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International

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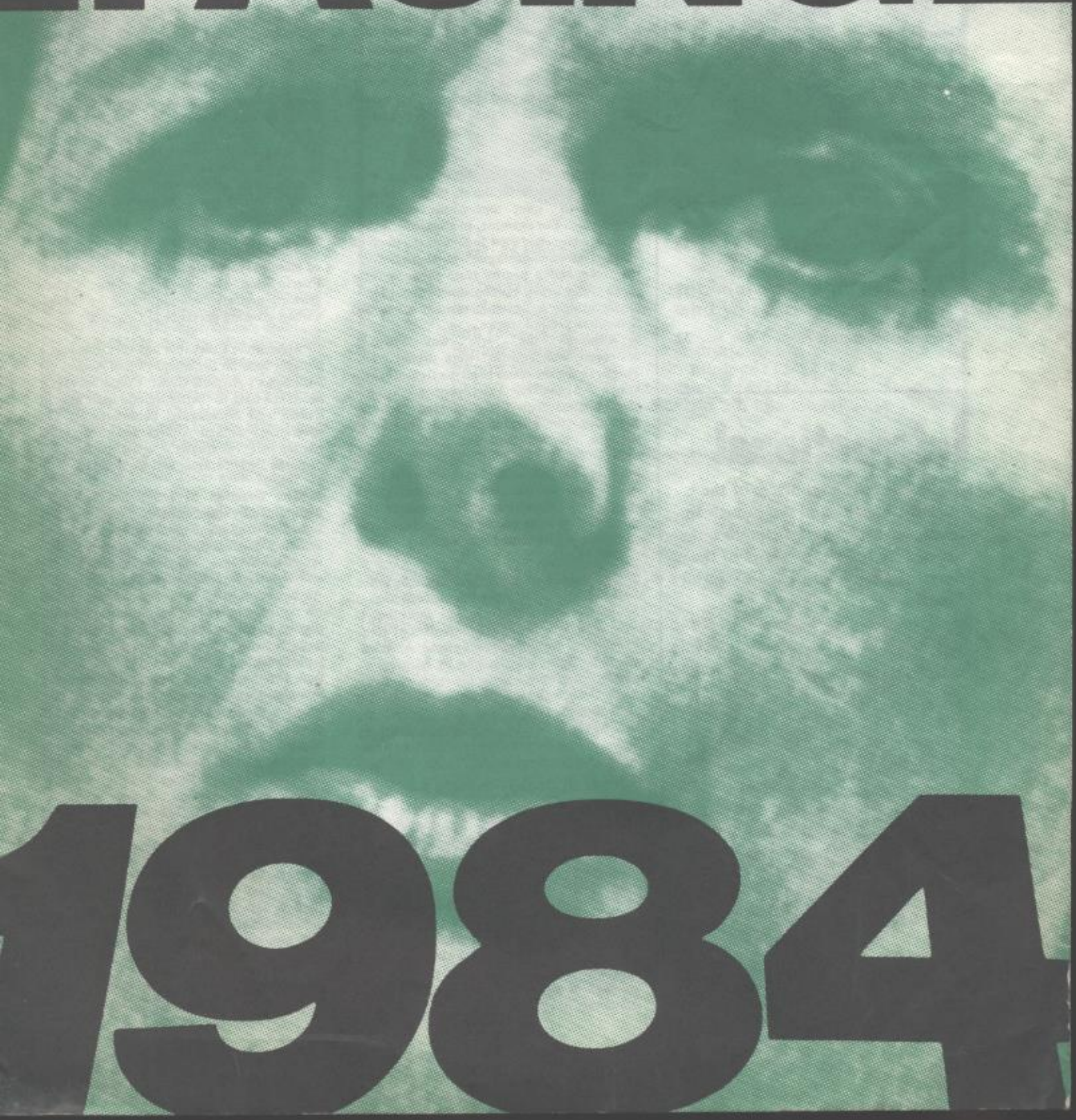

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Editorial

US WAR MOVES IN CENTRA

The Reagan administration is marching steadily towards putting combat troops on the ground in Central America.

A decisive move in this direction was taken in March with the invasion of Nicaragua by Somocista counter-revolutionaries ('contras') based in Honduras. The 'contras' have been active for more than two years in attacking Sandinista posts, strategic points, as well as straightforward terror activities against rural communities. Most of these attacks have been in the isolated Atlantic Coast region. The difference now is not only that the attacks are in the centre and east of the country and that the number of 'contras' involved is larger but more importantly, that the Honduran army is directly involved. Washington is clearly using Honduras as the cat's paw to engineer a war between Nicaragua and Honduras that would provide the pretext for the United States to intervene directly.

After months of aiding the 'contras' with logistical support Honduran forces are now engaged in joint operations with the Somocistas. For example, in a major 'contra' offensive launched on 4 June near the town of Teotecacinte on Nicaragua's northern border, the town and a nearby state tobacco farm came under heavy bombardment from Honduran artillery as a prelude to an attack by 600 Somocista ground troops.

Although the farm was virtually destroyed, the 'contras' were driven back. This has been the result in all the fighting since March. Militarily, the 'contras' cannot possibly overthrow the Nicaraguan government since the Nicaraguan leadership bases itself on the mobilised and armed popular masses. The problem for the Sandinistas in the 4 June attack — and ever since the invasion began — was that a counter-attack against the Honduran gun emplacements could be used as an excuse to allow Honduras to declare war against Nicaragua.

The Pentagon has laid out its scenario for the border war. Reagan has warned that a 'Soviet-Cuban-Nicaraguan war machine' is being created to impose communism by force throughout the whole of Central America: when Honduras is 'attacked by Nicaragua', the US preferably with some representatives of the OAS, will send troops to 're-establish the borders'. Of course, the 'borders' are those of the US's backyard, so re-establishing them will involve not simply defence of Honduras' border but overthrowing the Sandinista government.

The US has been steadily pushing forward its militarisation of the region. Honduras has received the greatest attention as the major staging area for war moves in the region. At the beginning of June the Pentagon announced that 100 more Green Berets would leave shortly for Honduras to start a new training programme for the Salvadorean army. This is in addition to the 62 who are already training Hondurans. Other US military personnel are involved in modernising various military installations in Honduras.

But there are several other strings to the US's bow. Increased numbers of Salvadorean soldiers are being trained in counter-insurgency at the US Army School of the Americas at Fort Gulick in Panama and the Howard Air Base in Panama is swarming with US aircraft hauling weapons and ammunition to Honduras and El Salvador. Among the planes based at Howard are four reconnaissance aircraft that have been modified to conduct electronic intelligence gathering as well as to transport troops. They are also equipped with weapons.

A pilot stationed at Howard was reported in the *New York Times* in May as saying that the four planes 'took off almost every night and did not return until shortly before dawn. He said the Air Force crews that flew the planes did not wear any unit insignias or other forms of identification. He said a mechanic who worked on the planes had asserted that the guns on the planes needed new barrels almost every day, a sign that they were being heavily used.' A Pentagon official admitted these facts but explained them as a result of nightly 'training exercises'.

In mid-April the US government announced plans to reactivate the US Air Force base in Puerto Rico. The reason given was 'Cuba's growing military capability' and the 'Soviet-Cuban growing presence in Grenada'.

Meanwhile Colombia has been building a military base on the island of San Andres off Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast. Colombia says it needs the base to 'better defend itself against Cuban and Nicaraguan communism'. The sovereignty of San Andres and other small islands off Nicaragua's coast is formally disputed by Nicaragua and Colombia.

The direction of US policy has been highlighted by some changes in the senior personnel of the Reagan administration. Thomas Enders, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, was given the boot in May and shortly afterwards, Deane Hinton, US Ambassador to El Salvador, was also given his notice. Enders had begun to show a willingness to follow the path of negotiations, in parallel with increased military aid. This 'twin-track' policy was aimed at winning support for the US in Venezuela, Mexico and Spain and was essentially an attempt to buy time for the Salvodorean regime and the US government to pursue their military solution. Hinton's mistake also was his failure to rule out the possibility of dialogue with the Salvadorean opposition.

The Salvadorean regime responded angrily to Enders' proposals, and the National Security Council in Washington, led by Jeanne Kirkpatrick and William Clark, rejected it. Kirkpatrick visited El Salvador early in the year and on her return presented Reagan with an assessment of the political-military situation which concluded that if the war continued its present trend then the Salvadorean army would be defeated, and as the war deteriorated Magana's Government of National Unity would collapse through its own internal contradictions. She recommend-

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ed a large-scale political and militarily effort to reverse this trend. From that point the Pentagon effectively took over military control in El Salvador. Military leaders who resisted the US advice on the conduct of the war were transferred and the US stepped up its training of the army.

At the same time a concerted propaganda effort was launched to disguise this reinforcement of the 'hard line' approach. A series of declarations by top members of the administration culminated in Reagan's address to the special joint session of Congress at the end of April. Reagan's speech announced that the administration would now 'support dialogue and negotiations'. The clue to what he meant by this was given in a National Security Council document leaked in April. This document outlined the need to 'co-opt the negotiations issue to avoid Congressionally-mandated negotiations'. In other words, 'dialogue' would be tied to acceptance of the Salvadorean government's own 'peace plan' which involves participation in the election scheduled for the end of the year. The terms and conditions of participation in elections are negotiable. Nothing else.

The FDR-FMLN reject the elections. Their approach to negotiations is directly counterposed to US imperialism's elections. The FDR-FMLN estimate that since early 1981 they have made great progress in their international political-diplomatic struggle to isolate the US's interventionist policy internationally. The FDR-FMLN call for negotiations while pursuing the military offensive inside El Salvador. The Nicaraguan leadership likewise calls for bilateral talks with Honduras and the United States while arming the masses to defend their revolution. Both leaderships know that in a military confrontation with US imperialism directly they could not win. They can only successfully defend their revolutions by isolating Reagan internationally and making the price of direct US intervention too high.

The FDR-FMLN and the Sandinista leadership request supporters of the Central American revolution to actively build a broad anti-intervention movement by assisting their political-diplomatic initiatives. In Britain this means a campaign which focusses on stopping Thatcher's support for Reagan's Central American policy. As more and more European and Latin American government's begin to doubt the efficacy of Reagan's policy Thatcher's government becomes his only real cover. We have to 'take out' this cover: no mean task. But we have an opportunity to take a step in this direction on 11 September, the tenth anniversary of the coup in Chile. We can mobilise for 11 September around the slogans of 'No more Chile's: US hands off Central America' and 'End British support for Reagan's war in Central America'.

***The next issue of International will devote substantial space to the tenth anniversary of the Chilean coup and the revolutions in Central America.**

We Need Your Money

International is more than £1000 in debt. And yet the journal is selling well — the issue before last (the special Marx supplement) completely sold out. Why? Because our cover price really ought to be £1 to match our production costs. We don't want to raise our price that high and so we are appealing to our regular readers — please help us out and send us a donation.

We don't think you have to be persuaded that International has played a serious role in developing a revolutionary Marxist analysis of the British crisis. Our contributors have ranged widely from Ernest Mandel and Andrew Gamble to Joan Ruddock and Ron Brown MP. Please help us keep up this standard by sending us a donation.

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British Features

REBUILDING THE LABOUR PARTY

ALAN FREEMAN

The election was a disaster for the Labour Party and the labour movement and calls for fundamental rethinking on strategy. Alan Freeman argues that this demands changes in particular from the left, which has to adopt extraparliamentary action both as the way to resist Thatcher's attacks and to replace the Tories with a Labour government. In doing so it must come to grips with the basic weakness of Labourism's heritage.

Some time in the future an idle historian with little better to do will weigh up the great political disasters of the past, ranking them in order of the stupidity of those responsible. We are convinced that Labour's 1983 election performance will merit a special award in a category all of its own.

Just consider a couple of facts. In 1931 Ramsay MacDonald, who is recorded as the Labour traitor of all time, brought Labour's poll share down to a paltry 30.6 per cent. In 1983 Healey and Callaghan outstripped him by a full two per cent. Maggie Thatcher has secured the lowest popular vote of any Tory Prime Minister this century, and the only reason for her 140 seat landslide is Labour's defeat.

This was not just a setback. It was a disaster. When the Titanic — with which Labourism has much in common — went down, there was a widespread and natural tendency to blame the iceberg. Yet the task of any serious inquest was to expose the greed, cynicism and folly which floated an allegedly unsinkable ship, with half the lifeboats it needed, where it had no business to be.

Marxism has a similar obligation to the Labour Party. It has to get to the root of what was, in essence, the shipwreck of Labourism on the flotsam of the British Empire, and answer the question, can the Labour Party be saved from Labourism?

Let's start with a small incident: the Healey/Kinnock attacks on the Belgrano affair. This incident is noteworthy because it was clearly *not* tied to any of the current scapegoats for Labour's defeat — the manifesto, the bickering, the extremists, or even right wing treachery. Yet, more than anything else, it symbolised Labour's loss of direction.

The attack probably did not lose votes. Most phone calls to Walworth Road were sympathetic. But Healey lacked all credibility because he *waited twelve full months to make his attack*. What kind of leader waits until the middle of an election to denounce even one incident in a war which he fully backed at the time. This episode finally proved that Labour lost all sense of direction on the day the fleet set sail for the South Atlantic.

And this clarifies a deep failing which voters unconsciously sensed: Labour's lack of contact with today's world. Everyone *knows* that capitalism is in crisis. Labour *should* be debating Thatcher on whether capitalism ought to exist, not on how to defend it. Workers are completely unconvinced by half-baked measures that correspond only to a dream world which the Labour Party is vainly trying to recreate. Labour did not even put across the minimal socialist message that the crisis could be solved by taking wealth from the rich. Trying to package such answers in socialist wrapping only drives workers further from socialism. We would not claim that if Labour had gone on the nation's television sets on the slogan 'sod the empire, soak the rich and smash the state' that it would have achieved overnight success: but at least voters would have understood what it was trying to say.

But Labour's failure to grasp Thatcher's world led it to conspire in its own defeat. It failed to grasp that no amount of Keynesian borrowing would patch up the mess, and it therefore did not understand just how desperate the capitalist class was to keep it from office. It failed to understand that the post war consensus was over, and with it the gentlemen's agreement which let it run the country every five years to clean up the mess left by the Tories.

The sad fact is that the Labour Party was destroyed not by its present but by its past. For sixty years it had educated its voters in a spirit of insular, smug worship of Britain's greatness and freedoms, with the simple result that Thatcher triumphed as the defender of both. Labour projected a vision of socialism that never went beyond the confines of the third worst national health service in Europe, and promptly handed the package over to the Social Democratic Party, the natural inheritors of this bankrupt traditions. Labour prepared its voters perfectly for a mass desertion, and compounded the error by clinging desperately to the spoils of a two party system which held together the rotting hulks of Toryism and Labourism long after neither could ever hope to aspire to a popular majority ever again.

can the Labour Party be saved from Labourism?

The ruling class cashed in. It built a second bourgeois party with a simple purpose, fulfilled brilliantly: to remove the Labour Party from politics as a serious governmental contendor. And this is the critical point. In the last analysis, Labour was not defeated by its manifesto or leadership, but by a sea change in British politics: by the fact that the ruling class could not afford to let it form a government again under any circumstances.

That is why a proper reconstruction of the Labour Party cannot just begin with a critique of the right. It calls above all for a self-examination by the left, whose failure is the most striking of all because *they* failed to defeat the right.

True, Callaghan and Healey betrayed, just as we warned they would. What did anyone expect? They spoke out against party policy because they didn't agree with it! They were prepared to lose the election rather than let Labour win committed to left positions. They were in office before, and they knew the price to be paid if Labour came to office again on its current policies. They knew that the British ruling classes — the most heavily committed abroad next to Switzerland — would be brought to the brink of isolation and ruin by three policies alone: quitting the EEC, scrapping the bomb, and inflating the economy without a guaranteed incomes policy. They had no intention of defying the British ruling class and they said so. Their real dishonesty lay, not in speaking out against policies they didn't support, but in holding on to the party leadership when the party overwhelmingly rejected their views.

This treachery was entirely predictable. The real question is, therefore, why didn't the left prepare to defeat it? Why did Tony Benn accept the non-existent 'truce of Bishops Stortford' and refuse to stand for the party leadership? Why did he call, even as John Golding's team of Kremlinoid neanderthals seized the national executive (NEC), for 'unity around existing policies, membership and leadership' when it was crystal clear that the leadership was out for the membership and policies with a stone axe? With the exception of the small forces around

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Socialists for a Labour Victory, the left did not even follow its *own* strategy of defending conference decisions as sovereign — fooling no-one that the party was united, and throwing away the entire political capital saved up during five years of the democracy battle.

The fundamental reason is that they saw no other way to win the election. When the chips were down, they could not take the final step of standing up for the party against the leadership because they were convinced that it would lead to certain defeat. For suppose the left *had* pushed ahead full-bloodedly with the party's radical policies in defence of the right wing? Suppose it had rejected compromise under Foot? Surely the party would have been *more* divided, *less* supported, and therefore even less likely to win at the polls? Wasn't Benn's line the only option, and isn't Kinnock's leadership now the only possible way to hold together the remaining shreds of a tiny Labour vote?

This puts the left in an impossible dilemma, on which Kinnockism feeds rapaciously. The manifesto was a completely implausible piece of fudging. It did not even come over as a policy to transfer wealth and power to working people and their families, which was the proud rallying call for which the Bennites had secured Labour Party endorsement. Labour cannot mobilise or enthuse its supporters without policies which convey this message, even if only through such minimal steps as nationalising the banks. Yet, clearly, if the left *deepens* Labour's policy commitments, Labour will be still more divided and its vote apparently still more threatened. The seeds of capitulation from an important section of the left are being sown, because it cannot explain how to win elections without trimming its sails to the ruling class's demands.

What then is the solution? It is the strategy most consistently vilified, attacked and hounded during the election, the one strategy which has actually *succeeded* in getting a Labour government elected against frantic ruling class opposition: good old extra-parliamentary political action. The most disastrous feature of Labour's heritage, the sickness against which it must immunise itself, is its pathological rejection of any form of independent mass action for political ends, which remotely threatens the authority of the British parliamentary state and constitution. Labour began its self-destruction with a virulent witch-hunt against Peter Tatchell for the crime of endorsing extra-parliamentary action. It dismally fluffed every conceivable chance for mass campaigning action. It left it to the Tories to organise the only youth rally of the election. The People's March for Jobs and the 24 May women's day of action on disarmament passed unnoticed by Labour's dedicated foot-soldiers. A careful conspiracy of silence between Labour's leaders and the CND/Jobs March leadership ensured that neither drew attention to the other.

And it thereby rejected the only measures which could actually have won the election. When consensus politics ended — in 1969 — a new political era opened, during which Labour could, in fact, *only* arrive in office on the back of a wave of mass action which seriously challenged the authority of the government.

Labour's analysts, of left and right, persistently ignore the real cause of Labour's February 1974 victory. Why was Wilson, holding only a minority of parliamentary seats, able to form his fatal cabinet and why didn't Edward Heath sweep to a second term of office as Maggie Thatcher has done? Not because of Labour's 1974 programme; not because of the Social Contract; not because of Labour's dynamic leader. No, Labour won the February 1974 election in the wake of the most dramatic four years of struggle witnessed since 1926, at the end of which the miners' extra-parliamentary action finally made it plain that Heath simply could not govern the country.

This action splintered and shattered the Tory vote and drove it back into the shires where it came from. It so terrified the Liberals that, even though they were the main beneficiaries of Tory losses, they refused point blank to enter a coalition with Heath. The action even drove sections of the bourgeoisie into outright support for Wilson, on the (ultimately incorrect) belief that, armed with the Social Contract, he might pacify the unions for good where Heath had failed.

Viewed in this light, the tragedy of Labour's defeat is most pathetically expressed in the latter sent from Michael Foot asking Brian Stanley of the Post Office Engineers' Union (POEU), on the eve of the election, asking the engineers to call off their actions as there was an election going on. Unfortunately, however, the Labour Party's rejection of extra-parliamentary action is not just a minor question of leadership. It is part of its whole purpose and being. Foot's letter is the crux of the matter. The principle that he is outlining is the foundation of British social democracy: as the highest organ of British democracy, parliament must be sovereign, not merely over its officers and government, but *also over the people who elected it*. Our right to take decisions on how our lives should be run begins and ends when we cast our vote; all attempts to interfere with parliament's right to make its own sovereign decisions outside of that act is fundamentally undemocratic and impermissible in the British Labour Party. Six hundred and twenty-six white men, one Tory Asian and twenty-three women in Westminster, in Michael Foot's eyes, now have the sovereign right to do what the hell they like to us, on our behalf, and claiming our mandate, for the next five years.

We may, of course, petition our representatives. And we may even undertake certain, precisely defined, legal extra-parliamentary actions such as holding protest demonstrations or even strikes, provided these actions do not in any way seek to challenge, defy or overrule parliament's sovereign right to make and execute laws. It would be laughable if it were not so tragic. The full irony of Labour's failure to get into parliament is that it was *first and foremost the consequence of its parliamentarism*.

We, the 'impractical and utopian revolutionaries' with our 'failure to understand the fundamentally parliamentary preoccupations of the British people' propose the only strategy which could actually get Labour a majority in parliament — to have it rejected in the name of parliamentary principle! In a nutshell, Labour's dilemma now consists in the fact that it may only seriously aspire to become a governmental parliamentary party by abandoning parliamentarism.

But this drives right to the heart of the dispute between Marxism and left social democracy. The critical weakness of social democracy is not that it relies on the conquest of parliament, but that it ignores the conquest of the state. Its parliamentarism is a symptom, not a cause. Under the conditions of a crisis in the state, however, parliamentarism betrays its own promise, to the extent that even its supporters can see its weaknesses. They begin to discover the Marxist truth: *real*

British Features

power does not lie in parliament. It lies in the hands of a non-elected, non-accountable, hierarchical, class-ridden and repressive state apparatus, trained and paid by the wealthy to defend their interests no matter who is elected.

The hold of Foot's strategy on the Labour Party is a product of its failure to come to grips with the problem of the state. Now, at one level, this is all that can be expected of a social democratic party. However, it is in the *British* Labour Party above all others that parliamentarianism is concentrated to such an extraordinary degree. It was formed, not as a socialist or democratic party, but precisely as a *Labour Party* to represent Labour in parliament. It was not formed out of the Marxist, democratic tradition of its European counterparts. It has consistently refused to take up even minimal democratic questions. It has never seriously attacked the Lords, the Monarchy, or the Church; it is traditionally blind on all questions of oppression — black people, women, national self-determination. Its strategy for socialism is based on gradual parliamentary nationalisation rather than the fight for control.

And this heritage is simly inadequate to Britain's present crisis. It is a product of Labourism's classical deal with imperialism. In return for support for Britain's 'Great Power role' — that is, its foreign investments — the labour bureaucracy was allowed to implement social reforms via the British state machine. There was a second element to this deal: the labour bureaucracy must on no account challenge the state, which was backward even from the point of view of thoroughgoing *bourgeois* democracy precisely because of the decisive weight within it of all elements which shored up its imperialist-colonial orientation.

Now, with the chronic decline of British imperialism Labour is doubly caught. It must try to implement pro-working class social reform through a hidebound, snobbish, anti-working class civil service hierarchy. It must rely for its legislation on a parliamentary system with an unelected second chamber, a totally undemocratic voting system, and a monarch. And then it must defend all this garbage in the name of democracy! Thatcher, presiding over a completely *unfree* parliamentary system, accuses the Labour Party of authoritarian attacks on freedom: and the Labour Party responds by defending Thatcher's state, one of the most undemocratic in Europe, as a model of the freedom it stands for!

And this is precisely the origin, importance and motor force of Bennism. Its roots lie in the triple process comprising the weakening of the empire and the inability of foreign income to pay for social reform; the erosion of democratic rights via the strengthening and centralising of an already antiquated and reactionary state; and the consequent steady weakening of a trade union bureaucracy which bases itself on the defence of what has now become indefensible.

The strengthening of the state and the steady attack on living conditions creates a movement at the base of the unions and Labour Party that is fundamentally concerned with the defence of democracy: defence of the oppressed, defence of trade union rights, defence of human rights, a growing expression of the burning desire of working and oppressed people to control their own lives without bureaucrats, without cops, without 'experts', without bosses. Such movements conflict with the state, and are the motor force of Bennism. What classically distinguishes Bennism from all previous lefts in the Labour Party is precisely its overriding concern with democracy.

But the limitation which Benn places on Bennism is this: instead of seeking to give the movement full reign in its conflict with the state, he insists that it must be directed towards the *strengthening of parliament against the state*. He thus rejects calling for industrial action to defeat elected governments, and instead limits himself to cheering on the unions when and if they organise such action. Consequently he falls at the last hurdle to propose a strategy which would allow his movement to proceed independent of the trade union bureaucracy. He falls back into the sterile trap of a united leadership at all costs because he renounces the only strategy which could unite the rank and file, for fear it threatens parliament.

Here, he fails to grasp the second great lesson which Marxism alone has to offer the labour movement, that parliament is in the last analysis the *prisoner* of the state. Precisely because real power does not lie in parliament, the entire parliamentary system weeds out, selects and promotes only those MPs who will be 'reasonable' and 'moderate' and abide by the constitution: that is, who will obey the state.

It was consequently the easiest task in the world for the British ruling class to use parliament against Tony Benn and his movement: all they did is point out that if the Labour Party got in the result would be total anarchy, whch was perfectly true. And after the anarchy, they said, exactly the same thing will happen as in 1975 and is now happening to Mitterrand: the right wing will win out in the Labour Party and you'll go back to doing what we said you should do all along. So why not cut out the two years' anarchy and make sure Labour doesn't get anywhere near the driving seat?

Translated, this simply means 'parliament is *ours*, and don't you forget it.' It was a not very subtle warning that the ruling class does not intend to surrender parliament to the working class: and it was a convincing demonstration that the extra-parliamentary power of the ruling class (the state banks, and so on) have placed an iron chain round parliament itself. Those who reject this chain — like Tony Benn — are expelled by the organism.

That's why 9 June saw the death of an entire range of semi-parliamentary strategies, of which Tony Benn was one, which must now be re-examined. In particular it exposed a very tempting, very popular, and very wrong approach to socialist strategy on the left through which almost every Labour Party socialist tries to explain their policies on the doorstep: which is

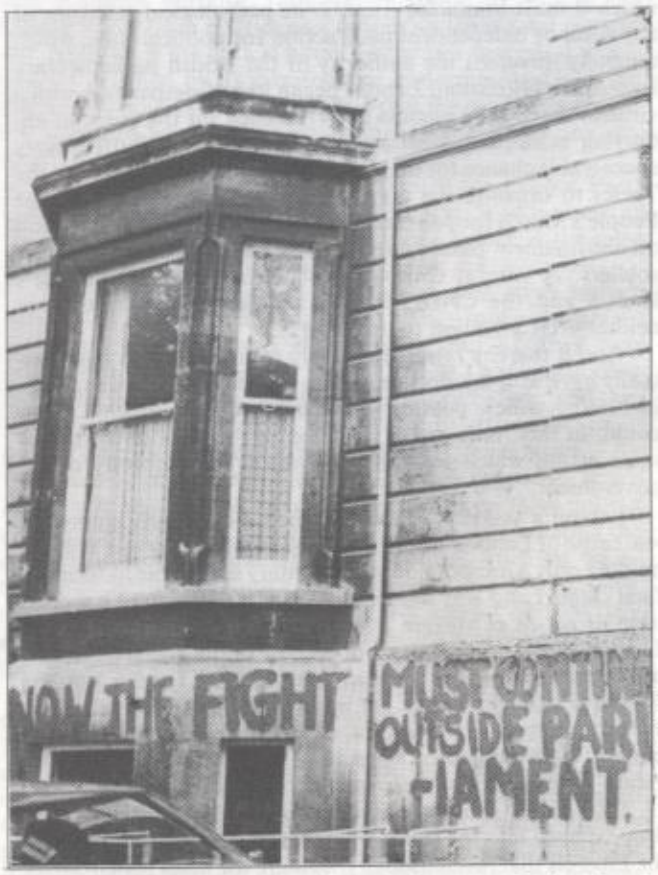

Photo: ANDY GOLDING

Bristol West Conservative Association headquarters the day after the election

to talk about socialist advance through the Labour Party *in terms of what will happen when a left Labour government gets into office.* There are thus two distinct phases: one, peaceful, routine doorknocking entry into parliament by standard electoral method. Two: Labour Party pulls off dirty mac, unveils socialist programme and defeats multinationals by summoning masses.

Thus the whole Labour left is committed to working for socialism in the guise of an historically bizarre and fantastic event which will probably never happen. *Militant,* with its 'enabling act'; *London Labour Briefing,* with 'Labour take the power'; not to mention many varieties of the call for a 'workers' government' which boil down to promoting any perspective at all for propelling the result into office. All such strategies amount, in essence, to a sneak attack on bourgeois democracy. All call for a series of historically unparalleled accidents; the accidental capture of the Labour Party by the left; the accidental victory of the new left party at the polls; and finally, the accidental discovery of revolutionary methods of self-defence by the left social democrats.

What is wrong with this, as 9 June shows, is that short of a catastrophic bourgeois crisis Labour cannot conceivably arrive in office, particularly committed to any radical measures, without *first* having mobilised very large scale mass action to the point where the credibility of the bourgeois state and government are seriously being questioned by the mass of voters. The prospect of a left Labour government coming to office by peaceful electoral means is as remote as the prospect of Maggie Thatcher abolishing the monarchy. Never in history — including Chile — has a left social democratic party been promoted to office under any other conditions than mass upsurge and relative collapse of ruling class authority.

Labour projected a vision of socialism that never went beyond the third worst national health service in Europe

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Can we begin to map out an alternative? To do so we must settle accounts with a second version of revolutionary strategy in Britain which even further confuses and befogs the issue of how the working class should deal with parliament: the notion of an anti-parliamentary revolution. This notion understands the need to organise mass action, understands that the working class can only progress if it is prepared to challenge the authority of the state and the government of the day, and then draws the utterly false conclusion that a revolution can only happen if the working class blithely *ignores* parliament and prepares a revolution *against* parliament.

This view is advanced by the Socialist Workers' Party. No-one since Bordiga has so effectively and consistently defended anti-parliamentarism as the SWP; few have so skillfully exposed its weaknesses as Tony Benn. His fundamental point is devastating: since the working class *itself* struggled to create parliament, since parliament, the suffrage, and all the extensions of democracy that go with them are working class gains, it is inconceivable that the working class should blindly embark on its destruction. The socialist who seeks to unite the working class against parliament faces a critical problem: while there is no higher form of democracy in existence there is no vantage point from which workers can launch the assault on parliament, because there is nothing to replace it with.

The critical point to be understood which neither the SWP nor Tony Benn grasp is that the working class is perfectly capable of embarking on revolutionary actions without breaking from its illusions in parliamentary democracy, and indeed under the belief that is is defending parliamentary democracy! This is simply because support for parliament as an institution is entirely separate from support for any particular parliamentary *government,* and even more remote from obedience to the *state* which acts in parliament's name. One who does not grasp this cannot understand the true significance of the miners' action of 1974, to which British socialism must return time and again if it is to find its bearings in the 1980s and beyond.

Heath, the last Tory Prime Minister to take the unions on frontally, taught the ruling class a lesson that the working class has not yet absorbed. He proved that *even a working class which is completely besotted and enraptured with bourgeois parliamentary democracy will take action that can bring down an elected government, if on the horizon stands the prospect of electing an alternative government which it believes can be made to represent its interests.*

The miners consciously defied an elected government to the point of forcing its departure without moving an inch from their illusions in parliamentary democracy. If they had been hostile to or even mistrustful of parliament, they would have denounced the election as a fraud and stepped up their strike to pre-empt the result. Indeed, they would have picketed polling booths or even stopped people voting. For in a *revolt against parliament* — such as the recent farcical 'election' in El Salvador — *the act of voting* is an act of capitulation and abstention is the hallmark of resistance. But this stage of revolution is reached only when workers have *already* embarked on building a higher democracy in the shape of an alternative state. It is a feature of the last, not the first days of the revolution. The essential point is that working people will break with the state that lies behind parliament long, long before they break with parliament itself, precisely because their experiences of an alternative national democracy have been confined to brief and brilliant flashes rapidly extinguished by war, Stalinism, or both.

The British working class can therefore be fully expected to launch assault after assault on British governments and indeed on the British state, in ever more frenzied attempts to create an elected parliament which will answer to them instead of to the state. They will break not with parliament but with the chain that shackles it to the state, and only when that chain has tightened to the point that it throttles parliament itself will they take the final step to an alternative, higher democracy.

It is out of this understanding that some sense can be breathed into the present situation, and some hope offered to working people against Maggie Thatcher. For the ruling class's fear of the Labour Party is not born of strength but of desperation.

The ruling class wants to destroy Labour as a potential party of government because of what it has to do to the working class. British capitalism, bottom of the imperialist ladder in an extended period of heightened inter-imperialist competition, is falling off the ladder. It faces a cataclysmic economic future. Only North Sea Oil stands between the Treasury and economic collapse. The world upturn which, for the more advanced countries like Germany and Japan, is the opportunity to conquer yet more markets from their weakened competitors, is proving bad enough news for British exporters whose productive capactiy has been slimmed to extinction. For the Treasury it is a nightmare because it spells a balance of payments out of all control. And beyond the upturn looms the 1986-7 slump. Consequently, only two real remedies are to hand: further giant cuts in social spending and real, serious wage cuts. Both measures are politically destabilising. Thatcher's support among some sections of the working class is undoubtedly due to the rise in real wages of those who still have work which went side by side with her dole strategy. Now this is to be reversed. Attacking the welfare state is even more politically difficult: something like 80 per cent of the population believe that the limit of acceptable cuts has already been reached.

Hence, to go with the attacks on material conditions, Thatcher needs to go on the offensive on democratic rights. Union powers need to be whittled down; the police and repressive apparatus strengthened; most of all, the state has to be centralised. The alarm bells are already ringing with Scottish MPs

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theatening to convene a Scottish Assembly. Her promise to abolish the GLC is a sure sign of political weakness — a real confession of doubt that she can inflict a *political* defeat by simply recapturing the GLC at the polls. There is no question but that this will call forth resistance. The problem for Thatcher is: can it be crushed or thwarted? And the condition of the Labour Party is critical to solving this problem.

For the great and fundamental difference between the Labour Party and any other parliamentary party, no matter how radical, lies in its connections with the trade unions. And the leadership of the Labour Party understands this connection in precisely the opposite way to the ruling class. For the Labour Party leaders, the union connection means that it is the only party able to pacify the unions. For the ruling class, it is the only party able to *mobilise* the unions: and that is why it must be prevented from coming to office in the midst of a crisis which cannot, as the winter of discontent proved, but provoke workers to action.

The danger for Thatcher is not that Roy Hattersley or even Neil Kinnock might arrive in office in 1988 and jettison Britain's nuclear weapons in a fit of inspired generosity; it is that British workers might place him there so that *they* can get rid of them. It is therefore critical to Thatcher's strategy — and David Owen's — to dissolve, as thoroughly and efficiently as possible, the connection between the Labour Party and the unions: the connection between Labour and any spirit of resistance.

It is fundamental to Thatcher's prospect of success that she is able to insist, and continue to insist, and be believed, when she says 'there is no alternative': because if there is an alternative, no matter how pathetic or half-baked, in the form of a government which working people feel is theirs, then working people will feel inspired to take resistance to Thatcher to the point where she falls. If there is no alternative, or if the alternative is utterly discredited in the eyes of the majority of workers, then she will be able to drag union leader after union leader into capitulation, isolate strike after strike, grind down the working class always with the same, insistent argument: whatever you say about me, *there is nothing else.*

Anyone who now discusses strategy for the Labour Party must understand that a political vacuum has been created by this election. Thatcher has not won a popular mandate, despite her landslide in seats. She will confront all who resist her with the demand that they say who is to replace her, or stand accused of anarchy and subversion. All political forces will be driven to answer this question in one way or another. Kinnock's answer is no answer: more of the same, under a younger leader. It is for this reason that all issues of policy, leadership and strategy will now begin to fall within the framework of a new issue in British politics: the political independence of the Labour Party.

There is only one other serious non-socialist alternative for the Labour Party, and it has been clearly spelt out by Frank Chapple: Coalition. Lib-Labism, reborn just in time for Thatcher's return to Queeen Victoria, stalks the corridors of Walworth Road. EP Thompson has breathed it into vibrant life in a forthright article in the *New Statesman;* one half of the Communist Party is energetically pursuing it. It is only a question of time before a serious figure in the Labour leadership raises it, and if they do not, we can be sure that someone in the Alliance will do it for them.

Coalition has a unique virtue: it *is* acceptable to the ruling class as a second best to Thatcherism. Under a coalition, every dangerous policy can be safely dropped under the wonderful new excuse that although we, of course, desperately want to do it, our partners unfortunately don't ... Coalitionism has a unique vice: it rules out the Labour Party becoming a serious focus for movements of reistance to Thatcher. If the party of the working class intends to enter office alone, every movement of resistance has a clear and practical strategy: win over the trade unions to take joint action to stop Thatcher; and win over the trade unions to impose alternative policies on the Labour Party for when Thatcher has gone. The two go together neatly and efficiently.

But if Labour *does not intend to govern,* half the effort is dissipated and so the entire enterprise fails. And so comes the insistent, siren voice of EP Thompson and his friends: don't just work on the Labour Party, work on the Liberals as well. But if you're going to work your way through the Liberals, why link up with the unions? Indeed, it becomes positively dangerous to become too identified with sectional, discredited forces such as the dwindling band of Britain's remaining militant trade unionists. And of course, extreme policies will alientate our Liberal friends. *The road to coalition is thus the road to capitulation.*

Labour may only seriously aspire to become a governmental parliamentary party by abandoning parliamentarism

The alternative to this capitulation cannot be simply to stand still; simply to try and hold together the old, rotten Labourist politics. This is why Kinnockism is in the long run doomed. The task for the left is to understand that it faces a long-term, strategic battle to defend the political independence of the Labour Party by transforming its relation to the unions and mass movements; by transforming it into a party of action instead of a party of discussion and legislation.

The signs that such a task can be attacked in a serious way are extremely healthy. The Labour Party, far from losing members through the election, has recruited in a big way — and to join the Labour Party in the present climate is an act of extremism. The very fact that the ruling class is unlikely to succeed in imposing Hattersley as leader, much less Healey, is a sign of its weakness whatever Kinnock's future role will be. The left victories in the POEU and NUR and the establishment of Broad Lefts in union after union show that the political debate in the Labour Party is penetrating and intertwining with the battle in the unions on a much larger scale. A growing mass campaigning wing in the YS is taking shape.

Discussion is in train in the now 30-strong Campaign Group of MPs to approach the Broad Lefts Organising Committee for a joint conference. If this happens it will be the first time since 'In Place of Strife' that a parliamentary and trade union left have linked up for battle. Ken Livingstone and Arthur Scargill both came out clearly for extra-parliamentary action and deepening labour's policies straight after the election. *Labour Briefing* is attempting to set up a national journal. This left has three tasks, which can be summed up by the proposal to ceate a mass, campaigning Labour Party to fight the Tories.

First, to construct an organised minority across the labour movement — in the unions and workplaces, constituencies and party leadership — committed to subordinate everything else to the paramount need to organise and link up with action to defend working and oppressed people against Thatcher's onslaught. Second, to draw policy conclusions from this battle: to defend and promote policies within the Labour Party which can serve as a genuine inspiration for the mass struggle by demonstrating Labour's intention to take hold of capitalist wealth and use it for working people; to confront the capitalist war machine and halt its bloodthirsty adventures overseas; and to struggle for the maximum possible extension of democracy and democratic rights against the strengthening and centralisation of the state.

Third, to prepare for a long term battle to place leaderships committed to these objectives at the head of both the Labour Party and the unions, without any fudging and compromising with the Hattersleys and Shores.

In short, to rebuild the Labour Party, bury Labourism!

ALAN FREEMAN is the author of *The Benn Heresy*, and a member of Labour Against the Witch Hunt steering committee

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PEOPLE'S MARCH & PEOPLE'S FRONTS

The 1983 Peoples March for Jobs was controversial from the start. The idea for the march was initially opposed by the Labour Party and the TUC, which was only reversed by pressure within the movement. The march itself was plagued by controversy on and off the march itself over its 'non-political' stance. Before the march began Mick Archer interviewed Pete Carter, Midlands regional official of UCATT and the industrial organiser of the CP, who helped to campaign for the march to go ahead. Valerie Coultas and Redmond O'Neill interviewed two marchers, Tony Purtill and Paul Atkin, about the march, and the attitude of the Communist Party in particular.

'We have to win the centre ground'

MA: You have argued that a broad conception of the 1983 Peoples March is a prerequisite to its success: that we should resist a tendency to tag on questions like nuclear disarmament, the Alternative Economic Strategy, and so on which would preclude the involvement of broader forces. Could you explain why?

PC: Eighty per cent of people see unemployment as the main problem facing Britain, not inflation, nor a range of other issues. In that 80 per cent there are a mixture. They are not all socialists. They are not calling for the overthrow of capitalism. If we had the slogan 'Jobs not Bombs' you would initially alienate a lot of people who feel strongly that Britain should have the bomb, or the multilateralist elements, from taking part in this particular initiative on jobs.

Secondly, when you talk about, for instance, including an Alternative Economic Strategy to involve other forces once again I think you begin to limit the participation of people. Especially when you think that 49 per cent of people, at this stage, of those 80 per cent think that the problem is not of the government's making. So if we began to put forward an Alternative Economic Strategy, or if we became so narrow that we turned it into an anti-Tory march then you would alienate an awful lot of people.

The creation of such a broad movement on unemployment would also carry the potential for a wide range of discussions of political alternatives and for a socialist future.

MA: It seems to me what you are putting forward is a popular protest against unemployment that would include organisations like the Church, Tory councils in certain circumstances, and chambers of commerce.

But how would such a march relate to traditional struggles like strikes over redundancies or even occupations?

PC: I think there is an organic relationship between the breadth of what we are trying to do and the traditional forms of struggle. I am sure, for instance, that there will be a definite relationship between the launch of the march in Scotland on the 23 April and the Timex dispute in Dundee. The contradiction would be if the march itself took on the fight to save Timex, and the fight to save Kraft. We have to find this way of the struggles complementing each other rather than either imposing a struggle on people who are not prepared to accept that struggle.

MA: You said the march should steer clear of being narrowly anti-Tory, pitched at people who will not simply identify themselves as labour movement activists. Do you feel that, as a popular protest, it could be expressed politically in the form of alliances or a coalition?

PC: It seems to me that we have to find a kind of uniting minimum programme whilst at the same time retaining our long term overall objectives. I am sure that there are enough issues that would make such a minimum programme possible. But there are a lot of hostilities, a lot of fears, there is a lot of mistrust. On the question of unemployment we have got a kind of minimum programme, in the sense of the slogan 'to make employment a first priority'. It's a minimum demand, on which to develop and to forge new alliances. You can begin to see in embryonic form the possibilities of coalitions. And, incidentally, I do not just see the question of coalitions as political parties. My coalition extends much wider than those to involve all sorts of other people. It involves the peace movement, and the women's movement. The boards being planned by the Labour government, in terms of the tripartite things, I think they should be much wider, much broader. They should contain within them a much more representative voice of the British people as reflected in the types of movement that have been developing over the years.

But on the question of unemployment it does create that kind of new relationship with people. The practice of it brings about a completely new ball game. One example, for instance, is that during the course of the 1981 People's March we were able to develop a relationship with the Church in a way we had never done before. We worked with them and they worked with us. We got to know them. We got to know a lot of their parishioners. We were able after the march to carry that on in the sense that the West Midlands TUC meets regularly with the Industrial Mission.

MA: Do you feel these alliances or coalitions can maintain themselves around definite proposals for tackling unemployment? Isn't that much more difficult?

PC: Yes, and of course this is where we have not been good at intervening. We have tended to respond to situations and defence of jobs at all costs when in reality some of the jobs should have gone. We must really come off the defensive and now, under capitalism, begin to make an intervention. For instance, challenging workers who are using their labour in the armaments industry. It is a very difficult issue, but I think we have to confront that. We have to start to raise with the workers in those industries how they are going to begin to campaign to support the trade union movement's desire to end the nuclear rat race.

MA: But can employers, local Tory councils, chambers of commerce and so on be genuinely involved in discussing employment for social need, given that it will inevitably infringe upon the profit motive?

PC: Well, I think at this particular moment it would not be really possible. We are talking of a position of a really low level of activity. But what now seems impossible could well be different once the people in Britain are aroused. For instance, I know a lot of people don't think this is important, but in the 1981 march from the word 'Go' Mrs Thatcher refused to meet a delegation of the marchers. But the march reached such a

Photo: JOHN HARRIS

climax that Jim Prior had to bale her out and meet a delegation. There are big divisions between the Tories but those divisions do not really express themselves in the absence of struggle.

I just think it is quite possible for quite a movement to develop which includes non-Thatcherite Tories and amongst them, of course, a lot of working class people — not just the cabinet wets. There are an awful lot of working class people who are actually non-Thatcherite but have a Tory tradition. I think they can be won. I am very mindful, for instance, of the divisions that have been created in the Labour Party. You can argue the rights and wrongs of them, I don't want to get involved in a debate about that, but those divisions between the left and the right and the way that they express themselves can only help the Thatcherite government because people could not see a real alternative.

The average worker just sees divisions and decides to support and vote for what they know to be at least fairly secure. And at this particular moment the government, in the eyes of the workers, does seem fairly secure and a safe bet. But if we can unite the non-Thatcherite Tories around the issue of unemployment then I think that would create deep problems for the Conservative Party. There is a problem, though, from people in traditionally left wing movements and so on — their view at the moment is they wouldn't work with a Tory for love nor money. I have come across this time and time again. They wouldn't share a platform with the SDP. But I think in the present climate that only goes to help Mrs Thatcher.

It does nothing to win the centre ground and that is what we have to do.

'All the TUC wanted was to march us from A to B'

R: Why did you go on the People's March?
T: The main reason initially was that I wanted the opportunity of visiting factories, getting out into the wider labour movement, stressing the need for stronger links between the unemployed and the employed. Having been involved in negotiations over quite a number of years particularly in the last few years, it's become dead clear how the threat of unemployment is used against workers who are employed.

In wage negotiations you get this take it or leave it attitude, that if you don't like the offer we're making there are hundreds of people waiting who could start work tomorrow. When you're representing a factory with a large proportion of semi-skilled workers, which management say can be trained up in six weeks, the threat becomes quite real. The same kind of thing happens over conditions. That is really why the unemployed need to have some kind of a voice, to refute these tactics in employment negotiations.

R: How have the conditions in the Oldham factory you were working in changed?
The degree of militancy has definitely gone down from 1980. People are less prepared to take action. Living standards have been hit, particularly in the first years of this government, and the fear of unemployment, even if it doesn't affect you in a direct sense, you see what it does to other members of your family, and you realise it could be you next. People start to believe the propaganda in the press that strikes create unemployment. The reverse is true of course. Strong trade unions, democratically organised, would plan a fight against it. The unions as they stand haven't countered this argument. Some of the actions of the trade union leaders in trying to destroy democracy in the unions tend to strengthen the argument of the media.

R: Why do you think the Communist Party's strategy of a 'broad alliance' to fight unemployment held back support for the People's March? Do you think they damaged the potential of the march?
T: Yes. It stopped it mobilising, there's no question about that. It stopped it really being taken into the labour movement. You can't very well go and speak at a factory which is in struggle against redundancies and argue that the return of a Conversative government, as long as it says that it's going to make full employment its first priority, is the thing.

V: You were just told you had to stick to 'make unemployment a first priority'? That's all you were allowed to argue?
R: Why couldn't you argue at least on the policies of the labour movement, public works, more money on health, 35 hour week?
T: Because if you take up those kind of arguments you've got to talk about which kind of government it going to implement them, and quite clearly the Tory government isn't, or the Liberal/SDP Alliance, so you've got to start talking about the return of a Labour government that's going to implement real socialist policies.

V: Did you notice any political differences inside the Communist Party on the march?
T: On our leg, although the differences weren't as sharp as when we met up with the Eastern leg, a lot of the Young Communist League (YCL) members were quite bemused at what the old line Stalinists were saying. They couldn't really understand what was going on. Particularly around the 'Jobs not Bombs' slogan which the Stalinists opposed, the YCL joined in the debate over it and supported us. They were then dragged into line again and told they mustn't chant that. Even when some of them argued that unemployment was linked to the arms race they were told that this was a diversion. When we walked into Stafford we raised this slogan and all the YCL people chanted with us in our contingent. When we got to the accommodation they were approached individually and told they couldn't shout that. At our regional meeting the next morning some YCL members were still willing to argue about it. We were told by the Chief Marshall, Danny Collins, that if we continued to chant this slogan we would be off the march.

On the Yorkshire leg they were chanting anti-Tory slogans until they were stopped. Also on the platforms, the people that spoke to us reflected the 'broad' conception of the march. While the Yorkshire leg linked up with factory struggles ours did not. When we went through Widnes, a stone's throw from Warrington where Greenings was on strike, there was no at-

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tempt at all to link up with that. As far as I know no delegations were sent out to Timex either. The other leg was different, they held march meetings and decided to raise political slogans. They had prominent Labour Party lefts, Skinner and Cryer, addressing them but we didn't have any left-wing leaders addressing us until we got to London.

P: Jack Dromey of the South East Region TUC tried to make out that some of us wanted to sing songs about hitting Tories with spanners, But that wasn't it at all. When the CP talked about 'winning hegemony over middle layers' they omitted to mention that to do this you have to put across a clear labour movement alternative in terms of policies and actions. We could have toured round factories, youth clubs, shop stewards committees, CND groups, black and women's groups to win support. Instead we were told that during an election it was 'sectarian' for the labour movement to chant 'Tories Out'.

Worse was some of the harassment from some of the marshalls and CPers. For example not only were police called in to harass socialist paper sellers but also Peter Lenahan, a CP marshall, gave an interview with the *Sunday Telegraph* claiming that the North West TUC and Liverpool Trades Council were 'infiltrated' by Trotskyists. When challenged about it, Lenahan claimed to be 'proud' of what he had told this wretched right wing Tory rag.

Other CPers disagreed with this approach. We could read the shadow boxing in the *Morning Star*. Articles by Dave Hawkins, fulltime secretary of Manchester Trades Council, and Kevin Halpin, both called for the march to be 'an anti-Tory crusade', at the same time as their comrades on the march were kicking off people who wanted to do precisely that.

R: Did you feel that you had a broader march because it just concentrated on jobs? What support did you get from the Tories?

T: The theme of unemployment and expenditure of nuclear weapons wasn't linked. It was deliberately, artificially separated out and this had the effect of demobilising people, like CND activists. There wasn't a CND speaker on the platform until we got to London. CND can turn out a quarter of a million people. They should have all been brought in around this march.

As for the Tories, we got no support at all. Milton Keynes showed what nonsense the 'broad church approach' really was. The council refused to give us a school because they said it could constitute a fire risk. A disused factory was suggested and obstacles were put in the way of that. They wouldn't even allow us to cook on the premises. So they had to run out and order fish and chips for four hundred people.

V: And what about the Bishops?

T: That was quite funny really. On the boundary between Salford and Manchester we were greeted by the MPs for Manchester. They were told quite clearly they would have to join the back of the march. Yet when we arrived in Leek and handed over to the West Midlands, the Bishop of Stafford was allowed to walk from Leek into Newcastle-under-Lyne at the head of the march.

The Church sees unemployment as a moral issue. The Church will always involve itself in a campaign against unemployment. The people who seemed to be doing the actual work for us seemed to be there for political reasons, it wasn't the whole church by any means. I don't think that if the march had had a stronger labour movement line we would have 'alienated' any of this support. The march was always going to alienate Tory councils.

V: What did the march organisers do in relation to the organisation of black people and women?

T: On the march leg up to the West Midlands, there were three black youth that came from Shotton but there weren't any at all that came down from Glasgow through the North East. Very, very unrepresentative, and the same with women. There were 17 on our leg until we met up with the other people from the North East. We had, up to Salford, 110 marchers. Altogether when we all joined up there were about 40 women on the march, 50 at the most.

R: Was there any effort made to get black people to go to factories where black people worked or into the black communities to take up the unemployment issue.

T: No. Nor were women encouraged to go to factories where a large number of women worked.

P: Even when we were greeted enthusiastically by women workers along the route, from the men it was all, 'well done, lads'.

V: You did have the Women's Day though, on 24 May.

T: Well, yes we had to raise the women's day though. We had to argue for a minibus to go down to Greenham Common. Had we not brought that up nothing would have been done about that at all. They sent that minibus and they had four women holding the ropes of the banner, but there are a number of large factories coming into London that employ a large number of women.

R: Was there positive vetting to get a particular person on the march? I think they'd learned lessons from the 1981 march, with politicos on the march.

T: Our region, the North West, was heavily populated with Communist Party members who controlled all the transport side for the North West, and ended up running the transport for the whole march. There were a large number of YCL youth in our region too. It was an attempt to get a mixture of Communist Party members and non-political people, particularly non-political youth: youth who hadn't been involved in the labour movement, and I think they may have had the aim of trying to recruit.

R: Did they give any special kind of privileges to the Communist Party?

T: The *Morning Star* was distributed every morning. We were

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woken up sometimes beaten over the head in our sleeping bags with a copy. They were given out by the march organisers. While *Newsline* and other paper sellers were harassed from selling their papers.

R: What about the line of other tendencies on the march.
V: Yes the Workers Revolutionary Party for example?
T: I honestly don't think the WRP had a line on the march itself. They had marchers. They had the biggest far left presence. But there were quite a number of very young comrades amongst them, who had only recently been recruited. They didn't have a policy at all. They had been told from the word go, march and get down to London, if the march changes politically, fine, get involved, but if it doesn't don't go out on a limb to change it politically. While their paper constantly took up the opposition to the march organisers, I think their individual marchers were told to keep their heads down.

Tony Purtill: 'Unemployment and nuclear weapons were deliberately separated out, which demobilised people'.

V: The Militant?
T: We had one or two on our leg but they were also unwilling to take up the argument forcefully with the CP. One guy from Scotland was quite good, he was expelled and then reinstated but they didn't come across in a coherent fashion, having a policy that they all argued for. It was generally *Socialist Action* supporters and other Labour Party lefts who led the opposition to the CP on the march itself.

V: The Communist Party might reply to these criticisms of the march, that working class people are shifting to the right under the impact of the Thatcher government and that there is a lack of support for the struggle against unemployment, which explains the lack of rank and file feeling for the march. Would you agree with that?
T: No, I wouldn't agree that there is no rank and file feeling against unemployment. What I would agree is that there's no *leadership* in that fight, which is totally different. The reasons for the attitude of workers towards unemployment is that there is this feeling that most of the right-wing trade union leaders seem to be going along with it. That it is inevitable and it's got to be accepted. I don't know how else you explain the lack of fight against it.

It's difficult to see why the CP went to all the trouble they did to get the march going in the first place. They went to the trouble of pressurising the TUC and the Labour Party to stage the People's March to put it on and then they didn't build it. It wasn't built, there's no question about that. Some of the turnouts as we came down into London were absolutely appalling — two hundred people at a rally in the Free Trade Hall in Manchester — precisely because it hadn't been built, we hadn't toured any factories, very little information had gone out to anyone. It wasn't surprising the turnout was as small as it was. When you consider that with practically no mobilisation at all

you can still turn out between 50 and 60,000 people out on 5 June, this gives the lie to the idea that people are not concerned with unemployment.

I think there are differences in the TUC line and the Communist Party line. With the CP, it could reflect the politics within the Communist Party at the present time. According to them, the choice is not between one extreme and the other, either a left-wing Labour government or a right-wing Tory government. They say that the class isn't ready to move to a left wing Labour government, that there's got to be some middle ground somewhere along the line. This falls into line with their collaborationist politics, the coalitionism that they're pushing for. I think they put on two faces with this march. Publicly they say that it was a success by the amount of people that came out, but in other circles that it wasn't a success, people couldn't be mobilised, people aren't going to be mobilised for left-wing policies, and so on. It's significant that the march was labelled as anti-Thatcher and not pro-Labour. Anybody who is against hard-line Toryism then they can all get together in one sort of huge party.

R: Including in a government or just around things like the People's March?

T: For them, including in a government, yes. There are examples like Italy, where you got Communists proposing participating with Christian democrats. They don't seem to see anything wrong with that. I think the British Communist Party would be quite prepared to get involved in something like that here, with the SDP.

V: So you're saying that the Communist Party specifically organised the march and then didn't build it in a massive way because they wanted to promote a particular political line away from a left-wing Labour government and towards coalition. Do you think the TUC wants to stop the organisation of a National Union of the Unemployed by these marches? Do these substitute for building such a movement?

T: I think the TUC entered the march from a different perspective. The TUC's line, along with the right-wing of the Labour

Paul Atkin: 'On 5 June the labour left was on the knocker, instead of in the streets with us'

Party, opposed the march simply because they felt that once you start mobilising the unemployed and the employed, a march like this could create a real mass movement against unemployment and real anger. With all the statements by Michael Foot 18 months ago saying he's against extra-parliamentary action it makes it difficult for him to come into line and back what this march should have been all about — namely extra-parliamentary action agaisnt unemployment. They are frightened of any kind of mass movement that they're not going to be able to control. This is the reason why they didn't build it.

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Photo: JOHN HARRIS

V: I think the TUC patronises the unemployed. I think it's like charity to salve the conscience of the bureaucracy for not doing anything to fight unemployment.

T: It could be seen like that certainly: like we are doing something for the unemployed, we're staging this march that's going to end in a massive demonstration in London, then you can all just go home. It's significant that after the march on Monday morning people were just left hanging about outside County Hall at about a quarter to nine, waiting for the train tickets to go home. It certainly came home to me then just what this march had all been about. All they wanted to do was to march us from A to B. Nothing else.

R: The TUC has backed an action on unemployment. How can that be used to develop some kind of movement? What kind of movement do you think is necessary?

T: What's necessary is that the unemployed have got to be in charge of their own destiny in terms of the trade union movement, rather than relying on TUC bureaucrats doing everything for them. They decide what you can do. They decided on a march. This march wasn't decided on by unemployed people it was decided on by employed people. They decided on the character of the march. They decided on the politics of the march without any real input from the unemployed. Unless you've got a national movement that represents the unemployed you're always going to be in the hands of the TUC who are going to decide when, what you can do, where you can do it, and how you can do it.

V: What balance sheet would draw of the march?

P: It's interesting to compare it with the 1981 march. In 1981 the Labour Party was organising mass demonstrations on unemployment, CND had huge marches, there was the hunger strike in Ireland, and the Benn deputy leadership campaign — 'Tony Benn for number ten' was the slogan of the day. In short the left seemed to be on the move.

Since then unemployment has risen to four million. Many workplaces that came out in 1981 had closed by the time we got there this year. The 1983 march did not appeal to 'broader' forces than the labour movement, but at the same time it failed to project a labour movement alternative to mass unemployment and Thatcherism. But not all the responsibility for this can be laid at the door of the CP. On 5 June the Labour left was mostly out on the knocker instead of in the streets with us. It ceded the march to the CP without a fight, when the march could have been the best catalyst we had during the election to pull the movement together. Never again!

Reviews

'A MASCULINE TRADITION'

MARGARET WARD

Margaret Ward is a socialist feminist, living and working in Belfast. She has just written a book *Unmanageable Revolutionaries* about women's participation in Irish national struggles. Shelley Charlesworth asked her why she wrote the book.

MW: The main reason I wrote this book was to present women's contribution to nationalist history in a way that hadn't been done before. The Republican movement has always felt that if you could quote some of the great figures of the past like Countess Markiewicz then women had always been active and accepted. I wanted to give a chronological account of the much wider contribution that ordinary women have made to the nationalist movement, but also to look more critically at the kind of mythologising that has gone on in the Republican movement. The book tries to say that women have been active politically as a result of a lot of hard pressure on the part of women. But their role has been very circumscribed by the nationalist organisations where they haven't really been accepted as equal participants.

SC: You also make the point that when women have been given positions of autonomy, or political responsibility, they have quite often been on the left or more radical wings of these organisations and have thought of more diverse and imaginative forms of political protest. It does come out consistently in the Ladies Land League and in Cumann na mBan (the Republican women's organisation) that there is this strong, critical stance from the women.

MW: I'm not necessarily saying that women as a sex would be inherently more egalitarian than men. Rather that women who become politically conscious then become conscious — even if they don't ever articulate it — of their own oppression as women, and of the need for a radical transformation of society before they can have the kind of equality they want as women. I think they were much more receptive to the fact that waged labourers and agricultural workers are oppressed, and they saw the necessity for drawing them into struggle. For instance, the Land League was basically run by Members of Parliament and men of substance and later on, in the early days of Cumann na mBan, the political movement seemed to be dominated by intellectuals and very confined to narrow groups. Women weren't necessarily of the same social groups and didn't have that kind of economic stake that men had in maintaining the status quo.

SC: But a lot of the women activists were actually related to male nationalists and so in a sense they would have shared a certain class background to the men.

MW: Yes. For example, in the Ladies Land League, Anna Parnell was the sister of Charles Stewart Parnell. But I think the important thing about Anna was although she came into politics because she was the sister of the leader of the movement, she didn't automatically go along with the political beliefs of her brother. The same could be said of a lot of women later on in the movement. One of the reasons I tried to show the family relations of the women was also to try and isolate what sort of women were able to be politically active, particularly when you think of the early part of the century. It seems to me that if you didn't have a supportive family background in the first place it was very difficult for you to be politically active. And so those women who were active had a very strong family tradition that often went back for generations. Interestingly, quite often they tended to break from the family tradition.

SC: I think one of the most encouraging things I read in the book was the articulate opposition to the 1937 Constitution (De Valera's brainchild which is still in force today) from some Republican women and the more bourgeois feminists, and professional women's bodies. In other histories of the period there doesn't seem to be very much reference to this.

MW: Well I don't think that anyone has realised that there was any opposition by women to the 1937 Constitution. For example, John Whyte in his book *Church and State* itemises the clauses relating to women but says that the only visible opposition to the constitution was by the Anglo-Irish intellectuals. He talks about their outraged response and simply leaves it at that. Historians have had a myopia about women. For example the *Irish Times* took the issue very seriously and was completely opposed to it. Historians have ignored page after page of mass meetings of women which were reported by a woman columnist on the paper.

I'm not sure how widespread this opposition of women was outside of Dublin. I would have thought its composition was very similar to the present anti-Amendment campaign on abortion in the South. But I'm not sure what would have happened in the countryside, particularly given Fianna Fail's dominance over Irish political life. There must have been great antagonism to the Constitution, because it was passed by such a very small figure, and the abstention rate was a third of the electorate, a lot of whom were the principled Republicans who refused to vote on the question because of giving legitimacy to the state. Republican women who were well-known figures like Kathleen Clarke, and Maud Gonne, wrote in to one of the mass meetings saying how much they condemned the clauses — partly on political grounds because the constitution didn't say that it would abolish special courts and also because they disagreed with its clauses on women. But Cumann na mBan as the leading Republican women's organisation didn't make any statement because they took the traditional abstentionist line. That was a great failure on their part.

SC: It does seem in this and other issues relating to employment, that you have a conflict between what men want — whether they couch it in nationalist terms or not — and where women's interests lie. The Conditions of Employment Bill introduced in the South in 1935 must be one of the clearest examples of the state using male material interests to further their own ends at the expense of women. Do you see it in those terms?

MW: If you take the Conditions of Employment Bill, it was completely supported by the Labour Party and the trade union movement. It gave statutory provisions for holidays and so on, and it seemed very progressive. On the other hand, without being conspiratorial about it, one of its most fundamental aspects was getting rid of women's waged labour at a time when the state could only provide more jobs for men by sacking of women. Male trade unionists and men generally saw very little conflict of interest — they were in favour of the Bill — and didn't argue for the deletion of the clauses relating to women. So women had to mobilise opposition with very little male support.

On the Constitution, men tended to oppose it on Republican grounds, and that was good enough for them. I don't think women as women were an issue, and although some men did support the women, they were an incredibly small minority. If Cuman na mBan, as a women's organisation, had seen it politically important to side with women over this issue, rather than turning their back on a very serious attack on women's rights, then the Republican movement would have had a very serious chasm between the interests of the women and the interests of the movement as a whole. I don't see how that could have been overcome if women were to remain in the movement, unless the movement fundamentally transformed itself. And that didn't happen.

Interviews

SC: What is the Provisional's position on the anti-Amendment campaign?

MW: They're opposed to the Amendment but they're not going to join the anti-Amendment campaign.

SC: So the result is a form of abstentionist politics, because they're not campaigning against the Amendment. It would be ironic if the amendment was passed by a small majority as a result of their not campaigning?

MW: This looks as though it will happen. Individuals within the Republican movement, like Rita O'Hare and the women's commission want Provisional Sinn Fein to join the anti-Amendment campaign. Many who oppose this do so not on abstentionist grounds but because they are afraid they will lose support from the more traditional rural supporters of the Republican movement. But of course that can easily be legitimised and dressed up on traditional abstentionist grounds.

SC: Absolutely. There have been a lot of parallels in this women's interests versus men's interests argument in the North over the last ten years: nurseries in particular. Do you think there is the beginnings of a change of policy within Provisional Sinn Fein at the moment, which takes these issues more seriously and sees a link between fighting for reforms and eventually achieving their national aims? Do you think there is now an opening for women's politics, which campaign for certain concessions from the state to make women's lives easier, like socialised child care facilities and nurseries?

MW: As long as that kind of campaigning comes from the Republican movement, yes. Today's grass roots community politics are very much organised and controlled by Sinn Fein and circumscribed within that framework. Given the appalling poverty and deprivation that exists in housing and unemployment, to increase their support, Sinn Fein will have to take up these issues. But whether they would actually encourage movements like tenants associations or claimants unions, that couldn't be easily dominated by Sinn Fein, is quite another thing. I don't think that Sinn Fein would aim at the self-activity of the people because its tradition is for the Republican movement to be the guardians of the people's well being, to be the negotiators with the appropriate government bodies.

SC: And that's where they come into conflict with feminist organisations, who have stressed autonomy and control as prerequisites for any political activity.

MW: Yes. If for example a nursery is going to be set up, I'm quite sure it will be initiated by the women of Sinn Fein, which is fair enough if the women of Sinn Fein want to organise that, but I can't see more general support given to a group of women who want to achieve something similar.

SC: I also think there is another parallel in the types of activity women were most involved in historically from the Land League onwards, in organising aid for people in prison and their families and the Relatives Action Committee formed to support the H Block Campaign. In fact it is not really surprising that the Relatives Action Committee never developed into a mass movement on the streets, although there were certain high hopes on the Left that it would broaden out into a more generalised political campaign. It was a very similar experience to the events you record in your book. Women would exhaust themselves in these prisoners' struggles, which were largely an adjunct of the main military campaign, and were never able to broaden out the campaign.

MW: It's hardly surprising particularly when you think that women's domestic role has been really transposed into a wider sphere in work on behalf of the prisoners. It is still very much the mothers, the wives, the daughters fighting on behalf of their male relatives, working themselves into the grave, and they don't have the time or the energy for other political activity because they still have all their domestic commitments too.

SC: I think what's interesting in your book is reading about women's organisations with a slightly more tangential or complex relationship to nationalist organisations. I'm thinking of the Irish Women's Franchise League which was virtually run by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington. How important was she and to what extent was she influential, in both the suffrage and the nationalist movements?

MW: The IWFL was a very militant body set up in 1908 by Hanna and other women, like Margaret Cousins. It had its own newspaper, which was open to all the suffrage groups, with a wide distribution throughout Ireland. It was the only suffrage paper in Ireland and was very well-written, with a huge international coverage and input. The Sheehy Skeffingtons, Hanna and Francis, were quite unique in Ireland because they were feminists, nationalists, socialists and pacifists. Hanna's pacifism was mediated by her realisation of the brutality of the British state in Ireland, particularly after the murder of her husband by the British. I don't think, after 1916, that she would ever have said that armed rebellion was not justified.

As to her own significance, she was instrumental in raising the whole question of feminism at a time when it was extremely unrewarding to do so, prior to the First World War, when the major political debate was whether Ireland got Home Rule or not. It was people like Hanna who said it was being discussed in purely male terms when women didn't have the vote, and would not get it under a Home Rule Ireland, yet women wanted Home Rule as well. She continued, despite opposition from every political faction, to raise that issue. She went to jail several times, and was not the only woman to go to jail in Ireland for her suffrage beliefs. A whole new dimension was created in Irish politics, with the question of votes for women, and radical movements on the na-

The Ladies' Land League was organised by Anna Parnell in 1880/1. It carried on its work after the suppression of the Land League. Michael Davitt says of Anna Powell: 'Her purpose was to render Ireland ungovernable by coercion, and this she and her lieutenants succeeded in doing'. The meeting above was at central offices, Upper O'Connell St, Dublin.

Interviews

Hanna Sheehy Skeffington addresses protest meeting

tionalist side had to start taking the question seriously.

Cumann na mBan was set up in 1914, but they didn't have any particular policy on women, because they started out as an organisation to assist the men of Ireland. Within a year they had to change their policy in response to the critical attacks from women like Hanna. They had to take Hanna seriously because she was not only a feminist but someone who understood what the national struggle was all about and was respected for those views. She wasn't a suffragette who was anti-nationalist, although there were people like that as well, rather she wanted an independent Ireland that was also socialist and imbued with feminist beliefs. Later on, Hanna was very important in the 1920s and 30s as a propagandist in the Republican movement. Read *An Phoblacht* in 1932 when she was editor while Frank Ryan was in jail, and see a basically nationalist-feminist paper.

As an individual feminist she was very important in forcing feminist concerns into the nationalist movement, but she always found her relations with the nationalist movement very problematic, because, particularly as a militaristic movement, it had very little space for women or women's concerns. She never felt she could join Cuman na mBan because she always maintained it was a subordinate organisation and as a feminist she couldn't join anything that didn't accept women on equal terms to men. So she was very much the feminist conscience of the Republican movement.

SC: It is quite instructive to think that at that time there was a paper with those types of politics and there hasn't been anything similar since, despite the rise of the women's movement in the 1970s. There just hasn't been that much influence on the Republican movement, although they might argue with that. The criticisms that have come from women of the Republican movement seem to have been much less sharp than the things you talk about in your book.

MW: Yes, *Republican News* doesn't carry the kind of analytical articles on women's oppression that an article written by Hanna Sheehy Skeffington would have done. It might detail events organised by women, but they are very much factual news items. All you might get is an occasional policy statement, but that doesn't give any idea of the dynamic of the women's movement. I hope that one of the effects of reading the book and the debates that went on will make people go back and look at what happened historically to women.

SC: There is to be a conference in Belfast soon which will look at the experiences of women over the last ten years. The topics it covers seem very wide ranging: housing, child care, abortion, violence, disarmament and the national question. These sorts of conference are obviously very important but are they supported by Republican women?

MW: Some Republican women have been going to the planning meetings and showing a lot of interest in the aims of the conference and the opportunity it provides to discuss some of the issues that have divided feminists for such a long time. There is now a much greater degree of understanding both of the differences within the feminist movement and an understanding that if feminists don't start getting together even on a very limited basis to fight for women's interests then they are not going to be promoted, and there aren't going to be any significant gains made for women. One of the main things I felt in researching the contribution that women have made in nationalist history, has been that the very small feminist voice that has been on the margins of the dominant political culture has been instrumental in creating a small space for women and actually helping women involved in nationalist movements to raise the question of women. Feminists have been able to insert it into the political arena in some way because they have had that kind of freedom and autonomy to do so, and nationalist women have been able at least in a limited way to take on some of those ideas.

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FACING 1984

JOHN ROSS

Two years ago in International John Ross wrote that the Left was totally unprepared for the tremendous shake up of British politics which had just begun. We asked him how the article British Politics in the 1980s has stood up to the recent elections and the political events of the last two years.

There are two fundamental approaches to the dynamics of British politics today. The first is to see a basic continuation of the old system where the Tories fight the Labour Party: that's the way it has been and that's the way it always will be. I think this has been proved to be fundamentally wrong by the election result. Rather the second model has been confirmed where you have a break up of the whole British political system. It's wrong just to look at the decline of the Tory vote or of the Labour vote, or at the rise of the Alliance/Liberals. The whole British political system has come to the end of its period of existence.

Therefore the ruling class needs a general reorganisation of things. Previously there was a simple situation with a dominant Tory Party, and a Labour Party allowed into office periodically whenever there was a temporary crisis of the Tory Party, who then came back to dominate things again. Underneath the recent election result strangely enough lies the weakness of the Tory Party, which does *not* have authentic mass support and therefore continually faces the danger of new political forces expressing themselves through the Labour Party and erupting on to the political scene. In this situation the ruling class has to reorganise the political system.First, to create a new stronger Tory Party, but no longer dominant in the way that it was between the first and second world wars when it got between 50 and 55 per cent of the vote, dominating all the areas of the country; nor even of the MacMillan/Eden type government of the 1950s, when the Tories had almost 50 per cent of the vote That's no longer possible. The bourgeoisie cannot recreate that type of Tory Party.

It therefore has to create a new type of political instrument to the Tories to politically weaken the working class. The working class cannot be won to Conservatism. It has been fighting the Tories for 200 years. This election proves it — the Falklands, oil revenues, an hysterical press campaign and yet 700,000 less people voted for the Tories than the last election. The problem is that the Labour Party never won over the working class actively to socialism. It is after all the British Labour Party not the Socialist Party. And therefore the obvious solution for the bourgeoisie was to create an alternative to the Tories that was not Labour. And that was the Alliance's job — they took the votes away from the Labour Party.

But at the same time the Alliance is a destabilising element in British politics in the long term. That's because the interests of the ruling class are not the same thing as those of the Tory Party. Thatcher has absolutely no interest in any of the institutional changes that are necessary from the point of view of the Alliance, like proportional representation. Therefore the bourgeoisie is building up the Tory Party as its strongest instrument, while on the other hand other sections of the ruling class are building up the Alliance as an alternative to the Labour Party. The political system cannot be restabilised. If Thatcher had won an authentically mass vote she would have ended this period of political crisis. Thatcher's 144 majority in parliament is obviously a very dangerous threat but she hasn't rebuilt the popularity of the Tory Party. Thatcher is a link in the political crisis in Britain not the solution.

You said in the last article that Thatcher would be the last Tory government in its present form. Do you still think that's true?
Absolutely. The election shows that. Of course there's been one technical hitch in that analysis, namely that it's going to take more than one parliament to get rid of this government. But this Thatcher government is only a continuation of the last one, there's no fundamental change. A dominant mass capitalist party like the Tories cannot hold Britain together on a 42 per cent vote. Therefore the bourgeoisie must put into place new political mechanisms, which cannot rely on reviving the Tory Party.

Think back to the election of October 1974. The Tory Party vote fell to its lowest level for 115 years. There was talk of proportional representation and coalition governments. The ruling class and the press were frantic to keep Labour out of office. Thatcher came in to put a stop to all that. She said forget all this PR stuff, we will rebuild an authentically mass, popular Tory Party. She pulled out everything — racism, law and order, appeals to skilled workers to buy their own houses — all to rebuild a mass popular Tory Party. She had a big initial tactical success in 1979. If she had gone on to increase the Tory Party vote up to 47/48 per cent, then one could say that she had succeeded in reversing this decline of the Tory Party and one could restabilise the old system of political domination. But Thatcher has failed to recreate a mass base for the Tory Party. That in the long run is more significant and powerful than any immediate repression from the Tories.

Do you think that she now has a more coherent economic formula?
Thatcher has no economic formula for dealing with the problems of British manufacturing industry. I think the whole left underestimated, including my article from two years ago, the weakness of the industrial sections of the British bourgeoisie which is far more pronounced than most people supposed. The Thatcher Government has no interest in or intention of rebuilding British manufacturing industry. It's quite prepared to dump and sacrifice British manufacturing industry, not to replace it with an efficient service sector, but rather to use the oil revenue and the huge powers of the banking system to prop up the balance of payments. That's why you now have the extraordinary situation of a huge deficit on manufactured goods in the balance of payments, a decrease of competivity of British industry of 25 per cent, and yet there is still a balance of payments surplus. I think we all underestimated the economic room for manoeuvre which that allowed.

What do you think the Alliance strategy will be now?
Undoubtedly to try and get a base in those sections of the working class which have broken from the Labour Party. All the polls show that the biggest increase in votes for the Alliance was amongst skilled workers. I'm extremely dubious that Thatcher can consolidate all those skilled workers who voted for her in 1979 in places like Birmingham and the West Midlands. I don't think the Labour Party will find it easy to win them back. So the Alliance will go for these workers, those who supported Duffy in the AUEW and Chapple in the EETPU.

That would go hand in hand with the Tories' offensive against the political levy?
Yes, the Tories and the Alliance on all practical questions work hand in glove, so they will organise a joint campaign in the unions under the banner of non-political trade unions.

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Photo: GM COOKSON

Resolution is not enough if it results in only 42 per cent of the vote

Would you revise your opinion on proportional representation in the light of the election?

This is purely a personal view, not necessarily that of the Socialist League. The struggle which will be fundamental over the whole next period will be against coalition government. Because there are only two ways forward for the Labour Party: one is to rebuild itself as a mass popular socialist party to fight the SDP/Liberals, and the other is to go to the right and form a coalition with the Alliance. The struggle against coalitionism in all its forms will be decisive. It won't always be against a coalition government: in the last election it took the form of a struggle against 'tactical voting', in the future it might take the form of nasty things from the trade union bureaucracy. But the general drift will be towards forming a so-called 'progressive anti-Thatcher alliance'.

The question of PR is a tactical issue. The key question is the consciousness of the working class. The working class has to be won politically from the coalition orientation, not prevented from supporting it by tricks of the electoral system. I personally think that the best thing for the Labour Party would be to support PR and to wage a mass struggle against coalition government. The only way to finally smash the SDP/Liberal Alliance is by them being forced to go into coalition with the Tories, and for the Labour Party to show that it is resolutely opposed to them.

Of course in the short term this might have some negative consequences. The banner of PR is generally supported today by those who back the coalitionist approach with the Alliance and therefore you would need a tremendous struggle in the labour movement and the unions against that orientation. But it's better to have that out on the open political terrain of support for or opposition to coalition with the Alliance than an utterly mystifying debate on the electoral system. Finally, if the working class has not been won away from this position of coalitionism, whether you have PR or not, it will find some way of expressing itself. It's better to have that fight out in the open.

You talked about the Labour Party becoming a mass campaigning party. The main obstacle to that is obviously the trade union and labour bureaucracy which waged the battle against Bennism, which was the only force proposing anything like that orientation. Do you think there is any chance of such a struggle achieving success in the Labour Party?

I think the bureaucracy would rather sabotage the Labour Party than allow it to become a mass socialist party. But that's not where we're at at the moment. Looked at historically there is no doubt but that the left continues to gain in the Labour Party. The classical formula in the 1950s was the Parliamentary Labour Party plus the trade union bureaucracy totally isolating the constituencies. The left has maintained its position in the constituencies — it's stronger there than it's ever been. And importantly the trade unions are now divided. The left shifts in the POEU and the NUR, Scargill's victory in the NUM, all show not that the trade unions will now support the left in the Labour Party but that they are seriously divided. There won't be a short term victory of the left in the Labour Party but over the long term it is gaining. That's why the ruling class needs the SDP/Liberal Alliance to attack the Labour Party on its leftward evolution. I'm convinced that the number one task of socialists at the moment is the defence of the Labour Party and the unions against the attacks that the bourgeoisie intends to launch against them.

The most important thing is for the left to build a mass open left wing inside the Labour Party. The policy of Benn during and up to the election of not criticising the right wing was a disaster even from the point of view of the Labour Party as a whole. It left the door open to Callaghan and Healey. My judgement is that a left wing campaigning Labour Party would have got more votes in this election than the existing policies and leaderships. That's not just a traditional Trotskyist response. I think all the evidence suggests that a clear left wing Labour Party would not have lost one single vote, but would have generated more enthusiasm. I'm not saying it would have won the election necessarily, but I'm sure it would have got more votes.

Are you saying that because the material basis of the trade union bureaucracy's attachment to imperialism is being eroded that it is no longer a reliable instrument for the ruling class to use?

It's extremely reliable but it's also weakened. You no longer have Deakin running the TGWU with a rod of iron. You don't have 'Carron's law' in the AUEW. You have Duffy and Chapple who try very hard, but even there left oppositions are developing. The labour bureaucracy is extremely reliable in being one hundred per cent in support of the capitalist class, but it is definitely weaker than it was.

JOHN ROSS is the author of a forthcoming book on the Tory Party in Pluto Press' *Arguments for Socialism* series, and a member of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

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NORTH BRITAIN PREPARES REVOLT

GEORGE KEREVAN

The election result in Scotland was quite distinct. Labour's share of the poll was 35 per cent compared to 28 per cent in Britain as a whole. Labour was nearly seven points ahead of the Tories and took 41 of the 72 Scots seats.

George Kerevan argues that this Scottish exceptionalism is about to become another cardinal fact of *British* politics, for the North Britains are preparing to revolt.

The day after the 1983 general election, the leading Scottish quality daily led with the headline: 'Home Rule drums beating after "no mandate" for Tories'. The in-built Scots anti-Thatcher majority — which increased from 69 per cent of the vote in 1979 to 72 per cent in 1983 — is now fuelling a renewed demand for a Scottish Assembly as a bulwark against the Tory government at Westminster. Faced with a Thatcher government elected by English votes, and set against granting Scottish devolution, the new Home Rule clamour is taking on a decidedly extra-parliamentary character.

George Foulkes, Labour MP for South Ayrshire, has called for his fellow Scottish Members of Parliament to disrupt the proceedings of the mother of Parliaments to force a Tory government to grant a Scottish Assembly. George Galloway, former Labour Party chairperson in Scotland and a leading leftwinger, demanded in *Radical Scotland* magazine a campaign that 'could make the fight for a Scottish Assembly a central question in British politics, with a world-wide interest beyond. The Scottish local authorities could withdraw all co-operation with St. Andrew's House, there could be demonstrations, selective industrial action, a "People's March on London" ...'

Even former leader of the anti-devolution wing of the Scottish Labour Party, journalist Brian Wilson, has been heard to mutter that an Assembly is necessary as a defence against Thatcherism. And such pronouncements at leadership level merely reflect a strong grassroots surge of support for Scottish Home Rule as a barricade against another spell of Tory rule. The independent Scottish Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) favours a radical measure of devolution, its ranks having been swelled of late by many defectors from the SNP '79 Group. The newly formed Scottish Socialist Society, probably as big in absolute numbers as its English counterpart but more representative of activists, has emerged as a pressure group for the Home Rule left in both the Labour Party and the Scottish National Party (SNP).

What is different about the re-emergence of the national question in Scotland is that it is being led from within the Labour Party and not the SNP. The Scottish National Party itself is in serious decline. At the election, its share of the poll fell to just under 12 per cent (332,000 votes) and it was in fourth place behind the Alliance (693,000 votes). For the past four years the SNP has been engaged in a faction fight between left and right culminating in the expulsion of the leadership of the socialist '79 Group and the resignation from the party in protest by Margo MacDonald. Just prior to the general election the expelled socialists were readmitted but this papering over the cracks has not halted the defection of the left-leaning youth from the nationalists. The SNP has not travelled the same leftward course as Plaid Cymru, but remains firmly on the populist right. This has resulted in the massive loss of SNP votes among the working class in the West of Scotland, where it polled only 8.9 per cent.

The failure of the SNP left ensured that the anti-Thatcher vote in heavily proletarian Scotland would go to Labour, and that the demand for anti-Thatcher Home Rule would be reflected in the ranks of the labour movement. But it would be a big mistake to conclude that all is well with labourism in Scotland. The strength of the Scottish Labour Party is in part only a reflection of the more advanced crisis of labourism south of the border. In fact Labour in Scotland saw its share of the poll drop over six points, while the Alliance came from nowhere to get 24 per cent, just behind the Tories. This raises two important theoretical questions. First, what precisely is unique about the direction labourism is taking in Scotland? Secondly, how does the re-emergence of the national question relate to the reconstruction of the leadership of the Scottish workers movement and the mobilisation of working class resistance to Thatcherism?

the SNP's share of the vote declined to just under 12 per cent, and only 8.9 per cent in the West of Scotland

Labourism's unique strength in Scotland rested on a particular network of alliances which are now decomposing: its use of intellectuals as an organic link with society, unlike England where they were mere 'programme writers'; its use of the Communist Party as its industrial arm; its hegemony over the dense concentration of industrial workers in the West of Scotland.

First, the intelligentsia: politically the English intelligentsia as a whole has been either co-opted into the state machine through the Civil Service, or exiled into academic Olympia at Oxbridge. The Labour Party's relationship with its English intellectuals, from the Webbs to Bernard Crick, has been to keep them in the display cabinet. They were for show, not for bringing out where they might contaminate politics with ideas. The British Labour Party's intellectuals talked to other intellectuals. But not so in Scotland.

Scottish labourism would neither have been created nor have survived as the dominant structure in Scottish politics had it not used the local intelligentsia as its social cement. The ethos of 'service' and 'education' as well as the poor material position of these lower middle-class intellectuals propelled them into the Labour Party. From Maxton to Pollock to Ross, school teachers provided the intellectual fodder of Scottish labourism till the values of the party and the educational system itself became inextricably bound up. Further, Labour's Catholic communalism in the West of Scotland ensured that Catholic intellectuals gravitated towards it, linking church and party. Marxist intellectuals joined the Communist Party, but in Scotland there was a mass CP which by dint of its social weight was accepted as an integral part of the labour movement. A 'modus vivendi' existed between Labour and Communist which brought CP intellectuals into the bosom of labourism: witness Hamish Henderson or Ken Alexander. Finally, the national question itself played a role, for whether politically nationalist or not, Scottish intellectuals felt themselves born of a different culture and this 'otherness' spawned a radicalism which fuelled support for the left among the entire intelligentsia.

Today the Scottish intelligentsia has defected from labourism as a creed. In the seventies and eighties it has become

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overwhelmingly politically nationalist while retaining its old social radicalism. This resulted from a change in the composition and role of intellectuals in Scotland. The sixties and early seventies saw Scottish universities flooded with the sons and daughters of the working class, all imbued with the labourist welfare state notion that education was a passport to the good life. This swollen mass of the new professional middle class rapidly became disenchanted with the realities of secondary school teaching. One side-effect was the wave of teachers' strikes in the seventies, a telling break with the service ethos. Another significant result was the explosion of cultural activity in Scotland in the seventies and eighties, feeding off the frustrations of this new and enlarged intelligensia: suddenly there has appeared an endless outpouring of local writing. In effect this has been a declaration of cultural independence, and almost to a person the new Scottish intelligensia supports Home Rule and the Scottish workers republic rather than London labourism.

This defection from Unionist labourism has been reinforced by the growth of anti-Stalinist Marxism and by the spread of feminism north of the border. These winds have affected not only Scottish labourism but also its Communist Party ally, removing another prop from the rotting labourist edifice. Till the seventies, roughly a quarter of the entire membership of the British Communist Party was concentrated in the greater Glasgow area. While the CP was almost non-existent in that other bastion of labourism, the English north east, in Scotland the CP was powerful in the unions, shop stewards committees and, latterly, in the Scottish TUC (STUC). The result was not a French or Italian-style running fight with social democracy. Rather, there was an alliance.

British labourism is founded on the principle of the division between politics (ie elections) and trade unionism. The Labour Party fights elections, while the unions deal with wages and working conditions. This split results from the actual creation of the Labour Party by the unions as their 'watchdog' in parliament. Elsewhere in Europe this division of labour does not occur. The European socialist parties established their respective union machines as adjuncts of their political machines to organise support, raise cash and make political propaganda effective through strikes. The British model leaves labourism at a disadvantage. The Labour Party machine as such hardly exists outside of election times, for it has no other rationale for existence. Therefore there is no real transmission belt to mobilise working-class support for Labour policies. In Scotland, however, things were different because the mass CP used its weight in the factories to mobilise politically, and did so in the service of labourism.

The Labour Party in Scotland got people elected to parliament and local government, and in return for tacit electoral support let the CP run the unions. There was a whiff of Cold War politics at the start of the fifties but mostly Scottish labourism was prepared to tolerate the CP. In fact there was a degree of 'mixing' of respective ideologies: Scottish labourism is perhaps the most Stalinist variety of labourism within the British state both in terms of political programme (long indistinguishable from that of the CP) and in terms of internal party regime.

This labourist CP amalgam has now shattered. Communist Party membership has collapsed as the post-sixties generation turned to Trotskyism, feminism and other anti-bureaucratic creeds. The working class has been repelled by the police states of Eastern Europe associated with the Communist Party. The bastions of CP organisation in the shipyards, mines and engineering factories have been destroyed by de-industrialisation. The Scottish CP's political weight now depends only on its residual control of the apparatus of full-time trade union officials — bureaucrats cut off from the factory floor. These developments have left the labourist machine in Glasgow an ageing head without a body.

This decay of the labourist machine has been accelerated by a major revolution in the structure and demography of Labour's traditional voting base, the West of Scotland industrial working class. This was the proletarian heartland which the SNP tried and only just failed to storm in the mid-seventies. What the SNP failed to do, Thatcher's recession is accomplishing. The core section of the working class, the base on which Scottish labourism rested, lies in manufacturing and mining. Here were the strong unions, the CP-controlled shop stewards movement and the male, craft ethos. It is precisely this core section which has been cut to ribbons by the present slump. In 1974, one Scottish worker in three was employed in mining and manufacturing. By 1982 it was one in four. In the last decade over two hundred thousand jobs have been wiped out in this area, never to return.

It must be deduced from the above that the collapse of the set of alliances which have buttressed labourist ideology in Scotland will sweep away the Labour Party as such. Instead, the erosion of the material basis and rationale for labourism has precipitated a debate about the future role of socialism within the party, and about the new set of popular alliances it will be necessary to construct in order to defeat Thatcherism. One proposal, associated with CP intellectual and English historian Eric Hobsbawm, calls for a People's Alliance. That is for a popular bloc to rally support from any and all sections of the community opposed to Thatcher. Hobsbawm rightly devines the failure of orthodox labourism, but his alternative People's Alliance is nothing more than an accommodation with the English professional classes achieved by abandoning those bits of the labourist programme the middle classes don't like — nationalisation, free collective bargaining and leaving the EEC. Shorn of the jargon, the People's Alliance means a coalition with the SDP on the latter's terms. Supporters of the People's Alliance would argue that since the only way to vote out Thatcher is by such a coalition, and since it is imperative to get rid of Thatcher, then it is necessary to forego their long-term objectives in favour of what can be achieved now.

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But that is not the real choice. The English petty bourgeois psychosis known as Thatcherism is merely the reflection of a real material crisis on the economic and social plane. A genuine alliance with the middle classes, which is not to be eschewed in principle, can only work if it is on the basis of a programme which deals with the root causes of this crisis. Otherwise the trajectory of the Hobsbawm approach can only be to create a People's Alliance on the vague basis of 'common sense', English, middle class values, ie 'decency', the Dunkirk spirit, Fabian paternalism, with the unemployed of the eighties serving as a generation of new model evacuees from Thatcher's Blitz being fostered by the English gentry in an idyll of thatched cottages and country hedgerows. To invoke English 'decency' and the commonweal of 'This Island Race' against Thatcher's nasty, lower middle class, grocer's shop concern for 'trade' is to tread a path away from socialism towards English populism. This is indeed Hobsbawm's project: to invoke English nationalism against Thatcher's sectional assaults on the working class and middle class. However, English nationalism is at root the tradition of Empire, of racism, of jingoism and of acceptance of caste. English populism is rotten to the core, and it is a strange direction to take for a Hobsbawm who once savagely attacked Tom Nairn for the supposed crime of capitulating to nationalism.

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Yet here lies the clue to the future of Scottish politics. A new popular bloc must be created to replace traditional labourism and oppose Thatcherism. But a Scottish Home Rule Alliance rather than a so-called People's Alliance. A united front that will mobilise all shades of working class and popular support around the democratic demand for the right of the Scottish people to decide their own affairs, and against the imposition of the will of a Tory government which has no mandate north of the border. The Home Rule demand is a bodyblow to the super-centralist English state and its constitutional convention of parliamentary sovereignty rather than popular sovereignty. It changes the emphasis of left wing politics from the strategy of the begging bowl of regional economic aid to the need to confront de-industrialisation through local initiative. That raises in turn the question of popular sovereignty over local capital and the multinationals. It transforms the role of the STUC and the Scottish trade union movement from that of supplicant in London to defender of working class interests at home. And above all the fight for Home Rule is based not on a reactionary imperial heritage but on a popular tradition of resistance to oppression and exploitation, the honourable 'national' tradition of the 1820 rising, of Maclean, of the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders.

> a Home Rule Alliance which mobilises the Scottish working class against Thatcherism can only aid the struggles of the working class throughout Britain

What would be the precise programme of such a Home Rule Alliance? A minimum would be: for the immediate election, by proportional representation, of a Constituent Assembly to draw up plans for a Scottish Assembly; for the creation of such a Scottish Assembly with economic powers to deal with unemployment and the economic crisis.

Some socialists south of the border will see such a Home Rule Alliance as a reactionary diversion which splits the British working class. But this view is itself a reactionary diversion from granting the real balance of forces within the British state. A Home Rule Alliance which mobilises the Scottish working class against Thatcherism can only aid the struggles of the working class throughout Britain. It would give heart to English socialists by turning Scottish Labour's electoral strength into extra-parliamentary fighting strength. It would mean the Irish struggle for freedom was no longer isolated. It would provide a focus to unite the partial struggles of the Scottish trade union movement. The power of the Home Rule Alliance lies not in reformist tinkering with the British constitution, but in the ability to overcome the creeping demoralisation of the labour movement by mobilising shock troops north of the border.

Who will join this Home Rule Alliance? The very way in which Scottish labourism's old alliances have disintegrated indicated how the alliance must coalesce. Already the Scottish intelligensia has opted for Home Rule. With the collapse of the labourist Stalinist machine, the Labour Party faces the necessity of reorganising itself as a European-style campaigning party in order to mobilise a new constituency for itself. It can no longer be just an electoral machine. South of the border, this has given rise to the GLC phenomenon: a local Labour Party turning to campaign politics and using the local government machine not as an end in itself but as a platform. The first signs of this development appearing in Scotland have been in the Lothians in the fight of the Labour Regional Council against Governor General Younger's dictats. Forced at long last to convince and persuade people rather than treat them as voting fodder, the Scottish Labour Party has become fertile ground for debating ideas which would once have been dismissed as heresy. Witness the emergence of George Galloway, not as a Labour Town Council boss — though he is — but as a veritable ideologue actually debating political strategy at the level of theory. Can you imagine a Labour Glasgow Lord Provost doing that in the fifties and sixties? This cultural revolution has attracted a steady flow of recruits from the left of the SNP and it is now perfectly possible to find Labour Party members who are not simply pro-devolution but pro-socialist independence.

What of the mass of the working class as part of a Home Rule Alliance? Scotland never had the Midlands, mass production industries with their conservative, and Conservative-voting, highly skilled, highly paid workers. The latter have become demoralised by incomes policies and unemployment and trooped into the voting lobbies for Thatcher. The Scottish workers reacted to the onset of crisis by supporting the SNP, ie by calling for radical democratic solutions. The right wing, Poujadist leadership of the SNP could not respond to this gut reaction, and so the workers have temporarily returned to labourism (spurning the SDP en route). This experience of the early seventies shows that there is the makings of a Home Rule Alliance based on the workers movement.

Some have taken the decline in the core section of the industrial working class as signalling the end of political projects based on this stratum. This is a profound error. Every capitalist slump recasts the shape of the working class, but it does not eliminate the worker. For instance, it was the post-war expansion of the proletariat that brought massive numbers of women out of the home and into work, preparing the ground for the rise of the women's movement. the smaller number of industrial workers today is merely the changing division of labour within the overall capitalist order, and those who continue to live by selling their labour power will still have nothing to lose but their redundancy payments. From Lee Jeans to Timex, Scottish workers continue to show a traditional syndicalist reflex for direct action which is absent south of the border. There is every likelihood that a recast workers movement will throw up a new leadership as part of the Home Rule Alliance, though this leadership might be very different from the archetypal male, manual, engineering shop steward.

Male engineering workers were not always the leadership of the workers movement: in the early nineteenth century it was the educated artisans; in France the lack of industrial concen-

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Photo: GM COOKSON

The core Scottish industries face further cuts and decline

tration passed the leadership to socialist town councils rather than shop stewards. In the new microchip age the workers movement will adjust to changing times. Thus some would identify a new workers leadership emerging among the computer workers, the skilled priesthood which capitalism cannot live without as once it could not live without the boilermaker. (And note that Scotland has gained a major share of the British electronics industry.) However the essence of working-class leadership is the ability to mobilise other workers through the very mechanics of the production process which throws workers together. It was the ability of the engineers to lead the tens of thousands of workers under the same factory roof that turned them into the shock troops of the Red Clyde. Today small factory units render this model an unlikely variant, and the computer workers' monopoly of scarce skills will probably produce only a very well-paid conservative labour aristocracy. The reduction of the workforce into small units in fact might explain the re-emergence of municipal socialism. Only the democratic, socialist commune can now act as a centraliser of working-class activity and resistance. This reinforces the need to build an alliance around the fight for an Assembly linked to socialist municipal authorities, and further requires the undermining of the traditional labourist model of the use of local authority machinery as a base for power-broking with London.

How shall the Home Rule Alliance be formed? Since a Thatcher government will never freely grant the Assembly for which a majority voted in 1979, it will be necessary to emulate the tactics of the Irish Home Rule movement. The sovereign will of the Scottish people is already expessed in their democratically elected representatives. These representatives, or as many as respect the mandate of the 1979 referendum, must convoke a convention to demand the Assembly and challenge the right of the Thatcher government to dictate to the Scottish working people. Such a convention should embrace MPs, regional, island and district councillors. Most would be from the Labour Party, but other political parties could be shamed into attending. A mass public campaign would be necessary to get such a convention. Primarily it would be necessary to mobilise and win over the Labour Party and the STUC.

Such a campaign would only succeed over the dead body of Scottish labourism. But for those of us within the Labour Party today the death of labourism is the birth of a new mass socialist Labour Party based on campaign politics. With great respect to the left inside the SNP, the choice is neither a socialist party without Home Rule nor a Home Rule party before socialism, but a party of both. The SNP cannot be a multi-class, 'national' party and embrace socialism. Neither socialism nor Home Rule are achievable without the Scottish working class. The collapse of the SNP vote and the attempted expulsion of the '79 Group point only to the conclusion that it is necessary to build a Home Rule current within the Labour Party. The ideological crisis of labourism means there has never been a better time to do this. The condition of success will be to convert the constitutional relationship of the Scottish Labour Party to the British Labour Party to one of federalism, in which an autonomous Scottish (Independent?) Labour Party forms an equal coalition with a separate English sister party.

Both Home Rule and the suggestion of an autonomous Scottish Labour Party are subversive of the very rationale of British labourism. Unlike European socialism, labourism is not just predicated on winning reforms for the working class section of the nation, it has been the central prop for national integration and social harmony. Labourism is the social cement of British society. Toryism expressed the narrow interests of the City and the landed gentry, bringing in tow the middle class of the English south east. There is no mass Christian Democrat Party uniting industrial capital and skilled worker, no division of the working class between social democracy and Stalinism, no peasant party, no Radical Party of the petty bourgeoisie. There is only Labour to integrate the masses of the most proletarian state in Europe. Break this, through Home Rule or proportional representation, and the conservative prop to British society is smashed away.

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neither Socialism nor Home Rule are achievable without the Scottish working class

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The role labourism has played as chief social prop to a state based on eighteenth century class structures has made it supercentralist in programme. The Alternative Economic Strategy, whatever its other faults, it totally at odds with Labour's commitment to devolution. The AES assumes rigorous central planning of the economy while the devolution policy implies an Assembly with complete economic planning powers in Scotland. These two structures are in contradiction, unless, as one suspects, the advocates of the AES have not considered the implications of devolution, because they see it only as a quaint sop to North British opinion separate from the real business of planning the economy. Even Tony Benn, for all his advocacy of radical democratic reform, persistently and ominously fails to include in the major points of his programme any reference to Scottish devolution, the issue that led to the collapse of the last Labour government. And the Socialists for a Labour Victory pointedly 'failed' to include Scottish devolution in their platform while committing themselves to a united Ireland. Scottish socialists might be forgiven for thinking that their comrades South of the Border still have not transcended Great British chauvinism. But more accurately those English comrades have not really come to terms with the insidious nature of labourist ideology. Just as labourism has been confronted by feminism so it will be confronted by the national question in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The break-up of Britain begins with the break-up of labourism.

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International Features

THE DEMISE OF THE COMINTERN

CHARLIE VAN GELDEREN

Fifty years ago Leon Trotsky and the International Left Opposition launched the call for building a new revolutionary International. Charlie van Gelderen, a revolutionary activist throughout those years, recalls the momentous events of 1933 that led to the call for the Fourth International.

1933 was a year of critical importance to the international labour movement. Hitler was in power in Germany: the most powerful organised working class movement outside the Soviet Union had been crushed, almost without resistance. This was not due to a lack of combativity of the masses but because they were hamstrung by the leaderships of their traditional organisations — Social Democrat and Communist (Stalinist) Parties, both of which had abandoned the revolutionary road to power for 'victory' through the ballot box. This traumatic historic event brought about a re-thinking of the role of the International Left Opposition, the small group of revolutionary Marxists who had gathered around Leon Trotsky in the years since his exile from the Soviet Union.

Previously the Left Opposition had seen its role as an opposition to Stalinist policies within the Communist International: against the growing bureaucratism of the apparatus; against the ultra-leftist 'Third Period' which adopted Stalin's aphorism that 'Social Democracy and Fascism were not antipodes but twins'; which rejected the Leninist tactic of the united front, the only effective weapon for defeating the forward march of Fascism.

The decision to call for the Fourth International was not taken lightly. In March, 1933, Trotsky wrote to the International Secretariat of the Left Opposition in which he put forward the need for a new Communist Party in Germany. 'German Stalinism,' he wrote, 'is collapsing now, less from the blows of the fascists than from its internal rottenness. Just as a doctor does not leave a patient who still has a breath of life, we had for our task the reform of the party as long as there was at least hope. But it would be criminal to tie oneself to a corpse. The KPD today represents a corpse.' For Trotsky, the abject surrender of the powerful German Communist Party could only be compared to the betrayal by the German Social Democrats in August 1914, which heralded the collapse of the Second International.

From the David King collection

But if Trotsky was calling for a new Communist Party in Germany in March 1933, he was by no means in a hurry to extend this diagnosis to the Communist International as a whole. In reply to the rhetorical question, 'Do we break immediately with the Third International as a whole? Do we break with them immediately?', he replied that it would be incorrect to give a rigid answer. 'The collapse of the KPD', he wrote, 'diminishes the chances for the regeneration of the Comintern. But on the other hand the catastrophe itself could provoke a healthy reaction in some of the sections. We must be ready to help in this process ... We are calling today for the creation of a new party in Germany, to seize the Comintern from the hands of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is not a question of the creation of the Fourth International but of salvaging the Third.'

By July 1933 the situation had changed. The 13th Plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist Inernational (ECCI), had met in Moscow and assessed the lessons of the German events. Its conclusion, in the words of Piatnitsky, then Secretary of the Comintern, was that the policy of the German party had been, 'correct before, during and after the victory of Hitler'. It also concluded that, 'even now Social Democracy remained the main prop of the bourgeoisie.' To Trotsky and the Left Opposition it was now clear that as an international revolutionary organisation, the Stalinist Comintern was dead. It could no longer serve as the general staff of the world revolution, the purpose for which it had been created by Lenin and Trotsky after the October Revolution.

The demise of the Stalinist-led Communist International had, of course, been foreseen by the International Left Opposition unless it could succeed in wrenching the Comintern from its disastrous course. The LO's criticism was almost wholly constructive. Against the policies of Stalinism it put forward concrete alternatives. They were summarised in the 11 Point Programme adopted by the international pre-conference of the Left Opposition which met in Paris in February 1933. The preamble emphasised that, 'The International Left Opposition stands on the ground of the first four congresses of the Comintern (and) in accordance with the spirit and the sense of the decisions of the first four congresses, and in continuation of these decisions, the Left Opposition establishes the following principles, develops them theoretically, and carries them through practically:

'1. The *independence of the proletarian party*, always and under all conditions; condemnation of the policy towards the Kuomintang in 1924-28; condemnation of the policy of the Anglo-Russian Committee; condemnation of the Stalinist theory of two-class (worker and peasant) parties[1] and of the whole practice based on this theory; condemnation of the policy of the Amsterdam Congress[2], by which the Communist Party was dissolved in the pacifist swamp.

'2. Recognition of the international and thereby of the *permanent character of the proletarian revolution*; rejection of the theory of socialism in one country and of the policy of national Bolshevism in Germany which complements it (the platform of "national liberation").[3]

'3. Recognition of the *Soviet state as a workers state* in spite of the growing degeneration of the bureaucratic regime; the unconditional obligation of every worker to defend the Soviet state against imperialism as well as against internal counter-

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revolution.

'4. Condemnation of the economic policy of the Stalinist faction both in its stage of *economic opportunism* in 1923 to 1928 (struggle against "super-industrialization, staking all on the kulaks) as well as in its stage of *economic adventurism* in 1928 to 1932 (over-accelerated tempo of industrialisation, 100 per cent collectivisation, administrative liquidation of the kulaks as a class); condemnation of the criminal bureaucratic legend that "the Soviet state has already entered socialism"; recognition of the necessity of a return to the realistic economic policies of Leninism.

'5. Recognition of the necessity of systematic Communist work in the proletarian mass organisations, particularly in the reformist trade unions; condemnation of the theory and practice of the Red trade-union organisation in Germany and similar formations in other countries.

'6. Rejection of the formula of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" as a separate regime distinguished from the *dictatorship of the proletariat*, which wins the support of the peasant and the oppressed masses in general; rejection of the anti-Marxist theory of the peaceful "growing over" of the democratic dictatorship into the socialist one.

'7. Recognition of the necessity to mobilise the masses under *transitional slogans* corresponding to the concrete situation in each country, and particularly under *democratic slogans* insofar as it is a question of struggle against feudal relations, national oppression, or different varieties of openly imperialist dictatorship (fascism, Bonapartism, etc).

'8. Recognition of the necessity of a developed *united front policy* with respect to the mass organisations of the working class, both of trade unions and of a political character, including Social Democracy as a party; condemnation of the ultimatistic slogan "only from below", which in practice means a rejection of the united front and, consequently, a refusal to create soviets; condemnation of the opportunistic application of the united-front policy as in the Anglo-Russian Committee (a bloc with the leaders without the masses and against the masses); double condemnation of the policy of the present German Central Committee, which combines the ultimatistic slogan of "only from below" with the opportunistic practice of parliamentary pacts with the leaders of Social Democracy.

'9. Rejection of the theory of *social fascism* and of the entire practice bound up with it as serving fascism on the one hand and Social Democracy on the other.

'10. Differentiation of *three groupings* within the camp of communism: the Marxist, the centrist, and the right; recognition of the impermissability of a political alliance with the right against centrism; support of centrism against the class enemy; irreconcilable and systematic struggle against centrism and its zigzag policies.[4]

'11. Recognition of *party democracy* not only in words but also in fact; ruthless condemnation of the Stalinist plebiscitary regime (the rule of the usurpers, gagging the thought of the party, deliberate suppression of information from the party, etc.' (All emphases in original)

Thus, before he left his exile in July 1933, Trotsky issued the definitive call for a new, Fourth International. (*It is Necessary to Build Communist Parties and an International Anew*). This call was taken up by two leftward moving centrist parties — the SAP (Socialist Workers Party) of Germany and the OSP (Independent Socialist Party) of Holland. A fourth signatory to the Declaration of Four (see Appendix), was Henk Sneevliet, the veteran Dutch revolutionary socialist, on behalf of his Revolutionary Socialist Party.

The SAP speedily sank back into the morass of centrism and the London Bureau, spearheaded by the British Independent Labour Party (ILP). The two Dutch parties, which merged, remained faithful to the idea of the Fourth International but developed important differences with Trotsky and the Left Opposition, especially during the Spanish Civil War when Sneevliet gravitated toward the POUM. Sneevliet was sentenced to death by the Nazis during the German occupation of Holland during the war. He and his comrades died heroically. Facing the firing squad with clenched fists, their last words were 'Long Live the International'.

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German Communist Party election poster

Not even all who had supported the Left Opposition in its decade and a half struggle against Stalinism, agreed on the need for a new international. Chief of these was Isaac Deutscher, who wrote: 'The idea that new impulses for revolution come from the West but not from the Soviet Union was the leitmotif of Trotsky's advocacy of the Fourth International. Again and again he asserted that while in the Soviet Union Stalinism continued to play a dual role, at once progressive and retrograde, it exercised internationally only a counter-revolutionary influence. Here his grasp of reality failed him. Stalinism was to go on acting its dual role internationally as well as nationally: it was to stimulate as well as to obstruct the class struggle outside the Soviet Union. In any case it was not from the West that the revolutionary impulses were to come in the next three or four decades. Thus the major premise on which Trotsky set out to create the Fourth International was unreal.'[5]

Deutscher's influence was responsible for the two Polish delegates voting against the foundation of the Fourth Internatoinal at its founding conference in 1938. In effect, his position was that of the radical middle class intellectuals, who were critical of Stalinism but sceptical of the need to build an alternative revolutionary party of the working class.

Trotsky answered them: 'Let the disillusioned ones bury their own dead. The working class is not a corpse. As hitherto, society rests upon it. It needs a new leadership. It will find this nowhere but in the Fourth International. All that is rational is real. Social democracy and Stalinocracy today represent stupendous fictions. But the Fourth International is an impregnable reality.'[6]

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Pierre Naville (left) and Trotsky (right) in France in 1933

Deutscher was not alone in his scepticism. Centrists and quite a few fainthearts in our own ranks expressed their doubts about the advisability of establishing a new international. Arguments were not wanting. The revolutionary Marxist movement was too isolated; the consciousness of the masses had not yet developed to the point where they realised the betrayals of the traditional leadership, especially of Stalinism; we must wait for more favourable conditions and not fall into the error of 'artificially' establishing an international.

To those doubters, the answer was given at the founding congress of the Fourth International in 1938. The failure of the traditional leaderships had resulted in the historical defeats of the working class in Germany in 1933, in Spain and France 1936-38. These defeats had brought no reactions from the leaderships of the Social Democrats or the Stalinists to indicate that they had learned anything. There was no possibility of reconciling our programme with that of the architects of these defeats. Finally, our existence as a revolutionary current which had fought bitterly, under the most adverse conditions, for a Bolshevik-Leninist programme was an historical fact. Our existence was an objective consequence which would, from now on, influence the developments of events.

The Fourth International arose as an international movement against the traditional workers' leaderships out of the development of the international class struggle as it existed before the Second World War. From the standpoint of its ideas, its programme and ideology, as well as from its cadres, the Fourth International was the result of objective developments within the labour movement. In no way could it be said to be an 'artificial' creation. Its conjunctural isolation from the masses cannot be used as an argument against its establishment. Revolutionary Marxists have long ago understood the dialectic of the relationship between classes, parties and leadership. Only at rare moments in history, at the peak of revolutionary development, is there a fusion between these elements. The changing dynamic of the class struggle continuously loosens these elements and binds them together again.

The party itself is an integral part of the class, but it differentiates itself from the class by the fact that it has a higher conception of the historic role of the class struggle than the class as a whole. The programme, the doctrine, tightly related to the actual class struggle — this is the work of the party and not of the class as a whole. What is important is that a revolutionary movement, at a given moment, and not leading a great mass movement of the class can defend, through its cadres, its ideology and programme and its continuity with the revolutionary past. Despite the most adverse objective conditions, the Fourth International has passed this test.

Since the end of the war, we have seen successful socialist revolutions in many countries (China, Yugoslavia, Cuba, Vietnam, etc.) led by currents outside the Fourth International. These revolutions, in the words of Ernest Mandel, were headed by 'pragmatic revolutionary leaderships that had a revolutionary practice but a theory and programme that was adequate neither to their own revolution, nor especially to the world revolution ... they do not have an adequate overall programme for constructing a socialist world ...' One of the most blatant omissions of these leaderships, is their failure to recognise the need for political revolution in the degenerated workers states.

The Fourth International has such an overall programme. It is the living continuation of the best traditions of Lenin's Third International. This programme is needed, not only by the workers and toiling masses who still have to overthrow the rule of their oppressors, but also in those countries where the dictatorship of the proletariat is living proof of the theory of permanent revolution.

References

1 Two-class 'workers and peasants' parties' was a formula used by the Stalinists in the 1920s to justify support of the Kuomintang and other bourgeois parties in Asia.

2 An international congress against war, initiated by the Stalinists in Amsterdam in 1932.

3 The German Stalinists developed an agitation for the 'national liberation' of Germany in order to compete with the Nazis as champions of German nationalism in opposition to the oppressive Versailles Treaty. Only the Nazis benefited from the competition.

4 The following year point 10 was amended in the light of the Comintern's refusal to draw the lessons of the victory of fascism in Germany. Reflecting the conclusion that it was now no longer possible to reform the Comintern, point 10 now read: 'The struggle for the regrouping of the revolutionary forces of the world's working class under the banner of International Communism. Recognition of the necessity of the creation of a genuine Communist International capable of applying the principles enumerated above.' The 'centrist' grouping within the camp of communism was applied to the faction led by Stalin as against the 'right' of Bukharin/Brandler and the 'left' — Trotskyists.

5 Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast*, p212.

6 Trotsky, *Writings 1938-39*, p145.

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THE DECLARATION OF FOUR

On the Necessity and Principles of a New International

1. The mortal crisis of imperialist capitalism, which has taken the props out from under reformism (Social Democracy, the Second International, the bureaucracy of the International Federation of Trade Unions), poses imperatively the question of the break with reformist policy and of the revolutionary struggle for the conquest of power and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship as the only means for the transformation of capitalist society into a socialist society.

2. The problem of the proletarian revolution bears, by its very nature, an international character. The proletariat can build a complete socialist society only on the basis of the world division of labour and world co-operation. The undersigned categorically reject, therefore, the theory of 'socialism in one country,' which undermines the very foundation of proletarian internationalism.

3. No less energetically must be rejected the theory of the Austro-Marxists, centrists and left reformists who, under the pretext of the international character of the socialist revolution, advocate an expectant passivity with regard to their own country, thereby in reality delivering the proletariat into the hands of fascism. A proletarian party that evades the seizure of power under the present historic conditions commits the worst of betrayals. The victorious proletariat of one country must strengthen its national dictatorship by socialist construction, which remains of necessity incomplete and contradictory until the working class seizes political power in at least a few advanced capitalist countries. Simultaneously, the victorious working class of one country must direct all its efforts to the extension of the socialist revolution to other countries. The contradiction between the national character of the seizure of power and the international character of socialist society can be resolved only by courageous revolutionary action.

4. The Third International, which grew out of the October Revolution, laid down the principles of proletarian policy in the epoch of imperialism and gave the world proletariat the first lessons in the revolutionary struggle for power, fell victim to a chain of historical contradictions. The treacherous role of the Social Democracy and the immaturity and inexperience of the Communist Parties led to the breakdown of the postwar revolutionary movements in the East and in the West. The isolated position of the proletarian dictatorship in a backward country gave an extraordinary power to the ever-more-conservative and nationally limited Soviet bureaucracy. The slavish dependence of the sections of the Comintern on the Soviet leadership led, in its turn, to a new series of grave defeats, to bureaucratic degeneration of the theory and practice of the Communist Parties and to their organisational weakening. More than that, the Comintern proved not only incapable of fulfilling its historic role but also became more and more of an obstacle in the way of the revolutionary movement.

5. The advance of fascism in Germany put the organisations of the working class to a decisive test. The Social Democracy once more confirmed the designation given to it by Rosa Luxemburg and revealed itself for the second time as 'the stinking corpse.' The overcoming of the organisation, ideas and methods of reformism is the necessary prerequisite for the victory of the working class over capitalism.

6. The German events revealed with no less force the collapse of the Third International. Despite its fourteen-year existence, despite the experience gained in gigantic battles, despite the moral support of the Soviet state and the plentiful means for propaganda, the Communist Party of Germany revealed under conditions of a grave economic, social and political crisis, conditions exceptionally favorable for a revolutionary party, an absolute revolutionary incapacity. It thereby showed conclusively that despite the heroism of many of its members it had become totally incapable of fulfilling its historical role.

7. The position of world capitalism; the frightful crisis that plunged the working masses into unheard-of-misery; the revolutionary movement of the oppressed colonial masses; the world danger of fascism; the perspective of a new cycle of wars which threatens to destroy the whole human culture — these are the conditions that imperatively demand the welding together of the proletarian vanguard into a *new (Fourth) International*. The undersigned obligate themselves to direct all their forces to the formation of this International in the shortest possible time on the firm foundation of the theoretical and strategic principles laid down by Marx and Lenin.

8. While ready to cooperate with all the organisations, groups and factions that are actually developing from reformism or bureaucratic centrism (Stalinism) towards revolutionary Marxist policy, the undersigned, at the same time, declare that the new International cannot tolerate any conciliation towards reformism or centrism. The necessary unity of the working class movement can be attained not by the blurring of reformist and revolutionary conceptions nor by adaptation to the Stalinist policy but only by combating the policies of both bankrupt Internationals. To remain equal to its task, the new International must not permit any deviation from revolutionary principles in the questions of insurrections, proletarian dictatorship, soviet form of the state, etc.

9. But its class basis, by its social foundations, by the incontestably prevailing forms of property, the USSR remains even today a workers state, that is, an instrument for the building of a socialist society. The new International will inscribe on its banner as one of the most important tasks the defence of the Soviet state from imperialism and internal counter-revolution. Precisely the revolutionary defence of the USSR places upon us the imperative task of freeing the revolutionary forces of the entire world from the corrupting influence of the Stalinist Comintern and of building a new International. Only under the conditions of complete independence of the international proletarian organisations from the Soviet bureaucracy and the tireless unmasking of its false methods before the working masses is a successful defence of the Soviet Union possible.

10. *Party democracy* is a necessary prerequisite for the healthy development of revolutionary proletarian parties on a national as well as an international scale. Without freedom of criticism, without the election of functionaries from top to bottom, without the control of the apparatus by the rank and file, no truly revolutionary party is possible.

The need for secrecy *under conditions of illegality* changes completely the forms of the internal life of a revolutionary party and makes wide discussions and elections difficult, if not altogether impossible. But even under the most difficult conditions and circumstances, the basic demands of a healthy party regime retain their full force: honest information about the party, freedom of criticism and a real inner unity between the leadership and the party majority. Having suppressed and crushed the will of the revolutionary workers, the reformist bureaucracy turned the Social Democracy and the trade unions into impotent bodies despite their memberships numbering in the millions. Having stifled inner democracy, the Stalinist bureaucracy also stifled the Comintern. The new International, as well as the parties adhering thereto, must build their entire inner life on the basis of *democratic centralism*.

11. The undersigned created a permanent commission of delegated representatives and assigned the following to it:
a. to elaborate a programmatic manifesto as the charter of the new International;
b. to prepare a critical analysis of the organisations and tendencies of the present-day workers movement (theoretic commentary to the manifesto);
c. to elaborate theses on all the fundamental questions of the revolutionary strategy of the proletariat;
d. to represent the undersigned organisations in the eyes of the whole world.

Signed
E. Bauer — International Left Opposition (Bolshevik-Leninist)
J. Schwab — SAP (Socialist Workers Party of Germany)
P.J. Schmidt — OSP (Independent Socialist Party of Holland)
H. Sneevliet — RSP (Revolutionary Socialist Party of Holland)

Reviews

TINA'S SECOND TERM

Steve Kennedy

Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques (eds): **The Politics of Thatcherism**, Lawrence and Wishart in association with *Marxism Today*, 1983, £4.95; Nicholas Wapshott and George Brock: **Thatcher**, Futura, 1983, £1.95.

After three weeks of image-building for Thatcher in the media during the election campaign, who on the left would willingly open a book featuring her photograph in full colour striking a statespersonlike pose and surrounded by a discreet border of Tory blue? Worse still, its authors are Deputy and Assistant Features Editor of the increasingly Thatcherite *Times* and its simple title *Thatcher* is qualified by the publishers as 'the major new biography'.

Fortunately Nicholas Wapshott and George Brock's book does not live down to its initial appearence. It is, in fact, a well-written, straight and not uncritical account of the Prime Minister's political career. It puts the record straight on the family circumstances of her childhood, provides a brief and relevant account of her early influences, her education and entry into politics, and shows quite clearly how little her emergence as Tory Party leader and then Prime Minister owed to her own intellectual or political talents: rather, she was the beneficiary of Edward Heath's abrupt and unanticipated fall from office and the collapse of his support in the party. In the absence of a more obvious Crown Prince or Princess, she was rushed in to fill the vacuum.

Where the book is less successful is in its account of the Thatcher Government of 1979-83 and the political basis of Thatcherism — which the authors largely dismiss as 'style' — and its relationship to traditional Tory Party politics. The book's discussion of economic policy and in particular of the Falklands war is restricted to superficial reportage with no serious consideration of the political issues involved or their longer-term implications.

The same accusation can not be levelled at *The Politics of Thatcherism*. Over the period since 1979, *Marxism Today* has published a wide range of articles on the implications of Thatcherism by writers drawn from diverse sections of the left, many from well outside the traditional orbit, politically as well as organisationally, of the Communist Party. Most of the key articles, several substantially revised to take account of changed circumstances, are included in this volume. In the absence of any other book providing so broad a sweep of analysis, *The Politics of Thatcherism* is essential reading.

Falklands Factor

The weakest section by far is the one on the Falklands Factor which brings together an extremely rightist piece by Eric Hobsbawn arguing that the left must 'recapture patriotism' with an article by Tom Nairn characteristically trenchant in his assertion that 'the real England is irredeemably Tory' and that the creation of a 'new national-popular idea' must go hand in hand with the break-up of Britain. In the middle is Robert Gray, the tone of whose contribution can be gauged by his speculation about the ways in which the left must 'begin to think more concretely and creatively about national identity and national interests' (p279):

'What,' he asks, 'constitute the legitimate interests of a Britain engaged in progressive democratic changes along the road to socialism? What sort of military forces would be needed to protect those interests?' (p279). What, one might reply, about putting the horse in front of the cart? Radical thinking is required if the left is to win popular support for a working class policy on international questions. But this will not be provided by such 'soft options' as trying to steal the made-to-measure suits of the bourgeoisie à la Hobsbawm, or indulging in abstract speculation à la Gray. Nor I suspect would Nairn's celtic fringe alternative really fit the bill if his meaning was more fully spelled out.

Fundamental Trends

The most thoughtful and fundamental contributions on the changing configuration of British politics are provided by Andrew Gamble and Stuart Hall. Both have two essays in the book — one each on the Tories and one each on the SDP. In 'Thatcherism and Conservative Politics' which has been almost entirely rewritten from two earlier essays, Gamble provides a concise account of Thatcherism as a doctrine and as practical politics and asks how it relates to traditional conservatism. He traces the continuities with the Heath Government: both, he argues, were concerned with forging a new conservatism appropriate to the intersection of Britain's economic and political decline and the onset of world recession. But while Heath retreated from social market doctrines because of the scale of unemployment and working class resistance they created, returning to a more traditional dash for growth, Thatcher has held firm. In this sense, Gamble argues, Heath represented a last attempt to operate within the post-war social democratic consensus (though it did not appear so at the time) while Thatcher — in the context of a world situation admitting of less room for manouevre — represents a decisive break. 'The Impact of the SDP' is a less substantial piece more at the level of good speculative journalism largely analysing the deficiencies of the party in relation to its stated objectives rather than providing a rounded materialist analysis of its dynamics and role.

Where Gamble's mode of analysis is that of the theoretically informed Marxist historian, Stuart Hall's leans more heavily on Gramsci and the new Marxist cultural studies of which he has been a pioneer. In 'The Great Moving Right Show', Hall shows how, on a range of issues, it has been the themes and issues of the new right which have spoken most directly to the social practices and lived ideologies of very large numbers of people, including crucially working class people, whose traditional party allegiances have been eroded in the post-war period. Thatcherism, in particular, by distancing itself from the authoritarian and inadequate aspects of the welfare state, has colonised a radical terrain with reactionary weapons. In 'The Little Caesars of Social Democracy', Hall considers the implications of this for the SDP, concluding that while the party may make transient gains from the secular declines of the Labour and Tory Parties, their actual policies do not have the same fundamental appeal as the radical anti-statism which Thatcherism has constituted as its ideological image.

Changing the Terrain

Hall's analysis is developed in the editors' introduction co-written with Martin Jacques, which argues that Thatcherism 'is not finally to be judged in electoral terms ... Rather it should be judged in terms of its success and failure in disorganising the labour movement and progressive forces,' (well they had to come in somewhere!) and 'in shifting the terms of political debate ... It has provoked a rupture — but failed to resolve it.' (p 13) Now in a sense this is true enough. The radicalism of Thatcherism lies precisely in its attempt to halt the prodigious decline in Tory support in the post-war period — and to do this it must necessarily work on a more fundamental terrain than simply electoral politics. But this is in no way separable form the party's electoral fortunes. The whole history of the Tory Party is that of a party geared to winning, an aspiration to which all considerations of ideology and doctrine are entirely secondary. Had Thatcher lost in 1983, which without the Malvinas war would have been a real possibility, there is nothing to suggest that she would have avoided the fate of all Tory losers.

And this underlines a problem in the high level of abstraction at which the main analytical articles in the book operate — a problem exacerbated by the general sensation of timelessness induced by the non-chronological mixture of articles written before the Malvinas war with others written after or revised in the light of its effects. Somehow, and with honourable exceptions like the excellent and provocative shorter articles by Lynne Segal and Martin Kettle on the sexual division of labour and law and order respectively, contributors fail to grapple with concrete questions or tangible lines of advance.

Lack of Strategy

For all the light that can be cast by Gramscian analysis of the forms of hegemony to which Thatcherism aspires, it no more provides a direct guide to action for socialists than the labourism or economism it derides. And whatever the value of historically locating Thatcherism in relation to the traditions of Toryism, on its own this is not enough. The real problem about the book is that it is left to rather unsophisticated Communist Party propagandists to attempt to graft elements of an anti-Thatcher strategy for the left onto the theoretically sophisticated analyses discussed above.

This is clearest in Jon Bloomfield's article which concludes the book and is worth quoting at length. Bloomfield explicitly rejects the idea of working in, or affiliating to, the Labour Party and asserts: 'There are large and clear political spaces on the British left waiting to be filled. There are opportunities for the Communist Party and others to take. Briefly stated, the left urgently needs a party which sees its main priorities as the development of mass struggles on the issues of

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unemployment, peace, democratic rights, anti-racism and women's liberation, the encouragement of links and alliances between these struggles and movements in a non-opportunist manner, and the application of Marxist analysis and organisation to these struggles, along with the stimulation of extensive Marxist discussion and debate.' (p338).

Apart from the omission of any mention of struggles around the control and organisation of the economy (presumably to avoid the remotest possibility the author may fall into the trap of economism) this ritual incantation is notable only for its vacuous timelessness. It could have come straight out of the 1977 edition of the *British Road to Socialism*: so much for the radical impression of Thatcherism on all aspects of political life!

What is, above all, notable about the book's strategic conclusions are their lack of radicalism in relation to the depth of the tasks implied by its analysis: 'A protracted, and arduous task lies before the entire left in swinging the people away from Thatcherism and onto a road of democratic peaceful advance. It can be achieved, provided the left blends its socialist vision with realistic estimates of the present situation and there is the utmost unity and co-operation among all the progressive forces and movements' (p339) is how Bloomfield concludes his article; hardly a high note on which to end such a book. Hall and Jacques in the introduction similarly conclude that what is required is, first, the 'transformation of the labour movement' (p16) by which they appear to mean 'a major political, social, cultural, ideological renewal' (p14), and second, 'the construction by the labour movement of the broadest possible set of alliances against Thatcherism involving, in the initial instance, possibly quite modest objectives' (p16). Hardly the kind of clear and confident line of advance that is likely to convince waverers that *there is* an alternative as Thatcher embarks on her second term of office.

STEVE KENNEDY is a member of the Editorial Board of International.

The future for Pakistan

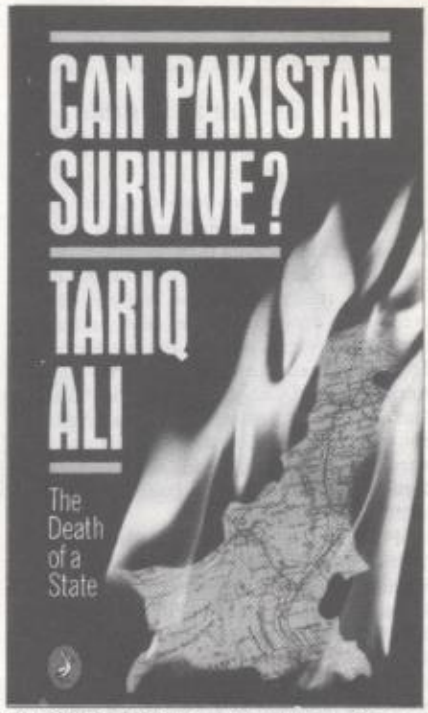
Brendan O'Leary

Tariq Ali: Can Pakistan Survive? Penguin Books, 1983, £2.95.

'Can Pakistan Survive?' receives the answer that the demise of Tariq Ali's home state is a 'consummation devoutly to be wished'. Ali tells us why Pakistan ought not to exist. Born amidst the slaughter of independence and partition, the scarcely desired child of the imperialist-influenced Muslim League of Jinnah and the errors of Indian nationalists and communists, Pakistan's existence seemed to deny reason in history. East and West were divided by 1,000 miles of Indian territory and, until the establishment of Bangladesh, (after a quasi-genocidal repression of the Bengalis was stopped by a much needed, if self-interested, Indian invasion) the West pillaged the East in a manner worthy of their British predecessors. Not the West, of course, but rather the dominant class of the Punjab, the bureaucratic-military-landed power elite that Ali demonstrates to be one of the most philistine and unashamed blocs of parasites ever to preside over a state. Pakistan even after the secession of Bangladesh did not possess linguistic, ethnic or territorial unity; only the legacies of the British Raj and the use and abuse of Islam gave the state coherence.

In a brisk well written narrative Ali takes the reader through the origins of Pakistan, the first decade of independence, the military dictatorships of Ayub and Yahya, the civil war, Bhutto's populist debacle (1971-77), and finally the military fist in an Islamic glove personified in the comic but awful General Zia-ul-Haq. Perhaps the weakest section of the book is here, because, unlike elsewhere, a lot is presumed of the reader. Ali writes with the vision of a South Asian internationalist inspired by the best sort of Trotskyist world view. The vacillations and twists of the Maoists and Stalinists in Pakistan (and India), who have ended up critically supporting their own exits from the political stage in virtuoso performances only matched by the dangerous stupidity of Pakistan's generals, are well documented.

Ali's final chapter on Pakistan's geo-political position is a useful overview of recent developments in Central and South Asia. And yet it is not clear that Ali's picture of Pakistan in perpetual crisis, within sight of being deleted from the map, is tenable. The USA and India both 'need' Pakistan. That 'backward, nomadic Baluchistan, should have produced a dedicated and internationalist cadre without equal in contemporary Pakistan' (p195) is, perhaps, an index for despair rather than hope. Ali holds to his trenchant optimism, to his vision which is an entirely worthy one: a voluntary federation of South Asian Republics. This is the tone of the undefeated revolutionary, the militant refusal to accept the accomplished fact. Yet, I am left with a more sombre view: 'could it be that History has something still worse in store? ... will the antediluvian generals of South Asia, bedecked with former imperialist medals, try to beat each other to the nuclear draw?' (p 193)



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Reviews

NO THIRD WAY IN CARIBBEAN

Phil Hearse

Fitzroy Ambursley and Robin Cohen (eds): **Crisis in the Caribbean**, Heinemann, £6.95.

Ambursley and Cohen have done the whole left a service by drawing together a mass of factual information on the revolutionary process in the Caribbean and Central America. The core of the book is an analysis of that process, in essays by Cohen and Ambursley themselves, which confirm the essence of the Trotskyist theory of permanent revolution. Ambursley and Cohen are concerned to show that there is no 'third way' — often called 'the non-capitalist path of development' — between socialist revolution and imperialist domination. Country by country the contributors prove their case.

Perhaps the foremost advocate of the 'non-capitalist road of development' in the region was the former prime minister of Jamaica, Michael Manley. Fitzroy Ambursley contributes what must be the definitive Marxist account of Manley's government from 1972 to 1980. The essay shows how the world economic recession in 1974-5 threw Manley's Peoples National Party government into crisis. The policy of limited reforms, within a framework of *refusing* to challenge imperialist economic domination of the country, led to an impasse.

The PNP government stood firmly by the principle of the 'mixed economy' — the continuance of capitalism — and failed to mobilise the people to challenge the multinationals' domination of the economy. Despite its friendship with Cuba and support for the MPLA in Angola, the PNP government was not in practice anti-imperialist. Eventually, in exchange for an IMF loan, Manley introduced a series of anti-working class measures, including a wage freeze. Ambursley concludes that the Manley regime was 'a belated experiment in bourgeois nationalist-populism' rather than classic social democracy. This is surely correct. Manley must be seen as one of a host of nationalist leaders in the post-war world who doubtless provoke and annoy imperialism, but are incapable of taking the struggle in a revolutionary direction. The present leaderships in Angola and Mozambique are in the same category.

The crucial essays in the volume are those by Weber, Dunkerley and Ambursley, analysing the problems of revolutionary transition in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Grenada. James Dunkerley directly confronts the problem of class alliances and revolutionary strategy in El Salvador. Concluding that there is no authentic 'national bourgeoisie', he estimates that the strategy followed for many years by the Salvadorean Communist Party, of popular fronts with the bourgeoisie, is wrong in principle and disastrous in practice. On the contrary, the fundamental axis of alliances for socialist revolution is that between the proletariat and the poor peasantry. Dunkerley relates this strategy to that of the Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). Correctly he points out that while only a worker-poor peasant alliance can defeat imperialism, it would be quite wrong to expel all bourgeois forces from the FDR, which is at heart an *anti-oligarchy, anti-imperialist alliance*. Nonetheless Dunkerley insists that the Salvadorean CP, despite its participation in the FMLN, is still wedded to a popular frontist strategy. There are others in the FDR, for example Guillermo Ungo's MNR, which are also popular frontist. What unites them is that they want a democratic solution, *without the overthrow of capitalism*. In that lies a danger to the Salvadorean revolution. The project of the popular frontists is also that of European imperialism and Mexico.

In my view Dunkerley is right to highlight these problems in the FDR. Often the political formulations of the anti-imperialist front are dangerously vague. Some of its leaders have explained the project they propose as having 'nothing to do with socialism'. But what Dunkerley fails to adequately stress is that *so far* the revolutionary forces inside the FDR are quasi-hegemonic. Marxists have always understood that the *real* programme of a movement is encapsulated in its concrete actions, not its theoretical and programmatic statements, important as those are. The FDR and the FMLN must be characterised as revolutionary primarily for their concrete actions, as well as for some of their programmatic statements.

In his second essay, Fitzroy Ambursley tackles the controversial question of Grenada. Taking issue with those who paint the New Jewel Movement government of Maurice Bishop as revolutionary Marxist, or a 'workers and peasants government', Ambursley insists that Grenada remains a dependent capitalist country. He characterises the NJM as a 'revolutionary petty bourgeois workers party', and the Grenadian revolution as, 'an interrupted popular revolution' of the same type as Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique. Whether or not he is right in these characterisations, there is no doubt that his essay is the first sustained and serious Marxist account of the Grenadian social formation and class structure. The crux of his argument is that the bloc of dominant classes in Grenada is a fusion of a landowning oligarchy and a comprador bourgeoisie with significant interests in tourism and real estate, and that the Bishop government has made no significant inroads into its power and domination. The taking of power by the NJM has not resulted in an overturn in the fundamental social relations, and the NJM's adhesion to the theory of 'non-capitalist development' legitimises this approach.

The real question, which in my opinion Fitzroy's piece tends to evade, is whether or not a country of just 110,000 people is capable of carrying through a socialist transition independently. Is it conceivable to make a complete break with the world market and imperialist domination outside of a 'socialist federation of the Caribbean'? Surely, only be allying itself with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc could such a project be carried through. A Marxist critique of the NJM must provide decisive evidence that such an alternative is an immediate practical alternative, whether or not the Soviet Union is prepared to sanction such a move. There are no easy answers to this question.

Henri Weber's essay on Nicaragua condenses the theses of his book *The Sandinist Revolution*. Two questions primarily concern him — the problem of defeating the bourgeoisie and overturning capitalism, and the question of democracy. With partial and secondary criticisms, Weber suggests that the strategy pursued by the Sandinistas is essentially correct. What he describes as a 'special kind of NEP' — the continuance of a mixed economy and capitalist production — has been necessary to give a breathing space to outmanoeuvre the bourgeoisie by mass mobilisation. By contrast Dunkerley's essay on El Salvador suggests in passing that the Sandinistas are committed to the mixed economy as a principle, and implies that they will not carry through the process of socialist revolution.

Our assessment would be much closer to Weber's. The process of class polarisation is deepening in Nicaragua, and the FSLN is taking more and more radical steps. But we must also add, the question of the economic power of the bourgeoisie must at some stage be confronted before it becomes transformed into political power. You cannot have a workers and peasants government on the one hand, and capitalist production on the other, for an extended period. One or the other must eventually go. The Nicaraguan leaders talk both of 'socialism' *and* the 'mixed economy'. Dunkerley takes this ideological imprecision for good coin, believing the FSLN to be popular frontist. This is a sectarian and pessimistic account. We are sure that the Nicaraguan revolution will solve these contradictions in good time.

The other notable essay in the book is that by Jean-Pierre Beauvais, editor of the French Trotskyist weekly *Rouge*, on Cuba. Using a mass of statistical and factual information, he suggests that Cuba's major economic problem has been that of labour productivity. Instead of attempting to resolve this through an extension of workers democracy and workers control, he argues, the Cuban leadership has increasingly reverted to Soviet-style economic management and incentives. In essence, the essay stresses the profoundly negative impact of Cuba's dependence on the Soviet Union, which only workers democracy and an extension of the revolutionary process regionally can break.

Central America and the Caribbean are today the focus of some of the most important revolutionary battles being fought across the world. Solidarity with this revolutionary process is of course the first task of the left. Nonetheless, socialists must make a sober assessment of the leadership and strategy of the movements in the area. The essays in this book provide irrefutable evidence that these 'new leaderships' are by no means 'Caribbean Bolsheviks', but in the best of cases empirical revolutionaries with many limitations. Eulogy can never replace the stern test of Marxist analysis.

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Reviews

RECLAIMING UTOPIA?

Megan Martin

Barbara Taylor: **Eve and the New Jerusalem**, Virago, 1983, £5.95.

Eve and the New Jerusalem is a study of the Owenite movement in nineteenth century Britain. It is an uncovering of the socialist-feminism of Owenism and a revindication of its Utopian vision.

The Owenite vision was one of a society freed from the deformations of both class exploitation and sexual oppression. The Owenites believed that the source of women's oppression lay within the institutions of marriage and the family and that only a complete transformation of family life and sexual attitudes — through the creation of a New Moral World — would free women. This commitment to a collectivised family life and female equality set them apart from most other radical movements of the period.

Owenism was never a mass movement. It did not have the same following as Chartism. Nevertheless women were actively involved in the movement in large numbers and, according to Barbara Taylor, the majority of these women came from the upper working class. The women who joined Queenswood, a Hampshire Owenite community, for example, were mostly the wives and daughters of skilled factory operatives. Before entering the community they had worked as dressmakers, straw-bonnet-makers, weavers and domestic workers.

Hundreds of women attended Owenite lectures on women's rights and scores wrote to its press on women's issues. A number of feminists toured the country, speaking at public meetings on the principles of Owenism. One such publicist, very popular with working class audiences, was Emma Martin. Audiences of two or three thousand were not unusual for Emma, and when the subject was 'marriage and divorce' they were often much larger. Emma specialised in an inverted evangelical mode which, for men and women raised on the Bible, was a form which was easily accessible and entertaining. In 1843, when she debated with a Baptist minister in Hull, so many wanted to attend that the tickets were sold and resold at vastly inflated prices. The audience on this occasion divided itself into two camps, each indicating their response to the speakers with cheers and heckling. By popular approval Emma won the day and the local paper sadly reported that 'the infidel, as a debater, was an overmatch for the Baptist'.

Barbara Taylor does not idealise the Owenites. Her study shows that competing views on women and sexual relations fought for an ideological foothold in the movement and that the initial intransigent attitude towards the family dissolved into a range of positions. She explains also that the lack of female leadership in the Owenite branches was symptomatic of underlying ambiguities in Owenite thinking which were never resolved.

Despite these deficiencies, Barbara Taylor argues that we have lost something with the failure of Owenism. She argues that there is an assumption within the socialist movement that there has been 'a steady progress in socialist thought, from the primitive utopianism of its early years to mature, scientific socialism'. She challenges this assumption and contends that the displacement of the humanist vision of the Owenites by a Marxist analysis of the class struggle 'did not raise the socialist project onto a higher terrain but contracted it around a narrow programme which left little space for women's needs, or women's demands.' She calls for today's socialist feminists to reclaim the Utopian vision as our own heritage.

How should socialist-feminists respond? Like Engels, we should 'delight in the stupendously grand thoughts' of the Utopians. We can acknowledge also the weaknesses in today's socialist movement's vision of the future. This same criticism of the movement was raised by E P Thompson in his work on William Morris. Thompson argued that, after Morris, the later Marxist tradition lacked 'a moral self-consciousness or even a vocabulary of desire' and was unable to project any images of the future. Hilary Wainwright in *Beyond the Fragments* also argued the need to 'project a vision of socialist society as part of the struggle to create a mass socialist consciousness.'

But Barbara Taylor is arguing for something more than this. She suggests that Marxism cannot deal adequately with the tasks of women's liberation. She allows Marxism a place and recognises that Owenism's strategic weakness was its belief that the capitalist system was a transitory, fragile form of socio-economic organisation. The Owenites did not recognise that 'capitalism itself had become the terrain on which the struggle for its own suppression would have to be fought.' She acknowledes that 'the new conceptual tools of Marxism gave the struggle for socialism a clearer direction.'

But she argues that Marxism also stranded women's independent aspirations outside the revolutionary agenda — an agenda now dominated by the class-based struggles of the (male) industrial proletariat. 'Sex oppression and class exploitation increasingly became viewed not as twin targets of a single strategy but as separate objects of separate struggles.'

Barbara Taylor counterposes the vision to questions of strategy. Marxism did not analyse the failure of Owenism as the failure of vision. The failure, according to Marx and Engels, lay in its analysis of how to change the world so as to make reality accord with that vision.

If the fading of the Utopian vision has left socialism morally impoverished, then we need to look further than Marxism itself for our explanations. We should understand the negative example of Stalinism in Eastern Europe but we should pay particular attention to the dead weight of social democracy on the socialist movement in Britain. If Denis Healey or Neil Kinnock fail to inspire large numbers of people with a vision of a socialist future, it's not surprising. They are not the agents for such a future. Even Tony Benn, a supporter of the women's movement, is not the agent for the kinds of changes that the Owenite feminists desired.

Barbara Taylor says that 'most present-day socialist thinking on feminism assumes

that struggles involving women's status and women's freedom are somehow less revolutionary in their implications than those based on class'.

This is hardly an accurate description of present day socialist thinking. But it also leaves out of account that whole strand of *socialist-feminist* thinking which has been involved in elaborating a Marxist analysis of the nature of women's oppression. This acceptance of class as the primary category has not at all hindered them from exploring a vision of a future society freed from both class exploitation and sexual oppression.

Barbara Taylor says that the Owenites failed in their endeavour to transform the whole order of social life and in so doing transform relations between the sexes. She says that we must take up this endeavour again only this time 'we must not fail'! Yet it is through Marxism that we can revive the link between women's freedom and class exploitation. The Owenite vision is insufficient.

MEGAN MARTIN is an activist in the El Salvador and Nicaragua solidarity campaigns.

Reviews

THE END OF LITERATURE?

Mike Hamlin

Terry Eagleton: **Literary Theory: An Introduction**, Basil Blackwell, £4.95.

Near the end of this excellent book Terry Eagleton admits that his sub-title: 'An Introduction' perhaps misses the point and that 'An Obituary' might more accurately reflect its central concern. The point is well taken; for what is being argued here is that any simple notion of 'English Literature', either as a body of 'great texts' or as the basis for a method of critical enquiry, is simply untenable.

First, the question is asked, what is Literature? Is it fiction rather than fact? In that case what happens to chronicle, argument or memoir? Moreover Eagleton shows that: 'if "literature" includes much "factual" writing, it also excludes quite a lot of fiction. Superman comic and Mills and Boon novels are fictional but not generally regarded as literature, and certainly not as Literature. If literature is "creative" or "imaginative" writing does this imply that history, philosophy and natural science are uncreative and unimaginative?' Early on then, the self-evident concept of 'literature' is dismissed as an illusion and the practice of 'literary criticism', being grounded on an illusion, is similarly dismissed as being a non-subject — the many varieties of literary criticism and theory having more in common with other disciplines: linguistics, history, sociology than they have with each other.

But where does that leave us?

In a word it leaves us with politics, and with the conclusion that any consideration of literature is inevitably and inescapably political: 'Literature does not exist in the sense that insects do, and the value judgements by which it is constituted are historically variable, but these value-judgements themselves have a close relation to social ideologies. They refer in the end not simply to private taste, but to the assumptions by which certain groups exercise and maintain power over others.'

This central argument is then impressively developed by a series of chapters which amount to a whistle-stop tour of twentieth century thinking about literature. The pace is rapid but there is a lot to see and enjoy — throughout the tone is light and refreshingly humourous. We begin with the rise of 'English' as a subject in Britain and with the formative ideas of Arnold, Eliot, Richards, Leavis and others. Then a brief transatlantic detour to glimpse at the American theorists of 'New Criticism', before returning to the European schools of phenomenology and reception theory associated with the names of Heidegger, Gadamer and Iser. We move swiftly into structuralism and semiotics with Levi-Strauss, Roman Jakobson and friends; before coming to a halt with the post-structuralist views of Derrida and the 'Yale Group' of deconstructionists. A further, overarching chapter on the significance of psychoanalysis — Freud in ten pages! — completes the trip.

Considering the ground that is covered, it is amazing that the whole enterprise doesn't just collapse into one of those arid exam crammers, 'Key Points on Key Thinkers', or a kind of up-market 'Modern Masters' for zippy undergrads. But it doesn't. Against all the odds, it manages to hold itself together, largely because of Eagleton's insistent political perspective.

The various threads of argument are drawn together convincingly in a magnificent concluding chapter. In what amounts to a powerful and, at times, passionately sustained plea for an openly committed, politically informed response to literature, Eagleton demonstrates that even if we wanted to, we cannot ever escape from the real world of human suffering and striving.

'Every literary theory pressuposes a certain use of literature, even if what you get out of it is its utter uselessness. Liberal humanist criticism is not wrong to use literature, but wrong to deceive itself that it does not. It uses it to further certain moral values, which as I hope to have shown are in fact indissociable from certain ideological ones, and in the end imply a particular form of politics ... The idea that there are "non-political" forms of criticism is simply a myth which furthers certain political uses of literature all the more effectively.

'The difference between a "political" and "non-political" criticism is just the difference between the prime minister and the monarch: the latter furthers certain political ends by pretending not to, while the former makes no bones about it. It is always better to be honest in these matters ... There is no way of settling the question of which politics is preferable in literary critical terms. You simply have to argue about politics. It is not a question of debating whether "literature" should be related to "history" or not: it is a question of different readings of history itself.'

This is an important argument with implications not just for students and teachers of 'literature', but for any socialist who has ever opened and enjoyed a book.

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