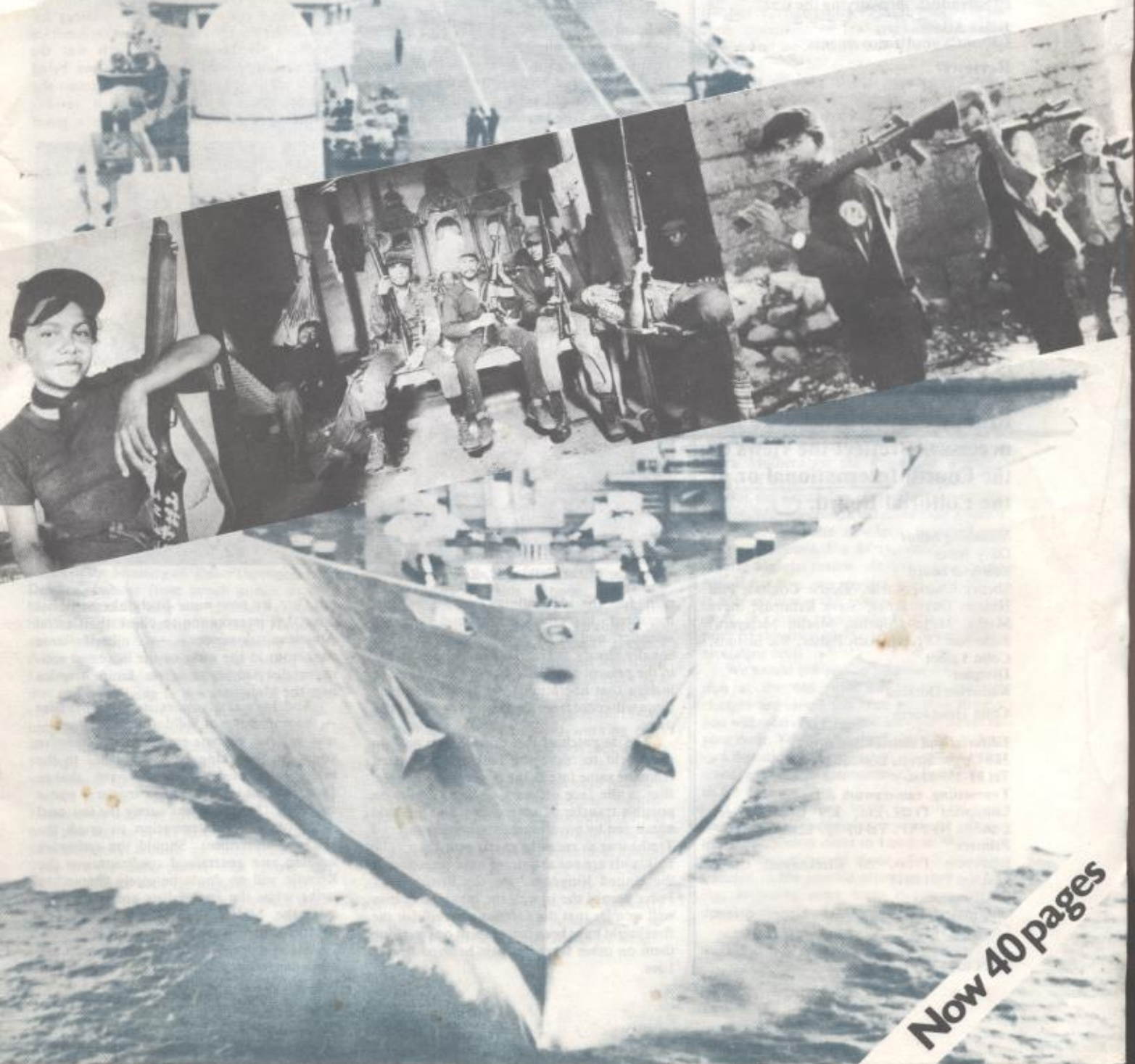


# International

May/June 1982 75p

Vol 7 No3

## IMPERIALISM GOES TO WAR



Now 40 pages



# Contents

May/June 1982  
Volume seven, number three

Alan Freeman Socialist Foreign Policy	4
Megan Martin Destabilising Nicaragua	9
Colin Smith Darwin's Revolution	13
Ric Sissons The Politics of Sport	15
Tessa van Gelderen 'Reds' at County Hall?	17
Holbrook Mahn Missing	20
John Ross Nuclear Free Europe	22
Ana Guadalupe Martinez El Salvador: 'there is no third way'	27
Salvador Samayoa El Salvador: 'intensifying the war'	28
Julian Atkinson Labour's youth movements	30
<b>Reviews</b>	
Irene Bruegel Free Market Feminism?	35
Anna Pollert Calibrating Torque	36
Margaret Coulson Images of Male Power	37
John Ross Inter-imperialist Rivalries	38
Tom Brass The Racist Gene	39
Colin Talbot Fifty Revolutionary Years	40

## International

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# Editorial

## MAY DAY AND

MAY DAY 1982 has the dubious distinction of having ushered in open hostilities between the armed forces of Britain and Argentina, uniting the workers of both countries in bloody warfare against each other.

Let there be no doubt as to who bears responsibility for this outrage: the 'initial aggression' of the conflict dates back to Britain's imperial piracy in 1833 when these islands off the coast of Latin America were seized to become another colony to plunder. It is no accident that all the peoples of that continent know the islands as the Argentinian Malvinas not the British Falklands, or that the governments of the third world and the 'socialist bloc' have denounced Britain's colonialist aggression.

Of course the war has unearthed a motley crew of 'fascist'-bashers from all the major political parties in this country, whose credentials are only tarnished by their previous record of arming the very same military junta to the teeth and refusing to allow refugees from its onslaught against human rights into this country. The Thatcher government's con-

What then is the war really about? Seizure of British territory, however insignificant, by a dependent country like Argentina threatened to undermine Britain's world role as an imperialist power. Thatcher's government, having fatally failed to prevent the Argentinian recapturing of the islands, was particularly vulnerable to the 'gunboat' lobby's demands for vengeance. In such a war socialists can only be for the defeat of British imperialism and the victory of the Argentinian people, however unsavoury the junta. Argentinian workers grasped this approach in their rallies for the Malvinas when they chanted: 'Down with the British, down with the junta'.

Yet however preposterous it may seem, this war threatens to dramatically alter the political landscape not only in this country but even internationally. Blocking with its 'oldest ally' against Argentina has dealt US imperialism a crushing blow in its strategy for containing the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean. Ironically it was the Argentinian armed forces that were being prepared for a possible incursion against the Nicaraguan and El Salvadorean revolutionaries. Not only is this option now ruled



Governor of the Falklands, Rex Hunt, before the invasion

cern for the Argentinian people can be measured in grim death and casualty statistics, and in its cynical use of another, equally bloody dictatorship in Chile as an ally in the present conflict. There should be no illusions that liberation from the Argentinian junta will come from the missiles of the British navy.

The despatch of this third largest navy in the world to 'save the Falkland Islanders' from the same fate as the Argentinian people, flies in the face of years of negotiations on possible transfer of sovereignty and the bald admission by government spokesperson Lord Trethgarne as recently as last year that: 'The Falklands are not and never have been part of the United Kingdom.' As the British Task Force bombs the islands the inhabitants may well wonder that the £1000m plus bill for the fleet might have been better spent on resettling them on other lands in their beloved British Isles.

out, but its now more likely alternative — direct US intervention to check the Central American dominoes — is itself more dangerous in the wake of the increased anti-imperialist sentiment across Latin America over the Malvinas.

And May Day's other stunning headline — the resurgence of Solidarnosc in Poland — may yet also become entwined. The massive youth and working class resistance to the military bureaucracy must have shaken Jaruzelski and his Kremlin masters, whose coup last December was surely the last card short of Soviet intervention to crush the workers' movement. Should the resistance develop into generalised confrontations the Kremlin will no doubt be sorely tempted to strike while the imperialists are in disarray over the Malvinas, completing the eerie parallel with Suez and Hungary in 1956.

But if Poland and Central America are more dangerous places as a result of the war it



# THE MALVINAS



must be said that the Thatcher government could also be a casualty. Its sudden leap into a 13 per cent opinion poll lead could be transformed into its opposite by a humiliating climbdown through a military fiasco or a negotiated 'sell-out'. Knives would not only be out for Thatcher but the whole government with her. There is little evidence that the British people are prepared to sustain a prolonged and bloody war.

Needless to say the bulk of the Labour leadership did its best to come to Thatcher's aid in her hour of need. Most of them celebrated May Day by cheering on the fleet, only 'to back up diplomacy' of course, echoing the words of the Ministry of 'Peace through War' Defence. Labour front bench unease as the blood started flowing was clinically exposed by Thatcher's iron logic: 'The Right Honourable Gentlemen supported the sending of the fleet, but not apparently our using it.' Labour's shameful backing for Thatcher's war and its rallying to the nationalist battle-cry was predictable. Internationalism was long ago jettisoned as unnecessary baggage by the Labour leaders including many on the left. Foreign policy remains the single biggest weakness of Labour policy.

Nor is it any surprise to find those who favour unity with the bosses over income controls and staying in the EEC, also advocating national unity around an imperialist war. They are the same people who favour the nuclear alliance with US imperialism. All of these policies have nothing in common with internationalism or independent working class politics. Rather they are shared property with the 'moderate' Tories and the SDP/

Liberal Alliance. That is why union leaders on the right of the party like Bill Sirs of the steelworkers and Roy Grantham of the clerical union see no programmatic obstacles to their proposed Labour/SDP coalition to keep out Thatcher, and why some Labour Groups will no doubt be similarly tempted at council level following the recent local elections.

At the same time the Bishop Stortford sticking plaster is already peeling off as a result of the war. Revulsion at the uncritical stance of Denis Healey towards Thatcher's handling of the crisis has fuelled a growing movement of the Labour left led by Tony Benn to openly oppose the war. The success of the Tories in the local elections will further reinforce this process, providing a major new opportunity for stepping up the fight within the Labour party for a class struggle current organised around socialist policies. Thus the war has brought into sharp relief the key features of the British crisis as a whole, as well as reasserting basic features of the revolutionary socialist programme: internationalism and independent working class politics, which is what May Day is supposed to be all about.

There are ample opportunities to put these policies into action in the coming months. First and foremost through opposing the war against Argentina, linking this to the biggest possible anti-imperialist mobilisations against Reagan and in defence of the Central American revolutions. Secondly, through alerting the labour movement in this country both to the resurgence of Solidarnosc's activities in Poland and to the increased danger of direct Soviet intervention.

## International BIGGER AND BETTER

From this issue **International** is bigger and better than ever. We have expanded to 40 pages to bring you more coverage of the different features of the international and British crisis.

Specifically, in this issue we begin a series of articles on the theme of Socialist Policy. Alan Freeman assesses the current war and the response socialists should develop to questions of 'foreign policy'. Future issues will include discussion of law and order and the police, and the different aspects of the welfare state.

From our July/August issue we aim to introduce a Right of Reply section with your letters, long and short, on articles in the journal. But that depends on us receiving your letters! Following on from our look in this issue at Charlie van Gelderen's fifty years in the Trotskyist movement we intend to start a regular history section on the pioneers of the socialist movement in Britain.

We think that the development of a revolutionary programme for Britain is increasingly urgent. The Malvinas/Falklands crisis confirms the appalling political and ideological inadequacies of the labour movement, including much of its left wing, in the face of the major political crisis shaping British politics. That's what makes **International** essential reading for revolutionary socialists.

Future issues will also include articles by Hilary Wainwright on Workers' Plans, Andrew Gamble on the British Political Crisis, Clara Mulhern on the Pope and a major review of *Sweet Freedom* by Valerie Coultas.

But the expansion of **International** costs money. Having completed more than a year's publication of the new-look **International** since we promised a lively, polemical and regular Marxist review, we make no apology for asking you, our readers and supporters, to help us finance this expansion and improvement. We have reluctantly had to raise the price of this issue to 75p to meet some of the escalating costs.

We would ask you to take out a subscription at the old rates before subscription charges are raised too. For £4.50 in Britain you will receive the journal six times a year to your door. You can further help us by sending us a donation, large or small, or taking out a standing order to **International**. Just write to us for details.

Last but not least, in the autumn **International** will be sponsoring a weekend educational/discussion event in London. We hope to have a number of those who have contributed to the journal attending and speaking, including some from overseas. More details will be available in the next issue.

Send all cheques, correspondence to: 'International', PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.



# Polemic

## SOCIALIST FOREIGN POLICY

ALAN FREEMAN

The sickening spectacle of the Labour Party leadership's support for Thatcher's war in the South Atlantic sharply raises the need for a socialist foreign policy. Alan Freeman takes issue with Tony Benn's notion of Britain being a colony and argues that Britain is the world's most warlike state.

War concentrates the mind wonderfully. Its effect on the British class struggle is what one would expect of a thunderstorm interrupting a muddy midnight football match: it doesn't do much for the game but at least you get to see what the players are up to. This time a fine piece of teamwork by Foot and Healey brought an immaculate own goal while most of the left wing were offside: within a week of a prospective Thatcher self-destruct, Labour's front bench had handed her the backing of sixty per cent of the electorate.

Foreign policy has always been the Achilles heel of our labour movement. As recently as 1975 the Labour left was demolished, not in the first instance by the CBI but by the EEC referendum. Two out of three Labour coalitions were hatched in wartime. The first sent a million workers to their deaths; the second ushered in the postwar consensus in whose aftermath we are now living.

A systematic and deadly weakness is involved here. What is the point of all those patient hours on the doorknocker when the results can be so easily demolished? The problem is not just cynicism or immorality: if anything the left suffers a surfeit of moralism. What it lacks is basic common sense. It has failed to grasp the connection between foreign and domestic policy matters.

It sees foreign adventures as banana skins on the broad road of class emancipation; as interludes after which normal class struggle will be resumed: please do not adjust your programme. Imperialism, it says, is a diversion from unemployment.

The problem is that unemployment is caused by imperialism. The same state, and the same economy, grows wool in the Malvinas and sells it in West Yorkshire. If you can't stop them in Port Stanley, you won't beat them in Bradford. Indeed this is the key to defeating our ruling classes. If our labour movement could only aspire to the common sense of an average Buenos Aires worker, the Tories would cease to exist. Thatcher's secret weapon is that half our leadership doesn't realise this and the other half support her.

The first task of British Marxism is to get to the root of this weakness, spell out its consequences, and apply them in the fight for a socialist foreign policy for Labour. It may be hard going, but there is no other road. Our job is to begin from what is true and make it popular — not to take what is popular and wish it was true.

We have to begin by rejecting, once and for all, the idea that Britain is no longer an imperial power. Dean Acheson's famous remark that Britain has 'lost an empire and not yet found a role' is common coin. Tony Benn takes it to its limit by claiming that Britain is now a colony. But the idea is persistent even on the Marxist left. Since the empire is in decline, it is argued, surely Britain is now becoming less imperialist? Thus *Militant* leader Ted Grant jokingly refers to Britain as a 'semicolonial' country; and many on the far left have reacted as if Britain and Argentina were on a more or less equal footing.

Thatcher's exercise should give cause for reflection. Six

months ago we said, and still hold,<sup>1</sup> that Britain is *more* committed overseas than before, *more* dependent on its imperial income and role, and hence potentially more aggressive than ever. The comparison between Britain and Argentina is a good starting point. The issue is not the relative standard of living — although this disparity is marked enough, especially when one digs beneath average income figures.

The most important point is the *ownership* of productive assets and the country of origin of those who benefit from them. Britain is a robber country and Argentina is a dependent country: that is the long and the short of it. Argentina's foreign assets are negligible, and two thirds of its industrial assets are in foreign hands.<sup>2</sup> British foreign assets amount to £84 billion<sup>3</sup> — twenty per cent more than British domestic investments at £67½bn.<sup>4</sup> Argentina is listed by the world bank as the planet's second most indebted country with liabilities of £16.5bn<sup>5</sup> and debt service charges around £2bn<sup>6</sup> a year — nearly a fifth of all profits. Britain, in contrast, has an income from foreign investment alone of £8bn.<sup>7</sup> Together with the City's invisible income of £2bn this adds up to more than half the domestic profits of British industry. Britain has the most overextended ruling class in the world. It is the most parasitic and the most dependent on its foreign activities. Forty two per cent of Britain's production is carried out abroad<sup>8</sup> — higher than any other nation except Switzerland.

But this means that Britain has an *invisible empire*. It is no less an empire than when half the map was coloured pink. Its true measure is not the number of garrisons we maintain but the number of wage slaves labouring for British masters. This empire is defined politically. Its boundaries are demarcated by the Commonwealth and the Sterling Area.

So much socialist humbug surrounds the Commonwealth that socialists have become blithely ignorant of its origins, extent and function. It was created in 1926 at an 'inter-imperialist conference' following a scheme first evolved by the arch-reactionary Tory MP Joseph Chamberlain. The idea was a simple one: faced with explosions of revolt such as the Irish rebellion, and the erosion of British interests by rivals like America, Britain created a special corner of the world which would trade in sterling behind protectionist barriers against the rest of the world. Nominal independence led to a new enslavement under puppet governments bound to British interests by subservience to the pound. In theory it was a free association of equals. But we have already cited<sup>1</sup> the more jaundiced view put forward in the Penguin history of twentieth century England:

Despite mere 'equality of status' within the dominions, Britain had to bear the main burden of imperial defence and foreign policy, and she had the lion's share of investment and trade. Equality of function or 'stature' could not accompany equality of status.<sup>9</sup>

The outer circle of empire comprises Sterling Area countries who are under treaty obligation to use sterling as a trading currency, keep their reserves in London, and 'pool' gold and dollars to help bail out the pound. There are sixty such countries, whose population exceeds 700 million.

This economic and political empire is also defended militarily. Garrisons and naval outposts in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Belize and Gibraltar neatly control major oceans (with the exception of the South Atlantic); close and friendly military relations with puppets such as the Sultan of Oman mean Britain is on hand should a client state be threatened by revolution, and can demand the appropriate privileges — in effect, protection money — from its clients.

Since the trauma of Suez, followed by Harold Macmillan's famous 'winds of change' speech calling for colonial disengagement, an image has been sold to the British public: the image of generous, peaceloving and humane detachment from old col-





Off to the Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa 1932 go J H Thomas, Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain. Also invited to the conference were two representatives of the TUC

onial interests; the wise old mother preparing her wayward children for the customs of the civilised world. 'Britain's record in bringing colonies to independence is the finest in the world,' declared Maggie Thatcher on *Panorama*. Henry VIII divorced more wives than any other monarch but this does not make him the pioneer of women's liberation.

To be sure, the attempt is being made at a change in the form of the empire. The more successful economic empires of Germany and Japan are based on the industrial, and not the military strength of these countries. The modern form of colonialism is a free association of unequals, and Britain has been trying to adapt to it. But this is a change in form only. British economic imperialism as such has increased. 1945 opened the biggest wave of foreign investment in British history — an expansion from £1½bn in 1945 to £12½bn in 1967.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover the structure of *all* world imperialism, despite its allegedly more peaceful methods, is in fact based on the *collective* military defence of imperialist interests by the two 'great powers': the United States and the United Kingdom. There is a convenient division of labour between the 'peaceloving' Japanese and Europeans and the warlike Great Powers — a division between racketeers and hitmen.

The dynamic duo are the world's bailiffs. But what happens when bailiffs can't pay the rent? They do not cease to be bailiffs: they become more energetic and violent bailiffs. This is the key to Thatcher's apparently Victorian reactions. Britain's military/financial role has become a *substitute* for other forms of economic development. The present dispute illustrates this graphically.

If Britain had abandoned territorial claims and staked all on direct economic ties with the Argentine junta, it could have had free access to the South Atlantic oil fields. This was undoubtedly the foreign office's longterm objective. Indeed the most astute comment of the war was Tony Benn's remark on Carr-

ington's resignation: 'There are also British interests and British citizens in Argentina', he said, 'and when memoirs are written, in my judgement, Lord Carrington will be shown to have resigned in part because no responsible foreign secretary could put at risk so great a set of British objectives in pursuit of the objectives the Prime Minister has set.'

Yet successive governments have retreated from the Foreign Office line under backwoods pressure. 'The Falklands Islands lobby', said Tam Dalyell MP, 'is the biggest bloody bandwagon in parliament. The Archangel Gabriel couldn't pacify them.'<sup>12</sup> Neither did Carrington. Why did this happen? Britain's problem can be summed up crudely but concisely: it is a second rate military power and a twelfth rate industrial power.

Germany, Japan and the other stronger industrial powers are pressing their advantage in a new wave of foreign investment in the third world. In 'free' competition with German entrepreneurs, Britain doesn't make the grade. It is outclassed: it makes antiquated goods with antiquated machines. German direct investment in Argentina is now three times Britain's.<sup>13</sup> Yet in the middle of the last century Buenos Aires was mortgaged to the City — lock, stock and barrel. In the most dynamic capital export market — secondary manufacturing in the third world — Britain lags far behind its rivals. Around seventy-five per cent of new West German investment in Argentina is in the manufacturing sector; over half of new British investment is in the more backward food and raw material production sector.<sup>14</sup>

In the lead up to the present war, the islands were a bargaining lever. Those who resisted their handover were those whose only advantage over their rivals was the possession of territory. In short they were the most backward *monopoly* sectors of British capital — those whose superprofits flow not from the application of advanced technology but from the possession of particularly valuable territory, control over finance, or political clout resulting from military/diplomatic client status. This sector is especially strong in Britain, which participated late and



# Polemie

little in the postwar explosion of advanced technological investment in the metropolitan world, relying instead on mining, farming and financial interests in the traditional empire. Thatcher's is increasingly the only response left of Britain's ruling classes.

Britain is therefore at one and the same time imperialism's weakest link and the world's most warlike state. The disgrace and tragedy of our labour movement is that it does not perceive this: the central fact of British politics today. The first consequence of this mistake is a deep misunderstanding of US-UK relations. The Labour left see only Britain's subordination to America, and deduce that it has become an American satellite. They conclude that we can break the American connection by severing the alliance in a new declaration of independence without worrying about its foundations. They talk as if we can ditch nuclear weapons, refuse Cruise, and join hands with the non-aligned nations without leaving the collective security framework laid down by Yalta and Teheran. Unilateralism within NATO, neutrality within Western Europe: these are the dreams produced by this outlook.

Counterposing the navy to nuclear weapons comes from the same stable. Healey has been particularly cynical in arguing that Thatcher failed to 'protect' the islands because of expenditure on Trident. Conventional and nuclear weapons are part of the same deal: the attempt to conserve Britain's world role, assigned at the Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam conferences. After and during the war Churchill and Attlee gambled everything on clinging to British overseas interests. They offered Truman a partnership against revolution and a bridgehead into Europe. Britain secured a 'sphere of influence' by becoming America's junior partner.

It is true that the 'special relationship' conceals a deep antagonism, which Trotsky discussed in 1925.<sup>15</sup> But this antagonism did not translate itself into a transatlantic war as Hitler wanted; nor into a European war from which America would be the winner through neutrality, as Roosevelt hoped. Instead the struggle for supremacy was fought out within the framework of the wartime alliance and its aftermath. The antagonism remains: custodianship of the Malvinas may well pass from Britain to America, as did Iran in 1953. But the form of the conflict is that of a struggle between partners — in a part-

nership against revolution and in defence of world imperialist interests.

British 'subordination' to America is therefore the consequence of a great power role; of playing Robin to America's Batman. As a well-known American economist once said, there ain't no such thing as a free lunch. Britain survives as a world power on American sufferance: our role as USS Great Britain is the price. Haig crosses the Atlantic with a dove in one pocket and a Cruise missile in the other. Britain's relation with Europe makes no difference. On the contrary Thatcher not only doubles as Reagan's hawk in the EEC, but paves the way for renewed military adventures by France and Germany. They see the day — perhaps not so far off — when they can replace her at Reagan's high table. Thatcher is in turn compelled to keep them at bay by greater and greater attentiveness to their military and financial demands.

No nation that enslaves another can ever itself be free: Britain bows to Washington and Brussels because she rules the waves. But this highlights an even deeper problem in Labour's approach. This is the attempt to deal with domestic issues in the framework of the Western alliance. This ignores the fact that Britain's imperial role is the cause of its domestic decline.

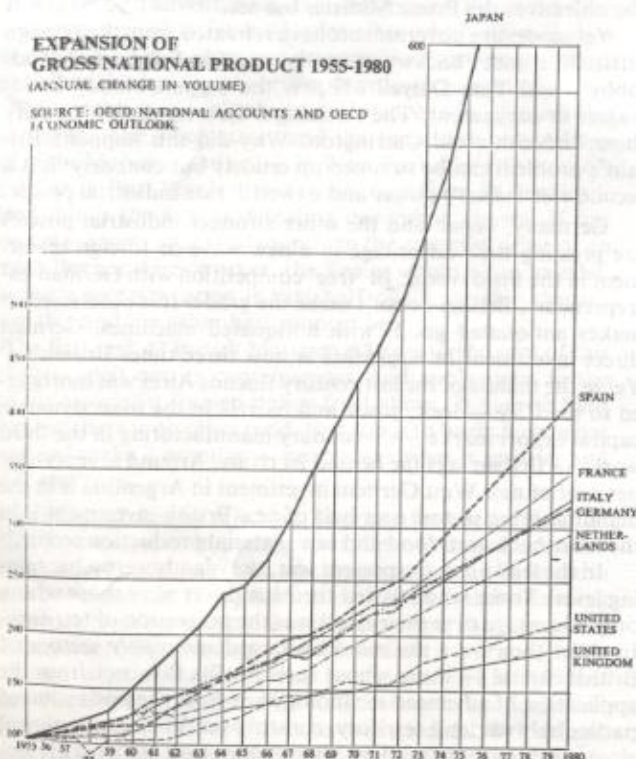
Of course Britain shares in the general mess that followed the end of the postwar boom. But it is worse off than everyone else. It has gone through a relative decline of catastrophic proportions. As figures 1 and 2 show, the two military-financial powers — the USA and the UK — have the lowest rates of domestic investment, and in consequence the lowest rates of productivity growth and per capita income growth among all the advanced capitalist nations. The price paid by these nations for serving as world superpowers is the erosion of the very base on which their supremacy rests.

This is particularly dangerous for Britain, which starts from a far smaller domestic base than America and has been in decline for longer. Britain's imperial crisis has become chronic. During 1965-82 none of the domestic effects of imperial decline have been halted and indeed most have accelerated. For the first time in history Britain has begun to import more manufactured goods than it exports. Employment in the manufacturing industries fell from nine million to under seven million over this period.<sup>16</sup> Investment in productive assets has never risen above £4bn at 1975 prices and in the last two years has taken a nosedive while foreign capital outflow last year reached a staggering £10bn. Per capita national product is now lower than that of East Germany.<sup>17</sup>

There is an absolute and intractable contradiction between Britain's military and financial power and the domestic industrial base on which it rests. This is now ripping through the entire fabric of British domestic politics. The prospects for peaceful resolution of this contradiction are now almost non-existent; in consequence we are witnessing a massive crisis of the British parliamentary state. The insulation of foreign from domestic politics is coming to an end, and with it everything 'normal' and 'traditional' about British politics.

This is particularly important when we come to ask what is specific to the crisis in Britain and above all, what is so peculiar about the English? Everyone who relates British politics to the unique features of its labour movement, party system, disposition towards peace and parliament, or any purely national feature of British politics gets it upside down. What is unique about Britain is its relation to the rest of the world; not at all the nature of its labour movement, traditions of political system, all of which are now passing and will continue to pass through a most dramatic and un-English evolution.

The peculiarities of the English were astutely summed up in a cartoon in *Clarín*, the Buenos Aires nationalist daily, after the fleet left Portsmouth. 'What do you expect?' runs the caption, 'they were still pirates when we were already Indians.' The anatomy of England is that of a pirate nation grown so flabby that it can scarcely bury its treasure. The diagnosis is not end of empire but extreme excess of its. Britain is sick with terminal





# Polemie

imperial decay.

From these facts we can discern the central strategic mistake of the proponents of the Alternative Economic Strategy. Their solution to Britain's problems amounts to an attempt to rebuild the economy by defending it against the rest of the world. Protective tariff barriers will wall us off from the plundering multinationals so that we can build up the economy under government supervision, as did the Germans and Japanese after the war. This is to happen in the framework of a mixed economy. This approach ignores what the Japanese and Germans had to go through *before and during the war*. It completely underestimates the scale of the class forces which will stand in the way of such a reorientation and therefore the nature and scope of the violence and disruption which would be needed to undertake it. On the one hand the Labour left are therefore still shellshocked by the ferocity of Thatcher's attack because they do not understand how deep are the problems of the capitalist class. On the other hand they cannot face up to the resistance which they themselves encounter when they attempt capitalist reform without its prerequisite — the destruction of British working class organisation as we know it.

They remain mesmerised by the party structure of British politics, unable to discern the underlying class and social structure and its relation to the state. For them the Tories represent the ruling class and the Labour Party the working class and ever more shall do so. The rise of the SDP, the witch hunt, the trade union bureaucracy's attachment to imperialism and its willingness to wreck the Labour Party rather than accept a serious confrontation with capital, the growing spectre of coalition, now ten times nearer since Foot handed Thatcher the gift of national unity against the Argentinians — all these are no more than passing ripples on a pond.

The essence of the matter is very simple. Does the agent of our oppression lie *inside* or *outside* the country? For Benn and the supporters of the AES the principal resistance to social change lies outside Britain. The answer is therefore a 'national liberation struggle' to free the land from external pressure. Relatively small layers inside Britain will oppose this, and our main objective is to neutralise them by convincing them we will liberate them from the harsh lash of the foreigner. It follows that reforms will be easy to win; that parliamentary majorities will be easy to obtain and the risk of treachery is low; that the danger of coalition manoeuvres need not deter us; and that the main thing we have to fear is fear itself.

The criminal error of this idea is its wilful ignorance of the social forces aligned against change *inside* Britain. In the IMF, which Benn believes is holding Britain to ransom, we meet our own capitalists working on a world scale. The idea that British multinationals and banks have somehow taken wings, and are no longer British because they work outside Britain, is like say-

ing Julius Caesar wasn't really Roman.

Thus Tony Benn treats the 1976 expenditure cuts as an invasion of British decision-making prerogatives by 'IMF imperialism'.<sup>18</sup> But Michael Meacher has a slightly different story. 'The IMF was largely the vehicle,' he said, 'by which domestic groups, including the City, Bank and Treasury, could get extra power behind their elbows to jog elected ministers ... Haines describes this action as an attempted civilian coup against the government.'<sup>19</sup> It is quite important to distinguish an invasion from a coup: it tells you which side the army is on.

Labour's left commit the unpardonable crime of all opportunism: underestimation of the class enemy's determination and resources in the hope of finding a short cut which avoids the need for confrontation. Does this most Protestant of labour movements really imagine that it can so easily avoid an accounting for past sins? The root of resistance to change in Britain was accurately identified by Lenin: the monstrous growth of parasitism brought by living off the labour of others.<sup>20</sup>

Imperialism has created a Britain torn between irreconcilable interests with a vast middle ground facing penury and social disaster. Lenin and Hobson were astonished by a Britain in which a mere 15 per cent of UK wealth lay abroad;<sup>21</sup> the figure is now above forty per cent.<sup>22</sup> The income of the capitalists in the UK is £45bn<sup>23</sup>; £10bn, or nearly a quarter, comes from abroad. Worse still another £15bn takes the form of rent and non-trading, that is, parasitic income. The total parasitic income of the British ruling class is thus £25bn or more than half its total surplus value! These are truly gigantic sums, which render millions of individuals dependent on imperialism. For example one third of all civil servants work for the Ministry of Defence, and some 1.2 million work in insurance and banking.<sup>24</sup>

Moreover our society secretes parasites at all levels who regulate a terrible social compromise between classes: a compromise which has *purchased domestic social advance and peace at the expense of foreign plunder*. Most disastrous of all, we have created a trade union bureaucracy which is educated and organised around support for imperialism, and which runs the workers' political party. The *true* class relation of forces in Britain has been laid bare by this crisis: the handful of MPs who stood out against the military adventure represent the outer boundary of those political representatives in whom workers can now place trust.

Of course those who are dependent on foreign income have no *interest* in it. None of them will be any better off after Thatcher's brigandage. The problem is that their condition cannot be relieved by capitalist means: within a framework of parliamentary reform. Reform is beyond capitalism's scope without the most violent attacks on working people; and beyond socialism's scope without revolution.

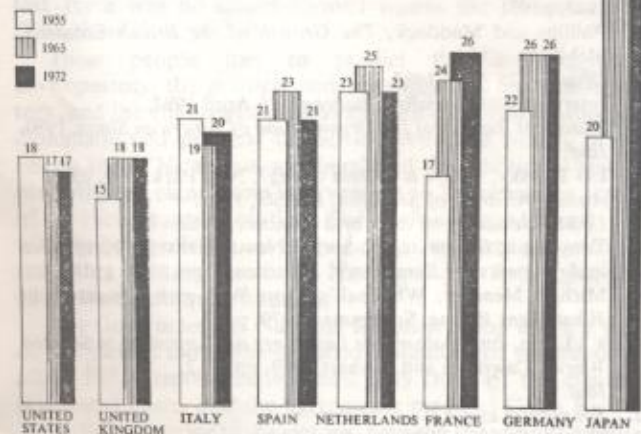
Imagine the consequences if Labour were to announce a wholesale onslaught on our imperial role. It would threaten to throw millions on the streets at a stroke. Such huge social dislocation requires tremendous movements of humans and machines for reconversion to productive activity. Under conditions of revolutionary upheaval and working class mobilisation these movements are simple. Capitalism can achieve such changes only under conditions of war or fascism.

Labour's opportunism consists in a moral refusal to face up to the policies which would resolve the problems of millions of frightened people who have been cushioned from the underlying harshness of capitalism by the proceeds of world plunder. Yet there *is* another way, an alternative to barbarism. This consists in recognising the inevitability of revolutionary upheaval in any serious attempt to defend workers' interests. It consists in recognising that our ruling class's greatest strength — its overseas role — is also the source of its greatest weakness. It consists in recognising that the socialist road for Britain's workers consists in an *alliance with all those, throughout the world, who are suffering attack from our own ruling class* and that, in distinction to the situation in a dependent country this

INVESTMENT AS PERCENTAGE OF G.D.P.

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# Polemie

alliance is the *first* precondition for social advance. As the Angolan and Mozambican revolutions relieved Portugal of its fascists, so we must link up with the peoples of the Caribbean, Southern Africa, India and the Far East to rid ourselves of Thatcher.

Labour will only start on this road if it renounces Britain's world role and withdraws from imperialist power politics. This means withdrawing the fleet to port and withdrawing from NATO and all colonial outposts. It involves unconditional withdrawal from Ireland. It means winding up the Commonwealth and unilaterally ending all guarantees of military assistance to Commonwealth countries, which serve only as an excuse for intervention.

But Labour must also attack the economic underpinning of this world role. A new relation with the oppressed of the world calls for unilateral renunciation of British foreign assets. They should be nationalised and handed over to the governments of the country in which they are located. The pound's reserve role should be wound up when the banks are nationalised. For the first time, this would permit British workers to link up with their sisters and brothers against the multinationals instead of being used by the multinationals against them.

This relates to an important distinction between a neutral and an independent foreign policy. A break with our capitalists will provoke revolution in much of the third world. It will call for alliances with non-capitalist countries, and this will include existing noncapitalist countries.

The *practical* consequences of alternative schemes, such as an independent and nonaligned nuclear-free Europe, is often to remain for the moment in the Western Alliance. But 'Western Europe' is not about geography but politics. Geographically Cuba is part of North America: this is no argument for a military pact with the USA. Western Europe is an imperialist alliance whose collective security arrangements are directed

against all those who threaten the joint economic empire of the European investing powers. The notion of a 'neutral' Western Europe is absurd: aggression is written into its very foundations.

The alternative is not slavish subservience to Moscow, nor is it splendid isolation. How long would it be before democratic socialist Britain was joined by democratic socialist France, Spain, West Germany, Italy — and East Germany, Poland and Russia? Britain has nothing to fear from alliances with Eastern Europe, and the Kremlin has everything to lose from it. A British government which halted all military and economic sanctions against Russia would be a ten times greater threat to the bureaucracy than Solidarnosc, because it would deprive it of its excuse for existence.

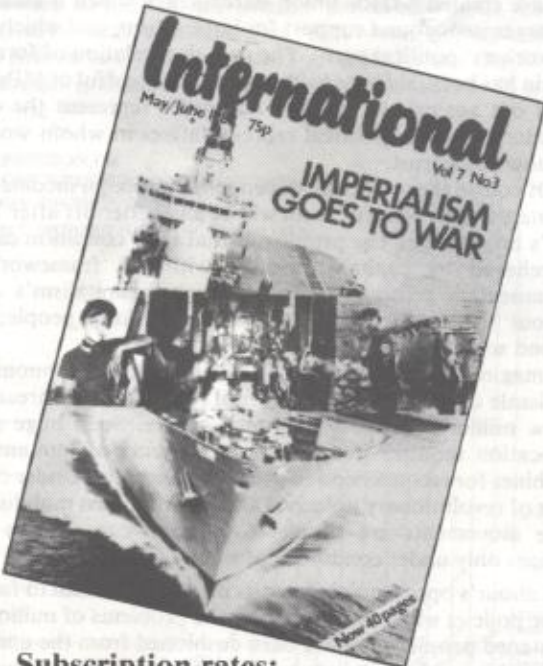
Neutrality in diplomacy is a cover for renouncing support for revolutions; renunciation of all alliances means, in practice, renunciation of all routes to the oppressed of the world. The aim of an independent foreign policy is different: to open the road to an alliance with the workers and oppressed of the world through support for all struggles against imperialism, on the one hand; and through systematic defence of socialist revolution and socialist democracy against all who stand in their way, on the other. This implies support both for the antibureaucratic struggles in the East, and in the dependent countries for those fighting for socialist emancipation.

Any system of alliances, which would change with the changing fortunes of world revolution, should be directed to this end. Its aim is not to conclude pacts of non-interference, or mutual defence against revolution — a modern holy alliance — but to facilitate a meeting of peoples on the ground of common struggle against all oppression and all class rule. For Britain's labour movement this is not just the best road to socialism — it is the only road.

ALAN FREEMAN is the author of a forthcoming book on Tony Benn to be published by Pluto Press, and a regular contributor to *International*.

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# International Features

## DESTABILISING NICARAGUA

MEGAN MARTIN

With world attention focussed on El Salvador, Megan Martin highlights US imperialism's destabilisation campaign against revolutionary Nicaragua.

In September 1981, the Government of National Reconstruction in Nicaragua enacted Measures of Economic and Social Emergency. These measures included cuts in government spending, a campaign for efficiency and austerity in state government ministries and institutions, controls on the parallel currency market, and new measures against hoarding and speculation. They also included a ban on strikes, workplace takeovers, and land occupation.

In October, four leaders of COSEP (the Superior Council of Private Enterprise) were arrested on charges of violating these emergency decrees. Leaders of the Communist Party of Nicaragua (PCN) and the PCN-controlled Confederation of Trade Union Action (CAUS) were detained at the same time. The international bourgeois press characterised these actions as a further indication of the drift towards a 'totalitarian' regime in Nicaragua. The reflex reaction of the sectarian currents on the left was about the same.

On 15 March 1982, a new State of Emergency was decreed which supercedes the September decisions. This Law of National Emergency suspends the Statute on the Rights and Guarantees of Nicaraguans which was adopted in August 1979. Taken together, these measures illustrate the acceleration in US imperialism's attempts to overthrow the Nicaraguan revolution.

The September decree was, primarily, the FSLN's response to the campaign of destabilisation waged by the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie for the previous two years. The March declaration was the response to increased military threats against the revolution — Nicaraguans are mobilising in thousands, throughout their country, against the threat of US intervention. Meanwhile in Britain, where some sections of the left have only recently discovered El Salvador, there has been no real understanding of the continuing need for solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution.

### US imperialism backs Nicaraguan bourgeoisie

In the weeks leading up to 19 July 1979, when it was beginning to become clear that the FSLN might be able to sustain their final offensive against Somoza's National Guard, an inter-agency working group was established within the National Security Council in Washington. In the CIA, a Nicaraguan task force was no doubt formed within the Directorate of Operations.

These people had to predict the likely military developments, the political consequences of a Sandinista victory, and the chances of success of various possible American diplomatic and political initiatives. With the victory of the FSLN, these 'Nicaragua-watchers' had the additional task of preparing for clandestine intervention to influence the course of the Nicaraguan revolution. The obvious place to start was with the bourgeois figures in the new government and with the remaining capitalist sector in Nicaragua. At first sight, this could even seem quite hopeful.

The Government of National Reconstruction and the staff of the various ministries included a number of potential US allies. FSLN representatives held only three of the eighteen ministerial posts, and the agreements made in Costa Rica in June 1979, just prior to the victory, between the various opposition groups envisaged that the FSLN would also be a small

minority in the future Council of State.

Of course, real executive power lay with the Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction which had an FSLN majority. But even here the bourgeoisie was present through Violetta Chamorro, widow of the murdered newspaper editor, and Alfonso Robelo, leader of the Nicaraguan Democratic Movement (MDN). They also had important economic strongholds since nationalisations were initially restricted largely to those enterprises belonging to Somocistas.

The obvious method was to give money and propaganda support to these bourgeois figures — or 'moderates' as the State Department would describe them — to assist them to campaign around such issues as 'free elections'. This is precisely the line that was followed. An important section of the bourgeoisie focussed its energies on launching the MDN as its main political formation. The MDN manifesto included resonant phrases from Sandino, and Robelo signed the preface with Sandino's own seal of *Patria y Libertad*. Whenever Robelo spoke in public he deliberately confused his two roles as MDN leader and Junta member. The cry was 'Sandinismo yes, Comunismo no'.

Robelo led the campaign for the calling of 'free elections' and demanded the convocation of the Council of State, arguing that the composition of this body should allow the non-FSLN forces to make themselves felt. The old opposition newspaper from the Somoza days, *La Prensa*, became the mouthpiece of this campaign. (*La Prensa's* continuing role recalls that of *El Mercurio* in the period leading up to the Chilean coup or the Jamaican *Daily Gleaner* in the months leading up to Michael Manley's election defeat.)

The FSLN set a date for the convocation of the Council of State but put forward proposals about its composition which would allow representation of the new mass organisations developed since July 1979. The changed composition which the FSLN proposed gave itself and the mass organisations a majority. When this composition was announced officially, Robelo resigned from the Junta. Violetta Chamorro had resigned three days earlier. (She explained her resignation on the basis of poor health). Archbishop Obando y Bravo joined the fray and demanded that all priests who held official posts should resign them.

Robelo thought that his departure from the Junta would place him at the head of a powerful backlash against the FSLN. In his brief letter of resignation he accused the FSLN of 'deviation from the goals of the revolution'. But the resignation rebounded badly. The MDN itself was far from being a united force and the other bourgeois groups failed to rally round. COSEP closeted itself away for discussions with the US embassy and the Democratic Conservatives held heated internal debates on party tactics. In the end none of them boycotted the Council of State, although some of them delayed taking up their seats. Much to COSEP's indignation, the FSLN itself designated the replacements for Robelo and Chamorro in the Junta.

Nonetheless, the MDN relaunched its campaign for free elections and a constituent assembly. The FSLN rejected these calls. It insisted that the reconstruction of the country and the development of the mass organisations — the embryos of the new power — must take precedence over elections.

When Robelo withdrew from the Junta a mass demonstration in the *Plaza de la Revolucion* brought a sea of banners denouncing him as a 'traitor', a 'Somocista'. Some read: 'Robelo — made in USA'. He was down, but not out. In autumn 1980, with Ronald Reagan President-elect of the United States, he called a huge national rally in protest against the drift towards 'totalitarianism'. *La Prensa*, the church hierarchy, and COSEP took up the call. The groups of ex-National Guard, conducting raids into Nicaragua from camps



# International Features

in Honduras, intensified their activity.

The FSLN banned the demonstration, and Sandinista mass organisations, especially the youth organisation, spontaneously organised counter-demonstrations in front of MDN offices. In Managua the MDN headquarters was sacked. In protest against the anti-MDN violence representatives of the four bourgeois parties, COSEP, and the CTN and CUS trade unions (both right-wing unions: the former allied to the Social Christians and the latter encouraged by Somoza for its virulent anti-Communism) walked out of the Council of State. Unfortunately for the bourgeoisie, this gesture was undercut five days later when Jorge Salazar, landowner and vice-chairman of COSEP, was killed in an exchange of gunfire with a police patrol near Managua. Six M-16 sub-machine guns were found in his van and it was revealed that Salazar had been busy gathering funds, weapons and political backing for a coup-d'état against the government.

The bourgeoisie was once more thrown into disarray. It became increasingly clear that its hopes for reestablishing its positions relied heavily on aid from imperialism and on a defeat of the revolutionary forces in El Salvador which would isolate the Sandinista government.

## Economic destabilisation tactics

Robelo's political challenge to the FSLN leadership might have been predicted to fail considering the enormous prestige which the FSLN had won as the actual leadership of the revolutionary army in the struggle against Somoza. But it was also a challenge to the National Unity project of the Sandinistas, and the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie was not restricted to challenging this on the political front. Economic destabilisation is an important tactic in fomenting political instability, in creating a climate where the legitimate complaints of people regarding the rising cost of living can be manipulated to weaken support for the government. While Robelo was making a private visit to the USA, lobbying for the speedy release of the Carter administration's \$75 million aid package to bolster the private sector, others were taking the road of obstruction, sabotage and decapitalisation.

Thus, at the beginning of 1980, only 296 out of a total of 663 enterprises in the industrial sector had resumed operation, and of the 63 most important textile plants, an even higher proportion were not functioning. Those companies that did function generally did so at only 50 per cent capacity. In agriculture there were also many large and medium-sized property owners who hesitated to get involved in the reconstruction process.

This campaign of decapitalisation gave rise to a watchful and suspicious at-

titude among the workers. Many occupied factories as soon as they suspected the slightest moves towards decapitalisation. Agricultural workers began to occupy lands and, in a series of mobilisations, called for the deepening of the agrarian reform. The FSLN responded in March 1980 with decrees calling for penalties against merchants, industrialists, and landlords in order to

proof that were almost impossible to provide. Decapitalisation continued and, in the United States, Reagan came to office.

## The impact of Reagan's election

A couple of weeks after Reagan won the presidential elections the bodies of two young people were found in the streets of San Salvador. One bore a sign around its



Past and present of the revolution: memorial of a woman killed in the struggle against Somoza and a women's brigade of the Popular Militias

halt decapitalisation and sabotage of all kinds. Workers were encouraged to oppose sabotage and to take measures of workers' control. Land occupations by poor peasants and agricultural workers were formalised. Against speculation, the FSLN encouraged popular control over prices.

But the law passed in March proved ineffective in the following months. It did not cover some of the most common forms of decapitalisation, its implementation procedure was cumbersome and complicated, and it required forms of

neck: 'With Reagan we will eliminate the miscreants and subversives in El Salvador and Central America'.

The change in presidency had immediate effects in Nicaragua. The Republican platform had declared: 'We deplore the Marxist Sandinista takeover of Nicaragua ... We do not support United States assistance to any Marxist government in this hemisphere and we oppose the Carter administration aid program for the government of Nicaragua. However, we will support the efforts of the Nicaraguan people to



# International Features

establish a free and independent government.' The undisbursed balance of the \$75 million in US bilateral aid was suspended. This was followed in April 1981 with the cancellation of \$9.6 million worth of PL-480 food aid for the purchase of US wheat. Threats were made to prohibit the import of Nicaraguan beef and the sale of PVC resin to Nicaragua if it continued to increase its trade with Cuba.

In November 1981 the US used its influence to block a \$30 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank. The impact of such moves in Nicaragua is rapid and dramatic. In November 1981 a shortage of foreign exchange forced a large shrimp and lobster plant at the Pacific seaport of San Juan del Sur to close, throwing 1100 people out of work. The results on the troubled Atlantic Coast, as the Reagan administration well knows, will also be severe. This region is the centre of the national fishing and seafood-freezing industries, and will be worst hit by the refusal of the IDB loan.

The Reagan administration has not lost sight of the forces within Nicaragua that it wants to assist — it has specifically named *La Prensa*, the church hierarchy, and the so-called Free Trade Unions as the three key factors in the opposition within Nicaragua. But some of its strategists feel that 'it will not be possible to dislodge the actual communist government of Nicaragua, regardless of the level of discontent, except through military action.' (Cleto Di Giovanni, private advisor to the State Department). The former National Guardsmen slopping around the Everglades come into focus now.

## Military attacks on the Revolution

The threat of armed counter-revolution has been there from the very beginning. With the collapse of the National Guard, 7000 of Somoza's troops were taken prisoner. But another 5000 escaped to El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and the USA. Groups of ex-Guards carried out attacks on FSLN leaders and patrols within the first weeks of the revolution. These first attacks were probably simply desperate acts of revenge and not part of a political strategy. Nonetheless, almost immediately Somoza began to shuttle between Miami and Guatemala City, reassembling the remnants of the Guard into an effective fighting force. The 2000 housed in temporary refugee camps across the Honduran border began to overcome their demoralisation and launch systematic strikes into Nicaraguan territory. Brigadistas returning home from the Literacy Crusade in August 1980 had lost seven of their number in right-wing sniper attacks.

The aim of the attacks is not random terrorism, but is part of a concerted effort to destabilise the country, provoke border incidents, provide pretexts for military intervention, and even perhaps to prepare for a full-scale invasion at the right time. The gangs operating out of camps in Honduras have active support from some sections of the Honduran army and these are reinforced by others openly training in Florida and California — a new training camp for Nicaraguan and Cuban exiles seeking to overthrow their governments was opened with a public celebration in Florida on 27 December 1981.

Many observers feel that the ex-Guard as the military instrument for a hostile bourgeoisie unable to rid itself of Sandinismo by any other means is a long shot — it would involve projecting a new identity for the National Guard which breaks with 45 years of historical association with the hated Somoza dynasty. Yet convergence is not impossible as the class polarisation deepens. In any case, these armed bands do not of themselves provide a sufficient alternative power base, militarily or politically, to challenge the FSLN. Their effectiveness depends on the place they occupy within the strategy of destabilisation of the Reagan administration.

## The Miskito Indians

The FSLN's claim that some sections of the Honduran army were collaborating with the counter-revolutionaries was vividly demonstrated on 29 December 1981 when a Honduran army plane crashed at Puerto Lempira, just outside Nicaragua on the Atlantic Coast of Honduras. Among those on board with the

Honduran soldiers was Steadman Fagoth, a former leader of Nicaragua's Miskito population and now a counter-revolutionary exile. There are an estimated 3000 Miskitos now in Honduras, many of whom are involved with the armed bands. This has added to the problems that already existed for the Sandinistas on the Atlantic Coast.

The Miskitos are one of three Indian groups which, along with black, English-speaking descendants of slaves make up the majority of the population of Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. Although the Coast comprises the entire eastern 56 per cent of the country it has only 9 per cent of the population. It is a totally separate reality, linguistically, politically, historically. The struggle against Somoza barely touched the Coast and the new revolutionary government was faced with a population with little political consciousness.

In an effort to respect the various cultural traditions on the Coast, the FSLN assisted in the creation of an indigenous organisation, MISURASATA (Miskito, Rama, Sumo and Sandinista all together). Steadman Fagoth was named as its representative to the Council of State and through this action the FSLN helped to make Fagoth a hero and saviour to the Miskito people. Then in February 1981 Fagoth and other leaders of MISURASATA were arrested. Fagoth was identified as fostering counterrevolutionary plans and also identified as having been an informer for Somoza's Security Force. A few days after his release Fagoth crossed over into Honduras and in collaboration with the Somocistas there continued to influence his people, particularly through the radio station, Radio 15 de Septiembre, operated by the counter revolutionaries out of Honduras.

Serious efforts have been made by the FSLN to improve relationships with the Miskito population and efforts to build hospitals and extend the literacy campaign to the Coast in the local languages. But the raids have dramatically grown recently and this increases the need for military presence and heightens the very real dangers for the people there. The military emergency is very serious, as is the concerted, albeit hysterical, propaganda campaign which US imperialism has waged around the Miskitos, in an attempt to isolate and discredit Nicaragua internationally. Jeanne Kirkpatrick even declared that the Sandinistas' treatment of its indigenous population gave it the worst record on human rights of any country in Latin America!

The September 1981 Emergency Decree took account of the training camps in the USA and Honduras, of the Miskitos who had crossed into Honduras, and of the campaign being led by Archbishop Obando y Bravo against the progressive sector of the church in Nicaragua. Its principal emphasis, though, was on the economic situation in the country. The official communique stated:

'To the inherited difficulties, we should add other factors that have weakened the means of production and investment, such as the decapitalisation practices of some businessmen that have moved their business activities outside the country; the lack of state control in the parallel market of foreign exchange, which has grown to intolerable levels; fraud in payments of fiscal and customs taxes; growth of public expenditure and excessive state bureaucracy; and on the other hand, seizures of factories, labour stoppages, and lack of work discipline which has reduced the means of national production.'

The PCN and the CAUS attacked the economic measures and threatened to call strikes in all the workplaces where they had influence. This confrontationist approach to the leadership of the revolution had been demonstrated in a number of previous strikes. The PCN define the FSLN as having a 'bourgeois nationalist ideology'. According to them, the FSLN is therefore only capable of leading the first stage of the Nicaraguan revolution, the bourgeois democratic phase, and when that phase is over, the PCN itself will move in as the authentic vanguard of the Revolution's 'proletarian' phase.



# International Features

The severe economic difficulties led some of the workers to look to the PCN and the CAUS because these organisations oppose the FSLN's calls for efficiency, discipline and sacrifice. The Sandinistas also have a shortage of experienced trade union cadres. Thus, the ban on strikes and the arrest of the PCN and CAUS leaders was taken from a position of weakness. The FSLN have resorted to administrative measures against a sector of the workers whom they have not yet been able to win over politically.

A general ban on strikes and the arrest of opponents within the workers' movement clearly involve dangers for the revolution. These should be assessed in the light of the proven record of the FSLN leadership and the trajectory of the Nicaraguan revolution. They cannot, however, be separated from the very

'the security of El Salvador requires the acceleration of the removal of the government in Managua.'

real threat to the revolution from US imperialism. In a time of national crisis, the organisation and discipline needed to mobilise the population leaves less and less room for discussion, debate and differences. Since the September decrees the crisis has deepened.

### Sabotage is stepped up

In November 1981 the State Department admitted for the first time that the US was not winning the war in El Salvador. Back onto the screen came the advice of Di Giovanni: 'The security of El Salvador requires the acceleration of the removal of the government in Managua.'

A \$19 million CIA plan for the destabilisation of Nicaragua was approved. The plan included provisions for the training of 500 persons (in the first instance) who would 'eventually attempt to destroy essential Nicaraguan targets like electrical plants and bridges in an effort to affect the economy and deviate the attention and resources of the government.' Money was also allocated for individuals and groups within Nicaragua.

In December a plot to destroy the nationalised cement factory and the Esso oil refinery was discovered. Hundreds, or even thousands, of people might have died in an explosion at the refinery. The majority of the country would have been without electricity. Immediate fuel shortages would have forced factories to close, halted public transport, and caused the loss of much of the cotton and sugar harvest. Destruction of the cement plant would have brought many public works projects to a standstill, throwing thousands out of work.

In the same month the 'Red Christmas' plot was uncovered on the Atlantic Coast. Through this project the counter-revolutionaries aimed to gain control of the northern section of Zelaya province and to set up a provisional government which would ask for help from sympathetic governments, chief of which was the United States. Raids across the Rio Coco in December also brought the death toll from border incidents to over 100. This is the context in which the government has taken the decision to move residents out of the area.

On 19 February 1982 a plan to blow up several bridges and to sabotage an electric plant was discovered. On 20 February, the day before the scheduled arrival of Mexican President Lopez Portillo, an explosion in the Sandino airport in Managua caused the deaths of 4 workers. On 13 March two bridges were blown up...

The increasing number of US military exercises in the Caribbean should also be taken as an indicator that the US has not ruled out direct military intervention. Between 7 and 9 October 1981, the United States and Honduran governments carried out operation 'Halcon Vista' which consisted of joint manoeuvres off the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. Further manoeuvres were carried out in the Caribbean at the end of November. Between 9 and 18 March, a major NATO manoeuvre 'Operation Safepass' was held in the Gulf of Mexico and the Straits of

Florida. On 27 April another massive show of military strength (Ocean Venture 82) began in the Caribbean. It will include a mock invasion of Cuba by marines, at the US base at Guantanamo. These manoeuvres come at a time when the US administration has repeatedly refused to rule out the use of American troops in the region.

The US has tried to provide a cover for its aggression against Nicaragua through the international propaganda campaign around the Miskitos and through a campaign against Nicaragua's alleged involvement with the Salvadorean guerrillas and its military build-up supposedly beyond defensive needs.

The events which provoked the March declaration of a State of National Emergency are numerous. Nicaraguans are again a people in arms. Emergency networks of defence, production, food distribution, price control, information, health and sanitation, and construction are being set in place. It is this mobilisation of the population that differentiates the State of Emergency decreed in Nicaragua from the emergencies and States of Siege which have existed on the Latin American continent for many years.

The Latin American dictatorships have used exceptional laws to suppress popular rebellion. They have converted the 'exception' into the essential elements of their government. In Nicaragua, the State of National Emergency has arisen as a response to external factors, the threats and interventions of the Reagan administration and their allies on the continent. This mobilisation is the very antithesis of Allende's response to US imperialism's destabilisation campaign in Chile. Socialists throughout the world should take their cue from Nicaragua. We must mobilise to prevent the isolation of the revolution. The pressures brought by the United States on the direction and future of the Nicaraguan revolution must be met by a massive campaign of solidarity. This is part of the campaign in solidarity with the people of El Salvador; the future of these two revolutions is inextricably linked.

**MEGAN MARTIN** is co-author of *Women in Nicaragua*, and an activist in the El Salvador and Nicaragua solidarity campaigns.

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# DARWIN'S REVOLUTION

COLIN SMITH

One hundred years after Darwin's death, his theory of evolution by natural selection is still a cause of debate. Colin Smith considers the strengths and weaknesses of Darwin's achievement.

At 11am on 27 December 1831, HMS Beagle weighed anchor in Plymouth harbour to start a four year voyage to survey the coastline and islands of South America. The 'Beagle's' master was Captain Fitzroy, an ardent Tory, nephew of Castlereagh and a fervent believer in the literal truth of the bible. A favourite hobby of Fitzroy was calculating the dimensions of Noah's Ark. Also on board was the captain's 'gentleman's companion' — a newly graduated student of theology, a Whig supporter, nephew of Josiah Wedgwood, who had brought along a copy of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology*. His name was Charles Darwin.

Fitzroy and Darwin did not get on, as such social, political and intellectual differences would suggest. Years later, Fitzroy was to blame himself for Darwin's godless theory. At the famous evolution debate between Bishop Wilberforce and T H Huxley in 1860, Fitzroy was seen roaming around, holding a bible above his head, shouting: 'The book! The book!'. Five years later he slit his throat.

So much for that Victorian 'scientific creationist', but Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection (the culmination of years of study, begun on the voyage of the 'Beagle') was to meet with much, if less extreme, opposition from like-minded religious fanatics. However, *The Origin of Species* met with many favourable responses on its publication in 1859, for evolution had been a growing debate in scientific and intellectual circles since the beginning of the century. JS Mill wrote: '...after beginning by thinking it impossible one arrives at something like an actual belief in it'. TH Huxley (later to become 'the attorney-general of Darwinism') was brief: 'How extremely stupid not to have thought of that'.

Others were far more prepared for what Darwin had to say. Within a month of its publication, Engels wrote to Marx about *The Origin of Species*: 'The Darwin, which I am just reading, is really stupendous. Teleology in one respect had still not been finished off hitherto; now it is. Moreover, there has never yet been such a magnificent attempt to demonstrate historical development in nature, or at least not so happily. Of course you have to pass over the crude English method.' Marx later confirmed Engels' judgement.

Engels' comments were perspicacious. Before Darwin, the prevailing view of nature was of a static, ahistorical world with fixed and wholly discrete species and biology was dominated by the descriptive disciplines of anatomy, comparative anatomy and tax-

onomy. Although this view was under pressure and beginning to break down, final causes and creationist views still riddled biological thought and were the predominant explanations for the origin of human life. Lamarck, the ablest of Darwin's predecessors, failed to provide a coherent theory of evolution without recourse to concepts such as the 'will to evolve' and the 'inheritance of acquired characteristics'.

Darwin's theory heralded a revolution in biological thinking. His view of organic life was of a changing, competitive, historical world in which he stressed the common ancestry of species and put forward a thoroughly materialist mechanism for the generation of new species. The triumph of this view gave a tremendous impetus to the development of biological research, displacing the predominance of the old descriptive disciplines and helped to establish new fields of study, such as genetics, ecology, biogeography, molecular biology, and developmental biology as work was done to corroborate, develop and add to Darwin's original theory.

The basic tenets of Darwinian theory are simple enough: 1) Organisms vary and these variations are inherited (at least in part) by their offspring, 2) Organisms produce more offspring than can possibly survive, 3) On average, offspring that vary most strongly in the direction favoured by the environment will survive and reproduce. Favourable variation (adaptation) will therefore accumulate in populations by a process of natural selection. Two further constraints are necessary to ensure natural selection a creative role Darwin assigned to it; variation must be random in the first place and variation must be small relative to the extent of change in the foundation of a new species.

The materialist implications of such a theory are clear. God or any other idealist 'final cause' are expelled from scientific explanations of the natural world. Evolution has no purpose or direction: 'There seems to be no more design in the variability of organic beings and in the action of natural selection, than in the course which the wind blows', wrote Darwin in his *Autobiography*. All that happens is that organisms become better adapted to their local environments. The wriggling of a worm is as perfect as the gait of a gazelle.

What makes Darwin particularly impressive as a scientist of his time is that he did not retreat from extending this materialist explanation to the origin of human life. He wrote in one of his notebooks: 'Plato says in *Phaedo* that our "imaginary ideas" arise from the pre-existence of the soul, are not derivable from experience — read monkeys for pre-existence.'

How did Darwin arrive at his central insight into the role of natural selection. Contrary to many popular ideas as to how scientific research is done, he did not simply accumulate a myriad of 'facts' and reason inductively from the particular to the abstract (though he made use of this form of argument), neither did he have a sudden flash of amazing insight like Archimedes in his bath. The theory of natural selection arose as a result of a conscious search using both facts of natural history (Darwin was a biological



polymath) and insights from many disciplines outside of biology. Particularly important was his reading of bourgeois economists such as Adam Smith and the doctrines of Malthus.

Ironically, Darwin came to formulate his theory through a misunderstanding. He thought he was applying Malthus' doctrine on human population to the natural world. Malthus stated that there was a struggle for existence in human society caused by the tendency for the population to increase at a geometric rate, whilst food production could only grow at an arithmetic rate. Such a concept is inapplicable to nature as animals do not produce, they only collect and consume. Malthus was arguing for the restriction of marriage and reproduction among the working class and was a million miles away from any conception of evolution. The point is that Darwin's misunderstanding did not make his insight into crucial importance of natural selection wrong, but it does show that his theory like those of Adam Smith and Malthus was a product of his time — nineteenth century capitalism. But his methodological confusion was to have consequences for the use to which his theory would, in the future, be put.

## Darwin did not see the crucial difference between the natural world and society

Darwin did not see the crucial difference between the natural world and human society. Humans produce their means of life, are not passively dependent on the natural world. Human consciousness and social development is not the simple result of the pressure of environment on genes as if it were merely like wet mortar extruded from between two bricks. The forces fashioning human society exist within that society — the antagonism between the potential of the techniques and means of production for improving the conditions of life and the constraints on this potential of the social relations of production — the struggle between those who labour to produce society's wealth and those who own the means of production and control the distribution of socially produced wealth.

In practice, Darwin 'filtered out' what was inapplicable to the natural world in doctrines such as those of Malthus but his confusion on the crucial scientific difference between human society and the natural world led to a continuing predisposition among Darwinist biologists to mechanically extrapolate from



# Culture

animals to human society. What was science in the confines of biology thus becomes non-scientific ideology or plain nonsense when let loose in the realm of social theory.

In Darwin's own time his theories were put to use as a justification for the social order of nineteenth century capitalism. Such social Darwinism even for a time eclipsed Marxism in influence as the 'scientific explanation of human society' and Darwin himself was not immune from its influence. But his seriousness as a scientist made him extremely cautious about applying his theory to social questions.

Such caution, is unfortunately not shown by the currently growing school of 'sociobiologists'. Since the 1960s there have been a number of biologists (Lorenz, Morris, Dawkins) who have tried to apply the results of biological research particularly from the field of animal behaviour, to human society. The definite statement of such attempts is to be found in the books of E O Wilson, an entomologist, in *Sociobiology — the new synthesis* and *On Human Nature*. Because sociobiologists such as Wilson have no conception of the role of class society in fashioning the social order and individual human behaviour, they have been forced back on a crude pseudo-scientific reductionism. Everything in the production of natural selection and social behaviour is the product (and the direct product, at that) of the genetic make-up of human beings. 'The genes hold culture on a leash ... inevitably values will be constrained in accordance with their effects on the human gene pool', writes E O Wilson.

Thus, to give only one example, racism is not due to imperialism but the workings of natural selection: each individual strives to preserve its genes or those of its kin in the gene pool of a population, and therefore, the reasoning goes, individuals will be most hostile to 'strangers' from other populations with which there has been little or no interbreeding, and with which, therefore, a bigger genetic difference will exist.

The theorising of 'sociobiologists' is all of this flavour. Find a characteristic of society, for example anything from the sexual division of labour or aggressive behaviour, to a dislike of spinach, work out a reason why it could be 'adaptive' and then posit a gene to account for its presence in human society. The consequences of this sort of rubbish parading as science is obvious. Not only does it inevitably justify practically every aspect of the status quo, if taken seriously it inevitably proposes a whole dangerous array of 'solutions' for 'social problems' — from drugs to genetic engineering, from behavioural therapy to 'psycho-surgery'.

It would be hard to lay the blame for all this at the door of Charles Darwin, though the fact remains that had he not suffered from his methodological confusion (if only he had read Marx and Engels!) such dangerous pseudo-science as 'sociobiology' could be more easily exposed. And, indeed Darwin's misunderstanding of the inapplicability of Malthus led him to overemphasise the role of overpopulation as the force for evolutionary change. Geographical isolation, the opening up of new environments are at least as important. Nevertheless Darwin deserves our admiration and our study. He founded a materialist biological science and in doing so, changed our ideas about ourselves.

COLIN SMITH is a former research biologist and a member of the Labour Party.

## POLITICS AND SPORT

RIC SISSONS

### As a new cricket season gets underway and the hysteria around football's World Cup in Spain begins Ric Sissons examines the politics of sport.

'Keep politics out of sport' is still heard. By a strange coincidence the strongest advocates of that saying also tend to hold the most right wing views. For example those seeking apolitical sport would like to see an immediate resumption of all sporting links with the white racists in South Africa. Sport has always been a class issue. Trevelyan claimed that: 'If the French noblesse had been capable of playing cricket with their peasants, their chateaux would never have been burnt'. Undoubtedly he overestimates the influence of cricket but there is a grain of truth to be found in that statement.

#### From popular recreation to organised sport

Sport as we know it in Britain today has its origins in the fifty years prior to the turn of the century. Between 1850 and 1900 all the major sporting institutions were established. To take a few examples: 1860, the open golf championship; 1863, the Football Association; 1866, the Amateur Athletic Club which later became the Amateur Athletic Association; by 1870 nearly all the county cricket teams had been formed; 1871, the Rugby Football Union. A sporting revolution had been effected which transformed the leisure activities of the working masses. The organisation of popular, sporting, recreations stemmed from a concern for discipline and was a direct consequence of the needs of urban, industrial society.

During the 18th century popular recreations were characterised by being disorganised, rural, often violent, with widespread participation and occasionally used as a pretext for political action. In 1720 the main pastimes included football, wrestling, cudgels, ninepins, cricket, bell ringing, quoits, badger, bear and bull baiting, cock fighting, drinking in the 50,000 or so alehouses and eating scalding porridge with bare hands! The shrovetide football match in Derby is an interesting example. The goals were a mile apart. Between 500 and 1000 participated on each side and the river was an accepted part of the playing area. Clearly such mass gatherings could get out of hand and lead to riots. Sometimes the reverse was true in that the games were used as a pretext for a gathering. In *Popular Recreations in English Society* there is a case cited of 'a match of Futtball was cried at Ketring of five Hundred men a side but the Design was to pull Down Lady Betey Jesmains Mills'.

In the mid 18th century, despite pressure from puritan reformers, these rural recreations persisted and thrived. Less than a century later industrialisation had changed the geographical, social and political face of Britain. No provision for sporting or recreational facilities had been made in the new industrial towns. Sport was prohibited on

the public thoroughfares, but most importantly it was the machine which determined the rhythm of life not the agricultural seasons. Leisure time was severely restricted. During the second quarter of the 19th century the real low point was reached as the traditional forms of culture had disappeared with nothing to replace them.

In the following twenty five years some important changes occurred in the social life of Britain as it affected the broad masses. In 1847 the Factory Act shortened the working day to 10 hours and led to the introduction of the 5½ day week with the major advance of free Saturday afternoons. The 1870 Education Act not only widened literacy, but also saw the beginnings of the introduction of sport into state schools, while the 1871 Bank Holiday Act brought millions their first public holidays. The significance of these measures was that the working class in the towns had some, albeit restricted, time for leisure activities. The ruling class and its institutions were quick to recognise the necessity of providing some framework for that time which they did not already directly control from within the factory gates.

In 1883 the Football Association Cup Final was won by the Old Etonians. That was the last time that a southern, amateur, side ever won the Cup. Football had been pioneered in, and by, the public schools but this situation was completely transformed by the turn of the century when the game had won widespread male, working class participation and support. The spread of football had received an impetus from three sources. First, the Church recognised the importance of physical recreation: 'The laws of physical well-being are the laws of God'. In Birmingham in 1883 one quarter of the 344 football clubs were church teams and many of the contemporary league sides, such as Aston Villa, Everton and Fulham can trace their origins there. Secondly, the public houses saw that a team was good for business. The landlord was prepared to incur the expenses for equipment and facilities that were still beyond many working class communities. Thirdly, local firms quickly realised that sport could assist in generating social and industrial harmony.

#### local firms quickly realised that sport could assist in generating social and industrial harmony

The case of Thames Ironworks provides an interesting example. The owner Arnold Hills was ex-Harrow and Oxford and former English mile champion, as well as being a strong advocate of temperance, vegetarianism and good causes. After a strike at the works he launched a football club as a means of restoring good will. The team ultimately became West Ham United, though Hills opposed the professionalisation of football being a strong advocate of amateurism. He feared that the team had become 'gladiators'. Arsenal had similar origins in a munitions factory and Coventry City at the Singers Cycle Factory. Such a phenomenon was not restricted to Britain. In North America, Carnegie founded baseball and American football teams around the Bessemer steel plants and by 1940 twenty million workers were playing sport for factory



teams.

#### Sport and the labour movement

In the 1890s certain socialist groups in Britain had recognised the importance of recreation for the working population. In 1895 the *Clarion* Cycling Clubs were formed. The *Clarion* was a one penny, large format, 8 page weekly paper, edited by Robert Blatchford. Cycling had taken on such importance for the *Clarion* that by 1897 an entire page was given over in the paper to articles about bicycles, club news and advertisements for tyres, saddles and handlebars. Cycling outings were not just recreation. They were also the form of transport to public meetings in the crusade for socialism that the *Clarion* pioneered.

During the 1920s and 1930s the workers' sports movements had very broad followings in central Europe. It was in Germany that these organisations maintained the greatest support. In 1929 the ATUS — a body which coordinated the labour sports and gymnastic groups — had a membership of 1.2 million, while the German Communist Party also had

its own sporting organisation of 250,000. The ATUS published 60 sports papers with a combined circulation of over 800,000. Similar organisations existed in Austria and Czechoslovakia. In 1931 the Socialist Workers Sports International, which claimed a membership of more than two million, organised an Olympiad in Vienna — a city then under the political control of social democracy. On the final days there was a demonstration by 100,000 sportspeople from 26 countries, watched by a crowd of a quarter of a million. These Olympiads were clearly counterposed to the Olympic Games which had begun in 1896.

#### the Comintern had its own Red Sports International

The Comintern had its own Red Sports International which had been established at the third congress of the Comintern. In 1928 they organised an international sporting Spar-

takiada in Moscow and a further one in Berlin in 1931. In Britain the Communist Party was closely involved in the British Workers Sports Federation which in 1932 organised the mass trespass on Kinder Scout, in the Derbyshire Peak District across land used by the Duke of Devonshire for shooting parties. Such actions played an important role in opening up the countryside but still today large parts of the land, even uncultivated areas, remain closed to the public. It would appear that the movement went so far as to organise a workers' Wimbledon tennis tournament in Reading during the thirties! The importance of such workers' sports organisations can be seen by the fact that one of the first measures undertaken by Hitler upon taking power in Germany was to suppress the ATUS. The following year, 1934, similar action was taken against the Austrian ASKO.

#### Sport and industry

Industry pervades every aspect of life and sport is no exception. This takes various forms but the following three are the most striking.

\*Sponsorship. Every year in Britain more than £20 million is put into sporting competitions by industrial sponsors. Many occasions would not occur without that finance for which firms receive substantial, free advertising. Virtually every sport has its sponsors. To take the example of cricket there is the Schweppes County Championship, the National Westminster Bank Trophy (formerly the Gillette Cup), the Benson and Hedges Cup, the John Player League, until last year there was the Lambert and Butler floodlight trophy, the Cornhill test matches and the Prudential one day test series. Additionally, many of the county teams have local sponsorship. Surrey has two deals worth several thousands pounds from car and medical insurance companies. It should be stressed that cricket is the norm not the exception, and that sport and industrial sponsorship move hand in hand.

Since the restrictions imposed on cigarette advertising on television, sponsorship of major sporting events has been one way of keeping the brand name in the public eye, which is ironic given the harmful nature of smoking. Likewise Coca Cola, which despite the fact that the secret formula is known to contain the highest concentration of sugar and caffeine of any soft drink and hence to be the most harmful, has availed itself of the title official soft drink for the World Cup 82 in Spain, and had established a similar position for the Moscow Olympics two years ago prior to the American boycott. Sport sponsorships are the marketing department's dream.

#### the most obvious sporting commodities are often the players themselves

\*Sports commodities. The most obvious commodities are often the players themselves as can be seen in the transfer system of players from one club to another. Until recently in professional sports the players had been treated very poorly. It was only in 1958 that footballers won the right to a maximum wage of £20 and after a further prolonged campaign the maximum wage concept was abolished. Since that time the salaries of the top soccer stars have increased dramatically. Among cricketers it was not until 1978 that a



'Political Football' photomontage by Alexander Rodchenko



# Culture



British footballers give Nazi salute just prior to the war

minimum wage was established.

Prior to that many of the worst aspects of the class system pervaded the game. Until the 1950s it was always an amateur player who captained the side. Len Hutton was the first professional to be appointed England captain and that was in 1952. Within the West Indies the choice had to be not only an amateur but also a white player. In 1961-62 Frank Worrell became the first black cricketer to be chosen, captain of the West Indies after a very vigorous campaign in which C L R James, then editor of *The Nation*, played a major part. The amateur players used different changing rooms, entered the field by a separate gate, stayed in better hotels and were addressed as 'sir'. Those anachronistic hangovers may have been removed, but cricket is still run and controlled by men whose approach to the game is formed by that ethos.

Sport also generates an industry of its own in equipment and accessories most of which carry the endorsement of a well-known star. Governments are well aware of this lucrative market. The winter Olympics held in Grenoble in 1968 cost the French state £135 million but not only did it give French tourism a much needed boost it also gave French manufacturers a bigger slice of the European ski market.

\***Gambling.** Betting and sport have never been far apart. In 1751 the Old Etonians took on an England cricket team for a prize of £1500 but it is estimated that £20,000 was at stake in side bets. Virtually all these early cricket matches were played for large sums of money, and to ensure success the aristocratic patrons, like the Duke of Richmond, employed the best plebeian players on their country estates as gardeners or coachmen but, de facto, as cricket professionals. Today millions of pounds pass into the hands of bookmakers and the pools promoters from betting on horse racing, greyhounds and football matches.

#### Sport and ideology

Sport in bourgeois society helps transmit certain ideas that assist in the maintenance of capitalist rule.

\***Respect for authority.** Early sports administrators, who were predominantly Victorian and middle class, quickly recognised the need to provide a framework of laws and institutions. Consequently it was an amateur, public school ethic which prevailed. The no-

tions of being 'a good loser', of 'fair play', of 'not cricket' and 'playing the game' are ingrained into young people playing games, as is of course the respect for the authority of the referee or umpire whose decision is always final and not to be questioned.

\***Individualism and social advancement.** Sport offers one of the few ways for a working class person to traverse the class boundaries and become a 'success' in bourgeois society. They can be readily accepted in the best social company and through a high sporting salary with advertising and endorsements, earn a good living. Very few make it, but the idea that 'everybody can get to the top if they work, train or practise hard' is important for the upper class.

\***Nationalism.** National unity can be forged around a sporting success which transcends all the social, economic and political problems that may exist at any given moment. The Argentinian World Cup Victory in 1978 is a good example. Sport has military overtones in terms of regimentation, discipline and physical fitness. It comes as no surprise to learn that the German and Italian fascists undertook the strict organisation of leisure time. In Italy it was done via a central state structure called the *Dopolavoro* (afterwork) which even went so far as to control dance halls. A leading Italian fascist Maraviglia said: 'Fascism avails itself of the various forms of sports, especially those requiring large groups of participants as a means of military preparation and spiritual development, that is a school for the training of Italian youth.'

In Britain sporting occasions have been used as an important mechanism for recruitment to the armed forces. In the first year of the 1914-18 war 500,000 of the 1,186,000 recruits were made at football matches. Recruiting offices were set up at every ground and speeches made before every match. Stadiums were transformed into prison camps as was the Santiago stadium in Chile in 1973 while the Lake Placid winter Olympic village is now a prison.

\***Sexual discrimination.** Within sport women have been systematically discriminated against. Their position within the home meant that as organised sport developed at the turn of the century women were unable to participate. Responsibilities for the family severely restricted their time outside the factories. Men, who have always run sport,

regarded women as an intrusion into a male preserve. It was not until 1928 that women were allowed to participate in athletic events at the Olympic Games. At cricket grounds, until recently, women were not admitted to the pavilions but were given separate seating enclosures elsewhere.

Discrimination through the law has also blocked young women from participating in sports. In 1978, 12 year old Theresa Bennett won a court case against the Football Association who had banned her from playing for the Muskhams United Under-12s team. But the Court of Appeal supported the FA and refused her right to appeal to the House of Lords. However the problem is deeper than that. It stems from sexual stereotyping at an earlier age and an education system which refuses to allow young women to play some sports.

\***Violence.** Aggression, usually male, typifies many sports. The most obvious is boxing. Not only does it legitimise violence within society but the sport itself is physically damaging to the participants. It is estimated that 400 boxers have died in the last 25 years from injuries sustained in the ring, while there is growing medical concern over neck and spinal injuries caused on the rugby field. Within certain field sports, which in Britain have tended to be the preserve of the upper classes, the violence is against animals and birds. The shooting of pheasants and grouse, often reared simply for that purpose, as well as fox and deer hunting, are events ridden with class and social status.

\***Competitiveness.** One feature of contemporary sport which distinguishes it from recreational activities is the aspect of competition. At the national level, with professional sport being played for high, financial rewards, winning has become paramount and entertainment often secondary. The media influence, in turn, has transmitted that spirit into local, amateur sport.

Striving for success has led to the use of drugs within athletics. Anabolic steroids which unnaturally develop muscles have become more common. Records have also taken on a greater significance as performances lose human content and become lists of facts and figures — an anonymous target for the next person to try and break.

#### Is there a future?

Recreational activity can be important for the individual. I do not wish to reject all game playing. Sport can be pleasurable to watch and to participate in. It can be an important form of self expression, particularly when counterposed to the boredom and routine of factory life. It can be an art form. The state needs to provide equality of access and facilities which does not happen at the moment. Playing fields and recreational facilities are under threat as the social services are cut. As long as the land remains in private hands there will not be freedom to roam.

It is the growing involvement of big business in sport that needs to be opposed. Recreation should not be seen as an extension for the marketing of commodities. But the question needs to be asked — why do we need professional sport at all? Cannot the specialised professional be dispensed with and returned to the community? Whatever the answer socialists cannot ignore a phenomenon which captivates millions of working people.

**RIC SISSONS** is cricket correspondent of *City Limits*, co-author with Pete Kennard of *No Nuclear Weapons* and a member of the International Editorial board.



# 'REDS' AT COUNTY HALL?

TESSA VAN GELDEREN

The Labour GLC was elected last May in a wave of euphoria. 'London was ours' was how the chief spokesperson for the left, *London Labour Briefing*, heralded it. Tessa van Gelderen assesses one year in office of the new Labour GLC.

After four years of Tory rule under the dreaded Horace Cutler, the new regime at County Hall had a clean sweep, threw out right wing Labour leader, Andrew Macintosh, and installed Ken Livingstone to lead the new band of merry people against the nasty Sheriff Heseltine.

There were genuine grounds for optimism. The manifesto on which Labour had been elected was the result of a thorough discussion in the Labour parties throughout London and to a certain extent in the trade unions, culminating in a special conference to finalise the details. The London Labour Party had established what the left were fighting for nationally: a manifesto decided by conference and not by the outgoing Labour Group or a few gurus in regional office. Just as important was the fact that the manifesto was a break from the right wing policies of previous Labour administrations.

The left throughout the labour movement placed great hope in the manifesto and what a Labour GLC could achieve. It coincided with the beginning of the campaign for Tony Benn for deputy leader of the Labour Party. Here was an opportunity to put into practice, at least at a local level, what a Benn government would do nationally. There was a huge press campaign against Livingstone, who had come to symbolise the left group on the GLC. Although there had been a concerted campaign by the press during the elections, this intensified in the first few months of office, and Ken Livingstone was hardly ever out of the news, certainly in the London press. He and the Labour GLC were vilified mercilessly, and the ferocity of the campaign meant that time and energy had to be spent in answering these mainly false accusations of 'reds under the beds', rather than on informing and publicising the plans and achievements of the Labour group. And like the party nationally, the Labour group was affected by defections and rumours of defections to the SDP. Yet the programme on which the GLC was elected was a moderate one. It was the enthusiasm and sincerity of the leading left councillors that brought the media, the Tories and the SDP down on their heads, but which at the same time made it seem to everyone that this time Labour was going to keep its promises.

## The way of all manifestoes?

What were these promises and how many have been carried out? The best known and most controversial was the 25 per cent reduction in fares. This was duly carried out on 4 October 1981, but by 21 March fares were doubled because the Law Lords had ruled the GLC's fares scheme illegal. More council houses were to be built but central government has withheld the money. Sales of council houses were to be opposed as was the transfer of council estates from the GLC to the borough councils. In the event there was no opposition because of 'legal' threats. Rents were to be frozen; they have just been increased. The Inner London Education Authority was to receive more money; £11m has been lopped off its budget in response to legal threats. School dinners were to be reduced from 35p to 25p. Threat of surcharge saw that promise fly out the window. Virtually no progress has been made on the 35 hour week for manual staff and the Greater London Enterprise Board, intended to create

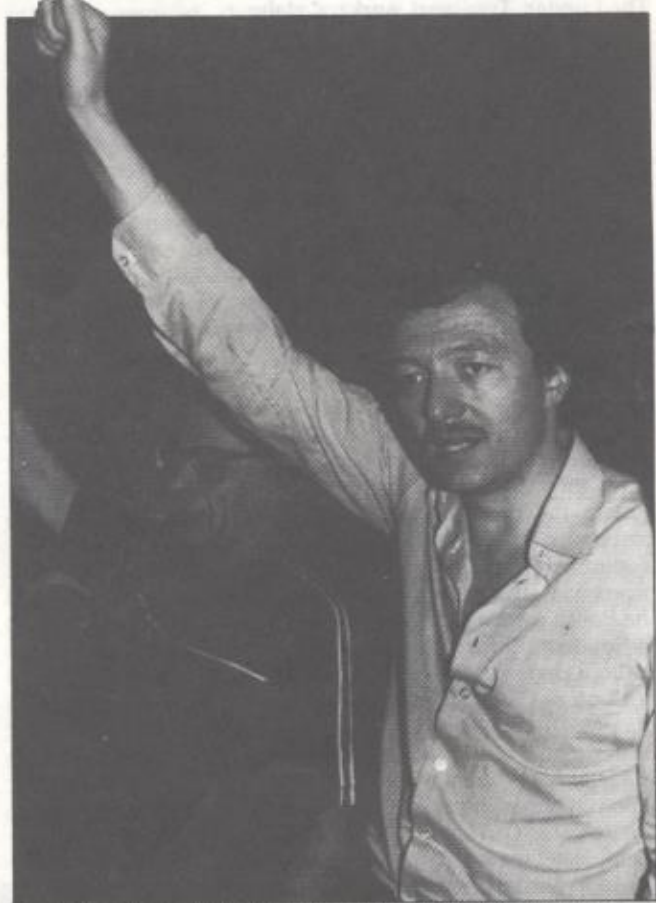


Photo: Pete Grant

'Red' Ken at a Socialist Challenge rally shortly after his election

jobs, remains on the drawing board. Finally all these promises which involved a major expansion of public services in London and redistribution of expenditure to the less well-off would have been financed by 'each London household paying another £1 a week rates by 1983/4'.

Thanks to Michael Heseltine, the GLC's contribution to the rates bill rose by the equivalent of 11.9p in the £ from 24.7p — before the Law Lords ruling. This was mainly to finance the fares increase, pay the deficit on London Transport's budget inherited from the previous administration, and meet the government's penal withdrawal of grant. In effect, every £1 spent on support to London Transport added £1.70 to the rates. In contrast to the views held by some on the left that rates increases buffer the working class from cuts, they have in fact financed Tory cuts. Londoners have been paying more and more for less and less.

## the heart of the manifesto has gone the way of all manifestoes, into the waste disposal unit

Some promises have been implemented: the GLC has declared London a nuclear free zone; it has to some extent democratised the committee structure at the GLC and in particular within the Labour Group itself; and it has given grants and loans to community groups and projects. But not many would doubt that the heart of the manifesto has gone the way of all manifestoes, into the waste disposal unit. Inside County Hall today there is a small group of dispirited and tired councillors who don't know where they went wrong, tending to resort to internal bickering which all too often becomes public. They are divided among themselves as to who is to blame and whether or not there is any point in staying in office. Could



# British Features

things have worked out differently and what are the lessons to be learnt for the labour movement as a whole?

## The London Transport workers' claim

The real turning point for the Labour GLC was not the school meals issue, or even the fares debacle. It was the mess it got itself into over paying London Transport workers their wage claim last summer.

Demanding a rise of nothing less than the rate of inflation, the National Union of Railwaymen, led by Sid Weighell, who later was to sell out British Rail workers over flexible rostering, threatened an indefinite strike. Ken Livingstone played directly into the right wing's hands, both in the unions and in the press. Although he announced that the GLC would 'underwrite any agreement the unions and management come to', he did not openly instruct the London Transport executive to pay the full claim.

It was this fudging of the issue that left a bitter taste in many people's mouths and allowed people like Sid Weighell to drive a wedge between the left in the GLC and rank and file trade unionists who have seen too many Labour leaders make promises they don't keep. Support for the GLC at that time, despite the press campaign, was high: it gave marvellous hospitality to the People's March, it was then about to introduce its cheap fares policy. Livingstone himself had been on picket lines, had openly supported the Irish hunger strikers and the Polish workers and had demanded that the Asians arrested in Southall during the summer rebellions should be 'released without charge'. Yet, when he was in a position to really use his position as GLC leader, he went on the defensive.

## A strategy to unite with the unions

It has been the inability of the GLC to build a real base in the unions that has shown its manifesto to be built on sand. Unfortunately, the GLC has found itself in a nasty spiral. On the one hand, aside from a few heroic councillors, the majority in the group has been reluctant to take a stand to defy the law because there is no mass movement outside County Hall waiting to support them. On the other hand, without taking such a lead, the GLC can hardly expect the labour movement to take the initiative in defending them. At a time when the working class has suffered a number of setbacks, particularly through mass unemployment, when trade union leaders have not been prepared to take on the Tory government, the GLC could have provided a beacon.

In fact Livingstone, even before he was elected, and for a number of months afterwards, claimed that what was needed was:

A council that campaigns against the government. The government has the power to prevent us from building new housing, extending the tube, buying new buses or undertaking any works of improvement to housing or the environment. The new council will have no alternative but to lead a massive and continuing campaign to mobilise public opinion and force the reversal of these policies. (*Socialist Challenge*, 26 March, 1981).

And again:

We will stand by our programme ... If Heseltine tries to stop us raising revenue, that would be an attempt to stop local government. We would expect trade unionists to launch a campaign of industrial action and Labour MPs to make the continued working of parliament impossible. (*Socialist Challenge*, 11 June, 1981).

Ken Livingstone understood the vital necessity of basing the promises of the manifesto, not on the administration or even the political will in County Hall, but on the mass, independent actions of the working class. But after less than a year in office, he appears to have forgotten this elementary point:

Whilst Labour remains the administration at County Hall we will continue to implement each policy in our manifesto

until the government defeats us. (*London Labour Briefing*, March 1982 — emphasis added).

The almost total collapse of the left in the GLC cannot be simply attributed to the media campaign against it, bad though it is. Unless the left is completely naive, such a campaign is only to be expected and it will certainly be repeated tenfold under a Labour government committed to carrying out socialist policies.

## The effect on local elections

It has been this inability to provide a lead for the labour movement in London that has led to the real mess the Labour Group, and by association, the left in the London Labour Party, find themselves in. It is not so much that all the policies in the manifesto would have been passed. Far from it. But a mass campaign led by the GLC on its manifesto, against the Tories would have thrown off the yoke of sell outs that has been hanging round Labour's neck for decades. Now the GLC is 'like all the rest, promises, promises' while a few individuals have managed to keep to their principles. But they are up the proverbial creek, without a boat, never mind the paddle.

now the GLC is

'like all the rest, promises, promises'

Some of these individual councillors on the GLC, including Ken Livingstone, together with many who have been elected at the local elections this month, have pledged themselves to fight cuts in services and to defy district auditors and judges. Their statement, published in *London Labour Briefing*, before the elections, also starts out with the same hopes and, dare one say it, promises, that the GLC manifesto did just 12 months before: 'We will seek to unite Labour local authorities and the trade union movement in a mass campaign to bring down this government and the system it represents at the earliest possible opportunity.'

The statement also makes reference to seeing their victory in London as necessary to secure for 'a future socialist Labour government some part of that base of strength ... which it will need in order to defend itself and carry through its programme to the full.' While acknowledging that the GLC has been 'forced to retreat on a number of issues', it does not come to terms with the fact that these retreats will affect both the elections of future Labour councils and government and their ability to carry through their promises in alliance with the trade unions.

The problem with the left in London is that its base rests almost entirely on constituencies. The left has a majority on the Greater London Regional Executive because the CLPs together with the socialist societies give them a majority over the trade union section. The same pattern is repeated at constituency level where the left dominate the wards and the right the unions. It is the situation inside the national party in microcosm. Without a radical change in that situation all manifestoes, pledges and so on are liable to crumble away at the first possible opportunity.

## A strategy to overcome localism

Does this mean the left should not stand for local councils? It is not an easy question to answer, but first and foremost such a decision cannot be taken on the basis that all that is needed is sincere individuals who are prepared to martyr themselves. Local government has come under attack from the Tories for two essential reasons: it is part and parcel of the Tories' overall central strategy to attack the standard of living of the working class and hence decrease its combativeness. At the same time it is a direct attack on those councillors and councils who do want to improve services against both Tory policy and previous Labour administrations both locally and nationally. Hence the inability to fight on the part of these councillors weakens the whole movement against the Tories nationally. The fight of local councils has to break out of localism and lack of concern



# British Features

at anything that goes beyond borough boundaries.

Local councils have to become centres of resistance. They have to take on board each and every struggle that is being waged against the Tories, no matter where it is happening. That is why the GLC was correct to support the Peoples March; that is why it is right to support the campaign against nuclear weapons and Reagan's visit to Britain. That is why, on more controversial issues, it was right for Ken Livingstone to oppose consistently Britain's war in Ireland and now its war against Argentina. But in general the GLC has not gone far enough along this road and all too often it is left to the odd individual to make 'personal' statements.

## every defeat of the working class is a nail in the coffin of the GLC

Ken Livingstone and the others have pointed out that the only real option facing Labour councils is the return of a Labour government committed to socialist policies. But a Labour government elected on the defeat of the working class will be as right wing and reactionary as the Wilson/Callaghan/Healey government. That is why every defeat of the working class over the past period is a nail in the coffin of the GLC. At the same time the victories of the miners and the railworkers, as well as numerous smaller gains, have threatened the survival of the government. Thus, Labour councils like the GLC have no choice but to support openly these struggles, whether they take place in London or not. Administering County Hall to make cuts as painlessly as possible (Valerie Wise argued that the reason why she ended up voting for the budget was that if the Tories took over they would make worse cuts than Labour!), and paying out a few paltry pounds to local groups, can in no

way justify the high hopes of a year ago.

A Greater London Council and local Labour councils that openly supported the train drivers, that gave financial assistance to the workers of Laurence Scott, that came down on the side of the Barking teachers against the local Labour council, would do more for Labour's chances at the polls than 'disengaging' and causing chaos. The working class elects Labour councils and a Labour government to act in its interests, not to hand over the reigns of office to the Tories, or the SDP. The only way to oppose the cuts in services being foisted on it by the Tories was not to go into opposition, or some other variant, but to vote against each and every cut, each and every rate and rent increase and each and every loss in jobs. Then and only then was there potential for building a mass movement.

Nor is it enough for the left not on the councils to get complacent. The failure of the GLC to implement its manifesto which as Livingstone himself points out is hardly revolutionary but 'predominantly reformist' has lessons for us all. When the GLC was first elected it was seen by some, the media in particular, as a forerunner of a Labour government led by Tony Benn. There was some truth in that analogy and the present debacle bodes ill for such a future Labour government.

If Ken Livingstone thinks that such a government is the knight in shining armour to the fair maiden GLC, then who will defend that government when the forces of the state, including the courts and the army, are launched against it? The answer is the same as to who is the real saviour of the GLC: only by relying on the mass actions of the workers themselves can either this government be brought to its knees or a Labour government be forced to carry out policies in the interests of the workers and not the bosses.

TESSA VAN GELDEREN is a journalist on Socialist Challenge and an active member of the Labour Party.

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132 (march/april)

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## new left review



## Reviews



Jack Lemmon and Sissy Spacek

## MISSING

Holbrook Mahn

It's not only in Argentina where thousands of people have 'disappeared' under a military junta. In nearby Chile it has been the same story for more than eight years. A new film by Costa-Gavras, *Missing*, examines the Chilean coup afresh. Its conclusions have caused enormous controversy in the United States where the film is packing in record audiences. We reproduce a review from the US socialist weekly *The Militant* by

Holbrook Mahn.



Smoke and flames belch from Allende's Presidential Palace after it was bombed in the coup

*Missing* is based on the true story of the disappearance and execution of Charles Horman, an American writer and filmmaker, during the coup in Chile in September 1973. Horman had discovered too much information about the United States' involvement in the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende. A military coup promoted by Washington, had led to Allende's ousting on 11 September 1973, and the installation of the murderous military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet.

Costa-Gavras, whose other films include *Z*, *The Confession* and *State of Siege*, graphically depicts the vast carnage in the aftermath of the overthrow of Allende. He emphasised this horror by making a central part of *Missing* the development of a strong emotional relationship between Charles' father, played by Jack Lemmon, and Charles' wife, played by Sissy Spacek, as they search for Charles. Lemmon's and Spacek's riveting performances and Costa-Gavras' masterful direction move the action forward by reconstructing the events surrounding Charles' disappearance bit by bit through flashbacks, the recollections of witnesses, and Charles' notebook.

In *Missing*, Costa-Gavras drives home the fact that Washington was complicit in Horman's execution by making central to the film the transformation of Ed Horman, a well-to-do businessman who has his faith in the US government shattered as he discovers the truth about the murder of his son.

**Indifference of US embassy**

The Hormans run into the calculated indifference of the US embassy at every turn. The officials are all portrayed as lying bureaucrats whose false sympathy wears thin as the Hormans begin to unravel the truth about Charles' disappearance and murder. At a preview showing, Costa-Gavras answered complaints on this point by the *New York Times* and the US State Department by explaining that the Hormans said in real life that the American officials were four or five times worse than portrayed in *Missing*.

One person the Hormans had to deal with was the US Ambassador to Chile from 1971-3, Nathaniel Davis. During his tenure as Ambassador to Guatemala from 1968 to 1971



Chilean army units creating more 'missing' pe



## Reviews

when 20,000 Guatemalan peasants were massacred under a 'pacification programme'. Davis gained some experience in covering up the kind of butchery that Costa-Gavras so vividly depicts in *Missing*. Davis is currently a faculty consultant at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

A particularly telling scene in *Missing* takes place at the airport after the Hormans learn the truth about the execution of Charles and are leaving the country. Ed Horman, anxious to leave the nightmare of the last few weeks behind him, is badgered by the US Consul who keeps reminding him that Charles' remains won't be sent unless the charges for the crate and shipping are paid first. (It took seven months for the remains to arrive, by that time they were too badly decomposed for an autopsy.)

#### US government objects to film

The US State Department and the *New York Times* have objected to the strong implication in *Missing* that the US government was involved in both the murder of Charles Horman and in the overthrow of Salvador Allende. As for the assertion of complicity in the Horman murder, if the State Department played no role and had nothing to hide why don't they simply release the documents about the Horman murder that they are hiding behind the phony rubric 'Classified - National Security'. They refused to release these materials in a suit the Horman family brought against Henry Kissinger et al.

Thomas Hauser's book *The Execution of Charles Horman: an American sacrifice*, upon which the movie was based, has been reissued in the USA in paperback under the title *Missing*. It offers overwhelming proof of the US government's role in the Horman murder and is well worth reading to supplement the movie.

Diane LaVoy was a member of the Senate committee established to investigate covert activity in Chile (the Church committee) and was responsible for investigating the Horman case. She said: 'I don't think Charles Horman could have been killed without some rather full cooperation from some Americans.'

#### 'Film seemed plausible'

After viewing *Missing* Senator Frank Church said: 'Our hearing dealt with a different time

period (pre-coup), but from what we learned then the film seemed very plausible.' Of even greater concern to the State Department than the charge of US complicity in the Horman murder and the overthrow of Allende is the graphic portrayal of the brutal regime that Washington installed in Chile. It is not really a matter of debate that Pinochet was put in power to protect the \$1 billion that the US corporations had invested there and to reestablish their right to expropriate 80 per cent of the copper mined in Chile each year. The Church Committee report *Covert Action in Chile 1963-73* and Hauser's book *Missing* provide substantial proof of US involvement in the 1973 coup.

The real worry of the Reagan administration is that the record-breaking audiences seeing *Missing* will make the connection between the Pinochet regime in Chile and the Duarte regime in El Salvador and see the true face of US foreign policy. A further touchy point for Reagan is how closely his plans to destabilise the Nicaraguan economy parallel those used in Chile to set up conditions for the coup.

One of the key figures in the destabilisation was Deane R Hinton, who was the director of the Agency for International Development in Chile from 1969-71. Previously he held the same position in Guatemala during the 'pacification programme' there. He is now US Ambassador to El Salvador.

One of the strong points about *Missing* is that the inhumane brutality depicted in it can be generalised to other countries. Chile is not



John Shea

even mentioned by name in the film. 'Members of the audience who follow world events will know where they are. But there is a feeling that it could happen anywhere. At any time. To any of us. There is no ending for a story that continues into real life,' Costa-Gavras says.

This is what is so disturbing to the US State Department. *Missing* strikes too close to home. As Reagan tries to whip up pro-war sentiment, *Missing* shows how the US government operates in foreign countries and what the regimes of 'friends' like Duarte and Pinochet are really like. Besides being a very good movie *Missing* will help to fuel the anti-war sentiment in the USA.

Contact the Chile Solidarity Campaign at 129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7. Ring 01-272 4298.



Burning socialist literature in Chile after the coup





# International Features

## FOR A NUCLEAR FREE EUROPE

JOHN ROSS

As hundreds of thousands of people across Europe prepare to march against President Reagan, John Ross looks at the significance of nuclear weapons to the military strategy of imperialism. He argues that socialists should fully endorse the demand for a nuclear free Europe from Poland to Portugal.

The possession of nuclear weapons by the imperialist powers, and above all by the United States, is key to their entire contemporary military strategy. Ever since the middle of the Second World War when it became clear that Germany would be defeated, the imperialists began to prepare both to prevent post-war social revolutions and for political and military confrontation with the USSR. This was the meaning of the continual delay in opening the 'Second Front' in Western Europe against Nazi Germany; of British imperialism's continued military policy of intervention in Southern Europe and Greece, of the American use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a demonstration of strength to the Soviet Union; of the establishment by US imperialism of over 400 military bases around the perimeter of the USSR by 1949; and of the continuation after the war of the US's massive B29 and B36 heavy bomber building programme.

In the period after the war the US and other imperialist powers held back from war against the USSR for fear that a new world military conflict waged with conventional weapons would lead to the overthrow of capitalism in decisive centres of the world, and because of the need to break opposition to new wars from the US working class. Further, following a major debate which culminated in the dismissal of MacArthur as US Commander in Korea, the US ruling class concluded that the Soviet Union, despite itself having no significant number of nuclear weapons, could not be defeated militarily so long as the working class in the West remained undefeated and imperialism held only a limited arsenal of nuclear armaments.

In 1946 Lippman analysed that: 'No atomic bombardment could destroy the Red Army; it could destroy only the industrial means of supplying it. The Russian defence to atomic attack is therefore self evident; it is to over-run continental Europe with infantry, and defy us to drop atomic bombs on Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Switzerland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Sweden. The more we threaten to demolish Russian cities, the more obvious it is that the Russian defence would be to ensconce themselves in European cities.'<sup>1</sup> Such a strategy would make it impossible for US imperialism to win the war as it would destroy its trade links and major bases of its economy.

Furthermore, at that time US imperialism did not possess the technical capacity to rapidly defeat the USSR even in nuclear war. The atomic bombs of the type dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while decimating in terms of human life, could not guarantee to destroy the mighty industrial capacity of the USSR: for example the US military estimated that within thirty days of the dropping of the bomb on Hiroshima some 74 per cent of its industrial capacity could have been resumed. Nor had the massive strategic bombing of Germany, which was on the scale equivalent to an atomic attack on the USSR with the then existing technology, seriously affected its industrial capacity — production of war materials continued to rise right up until August 1944.

'Official American figures show that the early types of atomic bombs produced about the same destruction as some 2,000 tons of ordinary bombs evenly spread over the same area ... more than 1000 atomic bombs of the Hiroshima type would have been required to inflict on Germany and the occupied territories the same industrial damage as was done by the 2.7 million tons of chemical bombs actually dropped on them.'<sup>2</sup> US imperialism simply did not possess the capacity to successfully deliver 1000 atomic bombs against the USSR. It was therefore not any regard for 'peace' which held back the US ruling class from war with the USSR in the late 1940s and early 1950s, but rather a rational calculation that it would lose in such a confrontation. It did not possess the nuclear armoury to rapidly defeat the USSR, and a long drawn out war threatened both domestic unrest from the working classes in the imperialist countries and the rise of the colonial revolution.

### Atomic Weapons and the USSR

Today the technical military capacity of US imperialism is considerably higher than at the end of the Second World War. Without the capacity of military resistance by the USSR, including through nuclear weapons, the US ruling class would be able to threaten rapid mass nuclear destruction of the USSR, bringing world war far nearer. The US ruling class has seriously debated using nuclear weapons on several occasions against the colonial revolution — Korea, Vietnam. Its threats have receded because the USSR now possesses nuclear weapons. Contrary to the views of the theorists of the 'superpowers', EP Thompson's 'exterminism' and others, nuclear disarmament by the USSR while the US imperialists still possessed their nuclear arsenal would mean the inevitability of world war. It is a fact that US imperialism's threats of war against the USSR have decreased since the USSR developed nuclear weapons.

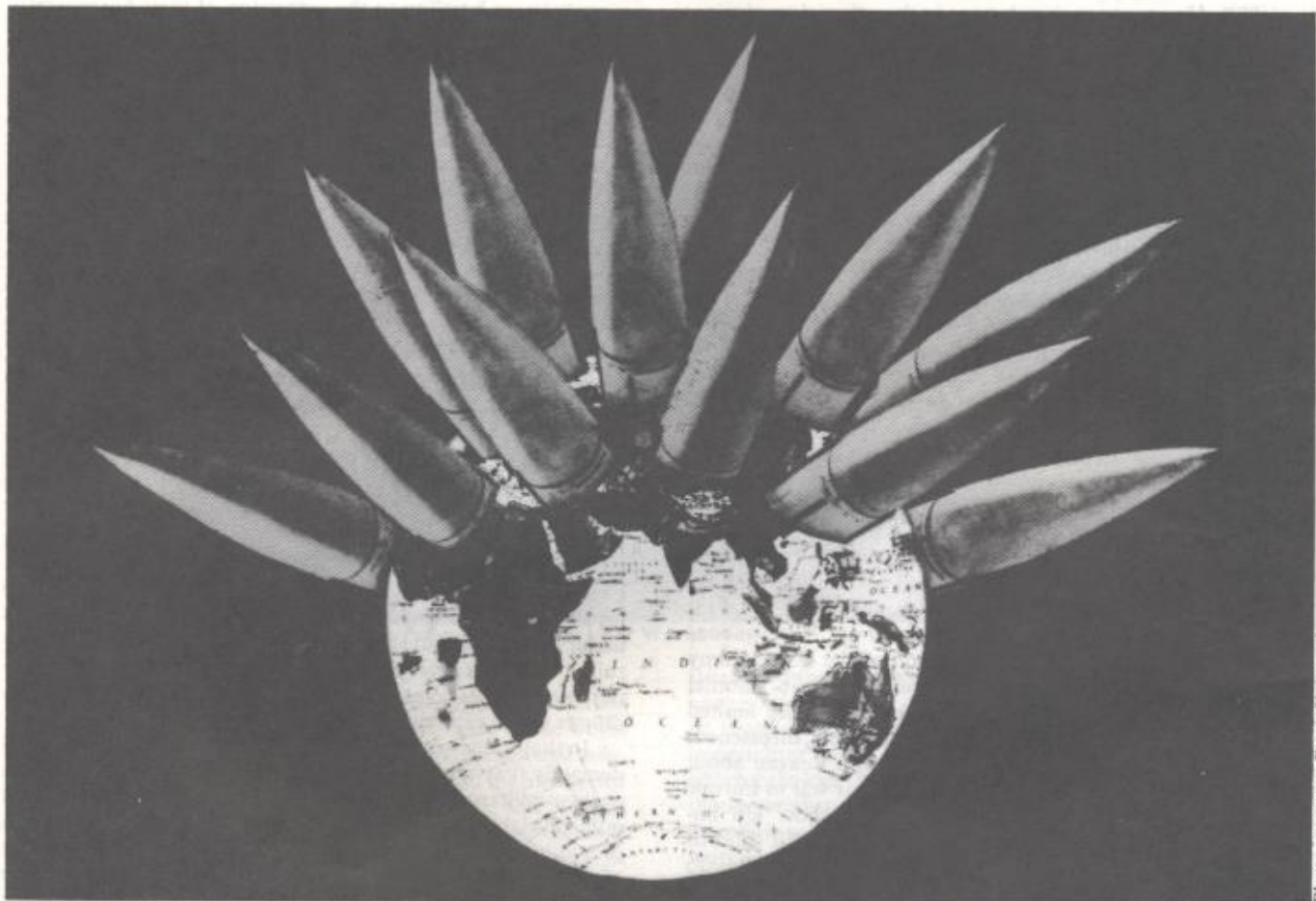
Such a recognition in no way implies acceptance of the policies of the Kremlin bureaucrats. The Soviet bureaucracy's guiding policies of peaceful coexistence and socialism in one country entail total reliance on a framework of military defence against imperialist aggression, rather than a fundamental political strategy of defence of the struggles of the international working class for socialism, within which framework military considerations are important but subordinate. The criminal policies of the Kremlin bureaucrats of stifling domestic repression and counter-revolutionary operations against the workers of Eastern Europe repel the workers of the West from socialism. Thus, defence of the workers' states against imperialism must not be confused with defence of the political or military policies of the Kremlin bureaucracy.

military domination of Western Europe is a prerequisite for any credible imperialist threat to wage war against the USSR

Yet the greatest blows to imperialism, which have limited its war threats against the USSR have precisely come from the extension of the workers' and peasants' revolution. It was the long drawn out and finally successful war of liberation led by the NLF in Vietnam which brought about and combined with the US anti-war movement to defeat US imperialism in South East Asia. This profound shock was decisive in preventing US military intervention in the Angolan civil war, the overthrow of the Shah of Iran, and the defeat of Somoza in Nicaragua. It is a major factor in the continuing difficulties which US imperialism faces in the current war in El Salvador. The international extension of the class struggle is the only path to peace. The current build-up of US military force in Europe is essential if US imperialism is to overcome the USSR's capacity in the event of war to seize the key economic areas of Western Europe



# International Features



Photomontage: Peter Kennard

and the Middle East and colonial oil and raw materials supplies to the US, thereby crushing the US economy. Military domination of Western Europe is a prerequisite for any credible imperialist threat to wage war against the USSR. The official codification of US post-war military policy, National Security Council document 68, called for 'an immediate and large scale build-up in our military and general strength, and that of our allies.' This calculated up to 20 per cent of US production in peace time could be used for military production.<sup>3</sup> In the words of one of the original formulations of this doctrine in the 1950s: 'The year of decision was to arrive when Western rearmament on land had gone far enough for the West to be able to repulse a Soviet counter-thrust into Europe. When the West had acquired this adequate strength on land, it would be able to use its nuclear power to force the Soviet Union to accept the Western terms or be bombed.'<sup>4</sup> Imperialism's military policies in Europe following the Second World War notably the decision to rearm Western Germany, were dictated by this goal.

The ability of US imperialism to pursue these objectives in the 1950s-70s was thwarted by the shift against it in the international relationship of class forces. The victory of the Chinese revolution and of the first stage of the Vietnamese revolution reinforced the fears of US imperialism that war would lead to a huge wave of the colonial revolution, threatening or destroying US world political domination and raw material supplies. Economically and technically the advance of the Soviet Union was also more rapid than anticipated, allowing it both to produce nuclear weapons far earlier than expected alongside a major conventional weapons superiority in Europe. Finally, to maintain political hegemony and stability inside the imperialist countries, the ruling classes had made major economic and political concessions to the working class throughout the post-war boom. This set objective limits on the ability of the ruling classes to expand the scale of the armaments and militarisation programme sufficiently to gain the necessary superiority over the USSR to guarantee victory in war. President Kennedy's

massive military build-up in the early 1960s aimed to overcome this situation.

The culmination of the new US armaments drive from 1960 onwards was the Vietnam war. US imperialism deployed the full weight of its military apparatus in an attempt to show it could crush any colonial revolution. In fact the three sectors of the world revolution combined to defeat it. The depth of the revolutionary struggle in Vietnam allowed the NLF to make military successes and to prolong the war far longer than US imperialism had calculated. The US economy was unable to take the strain of such a prolonged war without producing massive internal discontent and upheaval which finally made it politically impossible for the ruling class to continue. Finally the military aid of the workers' states, and above all the USSR, while far less than should have been supplied, was sufficient to enable the NLF, at the cost of appalling suffering and the devastation of the country, to defeat US imperialism and its South Vietnamese puppets. In particular the supply of military equipment from the USSR made possible the decisive military victory of 1975.

### The centrality of Cruise, Pershing and the Neutron Bomb

Since this time US imperialism has embarked upon a major campaign of rearmament, particularly aimed at Western Europe. Militarily, it hopes thus to be able to achieve such overwhelming superiority, far greater than at the time of Vietnam, to rapidly win a war before opposition mounts inside the United States. Politically, it aims to use the crimes of the Soviet bureaucracy, which conveniently provides it with regular new material as with Czechoslovakia and Poland, to discredit socialism and the colonial revolution, thereby strengthening imperialism's ideological hold over the working class and extending its room for manoeuvre before domestic opposition to war develops.

The immediate target of imperialism's attention is the colonial revolution rather than reconquest of Eastern Europe of



# International Features

the USSR. However a major element in the colonial revolution is the supply of weapons and military support from the workers' states. A key goal of imperialist policy is to block this aid to the colonial revolution, through threats of war against the USSR — this was Nixon's policy in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war for example. But for this threat to be credible imperialism must possess the military strength to either win a war in Western Europe, or to be capable of defending it against a defensive counter-attack by the USSR necessitated by US imperialism's declaration of war.

This is the context in which the imperialists are planning to introduce the US Neutron Bomb, and Pershing and Cruise missiles into Western Europe. To achieve sufficient superiority in *conventional* military terms to defeat the USSR in a war in Western Europe would require a level of armaments expenditure, conscription in the army, and cuts in living standards, that could only be achieved following a crushing defeat of the working classes in the imperialist countries — witness the difficulties of the imperialists in Europe in even achieving NATO's projected 3 per cent increases in military spending this year.

The new weapons deployed by US imperialism are designed to shift the military relation of forces to allow it to 'win' or 'draw' a conflict with the USSR in Europe. US imperialism cannot credibly threaten the USSR with all-out military conflict, with the certainty of the destruction of the US economy which this entails, over every development in the colonial revolution. It must rather be able to threaten more limited military conflicts when its interests are seriously threatened. Hence the apparently 'wild talk' by Haig and Reagan about conventional war in Europe, a 'limited' nuclear war in Europe and the like. They are threats designed to show US imperialism's preparedness to wage a war with the USSR short of 'mutually assured destruction' to blackmail the USSR into ceasing its interventions into the colonial revolution.

## the Neutron Bomb, Cruise and Pershing missiles are absolutely central to US global strategy

For this reason the Neutron Bomb, and Cruise and Pershing missiles are not something incidental to US policy, but absolutely central to its global strategy. They cannot and will not be abandoned by the US ruling class without the threat of a major shift in the relation of forces against it. Fortunately such a shift may well occur as hundreds of thousands of people correctly recognise that these weapons bring the threat of war significantly closer, and understand the relation between this drive to war and the second prong of the capitalists' offensive, the drive to cut the living standards of the working class.

### The importance of the anti-nuclear movements

It is no accident that the movement against the missiles and nuclear weapons is the largest international movement in Europe since the Second World War — qualitatively larger than the Vietnam war movement, nor that it has begun to find an expression even in the imperialist heartland of the United States itself. The strength of the anti-militarisation movement in Europe stems from its particular combination of all three sectors of the world revolution. First, the domination of the imperialist ruling classes has been weakened by the heightened exposure of their brutal nature in the Vietnam conflict, and by the profound crisis of the capitalist economies themselves. These have combined to produce a wider pool of discontent than even at the time of the Vietnam war.

Secondly, the developing colonial revolution continues to sap the political strength of imperialism. For example the majority of the American people would be openly cynical about official explanations for an intervention into El Salvador and at least a vocal minority would actively oppose it. Finally, despite

overwhelming hostility to the repression of their bureaucratic rulers, the strength of the workers' states is clearly shown by the mass fear of their military might. No significant section of the workers in the West seriously believes that a nuclear war with the USSR could be 'won' in any meaningful sense of the word. Indeed the majority of the population know that they would die in the attempt. It is the combination of these factors that fuels the anti-militarisation movements and explains their enormous scope even in countries where the economic crisis is not relatively deep. It is vital that revolutionary Marxists support these movements to the maximum.

## no workers in the West believe nuclear war with the USSR could be 'won' in any meaningful sense of the word

The starting point for any Marxist view on militarism is the class character of the state. It is impossible for the working class to disarm the ruling class under capitalism as this would be the equivalent of the very destruction of the capitalist system itself and its state which is founded on violence against the working class and the oppressed. All weapons possessed by the ruling class will be used against the workers of the world. In that sense revolutionary socialists do not oppose 'excessive' armaments under capitalism, but rather demand the total disarming of the ruling class through socialist revolution. That is why revolutionary socialists refuse to vote for any war budgets and expenditures under capitalism.

In that framework socialists support partial movements and demands that take the struggle in the direction of the fight against militarism and capitalism — from extending civil and political rights into the military, abolition of separate systems of military 'justice', the holding of referenda on war, cuts in the arms budget and so on. Each concession wrung from the capitalists weakens their military apparatuses. It is the same with nuclear weapons, which we have shown play a central part in the military strategy of the imperialists. In fact nuclear weapons are in many ways capitalist weapons par excellence, allowing the maximum destructive power to be technically concentrated in the minimum number of hands, thereby offsetting the numerical superiority and strength of the working class. Even the total 'abandonment' of nuclear weapons by the capitalist classes would be fraudulent as they would still retain the technical means with which to rapidly remanufacture them. But hindering their ability to use them gains precious time for the working class and alters the relation of forces in its favour. Hence the struggle of the working class against capitalism is indissolubly tied to the struggle to remove the imperialists' nuclear weapons.

Military relations between imperialism and the USSR and the other workers' states have to be approached in this framework. While the latter must be defended against imperialist aggression this in no way implies acceptance of the military or political policies of the Soviet and other bureaucracies. In fact the relation of class forces on an international scale is not the same as that between imperialism and the so-called 'socialist camp'. The only two camps which exist are those of different classes — the international working class and the international ruling classes. The military strength of the workers' states is an important factor within that framework — without it, Hitler would never have been defeated in the Second World War, the revolution would never have been victorious or have been maintained in China, the Cuban revolution would long ago have been destroyed by US imperialism, and the Vietnamese would never have won their war against US imperialism. But the struggle against imperialist militarism cannot be reduced to reliance on the military strength of the USSR, or the false idea of the USSR defeating the imperialists militarily. The destruction of the military apparatuses of the imperialists is a task which can only be carried out by the international working class as a whole, and by the working classes in



# International Features



Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin meet to carve up the globe after World War Two

the imperialist heartlands in particular.

The fundamental policy for the struggle against militarism and the threat of war is support for and advance of the world revolution in all its three sectors — the colonial and neo-colonial revolution, in the workers' states and in the imperialist centres. The idea of bourgeois, social democratic and Stalinist forces that the class struggle 'provokes' wars and militarism is false. It is only the advance of the class struggle that stays the hands of the imperialists, any retreat and abandonment of class struggle makes war more likely. Just as the renunciation by the working class of revolution leads to the inevitable bloodbaths of the Chilean type, so the retreat from class struggle encourages the imperialists to launch bloody wars. It was the failure of the social democratic and Stalinist parties to take up arms to crush fascism before it came to power that allowed the Second World War to be prepared — with a loss of life incomparably greater than would have been needed to crush Nazism in its embryo in Germany. It is extension of the international class struggle that alone can prevent world nuclear wars.

## extension of the international class struggle alone can prevent world nuclear wars

Every defeat for imperialism by the colonial revolution weakens its future ability to wage wars, discredits its military apparatus, and exposes the real goals of the imperialists to ever broader sectors of the population. It is precisely in the arena of the colonial revolution that the imperialists intend the most serious use of military force against the international working class over the next years. Solidarity with the colonial revolution will therefore be a central issue for the anti-militarist movement, most immediately that means defence of the revolutions in the Caribbean and Central America against threatened military aggression by US imperialism. It was Che Guevara who put forward the essential strategic line of march for the colonial revolution with his famous slogan: 'Create two, three, many Vietnams'. The best way to maximise the chances of victory and to minimise the losses in any struggle with US imperialism is through stretching the US military machine to its utmost, to divide its strength between a series of different conflicts.

### Support for political revolution in the workers' states

The struggle for peace in the deformed and degenerated workers' states means resolute support for the anti-bureaucratic revolution. This is not because the bureaucracies

threaten war against the capitalist states — on the contrary they have no such interests or intentions — but because their policies of repression in their own countries and collaboration with imperialism in the colonial world and the imperialist centres which provides the greatest single support on a world scale to the imperialist war-mongers. Stalinism is the best weapon the imperialists have both to discredit socialism in the eyes of the working classes and to justify their own militarism.

Every victory for the bureaucratic repression in the workers' states is therefore also a victory for the imperialists, increasing their ability to wage war and utilise nuclear weapons. The single biggest blow to the anti-militarist movement in recent months was the crackdown against Solidarnosc by the Polish and Soviet bureaucrats. Indeed the more cynical ruling class spokespersons in the West openly speculated on how best to use the military crackdown to disorient the anti-war movements and to ideologically sharpen their polemics with 'communism'. The extent of the imperialists' concern for the Polish workers can be gauged both by the measures they proposed to respond to the Polish crisis — cutting off economic links and aid, which imposed further suffering on the Polish people — and by the fact that it is the imperialists who have *hundreds* of nuclear missiles pointing directly at the Polish people, threatening them with daily physical annihilation.

It is vital that the international labour movement comes forward as the real champion of the cause of Solidarnosc and that the anti-militarist movements defend the interests of the workers in Eastern Europe. Failure to take such a lead will both reinforce the credibility of the bourgeoisie's ideological stance against the USSR and Eastern Europe, and weaken the links between the workers of the West and the East, seriously undermining the appeal of the anti-militarist and peace movements.

### Class struggle in the imperialist countries

For revolutionary socialists campaigning against the military drive of the imperialists goes hand in hand with promotion of the overall class struggle in the capitalist countries. They do not accept that 'peace' can be achieved outside the framework of the overthrow of their own ruling class. From that point of view linking the struggle against militarism to that against austerity is vitally necessary. It is no accident that the theme of 'Jobs not War', 'Jobs not Bombs', 'Butter not Guns' has appeared in the anti-militarist movements of the major imperialist countries. Every defence of working class living standards against austerity makes it more difficult for the imperialists to finance their war plans, and strengthens the anti-militarist movements.



# International Features

Revolutionary socialists not only fight against any attempt at imperialist war, but also try to show that the struggle against militarism will only be finally successful through the revolutionary socialist overthrow of the ruling classes. Such an approach affects tactics and orientation within the anti-missiles movements. For example they show how the bourgeois forces who come behind the 'peace' bandwagon fear and oppose the most effective proletarian methods of struggle to win it — mass extra-parliamentary action by the labour movement. Socialists direct their demands towards their own ruling class above all, for unilateral disarmament, as well as supporting every partial demand against nuclear weapons and imperialist militarism. The achievement of the demand for a nuclear free Europe from Poland to Portugal would be an enormous shift in the international relation of forces, and would gigantically weaken the imperialists militarily. It would also be a huge step forward in the defence of the USSR, which maintains crucial superiority in the field of conventional weapons in Europe and continues to have this possibility as long as the working classes in the West are not crushed (this is why incidentally even the Soviet bureaucracy supports this demand). Furthermore, it would mean the nuclear disarming of the two most powerful bourgeoisies outside the United States that possess nuclear weapons — the British and the French — reducing them to client powers in the military field. For this reason the achievement of this demand is extremely improbable. Maintenance and extension of its nuclear policy in Europe is so crucial to imperialist policy that it would entail the most enormous working class victory against imperialism to force its abandonment.

## a nuclear free Europe from Poland to Portugal would gigantically weaken the imperialists militarily

The demand for a nuclear free Europe from Poland to Portugal is so dangerous to imperialism because it cannot be confused with general calls for 'disarmament' East and West — the multilateralist utopia which concretely lets the imperialists off the hook of unilateral disarmament. Rather it is a demand for unilateral disarmament by the European imperialist powers and for an end to US imperialist nuclear plans for Europe, without demanding an end to Soviet nuclear weapons prior to complete imperialist disarmament. The demand is also against European imperialism in that it rejects European nuclear weapons to replace US ones in Europe. Precisely because the demand is so antagonistic to imperialism it is in practice not fought for by reformists such as E P Thompson, who instead support the 'zero option' of accepting existing US and European nuclear weapons in Europe while demanding the USSR gives up its most advanced weapons.

The achievement of the demand for a nuclear free Europe from Poland to Portugal would qualitatively strengthen the military defence of the USSR against imperialist aggression. Though as we have already insisted such an argument in no way endorses the foreign or domestic policies of the Soviet bureaucrats which undermine the gains of the workers' states. Indeed the USSR would powerfully aid the anti-militarist movements in the West by campaigning on its 'official' support for the devastatingly simple demand for the renunciation by all sides of all nuclear weapons worldwide. Such a demand would completely undermine the entire military strategy of imperialism without jeopardising the USSR's defence, as well as powerfully attacking the ideological justification of the imperialists for nuclear weapons — the so-called 'Soviet threat'.

Of course the demand for a nuclear free Europe from Poland to Portugal must go alongside those for unilateral disarmament in each country, which remains the immediate priority, and for opposition to NATO, the imperialists' war alliance which coordinates and develops its military and nuclear strategy. While a non-nuclear NATO might be unthinkable

militarily for imperialism, nevertheless any illusions in NATO's 'conventional' weapons, armies and 'defence' systems should be exposed within the anti-militarist movement, which at this stage is really united only around opposition to the next generation of nuclear weapons — Cruise, Trident, Pershing and the Neutron Bomb. But whether all the supporters of the demand for a nuclear free Europe realise it or not, their demand would in fact represent a mortal blow to NATO strategy.

The importance of the demand within the growing movement against militarism should not be underestimated. The fact that over a million people demonstrated against the missiles over a period of a few weeks in European cities last autumn, and that hundreds of thousands more are expected to greet Reagan's visits to European capitals in June this year, shows the growing international trend of this movement. Such a development should be welcomed as the campaign against imperialist war-mongering entails not just international coordination and campaigns but also such international demands to unify the movement. Opposition to the missiles, the Neutron Bomb, and NATO, combined with the demand for a nuclear free Europe from Poland to Portugal can provide such a unifying campaign.

Further, this demand has the added usefulness of uniting both the working classes of Eastern and Western Europe. This is vitally important for any revolutionary strategy for Europe to create an internationalist consciousness within the working class vanguard of Europe as a whole. It is also necessary to solidify the links between mass opposition movements in Eastern Europe such as Solidarnosc with their Western European working class counterparts.

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1. *From Yalta to Vietnam*, Horowitz, p253.
2. Horowitz, op cit, p272.
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JOHN ROSS is a leading member of the Fourth International and a regular contributor to *International*.

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Critical Social Policy is a new journal which will serve as a forum to encourage and develop an understanding of social policy from radical, feminist and socialist perspectives. The only collective editorial policy is a common opposition to the radical right and an awareness of the inadequacies of orthodox theories of welfare to meet its challenges. Within this project we wish to encourage contributions from a plurality of perspectives. Our priority is to develop a debate about political strategies and we will develop a format which will appeal to a varied audience of academics, practitioners and activists. It is intended that the journal will be international in its content and audience.

### Contents of next issue: Summer 1982

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 Vincente Navarro: The international capitalist crisis and welfare  
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# International Features

## 'THERE IS NO THIRD WAY'

In all the international interest in the crisis of El Salvador, the voices of the mass guerilla organisations have gone largely unheard. We reprint excerpts from interviews with two leading figures from the FDR-FMLN.

### ANA GUADELUPE MARTINEZ

Today, when the smallest country in Central America is about to open the door that will lead to a new society, it is worth reflecting politically on some of the more interesting aspects of the Salvadorean process. We sincerely and modestly believe that the organisational, social and political experiences that our people have accumulated will be useful for all those Latin American liberation movements for whom the taking of power is still some way off.

We are always asked one question without fail during our tours and interviews with government and media representatives: What sort of society will exist in El Salvador after the triumph of the popular struggle? Our immediate reaction to this question is that if these questioners understood the character of the Salvadorean revolution and the origins of the present struggle, then they would themselves find the answer to their query.

Only a few doubt the existence of a strong mass movement based in every oppressed sector of Salvadorean society. This organised mass movement has had a clear objective of taking power since the very beginning of its formation. It has understood the long and patient task of constructing the political and military instruments which will lead to victory.

This organised mass movement — and with it the great majority of the people — has learnt, first and foremost in the rich school of experience, that the different forms which the holders of political and economic power used to preserve their status were only tricks to deceive them. Thus, after the electoral experiences of 1972 and 1977, the Salvadorean people understood in a simple way something that theory had outlined many decades earlier: that electoral democracy, in our present socio-economic formations and with the coercive apparatus in the hands of the dominant class, is meaningless. It is understandable then, that Salvadoreans, with this experience, grimace when Duarte and others like him, start spouting off with promises through elections. Since 1932, and above all in the last decade, the Salvadorean mass movement has cemented the bases on which the new society will be built.

As the history of previous revolutions teaches us, the conditions that define the process after the overthrow of the dominant class are intimately tied to, and determined by, the political and social characteristics that the process acquired during the previous stage. Therefore we can foresee that the new Salvadorean society and its ideological, political and economic transformations will have a common denominator: the broadest and most active participation of the masses. If this were not to be the case, then the Salvadorean revolution which is costing us so dear in blood, would be condemned in advance to failure.

The Salvadorean masses will not only demand of their governments and of their Revolutionary Democratic Government an honest administration in their interests, but also, and this is something that we will always push, they will demand the broadest participation. The Salvadorean people will not only be the beneficiaries of the new society, they will also be its designers, and in this way they will be able to build the country and face all the difficulties and sacrifices which will be



Ana Guadalupe Martinez

necessary in the next stage.

It is on this immutable basis that the revolutionary democratic alliance which will synthesise the government and the institutions of power must be understood. We are conscious that the homogenisation of the democratic and revolutionary sectors and of the social democratic, social Christian currents, of the patriotic soldiers, and the Marxists won't be a straightforward process. But we are also convinced that the most difficult task, the convergence around a common project, is already achieved.

In this long road that we have travelled apart, the social democratic and social Christian currents have understood that no third way exists, that a policy of social reforms which does not alter the basic structures and does not question the state apparatus, is no more than a vain illusion. The patriotic soldiers have grasped in the same way that their commendable loyalty to a sovereign and just fatherland cannot coexist with a power that serves the imperialist interests.

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We, the Marxists, the new Salvadorean Left, have begun to elaborate — and we have further to go — a genuine strategy by learning from our successes and failures at key points in our relationships with sectors that do not see themselves as Marxist, the conception of the pluralist profile of the revolution, the in-



# International Features

ternational policy based on the principle of non-alignment, and much else.

All the currents of the Salvadorean revolution are forced to enrich their understanding through an effort at synthesis. If we eliminate vacillation and distrust on the one hand, dogmatism and sterile radicalism on the other, we will be able to crystallise — we are already doing it — a single revolutionary democratic project which will open the way towards the solution of the great evils of Salvadorean society.

Our people, who can show the world how to suffer but also how to hope, have demonstrated enough vitality to achieve the insurrectional triumph today and the revolutionary victory tomorrow. The swords are raised and the most diverse final

assaults are just beginning. Many of the best will not reach the final reckoning; the situation is as the Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano once wrote: 'A close relationship exists between the intensity of the threat and the brutality of the reply.'

**ANA GUADELUPE MARTINEZ** is a Comandante of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, a member of the Diplomatic-Political Commission of the FMLN-FDR, and a member of the national leadership of the ERP (one of the five revolutionary organisations making up the FMLN). This article has been reproduced from the 19 February issue of *Nuevo Diario*, published in Managua, Nicaragua.



Photo: Christian Poveda

## 'WE ARE INTENSIFYING THE WAR'

**SALVADOR SAMAYOA**

The general offensive in January demonstrated the huge qualitative and quantitative growth of the revolutionary forces. The balance of forces has changed in favour of the people. Today it is accepted that there is a situation of military stalemate in El Salvador, there being such a massive difference in the arms that the enemy possesses and those that we have. This stalemate illustrates clearly that the popular forces are growing without interruption, while the enemy is collapsing, going down in a deep economic, political and military deterioration.

We are fighting in 13 of the 14 departments of El Salvador. We are intensifying the war, extending our territorial control and our logistic and communications corridors. We are consolidating the popular power and the arming of the masses.

There was a substantial growth in every aspect from January to July.

As well as this, it is significant that the present North American model of direct intervention in El Salvador is not working. Since June the special Quick Response Unit, trained by the North Americans, has been in combat. This unit has operated in three areas so far and failed completely in all of them. And this was the force on which the imperialists were relying so as not to have to use their own forces! This fact marks a new political and military turning point. The USA already knows that its model of counter-insurgency is exhausted. It knows that it must change the nature of its intervention because the Salvadorean army cannot efficiently absorb, in the short term, more military aid. More military aid is being negotiated urgently but there is a problem about who is going to use it — the government troops grow increasingly demoralised every day because they aren't winning the war.



# International Features

On the other hand, our comrades in Guatemala are intensifying their revolutionary organisation. This complicates the regional picture for imperialism. The two sides are clearly drawn: on the one hand, the possibility that the revolutionary movement takes power; on the other, a direct North American intervention. There has to be a resolution, and the moment of resolution is coming.

That is why I believe that the balance of forces on a national level, and the balance of forces on a Central American and international level, is favourable to the revolutionary movement. But this fact has its counterside and that is the increasing possibility of imperialist intervention.

We know that this will have enormous political and diplomatic costs for them. In particular, it will have enormous military costs for the USA. They can get into El Salvador but to get out will be more difficult. Any analysis of the military situation shows that intervention in Central America — just to consider only Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua — would mean something like half a million troops. In El Salvador alone they would have to send something like 30,000 air-transported troops. Because of the type of operation it is obvious that in the first week of combat at least a quarter of them will die. This will mean that they will have to replace and increase the number of troops. This will be an enormous political problem for the USA. Now, to intervene in El Salvador is to regionalise the conflict.

We have very beautiful mountains on the border with Honduras, we are not going to be removed from there within 30 years. There is all the Guatemalan jungle; the Nicaraguan territory is extensive and the Nicaraguans are ready, organised into militias. If the North Americans intervene and try to do what they did in Vietnam, they will have the same fate as they found in Vietnam.

To talk about the balance of forces we have to understand two things: that this process is dynamic; and that it is a revolutionary popular war and not a conventional war. Since 1970, when the first political and military revolutionary organisation

was created in El Salvador, the process has been one of constant evolution in favour of the people in every way. The fact that we started with a .22 rifle and now have an army shows this process.

The popular war is a dynamic process and the people especially the peasants, play a very important role in providing arms. The production of home-made armaments is very significant. We have mined whole areas with mines made in our own workshops, within the country. On the other hand, all the weapons that the North Americans provide to the army follows an economic law called 'the law of diminishing returns'. They will ask for more and more arms, which will be useful to them to the extent that more equipment arrives, but there will come a

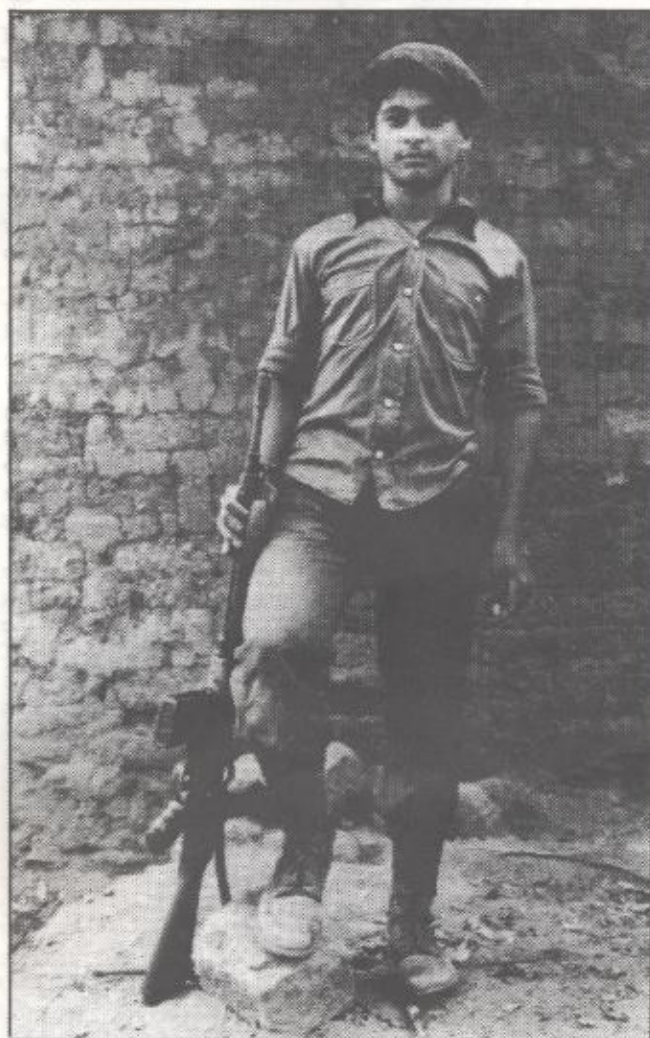


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point at which they won't be able to use it properly.

Let us look at what the absorption capacity of the war means. At a given time, these arms that are given to the army start being progressively acquired by the people, recovered during combat. We have recovered artillery pieces, mortars, grenade launchers, and the quantities taken away are very high.

I think that the solidarity tasks are those of material support, of the stopping, by all possible means, of imperialist intervention and of support to the refugee civilian population. These tasks that must be taken up in a combative way. It is a priority task to stop the intervention. But we also need material solidarity — aid in food, medicaments, money where possible and according to each people and each revolutionary organisation.

**SALVADOR SAMAYOA** is a representative of the FPL (another of the revolutionary organisations in the FMLN) on the Diplomatic-Political Commission of the FMLN-FDR. The article is reprinted from the January 1982 issue of *Combate* (Sweden).



# British Features

## LABOUR'S YOUTH MOVEMENTS

JULIAN ATKINSON

In the second part of his article on Labour's youth movements, Julian Atkinson reviews the battles between the Labour leadership and its youth section from 1955 to 1970.

In 1955 Labour destroyed its ailing infant, the League of Youth. The decline of the League was partly due to the organisational constrictions applied to it and the refusal to allow it any political role. But the defeat of Bevanism and the depoliticisation caused by the long economic boom also caused major losses from the constituency parties (CLPs) and the youth organisation. The Transport House apparatus had never welcomed the League of Youth, and as it became progressively enfeebled, the itch to put the League down became too great to be resisted.

In place of the League came the Youth Sections. There were to be no inter-branch connections and national and regional machinery had been dissolved. Within Transport House the Youth Sections were the most popular of the various Labour Youth organisations. The sense of achievement must have been similar to that of the Japanese gardener who first created a full grown tree which stood six inches high. The Youth sections too were perfect in every detail. And they were so small that when they opened their miniature mouths, none of their left wing slogans could be heard.

The Youth Sections were run nationally by a sub-committee of a sub-committee of the National Executive (NEC). This body was rarely convened and sparsely attended. During the political excitement of Hungary and Suez, some rumours of these great events reached the Sections and there was a growth until a peak of 301 branches were in existence. After this a steady and uninterrupted decline took place. The strict supervision and absence of any structure beyond branch level made it certain that the Party would not be troubled by youth. It also seemed to ensure that the Party would have no youth.

### The H-bomb

But some changes were taking place. A new current of radicalism was growing and the focus of its interest was the hydrogen bomb. The majority of Labour youth were critical of the Labour Party's official policy — unilateral disarmament was considered the necessary attitude for Britain to take.<sup>1</sup> May Day 1958 saw the sections involved in raising the issue of the bomb. The youth contingent on the Glasgow May Day march shouted 'Ban the Tories' and 'Ban the Bomb'. The YS contingent in Leeds carried posters against rocket sites and the same was true of Liverpool and London.<sup>2</sup>

In January 1959 a number of Youth Sections attended a co-ordinating meeting in Luton. A statement was issued and sent out to other Youth Sections: 'This meeting considers that the isolation of the Youth Sections from each other is a major cause of their present weakness and thus a threat to the whole future of the labour movement.'<sup>3</sup> The letter ended with a call for a delegate conference in February. The conference attracted 40 delegates from London, the Home Counties and Merseyside. A committee was set up to establish a permanent form of cooperation. A weekend school was arranged and it was decided to build for the Aldermaston march.

These feeble signs of life in the patient were sufficient to seriously alarm the surgeons of Transport House. The London Labour Party circularised all its constituent CLPs and Youth Sections against unofficial actions or bodies. But before

Transport House could send out a punitive expedition national events intervened. Constitutions were about to be re-written.

From 1953, there had been a slump in the individual membership of the Labour Party. Gaitskell and the 'revisionists' such as Crossland and Jenkins had defeated the left in order to modernise and popularise the Party among moderate voters. The fruits of this policy were a haemorrhage of membership and votes as Labour went down to defeat in the 1955 and 1959 elections. The Labour Party found it almost impossible to recruit young people. In February 1959 a series of articles on 'The ageing Labour Party' by Anthony Howard

the Labour Party found it almost impossible to recruit young people

appeared in the *Guardian*.<sup>4</sup> They shocked the Party leadership ship by giving an uncomfortably accurate account of the Party's youth troubles. In addition to irreverent references to 'tired grizzled men and grey-haired care-worn women' they drew attention to the success of unofficial and youthful socialist organisations such as the New Left Clubs.

### The turn to youth

These articles backed up the proposal of Anthony Greenwood that a working party be set up to study the problems of youth recruitment and to report back to the NEC. The working party included George Brinham, Anthony Greenwood, Jim Callaghan, Harry Nicholas and Alan Williams. Also some people with knowledge of youth were co-opted on to the group. Anthony Greenwood told the author in 1965 that the working party made slow progress. He believed that some of the Transport House staff were dragging their heels. Alan Williams wrote: 'By the end of the Commission nearly everybody under forty hated everybody over forty.'

The report was presented to the NEC a week prior to the 1959 conference after the general election defeat in which the Labour Party had done particularly badly among young voters. Brinham, however, gave no details to conference of the working party's report which had caused considerable discussion on the NEC. A long contribution finally arrived at a breathtaking conclusion: 'If we are going to make a sustained and regular effort to recruit young people to the party, we shall have to devote more resources from the party to the recruitment of youth.'<sup>5</sup>

The contributions from the floor of conference were more useful. The brash, radical MP for Greenwich, Richard Marsh — it was rumoured he had once worn a CND badge at his selection meeting — made some points: 'If we have a youth movement and it is worth having, it will not be polite and respectful but will pass resolutions of no confidence in everybody on the platform, tell us what is wrong with the leadership of the party and inform us how we can have the socialist revolution in the next 24 hours. If they did not do these things they would not be any good to the movement, anyway.'<sup>6</sup>

### The Young Socialists established

In January 1960 the Young Socialists were officially formed and in February a model constitution and standing orders were produced. The new body was to be an integral part of the Labour Party, but it was to have a national structure and a national conference that would take political resolutions and elect a national committee. It was even envisaged that it would control its own youth paper.

The constitution was more liberal than previous ones. But it was only a half-way house to the autonomous movement that the Manchester Left Club had called for in their influential pamphlet calling for 'a new Young Socialist Organisation



# British Features

to be set up'. Verbal guarantees that a Young Socialist paper would have a democratic editorial board were suitably vague.<sup>7</sup> Area federations and regional committees were required not to discuss politics. The constitution still firmly 'integrated' the youth under the control of the National Agent's office, which placed a question mark on the ability of the YS to carry out its own campaigns.

The branch-by-branch adoption of the new liberal constitution exemplified the tensions in a set-up that raised expectations but only went halfway to allow them to be achieved. The meeting of the Eltham YS was not atypical. There was a meeting of about 50 Young Socialists. We were politically very inexperienced, some wore CND badges, and some were along mainly for the dances. Two unsmiling middle-aged men at the front had come to get us to adopt the constitution. They were full time workers for the party. One of the Young Socialists asked whether the constitution could be amended and what would happen if we did not vote for the document at this meeting. The man from the London Labour Party replied immediately: 'The first, you can't. On the second, we will close you down.' The meeting went very quiet and then there were a series of whispered consultations. The constitution was proposed and seconded. Two voted for, one against and all the others abstained. Our political education had started.

the history of previous youth organisations showed the first victim of inner party struggle was the youth

Whatever problems were to lie ahead did not impede a rapid growth of the YS. The 288 Youth Section branches in December 1959 rose to 608 YS branches in October 1960 and then to 726 by April 1961. The political roots of the growth of the YS are easy to identify. Large numbers of young people were radicalising. Nuclear weapons was the major focus of their attention. But other issues such as the apprentice strike of April 1960 and the anti-apartheid campaign drew people into the YS. The dangers facing the youth organisation were equally clear. The Labour Party was in crisis as the Left had won its biggest victory over the Right since the War at the 1960 party conference.

The history of previous youth organisations showed that the first victim of inner party struggle was the youth. And although the YS had a less restrictive constitution than its predecessors it soon became clear that the Regional Youth Officers intended to control the branches in their areas. Some 72 per cent of the Labour Party's grant to finance the YS was used in paying the salaries of the RYO's<sup>8</sup>, who were often used in general party work. When they were involved with the YS, they acted as political sheep dogs, or vainly tried to interest young activists in healthy alternatives such as five-a-side football or canvassing.

The first serious problem arose over the proposed YS newspaper *New Advance*. There was no elected editorial board. Instead an advisory committee of four was elected from the YS National Committee. One left winger resigned from this advisory body after the first meeting saying that it was a waste of time as it exercised no real control.<sup>9</sup> *New Advance* was launched in November 1960. True, there was no elected editorial board and Transport House just appointed Roger Protz from their Press and Publicity Department, but Protz was of Young Socialist age. The first months of publication did not quiet the alarm of the critics. Only one article appeared on the key issue of unilateralism. The circulation barely struggled to 4000 and those in the know dropped heavy hints that little of this was actually paid for. The majority of the YS members never considered *New Advance* as their paper. The papers produced by the left were to have far more influence and positive support among the YS rank and file.

## The Socialist Labour League

The Marxist Left at this period was far smaller than today. The dominant organisation, in fact the only truly national group, was the Socialist Labour League. This was not the crazed caricature of itself that it became later as the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP). But even by the late fifties elements of degeneration could be seen. It had split from the Fourth International in 1953 and the very erratic functioning of the International Committee did not provide a sufficient counterweight to purely national pressures. After 1956 the SLL won a series of recruits from the CP who were vigorous and incisive but whose politics were often marked by brash crudity. *The Newsletter*, the SLL paper edited by Peter Fryer, was fine in many respects but was marred by ill thought positions — such as support for the United Nations, alongside an increasingly ultra left line on other issues.

This political degeneration became more acute when the SLL refused to take part in the moves to reunify the other Trotskyist forces into the Fourth International which was completed in 1963. It led to a series of splits within the SLL as many of its leaders were expelled or left. The internal regime of the League became extremely undemocratic and dissident members were assaulted. When Fryer left the SLL he was so scared that he went into hiding and squads of SLL supporters were sent to find him. His companion was alternately told that Fryer had had a nervous breakdown and had to be found or that the ports and airports were being watched and Fryer could not escape!

In 1960 these already-existing aspects of degeneration were not fully developed. The youth paper associated with the SLL but published by Hendon North and Wembley North YS branches, *Keep Left*, had a large and growing influence. As early as 6 November 1960 150 delegates attended a *Keep Left* conference in Manchester which supported the Scarborough unilateralist decision and the five MPs, including Michael Foot, who were expelled from the parliamentary party for voting against the defence estimates.



The NEC saw *Keep Left* as a threat. On 23 November it wrote to the Hendon North and Wembley North YS branches that: 'It is not the function of a branch or branches of the Young Socialists to issue a journal for national circulation.' The YS The YS replied quickly to this attempt to censor the spread of opinion. By December the number of sponsoring branches had increased to fifteen, and by April 1961 this number had risen to thirty-five — a figure that included a number of branches that supported other left currents but wished to take a stand against the incipient witch-hunt.

In 1960 the other left groups were very small. The precursor to the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) had under fifty members, mainly based in London. On their initiative a paper *Rebel* was produced, based on YS and Young CND branches. The Revolutionary Socialist League, which later dissolved to set up



# British Features

the *Militant* tendency, possessed only nuclei in London, Liverpool and South Wales. Their youth paper *Rally* was duplicated. The embryo of the precursor to the International Marxist Group (IMG) was a handful of people mainly in Nottingham who irregularly produced a local edition of a youth paper also called *Rally*. Only the SLL was effectively nationally organised. This, together with the new wave of radicalisation, meant that the political map was not drawn. Huge areas of the country were unknown to the left groups which had often only vague reports of what other isolated currents were up to. The unified left paper *Young Guard*, founded September 1961, was preceded by a welter of Stanley and Livingstone encounters.

## The 1961 YS conference

The first YS conference held on Easter Saturday and Sunday 1961 was crucial in creating a national structure and debate. The date itself was controversial as many YS members wanted to attend the four days of the Aldermaston march but had to compromise and sandwich the conference inside two days of marching. The conference was an undoubted success. The 381 delegates present were enthusiastic and noisy. There were political resolutions, even if they had to be vetted by the local general management committee (GMC) before being submitted. The conference decisions showed that the YS was firmly committed to the left.

A resolution calling for unilateral renunciation of the H-bomb and withdrawal from NATO was passed by 222 votes to 97. By 189 to 113 the resignation of Hugh Gaitskell was demanded due to his attitude to the decision of the Scarborough conference. The conference also came out in favour of: democratic control of *New Advance*; a new YS constitution to be drawn up by the YS National Committee; the election of all officers; the right to decide policy by discussion at any organisational level; and unrestricted publication of independent YS newspapers.

The undoubted sensation of the conference concerned *New Advance*. The first issues of 1961 had seen the paper used to fan the flames of an anti-left witch hunt. The editor, Roger Protz, came to conference and distributed a duplicated leaflet. 'For the past six months I have been the so-called editor of *New Advance*. During that short time I have been the subject of some praise and much criticism; the praise has come from Transport House and the criticism from the Young Socialists ... there are two very fundamental things wrong with it:

1. It is not democratically controlled by its readers.
2. It does not campaign for conference decisions.

The NEC is editor of *New Advance*, not me. I carry out their wishes. They have produced a paper FOR Young Socialists, not OF Young Socialists ... *New Advance* must have its freedom. It must be run by an elected editorial board and editor who will base its policy on conference decisions.'

## few instances of Reg Underhill causing people to laugh are on record

It was an honest, courageous and naive intervention by a not very political young man at the end of his tether. He got the sack and Reg Underhill, aged 47, was appointed as editor. Reg was not naive and few instances of him causing people to laugh are on record.

But the conference revealed a severe weakness in its attitude to *Keep Left*. The same delegates who voted for withdrawal from NATO, for the 'unrestricted publication of independent Young Socialist newspapers', and condemned the recent attempt to infringe on these rights with the assistance of official party machinery', also voted to express 'concern at the activities of the unofficial *Keep Left* group and in particular the policies of its paper *Keep Left*.' A motion denouncing the attacks on *Keep Left* from Transport House fell by 172 to 148.

These inconsistencies arose from the nature of the Young

Socialists. In the main they had just entered politics and although overwhelmingly sympathetic to CND and other issues raised by the Left, were suspicious of being manipulated by the more experienced and articulate political 'hards'.

The main responsibility for this unhappy situation did not lie with *Keep Left* but with the Right. The NEC opened a continuous witch hunt with its statement of November 1960. *Keep Left* represented at that time the only nationally organised left current. It was also, because of its growing sectarian excesses, disliked by many on the left. The Right, when it initiates a witch hunt, does not search around to find the most personable and charming of its political opponents. Leftists with flawless skin and impeccable table manners are purged later in the proceedings. The soft left in the YS failed to grasp this elementary law of salami tactics.

## The witch hunt by the Party

The general crisis in the Party demanded a purge. As in the thirties and fifties, the youth section was an early victim. Another factor was the extreme weakness of the organised right. It regrouped in late 1961 around a manifesto and then a paper called *Counterblast*. A small group produced the paper, including Julia Gaitskell, and David Warburton (now risen to great heights in the GMWU). The initiative seems to have come from the pro-Gaitskell Campaign for Democratic Socialism, organised by Bill Rodgers. *Counterblast* was not short of money, from some transatlantic agencies. It just lacked support. After two issues it collapsed.

David Warburton, under the pen-name Victor, was given a regular column in *New Advance* to promote the witch hunt. It also carried a regular series of articles attacking *Keep Left* in the most extraordinary terms. One article began; 'Is there a Trotsky at the bottom of your garden?'

Overall, the YS was still healthy in 1961 despite the gloom that followed Gaitskell's victory on the bomb at the 1961 party conference. In May 1961 the YS rally at Scarborough attracted 600, of whom 400 stayed for the whole week.

In September a new force appeared with the first issue of the paper *Young Guard*. Since the Easter conference, supporters of *Rebel*, *Rally*, the youth page of *Labour's Voice*, a group of apprentices from Glasgow, and members of the Manchester New Left Club had been discussing. They decided to merge the existing youth journals to form *Young Guard*. Its statement of aims called for:

'The return of a Labour Government, nationalisation under workers' control of the banks, insurance companies, land, and major industries; unilateral renunciation of all nuclear weapons and withdrawal from NATO and all existing military alliances; self-determination for all colonial peoples and withdrawal of all British troops from overseas; an internationalist foreign policy based on co-operation with genuine labour movements throughout the world; votes and full legal rights at 18; three-year apprenticeships, full trade union rights and an end to blind-alley employment; free access to the highest educational facilities for all, and replacement of the tripartite system of education by comprehensive schooling; the building of a democratic young socialist movement within the Labour Party pledged to achieve the above programme, working in conjunction with young socialists from other countries'.

The paper was controlled democratically, through regional readers' meetings which elected delegates to the national editorial board. This in turn elected a small working editorial board to produce the journal. At first many independents were involved, which gave an open feel to the NEB meetings. But as time went on and the YS declined, tension between different tendencies increased. At its best *Young Guard* was an attractive non-sectarian paper of the Left, and played a valuable role in educating a new generation of Marxists. At its worst it was an ill-tempered publicly-sold internal bulletin.

There were real differences between the sponsoring groups, on questions ranging from the nature of the USSR to whether it was possible for the colonial revolution to advance into a



# British Features



Reg Underhill (above) and Frank Cnapple (below) at 1965 YS conference

socialist revolution. On this last point, Cuba saw a major divide between the 'state capitalist' views of the supporters of the IS (predecessor of the SWP), and the Trotskyists, which reached flash-point during the Cuban missile crisis. In September 1963, supporters of the RSL left *Young Guard* and in September 1964, the *Militant* appeared.

### Keep Left's mass turn

In 1961/2 *Keep Left* produced a tactic to fit its view that a slump and a revolutionary situation were in the immediate offing, involving 'the greatest wave of strike action since the 1926 General Strike'<sup>10</sup> and an economic downturn. Fascism was seen as imminent, and the answer was a turn to social activities — in particular dances — to build a mass working class base. A number of very large 'social' branches were built, but the 'raw youth' — as the cadre called them — moved on very quickly, and only a small number were ever politicised. When the activist organisers moved on from the large social branches, they left nothing behind. Except in a few cases, most branches sponsoring *Keep Left* on the eve of proscription were relatively small.<sup>11</sup>

*Young Guard* had a mass orientation. It was built from CND, and helped to build it. It played a role in the apprentice movement and in the campaign against immigration laws. It was also touched by sectarianism, and did not find a way of waging an effective and open defence against the witch-hunt — although never, as *Keep Left* perpetually alleged, lined up with

the Right. *Young Guard* avoided the hectic approach of *Keep Left*, but IS supporters risked falling into an opposite danger when they envisaged a long period of capitalist boom and a quasi-American depoliticisation of the working class.

The Right's conference victory on the bomb in 1961 led to bitterness in the YS, especially since the parliamentary Left helped make it possible by their unwillingness to fight and by their support of various bogus compromise attempts. The Easter 1962 YS conference showed the movement was still basically healthy. Delegates totalled 356, from 756 branches. During the year there had been a joint campaign with the Labour students organisation NALSO, against the Immigration Act, which conference condemned as racist. Less happily, conference also passed, by 156 to 149, a call for compulsory health checks on immigrants.

Unilateralism was readopted, Labour's programme 'Signposts for the Sixties' rejected, and the EEC attacked. There was considerable confusion on various motions on the United Nations; the Right used the opposition of the Left to the UN as a stick to beat them all, especially *Keep Left*. In a stage-managed provocation against *Keep Left*, three YS members from the West Midlands alleged they had been attacked by *Keep Left* supporters. One, who was given delegates' credentials to address conference, later withdrew his statement. The whole event had been planned at a meeting in Lord Walston's flat in the Albany, attended by George Brown, Julia Gaitskell, and Chris Cowling, the editor of *Counterblast*.<sup>12</sup>

Unfortunately, conference accepted the delegate's first version. *Keep Left* had no policy of using violence, but some of its supporters did sometimes get out of hand. In the end conference agreed by 186 votes to 150 to call for an investigation into *Keep Left*. The door was opened for a purge.

### George Brown attacked

The YS crisis exploded on May Day 1962. In Glasgow, Gaitskell was booed and heckled by the YS, which had played a leading role in the demonstrations against Polaris submarines in Holy Loch. In London George Brown spoke in support of the US H-bomb tests at a May Day rally. As the YS contingent moved in, stewards snatched their unilateralist placards. The platform was stormed, the microphone was torn from George Brown's hands, and a banner with the message 'No tests' was gently tapped on his head. The action was undeniably stupid. It broke with democratic norms and nearly got a lot of YS

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the sudden look of fear in those piggy eyes as we crowded over the protecting barriers I still remember

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members, including the author, expelled. But the sudden look of fear in those piggy eyes as we crowded over the protecting, crowd-barriers I still remember.

These events gave the NEC its excuse to move. *Keep Left* was proscribed and an investigation ordered into *Young Guard*. Seven NC members of the YS were to be interviewed. The Glasgow Federation was closed down and Roger Protz, then the editor of *Keep Left*, was expelled by his constituency party. The three *Keep Left* NC members were expelled and the number of YS branches began to decline.

The new NC organised an unemployment demonstration for November, which the NEC rescheduled for February 1964. About 1,500 young people turned up, 28 MPs spoke at a poorly attended meeting in Central Hall, and there was a rally at Speakers Corner. Credit must go to the *Keep Left* NC majority — though typically, they soured the event by organising their own meeting from which known supporters of other tendencies were chucked out although it had been advertised as open to all.

The 1964 conference showed the YS in decline, with only 347 delegates. The left won the policy votes again but the infighting was worse. There were persistent rumours that *Keep*



# British Features

*Left* was about to split, in spite of again winning seven of the 11 NC places. *Keep Left* held an ugly meeting at conference. Roger Protz, the main speaker, delivered a careful, low-key speech on unity of the left. But John Robertson, chair of the outgoing NC, then made a statement. He had earlier warned the conference that attempts were pending to have him expelled for selling the proscribed *Keep Left*. 'Young Guard are political scabs' he ranted. 'If you do not get out of our way we will go over your bodies ... *Young Guard* was formed to lead the witch-hunt and smash *Keep Left* ... *Young Guard* supporters say that the unemployed don't want to work. If you are not 100 per cent with us, then you are 100 per cent against us.'<sup>13</sup> Protz left the SLL shortly after. Robertson was also to join IS later, and argued that the whole performance was delivered on the personal orders of Healey.

## The split of *Keep Left*

Easter 1964 had seen a series of seaside scuffles between 'mods' and 'rockers'. *Keep Left* argued that this was part of the Tory tactic to divide the working class, and raised the slogan 'Mods and rockers, unite to fight the Tories'. The right took this as their signal for a purge. Streatham YS was suspended after a fracas in which YS members had gone to a local bowling alley to intervene in a threatened fight between 'mods' and 'rockers' and try to recruit these young people in the Labour Party.<sup>14</sup> The first meeting of the YS's new NC condemned the suspension, and was adjourned by Reg Underhill and never reconvened. The eight Left NC members held their own meeting and adopted a pre-election manifesto.

The impending general election made Transport House even more determined to deal with the YS. In June the NEC expelled John Robertson. After a rowdy picket in his defence, Len Williams warned for the NEC that 'the future of the YS might have to be considered after the election.'<sup>15</sup> In February 1965 *Keep Left* held its own conference and announced the formation of a breakaway YS. The NEC reorganised the old YS as the Labour Party Young Socialists, which held its first conference in Malvern in November 1965.

## any attempt to transform the YS into a campaigning organisation was hindered by Transport House

Despite restrictions there was some political discussion at the conference, and the new constitution was heavily rejected. But the YS was in serious trouble and could not pull itself back to become a serious and outgoing part of the labour movement. The Right's relative strength in the YS had increased. The Left was still in disarray. In Autumn 1964 a moderately successful 'Save the YS campaign' was run by *Young Guard*, *Militant*, *Tribune* and NALSO. The newly formed *Militant* saw its role as providing 'a conscious socialist lead for the labour movement, particularly the YS... our aim is to be the Marxist voice of the YS and militants in the labour movement.'<sup>16</sup>

*Militant* was severely critical of *Keep Left*'s split. Its supporters also involved themselves in moving the expulsion of *Keep Left* members. One S. Mani, a member of the *Militant* editorial board and Wandsworth YS, moved the expulsion of three *Keep Left* supporters, after some provocation, it is true, as they had led 30 lads into a YS meeting and intimidated existing members. For once, *Keep Left*'s slanders that the rest of the left was an accomplice in the witch-hunt, could be backed with evidence. Worse than Mani's behaviour (which he later admitted was wrong) was that *Militant* justified it. This ended a short-lived fusion between the *Militant* and forces around *The Week*, who split away to found what later became the IMG.

The major reason for the failure of the YS from 1960 to 1965 has to be laid firmly at the door of Transport House. The constant witch-hunting created an atmosphere in which fratricidal sectarianism could develop. Any attempt to

transform the YS into a campaigning organisation was hindered by Transport House. The restrictive YS constitution, though it appeared liberal, gave its NC no executive powers to



Tony Benn at 1957 Youth Rally in Hyde Park

The SLL/WRP degenerated further after leaving the Labour Party, but that was due to its already-present political failures, not to the open party tactic itself. The SWP, IMG, and ICL (or their forerunners) were able to intervene in the radicalisation outside the Labour Party and to grow without degenerating. The only tendency to stay solidly locked into the Labour Party in the late sixties and all through the seventies was the *Militant*. By 1970 it had won political control of the YS. It interpreted the *Keep Left* split as demonstrating that nothing existed outside the Labour Party and YS. Its influence was to insulate the LPYS against all the shocks of the class struggle in the 1970s. Its ideas have been preserved as in a peat bog, unaffected by the Left's gains on such issues as women's liberation, Ireland, and black self-organisation.

Despite all the recent crisis and growth in the Labour Party, the YS has relatively stagnated. The task of building a mass YS able to intervene in the class struggle has still to be achieved. turn outwards and grow.

*Keep Left*'s 'mass line' was vitiated by its profound sectarianism and increasingly eccentric politics. *Young Guard*, after the decline of CND, failed to provide any set of programmatic or campaigning objects. After 1965, the impact of the Labour government produced the hibernation of the YS. Wilson's betrayals on trade union rights, racism and Vietnam meant that the new generation of radicals was repelled by the Labour Party.

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# FREE MARKET FEMINISM?

Irene Bruegel

Janet Radcliffe Richards: *The Sceptical Feminist*, Penguin, 1982. £2.50.

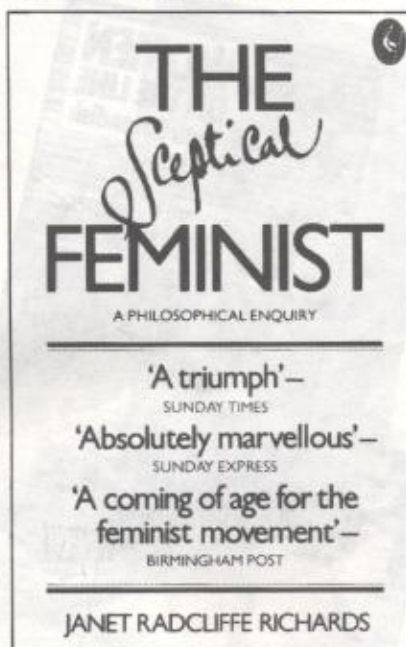
In the early years of the women's movement, socialists often attacked feminism as 'bourgeois individualism'. Feminists were said to be concerned only with the ability of individual women to compete equally with men. Few socialists now express such views; feminism has come to be acknowledged by feminists and socialists alike, as a radical and potentially revolutionary movement.

*The Sceptical Feminist* breaks decisively with this consensus. It is a sophisticated argument for a liberal feminism, purged of the emotional, irrational, strident, unattractive, man-hating, scruffy elements it perceives in the feminism of the women's movement. Hailed by the media and now reprinted in paperback, it can be seen as part of an intellectual backlash against both the feminist and socialist movements and, as such, needs to be taken more seriously than it has been to date.

Some of Richards' criticisms of the women's movement are apt; some feminists do use emotional manipulation in the place of consistent argument; some feminists are personally hostile to anyone who doesn't accept their views entirely; the media image of feminism does probably alienate potential support. But Richards' solution — to develop a politically acceptable, 'attractive', feminism — has little to offer most women.

Janet Radcliffe Richards calls herself a feminist because she objects strongly to discrimination on the grounds of sex. She takes to task chauvinist arguments that a woman's 'natural' place is the home and neatly demolishes the view that being a housewife has its own valued rewards. Moreover, she shows how social pressures to be 'feminine' can conflict with liberal notions of individual freedom. She makes a good case for free contraception and abortion, pointing out the inconsistencies in the positions of most anti-abortionists. All this provides valuable ammunition for abstract debates of this kind. She even manages a justification for some positive discrimination in favour of women, though she clearly feels herself to be on weaker ground here. But, by and large, she is fighting old battles with antiquated weapons which fail utterly to match up to the task in hand.

She blames women, in effect, for their failure to win equality. In her view women have not learnt the power of rational argument. She, however, as a professional philosopher, fails to appreciate the limited power of logic in economic and political conflict. After all, men have not generally been persuaded by rational argument to act against their perceived interests, so it is difficult to see why they should start now. All Richards can suggest if we meet with irrational male resistance, is that we learn a little social psychology, the better to manipulate men. Failing this, individual sexual blackmail is suggested: 'What feminism needs is women who are very desirable to men, but will have nothing to do with any man who does not treat them properly.'



The central weakness of the book is that women's oppression is seen to stem from nothing more than a set of inconsistent beliefs; it has no material roots, or if it does, these are irrelevant to the fight for liberation. Richards does in fact at one point maintain that oppression arises from men's desire to control women's ability to procreate, but nothing follows from this observation.

It is because Janet Radcliffe Richards fails to appreciate what women are up against when fighting for liberation that her criticisms of the women's movement — that it is prone to dogmatism, philistinism and puritanism — are misplaced. She finds nothing oppressive in the dominant culture, in language, in definitions of female sexuality and attractiveness, and so reduces the problem of male domination to no more than inequalities between men and women. Hence 'direct' social pressures forcing femininity on women are attacked but 'indirect' pressures on women — eg conforming to a female stereotype in order to attract men — are defended because women have 'chosen' to want men. It is no wonder, then, that Richards so studiously avoids any discussion of 'compulsory heterosexuality' in her book.

Richards' failure to recognise male domination is reflected in her definition of feminism and her prescriptions for feminist action. For her, feminism is no more than the belief 'that women suffer systematic social injustice because of their sex'; a definition that would make a feminist of everyone but the most diehard reactionary. Such a definition of feminism implies no common view amongst 'feminists' of the importance of these injustices, nor of how they arise and, least of all, of how they should be overcome. It denudes feminism of any real content. On this basis Richards argues that feminism is neither a movement of women (for this would exclude men) nor a movement for women, because many issues which affect women — she uses the example of slavery — may have 'nothing to do with' sexual injustice.

Her insistence on this distinction arises because of her concern lest feminism should

go 'too far' and instigate, in pursuit of women's interests, injustices against men. But, it is virtually impossible to maintain her chosen distinction between a movement against injustice on the grounds of sex and a movement on behalf of women, because what precisely constitutes 'injustice on the grounds of sex' is not immediately obvious. Richards herself collapses the distinction when she argues that: 'One thing all feminists must want to lessen is women's unhappiness', since if women's unhappiness is due to slavery or unemployment or anything that men share, it is not a feminist issue. The distinction is, however, politically important for Richards because she wants to abstract feminist issues from issues about equality in general.

On her definition, equality and solidarity between women are not feminist issues. She does not see, as a socialist feminist would, that inequalities and exploitation underlie sexual injustice nor that individualism and lack of solidarity among women help to perpetuate sexual inequality. Rather, she is horrified by the insistence of the women's movement that every woman's experience should be regarded as equally important and argues alongside Hayek and Keith Joseph that an unequal society may benefit the worst-off groups more than an equal one — because it is more efficient. Housework is seen as objectionable mainly because it wastes the talents of intelligent women; 'some women' she says 'are ideally suited to be housewives' and 'many are probably doing far more valuable work at home than they could do elsewhere'. She does not favour the collectivisation of housework, for it would restrict the freedom of such women to choose.

Her individualism knows few bounds; the women's movement should be about extending individual choice, not about constraining women who 'want' to be sex objects, prostitutes or slaves to the household. In true liberal style, she condemns the attempt to disrupt Miss World because many women choose to compete or watch. Despite a long discussion on conditioning, she rejects the idea that individual choices are socially structured, seeing it as totalitarian not to accept what people say for themselves. There are, of course, real problems in asserting that other people's choices result from oppression; but to accept these choices as paramount, as Richards suggests, is only to perpetuate the status quo.

This is then a profoundly conservative book, arguing for feminism on grounds of common sense without any questioning of the 'common sense' of capitalist society. Some women would no doubt benefit from the extension of bourgeois rights Janet Radcliffe Richards wants, but the choices for most women would remain as bleak as ever.

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## CALIBRATING TORQUE

Anna Pollert

Jackie West (ed.): *Work, Women and the Labour Market*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, £4.95; Ruth Cavendish: *Women on the Line*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, £5.95.

*Work, Women and the Labour Market* is a book to dip into rather than read from cover to cover. Although its audience is likely to be mainly academic, it is not obscure or esoteric. All the contributions are based on concrete research about women working in different situations, and together they cover a wide range of theoretical and political problems. Many also offer strategies for action: a healthy move away from 'pure' contemplative sociology.

The issues covered include the relationship between gender and notions of 'skill'; the impact of new technology in the office; the double oppression of racial and sexual discrimination experienced by Asian and West Indian women; and questions of personal and everyday life. One chapter, called 'The "understanding" employer', vividly describes the details of childcare arrangements for working mothers and how these tie them by gratitude to employers who make 'concessions' to their 'predicament'. Another, in which the voices of the women themselves tell much about the complexities and ambiguities in their ideas about the world around them, looks at how working class housewives think of themselves, their lives at home, their own part-time jobs, and their husbands' worlds of work and collective organisation.

A concluding chapter surveys recent developments around 'women's issues' and organisation in the trade union movement and stresses the importance of greater participation by women, and the continuing need for special action to ensure that women's demands are recognised and make their mark in the working class struggle. The book does not make gripping reading, but it is one of very few books which looks at women and work, and combines theoretical analysis with real voices and experiences.

*Women on the Line* by Ruth Cavendish is a personal account of the author's experience of working in a factory. It is vivid and lively and evokes very well the atmosphere on the shop floor, the relationship between women workers, the debilitating pressure of the work, and the endless stretching of the minutes.

But for all this, it is impossible to avoid comment on the book's paranoid anonymity. After consultation with libel lawyers, not only has the name of the firm in question been disguised, but elaborate steps have been taken to make the work process and products completely unrecognisable.

True, many sociological studies have used the convention of pseudonyms for companies



and towns — such as 'Chemco' and 'Provincial' in Nichols and Beynon's *Living with Capitalism*. But this has always followed a written guarantee to management of disguise as a condition of entry for the purposes of research which was not given in this case. More importantly, there is a growing tradition of investigative analysis of the realities of wage labour — including Haraszi's *A Worker in A Worker's State*, Beynon's *Working for Ford*, Beynon and Wainwright's *Worker's Report on Vickers*, and my own *Girls, Wives, Factory Lives* — in which making names and pointing the finger are central to the meaning of the books.

To cave in to the potential threat posed by the libel laws, as the publishers of this book have done, is to set an appalling precedent for research and investigative journalism. And to turn an apology into a 'political point' as Cavendish attempts to do in a preface entitled 'Freedom of Speech' and to claim that 'the book itself now stands as evidence of the limitations on freedoms of speech and who benefits from these limitations', is a feeble whimper and an insult to those writers and publishers who have taken, and still are taking, risks.

The effects on the book are furthermore extremely damaging which is a great pity as it is well written. I can well appreciate the skill that must have gone into organising the author's anecdotal diary material into a book. The distinctive character of women's work and the 'women's factory' come over well, and there was a familiar ring to the likes and dislikes between individuals, the many

private, idiosyncratic, and often fatalistic ways of surviving a life out of control, the importance of food and sweets and the clock, and the need to plan and regulate the small space of private life that was left. The divorce of the rank and file from the union and the failure of a strike are also convincingly chronicled — except, that is, that we are not even allowed to know the name of the union! The sexual and racial oppression of the women do come across, but as we cannot tell what anyone is doing, they could for all we know be sci-fi characters acting out a fiction.

True, there is much that is shared in common between all 'semi' or 'unskilled' work, and indeed all commodity production. But the fact that, in the author's words, 'operations like calibrating torque and screwing down transistors are intentionally gobbledegook', and that the products of the firm, UMEC, are UMO's (Unidentifiable Mechanical Objects!) means that the core of the book — wage labour — loses credibility. An element of remoteness lurks at the heart of a book which depends on the concrete for its conviction. I wonder, at this point, for whom the book is intended: I cannot imagine political or union activists seriously discussing unidentifiable places, processes, products and profits — particularly not at £5.95 for 172 pages. And as a (now unemployed) lecturer, I am doubtful that a class of sceptical students would be convinced of the realities of a factory and the lives inside it by a book about work which hides that work.

Finally, the political level of the book is poor. Despite the fact that the writer has been 'active in socialist politics and the Women's Liberation Movement since the late 1960s' and had given up 'teaching in a polytechnic to work as an assembler in an attempt to gain a concrete understanding of the daily life of working class women' as the blurb-writer tells us, there is a complete lack of political analysis or commentary. Her reticence to make any intervention at shop-floor level when she clearly had the background and experience to make at least some contribution smacked of a workerist deference to manual work. The narrowness and shallowness of Cavendish's analysis and concept of class conflict is encapsulated in her final statement that 'the experience changed me and my political outlook, challenging my understanding of the relation between race, sex and class and of the different groups within wage labour. It also showed me that we would need to build a new relationship between intellectuals and the working class in order to deepen this understanding.'

Quite apart from the meaninglessness of this conclusion, I searched in vain throughout the book for some terrible or shocking revelation to warrant the publisher's fear of litigation. All I could find was that factory work is hard, boring and badly paid, and an implication that a few improvements in conditions and friendlier management would put things right. Hardly a call for struggle, nor a crushing indictment of capitalism, nor for that matter of UMEC and the rest of the UMO industry.

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# IMAGES OF MALE POWER

Margaret Coulson

Andrea Dworkin: *Pornography, Men Possessing Women*, Women's Press, 1981, £4.75. Susan Griffin: *Pornography and Silence*, Women's Press, 1981, £4.75. Beatrice Faust: *Women, Sex and Pornography*, Penguin, 1982, £1.95.

For Mary Whitehouse and her moral army pornography represents an attack on traditional morality, on the sanctity of marriage and the family; it is explicitly about sex and therefore dangerous. For some sexual radicals pornography expresses an escape from sexual repression and even a form of sexual therapy; being explicitly about sex it promises new freedoms. Liberal concern about pornography has been caught in a balancing act between these views: between the defence of free speech and the need for censorship, between the importance of preserving private choice and the importance of maintaining public good, particularly in the sense of not offending the reasonable citizen and of protecting the young from corruption. Socialists have been overwhelmingly absent from these debates. And feminists do not fit into them.

Feminist analyses and politics around pornography have developed a different focus. The questions shift — not how shall obscenity be defined? or what is permissible in public/in private? but what is the meaning of pornography in our culture? what is pornography about? Although there are differences of style and approach in the work of Andrea Dworkin and Susan Griffin, both are centrally concerned with these questions. Andrea Dworkin explores 'the meaning of pornography and the system of power within which it exists'. Her 'particular theme is the power of men in pornography' — 'Men possessing women'. Susan Griffin's study 'shows that pornography is an expression not of human erotic feeling and desire, not of a love of the life of the body, but of a fear of bodily knowledge and a desire to silence eros'.

These are powerful books, insisting that we recognise what pornography is about. Dworkin's writing is driven by rage at what she has discovered in her study of pornography. She looks to the ancient Greek derivation of the word: *porne* meaning 'whore, specifically and exclusively the lowest class of whore ... in our language sluts, cows (as in sexual cattle, sexual chattel), cunts'; *graphos* meaning 'writing, etching or drawing'. 'The methods of graphic depiction have increased in number and in kind' (the whole technology of still pornography, film, video etc) but 'the content is the same'. Pornography is an expression of male sexual domination; whores exist only within such a framework. The major theme of pornography is a celebration of male power. Its standard values are repeated (literally) ad nauseum: 'the excitement of humiliation, the joy of pain, the pleasure of abuse, the magnificence of cock' (p.215). There are variations: men who are poor, weak, black may become victims of abuse almost as women are; pregnancy can be depicted as a 'whore-like' state of bondage and humiliation; black women are abused in particular ways in which skin directly



symbolises sex — victim and slave. Griffin points out that black women are sometimes depicted also as the slaves of (white) sexual slaves.

Dworkin shows that the way in which the woman is objectified in pornography is as a thing against which masculinity and male sexuality are defined. She indicates some of the continuities between pornography and the everyday world: the way in which advertising echoes pornographic images; the way in which force, a frequent dimension in pornography, has been established as a part of normal sexuality — men's natural response to women's 'low sex drive' (thanks to Kinsey and his associates in this instance); the way in which everyday household objects become objects of sexual torture — a symbolic link between pornography and domestic violence?

Besides showing Kinsey's contempt for women and the masculine bias of his 'scientific' research into human sexual behaviour, a longer chapter demolishes the claims which have been made for the Marquis de Sade as revolutionary and sexual liberator. His commitment to sex was a commitment to male power, to the pornography and practice of rape and violence against women.

Susan Griffin similarly characterises de Sade and identifies many other representatives of the 'pornographic mind' in myth, in pornography itself, in history (Hitler for example). Her study is of the 'pornographic mind' which sustains oppression, which dominates our culture, which silences women, which feeds racism and anti-semitism and which opposes itself to the possibility of human liberation. Yet through this extraordinary exploration of horror and degradation Griffin weaves the possibility of alternatives, symbols of life and growth and liberation. Finally she asserts 'we have choice'.

Having read these books, I am left with many questions. The arguments built up by Dworkin and Griffin are compelling. But there are problems too. There's the way in which a vast sweep of history — from ancient

Greece to the present (Dworkin), or the whole of Judaeo-Christian culture (Griffin) are seen as telling the same pornographic story. Especially in Griffin's book, culture (the victory of the pornographic mind) attacks and distorts nature and the struggle seems to be to recover an essential nature, an essential eros. No particular attention is focused on the contemporary situation in which pornography is flourishing (except in so far as many examples discussed are from recent publications, films etc); there is no analysis of the pornography industry and its international connections. There is little to suggest how we can develop creative, non-oppressive expressions of sexuality, sensuality and love against the destructiveness of male-dominated sexuality. (Although the possibility is strongly implied by Griffin.)

But other feminists are taking up these questions: the discussion and extension of feminist analysis is under way. Perhaps the most accessible and devastating contributions are to be found in Alice Walker's writings, in four of the stories in *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*! What is most significant about the books by Andrea Dworkin and Susan Griffin is that they so clearly challenge the terms of the liberal debate about pornography. They reflect the development of a feminist politics against pornography. The political importance of this becomes even clearer if one compares their work with Beatrice Faust's more recently published book *Women, Sex and Pornography*. This is a sad mess of conflicting and confusing ideas and politics about pornography, sexuality, masculinity, feminism and freedom; it opens with a luncheon club discussion about pornography for women and ends with a quotation from 'wise Dr. Kinsey'.

The political issues raised by feminist critiques of pornography are important ones for the Left<sup>2</sup> — perhaps particularly for men on the Left. These issues cannot wait until 'after the revolution' or even until the present great capitalist crisis is over. For it is in this crisis that pornography thrives, alongside the resurgence of traditional pressures to keep women at home, economically dependant, subservient wives, devoted mothers ...

As Andrea Dworkin says: 'The Left cannot have its whores and its politics.'

#### Notes.

1. Published by Women's Press. Also in *Take Back the Night* edited by Laura Lederer published by Morrow Quill Paperbacks.
2. See: Pat Masters and Jane Shallice: 'The Politics of Pornography', *International* Vol.6 No.2, July 1981.

MARGARET COULSON has been active in women's liberation for many years.

Reviews Reviews Reviews



## INTER-IMPERIALIST RIVALRIES

John Ross

Riccardo Parboni: *The Dollar and its Rivals*, New Left Books, 1981, £3.95.

*The Dollar and its Rivals* is the most important book on inter-imperialist competition to appear since Ernest Mandel's *Europe Versus America?* was published in 1970. This is not to say that the book is without serious flaws: indeed Parboni falls into a classic error of bourgeois economics in his suggestion that the economic crisis and decline in the rate of profit have been caused by increased competition rather than constituting its basis.

This is not an academic point: it is essential for the understanding of the post-war world. As Parboni correctly points out, American imperialism sacrificed certain short term advantages in relation to its rivals immediately after the war by taking steps to rebuild West European and Japanese capitalism. This was, above all, forced on it by the fear of revolution and of the Soviet workers' state. But it was made possible by the absolute gains to be made from the enormous economic boom which the massive destruction of capital and weakening or smashing of the working class in many countries by fascism and war had put on the agenda.

Today such sacrifices relative to competing capitalisms can no longer be compensated for by an expansion of the world economy as a whole. It is necessary for each capitalist power to seek to expand its position at the expense of its rivals. Just as the long boom lessened inter-imperialist rivalries, so the onset of crisis and stagnation has heightened them. As Parboni himself explains, in the present period the United States is using its absolute superiority as the most powerful capitalist state to reinforce its relative advantage over its competitors.

Because he does not understand that it is a consequence of the decline in the rate of profit, Parboni cannot explain why the increase in competition and this turnabout in the global role of the USA should have occurred when it did.

A second criticism is that Parboni puts too much emphasis on a particular aspect of the monetary policy of US imperialism. Dollar devaluations were a key element of American policy during the 1970s but they are not the only tactic for exploiting its domination of the international monetary system. Reagan has used increases in the exchange rate of the dollar to boost the value of American exports and to put up the cost to America's competitors of oil, whose price is fixed in dollars, without paying more itself.

Despite these criticisms, an overall assessment of the book must be overwhelmingly positive. It makes excellent use of well-chosen statistical material. It is not one of those

## THE DOLLAR &amp; ITS RIVALS



books that scatter numbers around to look impressive. Each point is precisely illustrated with the crucial qualitative facts. An excellent example comes on the very first page: 'Through 1966, the total value of North American manufacturing production was higher than that of Western Europe and Japan combined. Since 1975, however, it has been lower than that of Western Europe alone.' This one simple fact, more than any complicated series of tables, shows the dramatic shift in the economic relation of forces of which has taken place in the post-war period.

Secondly, it provides an impressive overall view of the world economy. Naturally, Parboni concentrates on developments within the major imperialist countries. But his analysis of the neo-colonial economies and their integration into the world economy is exemplary. He traces the economic roots of 'non-alignment' in the 1950s and early 1960s in attempts at independent national capital accumulation by the indigenous ruling classes. Nasserism, Peronism, Sukharnism, etc were dictatorial regimes which improved the economic and social conditions of the working class with the objective of creating an internal market.

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From the mid-1960s onwards, a quite different 'model' became dominant. The Brazilian, South Korean, Phillipine, and similar regimes, are based precisely on abandoning any attempt at independent accumulation and on total integration into the imperialist division of labour and markets. The result is not merely a new and unprecedentedly brutal form of dictatorship but the systematic driving down of the conditions of the masses. The political expression of the new model is the end of 'non-alignment' and the substitution of total subordination to the imperialist powers.

This whole section of Parboni's book, though brief, is the best rejoinder I have seen to the currently-fashionable apologias for imperialism developed by Warren and others. Parboni shows imperialism in its true light; unable to develop the majority of states of the world, it enforces new savage attacks on the working class and suppression of democratic rights in those where some development does take place.

Finally, what about Parboni's key theme of inter-imperialist rivalry? To assess its significance one need only regard world events since the Polish coup: Reagan announces economic sanctions 'against the USSR' which would in reality hit just as severely the members of the EEC. West Germany rejects sanctions and France signs a 25 year gas contract with the Soviet Union. France agrees to sell arms to Nicaragua in the middle of a massive campaign against that country by the US government. The EEC takes initiatives towards the Arab states which at least in key tactical respects break with the framework laid down by the USA and Israel. All this amounts to a major new development in international politics compared to the period of inter-imperialist calm which has prevailed since 1945.

It is this, rather than mythical contradictions between 'west coast cowboys' and 'east coast yankees' which explains the politics of Reaganism. The US ruling class is in reality one of the most centralised in the world and far from running down traditional 'east coast' industries (steel, auto, etc) the Reagan administration is preserving and protecting them. In reality, Reaganism represents a massive assertion of specifically American imperialist interests. Certainly this is directed against the working class, against the USSR and against the colonial revolution, but it is also directed against the United States' imperialist rivals.

Parboni provides a clear description of the emerging inter-imperialist competition but he also indicates its limits. The US holds two decisive cards: total military superiority, which Parboni does not discuss in detail, and control of the international monetary system, which is one of the major themes of the book. In the final analysis, the United States will always be able to out-trump its rivals: there will be no third world war between the imperialist states; it would mean the end of the capitalist system as a whole and they are well aware of this.

However, between the 'here and now' and the 'final analysis' lie many important political developments to whose unfolding, despite its theoretical flaws, Parboni's book provides a useful guide.



# THE RACIST GENE

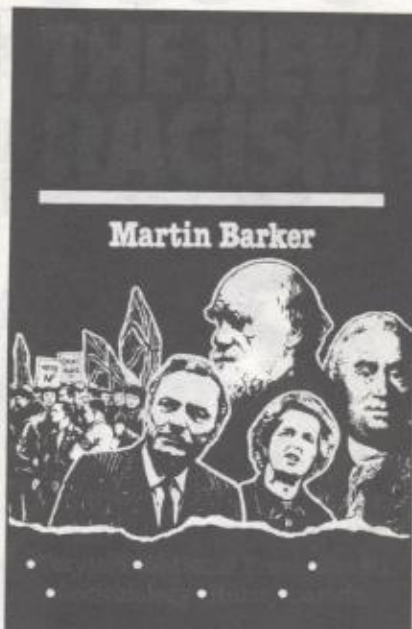
Tom Brass

Martin Barker: *The New Racism*, Junction Books, 1981, £4.95.

Covering a variety of related topics (the new racism, conservative ideology, Hume's philosophy of human nature, socio-biology), Martin Barker's book sets out 'to do three jobs that cannot be isolated. (It) is centrally about racism. It attempts to show that certain forms of argument that, to date, have been regarded as relatively innocent, are racist. Its exploration of forms of racist belief shows that they cannot be detached from beliefs about a whole range of other social problems. These are not simply personal connections, or party-political connections, but conceptual connections. In other words, those who adopt the language and forms of argument here described on questions of race and immigration, introduce themselves into a network of concepts and 'scientific' theories which, if pushed to consistency, would be seen to have implications for all fields of social life.' The common and unifying theme to these topics and arguments is, in short, the 'project of innateness' which gives rise to the politics of instinct, the most explicit form of which is racism.

Racism, Martin Barker argues convincingly, has changed from an ideology propounding the 'inferiority' of non-whites (which accordingly legitimised imperial conquest and colonisation) to one propounding a non-hierarchical view of racial 'difference' (which correspondingly seeks to legitimise oppression within and repatriation from the UK). Thus the new racism is doubly potent: first, it is no longer based on universally discredited notions of racial inferiority/superiority; and second, it appeals strongly to 'common sense' notions of national consciousness (shared identity, place, feelings, way of life, traditions, etc) and human nature (natural to form bounded communities hostile to 'outsiders'). Furthermore, the acceptability of this new racism has been reinforced by the rise to prominence during the 1970s of supporting 'neutral'/'scientific' theories, in particular socio-biology.

Socio-biology maintains that in the process of evolution, individual genes — and thus persons — attempt to maximise their own chances of survival, and that the most successful reproductive strategy not only requires competition for mating, territory, resources, etc (ie aggression is natural, permitting the long-term emergence of the 'fittest' or 'selfish' gene) but also that it is correspondingly natural to look after only those related persons with shared genes since this ensures the survival of the gene pool over generations. Hence the naturalness (or instinctiveness) of on the one hand altruism towards genetically similar groups (family, nation, race), and on the other of antagonism towards 'outsiders' (other nations, other races). For socio-biology, therefore, racism is genetically determined, and to pretend otherwise is to offend against 'human nature'; human behaviour is depicted as an extension of animal behaviour, the differentiating cultural elements such as speech and technology being dismissed as 'de-



viant' and peripheral to the evolutionary dynamic of this basic instinctivism.

Martin Barker easily demolishes these 'scientific' claims: he not only shows how behavioural units ('femininity', 'criminality') which are identified by socio-biology so that their determining genetic units may in turn be identified, are in fact themselves taken straight from existing political discourse (and are therefore constructed and not 'natural'), but also the impossibility of linking genes with specific behavioural units anyway, the fallacy of treating people as a mere expression of genetic tendencies, the error of assuming that people are concerned solely with survival, and finally the importance of learning (as distinct from inheritance) in the evolutionary process. These objections to socio-biology are not new, however, and the real importance of this book lies elsewhere: whereas critiques by liberal-bourgeois academics have tended to focus only on the correctness or otherwise of its scientific claims and either deny its racism or else dismiss this as irrelevant, Martin Barker's critique focusses on its considerable ideological effects in the political arena and in particular on its role in the reconstitution of conservative beliefs.

Socio-biology is politically significant for

three reasons. First, unlike other academic work, it has received extensive and uncritical media publicity: soci-biologists and their sympathisers (Morris, Ardrey, Dawkins, Wilson, Eysenck, etc) have been given widespread coverage in the national dailies and women's magazines. Unsurprisingly, their views have quickly been taken up to legitimise the activities of fascist organisations (thus Richard Verrall in *Spearhead*: 'Socio-biology is transforming our view of man and society.... The great question of our time seems to be whether European man, the pinnacle of evolution, will destroy through the unnatural notions which are the modern products of his intellect what his inherited instincts have striven through these eons of time to preserve').

Second, it seeks to justify not only the new racism but (since it forms a *project* of innateness) also extends the utilisation of the same 'common sense' arguments in support of sexism, militarism and capitalism itself; hence female domesticity, imperialist aggression/war mongering and monopoly capitalism are all presented as 'natural' and therefore immutable elements.

And third, socio-biology both complements and is an integral aspect of an internally consistent *system* of Tory beliefs (built around a theory of race, nation and human nature) which has re-emerged during the breakdown of bourgeois hegemony in the post-war era; the respectability that socio-biology confers on instinctivism has strengthened and permitted the re-affirmation of traditional conservative philosophy.

Martin Barker is to be congratulated on having written an excellent and politically important book which all socialists *must* read; we ignore his warnings about the changes in the nature and acceptability of racism at our peril.

**TOM BRASS** was a lecturer in anthropology at Durham University and now teaches part-time at Cambridge.

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Reviews Reviews Reviews



# FIFTY REVOLUTIONARY YEARS

Colin Talbot

**CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN is celebrating 50 years in the revolutionary socialist movement. Colin Talbot talked to him about his life and experiences.**

Charlie van Gelderen was born in South Africa in 1913. At the age of 17 he joined the South Africa Fabian Society. 'I was always interested in politics', he says, 'as I grew up in a political family. My father had emigrated from Holland just before the Boer War and was a supporter of South African nationalism and strongly anti-British imperialism. The Fabian Society wasn't very good on socialism but it helped to purge me of racism.'

But in 1932, at the age of 19, Charlie was already becoming interested in more radical alternatives than Fabianism. Involvement in the International Socialist Club, made up largely of expelled members of the South African Communist Party, led to contact with a small group of South African Trotskyists. With them he participated in the Marxist Education League, which concentrated on basic Marxist education. 'We studied Marxist economics, the Communist Manifesto, and the Russian Revolution before moving on to the critique of official Communism.'

Charlie's first contact with Trotskyism as such was reading a copy of the American paper *Militant*, purchased outside a meeting of the International Socialist Club. It carried Trotsky's article 'Germany — Key to the International Situation'. 'It made a great impression on me,' he recalls.

The South African Trotskyists subsequently formed the Lenin Club in 1934, published the newspaper *Workers Voice* of which Charlie was editor. They also published the first Trotskyist manifesto on May Day 1934, which Charlie played a central role in drafting.

With the agreement of his colleagues, Charlie decided to come to Europe to expand his knowledge of the international movement. In 1935 he arrived in London. 'There were two Trotskyist Groups, one led by Reg Groves in the Labour Party. The other, the Marxist Group, led by C L R James, was inside the Independent Labour Party, which had split from Labour three years before.' Charlie, on advice from the Trotskyist international leadership, joined the Marxist Group and also joined the Labour League of Youth, which was rapidly growing with over 25,000 members.

Inside the League of Youth two political tendencies dominated: the Stalinist sympathisers of *Advance* and the Trotskyists of *Youth Militant*. While the Labour youth battled Oswald Moseley's home grown fascists, it also raised support for the fight against fascism in the Spanish Civil War. The Stalinists propagated the class collaborationist 'People's Front' to combat fascism, while the Trotskyists fought for the working class united front. On the editorial board of *Youth Militant* Charlie played an important role in this fight. Within the adult party, the



Photo: Colin Headworth

Charlie van Gelderen

Trotskyists entered the Socialist League, the left-wing led by Stafford Cripps and Nye Bevan. When the Socialist League was suppressed by Transport House in 1937 the Militant Labour League was formed to replace it. Inside the MLL the Trotskyists organised the Revolutionary Socialist League, which was affiliated to the International Communist League, the world Trotskyist grouping.

In 1938 Charlie attended the founding conference of the Fourth International as an observer for the South African Trotskyists and of the Youth International as a delegate of the *Youth Militant* group. He was elected to the Youth International's executive.

The outbreak of war in 1939 put the Trotskyists under immense pressure. 'The Labour Party shut up shop and virtually stopped meeting', Charlie recalls. 'We carried out propaganda against the war and carried on meeting amongst ourselves. The Independent Labour Party (ILP) adopted a pacifist stance and tried to avoid the draft but we decided to go into the army if we were called up.' Charlie joined the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) which provided him with a job at £3 per week, and a possible exemption from the draft. Together with George (now Lord) Brown he helped organise the ARP into the unions. But in 1941 he was called up into the Army medical corps and dispatched by troop ship to Iraq.

On board ship a group of Stalinists started up a Marxist discussion group, 'but they ended up asking me to do most of the talks', Charlie says. 'There was very little hostility to socialists and I never hid my views. After the Soviet Union joined the war socialist propaganda was hardly frowned on at all.' He says that among the rank and file British troops anti-fascism was at least as strong a motivation as patriotism.

As the Allied armies and the Resistance pushed up through Italy, Charlie was moved to Naples, where he stayed for 2½ years. He began establishing contact with the Italian Trotskyists. After making friends with an Italian Socialist Party member Charlie recalls addressing a meeting of the Socialist Youth. 'I didn't speak Italian but my friend spoke German and so did I. So I spoke to the meeting in German and he translated.' This meeting led indirectly to Charlie meeting the Italian Trotskyist Fosca, and he participated in the long

painful process of re-assembling the Trotskyist forces. Supporters in the American and British Armies sold scarce goods they had 'borrowed' from the Army on the black-market and used the proceeds to help launch the paper *Il Militante*.

'It was very exciting in Naples. The walls were covered with slogans saying "workers to power". In the markets communist books suddenly appeared. They were all dated 1924 and had obviously been hidden since Mussolini's rise to power.'

In March 1943 Togliatti, the head of the Italian Communists, returned to Naples from his exile in the Soviet Union. Charlie remembers the first big meeting Togliatti spoke at. 'There were placards everywhere saying "workers to power", pictures of Lenin, Stalin and Togliatti. There were tremendous illusions in the Soviet Union and Stalin. The Red Army was marching across Europe. Togliatti said: "No comrades, now is not the time for workers to power. Now we need Generals and Field Marshalls in power", and he appealed to the workers to hand in their guns and join the army.'

After the war, the Communists justified their failure to take power in Italy (and France) by saying that the American Army would have intervened to crush the revolution. But Charlie says that the American troops in Italy 'were completely fed up with Europe. If the Communist-led Resistance had seized power the Americans would have voted with their feet and gone home. The US troops used to have a favourite saying, "I've only got one war aim — Stateside." They just wanted to go home.'

Charlie attended the founding conference of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) in London while on leave in 1945. On being demobbed in 1946 he returned to London, joined the RCP and for a while became reinvolved in the Labour Party. The RCP was the shortlived unification of all the Trotskyists in Britain, which soon split on whether to be inside or outside the Labour Party. Charlie left the Labour Party and stayed outside with the RCP majority, but in 1948 they decided to dissolve the RCP and re-enter the Labour Party.

Inside the Labour Party the Trotskyists gained some influence among the Bevanite left-wing, which emerged towards the end of the Labour government and under the Tories. Charlie spent four years as a Labour councillor in Hammersmith. But as the main forces of British Trotskyism were gradually taken over by and degenerated under the leadership of Gerry Healy, Charlie withdrew somewhat. While on an adult education course in Edinburgh he met Ken Coates and joined the small group around the *Week* magazine. They were eventually to emerge out of the fragments of British Trotskyism as the International Marxist Group, the British section of the reunited Fourth International, of which Charlie is still a member today.

Charlie is working on his memoirs, 'but things are still very chaotic' he says. At the age of 68 and after fifty years Charlie is still an active revolutionary. His example is an inspiration to today's generation of revolutionaries. We can learn much from the veterans of our movement like Charlie, who are our living memory, a link with our heritage.