior on his first day with this penetrating crack: 'I presume, Secretary of State, that you do not intend to implement the industrial strategy in

Labour's Programme.'

By June 1975 Benn had been sacked and Labour's Industry Bill gutted. The NEB was turned into a fountain of handouts to industry, placed under the direction of Leslie Murphy, a merchant banker. In place of Benn's promised thirty-two planning agreements, the government signed exactly *one*, with Chrysler UK, and that only when Chrysler tottered on the brink of bankruptcy, its Scottish factory occupied by workers demanding the nationalization of the company. The government doled out some £40 million of taxpayers' money; two years later Chrysler broke the agreement and sold out to Peugeot-Citroën.

But what if Labour hadn't retreated? The most probable scenario would have been a repetition of the demise of the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende in Chile. Indeed, Holland and Hodgson have both referred to this experience in defending their policies. Granted, it is dangerous to push an analogy with a dependent and relatively backward economy too far. In particular, it would be wrong to assume that the economy of an imperialist country stands in the same relation to the world market as that of a country like Chile. But the Allende experience does sharply illustrate the *political* consequence of expansionist state

profound reforms within the framework of a mixed economy, directed against the large and privileged sectors of capital, especially international capital. The poor and exploited of Chile were to be the social base for a battle against imperialism, which would also face the wrath of 'anti-imperialist' capital. A broad redistribution of income was to be combined with a policy of full employment, expansion of the public sector, and a 'popular democracy' that would remain constitutional, that would not challenge the state.

There can be no doubt that Popular Unity scored major successes during its first year. It established nearly full employment, a spectacular achievement for a dependent economy. Personal consumption rose 12 per cent, and production increased in nearly all sectors. Popular satisfaction was expressed in the March 1971 municipal elections, when the left won an absolute majority of the votes cast.

But behind these successes, the basic problem of investment remained unsolved. Gross domestic investment fell by 7 per cent during the same year, and this minimizes the real drop in productive investment, because it includes the large government construction programmes. Foreign investment fell drastically. Capital



Chilean Peasants -looking for leadership?

intervention, when it conflicts with capitalist interests.

In its composition and policy the Allende coalition was a Popular Front. Despite this, it embarked on a series of radical capitalist reforms unacceptable to Chilean capital. Popular Unity, unlike the classical European Popular Fronts of the 1930s, defined itself as an instrument of struggle against imperialism and not fascism. Its programme included measures like the nationalization of the copper industry, which the petty-bourgeois parties saw as anti-imperialist rather than anti-capitalist. Its practical policy therefore bore many similarities to an AES programme. The aim was to carry out

movements shifted even more dramatically: a net inflow of \$149 million became a net outflow of \$103 million. The balance of payments moved from \$91 million positive to a deficit of \$315 million.

By mid-1972 production began to decline; it then fell more or less continuously until the coup. A second problem was the way in which nationalization was carried out. It could not be legislated easily because the Congress and Senate were dominated by the opposition. Popular Unity lawyers therefore dug up Law 520, which had been put on the books in 1932 and never repealed. It entitled the government to intervene

directly in industries that failed to meet any of a number of conditions, such as the maintenance of normal production; companies that held back supplies, engaged in profiteering, or simply provoked labour disputes could be 'intervened'.

The Chilean workers made full use of this potentially superb law. Typically, they would occupy a factory, demand state intervention, and often restart production under their own control. The government would send along an official, the 'intervenor', who more often than not would simply recommend nationalization. In May 1971 workers seized fourteen textile mills at once, which were then requisitioned to maintain production. In the same month they seized a Ford motor plant, which was then nationalized and reopened under an agreement that Fiat would operate it to produce trucks. Later, in 1972 and 1973, the workers responded to bosses' strikes and an attempted coup by wholesale factory seizures, taking Law 520 to its logical conclusion under conditions in which the whole bourgeoisie was trying to sabotage the economy.

But the government saw the law quite differently, as a technical device for legal arguments with the bourgeoisie within the confines of the state. It relied on the bureaucracy instead of the workers, and found itself embroiled in hopelessly complex legal battles. The government was fighting on the bosses' own ground, and it lost time and again. On several occasions the bosses trumped the government with the shadowy Controller General, whose constitutional function was to decide whether presidential decisions were legal; he outlawed many nationalizations. The result was that by the end of the first eighteen months the government controlled only 20 per cent of production and could not plan at all effectively. It was powerless to stop the drying up of productive investment.

The administrative structure of industry was a perfect Chilean reflection of the Bennis' proposals, containing five state representatives, five workers, and a

president. The workers were unable to exercise effective control, and the state bureaucracy was perfectly placed to sabotage or confound any attempts at planning. Christian Democracy, suddenly discovering a new enthusiasm for the right to work, put a law through parliament making it illegal to sack any state official. A mountainous bureaucracy, grossly inefficient, thus arose and discredited nationalization and socialism, particularly amongst the middle classes.

The third problem was inflation. Price controls kept this within bounds for a time. But government policy created an inflationary climate — an excess of monetarily effective demand, with no expansion of production to match. Shortages and a black market arose, and the problem was compounded by the government's determination to compensate owners of nationalized firms, which required the printing of new money, again creating more monetarily effective demand without a commensurate boost in supply.

Price controls constantly eroded profit margins, thus further decreasing the incentive to invest. Eventually galloping inflation burst out. By 1973 Chile earned the dubious distinction of sporting the world's highest inflation rate.

What caused the crisis

Apologists for the coup tend to present Chile's crisis as the result of bad economic management. This is true only in the sense that Allende refused to take the obvious step, recommended by Vuscovic, his own economics minister, of handing the economy over to the workers and abolishing capitalist ownership of production altogether. But this was a *political* decision, not 'bad economic management'. (Vuscovic was sacked in 1972.)

The Communist Party and sections of the Socialist Party, on the other hand, have placed all the emphasis on *conscious* sabotage of the economy, particularly by

the CIA, which spent \$8 million trying to destabilize the economy. But Western governments spent far more than that trying to 'destabilize' the fledgling governments of Russia and China after their revolutions, not to mention the wholesale internal and external sabotage of the Cuban economy. What accounts for their success in Chile? And was the American intervention the only reason for the crisis?

The truth is that the American intervention worked only because the political decisions taken by the government created the soil in which the counter-revolution could take root. A far more accurate explanation is to say that the whole of capitalist society *spontaneously, profoundly, and thoroughly rejected the reforms Allende was trying to carry out*. The economic class conflict erupted into an open *political* struggle between the ruling class and the working class. Ultimately, the issue could be settled only by the victory of one class or the other. The question of power rapidly became the central issue.

The greatest tragedy is that the Chilean working class itself was forging an alternative. Every stroke of the capitalist was met by a counterstroke by the workers until the very end. When shortages became widespread, the workers used the state rationing committees to take over distribution of food and other necessities. When sabotage of production began, they set up workers' committees and fought to take over production. When sabotage became widespread, and was co-ordinated through the lorry-drivers' strike, the workers responded by building a network of popular committees — the cordones industriales — that laid the basis for a genuine alternative administration for the country. They answered the first, abortive coup, early in 1973, with the wholesale occupation of production. A million workers paraded before the presidential palace, demanding people's power.

At every stage, Allende responded by trying to compromise with the army and the employers. He repeatedly tried to persuade



The Chilean Junta



Allende

or even force, workers to surrender occupied factories, and peasants were evicted from land they had seized. Instead of relying on the workers to break the lorry-drivers' strike, he called out the army. Faced with the spread of fascist and capitalist sabotage, he brought generals into his cabinet — the very generals who later proved to have been the vanguard of the destabilization campaign. Most disastrous of all, when workers began arming themselves after the first, attempted coup, he introduced the notorious 'arms law', which gave the army full authority to search out weapons. The theory was that the army would disarm both the fascist gangs and the 'leftist extremists'. In reality the former were left intact — or even supplied with weapons — whilst working-class districts were systematically raided and terrorized.

The revolutionary left is often challenged to produce its alternative to the AES. Our reply is that the Chilean working class itself produced the alternative, just as the Paris Commune did in 1871, the Russian workers in 1917, the German workers in 1919, the Italians in 1920, the Catalans in 1936. The alternative exists. The question is whether or not to embrace it.

The key claim of supporters of the AES is that their strategy commands mass appeal and is therefore realistic. It is true that the AES insists that the basic demands of the working class can be met with the existing resources of the country; it therefore challenges the traditional right-wing argument that cuts are needed because there 'isn't enough money'. But is such a complicated strategy necessary to make this simple point? Wouldn't it be more straightforward — and effective — to demand that workers run industry? Why doesn't the Labour left inscribe this proposal on their banner, and pledge to support, by parliamentary, industrial, and any other means, any action that brings workers nearer this goal? This would be neither dogmatic nor unpopular. The real problem is not that it would be opposed by workers, but that it would be resisted by the capitalists. Holland therefore proposes an elaborate and utopian scheme to get round the opposition of the capitalists.

Stripped of all its pretensions, this is what the AES really is.

Now, if workers could run the country with the agreement of the capitalists, it would be excellent. But *this has never happened, and it will not happen*. A strategy for socialism must therefore deal with the opposition of the capitalists. In practice, the AES would lead either to a government retreat before the bosses or to the very situation it is designed to avoid — an open struggle for power between the two main classes.

Holland might object — and Hodgson does — that revolutionaries should not oppose anything that will lead to a struggle for power. But our objections lie not in the fact that the AES will lead to a struggle for power, but in that it *does not prepare the working class to win that struggle*. It is based on the principle that the workers should *not* take power, should *not* attack the state, should *not* expropriate the capitalists. There is nothing realistic about this.

We should, of course, support the AES against the right's policies, provided it is put forward for action, and not as an alternative to action. As a government policy it would introduce reforms that would benefit workers and hurt capitalists. It should thus be backed, like any other reform that benefits the working class. *But it is not a strategy for socialism*. The fewer illusions the workers have on this matter, the more likely they are to follow an effective alternative course, and the better equipped they will be to cope if the AES is implemented by a misguided left government. But honest socialists should harbour no false hopes about the AES's chances of success in the long run. Instead they should explain very clearly that the capitalists will sabotage it, and that the only way to meet this sabotage is to prepare to dismantle the ultimate sources of capitalist power: the state and private property.

Our basic criticism of the AES is that it disarms the working class. Our criticisms have little in common with those traditionally advanced against it. Critics such as Andrew Glyn, for example, have emphasized the failure of AES to insist on public ownership. (*Tribune's Alternative Strategy, Militant* pamphlet, 1976). They place themselves on the firm ground of the postwar left-right debate in the party.

There are some good reasons for their attitude. In past Party struggles retreats on public ownership have always accompanied shifts to the right. Indeed, there is a certain historic irony in the present debate, in the light of claims that a new breakthrough in undogmatic thinking has been made.

In 1944, when the Labour government was up to its neck in coalition, the Executive opposed public ownership in its preparation for postwar elections. It argued for the 'transfer to the State of the power to direct the policy of our main industries, services and financial institutions'. The state should 'control the Bank of England,

and the lending policy of the joint stock banks, and set up a National Investment Board'; finally, it should 'control the location of industry'. (Milliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, pp. 276-7, emphasis added.) In contrast to this modern and undogmatic policy, the well-known dogmatic sectarians of the TGWU demanded that 'all vital services, Land, Banking, Coal and Power, Steel, Chemicals, and Transport (including Road, Rail, Shipping and Civil Aviation) shall be brought under a system of public ownership and control'. (*Ibid.*, p. 278.)

The AES therefore lies squarely in the tradition of the postwar Labour right. Its supporters stand on the left of the party only because the right has moved to even worse extremes.

AES supporters reply to this criticism in two ways. First, they point out, quite correctly, that the Russian revolution left large sectors of industry in private hands until 1919, and even restored a limited market during the NEP in the early twenties. Sweeping nationalization is not necessarily the first task of a new workers' power — workers' control is far more important in the short run. Why make such a shibboleth of public ownership?

Second, they point out that nationalization is unpopular precisely because it is implemented bureaucratically and limited to declining or service industries. The 'traditional' left seems to defend a socialist ideal that workers visualize as a cross between British Leyland, the National Health Service, and the Kremlin on one of Brezhnev's off days.

We can add a third point of our own, one Hodgson also makes. In practice, the 'blood and thunder' of the old Tribune left did not stop Foot and company marching into the lobbies for wage cuts and the death of the welfare state. *Militant* does not in practice propose a fighting alternative to the AES.

Our view is that criticism must focus on three more fundamental weaknesses, of which confusion and hesitation on public ownership is only a symptom.

First, like all Social Democrats, AES supporters insist on using the capitalist state. Second, their strategy completely fails to understand the significance of a struggle against British imperialism and all the social privileges and classes linked to Britain's imperialist role. Third, in practice the strategy depends on the goodwill of the capitalists.

The state

As we have seen, Holland wants to use the state to 'discipline' capital in its own best interests. Much of his argument rests not on any proof that this can be done, but on rejection of the alternative: that the workers should take power into their own hands. He states his case in a chapter of *The Socialist Challenge* entitled 'Against Violence'.

Revolution, he claims, leads to absolutism and the loss of civil liberty.

Moreover, violent insurrection has succeeded only in Eastern Europe and Asia, and is not suited to Western conditions: 'The most effective answer to the case for violent transformation of capitalist society lies in the fact that a violent overthrow of capitalism may in some countries be the only means of progress, but in others is simply a painful means of changing the form of exploitation ...'

'But there are further arguments against violent revolution. One of the most important is the failure of such attempts at armed uprising in Western Europe in the twentieth century.' (*The Socialist Challenge*, pp. 162-163.)

This polemic against violence neatly ducks the real dilemma Holland faces. Democracy is more than just 'involvement', 'opening doors', or even civil liberties. Properly speaking, democracy — the rule of the people — does not exist unless the majority of the people have the right to decide what society is to do, on all the crucial issues that face them.

But the right to decide must be real, and not merely formal. The majority has to be able to implement its decisions. The bourgeois state administration is, and always has been, the central obstacle to genuine workers' democracy, in both autocratic and bourgeois-democratic countries. It is a hierarchic and non-elected body whose ruling members draw their privileges from the monopoly of executive power they hold in trust from the ruling class. Using this monopoly, the state always usurps decision-making power. It is the Civil Service, and not Parliament, that dictates the most important government decisions. The police, the army, and the courts command the coercive power to ensure that these decisions are carried through.

Real power lies in the hands of the majority of society only when executive power is held by the workers themselves. But this is possible only if the old bourgeois state bureaucracy is dismantled, and if the means of administration and coercion cease to be the monopoly of a privileged professional caste. This is why the mass of workers must really enter into the process of government, which means not simply passing laws but carrying them out as well.

But Benn and Holland's entire approach to workers' democracy is built on the premise that the state must retain its monopoly of administration. This leads them to abandon any real project for workers' control, and to entrust the state executive with the job of carrying out the government's economic strategy. They reduce the working class to a cheerleader that can only encourage the home team, throw toilet rolls at the other side, or shout foul at the referee. But the referee is the away side, and the home team has been nobbled. The only way out is for the workers to take to the field and run the game themselves.

AES supporters tend to overlook the fact that the state is actually very

unpopular. It is a bloated, hierarchic, and bureaucratic machine whose role is to suppress and regiment workers — not only through its bodies of armed men, but also through countless petty acts of authority at schools, dole offices, public service counters, and even hospitals. It is run by arrogant mandarins drawn from top ruling-class circles and exudes an atmosphere of petty officialdom. It defends the rich against the poor. Far from generating working-class enthusiasm, making use of the state is far more likely to demoralize and divide workers who want to take their future into their own hands.

Indeed, it is just this sentiment that lies behind the unpopularity of 'dogmatic nationalization', which is why Thatcher made such mileage with her calls for tax and spending cuts. Tom Forester makes the final, ironic judgement when he writes that Labour's industrial strategy came to be seen 'simply as the old leftwing "nationalization" campaign writ anew.' (*What Went Wrong*, p. 89.) State intervention, and not so much nationalization, is the millstone around Labour's neck: it is the central barrier between the workers and workers' democracy.

But the most damning objection is that the state is the instrument of the capitalists. It has played an even remotely autonomous role only when the working class was thoroughly smashed, as in Germany under Hitler, and then only because the capitalists were compelled to pay this price to extract themselves from the mess they were in.

At all other times the interests of the state are tightly linked to those of capital, for running the country is a closed, hierarchical profession. The top civil servants, carefully screened by the institutions of the ruling class, hold the careers of their subordinates hostage. Their privileges and livelihood are bound up with preserving their monopoly of administration. They can hardly make a move without recourse to the country's money-lenders. They see every challenge to smooth capitalist functioning or to their divine right to administer as a slight and a threat to be put down by any means necessary. This is not an article of Marxist dogma, but a plain fact freely admitted by the Labour left themselves, now that their noses have been well and truly rubbed in it.

Imperialism and internationalism

The second problem lies with the international aspects of the AES. Holland himself does not advocate import controls, and has elaborated a quite sophisticated scheme of international labour solidarity for defending the AES against 'foreign sabotage' of 'national sovereignty'.

But despite his odd description of this process as 'building socialism in one country', what he actually proposes is to rebuild capitalism in one country. Britain

will 'go it alone' against international capital, and will do so by overcoming all the historic weaknesses of its own capitalists — their refusal to invest in domestic industry, rejection of new technology, and so on. He shares the vision of other AES supporters who gaze longingly at countries like Germany and Japan, whose 'economic miracles' were based on a major national reconstruction after the war.

Let us leave aside the fact that he confuses genuine socialist national sovereignty (the self-determination of a people, which is possible only through popular sovereignty) with the sovereignty of state and Parliament. Even so, he utterly fails to understand that the obstacle to both national and popular sovereignty is private capital, and not just multinational private capital. As long as the capitalists of any country have the right to say what money, goods, and titles to resources will be moved where, the people of that country cannot truly control their destiny. This is the central political reason why nationalization is forced on any government that challenges international capital. Only when it has secured full control of all capital movement — which requires expropriation of the capitalists — can any government hope to initiate a serious national plan. And in any transitional period of workers' control, it is only if the workers have the full right to enforce the nationalization of any enterprise violating the public interest that the capitalists will be compelled to accept that they have no chance of recovering control or cutting their losses by means of capital transfers.

Equally misguided is the notion that the British capitalist class can somehow be led to participate in a process of national reconstruction. In the last analysis the British capitalist class is part of international capital and will choose to flee to its foreign boltholes before it will let workers anywhere near its property.

Holland forgets that even if a course of action is logical for capital, this does not mean that capital can take it. The conflict between the interests of individual capitalists and those of capital as a whole often prevents resolution of capitalist crisis by any but the most violent means.

In the particular case of Britain, the fact is that the capitalist class is historically wedded to imperialism. A network of bankers, financiers, colonials, ex-colonials, foreign investors and entrepreneurs — now reinforced by big British MNC directors and shareholders — is the backbone of private and public life: Whitehall, the Tory Party and the boardrooms. Even when it hurts, the remaining capitalists will not break with them, because the cost of the break would be far greater than the price of submission.

It is only the strength of these layers of the ruling class, and the effectiveness of their government machine, that can account for the seemingly illogical features of British political life. For example, what



bourgeois logic lies behind the tenacious war in Ireland? Why should such an anachronism as the Queen provoke such universal outbursts of chauvinism and jingoism? Why is it that the Lords not only continue to pass judgement over the 'mother of parliaments', but had their numbers increased by 251 under the government of a party that voted 6,248,00 to 91,000 to abolish the institution and to organize a 'great campaign through the movement on this issue'? Why was the economy forced, against all logic, onto the gold standard in 1924; why are interest rates now running at rates freely admitted to be ruinous to whole sections of the industrial bourgeoisie; and why is it that in its hour of greatest economic crisis, the bourgeoisie wheels out a government dedicated to *restoring* the City of London, *restoring* imperial glory, *restoring* foreign investors to the economic throne?

The reasons are transparent. The City of London is the only thing that stands between the British economy and international bankruptcy. Trade in manufactures has long ceased to pay the import bill. The conquest of Zimbabwe for London investors was a rich plum indeed. And what industrialist would not think twice about fighting the system that was able to promote Michael Edwards from the heartland of apartheid to the management of a nationalized car company, and under a Labour government yet?

Germany and Japan are in no sense living proof of the utility of AES. Their ruling classes had no choice, because their military-imperialist might had been smashed by the combined onslaught of the other world powers.

Social Democrats often protest that they are opposed to the dominance of the British military-imperialist tradition. The facts show otherwise. From Singapore to Sandy Row, from Delhi to Durban, there is not a people in the world who can thank Labour for anything but the odd kind word years too late. In the whole of Holland's works there is not a mention of Ireland or

Zimbabwe. Denouncing the House of Lords is now an annual ritual that has lost all practical meaning, for a very good reason. Once inside the corridors of power, generations of Labour leaders have been taught which goose lays the golden eggs. Let us be absolutely clear: to take on international capital, we start with our own capitalist class, and all the rot of ages that surrounds it.

Capitalist goodwill and workers' control

This brings us to the problem of capitalist goodwill. Holland assumes that there is a solution to capitalism's problems that the capitalists themselves cannot carry out. The brilliance of Keynes, he says, was to show how workers could meet their own needs within a system under which 'capitalism could really come into its own'. This exercise must be repeated. The workers will become a decisive factor in the running of the economy without actually owning it. They will come to manage capitalism better than the capitalists. The crisis of capitalism will be solved by the workers, who will be able to dictate the terms of the solution to their own advantage. Better still, they can win the confidence of the nation in their ability to manage the economy, paving the way for an eventual fully socialist society.

But if the capitalists refuse to let the workers play this role, Holland has no real answer. His approach is circular. Workers' democracy will enforce planning agreements; workers' democracy will be set up ... by planning agreements. Holland's greatest threat is that the government will 'decisively characterize' firms if they reject workers' democracy. He is therefore forced to fall back on the argument that capitalists will be worse off if they reject planning agreements, and better off if they accept them.

The argument is weak. His whole case ultimately depends on whether there is a capitalist solution to the crisis that allows for working-class advance. If there is not, why should *any* firm benefit from a planning agreement? Worse still, what is to stop firms behaving like Chrysler UK, using the threat of withdrawal to dictate their own terms to the government before signing an agreement? Chrysler screwed £37 million of taxpayers' money from the government and sold out to Peugeot two years later. With no effective means of coercion, firms will dictate to the government, and not vice versa. But Holland renounces the only effective means of coercion — the organized power of the workers' movement — because he rejects the idea of any challenge to the state.

Reliance on the state and on capitalist goodwill is not abstract. The AES proposals make a series of concessions the effect of which is to negate the stated aims of the strategy. In practice they posit neither genuine workers' democracy, nor genuine workers' control, nor genuine planning. Why, for example, why should planning agreements be voluntary? Why

should capitalists not be obliged to conform? And why should management be left 'free to initiate its own programmes'? Why should planning *not* be 'wholly imperative'?

Second, why is Holland concerned about 'legitimate state security' and 'commercial security'? These twin catch-phrases are the traditional excuse for barring workers from any worth-while information. What was the ABC trial wrapped in? 'State security'. What is the prime reason for keeping redundancy plans secret? 'Commercial security'. The entire apparatus of capitalist deception is built round these two little phrases.

But AES concessions are most glaring in the proposals for running enterprises that do sign planning agreements. The classical, Bennite idea is to run these firms by tripartite boards representing workers, government, and management. There are about 18 million active workers in Britain, about 300,000 high-level managers, and perhaps 15,000 top state officials. The average firm has about sixty times as many workers as managers. Where is the democracy in giving management, workers, and the state *equal* say? The proposal reaches the acme of absurdity in the case of the nationalized industries, where the formula still applies; these are to be run by the workers, the state, ... and the state.

In conclusion

Many socialists have come to question the record of the Labour left, especially after its dismal showing under the 1974-79 government. We agree with Holland that this showing was the result of errors of strategy, and not merely personal weakness. But I have tried to demonstrate here that similar errors of strategy run right through the AES itself.

AES theorists have replied that there is no alternative to their strategy, and that the far left has no developed strategy of its own. At least, they maintain, the AES has reawakened interest in planning and workers' control, exactly because it places these demands in the context of a realistic strategy.

We do not deny the need to fight for workers' control and planning. On the contrary, the revival of interest in these two demands amongst stewards and ordinary workers is a healthy and welcome response to the crisis of perspectives in the labour movement. But this interest can unfold in two different directions. It can be sidetracked into the old impasse of compromise, half-measures, demoralization, and defeat. Or it can become the basis for a genuine socialist revival, and an understanding that these things can be won only through the struggle of the workers, in the teeth of capitalist and state opposition. Our sights must be set on nothing short of a democratic state of workers' councils through which the ordinary people of this country will at last take their destiny in their own hands.

The Italian CP at the end of the war

By Anna Libera

Only the most superficial analysis could present the historic compromise as a completely new strategy for the Italian or international workers' and Communist movement. The fact is that the 'new' strategic options of the leadership of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) are no more or less than a re-edition, altered to conform to today's fashion, of the policy of the Popular Front adopted by the Seventh Congress of the Stalinized Communist International in 1935. The importance of a brief look backwards, then, lies not at all in idle concern to establish the continuity of the theoretical conceptions of the PCI as in the necessity to properly understand the political evolution of the party leadership as it sank deeper and deeper roots in Italian national political life. It is this evolution and this process that account for many of the aspects of the PCI's current policy.

This glance backwards will also enable us to grasp the elements of both continuity and discontinuity with the policy of the Stalinized Communist movement and thus to uncover the limits of Eurocommunism precisely on the central question it claims to have placed on the agenda: the connection between democracy and socialism.⁽¹⁾ Finally, by examining the historical roots of present-day PCI strategy, we can also sharpen our understanding of the worst of political education the Italian masses have received from their reformist leaders.

The Italian Communist leaders themselves describe the strategy of historic compromise as the logical outcome of all the theoretical efforts of their party. In his famous articles on Chile, Berlinguer traced this orientation back to the Lyon congress of the Italian Communist Party in 1926, the congress at which Gramsci and Togliatti triumphed over the previous leadership of the ultra-leftist Amadeo Bordiga. Berlinguer situated the decisive stage in this whole process with the 'Salerno turn' of 1944, effected when Togliatti returned to Italy from exile in the Soviet Union. Luciano Gruppi, another PCI ideologue, who has recently published a volume collecting the basic documents of his party on the subject of alliances with the 'Catholic world', introduces his collection with an article by Gramsci dated 1920.⁽²⁾

In the analysis of Togliatti — the major

landmarks of which are the 'Salerno turn' of 1944, the interview with *Nuovi Argomenti* on the Khrushchev report in 1956, the eighth congress of the PCI, also in 1956, and the *Yalta Memoir* of 1964 — we do indeed find all the elements that underlie the strategy of the historic compromise: the conception of the working class as the 'national class'; the alliance with Catholicism and Christian Democracy; the perspective of a gradual democratization of the state and the connection between democracy and socialism; the rejection of the 'Soviet model' and of an international communist centre.

On the basis of this corpus, the present leaders of the PCI have settled down to the task of lending flesh and bones to Togliatti's theory of gradual democratization, to bringing it up to date in the light of the new conditions that have emerged from the social and political struggles of the past ten years, and to integrating into it the democratic aspirations and experiences in self-organization of the Italian masses.

'This is Moscow...'

On 16 October 1943, during his daily transmission on *Radio Milano Libertà*, broadcast from Moscow, Palmiro Togliatti declared that the anti-fascist parties should consider participation in the government of the monarchist Pietro Badoglio, established just after the fall of Mussolini on 25 July 1943.⁽³⁾ The news came as a bolt from the blue to the underground leadership of the PCI in Italy, to its rank-and-file activists, and to the other anti-fascist parties grouped together in the National Liberation Committee (CLN).⁽⁴⁾ The next day the party leadership in Rome sent a telegramme to Moscow: 'Your radio broadcasts directing us to follow Badoglio are creating a number of difficulties, since they are in complete contradiction with the policy of the party and of the CLN'.⁽⁵⁾

The government of Marshall Badoglio, formed under the aegis of King Victor-Emmanuel (who had supported the fascist dictatorship), embodied the options of the reactionary bourgeoisie, which, sensing the way the wind was blowing, was striving to

effect a painless change in regime while simultaneously assuring the continuity of the state apparatus, of which the monarch was to be the symbol. Until Togliatti's broadcast, the anti-fascist parties, especially the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) and the PCI, had refused to give any support to this bourgeois operation. They regarded Badoglio as 'the representative of reactionary and plutocratic groups', as the PCI itself put it. Moreover, both these parties were then fighting for the immediate abolition of the monarchy.

The thoroughly imperious character of Togliatti's initiative is most evident in the very method he used: a radio broadcast simultaneously informing the underground leadership of the PCI and the anti-fascist listeners of *Radio Milano Libertà* that the line had been changed. Not only had Togliatti disdained to consult the underground leadership of the party, he also overstepped the agreements the PCI had signed with the Socialists and the Partito d'Azione (Action Party). Not to mention the disastrous effects of the news in the partisan organizations and the ranks of the party.

Togliatti's motivations were directly inspired by the global policy of the Soviet bureaucracy. The contacts between the Kremlin and the Western Allies that were eventually to lead to the Yalta conference and the 'division of the world' into spheres of influence had already begun. According to this division, Italy was to revert to the 'Western' bloc. Stalin's concern was therefore twofold: to prevent the Resistance, which was under strong proletarian domination in Italy, from flowering into an anti-capitalist revolution; to assure that the Kremlin would retain some influence in the Mediterranean, through Italy, in spite of the division of Europe into 'Eastern' and 'Western' zones. It was necessary to stem the intrinsic dynamic of the CLN in the North, which was evolving into a structure of alternative power, expropriating the factories of the fleeing fascist capitalists and placing them under workers' control. But this required that some other institution be counterposed to the CLN, and this in turn required participation in the reconstruction of the decomposing bourgeois state apparatus. (This was a

be done through the PCI's entry into the Badoglio government in April 1944.) The Soviet Union recognized the Badoglio government in March 1944, the official newspaper *Izvestia* informing its readers that 'the present aim of the efforts of the Soviet Union is to help to unite all Italian anti-fascist forces around the Badoglio government'.

This political orientation, this 'turn' — which was announced officially on 1 April 1944 when Togliatti returned to Naples — provoked deep reaction within the Communist leadership. Giorgio Amendola, who was then in Rome, learned the news from Giuseppe Saragat. In his war memoirs Amendola explained: 'I rushed to the offices of the party secretariat on Ennio Q. Visconti Street, where I hoped to find Scoccimaro and other comrades. When I told them the news, Scoccimaro, tense and pale, shouted, "You can go carry out that policy alone!" A period of sharp discussion in the party and the CLN then began'. (6) Opposition to the new turn was strongest amongst the party leaders in the North (Longon, Secchia, and especially Curiel, the leader of the Youth Front), who had difficulty accepting the parity rules under which the CLN operated, since the relationship of forces was overwhelmingly favourable to the Communists.

These leaders were following with interest the policy of the Yugoslav Communist Party and were leaning towards a similar perspective: preponderance of the Communist Party in the anti-fascist front (in accordance with the real relationship of forces); creation of a government headed by Tito in the liberated zones, in opposition to the bourgeois government-in-exile organized by the imperialists in London. The Rome leadership, however, headed by Amendola, immediately ranged itself with Togliatti and launched a battle against the Milan leadership in the North.

The 'Salerno turn' and 'Progressive democracy'

The debate among the party cadres was lively. What was under discussion was not only whether or not to participate in the Badoglio government, but also the more general question of what sort of state should be rebuilt in Italy on the ruins of fascism. Togliatti had already expressed his ideas on this matter before his return to Italy. In November 1943, speaking to a meeting of trade unionists in Moscow, he had explained: 'It is still too early to think concretely about the kind of Italy we want to rebuild after the complete destruction of fascism and the expulsion and annihilation of the German invaders. But what we can say, what we must indeed proclaim even today, is that in a country that has suffered the tragic experience of twenty years of fascism, a country that is emerging from this painful stage exhausted, devastated, and torn asunder, with a considerable portion of its population in need of thorough political re-education, it would be absurd to think of a government by a single party or

the rule of a single class'.

Togliatti traced out a road of national unity which he felt would give rise to a democracy of a new type, 'no longer completely bourgeois' but 'not yet socialist': 'progressive democracy'.

The clearest exposition of the position of those who advocated a new regime based on the CLN was offered by Curiel, the young Communist leader in the North. 'The CLN', he argued, 'must see itself not as a coalition of parties, but as the central mass political organ on a national scale, supported by all the organs forged by the Italian people in struggle. These are the bodies that enjoy the confidence of the masses, and it is these organs, and they alone, which are entitled to name and direct the new regime, to win victory by force and to impose respect for the new order on the reactionary forces'. (7) This perspective was in clear contradiction with the effort of the Badoglio government to re-establish the bourgeois state apparatus in a liberated Italy. 'It would be absurd', Curiel continued, 'to think that the CLN could re-establish the regime of the mayoralties, prefects, commissioners and generals, ceding them all the old bureaucratic administrative, judicial, and police machinery rotten with fascism and proto-fascism, for this would merely deprive the CLN of any authority and expose it to liquidation at the first possible opportunity. Today's CLN prefigures the government of tomorrow for in all cities, in all villages and neighbourhoods, it is stimulating the emergence of organs of national liberation'.

Curiel also insisted that class differences could not be muted in the name of anti-fascist unity: 'In preparing the national insurrection, we must deal with the problems of the social divisions of the country; we cannot be content to postpone this to the happy future. Thus, we cannot renounce, or simply forget, our class convictions in the name of a higher national interest'.

This perspective was countered, with the full authority of the Soviet Union (and the enormous prestige of the USSR among the Communist anti-fascist fighters must be recalled in order to understand how they could have accepted the new orientation), by Togliatti's proposal, which was to resolve the question of the government through a national-unity accord to which all activity of the partisans would have to be subordinated.

On 2 April 1944 (one week after his return to Italy) Togliatti wrote in the Communist daily *l'Unità*: 'Today we cannot be guided by any narrow supposed party interest, or by any narrow supposed class interest... It is the Communist Party, the working class, that must hold high the banner of national interests, which have been betrayed by fascism and the groups that accorded it power'.

Togliatti held that the working class and the PCI had to 'hold high the banner of national interests' by effecting a policy of national unity with the bourgeoisie. On 11 April, addressing the Communist cadres of

Naples (in the famous 'Salerno speech'), he enunciated his policy in these terms: 'The objective we propose to the Italian people once the war is over will be to create a democratic and progressive regime in Italy. ... We want the rapid reconstruction of Italy, in accordance with the interests of the people. We know how deep the fissures in the Italian social fibre are, and we therefore know that if we set ourselves any other objective we would be shirking our duty to the nation, which is turning to us for leadership'. (8)

The objective, according to the Communist leader, was to reconstruct a regime that would extirpate 'all the roots of fascism', eliminate the inequality between the Mezzogiorno (the South) and the rest of the country, and guarantee the broadest extension of democracy, without altering capitalist relations of production. This, he held, would permit the creation of a balance of forces that would make any new drift towards fascism impossible. Togliatti proposed to build this regime in conjunction with the bourgeois parties, with the 'non-reactionary' capitalists, by joining the monarchist government of Badoglio.

This perspective, however, implied a change in the party itself. Where it had previously been an organization of cadres seasoned in underground struggle, it now had to become a 'new party': 'We can no longer be a small and narrow association of propagandists upholding the general ideas of Communism or Marxism.... We cannot be content to criticize and revile, no matter how brilliant our invective. We must propose solutions to all national problems; we must be able to indicate those solutions to the people at the opportune moment, and we must strive to lead the entire country towards their realization'. (9)

This proposal to throw open the doors of the party was, of course, tailored to meet the new needs of the prospect of entry into the government (a step actually taken only ten days later, on 21 April 1944). If the PCI was to become a government party, then the base of the party had to be broadened throughout the country, sectors of the middle layers had to be organized, and popular sectors which had once followed fascism had to be courted. This transformation —



which was effected despite the very deep divisions in the leadership — rendered the party's theoretical framework somewhat 'more supple', as the old party cadres were swamped in the cascade of new, anti-fascist recruits. (Party membership rose from 100,000 in 1944 to 2,200,000 by the end of 1947!) It also greatly facilitated acceptance of the 'turn' imposed by Togliatti.

But the most important aspect of the transformation of the party lay in the second element emphasized by the PCI leader: the Communist Party would no longer be the party that organized the working class and its allies for the struggle for power, but the party that 'has solutions to all national problems' and is able 'to lead the entire country towards their realization'. Togliatti's 'new party' was to be a national party, a mass party, and a government party. Its central field of activity was to be parliament, and it was to view the question of alliances through the prism of parliament.

The reconstruction of the bourgeois state

Thus, in April 1945 the PCI (along with the other anti-fascist parties) joined the government of Badoglio, who was then replaced in June by Bonomi, a man viewed more favourably by the parties that made up the CLN. The effort to reconstruct the state apparatus in the liberated areas of Italy was set in motion by the establishment of prefects, staffed largely by the same people who had served fascism.

The PCI then hastened to explain its conception of the relationship between the government and the rank-and-file structures in which the masses had organized themselves. *L'Unità* commented on 18 June 1944: 'The work of the government may seem to be moving slowly. It will be necessary to overcome the resistance now being manifested within the government apparatus and among certain political circles.... At this point, the popular masses cannot substitute for the regular organs of power, but they can intervene powerfully to break fascist resistance and complicity'. The arena of mass intervention was thus clearly defined, and subordinated to the action of the government. Speaking in Florence on 3 October 1944, Togliatti explained that CLN should 'back up and support the action of the government' and function as 'local administrations until it is possible to reconstruct these organs on a democratic basis'. In other words, the committees were to be liquidated as soon as the old 'democratic' organs (parliament, city councils and provincial governments, etc.) could be re-established.⁽¹⁰⁾

Around the same time — and the two events were clearly related — Togliatti proposed, for the first time, a direct agreement between the PCI and Christian Democracy (DC), offering DC a pact of united action 'to weld together the common front of the great working masses'. Speaking in Florence on 3 October he asserted: 'There are other parties within the CLN to which

we feel specially linked. Prime among these is the party of Christian Democracy.... Without prejudice to the unity of the CLN movement, we would like to see the creation in our country of a closer accord between these parties, which have special links to the toiling classes'.

Togliatti's concern was evident. It was critical to accelerate the reconstruction of the old institutions of bourgeois democracy in order to stem the revolutionary upsurge then taking shape in the rapid advances of the Resistance in the North. (In April 1944 workers in the still-occupied northern provinces staged a general strike against the Nazi attempt to dismantle factories and cart machinery off to Germany. This strike had clear anti-capitalist overtones; its central political slogan was: 'For a popular government based on a network of people's committees that allow the masses to govern themselves'.⁽¹¹⁾)

By counterposing national unity to self-organization and by proposing a special agreement with Christian Democracy, Togliatti was attempting to resolve the politico-institutional problems of post-fascist Italy outside the CLN, thus assuring a smooth transition to a bourgeois-democratic regime. In this context, rank-and-file structures were assigned a completely subordinate role (only to be thoroughly liquidated shortly afterwards). And it was here that the underlying inconsistency of the position of the central leaders of the Resistance in the North became clear. These leaders — primarily Luigi Longo and Pietro Secchia, who represented the PCI left wing — finally accepted the option of 'national unity', but tried to conciliate it with a wider development of the mass organs of the CLN in the factories and neighbourhoods as 'the basic pillars of progressive democracy'. Although more sensitive to the contribution that could be made by the mass movement, whose potential and dynamism they saw unfolding day by day in the Resistance, they failed to see — or perhaps pretended not to see, determined as they were to support the party line, the international motivations of which they understood⁽¹²⁾ — that the extension of mass organization stood in direct contradiction to the rebirth of the state apparatus, acting in its dual capacity of guarantor of private property and guardian of law and order. (And whenever the CLN attempted to take control of requisitioned factories or to mete out justice to fascists, this dual role of the state came to the fore.) Once the option for national unity had been swallowed, the masses had to be barred from engaging in any action that would endanger its realization. Subsequent events were to confirm the incompatibility of reconstruction of the bourgeois state apparatus and development of rank-and-file organs whose dynamic was clear. The first forces to become aware of this, apart from the bureaucrats of the PCI, were those bourgeois parties that were members of the CLN. They had ceaselessly striven to limit the action of the CLN and, as of late 1944,

to liquidate the local committees pure and simple.

Rome was liberated on 4 June 1944, when the Allied forces entered the city (without any popular insurrection). Badoglio was replaced by Bonomi, who formed his government of the six anti-fascist parties of the CLN. The military and monarchist bureaucracy re-established itself in the capital under the protection of the Allied military administration. The forces then united with the right wing of the CLN to plunge the government into crisis. A second Bonomi government was formed in December 1944. The new government derived its authority no longer from the CLN but from the Regent Umberto II (who had replaced King Victor Emmanuel, who abdicated in April 1944). The PCI, which joined the government even while the PSI and the Partito d'Azione refused to do so, accepted this arrangement, which made the monarchy the symbol of the continuity of the state. In the Centre-South, the conservative forces began to regain the upper hand.

The entire North was liberated by a vast popular insurrection that broke out on 2 April 1945. About two weeks before, on 1 April, Togliatti had issued his orders to the National Council of the PCI: 'Make the greatest effort for the total liberation of the country.... Prevent the liberation of the North from being accompanied by clashes and conflicts that could give rise to serious misunderstandings between the people and the Allied liberation forces.... Prevent the emergence of a chasm between northern Italy and the rest of the country once the North is liberated, for such a fissure could be fatal for our country, opening a thoroughly confused chapter of history'. Other words: block any revolutionary action and prevent the CLNAI (Upper Italy National Liberation Committee) from coalescing into a new regime standing in opposition to the government that had been set up in the South. In December 1944 the leaders of the PCI and PSI had brought pressure to bear on the CLNAI to sign the 'Rome protocols', in which the CLNAI, without obtaining the slightest attribution of any government functions, had agreed to cede full authority to the Allied military government. The protocols stipulated: 'In the liberated territories all partisans will place themselves under the direct supervision of the Allied command and will execute all orders issued by the latter or the government acting in its name, including orders to dissolve or to surrender arms if this is requested'.⁽¹³⁾

In spite of this accord, which gave rise to violent polemics in the CLNAI, tensions between this organ and the government in Rome persisted. In June Bonomi was replaced by Parri, who brought representatives from the North into the government. But the Parri government lasted only a few months, finally succumbing to the contradictions of its own policy, which was sought to reconcile the revolutionary break of the insurrection in the North with

the reactionary drive of the possessing classes, the spread of self-organization among the masses with the reconstruction of bourgeois institutions.

In December 1945 the first government of the Christian Democrat De Gasperi was formed, on the basis of an accord among DC, the PCI, and the PSI calling for the convocation of elections to a Constituent Assembly. The Allied Forces then turned administration of the northern provinces over to the new government, whose president made no secret of his 'Western' aspirations. De Gasperi lost no time in setting himself to his task: re-establishment of prefectures in the provinces and liquidation of the workers' leaderships in the factories that had been taken over by the management councils (even though these councils, led by responsible Communists, were wholly devoted to the 'national interest'). In September 1945 PCI leader Sereni told an assembly of management councils in Milan: 'It would be only too convenient for the old ruling classes who led Italy to catastrophe to say to the workers: go ahead and run things for yourselves now....The workers have not fallen into the trap; they have been wise enough to demand that the representatives of property accept their share of responsibility for reconstruction'.(14) De Gasperi continued his effort at restoration by dissolving the High Commissariat for sanctions against fascism, demobilizing the partisans, and repressing northern struggles against rising prices and southern struggles for the occupation of land by peasants. The PCI and PSI ac-

cepted this programme and actively participated in implementing it, in order not to break up 'anti-fascist unity'. All 'reforms' were postponed until after the Constituent Assembly elections.(15)

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The reconstruction of the state apparatus and the capitalist economy took decisive strides forward precisely during the period between the formation of the first De Gasperi government and the elections to the Constituent Assembly. On 15 January 1946 the minister of the interior replaced all the prefects of the Resistance with career prefects who had administered regional governments under Mussolini. There were 64 first-class prefects in all: only 2 of them had not served as functionaries in the Ministry of the Interior under the fascist

government. There were 241 vice-prefects; all, without exception, had had careers in the bureaucracy under the fascist regime. There were 10 police inspectors-general, 7 of whom had worked for Mussolini. There were 135 police prefects, 120 of whom had joined the force under fascism. Similar figures could be adduced for all echelons of the apparatus of both the state and the army. Between 1944 and 1948 some 90 per cent of the personnel of the state apparatus of the fascist regime reoccupied their former functions.

The Communist leader Scoccimaro, who had been high commissioner for the purge of fascists, himself recognized the complete failure of his High Commission, pointing to the notorious gap between the making of a decision to purge a fascist and the implementation of that decision. The reason for this gap was simple: all levels of the administration were riddled with complicity between the bureaucracy and the fascist state.

In a book entitled *The Democratic Reconstruction of the State* the Socialist Morandi likewise recalled the limitations of government action in this domain: 'Government experience also taught us the extent to which the bureaucratic apparatus rejects any effort to free state action of subordination to capitalist interests; we saw the formidable resistance it is capable of mounting, or, in the best of cases, the obstruction and lack of effectiveness that characterize it'.(16)

These quite correct remarks must have escaped the lips of the two reformist

their arms. Which is what they did. De Gasperi's efforts in this domain were capped by the reconstitution of the police, first through the reopening of the police academy, staffed by officers of Mussolini's former colonial police, and then through the creation of the *Celere* (a sort of special branch), whose 'democratic' zeal was to be broadly appreciated by the Italian workers and students in the years to come. The bulk of the fascist legal code was left unchanged, and the police forces remained militarized (and still are to this day).

But there was another parallel process which had also been under way since the formation of the Badoglio government: the big capitalist groups had settled down to the task of reconstructing the economy in accordance with their own interests. Once again, as early as the time of the Badoglio government the workers' parties agreed to postpone any social reform until after the complete liberation of the country and the election of the Constituent Assembly. The DC took advantage of this time lag to wield together a reactionary bloc, making use of the support of the Catholic church to garner a mass base, primarily among the peasantry.

What line did the Communists take on the question of economic reconstruction once the country was liberated? Here again, all actions were determined by the necessity to maintain alliances. The weekly newspaper of the PCI put it this way:

'It was obvious — and quite normal, it should be recalled — that the Italian conservatives would be able to adhere to the policy of the most advanced forces of the anti-fascist bloc only if they were offered firm guarantees. The Italian conservatives had to be satisfied that the political liquidation of the fascists and the creation of the political conditions for normal democratic development would not coincide with profound, even revolutionary, modifications in Italian economic structures. Thus, all conditions were at hand for the development of a detailed compromise between the great currents of the anti-fascist front. The nature of this compromise could be based only on these points: renunciation of economic measures of a revolutionary type; agreement to leave the direction of economic life — and therefore also of financial reorganization and reconstruction — in the hands of the conservative forces on the decisive points...and defence, through the trade unions, against the possible dangerously anti-social and anti-national consequences of any conservative policy abandoned to unbridled liberalism....The compromise therefore left two perspectives open: that of the democratization of the country as a whole, which would permit pursuit of fundamental political objectives, and that of the democratization of the Italian conservatives themselves'.(17)

Idealism ran rampant. Not only do the conservatives adhere to the economic reconstruction policy of the most advanced forces of the anti-fascist bloc (what, then, one may wonder, is this 'line of the most



Partisans greet allied troops

leaders in moments of extreme and unusual lucidity, for neither of them drew any conclusion about the nature of this state apparatus or about their own strategy for conquering it. And since they ruled out any call upon the organized masses to make and apply the decisions in question themselves, they had no alternative but to simply fold

advanced forces', if not the anti-fascist alliance as an end in itself?); the objective of the 'compromise' is none other than the 'democratization of the conservatives themselves', which would doubtless eventually induce them to expropriate themselves.

But this idealism was reflected in a quite specific policy: rejection by the reformists of any measure that would have struck at the interests of private capitalism. All the various projects for tax reform to pare down the great fortunes, for confiscation of windfall profits reaped under fascism, timid as they were, remained mere scraps of paper. The Communist officials, for example, did not fight for an immediate change in currency, which would have been the only way to control fortunes in reality. The conservative forces resorted to all sorts of subterfuge to block this measure, which simply sank into oblivion.

The policy of the government was vastly more energetic on two essential points, however: wages and layoffs. The conquest of the sliding scale of wages was an essential advance for the workers, even though it guaranteed them only partial wage compensation for rises in the cost of living. But in the name of this agreement, all wage demands were abandoned at a time when productivity increases in the factories were running at 50 to 100 per cent. In addition, the PCI and PSI accepted the lifting of the ban on layoffs, a measure the bourgeois forces in the CLN had been demanding since April 1945. This granted employers full freedom to eliminate workers, a freedom they exercised with abandon. All these concessions, of course, were made in the name of the 'national interest'. In exchange, the employers were asked to 'be content with normal profits' (the expression of Di Vittorio, leader of the CGIL (the trade-union federation), in a speech to the congress of the Confederation of Italian Industrialists).

The period lasting from the inauguration of the first De Gasperi government and the Constituent Assembly elections (2 June 1946; on the same day, the monarchy was abolished and a republic inaugurated, by referendum) to the ouster of the workers' parties from the government (at the end of May 1947) was marked by the usual impediments of unbridled class collaboration.

A few days before its unceremonious dismissal from the government, the PCI leadership felt compelled to make this admission: 'It must be emphasized that although the toilers (workers, employees, pensioners, unemployed) have evinced a high degree of discipline and a lofty spirit of sacrifice in the common interest, the same cannot be said of certain groupings among the possessing classes. Although the toilers have accepted a truce on the wage front (which has not been accompanied by a price freeze), and although they have scaled down their demands and curbed their struggles in order not to damage the state and the nation, among the possessing classes we may note a worrisome tendency to shirk sacrifices and to make the toilers and the state bear the full burden of the situation'. (18)

The Communist leaders evinced similar blindness in their explanation of the government crisis that had resulted in their ouster from power. They denounced what was actually a long-term option of the Italian bourgeoisie as a 'conspiracy of plutocratic forces'.

Although Togliatti's policy was surely tailored to fit the instructions of the Kremlin, it seems likely that the period of government collaboration had actually stimulated the illusion in the leading group that this collaboration would long continue. It is this illusion that accounts for the scope of the concessions made to the bourgeoisie in 1947, which were criticized even by Moscow. (Similar criticisms were directed against the French Communist Party around the same time.) Although the PCI leaders were not unaware of the advances being made by the reactionary forces between 1944 and 1947, there is some evidence that they did indeed underestimate the dangers, in the illusion that they had embarked on an irreversible trajectory. In only two years their party's membership list had risen from 100,000 to more than 2 million; their representatives had become government ministers after twenty years of underground existence and prison. 'There were reasons for losing a sense of proportion', explained the veteran Socialist leader Pietro Nenni, recalling the triumphant speaking tour he made with Togliatti in early 1946 and the overwhelming majority won by the workers' parties in

the municipal elections in the North in April 1946. (19)

The party was deeply shocked by its ouster from the government, although all signs had been pointing in this direction ever since January 1947. 'I believe', Pajetta later recognized, 'that we must admit that at the time we thought that even if it was not impossible, it certainly would have been extremely difficult to effect a capitalist restoration and to oust the Communists from the government for a long period. It seems to me that one can say that we ruled out the possibility of such a long period of confrontation and new alignment without either rapid progress on our part or an openly reactionary affirmation by the adversary' (20)

Although the PCI was cast into opposition against its will (and subsequently hardened its position, which enabled it to reap the fruits of later mass upsurges), the leadership has always maintained its post-war strategy, even to this day. Initial evidence of this came in 1948, after the attempt on Togliatti's life. Frustrated by several years of constant concessions, and bearing the brunt of the attacks the bourgeoisie felt capable of intensifying in late 1947 and early 1948, the working class, although disoriented, was undefeated. Explosive reserves were building up. They were detonated when an anti-communist fanatic fired four pistol shots at Togliatti as he was leaving parliament on 14 July 1948. Within one hour the capital was paralysed by a spontaneously organized general strike; within several hours the strike had spread throughout the country. It quickly acquired insurrectionary overtones. In the North workers occupied factories and dug up the rifles they had buried in 1946 (sometimes hidden in the factories themselves). Armed clashes occurred in Genoa, Leghorn, Taranto, Venice, and San Salvatore. In several cities the workers occupied the telecommunications centres and railway stations. By 15 July the PCI leadership had been so disoriented by the popular explosion that *l'Unità*, which had published three special editions the day before, failed to appear. But the following morning, 16 July, the Communist daily was on the streets again, announcing that the strike should be halted by noon. This call went unheeded. It took several days for calm to



Fiat workers on strike

be restored, for the workers to note, bitterly, that their local initiatives had not been coordinated and that their leaders were determined to restore order.

Togliatti's last words to his closest associates before he was removed to hospital on 14 July were these: 'Stay calm! Don't lose your head!'⁽²²⁾ And stay calm they did, both in the streets, where they strove to demobilize the workers, and in parliament. The government, yielding nothing and even taking advantage of the situation to press its offensive by directly attacking the CGIL for its participation in the strike, received this answer from Di Vittorio, president of the CGIL (which had not yet split). Speaking in parliament, he explained that the CGIL had joined the strike 'in order to keep it under control'. And Nenni, the Socialist leader, was even more explicit: 'It is genuinely stupid of the government, both morally and politically, to fail to understand the significance of the decision taken by the CGIL against the will of the working class'.

Glorious action by the trade-union leaders! According to official figures, 20 people were killed, 600 wounded, and 7,000 arrested during the turbulent days of July 1948. The government seized upon the opportunity to strike a decisive blow at the workers' vanguard as well. In late July the right-wing forces in the CGIL used the organization's decision to participate in the strike of 14 July to provoke a split. The late and unlamented minister of the interior, Scelba, took the lead in a war against the workers. Between 1948 and 1954 some 75 were killed, 4,104 wounded, 148,269 arrested, and 61,243 sentenced to prison terms in incidents of strikes and demonstrations. It was the beginning of the years of reaction.

Togliatti did not want to lose his head, but neither did the bourgeoisie, which, with consummate mastery and brilliant exploitation of Communist capitulations, was able to forge a power bloc that was to rule the country continuously for the next thirty years.

This rapid sketch of the period from the Resistance to the post-war reconstruction indicates the major elements in the origin of Togliatti's political approach. It was during this period that the first premises of the 'Italian road to socialism' were hewed out. These premises were to be systematized at the seventh congress of the PCI in December 1956.

Although the PCI orientation was dictated fundamentally by the pragmatic exigencies of the counter-revolutionary policy of the Kremlin, from the very beginning Togliatti did attempt to codify a coherent strategy, called 'progressive democracy'. The elements of that strategy were to be taken up again and further elaborated later. What were they?

Togliatti argued that the proletariat, which commands neither economic power nor central political clout, must establish its hegemony through superstructural action, through utilization of its presence in all the

institutions of society, in order to isolate the reactionary sectors and permit a gradual democratization of all society (the emphasis on anti-fascism in the party's recruitment and propaganda was in complete accordance with this approach). Social and political institutions then become the major terrain of the class struggle (or of the 'dialectic' among the classes, as the PCI leaders prefer to put it). To be sure, this is not the sole terrain, but it is the crucible in which the 'dialectic' will be resolved.

In order to pursue this policy consistently, the new party, the national mass party, must present itself as a government party. To do this it must transform itself from the bearer of the proletarian programme into the upholder of a 'progressive' programme representing a mediation between the interests of various social layers.⁽²³⁾

The PCI leaders maintained that the republican Constitution, issued of the Resistance, guaranteed a new type of democracy because of the great role of the masses in the drafting of that Constitution. It could become the framework for both democracy and socialism, since, as PCI leader Sereni candidly explained, 'although it does not prescribe a democratic and socialist transformation, neither does it exclude it'.⁽²⁴⁾

The period of the Cold War impeded the further development of this initial programmatic approach by the Italian Communists. But although the reactionary offensive compelled them to shift the terrain of struggle, the perspective upheld in the party documents and congress reports remained that traced out during the period of the liberation and the immediate post-war years. The year 1956 was to mark a new step forward in the elaboration of the 'Italian road to socialism' and in the evolution of the PCI's relations with Moscow.

1956: a double turn

After the difficult years of isolation and Cold War, 1956 opened a new period in the evolution of the PCI. The background to that evolution was provided by the important changes that had occurred both in the Italian situation and in the international Communist movement.

The various 'centre' De Gasperi governments, which had presided over the reconstruction of Italian capitalism, began to suffer a crisis in the mid-fifties. The policy of the Christian Democratic leader, which was designed both to respond, through sectoral reforms, to the interests of the great industrial bourgeoisie and to satisfy the corporatist interests of conservative middle layers, faced ever greater difficulties. The DC managed to preserve and fortify its power only through an ever more thorough penetration of all the apparatuses of power. But what really exposed the limitations of the 'centre' governments was the tumultuous development of Italian capitalism itself.

There were two central questions on the agenda of the 1954 congress of Christian

Democracy: how strongly to emphasize state intervention in the economy and how much to develop public industry. The Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI, a public body established by Mussolini to salvage industries in crisis), which had been acting merely to aid companies in trouble, began to take independent initiatives in the steel industry, with the creation of the 'Italsider' production centres; ENI, the national coal and oil company, was born as the product of an alliance between Amintore Fanfani and the ambitious industrialist and Christian Democrat Enrico Mattei; a Ministry of Enterprises, publicly owned in part, was created. Fanfani was the central DC leader who gave expression to this policy, which had a double objective: to meet the development needs of the most advanced sectors of Italian industry and, at the same time, to fortify the power of Christian Democracy through the stimulation of a state bourgeoisie in control of the entire public sector.⁽²⁵⁾

The years 1954 and 1955 saw a turnabout in the direction of the policy of the leading branches of Italian capitalism. Previously, capital accumulation had been based essentially on the superexploitation of the work force (through massive unemployment and unlimited repression). Now, however, in order to compete more effectively on the world market, the Italian capitalists began to feel the need for a phase of development based on a massive injection of new technology in the apparatus of production, on the radical transformation of methods of production in the factories, and on indicative planning. The phase of reconstruction gave way to that of the 'miracle', of greater integration into the international market. The initial political overtures to the 'centre-left', in a bid for an alliance with a reformist workers' party with the aim of coopting a section of the working class, also date from this period. The new policy flowed directly from the new needs of Italian capitalism.

It was this development of capitalism, which was not understood by the reformists, that plunged the policy of the PCI and the trade-union federation linked to it, the CGIL, into crisis.

The economic reconstruction had been accompanied by a violent anti-union and anti-communist repression, initiated after the split in the CGIL in 1948. By the thousands, militants were laid off and put on blacklists. Members of the class organizations were no longer accepted in the factories. A deep fissure thus arose between the workers and their organizations, and this prevented the organizations from following and analysing the transformations under way in the apparatus of production.

The PCI refused to recognize that economic development was occurring and accused the bourgeoisie of applying a deliberate policy of economic depression. The CGIL upheld a plan for production against the alleged recession-mongering of the bourgeoisie. The CGIL plan was intend-



Khrushchev

ed to reveal the bourgeoisie's inability to resolve the question of employment and thereby to demonstrate the necessity for socialism. In one sense, the Communist trade-union leaders had incorporated an aspect of 'maximalism in policy, in that they asserted that capitalism was ruining the national economy. Politically, however, they strove for class collaboration, in that they wanted to square the solution to the wage problem with the real requirements of production. In practice, this policy fractured into a combination of purely propagandist enunciations on the one hand and stubborn but limited struggles with no general prospects on the other hand'.(26) Thus, although politically the PCI preserved its monopoly of representation of the workers(27), a deep chasm arose in the factories. This was reflected in a sharp decline in CGIL membership and, in 1956, in the defeat of the PCI-dominated metalworkers' union (the FIOM) in the internal commission elections held in Fiat.(28) The trade-union leadership responded to this defeat with a self-criticism, which concluded with a 'return to the factories', where the first signs of a new rise of combativity could already be seen. Politically, the Communists faced contradictory prospects. On the one hand, there was the possibility of a government opening to the left; on the other hand, the 'autonomist' policy inaugurated by PSI leader Nenni after the Hungarian events of 1956 had broken the front that had linked the PSI and PCI since the war. There was a danger of political isolation of the PCI, but also a hope that political discrimination against the left could begin to ease. Togliatti grasped the necessity of responding to these political changes. His statements about the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party, at which Khrushchev had delivered his 'secret speech', and the theses adopted by the eighth congress of the PCI represented party attempts to meet this necessity.

Khrushchev delivered his famous report denouncing the Stalin 'personality cult' at the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party in February 1956. Togliatti

seized upon this opportunity to express, publicly for the first time, his idea that there were 'different roads' to socialism. In an article entitled '1956, Some Premises of Eurocommunism',(29) the Communist historian Giuseppe Boffa emphasized that 1956 sanctioned for the first time the emergence of mounting differentiation within the international Communist movement. Immediately after the war, Boffa continued, this idea had circulated *sotto voce*, but it was temporarily abandoned after the famous Cominform meeting of 1947, when the Italian and French Communist Parties were sharply scolded for their policy of government collaboration, a policy the Kremlin masters had come to regard as in excess of the conjunctural necessities of their own policy. Taking umbrage at Togliatti's inclinations toward independence, Stalin asked him to leave Italy in 1951 and come to Moscow to take charge of the Cominform. But the Italian leader had refused.(30)

Togliatti was thus quick to respond to the declarations of the Soviet twentieth congress. He emphasized that the themes enunciated by Khrushchev (on the role of parliament in the socialist transformation, for example) had been foreshadowed in previous theoretical works of the PCI,(31) and he insisted that this theoretical elaboration had to be carried forward. In June 1956 Togliatti was interviewed by Alberto Moravia's magazine *Nuovi Argomenti* on the subject of 'democracy and socialism, autonomy and internationalism'. In this interview Togliatti put forward his own analysis of the state of the international Communist movement.(32)

Nowadays, when Carrillo, Marchais, and Berlinguer have accustomed us to resounding declarations against the Mecca of the Kremlin, this interview appears quite orthodox and moderate. To appreciate the extent of its heresy, one must situate it in the atmosphere of obedience to Moscow that prevailed at the time.

In the interview, Togliatti first developed, in quite measured terms, a critique of what he called the 'deformations' and 'errors' introduced in the construction of socialism in the USSR. But he insisted on firmly upholding the socialist character

of the Soviet Union: '...but this absolutely does not mean that the fundamental elements of Soviet society that determine its democratic and socialist character and make this society superior in quality to the modern capitalist societies have been destroyed'. He even firmly ruled out the prospect of any institutional changes (which in his view could only mean a return to the norms of bourgeois democracy). He further stated that the inauguration of a multiparty system would be useless: 'It seems to us impossible to conceive of a multiparty system in the Soviet Union today, however. Where would other parties come from? A decision by the leadership? A fine process of democratization that would be!'

But the essential lesson drawn by Togliatti was that the Soviet experience could no longer be repeated in other countries. The USSR could no longer play a dominant role in the international movement; international organizations like the Cominform (which was, incidentally, dissolved in 1956) were no longer necessary; 'the Soviet model can no longer and must no longer be obligatory'; and finally, each party must advance according to its own path: 'The entire system becomes polycentric, and in the international Communist movement one can no longer speak of a single leadership, but rather of progress achieved through different roads'.(33)

Togliatti decided to convoke a special congress of the PCI (the eighth) to 'renew and strengthen the party'. In the discussion preparatory to this congress, the Communist leaders appealed to the 'national lode' of Marxism symbolized by Labriola and Gramsci.(34) The aim was to systematize, in the form of a programmatic declaration, both the relationship between democracy and socialism and the strategy of the parliamentary road to socialism. Here Togliatti developed his conception of the utilization of bourgeois institutions. 'The PCI', he wrote, 'does not regard the republican Constitution as an expedient allowing utilization of the instruments of bourgeois democracy up to the moment of the armed insurrection for the conquest of the state and its transformation into a



I LAMBIARE VUOLA



socialist state, but as a united pact, freely established by the great majority of the Italian people and placed at the basis of the organic development of national life for an entire historical period. In the framework of this pact we can accomplish, within full constitutional legality, the structural reforms required to undermine the power of the monopolist groups, to defend the interests of all the toilers against the economic and financial oligarchies, to exclude these oligarchies from power, and to bring the toiling masses to power....Democratic institutions can be developed as the effective basis of a regime which, confronting the subversive efforts of the monopolist groups and depriving them of the basis of their power, can advance towards socialism....' (Programmatic Declaration of the Eighth Congress of the PCI, June 1956).

Of course, Togliatti explained, we are still dealing with a bourgeois state, since a bourgeois power bloc continues to hold the reins. The problem is to examine how this bourgeois power bloc can be modified through political advances. To do this, two factors must be taken into account: 1) Italy has experienced a process of great concentration of capital in the form of private monopolies and state monopoly capitalism; 2) Italian society is characterized by a highly complex social stratification, with a signifi-

cant incidence of middle layers whose interests are in contradiction with those of monopoly capitalism. The large state sector currently serves to prop up private capitalism and is guided by the law of profit. The problem, then, is to achieve a political leadership that impresses a different role on the state capitalist sector, democratizes its management system, and turns it into the leading force in a system of economic planning guided by the principle of social utility. Consequently, the policy of the party must shift toward the superstructures, which does not mean that such issues become the sole terrain of party struggle, but that all other fields of activity are subordinated to it. Here we scent the principles that lie at the root of the historic compromise, principles the PCI intellectuals were later to strive to adorn with more alluring theoretical ornaments.

The *Yalta Memoir*, Togliatti's last published book,⁽³⁵⁾ reaffirmed his positions on the need to intensify the search for national roads, on autonomy for the different parties (he criticized, among other things, the idea of an international Communist conference to condemn the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party), and on the 'deformations' of the Soviet regime. On the latter point, he expressed regret that the self-criticism made at the twentieth congress had been circumscribed and he

emphasized the necessity to explain the conditions that were permitted under the Stalin regime otherwise than by the personality cult: 'We do not agree that everything can be explained simply by the serious personal vices of Stalin. We strive to study what may have been the political errors which contributed to giving rise to the cult. This discussion is continuing among the historians and qualified cadres of the party'.

Togliatti thus left the Italian Communist Party a twofold legacy: the Italian road to socialism and polycentrism.

The evolution of the international situation (end of the Cold War, peaceful coexistence, the Khrushchev report) and of national conditions (the Italian economic 'miracle', the neo-reformist policy adopted by the bourgeoisie) offered the PCI prospects of development that Togliatti was quick to seize upon. From then on, the PCI found itself increasingly subject to national material pressures, determining its policy primarily on the basis of Italian reality and finding it ever more difficult to manifest blind obedience to the policy of the Kremlin.

National road to socialism and polycentrism in the Communist movement. It is this double legacy that the present leaders of the Italian Communist Party have pledged to fructify.

Footnotes

1. A long time must be spent in the pitch-black night of Stalinism to present the link between democracy and socialism as a 'discovery', for socialism was always seen by its founders as a regime of the highest democracy. But since Stalinism has indeed distorted the idea of socialism to exactly this extent, this discussion is essential today.
2. Luciano Gruppi, *Il compromesso storico*, Rome, 1977. The PCI leaders' insistence on tracing a 'red thread' from the theoretical work of Gramsci to their own current orientation is a product of their desire to assert their own national roots against both Moscow and the Italian bourgeoisie. This appropriation of Gramsci, however, is effected at the cost of very important revisions of the theoretical contribution of the Sardinian revolutionary.
3. *De Radio Milano Libertà*, Rome, 1974, pp. 381-382.
4. The CLN was established on 9 September 1943, just after the armistice that left all central and northern Italy under Nazi occupation. It included the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, the Movement of Proletarian Unity, the Action Party, Christian Democracy, and the

Liberal Party. The CLN immediately issued a call to armed resistance against the occupiers. Party representation in the CLN leadership was on a parity basis, i.e. each party had equal representation, regardless of actual strength. The consequent incongruity was especially striking in the North, where the workers' parties, especially the PCI, held the allegiance of the overwhelming majority of the Resistance fighters. Deep differences between the CLN in the North and in the South arose almost immediately. In the South, already liberated from Nazi rule, the CLN was primarily an alliance of the top leaderships of the anti-fascist parties; its perspective was to come forward as an alternative, democratic government force. In the North, where the proletarian class composition was predominant, the rank-and-file CLN committees that developed in the factories and localities tended to evolve into alternative structures of power, despite all the ambiguities consequent to the participation of bourgeois forces. Our aim here is not to trace the history of the Italian Resistance but to summarize the terms of the debate in the PCI at the time. This debate centred on these differences over the role of the CLN and gave a foretaste of

what was to become the PCI position on the relationship between parliamentary democracy and rank-and-file democracy. For further information on this period, see: Livio Maitan, *Opportunismo e stalinismo, la politica del PCI dal 1945 al 1969*, Rome, 1969.; Marcello Flores, *Fronte popolare e democrazia progressiva*, Rome, 1973; Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito comunista italiano*, Einaudi. See also the articles by Anna Maria Valentino, 'Il PCI e la ricostruzione economica', in *Politica comunista*, April-May 1976, and Silvano Corvisieri: 'La svolta di Salerno e il gruppo dirigente del PCI', in *Politica comunista*, April-May 1974.

5. Cited in E. Ragionieri, *Azionisti, cattolici e comunisti nella resistenza*, Milan, 1971.

6. G. Amendola, *Lettere a Milano*, Rome, 1973, p. 300.

7. Cited in Marcello Flores, pp. 47-48.

8. Togliatti, *Opere Scelte*, Rome, 1974.

9. Ibid.

10. Renzo del Carria, *Proletari senza rivoluzione, storia delle classe subalterne in Italia, 1860-1960*, Ed. Oriente, vol. II, p. 373.

11. The many works by historians, whether Communists or not, are unanimous in their assessment of the revolutionary dynamic of the Resistance in the North, where the masses saw the struggle against the Nazis as inseparable from the anti-capitalist struggle. See, for example, Renzo del Carria, and also Giorgio Galli, who notes in *Storia del Partito comunista* (1958): 'The proletariat of the cities and the countryside felt that the collapse of fascism would lead more or less rapidly to the end of the capitalist system. The working class was leaning towards a social system whose contours were rather ill-defined, but which they identified as socialist, understood to mean primarily the abolition of private property. Only a vanguard of this class took part in the Resistance actively, in the mountain groups, in the GAP (Armed Partisan Groups, popular militias created on the initiative of the PCI), in carrying on propaganda in the factories, and in organizing strikes. But this vanguard gave active and combative expression to the aspirations of the entire class. The Resistance was seen as the beginning of the revolution, and since the Resistance was waged arms in hand, those who participated in it thought that the revolution would be conducted in like manner. And since the PCI had called upon the working class to take up arms and was guiding and orienting the masses in this direction, it cannot be considered an opportunist and moderate party, even if it was not an Italian version of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin. Although it did not raise the slogan of expropriation, did not call for the liquidation of the capitalists along with the Germans and the fascists, and although it collaborated with the king, all this was because it was necessary to act by stages, to wait for the right moment to strike with full strength, as Lenin had taught. In the meantime, however, the arms were there and the workers were taking them; in the meantime, there were strikes and sabotage in the factories; in the meantime, grain for the workers was being seized in the countryside. Once the war is over, the workers thought, once the Allied forces have gone, the rest will come'. Giorgio Galli attempts in this manner to account for the fantastic adherence of the working masses to the Resistance to the PCI despite the policy of moderation and compromise of principle the PCI was applying in the liberated areas. This adherence was also and even more importantly due to the extraordinary courage and revolutionary devotion of the Communist militants, who made up the bulk of the armed partisan groupings.

12. Nevertheless, it is important not to underestimate the real differences both on this question and on the scope of the concessions Togliatti made to the bourgeoisie. These differences are reflected in two works by Secchia: *Aldo dice 261*, Feltrinelli, 1967, and *Chi sono i comunisti*, Mazzotta, 1977.

13. *Il movimento di liberazione in Italia, anno 1*, July 1949.

14. Giorgio Galli, *Storia del PCI*, p. 236.

15. Livio Maitan, the chapter entitled: 'Il biennio cruciale della ricostruzione'.

16. Cited by Livio Maitan.

17. *Rinascita*, 8 August 1946.

18. Resolution of 7 May 1947 in 'La politica dei comunisti dal V al VI congresso', resolutions and documents of the sixth congress, January 1948.

19. Pietro Nenni, *Intervista sul socialismo italiano*, Laterza, 1977, p. 72.

20. G. C. Pajetta, *Dalla liberazione alla Repubblica*, Rome, 1971.

21. On this point, it is particularly significant that the leaders of the PCI insisted on portraying 1977 as the year of reconciliation. When the accord of the six 'constitutional parties' was signed in July 1977, A. Reichlin wrote in *l'Unità* that 'what is important is not what they signed but that they signed it together' (27 June 1977).

22. Luigi Longo, interview in *La Repubblica*, 14 July 1977.

23. Around the same time Togliatti also developed a cultural conception that integrated all the traditions of Italian society, without exception. This provided ideological justification for the alliance between the PCI and DC, on the basis of an alleged identity between 'socialist

solidarism' and 'Catholic solidarism'.

24. *Rinascita*, March 1947.

25. Attilio Mangano, *Gli anni del centrismo, 1950-1960*, Moizzi Editore, 1977.

26. Giorgio Galli, p. 305-306.

27. During the same period the PCI waged major political campaigns, in particular against the anti-democratic laws the DC government attempted to pass. The most important was probably the campaign against the 'leggettruffa' (rip-off law), an electoral reform law that would have given 65 percent of the seats in parliament to a party getting only 50.01 percent of the vote. The project was abandoned when the DC failed to obtain the majority in the elections of 1953.

28. The FIOM's percentage of the vote fell from 63 to 35, while that of the FIN (linked to the Catholic trade union) rose from 10 to 40 and that of the UILM (Social Democratic) from 11 to 23. (Cf. *l'Esperienza della CGIL alla FIAT*, Vittorio Rieser, in *Politica comunista*, summer 1975.)

29. Giuseppe Boffa, *Studi Storici*, (the review of the Gramsci Institute), no. 4, 1976: '1956: alcune premesse dall'eurocomunismo'.

30. See also G. Napolitano, *Intervista sul PCI*, Laterza, 1976: 'The Italian party had suffered severely from the fact that in 1947 there was a sudden interruption internationally of the Communist movement's search for new roads to socialism, which had been undertaken just after the Second World War, and not only in Italy. It suffered particularly because it had already gone quite far in tracing out an original road of advance to socialism' (pp. 34-35).

31. The Khrushchev report affirmed that the working class, by 'assembling around itself the peasants and intellectuals, all the patriotic forces, and by firmly rejecting opportunist elements incapable of renouncing the policy of class collaboration with the capitalists and landlords, can inflict a defeat on the reactionary, anti-popular forces, conquer a solid majority in parliament, and transform it from the organ of bourgeois democracy into an authentic instrument of the popular will. In that event, this traditional institution of many developed capitalist countries can become an organ of real democracy for the workers'.

32. Palmiro Togliatti, *Intervista a Nuovi Argomenti*, June 1956; since republished together with *Yalta Memoir*, Rome, 1976.

33. In the Napolitano interview cited above, the PCI leader explains that the leadership accepted this international orientation of Togliatti's without any differences. This assertion must be compared to what he had previously stated in regard to the massive entry into the Central Committee during this period of cadres recruited at the end of the war, who were brought up politically on 'progressive democracy' more than on the classics of Marxism-Leninism. On the other hand — and he recognizes this — it was among the intermediary party cadres that the reservations and opposition were most significant. Indeed there was a deep crisis among the Stalinist cadres at that time, and many of them subsequently left the party to form the first Maoist Stalinist groups when the Sino-Soviet polemic erupted. Although the crisis of Stalinism in 1956 did not result in an organizational split, it did see thousands of departures from the party and the loss of PC hegemony over the intellectuals. Within the party itself, it enabled Trotskyist militants, then carrying out an entry tactic, to gain a certain audience. It was in the ranks of the Socialist Party, again in 1956, that a critique of the constitutionalist strategy of the PCI and PSI began to be developed, through the debate opened in *Mondo Operaio* by Raniero Panzieri and Lucio Libertini on the question of workers control. Libertini later participated in the foundation of the left PSIUP (Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity), when the PCI joined the first centre-left government in 1963. (Libertini later became a PCI member of parliament.) Panzieri played a leading role in the journal *Quaderni Rossi*, in liaison with left trade-union cadres of the FIOM in Turin. This journal was one of the sources of the new revolutionary left in Italy. (Collaborators of *Quaderni Rossi* include Vittorio Foa, Vittorio Rieser, Asor Rosa, Mario Tronti, and others. Panzieri died in Turin in October 1963.)

34. Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* became known only in the early fifties. Napolitano has explained that from that point onward Gramsci's writings began to become the patrimony of the cadres of the party, 'although the delicate coupling of his elaboration and the of the party remained to be accomplished'. This elegant formulation was doubtless a reference to the unscrupulous use to which the theorists of the PCI have put the writings of Gramsci.

35. In August 1964 Togliatti was urgently summoned to the Soviet Union to participate in the preparation of an international congress of Communist Parties. The battle between the Soviet and Chinese parties was raging, and Moscow wanted a solemn condemnation of 'the Chinese' by the international Communist movement. Togliatti fell ill barely after arriving in Yalta. He hastily drafted a few notes, which were to become the *Yalta Memoir*, and died a few days later. Luigi Longo, who arrived in Yalta in haste, immediately sent the memoirs back to Rome without informing the Soviet leaders of its existence. Having been raised among the wolves, he knew their ways. (Cf. Danilo Lajolo, *Finestra aperte a Botteghe oscure*, Rizzoli, 1976.)

Crisis of the European far left

By P. Lawson

Chris Harman, a leader of the British Socialist Workers Party has written a major study of the 'crisis' of the revolutionary left in Europe.(1) Harman points to the organizational decline of some major groupings, particularly the previously powerful Mao-centrist currents in Italy; the significant reduction in the political influence of the far left in nearly every country; the general feeling of frustration and even despair, that seems to pervade the membership of most organizations; the apparent stagnation, and even retreat, of the workers' movement more generally.

Harman does point out, correctly, that in a certain sense this crisis is one of *growth*. Nearly twelve years after May 1968, the revolutionary left has firmly established itself as a real, albeit minority, current of the workers' movement. I would agree with much of Harman's *description* of this crisis, but his view of its causes and his evaluation of the way the Fourth International and the British SWP have responded to it, are seriously flawed.

The causes of the crisis

The failure of the revolutionary groupings to transform themselves into genuine mass organizations is clearly related to the fact that the mass struggle opened by May 1968 and the 'hot autumn' in Italy in 1969 has suffered important reverses as well as major successes. The ability of the Spanish bourgeoisie to stabilize a regime of bourgeois democracy after the fall of Franco; the defeat of the Portuguese revolution of 1974-75; the setback suffered by the Union of the Left in France in 1978; the stalemate in Italy; the shift to the right in most of northern Europe — all these indicate that the mass struggle of the working class has been interrupted.

Harman holds that two factors account for this: the disorientation of the movement by the labour bureaucracy and the impact of the economic crisis on the workers. 'There was', he writes, 'a change in the attitude of the workers as the economic crisis grew deeper and the reformist leaders started to give open or covert support for government measures. The shift of political discussion to the right affected the wide layers of workers who were not particularly active in the workers' movement and who had only partially ever broken from the "ruling ideas" inculcated into them at

school and pumped out by the media. Their "common sense" attitudes shifted to the right. This exercised a powerful pressure on those militants who had previously been prepared to go along with much of what the revolutionary left said.' (2)

This analysis is unobjectionable as far as it goes. Clearly the failure of the mass struggle to rise continuously is rooted in the effects of the crisis: unemployment, austerity, and insecurity have deeply influenced the mood of the workers. And Harman is obviously right about the role of the labour bureaucracy. On the other hand, he maintains that there has not been a 'new flowering of reformist ideas' and denies that the workers remain strongly committed to the democratic forms of European capitalism. In our view this flies in the face of the facts. Neither the restraining role of the bureaucracy nor its collaboration with the bourgeoisie's austerity measures can be isolated from the reformist illusions of the workers themselves and their continued attachment to the forms of bourgeois democracy.

Harman has seriously underestimated the strength of reformist ideology in the working class, as may be seen by examining the course of events of the past twelve years. The explosion of social struggles in 1968 caught the bureaucrats off guard. They were outflanked on their left, and the revolutionary organizations grew rapidly. But by 1972 the reformists had begun to respond, advancing reformist, class-collaborationist political projects that offered the workers' movement a political focus. These projects seemed more 'credible' to most workers than those of the revolutionaries, especially in view of the organizational weakness of the revolutionary left.

The 'grand manoeuvres' of the reformist parties found expression in such projects as the Union of the Left in France and the programme of Historic Compromise in Italy; they even found their pale reflection in the 'social contract' proposed by the Labour Party in 1973 (3). The various reformist projects were a response to the radicalization of working-class struggle, for large numbers of workers were demanding general political solutions, and without such projects, the bureaucracy could not have kept the masses in check.

Harman views politics exclusively through the narrow lens of the trade unions

and the factory floor. He fails to see the connection between the class collaborationism of the union bureaucrats and the reformist political projects that were their essential complement. Séguy could not have operated effectively without the political manoeuvres of Marchais (and Mitterand); and Lama required the overall perspectives offered by Belinguer, Ingrao, and Amendola. In the light of the massive support the French working class extended the Union of the Left, for example, it is absurd to claim that there was no upswing of reformist illusions. Significant numbers even of militant vanguard workers endorsed the political projects of the workers' parties.

Democratic illusions

Illusions in the reformist parties and their projects are closely related to the attitude of most workers towards the institutions of bourgeois democracy. Granted, cynicism about parliamentarism and bourgeois politics in general is widespread in the working class. But Tony Cliff is wrong to say that 'the working class couldn't care less about democracy'. The Eurocommunists, for example, are well aware of this. When the French Communist Party formally deleted the words 'dictatorship of the proletariat' from its programme, Georges Marchais explained that French workers associated 'dictatorship' with Hitlerism. This, of course, was a dodge, since no sane person associates French Communism with Hitler. What Marchais really meant was that many workers fear a *Russian-style* dictatorship, for the anti-bureaucratic current in the working class now commands real strength.

The rise of this current has been quite positive, and offers revolutionaries enhanced opportunities. But it creates problems too. Hundreds of thousands of workers fear that any future upheaval may lead to a dictatorial regime, and that fear has been one of the major obstacles to socialist revolution for decades now. That is why any contempt for workers' democracy in theory — and any violation of it in action — is fatal to revolutionary strategy. That's why the Fourth International has developed its theses on socialist democracy. It isn't a matter, as Harman suggests, of 'becoming well



established on the parliamentary terrain', but of consistently integrating into our strategy the theory and practice of workers' democracy.

The politics of the Fourth International

Harman alleges that both the Mao-centrists and the Fourth International (FI) have moved to the right in recent years, and have been plunged into crisis by the general drift to the right in the working class itself. His case against the Mao-centrists is well reasoned, but his primary target is the FI. He especially denounces its French section, the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), for its position on the Union of the Left. In so doing, however, he exposes two of the weakest aspects of his organization: its attitude to the united front and to the demand for a workers' government.

According to Harman, when faced with a reformist workers' government, revolutionaries should: 'on the one hand maintain their own complete independence from the government and urge the class to do the same; on the other hand fight for demands of a limited character... alongside workers who have illusions in that government... (4)

For Harman, it is out of the question to demand that the reformists take state power, even against their own wishes. He argues: 'At one point, Alain Krivine, one of the LCR leaders, went so far as to argue that the reformist leaders were frightened to form a government because it would threaten the system. This was after the left had done quite well in the 1976 local elections. He wrote, "In such a situation, the workers are right to say to the CP and the SP: we've given you the majority, use it. It's possible to throw out this minority regime by basing yourself on our struggles. CP-SP take your responsibilities" (*Rouge* 17.3.76). A few months later, he went on to suggest that if a left Union government were formed, revolutionaries would have to keep quiet about their criticisms of it when it came to mass work.' (5)

This opportunism fell within the context of the LCR's 'mechanical' view of what would happen if a Union of the Left government did come to power. The LCR, Harman writes, 'developed a fantastically mechanical view of what a Left Union government would mean, transcribing into the 1970s what happened in 1936 when ... within a few days a huge wave of factory occupations had followed. Now that scenario was just possible in the 1970s — but more likely was a British-type scenario, with a left-wing government trying to cool

down the struggle and getting away with measures a right-wing government never could'. (6) This critique betrays a primitive ultraleftist conception of the united front and of the problem of workers' government. When revolutionaries represent a small minority and the masses follow the reformist parties, it is generally necessary to fight for the workers' parties to take power in order precisely to break the illusions of the masses. In no way would we support or take any responsibility for such a government. But it would be futile simply to maintain the independence of the revolutionary left and advance purely economic demands. Revolutionaries must take a position on the question of which parties are to rule, which is, incidentally, exactly what the British SWP does at every election when it calls for the election of a Labour government.

Harman distorts the LCR position when he writes that the French supporters of the FI tried to 'tone down' their criticisms of a left reformist government. The quotation he produces says nothing of the sort. It simply points out that revolutionaries can call for the *overthrow* of such a government only if it is genuinely possible to replace it with a revolutionary workers' government. The electoral victory of a left reformist coalition including the Communist Party would be met by mass enthusiasm in any European country, just as it was in Chile. We should not forget that when Allende came to power he took quite a few measures in the interests of the working class. Such measures should be supported by revolutionaries, who would, however, continue to point out that the government would remain incapable of satisfying the most profound demands and aspirations of the workers unless the bourgeois state was destroyed.

Revolutionaries would demand that the government meet the demands of the workers, and participate in their mobilizations precisely so as to outflank the reformist leaderships. They would strive to impel the workers' struggles beyond the limits set by the reformists, while defending the government against reactionary sabotage. They would do everything possible to foster the self-organization of the proletariat, in order to prepare for the inevitable confrontation with the bourgeoisie. Nothing in this perspective suggests 'tail-ending' the reformists.

Krivine's argument that the reformists were afraid to base themselves on the mass struggles of the working class in order to come to power seems evidently correct. The leadership of the French Communist

Party was even prepared to sacrifice its own electoral chances in order to maintain its organizational strength against the Socialist Party.

Finally, it is ludicrous to suggest, as does Harman, that the victory of the Union of the Left in France would have meant no more than the victory of the Labour Party in Britain. The expectations of the workers in such a government, precisely because of their 'reformist illusions', would have triggered a mass mobilization, like that which followed the victory of Popular Unity in Chile. That is why the possibility of outflanking such a government to the left would have been so much greater than the possibility of building a big opposition to a Labour government.

The tasks of revolutionaries

In their polemics against the Fourth International, the comrades of the SWP repeatedly make the point that particular transitional demands do not solve all political problems. Political programmes have no magical powers. The formulation of programme thus requires the closest attention to the agency of socialist transformation: the working class and its daily struggles. Here the comrades are knocking at an open door so far as the Fourth International is concerned. It is evident that the formulation of a political line of march for the proletariat must be combined with the assembling of the working-class forces to carry out this programme of action. But this combination cannot be brought about simply by arguing for 'an orientation to the working class', necessary though that is. It is also necessary to assess the relationship of forces accurately, and to formulate political projects and slogans that give the mass struggle a focus.

The political situation in Europe cannot be characterized with such simple formulae as 'shift to the right' and 'stalling of the mass struggle'. Immense reserves of working class militancy still exist, as is shown by the steel strike in Britain, the spate of struggles against austerity in Italy, and the fight of building workers and others in Spain against the Moncloa pact. There is a layer of vanguard workers, most of whom have not joined revolutionary organizations or broken with reformism definitively, but who distrust the reformist leaders and are prepared to act outside their control. European capitalism is still in a period of grave instability, and the organizational and political strength of the working class remains largely intact. The economic crisis of Western capitalism is getting worse rather than better. We are therefore in a period of prolonged struggles that can rapidly attain explosive proportions if the gains of the workers' movement are put in question.

These struggles require a political focus. They must be centralized and directed towards a general strike to impose a workers' government. This slogan, in our view, represents a vital weapon in nearly every country: for a Labour government in Britain, for an SP-CP government in France, Italy, and Spain.

Review of recent left publications

By Ric Sissons and Ron Ward

In the last issue of *International* we promised to report regularly to our readers on new books of interest. As this is the first issue of the new year, we will start with a brief summary of radical publishing in the second half of 1979.

While most of these books come from socialist publishing houses, several established capitalist firms still seem to find left-wing titles a lucrative area. With so many new products around you might have missed some of these:

On Trotsky: The works of Ernest Mandel, *Trotsky* (New Left Books, £2.95), and Duncan Hallas, *Trotsky's Marxism* (Pluto Press, £2.50), are discussed in depth elsewhere in the reviews section. Hutchinson published a serious biographical study by Ronald Segal, entitled *The Tragedy of Leon Trotsky* (£12.50, cloth), but it adds little to Isaac Deutscher's trilogy and is marred by major political weaknesses. Segal fails to discuss any of Trotsky's political contributions of the 1930s — the Fourth International warrants one page! However, our latest information is that Penguin may publish this book in paperback in 1980. New Park has begun a five volume collection of Trotsky's *Military Writings*. The first tome is £10, paperback.

On Gramsci: Quartet published a selection of *Letters from Prison* (3.95), while Lawrence & Wishart, who have done most to make Gramsci's writings available in English, brought out a short work by the Italian Communist Party's foremost historian, Paolo Spriano; it is entitled *Antonio Gramsci and the Party: The Prison Years* (£6.95, cloth).

On Lukács: Just before Christmas, Merlin Press published part three of Lukács's *Ontology*. Its title is *Work* (£1.80). In November NLB published Michael Löwy's study *Georg Lukács — From Romanticism to Bolshevism* (£10.50, cloth). Despite its price, it is an excellent contribution to the understanding of Lukács. Meanwhile, in December Pluto brought out *The Young Lukács*, by Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, two of the editors of the American magazine *Telos*. This work examines the genesis of Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness* and its impact during the thirties.

On Sartre: For those interested in the work of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, two new interpretations are available. Istvan Mészáros has written a first volume, *The Work of Sartre: Search for Freedom* (Harvester Press, £4.95), while Mark Poster has elaborated on *Sartre's Marxism* (Pluto,

£2.95). The latter is part of a series that has already considered Althusser, Gramsci, and Trotsky. In this volume Poster critically examines one of Sartre's most influential works, the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*.

On Political Economy: The eagerly awaited *Political Economy of the Welfare State*, by Ian Gough (Macmillan £4.95), duly appeared, sold out, and was reprinted. Here Gough develops the positions that have been debated so hotly in the Conference of Socialist Economists (CSE) and elsewhere. In the same series Macmillan also published Norman Ginsburg's *Class, Capital and Social Policy* (£4.95), which explains, through an analysis of the development of housing and social security, how social policies introduced in response to working-class pressure have been used to further the interests of the ruling class. Lesley Doyal's *Political Economy of Health* (£4.95) has received quite a favourable response. She traces in detail the expansion of capitalist medicine, its centrality to the maintenance of a health labour force and as a form of social control and capital accumulation; and the abject failure of imperialism to come to grips with world health problems. SWP member Dave Widgery has written a popular account of the present crisis in the Health Service, called *Health in Danger* (Macmillan Crisis Points, £3.95). The CSE is expanding its publishing venture, and the two most recent books produced are a collection on *Value* edited by Diane Elson, which attempts to resolve some of the differences over Marx's theory of value, and *Struggle over the State*, by the CSE's state apparatus and expenditure group. Both are paperback, at £2.50 each. The CSE, along with the National Deviancy Conference, held a conference in January 1979 on *Capitalism and the Rule of Law*. The papers have been published by Hutchinson Education, at £3.95.

Two works on *Capital* have recently appeared. The first is *Reading Capital Politically* (Harvester £3.95), by Harry Cleaver, and the second is *Rereading Capital*, by Ben Fine and Laurence Harris (Macmillan £3.50). Ink Links has made available in English for the first time Rubin's magnum opus, *A History of Economic Thought* (£5.95). Rubin, one of the foremost Soviet economists in the twenties, disappeared into the Stalinist camps in the following decade.

Finally at two extremes of the publishing spectrum there are the latest CIS report, *The Wealthy* (85p), and Professor Peter Townsend's massive *Poverty in the*

United Kingdom (Penguin £7.95).

Four quite different autobiographies relating to East European themes have recently appeared. *The Russian Enigma* (Ink Links £5.95) is now available in English for the first time, both in its complete form and in paperback. The author, Ante Ciliga, was a member of the Politburo of the Yugoslav Communist Party and became an oppositionist in the twenties and thirties; his book vividly recounts life in the camps. Similar insights, but of a more recent period, are to be found in *No Jail for Thought*, by Lev Kopelev (Penguin £1.50). Also from Ink Links came *Child of the Revolution* (£4.95). The author, Wolfgang Leonhard, broke with Stalinism in 1949 and here recounts his experience of life in the USSR in the 1930s and 1940s. Finally, Andrew Rothstein, a former Communist Party member, has written a documentary study of Douglas Young, the British Consul at Archangel in 1919 and surely the only British diplomat to publicly oppose British participation in the attack on the Bolshevik revolution. The story is told in *When Britain Invaded Soviet Russia* (Journeyman £2.75). Of more contemporary interest, Merlin has published *Samizdat Register II* (£3), and Allison and Busby, *Fisera's, Workers Councils in Czechoslovakia* (£3.95). Zed Press's expanding list of titles pertaining to the Third World continued with *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (£2.95), by Rosemary Sayigh, which studies the life of the Palestinians in the camps of Lebanon. Also worth noting is that Nathan Weinstock's excellent *Zionism: False Messiah* (Ink Links £4.95) has now appeared in paperback for the first time.

Three important works on art and culture have appeared in paperback: Dave Laing's *Marxist Theory of Art* (Harvester £3.95); John Willett's excellent study on popular culture in Weimar Germany, *The New Sobriety* (Thames and Hudson £4.95), providing a wealth of detail about working-class art, theatre, film, and writing in Europe during the twenties and thirties; and a second edition of the work on *Rodchenko* published by the Oxford Museum of Modern Art (£4.95). The latter, designed by David King, is a heavily illustrated collection of one of the most important influences on early Soviet culture. But beware, the second edition contains some omissions as compared to the first — among them the photomontage of Trotsky! *Media, Politics and Culture*, edited by Carl Gardner (Macmillan £3.95), is a collection

of articles taken from a series of forums organised by IMG media workers.

Finally, *Socialist Register*, the annual from Merlin Press (£3), continues the discussion on the history of the SWP with a reply from Ian Birchall to last year's critique by Martin Shaw. *Revolutionary Marxism Today* (NLB £2.95) is a stimulating and often controversial collection of interviews with Ernest Mandel concerning the gamut of problems facing revolutionaries today.

Back in print

Readers will no doubt have had the trying experience of finding that a desired book is out of print. Many titles reappear without much notice and slip back on the shelves. Here are some recent ones:

Mandel, *An Introduction to Marxism* (previously called *From Class Society to Communism*) (Ink Links £2.50).

Milton, *John Maclean* (Pluto £3.50). Biography by his daughter.

Laurie, *Beneath the City Streets* (Granada £1.95) Brilliant account of civil defence in Britain.

Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex* (Feminist Press £2.50). Very important early feminist work.

Farrell, *The Orange State* (Pluto £5.95). The history of Ireland since 1918.

Berger, *Art and Revolution, Permanent Red, The Foot of Clive, A Painter of our Time, and Corkers Freedom*. Writers & Readers Cooperative, of which Berger is a member, have republished virtually all his work.

Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (Pluto £7.95). The classic work.

A few to look out for in the spring

The following are a small selection of some of the radical titles you can expect to see in the bookshops in the next months:

Allison and Busby: *Socialism, Democracy and Self Management* (£3.95). A collection of essays by former Secretary of the Fourth International Michel Raptis (Pablo).

Ink Links: *Divided Nation, Divided Class* (£3.50). A collection on Ireland edited by Austen Morgan and Bob Purdie. Also: *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International* (£15 cloth).

Lawrence & Wishart: *Capitalism, Crisis and Inflation*, by Bob Rowthorne, and

Gramsci and the State, by French Communist Party dissident intellectual Christine Buci-Gluckmann. Both cloth, the latter £14.

NEW LEFT BOOKS: *Aesthetics and Politics*, previously in cloth, is due out in paperback, but NLB's most important title will be Perry Anderson's reply to E.P. Thompson's *The Poverty of Theory*. Anderson's eagerly awaited response will be put directly into paperback (£3.95).

PLUTO PRESS: An updated version of Eamonn McCann's *Wer and an Irish Town* (£1.95) is a must; also Rosdolsky's classic, *The Making of Marx's Capital*, in paperback at £4.95.

VIRAGO: Cathy Porter has written a detailed biography of *Alexandra Kollontai*, which will soon be out in paperback at £4.95.

WOMENS PRESS: They celebrate their second birthday with a new novel by Marge Piercy called *Vida* (£4.95); among their later offerings are *The Transsexual Empire* (£2.95), by Janice Raymond.

WRITERS & READERS: Continue the beginners series with *Trotsky*. The cartoons are by Phil Evans, the text by Tariq Ali. Also promised is a new collection of essays from John Berger entitled *About Looking* (£5.95 cloth).

"The Bolsheviks come to power"

By Dave Bailey

Alexander Rabinowitch
The Bolsheviks Came to Power
NLB, 1979

by Dave Bailey

Most of the European far left parties expel dissidents for their views at the first sign of difference. The result is the division of revolutionaries into a multitude of sects. It is often said that Lenin built a party able to win power in the October Revolution precisely by expelling every 'opportunist' and 'reformist' from its ranks. In reality, however, the Bolshevik Party was rather different.

The main theme of *The Bolsheviks Came to Power* is that the Bolshevik Party of 1917 'bore little resemblance' to the conventional view of a party 'by-and-large united, authoritarian, conspiratorial' and 'effectively controlled by Lenin'. According to Professor Rabinowitch, the party's internal life was 'relatively democratic', 'tolerant' and 'open'. Indeed, he believes this to have been one of the chief reasons for the party's success in October.

A subsidiary aim of the book is to show that the aims of the Bolsheviks were shared by the mass of the workers and soldiers of Petrograd. This is well known. The real value of the book, which concentrates on the tactical disputes in the party between July and October 1917, is that it demonstrates that the Bolsheviks decided their political course by dialogue rather than by the modern methods of splits, heresy hunting and the expulsion of dissidents. And the differences among the Bolsheviks at this time were serious.

The political choices facing the Bolsheviks in 1917 were difficult and critical. In July, almost every worker and soldier in Petrograd, angry with Kerensky's order for an offensive against the Germans, took to the streets demanding an end to the war. Some Bolsheviks wanted to turn these armed demonstrations into an insurrection. Lenin's policy was to continue pressing the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries to remove the capitalist ministers from the government and take power — a peaceful policy because as a result of the strength of the February uprising these ministers governed only by permission of the Soviet leaders.

The July demonstrations were bloodily suppressed by the government and the Soviet leadership. Lenin fled to Finland; other Bolsheviks were thrown into prison. Had the counter-revolution triumphed? Had the Mensheviks and SRs sold out completely? The Sixth Congress of the Bolshevik Party held in late July answered yes. Lenin now decided that the party must make plans for an armed uprising. But when General Kornilov attacked Petrograd in August, the situation changed once more.

At the General's approach, the Mensheviks and SRs, together with every conceivable mass organisation of workers, soldiers and sailors, took up arms. The Bolsheviks hesitated, then joined in. Petrograd became an armed camp and Kornilov was defeated by an impressive display of working class unity.

The Kornilov experience revived the hopes of some Bolsheviks that the Mensheviks and SRs might yet be persuaded to expel the bourgeois ministers from the government. The Soviets would then be sovereign, the revolution could proceed peacefully, and the Bolsheviks turn their energies to Soviet parliamentarism. Unfortunately, the Mensheviks and SRs, after some hesitation, renewed their support for Kerensky's coalition with the bourgeois ministers. Lenin was now convinced that the bourgeoisie would remain in the government unless the Bolsheviks took it upon themselves to organize its armed overthrow. Moreover, the Bolsheviks were beginning to win majorities in the Moscow and Petrograd Soviets, and the peasant war, which the Bolsheviks supported, had begun in earnest. After a furious internal struggle the Leninists finally got their way at the historic Central Committee of October 10: the insurrection was on.

Fresh disagreement broke out in September and October: this time over how the uprising should be carried out. Should the party call on the masses in its own name, or use the authority of some soviet body? Should the Bolsheviks sail a battleship up the Neva and arrest the government without further delay, as Lenin demanded, or follow the more cautious plan, devised by Trotsky, and eventually adopted, to arrest the government on the pretext of protecting the Second National Congress of Soviets planned for late October?

These were serious tactical conflicts, and behind some of them lay differences which Rabinowitch rightly calls 'programmatic'. They came into the open during the debate in September over whether to boycott the Democratic State Conference, and, more spectacularly, when Zinoviev and Kamenev opposed the October uprising itself. What was the nature of these differences?

Before 1917, both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks held the view that the coming revolution in Russia, if successful, would turn Russia into a democratic capitalist country. The main difference between them was that the Mensheviks believed the liberal bourgeoisie should straightway hold political power, whereas the Bolsheviks envisaged a 'Jacobin' interlude of worker and peasant dictatorship.

However, in 1917, Lenin changed his mind about the goal of the Russian revolution. Believing the socialist revolution in the West to be at hand, he adopted Trotsky's view that a revolutionary government in Russia should take over private property and start to build socialism. This, of course, ruled out a bourgeois democratic republic. It meant the permanent transfer of power to the workers and peasants. Here was something that the Mensheviks and SRs would never accept. Zinoviev and Kamenev, Lenin's oldest and closest lieutenants, resisted Lenin's change of mind and remained as keen as ever for the Bolsheviks to maintain the bloc with the parties favouring a democratic capitalist republic. So it was that they insisted on attending the Democratic State Conference, opposed the October insurrection, and were caught dur-

ing the uprising negotiating with the Mensheviks and SRs for a coalition of the three soviet parties (even after the Mensheviks and SRs had joined Krasnov's Cossacks to crush the Bolsheviks).

In effect, these right-wing Bolsheviks were still trying to persuade the Mensheviks and SRs of traditional Bolshevism: break the coalition with the bourgeois liberals and form an all-worker and peasant coalition that would create a bourgeois-democratic republic.

Unfortunately, Rabinowitch's treatment of these, the most fundamental differences among the Bolsheviks, is sketchy and inadequate. This may have something to do with his evident belief that an all-socialist coalition was still feasible in late 1917. The Bolshevik insurrection, he writes, 'prevented the creation by the (Soviet) congress of a socialist coalition government in which the moderate socialists might have had a strong voice'. In reality, however, a coalition of this sort had already become impossible, the divergences between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks having become too wide. Furthermore, Rabinowitch under-estimates the extent to which the workers themselves favoured a government of the Bolsheviks as distinct from a coalition of all the Soviet parties. Finally, he overlooks the fact that if the Bolsheviks had not organised the armed overthrow of the Provisional Government (and it was this, rather than the timing of the uprising, which angered the Mensheviks and SRs) it would not have fallen, at least not to the left. Kerensky no longer considered himself bound by the instructions of a Soviet Congress, especially one with a Bolshevik majority.

That differences existed among the Bolsheviks is not a newly-discovered fact. Trotsky discussed them at length in his *History of the Russian Revolution, Lessons of October*, and elsewhere. A recent book by R.V. Daniels, *Red October*, covers much the same ground as *The Bolsheviks Came to Power*. Yet no other account shows in such a detailed way that inner-party struggle, far from being restricted to the Central Committee, raged at all levels of the Bolshevik organization. A creative relationship between party leaders, party members and the broad masses was indispensable to victory.

This is not to say that the party was without discipline. Controversy was heated and the danger of botching the revolution by a wrong decision was obvious to all. And yet, by and large, the party respected a common discipline. It is true that during the July Days, as Rabinowitch has shown in an earlier study, *Prelude to Revolution: The Petrograd Bolsheviks and the July 1917 Uprising*, some of the hotheads of the Military Organization and the Petrograd Committee were doing their own thing. The indiscipline of Zinoviev and Kamenev in October is, of course, well known. Nevertheless, these occasions were rare, and the Bolsheviks remained the most coherent and effective of all the popular parties in the revolution.

Nor does inner-party democracy cancel the importance of certain leading individuals. The role of individuals in the historical process should never be under-estimated. Without Lenin's April

Theses, the Bolsheviks would not have made the October Revolution. Without his restraint, there would have been a disaster in July. Without his vociferous campaign in September and October, the party might not have turned to insurrection in time (for Trotsky did not have Lenin's influence among the old Bolsheviks). The nerve and judgement of Lenin and Trotsky contrast sharply with Liebknecht's foolery in Berlin on November 9, 1918, and his repeat performance in January 1919. These three men between them altered the course of European history. Nevertheless, Lenin was shaped by the party, which did not hesitate to oppose his views, sometimes for the better. If, for example, the Bolsheviks had followed to the letter his advice to pre-empt the Soviet Congress, they may have bungled the revolution. One thing is certain: a party run by command and blind obedience would have made a fiasco of the Russian Revolution. (With regard to that other great leader, Trotsky, Rabinowitch fails to deal with Trotsky's perspectives on the Russian revolution, or to fully rehabilitate him as the organizer of the October Revolution, giving too much importance to the effect of Lenin's arrival at the Smolny Institute on the night of October 24-25.)

The tolerance of wide-ranging differences within the best revolutionary party of the century surely holds lessons for the fissile left-wing parties of today. For example, in his *History of the Russian Revolution*, Trotsky refers to the right-wing Bolsheviks as 'centrists'. In *Lessons of October*, he describes them as a 'social democratic' tendency 'in sharp opposition to the proletarian revolution'. Their line, he writes, would have paralysed the party in October. The workers would have risen without party leadership and the revolution in all probability ended in blood. And yet, as Rabinowitch makes clear, there was never any suggestion that Kamenev and Zinoviev should be expelled merely for expressing their views. Lenin raised the question of expulsion only when they broke party discipline — which they did by publishing a public attack on the Central

Committee in a rival paper, and by disobeying orders in October to stop negotiating with the other parties for a coalition.

The Bolshevik Party was not alone in tolerating a wide range of views in their ranks — a range of differences wider than those which divide the far left today into separate parties. The Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, for example, were members of one party, the RSDLP, until 1912; the German section of the Second International embraced both Luxemburg and Kautsky; Lenin and Trotsky worked in the Third International alongside ultra-leftists like Bordige; Trotsky remained in the Comintern long after it had adopted the theory of social fascism, of socialism in one country, and neo-Menshevik perspectives for the colonial revolution (China). It is also useful to remember that Marx and the anarchist leader Bakunin co-existed for several years in the First International, which founded in 1873 upon Bakunin's organizational practices rather than his political views.

Lenin split with the Second International only after the historic betrayal of 1914, which convinced him of the need for a demonstrative public break with the opportunists. Trotsky broke with the Comintern only when he was sure, after the historic betrayal in Germany, that it had become too rotten to allow him to put up a serious fight for his views among its members.

It is hard to believe that things have reached this stage on the modern far-left. This is not to say there are no serious differences among us. The theory of state capitalism, for instance, is surely not an example of revolutionary Marxism. Nor is the decision of many leftists to give political support to a bourgeois coalition government in Nicaragua, on the grounds that it is being 'controlled' by the FSLN (analogous, this, to the support given by Stalin and Kamenev in March 1917 to the Lvov-Kerensky government, which was being 'controlled' by the Soviet that emerged from the February uprising). But these differences are insufficient by themselves to justify separate parties.

A demonstration of all this was perhaps furnished in Portugal in 1974-75. There the revolutionaries presented the workers with half-a-dozen far left parties. No other revolution has witnessed such curious behaviour. In no proletarian revolution of the past has there been more than two or three workers parties on the scene, reformist parties included: two in the Russian (Menshevik and Bolshevik), and two in the German (SPD and USPD). The Spanish revolution was exceptional in having four (SP, CP, POUM, and CNT-FAI). These party divisions expressed, at least at some stage, a choice between proletarian revolution and counter-revolution. In Portugal, with the exception of parties like the MRPP, which acted in a counter-revolutionary manner, this was surely not the case as far as parties like the LCI, the PRP-DR, the MES, or the LUAR, are concerned. These parties had disagreements over tactics, style, and sometimes elements of programme, but little, in my opinion, that justified the existence of separate parties. The Portuguese revolution had no historical idiosyncrasy requiring six parties of the far-left. That was the product of thirty years of sectarian practices on the part of the European revolutionary movement, for which the Portuguese working class paid the bill. If these far left parties had fused in 1974 they might have been able to challenge the reformists at the level of government in 1975. A historic opportunity was wasted.

Portugal should be a lesson to us all. In the 1980s, one of the most important tasks of all those fighting for a socialist revolution is to unite in a common party, disciplined but democratic. If, during the next decade, another Portugal should find us in the same disunited condition we are in today, we shall infallibly repeat the farce of 1975. In the eyes of history, what criminals we shall be! NLB's decision to publish Rabinowitch's book on the Bolshevik Party is to be welcomed.



May Issues includes a major article by Azar Tabari analyzing the first year of the Islamic Republic in Iran.

"There has been much recent talk of the 'Islamic revivalism' now taking hold in many countries in the Middle East. The leftist contribution to this discussion has been characterized by myriad efforts to demonstrate the newly discovered virtues of Islam, in a veritable cascade of patronising and self-abnegating Third Worldism."

— Azar Tabari

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