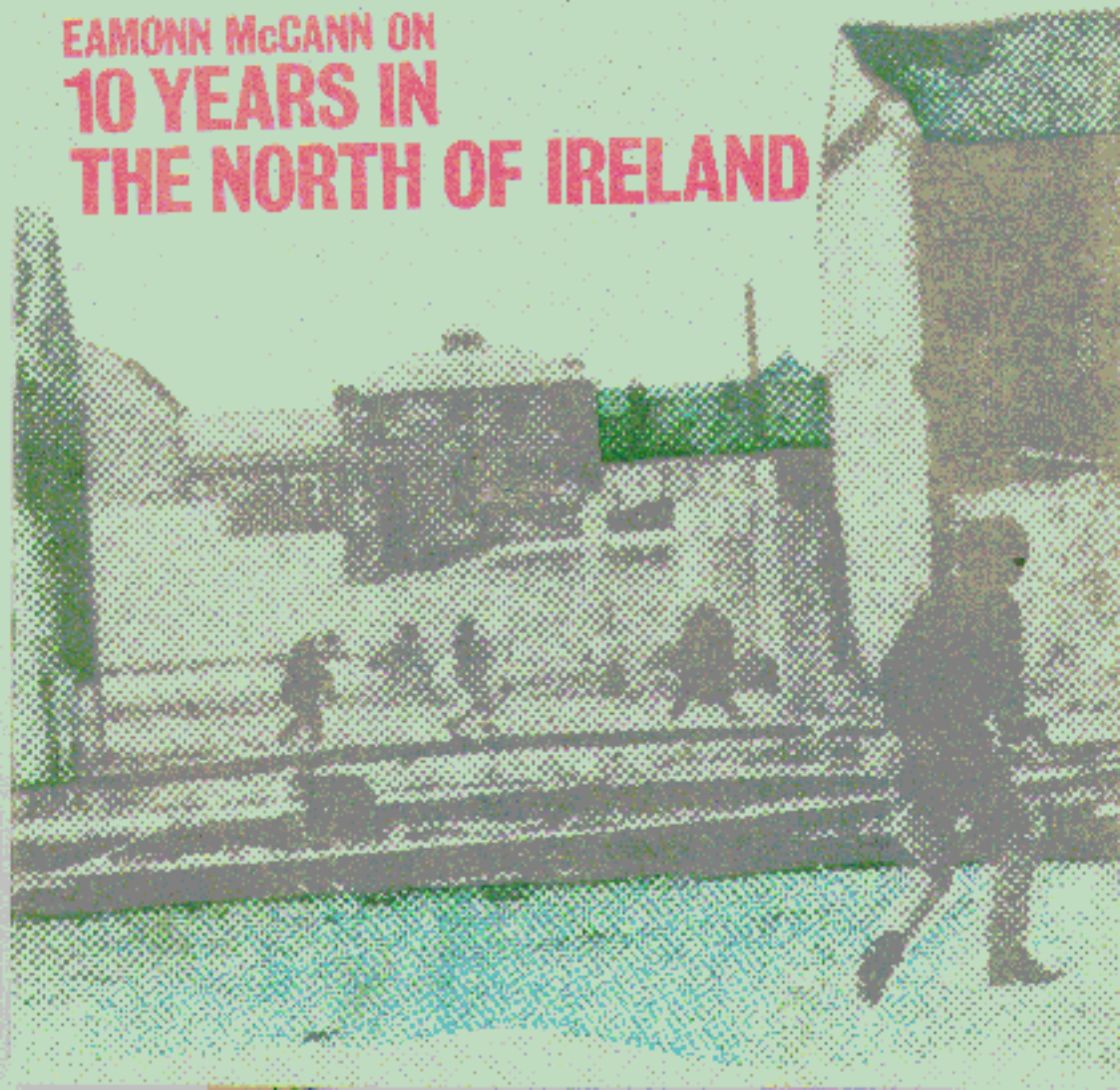


*socialist*

October 1978 Number 6

# REVIEW

**EAMONN McCANN ON  
10 YEARS IN  
THE NORTH OF IRELAND**



# NEWS

analysis

Middle East

## Sadat's camp fire

'The Jimmy Carter conference' at Camp David, as Menachim Begin called it, ended in a wave of euphoria. Carter has, it seems, pulled off the impossible and persuaded the Egyptian and Israeli leaders to agree on a settlement of the thirty years' war between their two countries.

The agreement has advantages for all the parties concerned. Carter, whose ineffective leadership of the US has caused his standing in the opinion polls to slump, can now present himself as a strong and decisive President.

For Anwar Sadat 'peace' with Israel means an opportunity to free Egypt's desperately weak economy from the burden of a massive war machine and to allow the *infitah* (open door) policy of attracting Western investment a chance to work.

But the main beneficiary is undoubtedly Israel. Begin has offered very little to gain a great deal in return. He has agreed to withdraw from Sinai within three years and to negotiate an Israeli handover of the West Bank and Gaza within five years.

In exchange for these promises he has achieved a long-standing goal of Israeli policy: to prise the most important state in the Arab world out of the anti-Zionist camp. A peace treaty with Egypt will give the Israelis a free hand in the Lebanon and make another Arab offensive against Israel like that in October 1973 almost impossible.

There is no doubt as to who is the main loser. The Palestinian people are being offered *nothing*. The envisaged 'self-governing' Palestinian entity in the West Bank and Gaza would exist only by permission of the Israelis and would, almost certainly, be under the supervision of King Hussein of Jordan, well known for his love of

Palestinians since the massacres of September 1970. The refugees in the Lebanon would be left to rot in the camps, while awaiting the tender mercies of the Israeli-backed Christian fascist militias.

The Camp David agreement is, in other words, another in the long line of agreements, dating back to the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which have allowed the establishment and expansion of the Zionist state at the expense of the Palestinians.

Whether it will succeed is another matter. There are a number of obstacles. First, there have been false dawns before.

The euphoria created by Sadat's visit to Israel last November soon dissipated as Begin stubbornly refused any concessions. The Camp David agreement papered over the differences between Egypt and Israel, particularly over the future of Gaza and the West Bank.

### Spinning

Begin is a tough and wily negotiator capable of spinning talks out indefinitely in order to buy time. Sadat is not home yet.

Sadat also faces the danger of being completely isolated in the Arab world. 'The front for steadfastness and confrontation' (Syria, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Libya and South Yemen) is bound to denounce Sadat's treachery. However, their response is unlikely to be more than hot air.

Syria, the only member of the front directly bordering on

Israel, is already deep in the mire of the Lebanon and would not stand a chance in a shooting war with Israel.

As if to remind Syria of its military weaknesses the Israeli armed forces are currently engaged in a massive build-up in the northern and north eastern border areas.

This build up has been described as the biggest concentration of Israeli forces since that preceding the six-day war. 'Peace' with Egypt on the western front allows Israel further possibilities to threaten in this area.

More important from Sadat's point of view is the attitude of Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states. The Egyptian economy is completely dependent on hand-outs from the Gulf Organisation for the Development of Egypt.

If the Saudis withdrew their backing, Sadat's days would be numbered.

Most likely Riyadh will continue its policy of the last nine months of staying in the sidelines, giving tacit support to Sadat while pressing him not to slam the door on Syria and the PLO (the Saudis had an Arab summit lined up to follow the expected collapse of the Camp David talks at which Sadat and the confrontationists would be reconciled—there is no hope of that now).

But the most important pitfall in Sadat's path is the Palestinian resistance. Again and again in the past the movement has been able to bounce back after apparently devastating setbacks.

Will the parties to the Camp David agreement succeed where so many others before them have failed? *Alex Callinicos*

## Contents

Letters:	14
Reviews:	16
Ireland/ Eamonn McCann:	19
Performance/ Steve Gooch:	25
Industrialisation of Office Work:	28
Can British Leyland survive?:	29
Terrorism:	33
Writers reviewed/ Lewis Grassie Gibbon:	34
Reviews:	36
Back page:	40

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What's happening in Iran? Here's a 4-page analysis by Ali Ahmadi and Chris Harman

Iran/1

# Where oil is thicker than blood

The Western press presents a very simple—and very distorted—view of the way the present wave of unrest in Iran has developed. They see its origins in an attempt by the Shah himself to introduce a few reforms, in the taking advantage of this by a few courageous liberal inclined intellectuals, and in an inexplicable growth of anti-regime religious feeling.

The real course of events is much different. After all, only two years ago the Shah, far from being 'reform minded' was trying to impose a single totalitarian party; the intellectuals, by and large, were completely silent.

And the religious opposition, like everyone else was cowed by the activities of the SAVAK.

What broke the log jam was the action of the mass of city dwellers faced with the effects of the economic crisis.

In the summer of 1977 the Shah's government tried to move more than a million people living in the shanty towns around Tehran. The reason, it seems, was to force them to move into the massively expensive housing schemes built by speculators inside the government.

Four months of disturbances followed as police attacked the shanty town dwellers, killing 40 of them and arresting many more.

The water and electricity supplies were cut off, as was garbage disposal. The response of the population was to find ways of providing these facilities for themselves, on a communal basis and in opposition to the regime.

The bitterness of the resistance his police faced forced the Shah finally to back down in the late summer and to cancel his decree on the shanty town.

The struggle in the shanty towns was accompanied by, and encouraged, a strike wave in the workplaces. In the spring and summer of 1977 more than 130 factories or depots were burnt to the ground—for example, the match factory at Tabriz, a paint-making factory in Karaj Road, Tehran, a seed-base oil factory of Khorasan, the General Motors assembly plant in Tehran.

In the same period there was

a big strike of workers at the box making factory of Qazvin which led to the imposition of semi-martial law in the area.

The strikes expressed the determination of the workers to keep ahead of soaring cost of living—especially housing—costs, just as the Shah was introducing legislation to keep wage increases down to productivity increases.

## Different

The protests soon spread to another sector, who were given heart by the shanty town dwellers' victory against an apparently impregnable regime.

The bank employees struck after the refusal of a salary increase. And then it was the turn of the so-called 'national bourgeoisie'—the intellectuals and the small bourgeoisie of the bazaars.

The intellectuals began their campaign of writing protest letters. The more courageous extended this to public poetry readings. Their agitation was joined by students throughout the country after a police attack on a poetry reading and on students at Tehran university.

Even the *Financial Times* admits that 'during the past academic year the universities have been less a base for higher education than a battle ground

where the Shah's security forces, in riot gear and wielding wooden clubs, have almost daily squared off with embittered students frequently armed only with youthful enthusiasm and the occasional wooden chair'. (12 September 78).

The attacks on the students last autumn forced the religious leaders to increase their activity—especially as the small bourgeoisie of the bazaars was agitated by the increased competition of the monopolies and the attempts at price control.

The religious leaders began to join their voices to the major oppositional religious figure, Aytollah Khomeini, who was exiled in 1963. There was a major clash in Qom between the religious led opposition and the Shah's forces.

The Shah's attempt to brutally smash the opposition merely led to it gaining increased sympathy and support.

For the first time since 1963 there was the closing of the bazaars throughout the country and the call to overthrow the Shah.

The centre of the opposition movement often became the Mosques, which offered a more or less legal focus for oppositional activity. The Shah's attempts to close some of the

Mosques forced more conservative religious figures to join the agitation.

The Shah was soon in a desperate panic. Forty days after the Qom clashes he had to repeat the same thing, and on a wider scale in the Northern city of Tabriz.

A brutal massacre there did not help things either. It created further unrest in other cities: Isfahan, Shiraz, Abadan, Tehran—in fact in all the major cities.

The regime then began a propaganda attack designed to split the opposition. It claimed that the religious opposition stood for a strict, puritanical Islam regime—although the religious leaders themselves had not demanded this—and tried to create panic with looting, attacks on women and religious minorities.

## Isolation

But the propaganda ploy failed. There was a complete one day strike in Tehran, with the Qom events repeating themselves, until the complete isolation of the regime was clear to all.

Meanwhile, as the *Economic Intelligence Unit* notes, while the confrontations in the streets were getting all the publicity, less advertised, but equally significant, the

analysis



country has been beset by a rash of strikes directed above all at foreign companies.

The depth and resilience of the opposition forced the Shah to backtrack for a time. He offered a number of concessions to the religious leaders, sacking his prime ministers, first Hoveida and then Amouzegar, and replacing them with Sharif Emami, who is close to religious circles.

Emami set about establishing a 'government of reconciliation'.

Almost overnight, 14 political parties and societies declared themselves. None sought to develop the organised power of workers, confining themselves to the demand for political liberty.

### Vacuum

Allying themselves to the religious leaders who had up to then filled the political vacuum at the top of the mass movement they organised a series of mass rallies in Tehran and other centres.

The growing militancy of the movement had one welcome effect for the Shah. It gave a serious fright to various Western powers which had previously been pressing him to offer concessions and introduce a constitutional monarchy.

Iran has known two great periods of revolutionary turmoil in the present century. In both the two components of the present opposition movement, the so-called 'national bourgeoisie' and the working class played key roles.

The years 1906-1911 were marked by very bitter struggles between the constitutional movement and the Iranian monarchy and its feudal backers.

The monarchy and the large feudal landlords were proving themselves incapable either of developing the counter of protecting it from near absorption into the colonial empires of Britain and Russia.

The merchants, small traders and small manufacturers of the towns became increasingly oppositional.

Because of their close ties with the local mosques these (as at later dates) quickly became the focus for much of their 'constitutional' anti-feudal sentiment.

But some of the incentive for the 'constitutional' move-

Continuing disorder presented the West with the choice between unconditional support for the Shah and chaos.

By 8 September the Shah felt

ment came from a different source—Iranian emigrants who had obtained work in Southern Russia and who had become involved in the revolutionary movements in Russia in 1905

In the aftermath of the First World War and the Russian revolution the monarchy and the feudalists came close to defeat in bitter fighting with the bourgeois and revolutionary Communist opposition movements.

But in 1921 the British embassy arranged a coup by which an upstart Cossack officer Reza Khan—the father of the present Shah—took power, unified the country with British help, and proclaimed a new dynasty. With the support both of the feudal landowners and a section of the so called national bourgeoisie he was able to smash the flourishing working class movement and

strong enough to act. Early in the morning, martial law was proclaimed.

That same 'Bloody Friday', as it is now known, troops fired

The present huge wave of struggles bears remarkable similarities with previous movements against the monarchy. In each case a fantastically important role in developing the struggle has been played by the working class.

But except in the years immediately after the Russian revolution of 1917 the workers have not had a revolutionary leadership capable of safeguarding their independent role in struggles they initiate.

In 1941-53 and in 1958-63 the workers shook the self-confidence of the monarchy. But then the 'national bourgeoisie' moved into action and soon exercised hegemony over the struggle.

The same thing is happening now with the same representatives of the small, so-called national, bourgeoisie playing a role—the Mosques, the intellectuals, and to some extent the National Front.

But the 'national

bourgeoisie' does not have a programme, either for the country or for the movement. Its most radical elements on occasions shout 'Death to the Shah', and make anti-imperialist speeches, but make no suggestion at all as to what social change should be made.

They cannot, because they are no longer fighting the feudal monarchy of seventy or even thirty years ago, but a state monopoly capitalist monarchy.

They are being driven down by the development of capitalism, but as representatives of a stratum that has traditionally opposed the Shah with the demand for the development of capitalism in Iran, they do not know how to respond to this.

Hence, despite considerable individual courage, they cannot be expected to offer any clear leadership to the movement at decisive moments of confrontation.

The industrial workers

could. They have a very long history of struggle behind them. But they do not have any sort of party capable of assimilating the lessons of that struggle.

The remnants of the old Tudeh (Stalinist) Party can be expected to compromise with the 'national bourgeoisie' just as it is tempted to compromise with elements in the Shah's camp.

And those who have broken from that path to the left have also, unfortunately, tended to abandon the mass struggles of the workers for the delights of small group guerillarism.

Instead of being with the class and its mass struggle, clarifying the issues at stake, they have been standing on the by-lines, waiting for the mass struggle to subside so that their individual heroism can come to the fore again.

So as in 1953 and 1963, the Shah could survive—not because of his strength, but because of the confusion of his enemies.

# Risings and

drive its leaders into exile.

Reza Khan made the fatal mistake at the beginning of the second world war of supporting the Germans.

The British, who had brought him to power twenty years before, now removed him from power with Russian help. For six years the country was divided into Russian and British spheres of influence and it was very difficult for the new monarch, the present Shah, to prevent a new flourishing of the opposition.

Movements for national independence seized power in areas inhabited by the Azar and Kurdish minorities, while huge strikes broke out among the workers, especially the oil workers.

The government was able to smash these movements—partly because of British support, partly because the most influential force within the working class movement

on demonstrators in Teheran. The authorities claimed that 97 people had been killed.

Opposition members of Parliament produced their own figures of thousands dead. One estimate is that between 7,000 and 9,000 people died on that single day in Tehran.

According to one source a secret mass grave has been dug in the army camp of Lashkark near Tehran.

A total news clamp down followed the shootings. However, the signs are that the struggle is far from over. Strikes are reported in Tehran, Tabriz and other centres.

One opposition MP described how he could hear machine-gun fire in the streets as he composed his speech opposing the imposition of martial law.

### Refused

Unrest is reported within the army. One soldier is said to have refused to fire on the demonstrators on 8 September instead killing his commanding officer and then himself.

Support has come to the Shah from all sides: a phone call from Carter, a letter from Callaghan, a promise of 'non-interference' from the Russians, visits from Chairman Hua Kuo-Feng and the Japanese prime minister Fukuda. Oil, apparently, is thicker than blood.

# manoeuvrings

the pro-Russian Tudeh Party refused to develop them in a revolutionary direction (even at that stage it argued for 'gradualism' not revolution).

However, although they smashed these movements, the feudalists, the Shah and the British were not strong enough to prevent a new growth of the 'constitutional' national bourgeois opposition, now organised in the National Front of Mossadeq.

There was a new wave of strikes in the oil fields in 1951 and then mass demonstrations in Tehran. The Shah was forced to appoint Mossadeq prime minister and finally, early in 1952 to give him real power to nationalise the oil fields.

Mossadeq was kept in power by the mass movement. But the effects of the movement were already frightening important sections of the 'national bourgeoisie': there were 200

strikes in Mossadeq's first year in office.

Mossadeq responded by implementing a law banning certain strikes and giving the police powers to attack workers. When the Shah fled into exile fear of the news prevented Mossadeq proclaiming a republic.

On 11 May 1953 the Shah took advantage of this vacillation to hit back. Gangs of lumpen proletarian thugs invaded the centre of Tehran, and while the 'national bourgeois' and Tudeh Party leaders assured people everything was alright, the Shah carried through a coup.

The coup was very much organised by the CIA, who soon afterwards together with the Israelis helped the Shah set up a new secret police, the SAVAK.

In return for aiding the coup, the US was able to begin to displace Britain as the main imperialist power in

Iran: the denationalised oil fields were now run by a consortium of American and British oil companies instead of exclusively by Anglo-Iranian (now renamed BP).

The compromise between British and American imperialism was matched by another compromise: between the old feudal landlords and a section of the bourgeoisie.

The state began a process of industrial development in collaboration with certain (predominantly American) foreign corporations. This provided a monopoly market for favoured sections of the local bourgeoisie and an opportunity for the old feudal landowners to move their wealth from land to industry.

A land reform programme which involved them selling some of their land to better off peasants provided them with the cash they needed for

industrial investment.

This was the 'White Revolution', of which the Shah's admirers boast. In effect, it was the state aided transformation of the old feudal ruling class into a new monopoly capitalist ruling class linked to foreign interests.

Excluded from the benefits of the 'white revolution' were:

(1) the rapidly growing working class—800,000 strong in 1953, today 3.1 million strong.

(2) two thirds of the peasantry, who after paying the feudal landowners for the land reform, still find themselves with only between one and 30 acres each.

(3) The mass of small traders and petty manufacturers in the towns (organised in the Bazaar and controlling the Mosques) who have found that the state aided monopolies are continually undercutting their trade.

It is the revolt of these excluded sections which lies behind the present events.

Iran/2

# Dream fading

Three or four years ago it was fashionable to talk of Iran as 'the superpower of the future'. The Shah had set out to make the country into the fifth economic power in the world and to lead it 'into the Great Civilisation'.

Sycophants throughout the world believed in his ability to do so. After all, Iran had oil, and the price of oil had just quadrupled.

Today even the sycophants are much more guarded in their claims.

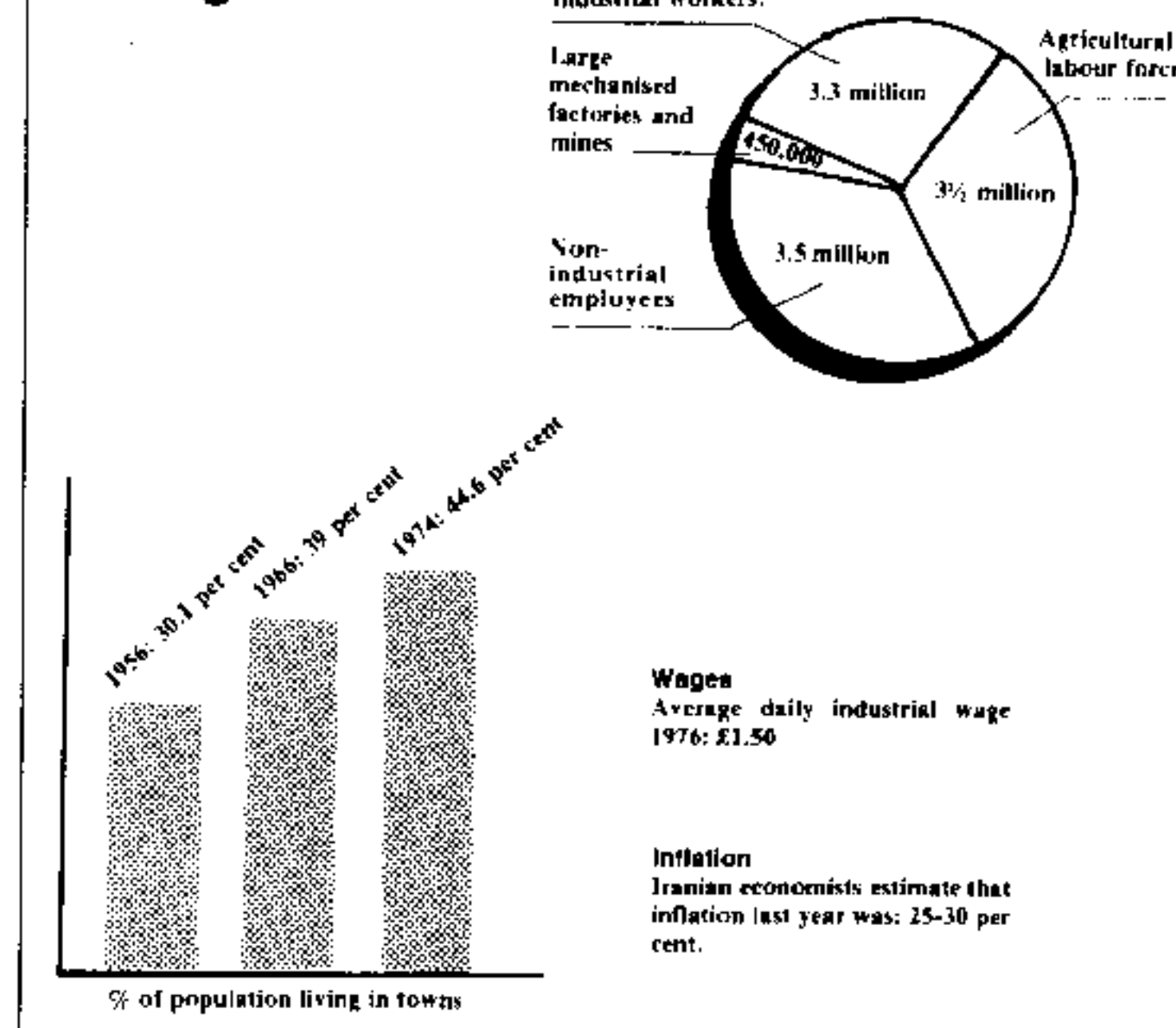
'Iran will be hard put', says a new report for businessmen, *Operating in Iran*. 'To attain its oft-proclaimed goal of becoming the world's fifth economic power with a GNP of \$190bn by the mid 1980s.'

Last year the real rate of economic growth slumped to 2.8 per cent. This compares with a claimed growth rate in 1974-5 of 41.6 per cent.

At the same time the rate of inflation has arisen to about 25-30 per cent. What's gone wrong?

The grandiose schemes drawn up for industrialisation after the 1973 oil price rise were based on the assumption that all that was needed was to pour

## Iran: some facts and figures



money into the economy and economic expansion was guaranteed.

But the pre-existing industrial base was just not big enough to feed this expansion. It soon ran into problems like those that have beset similar grandiose expansion plans in

the state capitalist countries of Eastern Europe.

The raw materials and the components to keep the expansion going did not exist within Iran. They had to be imported from abroad, through congested ports and with inadequate transport facilities.

All sorts of bottle-necks arose which held up particular investments for months at a time. For instance, last year it was estimated that something like 20 per cent of industrial output was lost because of power failures (shortage of electricity).

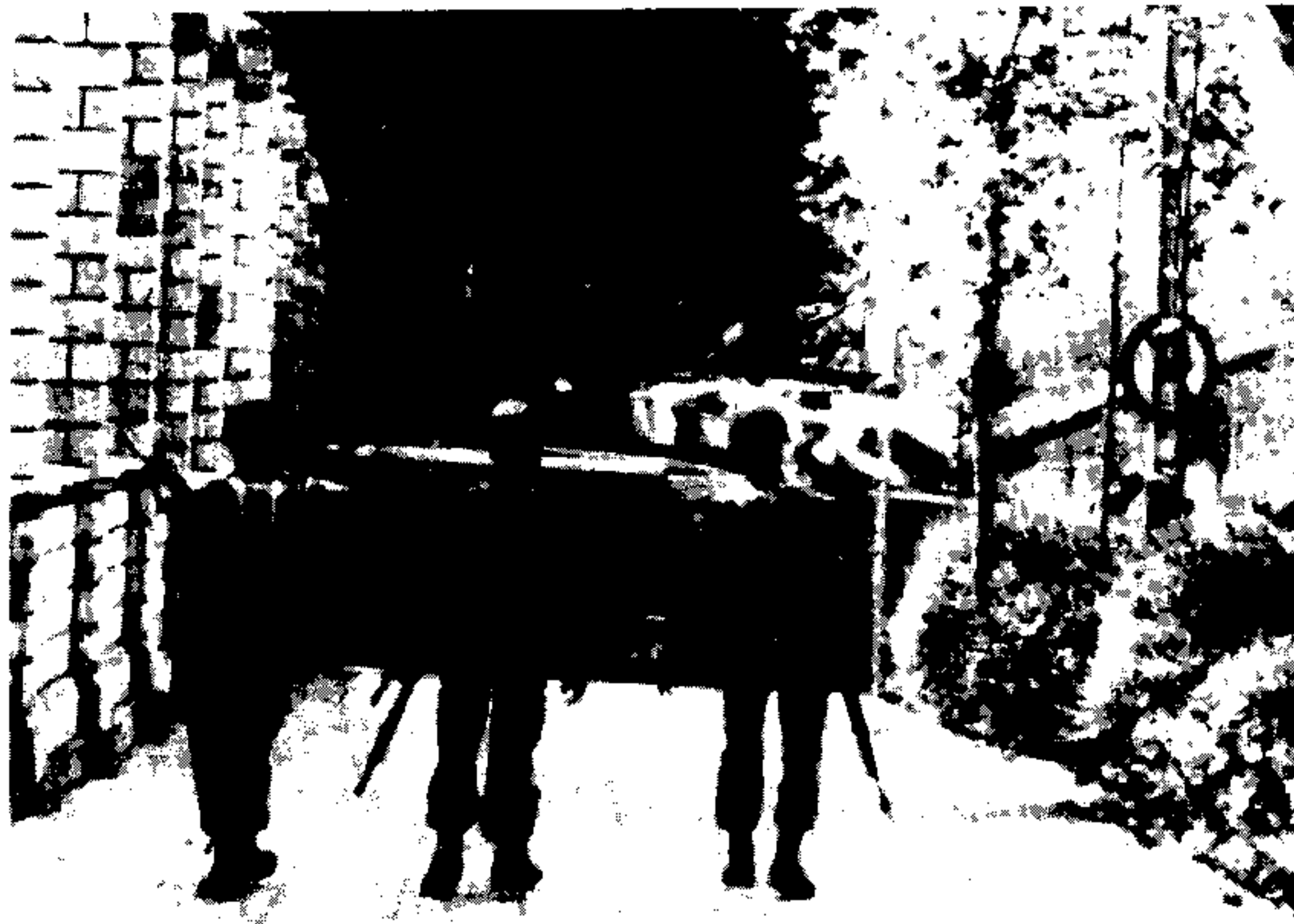
Despite a continual flow of labour to the cities from the countryside, there was an acute labour shortage: it is estimated that there are 400,000 vacancies for skilled labour alone, despite an estimated 120,000 'illegal' immigrants mostly from Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

### Worse

The problem of shortages has been made worse by a continual run down in the agricultural sector. The 'White Revolution' bought off the old feudalists by offering them a lucrative future in the monopolistic sector of industry.

But by the same token it removed any incentive for investment to take place in agricultural rather than industry. The most active part of the rural population has been lured to the cities by the industrial expansion, agricultural output has slumped.

Twenty years ago Iran exported agricultural produce. Now it imports a growing



amount, which is expected to eventually to half the total.

While all these problems have been accumulating, the price of oil internationally has stagnated. Iran is having to fork out huge sums for raw materials, for industrial components, for foodstuffs and for the Shah's massive arms bill.

Oil revenue is not rising to meet these needs. The dream of 1973-4 has turned into an economic crisis. And the crisis will get worse as time goes on: it is estimated that Iran's oil revenue will halve in the next 15 years.

The Shah would like to get out of this crisis by exporting manufactured goods.

### Giant

But here it is doubtful if Iranian industry can really compete with established foreign giants. As *Operating in Iran* notes, 'Most foreign observers question the viability of developing heavy industry oriented towards exports.'

So do Iran's own monopoly capitalists. They have preferred to put their money into speculation or, at best, producing consumer goods for the national protected market where the only competition is from the small manufacturers and traders of the bazaars.

'Officially total investment increased 27 per cent in 1976-7 and added value of industrial production registered a real 17 per cent growth. . . . This growth is concentrated

in the petrochemical and steel sectors, thanks to public sector investment, and in the booming housing and construction sector

where easy big returns are common, while private sector manufacturing industrialists have tended to complete ex-

## The fire last time

'The situation in Iran reminds one of the last days of Tzarist Russia'. That was the London *Evening Standard*—back in August 1962.

A new wave of struggle had begun within six years of the coup that overthrew Mossadeq, in 1958-9. Striking taxi drivers in Tehran fought with the police outside the parliament building, Isfahan's workers struck against an inadequate bread ration, workers in Bandar Shahpur struck for higher wages.

Their example was followed in 1959 by Esfahan textile workers, by Tehran printing workers, by 30,000 building workers in Tehran.

The King of Kings did not trust his subordinates to deal with this strike. He personally took charge of police and SAVAK who were in action within half an hour of the strike starting.

He ordered the police and army to machine gun the workers, killing 50 and filling all of Tehran's hospitals for the poor with the wounded.

But the success of the great general the Shah against the bricklayers was not complete: he was forced to concede

some of their demands.

The wave of strikes continued through into 1960 and 1961 despite repeated attacks by the police and the workers example began to be followed by other groups.

The students were now in action, and there were a growing coordination of strikes and of activity between workers and students.

It was possible for a Tehran weekly paper to note that one Isfahan textile factory had been on strike 52 times between 1957 and 1961. And this was nothing compared to the tempo the strike wave reached in mid 1962.

The workers' movement drew into the struggle the other classes—including the 'national' bourgeoisie (or rather, petty bourgeoisie) that had lost power in 1953.

In May-June 1963 scenes very much like those of the last few weeks took place, with traders from the bazaars going on to the streets with the mass of the population under the leadership of outspoken religious figures from the Mosques.

isting investment and to be wary of launching new projects. . . The reason boils down to narrow profit margins.'

The flow of funds into speculation has led to the huge increase in land and housing prices in the city, which has cut into the living standards of workers and the lower middle classes, further feeding the pressures for inflation.

Last year half the increase in the cost of living was caused by housing costs alone.

### Burden

The Shah's response has been to put the burden for slowing down inflation on those hardest hit by it. He has introduced price controls which it is easy for the monopolies and foreign companies to evade, but which hit very hard the mass of small traders and manufacturers.

This has been one of the most direct causes of the 'Bazaar' and religious protest movements. And he has encouraged big industrialists to resist wage demands—one of the causes of the growing working-class agitation.

Yet there was no coherent political programme or leadership to the movement, and the Shah was able to play a last card to save himself. He ordered his police and army to begin shooting straight into a huge demonstration.

He was heard saying over the army radio, 'Do not shoot over their heads, shoot to kill, shoot to kill. Don't try to maim their legs, shoot to kill'.

The number killed on the first day was between 10,000 and 15,000. Yet it took three days of bitter fighting for the army and police to gain control of the whole capital.

The Shah was victorious however, not because of his ruthlessness, but because there was no organisation or clarity on the part of his opponents as to what they were trying to achieve.

The spontaneous workers' movement was phenomenally courageous. But it did not have a working-class party capable of providing it with direction.

And the 'national bourgeoisie' could not even raise a simple slogan, as it had been able to raise the slogan of nationalisation of the oil fields ten years before.

Pay

# Where storm could come

Immediate press reaction to the government's surprise decision not to call an election was that Labour faced a 'winter of discontent', not only on the political front but with its five per cent wages policy as well.

But the first two months of that policy have shown just how hard a 'breakthrough' is.

An obvious example is the new 9 to 11 per cent deal in the British Sugar Corporation: originally a breach of the five per cent, this was then 're-negotiated' as a productivity deal. Phoney or not, this still leaves the policy intact.

What seems likely is a period when breakthroughs as such do not happen but the policy is constantly eroded at the edges.

With loopholes like the special low pay clause and provision for more special cases there is room for the trade union technician to find a way through, leaving the government to stand firm on the crucial disputes.

Already there are signs of this happening. Two major groups of construction workers who lost out during stage three--the plumbers and the heating engineers--are already in for special case treatment. Hospital engineers and technicians are being given 'favourable' treatment.

At the same time the government is announcing a very hard line on the council workers' claim a 'leaked' Department of Environment circular implied they could only get 4.3 per cent and not five, because last year's pay deal cost over ten per cent.

This could enable the union side to claim a victory if they 'win' slightly more than five per cent this time round.

Despite the wheeling and dealing, however, all is not plain sailing for the government. There are a number of acute pressure points in the bargaining round as a list of some of the prominent pay claims in the next few months shows:

**September/October**  
Plumbers  
Glasgow busmen  
Atomic Energy

**Fords**  
Metal Box  
Vauxhall  
Michelin  
British Oxygen  
Scottish & Newcastle Breweries  
Tate & Lyle  
& local engineering claims

**November**  
Scottish lorry drivers  
West Midlands lorry drivers  
Council Workers  
Council electricians  
Firemen  
Wire workers  
British Leyland car plants  
Rolls-Royce (Scotland)  
Tanker drivers  
Raleigh (Notts)  
& local engineering claims

**December**  
Hospital workers  
Water workers  
British Road Services  
Bakers  
Yarrow Shipbuilders

Of course some of these dates are a little artificial: eg negotiations for West Midland drivers have already started and the firemen have already got this year's increase from last year's strike (though not yet the 42-hour week).

On the other hand a lot of workplaces due to settle in August/September have hung back waiting to see whether there would be an election and a change of policy.

Even so there are many areas which must cause the Department of Employment some sleepless nights. Take the so-called 'anomalies' for example.

## Offset

In *Socialist Review* No 5 we pointed out that engineering firms have to offset the national increases in shift and overtime rates against the five per cent. This is already causing strikes and has prompted the engineering employers to issue 'unilateral guidance' to their members telling them what to do.

Another point of pressure is the spin-off from the last policy. Council electricians have seen their counterparts in the contracting industry and the hospitals get special treatment or phoney productivity bonuses are they going to

accept falling behind still further?

Leyland is due to centralise bargaining for the car plants this November--and several disputes have already occurred in the build-up to this. The tanker drivers have a special overtime deal which they won after last year's dispute: if they get another five per cent they'll walk through the policy etc etc.

Even if the government manoeuvres as skillfully as it has done in the last 12 months, there are several of the big battalions who could force the type of confrontation which the firemen had last time, before the new year.

The council workers are the most obvious example in the public sector and the National Union of Public Employees is at least taking the precaution of drawing up plans for action.

But the officials look to be talking in terms of selective action, sporadic strikes or even an overtime ban--the TUC has in mind something like the 'campaign' for government industrial workers, which owed a lot to the determination of the Faslane Polaris base.

The Ford negotiations are bound to be highlighted in the newspapers as a 'crucial test'. Even the company reckons they've got to give on something because of massive profits.

But the unions have hardly done any campaigning (least of all on the hours issue). Considering that Fords is now the only car company without a productivity deal (or the promise of one) there seems a ready way out for management and a union side led by Ron Todd.

But Fords have always rejected any type of bonus scheme on the grounds that the shop floor might win control of part of the payment system. Any productivity deal will therefore almost certainly be heard on the company's overall performance: not much of a carrot for accepting the five per cent.

If one group really does threaten to bust the limit, Labour's political heavyweights are bound to be brought in. As Keith Waterhouse recently remarked in the *Daily Mirror*: 'we are now in for the longest election campaign in history.'

No doubt this damping factor on official 'militancy' was an element in Callaghan's decision to wait.

This puts a premium on what revolutionaries can do about the individual disputes that break out: whether they are in dispute themselves or organising support. Arguments about blacking or even raising funds may easily become arguments about an election.

It's remarkable how the cry of 'election in sight' can change the TUC-type position of 'support for the government but not its wages policy' into an instruction to return to work.

In this case individual stewards, convenors and other experienced militants may come not only to support a strike but to question the basis of their support for Labour politics as well. *Dave Field*

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# Back in the US of A

'Out of the six economic recoveries since World War II', the *US News and World Report* told Americans in July, 'today's is now the longest peacetime expansion.'

But before the hurrahs get too raucous on Wall St (and in the City), let's enquire a little bit deeper into what's been happening since the present US economic upturn began in March 1975. For in a number of key economic areas, the upturn is not what it seems, with important implications for American workers.

Price inflation has been steadily going up. Now over 7 per cent a year it shows no signs of slackening in its upward progress.

Unemployment has fallen less than in any previous upturn, with official figures showing 6 per cent. When those hundreds of thousands of Americans who are now so 'discouraged' they aren't even looking for work, and part-time workers are added in, this figure doubles to over 12 per cent.

As in Britain, unemployment is hitting American teenagers

hard. 17 per cent of them are unemployed. And this figure doesn't account for racism: this means that 40 per cent of black teenagers are unemployed.

Nor has the upturn in after-tax profits (42 per cent above average post-war levels) been reflected in domestic capital investment. The level of new capital outlays in plant and equipment is only two-thirds the rate of expansion in other booms.

One of the reasons for this is the dramatic rise in overseas investment, which in the 1970s is running at more than twice the level of the 1960s.

## Reasons

The reasons for this shift are not hard to see. Earnings from overseas investment by US companies now make up a staggering 30 per cent of the total earnings of US companies.

Not only are whole economies like the British much more dependent today on US multinationals than in the 1960s and 1950s, but these multinationals are holding an increasingly important grip on the US economy.

Another important feature of the US economy in the 1970s is the continuing concentration of economic power. The top 500 companies in manufacturing now employ one in every six workers in the US.

When this economic power is faced with the worldwide slow down in economic growth witnessed in the 1970s, it, like

every other capitalist class in the world, has no hesitation to resort to state intervention. The 'free enterprise' US Federal and State Governments are today as interventionist in economic affairs as the 'socialist' Labour Government in Britain.

US President Carter launched his 5.5 per cent wage limit just days before Callaghan told British workers they could expect a similar quantity of peanuts. And in the deal offered to the US Postal Workers Carter has made it clear he intends to try and make this limit stick in the public sector.

The pattern of US Government wage limits is a familiar one to us in Britain. So too is another aspect of state intervention in the US: the cuts.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, considerable amounts of cash were pumped into the inner-city ghettos of America in an attempt (usually successful) to buy out the militant leaders of America's 'minority groups'.

In addition to the 'Poverty programmes', funds were also made available to provide improved medical treatment and to sustain the provision of education facilities and a few other social and community services for the 25 per cent of Americans on low (or no) incomes.

Today, while private business is getting a bigger share of state hand-outs, the squeeze is really on elsewhere. The extinction of the black movement and incorporation of the women's movement mean the government is faced with no radical mass movement capable of defending the earlier reforms.

Instead there has been a significant shift to the right.

There is a growing 'tax payer's revolt' aimed at curtailing government expenditure on social and community services.

Another feature is Court ruling in the Bakke case *against* positive discrimination (a quota of places reserved for women, blacks and other minorities) earlier this year.

Then there are the anti-gay campaigns being waged in several States and the moves to stop public funds going to abortion clinics.

The US ruling class is not, however, confining its attacks on American workers to their homes and social environment.

Faced with the slow recovery of the world market from the recession of 1974, and with productivity only rising at half the rate (1.6 per cent) of ten years ago, the ruling class have launched a new anti-trade union offensive.

## Obvious

The most obvious indication of this new employers' offensive is their refusal to go along with the minor reforms in trade union and industrial relations legislation that the AFL-CIO (US equivalent of the TUC) had been promised by Carter in exchange for their support in his election. The union leaders believed the Carter administration and the big highly-unionised corporations would support three reforms.

Firstly, to allow strikers on a legal strike to picket workers belonging to other trade unions who worked on the same site.

Secondly, to increase the farcical level of penalties on companies which abused the legal procedures for securing trade union recognition. And thirdly, to pass a law giving the Government the target of 4%

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unemployment by 1983.

After a five million dollar lobbying campaign by a coalition of mainly small and medium-sized companies the first two reforms were thrown out in the Senate, and the third was rendered worthless by an amendment to include the target of zero inflation by 1983.

America's top union bureaucrats were outraged by these defeats. Doug Fraser, head of the second biggest union in the US, the 1½ million strong United Auto Workers, immediately walked out of a joint trade union/top management/Government advisory committee which has been around for 16 years.

'I cannot sit there seeking unity with the leaders of American industry while they try to destroy us and ruin the lives of the people I represent', he told a Press Conference in July.

These minor reforms were of considerable significance for the American trade union movement because today, some thirty years after it totally embraced collaboration with capitalism in the anti-strike, anti-red hysteria of 1947-50, it is in deep trouble.

The immediate post-war years in the US had seen the world's biggest-ever strike wave. The 35 per cent of American workers who belonged to trade unions felt confident and angry.

But before this mood took anything like a socialist direction, the ruling class acted. Building on US nationalism stoked up by the Communist Party (after 1941 when Russia entered the second world war) and the trade union bureaucrats in their campaigns for 'no strike pledges' and 'more production', it launched a gigantic ideological offensive.

First came the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 with its compulsory cooling-off period in strikes and the certification of only those

## The Broad Left: what went wrong?

'Sectarianism in left politics has become divisive, disrupting the pattern of unity that we founded the broad left movement', says Bob Wright, recently defeated by Terry Duffy for the AUEW presidency, in the September issue of the Communist Party journal, *Marxism Today*.

Though Wright concedes that confusion has been created by certain (unnamed)

left leaders, he places great stress on the need for official strategy and 'fragmentation on the left as expressed in some of the ultra-leftist groups that have been very active in recent years'.

Despite an irritating vagueness about exactly where the broad left went wrong, Wright does think 'we've got to restructure the whole nature of the broad left

movement because we are missing out in many areas of communication.'

Meanwhile he says 'my experience has taught me that being elected to office isolates you in many ways, and pressures begin to take over from your close relationship with the grassroots.'

But wasn't this what some of the 'ultra-left' were saying all along...?

trade unions who barred CP members from office; then came the full McCarthy treatment. 'Reds', 'pinkos' of all kinds were drummed out of the factories and unions.

### Outside

By the early 1950s the most class-conscious of American workers were outside the trade union movement. The employers acted.

First of all they introduced long-term wage agreements throughout industry. Sometimes five-year agreements, more usually three-year agreements were forcibly imposed on virtually every sector.

The trade union leaders then acted to eradicate unofficial action. Not only did these long-term agreements outlaw unconstitutional (ie unofficial) strikes.

They also provided for the smashing of the shop stewards' system. Shop stewards elected by the section they worked among (blue button stewards) were no longer to be recognised by management. The only union officers recognised by management were the branch (local) committeemen. And these were to be elected only once every two years.

In the 1950s and 1960s the proportion of trade unionists in

the workforce gradually declined. Then came the sharp recession of 1973-4 when a big rise in unemployment threw millions out of work without a whimper from the trade union leaders.

2.9 million workers left the trade unions, not to return in the upturn since. Indeed, another ½ million workers have drifted away from US trade unions since then.

Two-thirds of these recent losses are women (a marked contrast with Britain where women make up two-thirds of recent recruits).

Today, only 18 per cent of US workers are still in trade unions. And the story doesn't end there.

Over the last ten years a large number of firms have set themselves up in business in the US operating as professional union-busters. They advise companies on how to secure decertification of the unions in their factories. And they have been very successful.

The rate of factories withdrawing from union recognition agreements after a new ballot of the workers is four times greater today than ten years ago. The unions are losing three-quarters of all the decertification ballots taking place.

### Slick

The American union-busting firms make John Gouriet's National Association For Freedom look like kid's play. They produce slick anti-union leaflets, hold meetings, picnics etc etc. And faced with the bureaucratized trade union structures inside virtually every American factory, they have precious little trouble in convincing workers that the rank and file will do much better without the union on their backs.

Trade union organisation is also under attack from another direction. A map of union strength in the US shows a concentration of trade union organisation in the mid-West, the North-East and in parts of

California. In the extremely racist South and South-West of the US trade union organisation never got off the ground.

In many Southern States laws have been passed giving individuals the 'Right to Work' without being in a trade union, in other words, outlawing the closed shop.

And so, many companies are now moving their main production facilities to States like Georgia and Texas where labour is cheaper (often only half as much as in the North) and the unions barely exist.

Where they can't get up and get out quickly, companies like General Motors are making life even harder for any genuine rank and file opposition to develop inside their factories. At GM's Fleetwood factory in Detroit, where they assemble Cadillacs, workers on an unofficial strike recently discovered a new management innovation.

They already knew that GM's plant security had the whole of the front and rear-gates to the factory covered by a bank of 12 video cameras and viewing screens. These cameras could be focused so sharply as to pick up the brand name of a cigarette in a workers' mouth.

What they did not know until after the strike and seven rank and file members were sacked for 'leading' the walk-out was that GM had also planted microphones in the factory wall so it could bug any conversation it wanted on a picket line or with someone selling a socialist newspaper.

The effect of the employers' offensive in the US has been quite dramatic on the rank and file. The number of strikes in the first quarter of 1978 was the lowest since 1966.

And when workers did come out on strike they had to stay out for a long time. The average length of strikes was the longest since 1950.

The miners' strike lasted 110 days. Its length, and the fact



that it was a *defensive* strike, defending (successfully for the time being) the right to strike, rather than being about money, made it reflect much of the character of class struggle in the US today.

But the 1978 national US miners' strike also held out something *new*. A combination of factors that add up to a confirmation of the potential of the American working class.

Firstly, as Tony Bumbico, a miner from District 6, writes in the SWP *Industrial Discussion Bulletin* (No 2), they 'shoved Taft-Hartley up the ass of peanuts Carter'. 166,000 miners refused to accept the compulsory cooling-off period that is the muscle of US industrial relations law. This lesson could be very important in the future.

Secondly, the miners' strike was a *rank and file* strike. Arnold Miller, who was elected President of the UMWA on a Miners for Democracy ticket four years ago, did everything in his power to sabotage the strike. And despite this the rank and file organised and proved to themselves and other workers that rank-and-file activity was crucial.

Then the strike was also the most *class wide* strike since the 1940s. Small though it was, there was an echo of a response

to the strike from the rest of the trade union movement.

For a brief period, and not to any great depth, a united US working class made a ghostly appearance from the fragmented kaleidoscope of experience of the last thirty years.

Food convoys from Detroit, workplace and union collec-

tions, meat wagons from Chicago meatcutters, solidarity meetings are not much. But they are something.

It is to the task of conjuring up that apparition of working-class unity again that American socialists must now turn. *Steve Jeffreys*

Steve Jeffreys recently returned from a visit to the US. Research: Pat McChesney, Milt Fisk (International Socialist Organisation, US).

## Toolmakers

# Sense and the skilled

'Craftist', 'divisive', 'sectionalist', 'sectarian'—these are just a few of the epithets that have been flung at toolmakers in British Leyland (and elsewhere) over the past month, as yet again various skilled groups have put forward demands for higher wages or separate bargaining rights.

Perhaps most outspoken has been the *Morning Star*, which gave pride of place to Leyland combine committee chairman Derek Robinson's attacks on the SU Carburettor strikers;

attacks in much the same vein as those by AUEW president Terry Duffy.

Though both Robinson and the *Morning Star* eventually recognised a 'justifiable grievance' behind the SU strike, the opposition to the Leyland toolmakers has continued unabated.

Now this naturally has a lot to do with the place BL holds in the heart of the official 'leftwing' of the unions; a factor which makes it likely that *any* strike in BL will be attacked as disruptive of the great enterprise. This is becoming a serious threat to trade union organisation itself, as we note elsewhere in this issue.

But the allegation that the toolmakers are 'craftist' has convinced many good militants. Last year when strikes by the Leyland toolmakers, by electricians at Port Talbot steelworks and by engineers at Heathrow airport were portrayed as elitist it served to weaken support for a movement that could have broken the stage three ten per cent policy before it began.

## Excuse

Do the 'craftist' allegations stand up—or are they an excuse for inactivity by those who won't fight?

The first point is that there is a long tradition of skilled militancy in the British engineering industry, generally as part of the resistance to the imposition of technological change.

The struggle over dilution (the replacement of skilled jobs by semi-skilled jobs) in the first world war grew out of the employers' determination to introduce new techniques

## An example to follow

The last twelve months seem to show unofficial shop stewards' organisation at a low ebb, but at least one new body has emerged which suggests there's a lot of potential remaining.

The unofficial coordinating committee for regional railway shopmen staged a highly successful national one-day strike on 1 August and is shortly to hold a conference which promises to be one of the most representative rank and file gatherings for some time.

The coordinating committee, which represents the vast majority of the 5,000 maintenance workers employed by British Rail, is not completely new.

A similar body was set up in 1971 but was not widespread enough to survive.

This time the organisation accurately represents the three unions concerned—AUEW, NUR and EETPU—and has a very broad geographical base. The first issue of a national newsletter has just been published.

Fifty-six BR depots struck on 1 August, and the action has had a considerable effect in forcing official negotiators to hurry in introducing a major revision to the existing incentive bonus system.

Behind the bonus issue, however, is a potentially much more explosive claim: for the national engineering agreement skilled minimum rate of £60.

Not only would this stop the railway shopmen remaining the 'cinderellas' in pay negotiations; it could lead to consequential claims from other skilled groups and an erosion in the status of BR's highly-structured system of joint committees and arbitration panels. *Roger Cox*

rather than simply to replace skilled workers with 'cheaper' women.

The classic craft response to this sort of situation is to impose new rules of entry into the craft—as guild members often did in the Middle Ages.

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This still happens now; for example, at ICI Wilton on Teesside where craftsmen have been resisting the training of new artificers.

But this has not been the response of the BL toolmakers.

In fact one of their main arguments for higher skilled rates has been that no apprentices are coming into the industry and that experienced workers are leaving it.

Secondly, the logic of the craft response would demand that the toolmakers be driven closer to the employer, seeking ways of preserving their position, even at the cost of most of the jobs. This has, interestingly enough, often been the response of a much smaller group of engineering craftsmen, the patternmakers.

Instead of this, however, the toolmakers have been the most significant group across the BL car plants to resist participation, to prevent stewards being incorporated into the management structure and to preserve independent organisation on the shop floor.

This raises the third, and perhaps the most important, point—of wages. For if the toolmakers' response to the increasing destruction of skill in car manufacture had just been to try and cling on to vestiges of their traditional craft, or alternatively to create new areas of demarcation, or lengthen apprenticeships then the sectarian nature of the approach would be evident.

### Control

But in fact the major effort has been on skilled wages, or on control of negotiations, ie separate bargaining rights.

It is, incidentally, quite revolting to see 'left-wing' champions of workers' rights backing BL's corporate master plan of centralised bargaining which is about the most divisive thing ever to have happened in the company—driving a wedge straight between the shop floor and full-time convenors.

The fact that wages have been at the centre of the toolmakers' fight is the clearest indication that traditionally conservative groups are being forced to take a really militant stance for the first time.

A recent example of this is at the North West London BL plant, Vanden Plas, where skilled coachbuilders have gone into dispute for the first time over parity with local Rolls-Royce and BL bus factories.

All this this is not to say that



Leyland Toolroom stewards vote to back the SU men

there are not tremendous limitations to the toolroom campaign, or that socialists should support it uncritically.

While the toolmakers do not have many illusions about the nature of a nationalised British Leyland, they evidently still have a lot about the unions. But many of these are being rapidly stripped away.

It was good to hear SU toolroom leader Albert Benbow say of Terry Duffy: 'He's trying to do what Edward Heath could never get away with'.

Toolroom stewards like Roy Fraser also seem set to try and build a skilled 'empire', taking in maintenance groups as well.

This is unlikely to have much

future: the potential for overtime and shift working—and thus much higher skilled earnings—is far greater on the maintenance side than in the toolrooms (even though BL are trying to head off militancy by allowing some toolrooms as much as eight or ten overtime hours a week at the moment).

In essence the direction the skilled revolt takes depends on the meagre forces socialists can mobilise. The 100,000 *Engineers' Charter* leaflets issued in support of the SU men—the only organised national support they received—are a good precedent.

Quite apart from the or-

inary dangers of letting an unofficial movement go down to defeat, those in the 'Broad Left' who shun the toolmakers might think of a fairly recent lesson from the Italian unions.

Train drivers organised into autonomous groups pursued a 'sectional' wages claim. Branded as splitters, wreckers and even fascists by the official CP-dominated railway unions and 90 per cent of the far left, the drivers went down to defeat.

Twelve thousand railway workers left the unions in just two months—and the far right was able to gain a foothold among a demoralised and leaderless membership. *Dave Field*

### India

## Another dud export

The Janata party government of India has just introduced an Industrial Relations Bill. In many respects it is remarkably similar to Heath's effort although it goes a bit further than the Tories could get away with.

The bill would ban all strikes (and lock-outs, so they say) in twelve 'essential services', which include railways and the coal industry, which have for years been leading militant sections of the Indian working class.

A National Industrial Relations Commission would 'adjudicate' disputes during which strikes would be illegal.

Just like the Tories National Industrial Relations Court and the cooling-off period.

Anyone taking part in an 'illegal' strike would face a fine and three months inside, as would anyone agitating for or assisting an 'illegal' strike.

The bill received little advance publicity but is compensation to big capital for losing the Emergency. Contrary to general impressions, the main motive behind Indira Gandhi's Emergency was a faction-fight inside the ruling class between sectional and regional power blocs (now best represented by ex-Home Minister Charan

Singh and Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram) and big capital and the bureaucracy on the other.

They need a strong centralised state to survive the international crisis. Bartering between factions just fritters away resources and paralyses the administration and that is just what is happening now.

Mrs Gandhi couldn't sustain the effort because of the strength of the regional power blocs—hence the amazing collapse of the Emergency in January-March 1977.

But this meant that the need to discipline the workers is now

greater than ever, since repression has been partially lifted. So the bill—an attempt at legal strangulation instead of violence.

For the Indian left it is a real threat. The Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Communist Party Marxist (CPM) both have trade union federations and both would be crippled if the act worked. But there are real problems in fighting the act.

Apart from the fact that the CPI and CPM leaderships both loathe each other to distraction, there are three other major political trade union federations, two of which belong to parties in the Janata government and the other to the Congress.

Then again, the CPM has been giving limited electoral and parliamentary support to Janata as a 'progressive' and 'democratic' force.

In an atmosphere like this opportunism is rampant and it

is quite possible that there will be a total shambles and the bill could pass through a fragmented opposition.

Nevertheless if you were optimistic, you would look for the CPI and CPM uniting in a

joint campaign against the bill.

If you were being a little more optimistic, you would look for the fragmented grouplets of revolutionaries using this unparalleled opportunity of approaching workers, since it's a good bet that the hopelessly

social-democratic CPI and CPM would chicken out sometime during the fight.

The opportunity may not recur for some time. Especially if the bill goes through. *Barry Pavier*

### Civil Liberties



# Repression/subversion

## Stewards on the up and up

'A change of profound significance for trade unionism,' is how the authors of a new study on shop stewards organisation describe the increase in the number of full-time stewards.

The study reckons that there are now four times the number of full-timers there were in 1966—about 5,000 in 3,000 factories.

The estimate is based on research carried out in 1976, which covered steward organisation in 453 workplaces with a total of 330,000.

Nearly all the stewards surveyed were in the GMWU, but as many were members of joint shop stewards' committees their replies probably hold good for the AUEW or the TGWU as well.

An important feature of the study is that large numbers of stewards seem to hang on to office for a number of years (a characteristic of the G&M?)

Nearly half the stewards in workplaces employing more than 500 people had been in office for more than four years.

The figures only cover about half the workplaces in the survey however—which suggests that continuity of

stewards may not be consistent.

In 63 engineering plants with more than 500 workers nearly 90 per cent had separate stewards' executives which met regularly, and nearly all of these had the convenor elected only by the stewards.

But against these tendencies towards a hierarchy of stewards, the authors note that, even in the G&M, there are a lot of regular and frequent elections of ordinary stewards.

And even in the large plants a typical steward represented no more than about 70 members, while measured across all workplaces the typical figure was about 40.

This suggests that stewards are pretty accessible to the rank and file—even if convenors are not.

An interesting footnote to the study states that over half the workplaces represented had been involved in significant industrial disputes between 1974 and 1976. So much for the government's claim that only two per cent of factories ever had strikes!

*Dave Field.*

\*Factors shaping shop steward organisation in Britain' W Brown, R Fhsworth, M Terry *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, July 1978

Elsewhere in this issue of *SR*, Colin Sparks gives a Marxist view of 'terrorism'. As you might expect, the powers-that-be have been busy with their views on the subject too. And acting on them.

Lord Chalfont, well-known champion of the free world, has said: '... the dividing line between dissent and subversion lies in the dividing line between the use and abuse of the instruments of democracy.'

'In many cases, of course, the question of use or abuse will be largely subjective and will depend on the political viewpoint of the individual.' (House of Lords debate, 26 February 1975).

Who exercises that subjective judgement is at times the police, at times politicians, at times faceless bureaucrats. But whoever it is, they share a common political perspective the perspective of capitalism. The view remains constant, but the detail of where the 'dividing line' is drawn, and the instruments applied to those who overstep the line change.

First of all a few definitions of subversion: '... except in so far as they are subversive, that is, they would contemplate the overthrow of the government by unlawful means.' (Lord Denning, *Profumo Report*, 1963)

'Subversive activities are generally regarded as those which threaten the safety or well-being of the State, and which are intended to undermine or overthrow Parliamentary democracy by political,

industrial or violent means... We might define terrorism... as the use of violence for political ends.' (Lord Harris, House of Lords, 26 February 1975).

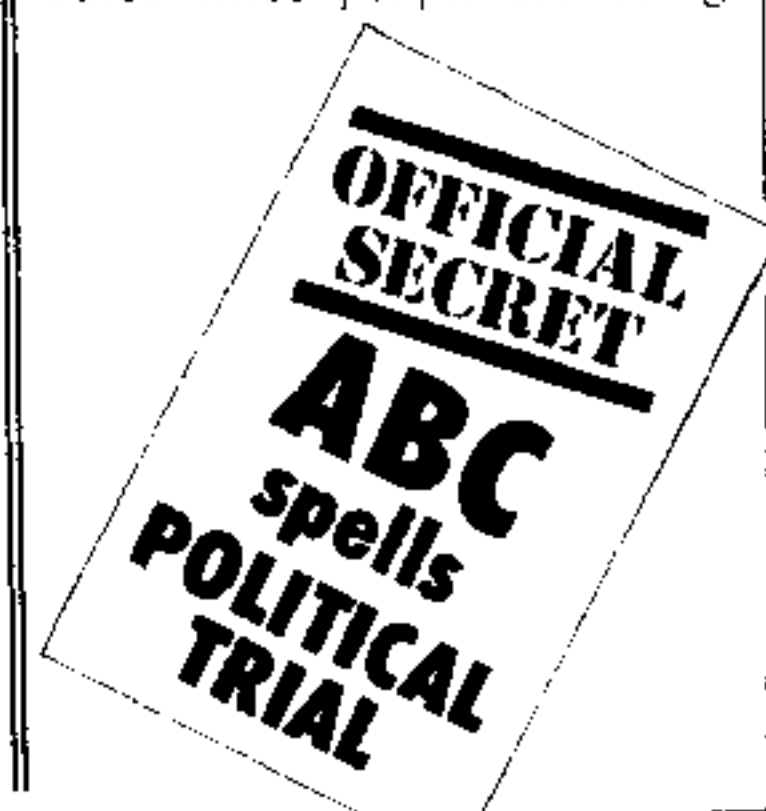
'The motive of the offender rather than the particular offence determines whether an offence is terrorist'. (Merlyn Rees, Commons written reply, 18 January 1978).

There are several interesting points about the shifting between 1963 and 1978. One is that the limits of lawfulness have moved considerably.

Another is that it is not only what is unlawful that counts any more as a threat to parliamentary democracy.

Also the use of the term 'terrorism' along with subversion, means that 'abuse' of the instruments of democracy is tainted with the emotive connotations of that word, used imprecisely and thus covering a multitude of undesirables.

The relevance of all this to the present moment is that there are several quite heavy things underway by the state. We are in the middle of the ABC trial, in which three people are being



Mark Risher (FL)

# Engineering a settlement

done under a section of the Official Secrets Act that has previously been reserved for spies, although Coombe, the prosecuting counsel said of Duncan Campbell at committal in December 1977:

'It is not suggested that Campbell is in the pay of a foreign power. . . but he is a thoroughly subversive man.'

There are currently six anarchists being treated to top security treatment in Brixton and at Lambeth magistrates court for 'conspiracy to cause explosions', when the police do not claim that there have been any explosions.

The press has been full of 'terrorists' and 'bomb factories' in relation to them. And the police have taken the opportunity of raiding over 40 homes supposedly looking for evidence, or accomplices, the 'persons unknown' mentioned in their conspiracy charge.

In this respect they are being treated just like the Red Army Fraction in West Germany. While this article was being written, Astrid Proll was picked up in this country, and the press went hysterically about producing sensational banalities about German politics and dissidents.

The *Observer*, at least, also tried to link Proll and the RAF to the six in Brixton. No evidence; good for the readers though.

All this may sound a tenuous case, and what has it all got to do with our leaders' statements on subversion? Well the six in Brixton have been accused in a court of law of being part of a 'group of idealistic persons who would take positive steps to overthrow society.' That must be subversive.

They have also been held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Their case is being handled by the Anti-Terrorist Squad, who are rather busy at the moment with Astrid Proll, several Palestinians and Iraqis, and their ongoing liaison with the other parties to the European Convention against Terrorism.

## Liaison

Merlyn Rees again: 'There is also close liaison between those directly concerned at operational level on known and potential terrorist groups and individuals'. (30 November).

Subversion has become an international concern—the well-known international terrorist conspiracy—with conferences of Ministers of the Interior of the EEC.

At a reconvened conference a healthy, militant minority of Post Office telephone engineers mustered 42,000 votes (against the executive's 78,000) in opposition to Lord McCarthy's formula for reducing their working week.

Although the 37½ hour compromise was accepted, the level of opposition shows the degree of militancy that developed around what could have been a successful campaign for the full five-hour reduction.

There is an undercurrent of bitterness against general secretaries like Lord Delacourt-Smith (ne Charlie Smith) and Bryan Stanley, who spent more time boosting the Labour Party than pursuing the seven-year-old 35-hour week campaign.

This could well bubble to surface again when the union seeks the full implementation of its claim.

The settlement is based on a report (still unpublished) by Lord McCarthy - obviously an expert in reduced working hours given the shortness of the academic year at Oxford University. The document itself is remarkable not so much for its recommendations - it doesn't take a genius to offer 37½ hours with one side claiming 40 and the other 35 - as for its insight into the machinations of the POEU executive.

For example, McCarthy literally underlines the fact that the union ignored a 1976 conference instruction 'because it was concerned

about the effects of industrial action.'

Yet years of working parties had failed to achieve what has now been gained after a nine-month campaign and two months' serious action. Was this the 'effect' the executive feared?

The settlement itself is a further indicator of the union's attitude. It has accepted that the reduction in hours must result in 'no loss of output per man.'

In other words the same work must be done in less time. Hardly a great step forward for a trade union movement which argues that the object of reducing the working week is to increase leisure time and reduce unemployment.

*Bill George.*

The communique issued after the one held on 31 May 1977 contained the following ideas, among others: '... terrorism is a crime, and should be treated as such'. 'Arrangements to strengthen. . . exchange of techniques for handling major terrorist activities.'

'Exchange of information about activities of terrorist and subversive groups'. 'Cooperative action'. And much else about European coordination on matters of security.

The new suppression of Terrorism Act brings Britain much more into line with Germany, which has forged the path into the area of creeping fascist law and order. The Prevention of Terrorism Act that has done such good service for the Irish now appears comparatively weak.

Add the recently signed European Convention on Terrorism is not only about swapping information on political activities and activists, and on police techniques and activities, but also takes away the possibility of freedom from extradition for those wanted in another country for activities considered political crimes in that other country.

In other words a country can no longer decide for itself whether to grant political status to a refugee.

Now put that together with the widening definitions of subversion, and you get a pretty threatening package. Led by

Germany we are getting closer and closer to being subject to repressive legislation, justified by the words 'subversion' and 'terrorism' just for holding views that are outside the democratic mainstream, and trying to propagate them or act on them.

## Ban

Germany already has the Berufsverbote, banning all but the most 'moderate' from holding public posts, including teachers, civil servants and garbage collectors and train drivers.

Anyone who objects to the repression directed against those branded as 'terrorist' is also a terrorist. We must reject their words and their implications.

There's lots of talk of subversion around in the ruling class and among the forces of law and order. And lots of talk in the left

about the state's ideas and practices for dealing with us subversives (or potential subversives).

The question is just how remote is it. As revolutionaries we stand outside Chalfont's definition of dissent.

After all, we do want to subvert the state, and we shouldn't be scared to use our own principles as the limits on our actions, rather than abiding by their definition of what is permissible and legal.

If Duncan Campbell, Crispin Aubrey and John Berry are done for being subversive, if Astrid Proll, who was released from prison in W Germany in 1974 because she had been tortured to the point where even the Federal prosecutor couldn't oppose her release to a sanatorium, is extradited, if six people are sent down because they are too idealistic, where do we stand? *Peter Bradbury*

Red Ladder is a collectively run socialist theatre company based in Leeds and tours regionally in non-theatrical venues. We require **female and male performers/musicians, a director, and a stage manager/technician** to start January 1979

Long-term commitment preferred, but short term

contracts would be considered. Closing date 30 October

Write giving full details of political and work experience and reasons for wanting jobs. References helpful

**Red Ladder Theatre,**  
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POBox82

## Blacks & blues

Having for a long time been an enthusiast of both, jazz and blues, but particularly the blues, I was more than pleased to see two books on black American music being reviewed in the last issue of SR.

I should straight away say that I have read neither of the two books in question and am not defending them. My criticism is directed at the comments of the reviewer. In particular, I was surprised to find in a Marxist journal sentiment given in stead of factual analysis. If *Stomping the Blues* was truly worthy of criticism, it didn't receive it in the two paragraphs Val Wilmer took to dismiss it.

The blues are a complete chronicle of the black American, who, while always at the bottom of the social ladder nevertheless performed different functions as American capitalism developed. Blues are primarily the music of the 20's, 30's, 40's - of the depression. Of the migration from what Marx called 'the idiocy of rural life' to the degradations of wage slavery and unemployment in the northern urban slums.

It was a period (as it was here after the defeat of the General Strike) of acute poverty - poverty of living standards and of politics. It is this that the blues reflect. To try and wishfully inject some hard Marxist lyrics into the music is to miss the beauty of blues, which are a unique record of a unique social experience.

Now, I have probably made myself sound condescending, which was not my intention. But the truth is that when American blacks became self-assertive, when they found a political voice, blues were not the vehicle which could carry it along. It was soul music which sang out 'Black is Beautiful'. Little Richard who sang 'Say it Loud - I'm Black and I'm Proud'. The Black Panthers were listening to Bob Dylan: read *Seize The Time!*

The sorry example Val Wilmer gives about 'I would get my shotgun and I wouldn't be a slave no more' is a product of the vogue for blues amongst white enthusiasts in the '60's, when many fine bluesmen, such as the excellent Lightnin' Hopkins who sang the above,

were 'rediscovered'. This gave slight recognition and well deserved cash to a dying group of musicians who had been part of the last and most influential of folk musics. But they were playing now to white audiences. The black Americans had moved on.

But the debate shouldn't end here. When are we going to have a regular jazz/blues column in SR?

Mike Garner.

Socialist Review

POBox82

London E2

Two Comments on the debate between Richard Kuper and Chris Harman in our July issue.

POBox82

## Preparing for socialism

Thanks for the Kuper-Harman seesaw around democratic centralism, though it's a pity the weights proved so uneven that Kuper seemed to be catapulted into the fleecy stratosphere of laissez-faire socialism. In fact the problems of democratic centralism (and there are problems) deserve a dialogue rather than a duel, and are neither as easy of resolution as Harman appears to assume, nor as avoidable as Kuper blithely hopes.

Many of the criticisms which Harman makes of Kuper's nebulous position are absolutely right; Kuper seems dangerously close to a near anarchic rejection of any but the most short lived organisational forms; and, as Harman points out, the non-centralism he advocates, is itself no guarantee at all of democracy.

We cannot do without an organisation which generalises experience, develops tactics and provides a coherent political lead. In the coldest analysis the politics of Marxism (in response to those of capitalism) are power politics: our organisation, our party, is our gun.

But Marxism is not all about the conquest of power, though some socialists have needed the women's movement to convince them of this. Harman's answers,

OK, Mike, what about a good political blues/jazz column? PO Box 82 seems to attract rather long letters, but we could well do with some shorter contributions. Don't be put off by thinking that you have to write several columns-worth.

(Oops, sorry about misleading you about the 1900 debate).

however correct, read as if they spring simply from theory. It seems as if he fails to see that Kuper's article demands more fundamental answers, though he is not helped by Kuper presenting his questions in a way which obscures and distorts them.

In fact I think that many of the doubts which Kuper expresses are shared not just by those whom Paul Foot dubs NANAS (from the National Organisation of Non-Aligned Sectarians) but by an enormous section of the working class. Furthermore I suspect that many of these feelings are shared, if perhaps repressed, by many members of the SWP.

It's all very well to insist upon centralist organisation within a democratic party; after all it has a lot more to offer than the dissolving mirages of liberalism, the compromises of Eurocommunism or the usually sterile bickering of institutionalised 'tendencies'. But a centralised nucleus of struggle, while indispensable, is not in itself a sufficient socialist strategy. Kuper's key point is that the party has to prepare the class for self-rule.

It is not only far too easy, but nonsensical for Harman to argue that the party is only a 'voluntary organisation of militants' which cannot be the embryo of the new society. Why on earth not? The party cannot be the model of the new society, but if it is not an embryo, it must

at least be the germ. If the theory of the party has any justification, socialism must spring not just from the class but from the party within the class. Particularly if, as Harman sternly asserts, the party must remain in power to defend the proletarian state.

The question which Kuper attempts (and fails) to address is the general, fashionable, but no less valid one, of whether the social and ideological aspects of contemporary capitalism have to some extent outmoded strategies and organisations which were devised under rather different conditions.

Not the least difficulty is the suspicion which capitalist and individualist ideology has engendered of any sort of collective activity, experience and leadership. Some socialists find this train of thought so threatening that merely voicing it draws accusations of a drift towards liberalism.

But, like it or not, we have to realise (and I think that the SWP has a talent for this) that people respond first of all to the needs and problems which they feel themselves, and not to the oppression which vanguard socialists tell them they ought to feel. And in developing their activity and participation (itself a blow against the apathy encouraged by liberal democracy) democratic centralism has a real role to play, not in stamping out self-activity does not degenerate into self-indulgence.

Unfortunately I doubt that Harman's version of centralism would confer such freedom, for in his anxiety to rebut Kuper's and Krivine's assertions that democracy and centralism are contradictory, he comes so close to identifying democracy with some forms of centralism that he fails to understand that while the two ideas must co-exist, they cannot do so successfully without some degree of creative tension.

Certainly the majority should be defended from the tyranny of a minority. But equally democratic (though not formalist or token) recognition must be given to the minority, as long as it respects the principles of centralism. What is crucial is the continual flow of ideas and experience and this in turn entails an ability within the organisation to tolerate conflict.

Recent experience within the SWP suggests that this may be improving, but in the past our

emphasis on centralisation has cause an unnecessary distortion and curtailment of debate. False unity among the leadership can be as dangerous in the machinations it encourages, as the demagogic leadership of factions.

The relationship between leaders and ordinary members is a difficult one which needs respect on both sides. Above all we have to avoid the all too common Marxist attribute of arrogance. In some ways the relationship of the party leadership to its members will at least partly determine the relationship of the party to the class.

And we are entitled to be worried by the fact that Harman, at the end of his reply, not only fails (in admittedly limited space) to deal with the implications of the fact that the party, which is supposedly the vanguard, may sometimes lag behind the class, but fails to recognise that the leadership may itself become distanced and routinised but remain in position through sheer organisational inertia. In conclusion let us consider the fact that the failure of some of our rank and file initiatives can be attributed partly to the centralist position defended by Harman, but let us also remember that if politics were left to Kuper, there might have been no organised rank-and-file activity at all.

We have to tread the uneasy balance between recognising that democratic centralism is the most appropriate way of organising for struggle, and allowing that many of the alliances we pursue need rather different ways of relating to people. And last, but far from least, it is not just the class which we have to prepare for socialism, but ourselves.

Mike Simpkin

POBox82

### Updating ideas

It is unfortunate that the contributions in the July issue of SR on democratic centralism are so totally located in organisational terms of reference. The fact is that organisational solutions are neither timeless nor eternally valid—they follow from many factors including the nature of the state that revolutionary forces are attempting to overthrow and

the composition of the working class that is the mid-field dynamo of the revolutionary process.

And it is clear that even if we argue that the Bolsheviks developed the correct organisational structures to overthrow the Tsarist regime, it does not follow that these structures are suitable for a revolutionary movement seeking to overthrow capitalism in Britain to-day.

Lenin, who was less dogmatic than today's Leninists, thought that different structures and strategies were needed because of the different nature of class rule in the West; 'The world-wide experience of bourgeois and landowner governments has evolved two methods of keeping people in subjection. The first is violence with which the Tsars demonstrated to the Russian people the maximum of what can and cannot be done. But there is another method, best developed by the British and French bourgeoisie...the method of deception, flattery, fine phrases, promises by the million, petty sops, and concessions of the unessential while retaining the essential.'

To this must be added the very different composition of the working class in Russia in 1905-17 to that of England to-day. In Russia, the problem was how to bring about in link up of middle-class (non pejorative) revolutionary intellectuals with a small industrial working class. Lenin's theory of consciousness (taken from Kautsky) and organisation was a successful attempt to bring about this link up.

Today, on the other hand, there is no longer this division between worker and intellectual: instead we find that potential members of the revolutionary movement are located along a spectrum that goes from worker to intellectual worker to worker intellectual to intellectual (of which there are very few).

Intimately connected with this changing composition of the working class is a changed state which through a network of institutions (courts, schools, the family, workplaces, welfare, etc) maintains class rule with a subtle mixture of consent and coercion.

The problem for revolutionary organisations is that to destabilise this state will require organisation that is as diffuse as the institutions that

have to be undermined and disciplined enough to be a collective learning process and a weapon hard enough to take on the brutality of the capitalist state. And it is not correct to think that there can be a time-scale solution—first we deal with the consent, then with the coercion. This is incorrect because capitalist class rule is simultaneously consent and coercion.

This short contribution makes no pretence to be a solution to the most difficult problem of revolutionary strategy and organisation. Apart from the points mentioned above, I reckon that the following factors need to be considered amongst other-

\* The structures we need to seize power with (with all that means today) may not be the ones we will need to build communism after the socialist revolution. Kuper is correct in saying that the party will have to be withered away—but it does not follow from this that we don't need it to bring about the socialist revolution.

\* That there must be some connection between relations within the revolutionary party and the socialist society we want to build. The history of the last 60 years has made the working class the world over very distrustful of parties that call themselves communist or socialist—many working class people are sceptical if the possibility of change for the better. Our ways of organising inside and outside the party must prefigure socialism and communism.

\* The priority for revolutionary organisations must be to give a political formation to their militants to give them the tools to help build the struggle locally. As the revolutionary movement develops, so will the forces of state repression—and as this happens it will be more and more difficult for a centralised leadership to transmit its orders downwards.

Two quibbles to end with: 1. Harman is factually wrong about Germany. Luxemburg was outvoted when the Spartacists decided to get involved in the 1917-18 uprising. She thought the policy was suicidal but carried it out (it cost her her life) because she believed strongly in democracy and collective discipline.

2. Lenin on many occasions (for instance over the April

Theses of 'All Power to the Soviets') was outvoted on the central committee of the Bolshevik Party. And like Mao he used undemocratic methods to overturn decisions he disagreed with.

Harman makes a virtue of this practice by writing '... the party leadership cannot simply sit back and reflect the "democratic will" of the party that is lagging behind the class. It has to campaign vigorously for the sudden turns in the line of the party if necessary reaching to forces outside the party to pressurise the party to shift their position.'

And who will decide if the party is lagging behind the class—the leadership of course! And this according to Harman explains 'lurches' in one direction and then in another, and on occasions of splits and expulsions.' For sure, this reflects accurately the behaviour of revolutionary leaderships from the beginning of time, but to call it 'democratic socialism' is to twist language beyond all recognition. Or if this is what 'democratic centralism' is taken to mean, then we need it like a hole in the head.

Peter Anderson

POBox82

### Men against sexism

Maurice Herson's review of *Achilles Heel* is revealing. He says: 'Well, us men have spent years being forced to react to the Women's Movement. In some ways that has the only relation for most of us to sexual politics.... *Achilles Heel* for me reflected my feeling that it is time for men to make their/our own serious contribution to what has been called women's politics, and should be sexual politics' (*Socialist Review* No. 5 p30).

Just what does this imply? That pressure from a strong and vociferous women's movement is somehow the wrong source for men's understanding of women's oppression? Although Maurice qualifies his comments with such phrases as 'What we don't want is a parody by men of women's struggles' and 'there is a real difference between men's politics and women's politics', the fact remains that he concludes that 'men have in the long long term the same' things to gain as women.

# Reviews *Films*

## In The Face Of The Bosses...

Now if this is true it has important implications. It means that a 'Men's Movement' would be a good thing, and presumably that the Movement would be made up of autonomous men's groups, which would also be a good thing.

But this is a travesty of the real situation. We support the women's movement not because its ideas are progressive, but because those ideas are the product of a group whose members are, in a perfectly objective sense, **oppressed, atomised** by their domestic role, **additionally exploited** at work by unequal pay etc. The same is wholly or partly true for other oppressed groups like Blacks and gays and so on.

For men as such this is obviously not the case. Men's groups *already* exist - unfortunately. You can find them already in the boardroom, the pub, the working mens clubs, the factory canteen. The ideology that these institutions naturally produce is overwhelmingly sexist, and as socialists we come to bury them not to praise them, and least of all to **add** to them.

Which brings us back to the original question. The **only** way that men can play a progressive role in sexual politics is as fellow travellers of the women's and the gay movement. **Yes** to a movement of men who will take up the demands of the women's movement, who will fight for equal pay, maternity leave, against sexist jokes at work and so on. **No** to the creation of yet another institution for reinforcing sexism.

This doesn't mean that **Achilles Heel** and other journals that may follow it, are a bad thing. On the contrary, hopefully they will be useful forums for discussing such matters. Nor does it deny that 'men against sexism' groups might be able to play a useful role in combatting specific sexist practices. Nor finally does it deny that the male psyche, having been robbed of significant powers of introspection by bourgeois society requires therapy - even group therapy. All these are probably true, but they should in no way be confused with a 'men's movement'.

Peter Binns

### FIST

It is 1938, and the workers at the Consolidated Trucking Company, Cleveland, have been on strike for many weeks. More than a pay rise is at stake, because this is the first dispute of the newly revived FIST (Federation of Inter State Truckers) local and it needs a victory to survive. Success is also essential to Johnny Kovak (Sylvester Stallone) the ambitious union organiser who has brought the men out of the gates; if the truckers lose, his career is ruined.

Then, protected by squads of police and the goons of the 'Law and Order League', scab trucks roar through the picket lines and the strikers are beaten up and driven from the depot gates. The strike seems lost, the truckers are demoralised and the national president of FIST is sniffing around, trying to get the men back to work.

Kovak calls in the mobsters, to provide 'push'. Soon, Consolidated trucks are hijacked and end up in rivers or in flames. The truckers counter-attack and in one stirring scene, the depot itself is invaded by the strikers. The boss concedes defeat and the workers (plus most of the audience) are exultant. FIST is stronger than ever, and all seems fine for Kovak. But gangsters have long

memories and want repayment. Little favours lead to bigger ones, and the Babe Milano's have a hold in FIST...

These are the opening scenes of *FIST*, the first Hollywood film about trade unions since *On the Waterfront*. There aren't likely to be many other American films released this year which give you the chance to cheer striking workers or which portray bosses as conniving liars.

In the second half, set in the early 1960s, Kovak is under pressure from both organised crime and from a Senate investigation, while his 30s comrade, Abe Belkin, is leading wildcat strikes against the recently agreed National Contract. Perhaps it's heartening that film companies are investing in films like this which deal with working-class subjects (however inadequately) because it suggests the emergence of a market for something more radical than *Heaven Can Wait* or *The Omen*.

Having said that, this entertaining film is cynical about change or reform. Kovak is portrayed as a self-seeking egotist, while the Senator investigating FIST (a suave Rod Steiger) is merely a publicity seeking careerist. Even Abe Belkin, who stays loyal to his youthful idealism

(he even looks like Henry Fonda!) at one point agrees with Kovak that deals and compromises are necessary; everyone is self-motivated and everyone sells out the truckers.

The men themselves (FIST doesn't seem to have women members) are rather faceless. In the 1930s sequence, they are loyal, uncritical supporters of Kovak, while in the 1960s they have become bloated, red faced buffoons at sumptuous union conferences. None of the shades of opinion which exist in all unions are shown; the truckers are faithful to Kovak and even the rebels led by Belkin are a voiceless, stage-picket. Women get an even leaner deal; they serve coffee to the strikers and marry the heroes and that's it.

Despite the echoes of the career of Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamsters, the film is fantasy. The faceless FIST (or Teamster, or TGWU or NUT) members build unions not individuals, even such pushy and forceful ones as Johnny Kovak. Nor are workers as helpless and uncritical as they are depicted in this film. But the film isn't anti-union and in some scenes, shows the latent power of organised labour.

A film worth seeing, not a masterpiece but enjoyable and provocative. The novel is even better. One final point: what are 1976 Right to Work posters doing in the opening credits, on an American wall in 1938? *Paul Cunningham*





## Grassroots history

**The English People and the English Revolution**  
 Brian Manning  
 Peregrine £3.25

What Brian Manning attempts to do in this book is restore the 'people' to the centre of the historical stage. One example will demonstrate where his sympathies lie. A Royalist historian writes of a skirmish at Birmingham which he finds important only because the Earl of Denbigh was killed. To set the balance right Manning lists the 14 men and women killed, mostly cut down in the streets by Royalists after the action.

The 'people' are the small independent producers being squeezed by the rise of capitalism, hating the large merchants on the one hand and terrified of falling into the steadily growing ranks of wage-labourers on the other. They are the hand weavers, the small shopkeepers, the yeomen who formed the backbone of the parliamentary armies. It was their actions, Manning argues, that forced some of the ruling class into the arms of King Charles I and precipitated civil war.

These actions began with electors refusing to continue in the deferential habit of returning the local landowner to Parliament. At Great Marlow in Buckinghamshire Lord Paget had recommended a candidate 'and thought to have carried it because he is lord of the town: but that will not do in these times, blessed be God'.

This was annoying to the ruling class but far worse was the increasing pressure being put on Parliament by the London crowd. They forced the Lords to pass the execution of the Earl of Strafford, a particularly hated adviser of King Charles. 'Many lords grew so really apprehensive of having their brains beaten out that they absented themselves from the House'.

The result was a hardening of a split in the ruling class into the 'party of order', seeing any concession to the 'mob' as the beginning of the end, and the 'popular party', opportunists prepared to use popular anger for their own ends, but well aware of the need to keep it within the limits they set.

## Band of the free, men and alone

### Convoy

Sam Peckinpah's films have always stressed the virtues of rugged individualism and male comradeship in the anonymous world of the big corporation. His latest film, *Convoy*, is no exception.

This time the bearers of these virtues are American's long-distance truck drivers (who seem suddenly have come into fashion in Hollywood - *FIST* is, after all, a lightly-disguised history of the Teamsters' Union).

Rough, tough loners, bound together by ties of fellowship which set them apart from the rest of society, the truckers are, as a crooked politician says at some stage during the film, the natural heir to the cowboy.

Indeed, *Convoy* invites treatment as a Western. The villain is Dirty Lyle, a beady-eyed sheriff who hates truckers (Ernest Borgnine). His feud with super-trucker Rubber Duck (Kris Kristofferson) sparks off a massive battle between a convoy of huge trucks which batter their way through the south-western United States and the forces of law and order, culminating in a confrontation between the Rubber Duck and the National Guard at - where else? - the Rio Grande as our hero makes a desperate dash for freedom in Mexico.

It is a theme which lends itself

easily to self-parody. Peckinpah buffs will spot a host of references to his other films.

When half a dozen juggernauts line up side by side to free one of their number from Dirty Lyle's jail what is this but the climax of *The Wild Bunch*, when the bunch line up to rescue their comrade Angel from the hands of the Mexican army?

Peckinpah seems, indeed, to be having a good time sending himself up. The use of slow-motion to portray violent death which Peckinpah pioneered is now adapted to the mammoth truck chases to which much of the film is devoted (as we should expect from Peckinpah, the film is superbly shot and edited). All he seems to be asking of his audience is, for once, just to sit back and enjoy it.

There is, however, a tougher, more pessimistic edge to the film. The picture painted of America is a bleak one - brutal, racist cops, venal politicians, a burgeoning corporatism which threatens to snuff out all individual freedom.

Indeed, Rubber Duck's convoy as it storms from state to state turns into a massive protest movement against the ills of America. It attracts a diversity of causes - one black trucker complains about the racism of American society, another attacks the oil monopolies, a gang of Jesus-freaks attach themselves to the

convoy (of course, because this is a Peckinpah film, they sing John Ford's favourite hymn).

But Rubber Duck is not interested in leading a movement. 'The aim of the convoy is to keep moving', he replies to a journalist's questions. He opts out, first to rescue a fellow trucker from gaol, then to escape to Mexico.

What counts for Peckinpah is still the individual male up against the world. At the beginning of the film Rubber Duck tells Dirty Lyle that they have two things in common: neither will join the Teamsters (which organises cops as well as truckers), and, 'there aren't very many of us left'.

One effect of this view of the world is male chauvinism. The woman journalist (Ali MacGraw) who becomes involved willy nilly in the convoy is little more than an appendage, whom Rubber Duck ditches once the going gets dangerous.

Peckinpah is no fascist - contrary to what some of his critics claim. His last film, *Cross of Iron*, was an anti Nazi, anti-militarist tract about the German army in Russia during the second world war which ended with Brecht's warning: 'The bitch that bore him (Hitler - AC) is on heat again.' But his apparent inability to break with an individualist ideology sets definite limits to Peckinpah's work.

All the same, go and see *Convoy*. Peckinpah seems incapable of making a bad film. *Alex Callinicos*.



It was the 'people of the middle sort' who were often the catalyst of the civil war that broke out, driving unwilling members of the ruling class into action, and they supplied many of the troops, notably Oliver Cromwell's 'plain russet coated captain that knows what he fights for.' It was inevitable that the demands raised in war should go far beyond the moderate reforms envisaged by the 'popular party'.

At first radicalism was expressed in religious terms, fortified by the belief that a poor godly man's opinions were better than an ungodly gentleman's opinions but it found secular expression with the Levellers who argued for a widening of democracy. In the times they were a dangerous force and as such were crushed by the army as Cromwell and his generals took power.

It's important to recognise

the limitations of this radicalism - the Levellers represented the 'people of the middle sort' and their definition of people involved the possession of property and excluded women and the increasing number of wage labourers. Their voice is fainter than that of the articulate religious radicals.

This book does not claim to be an explanation of the causes of the English revolution. What it does is turn away from the history of 'great men' and power politics and look to the grassroots, to the clash of classes and the involvement of thousands of ordinary people ignored as unimportant by academic historians and lets them speak in their own voices. It succeeds in this, and despite an occasional excess of caution, no doubt to placate the academics, it's worth a read.

*Alistair Mutch*

Shorter documents his case by an examination of birth, legitimacy and infant mortality statistics fleshed out by descriptive accounts from contemporary sources. From this evidence he also deduces the occurrence of two separate and liberating sexual revolutions; one commencing in the eighteenth century, the other in recent generations.

The strength of the book is in detail rather than explanation; there is for example no discussion of the family's role as an essential reproductive unit for capitalism, and little more than a nod towards the specific oppression of women which is thus caused. However this seems less because Shorter is unaware of this oppression than because he is most concerned with documenting the transition between the two forms of family.

In fact much of his evidence dovetails neatly into Zaretsky's position (in *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life*) that capitalism has produced an artificial but powerful division between personal life and work, thus trapping women in the home.

But Shorter, in perhaps the most interesting argument of the book, would deny that this phenomenon was wholly intrinsic to capitalism; his findings suggest that in pre-capitalist Western Europe the fundamental contrast in sex-roles lay not so much in the actual tasks allotted to women, as in the fact that the conduct of external relations and access to the economic market was predominantly a male preserve. This meant that however hard women worked, men's roles were always socially and economically superior (allowing them the luxury of more disposable time), while women's work, with the exception of poultry and dairy marketing, centred around the household.

Thus for many of these women life was so limited that the advent of capitalism, with its destructive impact on traditional loyalties and controls, and the introduction of wage-labour, gave women the promise of an economic independence they could never previously have dared hope for. Shorter admits that this independence was more easily desired than attained and suggests that instead the most

common form of expressing the wish for individual liberty among ordinary people was in sexual desire; hence an enormous increase in illegitimate births, well before higher standards of living began to secure a fall in miscarriages and infant mortality.

Shorter contrasts this development among the working classes with the very different ethics of the rising bourgeois family, which were later to predominate. Among the burgeoning middle class, the greatest emphasis was not on romance but on the mother-child relationship, which was essential to secure the transmission of private property. (Incidentally the chapter on Mother and Infants is worth reading on its own for anyone who believes that the mother-child relationship has always been natural and sacred.)

At least some of Shorter's speculations must be regarded with suspicion because he is far too optimistic about capitalism. Because he allows his recognition of women's aspirations to obscure the extent of exploitation which awaited them, he over-romanticises the freedom which capitalism appeared to bestow; wage-labour was soon to become a tyranny.

And because he lacks any sense of the dynamic of class development and struggle, he is far too cavalier in dismissing the possibility that the breakdown of traditional communities made working-class women far more of a prey to lustful bourgeois patriarchs and their male progeny (as the tales of the Victorian underworld grotesquely testify) and thus enabled the middle classes to pretend that sex and the family were worlds apart.

But even if Shorter's explanations need to be revised and strengthened in the light of Marxist theory, his detailed insights are invaluable for anyone who wants to understand not just how powerfully women were oppressed before the industrial revolution and how the structure of the family has been drastically altered by economic development, but also why it is that so many people remain wedded to the disintegrating illusion that capitalism and even the nuclear family are instruments of personal freedom and fulfilment. *Mike Simpkin*

## Familiar roles

### The Making of the Modern Family

Edward Shorter  
Fontana, £1.50

Don't be put off this book by the accolade by Desmond Morris on the front cover. It is not about our animal origins, but about the effect of economic demands on the way we live with each other. Although Shorter's approach is academic rather than political, he has collected a wealth of detail about family life among the peasantry and working class since the industrial revolution.

Previously most analyses of the family have had to be based on evidence from the middle classes or upon mere historical and sociological generalisation. What is more, his racy style makes the book easy to get through, although some socialists and feminists may find it patronising.

Shorter rebukes both those who assert that the extended family was the norm prior to the advent of capitalism and the modern 'revisionists' who try to prove the existence of the nuclear family in all epochs of history. Instead he argues that the crucial difference between the traditional and the modern family is not size but sentiment.

The traditional family was basically an economic relationship under close community control. There was little affection or eroticism, and much bitter rivalry between siblings and between generations as each sought to

assure their own survival.

The classic modern nuclear family on the other hand is characterised (at least in popular myth) by totally new



emphases on romantic love, the mother-child relationship, and domesticity. However, argues Shorter, this nuclear form of the family is now threatened (in sociological and psychological terms) from within by the inherent instability of the eroticised spouse relationship, and from without by the return of greater peer-group identification.

1968 was the year it dawned on Derry. And on every other area with a sizable Catholic population in the



**NORTH of IRELAND.** The long night finally lifted and, all around, people woke up and

*by Eammon McCann*

began to wonder what things we might be able to do now that daylight had suddenly broken. There were vivid faces everywhere.



## The way it was:

It is difficult now to convey—or even to remember—how heady it all was. Catholic workers suddenly had a sense of achievement. Something we had never felt before. What exactly it was that we had achieved, or where it might lead to, no-one was quite sure. But that didn't matter. Or at least it didn't

seem to at the time. It was enough to savour the feeling.

Politics, for as long as any but the oldest could remember, had been as unchanging as the hills. Indeed, in a sense, for practical purposes, there hadn't been any politics.

We knew that we were being badly done by, that we had more than our fair share of poverty, bad houses, unemployment, and no power at all even in the areas where we were in a majority. We felt the constant, pin-pricking humiliations of day-to-day discrimination. And we knew that it all happened because we were Catholics. It was accepted. A cross to bear. A price we paid for being true to our own traditions and the old ideal of a united Ireland. Nobody made much of a fuss about it, there being no point.

What politics we had within our own areas was dominated by the Nationalists, the rump

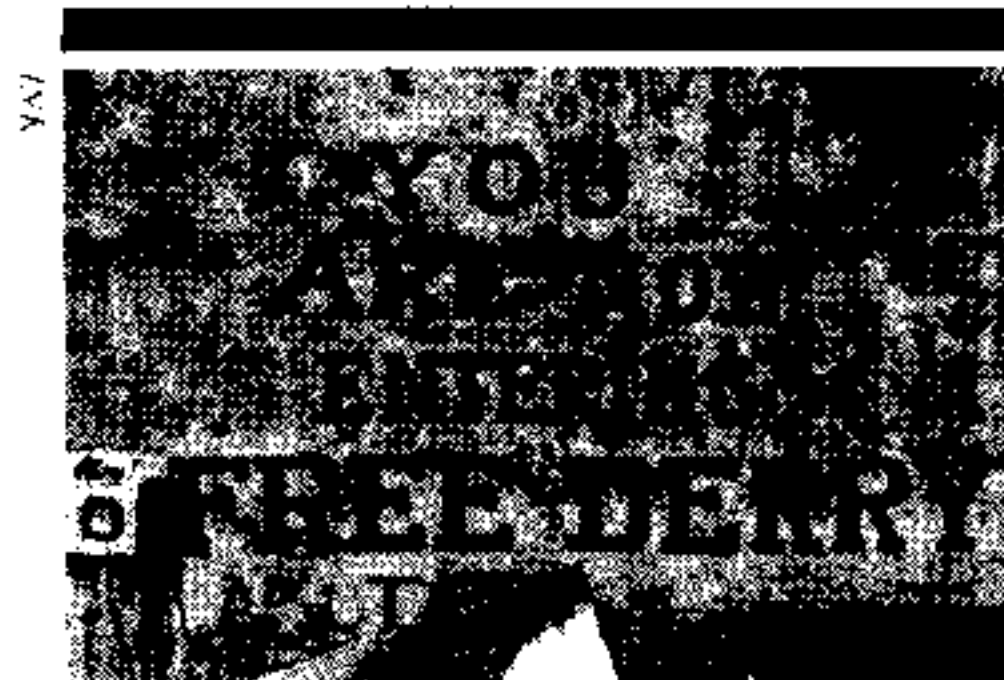
of Parnell's party, its head long dead, still protruding into the present.

Nationalist candidates, particularly in rural and semi-rural areas, were not selected. They were annointed. There were not a few who believed that it was, literally, a sin to vote any other way. Every Nationalist's nomination paper was countersigned by the parish priest.

And what the Nationalists told us—echoing what we believed already anyway—was that there would always be discrimination while the Northern State existed, no hope of succour until it was ended. And we couldn't see any way of ending it. The IRA's last campaign against the border had fizzled out in demoralising fiasco in the early 1960s. What Republicans were left were isolated, old men mainly, accorded some honour for the selfless, hopeless fight they had put up in

times past, but with little now to offer. There was nothing for us to do but suffer on and wait for deliverance to come sometime, from somewhere, in the future.

It is possible, in retrospect, to identify the small signs of impending change in the consciousness of the Catholic workers from the mid 1960s. Television had a little to do with it: for all our poverty quite a few houses acquired a window on the world, and looked out. The decline of the traditional, local Unionist-owned industries like linen and heavy engineering, and their replacement by branches of multi-nationals like Du Ponts that, too, although old patterns of employment (and unemployment) persisted, hinted at a shift in the structure of power.



And there was the 1947 Education Act (the belated extension to the North of the British 1944 Act) which provided free places in secondary schools for any who passed the 11-plus. By the 1960s it had been in operation long enough to produce a sprinkling of graduates from the Catholic working class and, every year, a batch of Senior Certificate holders (the GCE).

The church-controlled schools we went to were hot-beds of reaction and clerical snobbery. But they did represent a possible means of escape from the life for which, hitherto, we had all been 'destined'. It became possible for boys and girls from places like the Bogside and the Falls to 'do

well'. And that increased resentment that there were still well-defined areas of local life from which we were shut out.

When we were all hewers of wood and drawers of water and couldn't get work from the corporation, we resented it. But not as much as we did when we came strutting from the local grammar school festooned with certificates of academic accomplishment and still couldn't get wood-hewer's work from the corporation. Then there was a deal of determination just not to stand for it much more.

None of these things was vital in itself. None of them was perceived at the time as being particularly significant. They were imperceptively small, subterranean slips presaging the earthquake to come.

At the beginning of 1968 Eddie McAteer, president of the Nationalist Party and Stormont MP for the Bogside, issued a New Year Message to constituents via the *Derry Journal*. In it, he announced that he could 'smell sulphur in the air'. Eddie was and is noted for his sensitive nostrils. What he meant was that in many Catholic areas in the North small noisy groups of mainly Catholic malcontents had begun shouting the odds, challenging the Unionists and jeering at the Nationalists for complicity in the set-up. And they were not going about their business in the time-dishonoured ways.

Tenants' Associations were mushrooming. And unemployed Action Committees. Branches of Young Socialists and Young Republicans popped up in the most unexpected places. Squatting, the harassment of landlords, the disruption of official functions, pickets outside Mayors' houses, main roads blocked by sit-downs: it was all happening.

One leader of the Northern Ireland Labour Party lamented to his Executive that a 'new, tough element' was abroad in the land—even, damn! in branches of the NILP itself.

When the earthquake finally came, however, even the most articulate and self-assured of the tough elements were as bewildered as anyone else by the changed contours of the political scene afterwards. One morning of 6 October—the day after the first Derry Civil Rights March was batoned off the streets by the Royal Ulster Constabulary—there was a palpable sense of excitement around the Bogside. There were knots of people everywhere debating what to do next. Politics buzzed. And coming clear from the hubbub was a conviction, a certainty, that nothing was ever going to be the same again. Noone knew exactly what was possible, so everything was.

That was a marvellous, magic thing to happen—as exhilarating to be involved in, I'd guess, as the Carnival Against the Nazis. But then, exhilaration is not enough.

Nobody knew what was possible, because in the frenetic days which led up to 5 October, nobody had stopped to work it out, or refine attitudes down to ideas and apply them, or formulate a perspective and follow it. In the chaotic aftermath, which lasted well into 1969, the left, which had led towards the defensive barricades of Orangeism and breached them, could give no clear direction for further advance.

And because of that, subsequently, taking leadership from the left proved easier than taking sweets from the average child.

# Provos:

It is possible—just—that the Provisional IRA would not now exist if the Left in the late 1960s had understood the nature of Northern Ireland society.

The disparate, inchoate movement which surged up and swept over the North in the wake of the 5 October riots in 1968 demanded, with one voice, 'civil rights': and end to discrimination in job and house allocation, freedom for all political parties to operate openly, the repeal of the Special Powers Act, fair electoral boundaries, one person one vote, and so on. Nothing outrageous.

Within the movement there were 'militants' and 'moderates'—the militants, for the most part, being those who had been involved from the outset and who had detonated the Derry events, the moderates, with few exceptions being clerics, the clerically-dominated, the Catholic middle-classes and nervous Nationalists scrambling desperately to get aboard the bandwagon before it picked up to much speed.

Most of the militants were socialists; some were revolutionary socialists. There were very few Republicans. The IRA at the time was a not-very-funny joke.

The militants and the moderates disagreed



about the demands the movement should put forward and the tactics to be used. Should we demand 'fair distribution of houses' or 'houses for all'? Should we avoid trouble at all costs on demos or just let it rip? And so on. But about one thing we were united: partition was irrelevant. The old idea that nothing could be done until Ireland was united was turned on its head. It was necessary **not** to demand a united Ireland in order to get things done.

To be fair (not that fairness has much to do with it) the left's reasons for taking this stance were not at all ignoble. United Irelandism had for so long been the 'property' of crawl-thumping Nationalists that the very mention of it smacked of jingoism. For decades it had been used to mobilise the Catholic working class behind middle-class and bourgeois politicians. We wanted to break away from all that, and why not?

And we wanted, insofar as it was possible, not to alienate Protestant workers who, almost to a man and woman, were fiercely opposed to the end of partition.

The problem, as we were to discover to our own cost and at some cost to the prospects of building a workers' party, was that partition was an issue, a damnably difficult issue to face, but an issue whether we liked it or not. (Rather like the issue of Ireland for British socialists today.)

The series of marches, clashes with militant loyalists and confrontations with the RUC which followed on from 5 October

came to a climax in August 1969. Bogside teenagers fought off the RUC for two days while, in Belfast, the cops led Loyalists in an armed assault on the Falls Road which left hundreds of homes burned out and nine people dead. The Wilson government sent the troops in.

Hindsight is a great simplifier. It is clear now that the RUC assault on the Falls shattered the perspective of making gains within Northern Ireland. The police, the forces of the Northern state, had murderously attacked the Falls because the people there had been demanding that the State concede democracy. The conclusion drawn by Falls people, particularly the youth, was devastatingly simple and unanswerable: there'll be no democracy while the State exists. Smash the State. Unite Ireland.

Equally clearly, given the gable walls pock-marked by police bullets, the fight to smash the State could not be conducted with weapons of windy rhetoric and parliamentary pussy-footing. Teenagers, first in a trickle, then a torrent, poured into the Republican movement. And in so doing bypassed the left which all along had been whooping it up for revolution. . . but a different revolution unfortunately to the one actually beginning to happen.

When the British Army, in time, took over the repressive role of the RUC the pattern of play matched perfectly the old Republican idea of the way things really were. The old, narrow men who had clustered in corners almost unnoticed while the blithe advocates

of newer revolutionary ideas had romped towards the barricades, the old men had been right all along. Partition, the existence of the Northern State, was the central issue. Britain had always stood, and still stood, behind the Orange State.

So they and their ideology, and not we and ours, came to dominate the struggle against imperialism in Ireland.

Their ideology split the existing Republican Movement in the immediate aftermath of August 1969. Those Republicans who had been involved in the civil rights struggle had agreed with the perspective of putting partition on the long finger, and most held firm to this position even when they were swamped by kids who wanted to 'join the Republicans' to get their hands on a gun. The movement thus split in 1970 into 'Officials' and 'Provisionals'.

The Officials, and a section of the Communist Party close to the Officials, have argued since that the Provos were deliberately set up by a faction within the ruling Fianna Fail party in the South which sought to divert attention from social and economic matters by triggering an armed anti-British campaign. There is some truth in this, but not much. Certainly, the Provos at the outset were better armed, organised and financed through the intervention of a Fianna Fail faction than would otherwise have been the case. Equally certainly, the Provos would have come into being anyway. And once they did get off the ground a united Fianna Fail joined Britain in repressing them.

Other sections of the left join with the Officials in denouncing the Provos as 'right-wing'. And in a sense so they are. They are not Marxists. They see themselves, and it is not entirely fanciful, as the lineal descendants of the United Irishmen who rose in 1798 against British rule, led by Wolfe Tone, 'the Father of Irish Republicanism'. That rising was inspired by the American and French revolutions, and sought the same goals: political independence, the overthrow of feudal property relations and no brake on the rising commerce of aspirant manufacturers, parliamentary democracy. There was nothing socialist about it, nor could there have been, given the time of its inception.

Republicans trace their descent down through the Fenian Movement of the second half of the last century, the Provisional Government under Patrick Pearse which launched the Easter rising of 1916, the IRA which fought the War of Independence which ended in 1921 in sell-out and the partition settlement, and on in an unbroken line down to the present.

The Republican movement is military, the armed wing, the IRA, taking precedence over the political wing, Sinn Fein. As such, it is necessarily clandestine. And it cannot operate like, say, a socialist or social democratic party, formulating its policies and perspectives through open discussion, testing them against reality, changing them if necessary after factional disputation. Military organisations, in time of war most of all, demand **loyalty** from their members. Thus the old ideology survives almost unscathed, as if it had sailed through history in a time-capsule, despite the fact that it makes little sense to socialists.

But then, when the crunch came, the carriers of the socialist ideology had made little sense to the Provos' potential recruits.





And the majority of those recruits are working-class. For the first time in its history, the majority of IRA activists come from an urban working-class rather than a small-farming background.

That is one of the reasons many go far beyond the 'approved' ideology of the organisation, take up left, even far-left, positions. This is reflected in Republican publications and leads occasionally to speculation that 'the Provos are moving to the left'.

Individuals may well be. But the organisation itself is not capable of that kind of movement. And the individuals concerned have no mechanism available within the movement through which they might try to move it.

They will continue as they are, their tactics with all their occasional attendant horrors, stemming from bourgeois notions of battle, pursuing the Republican ideal through upturns and downturns, as they have done in the past seven years through botched jobs and brilliant jobs, marches for and against repression and replenishment, eyes fixed firmly on the day of deliverance when the Brits leave at last and the Orange State crumbles.

That's what the Provos have got going for them: the fact that, unchallengably, they have taken the brunt of the British war effort, alone met it head on without wilting and ploughed doggedly through, battered and bloody and showered almost on all sides with curses and contumely. They cannot reasonably be expected now to pay serious attention to advice shouted from the sidelines.

## Brits:

At five o'clock on Thursday, 14 August, in 1969 a company of the Prince of Wales Own Regiment under Major Hanson marched into Waterloo Place in Derry and brought to an end two days of rioting between Bogside and the RUC. The next day 600 men of the Third Battalion Light Infantry took up position with fixed bayonets in Belfast and ended the attempted pogrom on the Falls Road. Britain had taken direct control of events in the North.

At Westminster Harold Wilson expressed determination to ensure that economic discrimination against Catholics and sectarian operation of the law would cease in the North. The function of the troops, it was generally understood in the North and in Britain, was to defend the Catholics from attack and to supervise the implementation of necessary reforms. Things worked out very differently. Today the British Army in the North is clearly seen by most Catholics as an instrument of oppression.

Britain's commitment to reform was not based on any sentimental attachment to liberal ideas. It was based on the fact that the Orange machine which had run the North in Britain's name since Partition had become redundant. It had had a role to play through the years when most industry in the North was in local, Orange ownership and was a

thriving component of the British economy.

Now, however, the staple industries like linen and heavy engineering were in rapid and irreversible decline, being replaced by branches of multinationals concentrating mainly on light engineering and synthetic fibres. Moreover, the South of Ireland, hitherto unindustrialised, had thrown open the doors to new investment—much of it British. It was no longer true that in all Ireland, only Orange capital had any real clout with Britain.

And reforms did go on the Statute book. The notorious B Special Protestant militia were abolished, to be replaced by a new part-time British Army regiment, the Ulster Defence Regiment, membership of which was to be open to all. A Police Bill aimed at disarming the RUC and making it a civilian, rather than a paramilitary force was introduced. The Prevention of Incitement to Religious Hatred Act was designed to curtail the activities of Orange rabble-rousers like Ian Paisley.

A points system for the allocation of houses was devised and control of housing taken out of the hands of untrustworthy local authorities and given to a Government-appointed Housing Executive on which Catholics were fairly represented. And so on.

The reforms didn't work. And the reason was that, while they could be pushed through Stormont under pressure, there was no machinery to implement them. Having run Northern Ireland on a sectarian basis for almost half a century, the administrative apparatus was the nub of the problem, not

the instrument with which it could be solved.

For example: on the same day as the Prevention of Incitement to Religious Hatred was introduced at Stormont, another bill to make prison sentences for rioting mandatory was also brought in. This was intended to deter Catholic teenagers, who had not given up the habit of throwing rocks at any passing representative of law and order. One law against the Protestant trouble-makers, one against the Catholic trouble-makers. On the face of it nothing could have been 'fairer'.

By the end of 1970 109 people had been charged under the new legislation with rioting. 105 were found guilty and jailed. Only one person had been charged with inciting hatred. This was a Mr John McKeague, who published a 'song-book' of which the following is a fair sample:

*If guns were made for shooting*

*Skulls were made to crack*

*You've never seen a better Taig (Catholic)*  
*Than with a bullet in his back.*

Mr McKeague was acquitted.

The law against the Catholic trouble makers worked. The law against the Protestant trouble makers didn't. The assumptions on which the police force and the magistracy worked frustrated the probably-genuine wishes of the law-makers.

To greater or lesser extents, the same happened to other reforms. As moderate politicians on all sides pointed to the progress being made, the instinctive belief of the teenagers at every street corner in Catholic ghettos that nothing had changed, and that nothing would while the State existed, hardened into a certainty.

British press coverage, which had projected the Catholics as victims and generally been sympathetic, changed radically. Editorials raged at the 'impossible' Irish who were never satisfied. And as the Catholic youth increasingly came into conflict with the troops, calls at Stormont for 'stern measures' were echoed in Fleet Street.

By the beginning of 1971 the Provisional IRA had some sort of presence in most Catholic areas and the stage was set for the inevitable conflict which, almost 2,000 deaths later, still continues.

In its efforts to win the conflict, Britain has used a combination of ruthless repression, political double-dealing and, under the guise of 'community organising', more subtle efforts at 'pacification'.

Repressive measures have ranged from mass surveillance to imprisonment without trial to torture and multiple murder. It has been the use of such measures which reveals most clearly how and when the reformist strategy was decisively abandoned and Britain lined up again with the Orange ultra-right. And how hollow and dishonest British Governments have been in their protestations of liberal intent.

Internment without trial was introduced at the behest of Unionist Prime Minister, Brian Faulkner, on 9 August 1971 when 319 men were picked up by troops in pre-dawn swoops. All were ill-treated. Some were tortured, by methods which the Heath Government later made a show of outlawing: 'wall-standing', white noise, hooding, starvation and deprivation of sleep. In his book *The Guinea Pigs* John McGuffin describes in harrowing detail how men were selected for what was, in effect, a cynical

experiment designed to test out techniques and instil terror rather than to obtain information.

Internment and torture united the Catholic community against the Army and the Stormont regime, and caused an outcry even in some liberal circles in Britain. After the torture was exposed in the *Sunday Times*, the Heath Government set up a committee under Lord Parker to report on interrogation techniques. It presented its findings in March of the next year.

Parker reckoned there hadn't been any real torture, merely ill-treatment, and that circumstances had justified its use. Heath, however, accepted the minority report of former Labour Attorney General Gerald Gardiner which recommended that the five methods should not be used ever again.

In a stirring show of bipartisan camaraderie Wilson welcomed Heath's assurances. With the Liberals tossing in their tuppence-worth of agreement, the entire House of Commons pounded its collective breast and promised that this was the end of a very unfortunate chapter.

Meanwhile, back in the North, the torturers tortured on. And as the Amnesty International report demonstrated earlier this year, they are still torturing.

Internment too has been abolished, in theory. In October 1972 a commission under Lord Diplock and including ex-TUC leader George Woodcock was charged with considering 'what arrangements for the administration of justice in Northern Ireland could be made to deal more effectively with terrorist organisations, other than by internment. . .'. Diplock's report, published in December 1972, recommended that the Special Powers Act, which permitted internment, be abolished. Again, the Commons echoed to hosannahs, hurrahs and hallelujahs as honourable members, right left and centre, welcomed the report. *Internment is ended* shouted the headlines.

Special Powers were replaced by 'Emergency Provisions', introduced in July 1973. These include: the abolition of trial by jury; stringent restrictions on the right to bail (Diplock said troops' morale would suffer if they could see a 'known' terrorist on the streets on bail, the reference to 'known' terrorists showing Diplock believed accused persons were automatically guilty); the admission of hearsay evidence; admission of confessions even if the prosecution cannot prove them to be voluntary; onus of proof in possession of weapons cases to be placed on accused person.

The tenant of a house in which a weapon is found must prove he/she didn't know it was there; abolition of the right of accused persons to stay silent; unlimited powers of stop, search and arrest given to soldiers and police; right to refuse to be photographed and/or fingerprinted abolished.

Added to these measures is the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism Act, passed in the hysterical aftermath of the Birmingham pub bombs, which introduced the concept of 'administrative detention'—imprisonment without trial for as long as the Home Secretary feels like it; seven days' detention on the decision of any senior police officer; deportation without stated reason, and so on.

The combination of these measures means that people can be held without bail for more

than a year before charges are dropped. That tortured confessions can be used in court—Belfast University's Department of Law estimates that as many as 90 per cent of persons jailed for 'terrorist' crimes since the passage of the Emergency Provisions Act were convicted on 'confessions' alone. Almost all these confessions have been extracted in the main torture centre at Castlereagh Barracks.



Troops Out Newsletter

In other words the changes made in the name of liberalisation have resulted in more, not less, torture and unjust imprisonment.

Added to all this has been the straightforward killing of opponents of the regime. The most obvious example was Bloody Sunday in Derry on 30 January 1972, when paratroopers shot 14 unarmed anti-internment marchers dead. There were, and continue to be, other less-publicised but more sinister examples.

The SAS regularly kill 'suspects'. Recent examples have been the killings of 16-year-old John Boyle on 11 July at Dunley, Co. Antrim, when he went to check whether a suspect parcel he had earlier told the police about had been removed from a graveyard near his home; and Danny Heaney, assassinated in the street in Derry in May this year a few days after being released from seven days' detention and questioning in the local barracks.

And the Army and police have been involved directly and indirectly in a sectarian murder campaign against Catholics, particularly in Belfast. This was at its height in 1972, when 125 people were assassinated. In the cases of two killing—those of Patrick McVeigh and Danny Rooney—exposes in the press forced the Army to admit that plain-clothes soldiers had gunned the men down—although, of course, they soldiers were never named or charged.

At the same time military authorities were tacitly supporting the Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Defence Association in a horrific spate of blood-letting. This can be dated as beginning on 4 May 1972 when the body of Victor Andrews was found in the Antrim Road in north Belfast. He had been stabbed 15 times. This area was to become known as 'murder mile'. Some of the Catholics killed there were tortured unspeakably before they died. Thomas Madden was suspended from above, stripped naked and slowly cut to pieces. He had more than 150 wounds when found.

Others had had fingers, toes, genitals cut off, or eyes plucked out.

Yet while all this was going on, not only did the RUC and the Army refuse to do anything about it—they repeatedly denied that it was really happening. Official statements spoke of 'mysterious killings' or 'motiveless murders', when it was obvious to every rational person in the North that they were neither mysterious nor motiveless, but part of a systematic campaign to terrorise the Catholic community.

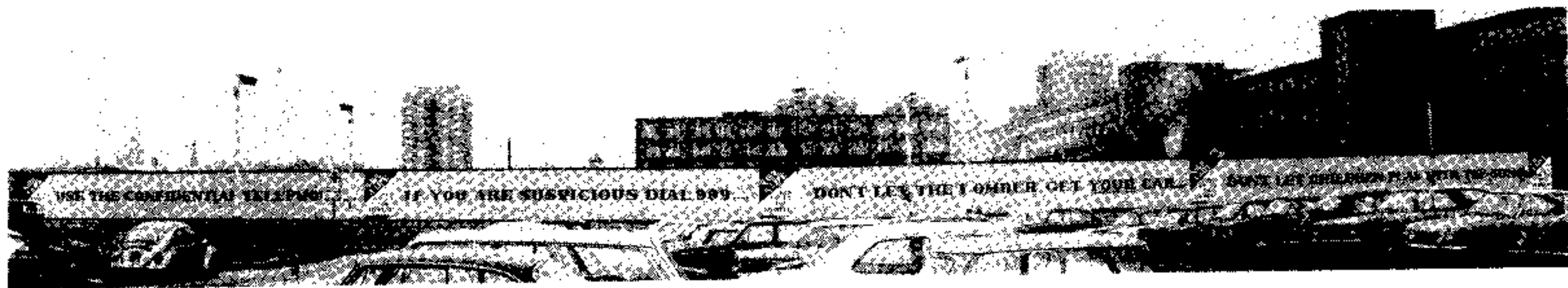
The RUC then put out the line that all the killings were work of one madman, variously dubbed 'Jack the Ripper' or the 'Shankill Butcher', even when killings were taking place simultaneously in different parts of Belfast, some of the victims being bundled into cars by three or four men.

Liaison between Army personnel and the UVF—responsible for more than half the assassinations—during this period has since been documented, at least in part. For example, the UVF itself has named Captain Anthony Ling, Captain Anthony Box and Lieutenant Alan Homer, all attached to Army Intelligence HQ in Lisburn, as having developed links with senior UVF men in 1972.

And it is of interest that the McVeigh and Rooney killings were so much part of the assassination pattern that Loyalists were assumed to be responsible until the truth unexpectedly and fortuitously emerged. (For example, the truth about Patrick McVeigh came out when one of the soldiers involved had a crisis of conscience much later and revealed all to the *Daily Mirror*).

The thinking behind Army involvement in toleration of the assassinations is hinted at in Brigadier Frank Kitson's book *Low Intensity Operations*. His theory of 'Gangs and Counter-gangs' has been summarised thus: 'Faced with a revolutionary grouping it may





be advantageous for the state forces to develop those forces inside the society who are opposed to the revolution and whose antagonism, combined with their detailed local knowledge, would make them ideal for carrying out operations which for political or military reasons are beyond the scope of the Army's activities.'

In 1972 Kitson was the Army's chief strategist in Belfast.

And his strategy worked very well. The effect of the killing of Catholics in 1972—from Bloody Sunday through the assassination campaign—was to terrify opposition to British rule off the streets. The year had begun with 10,000 mobilised against internment on the Bloody Sunday demonstration, and 50,000 in the Newry the next week. By December, with Catholics, particularly in Belfast, almost demented with fear, demonstrations were few, and few attended them.

As well, when, towards the end of 1972, a section of the Provos began to hit back in kind and kill Protestants at random, the British Army was able to pose as the representatives of decency standing above and between two contending sets of mad, Irish killers. The IRA was discrediting itself, and increasingly isolated from mass, public support. The Catholics were more cowed than before. Kitson was promoted to Major General. And the time was ripe for a political initiative. In March 1973 a White Paper promising 'power-sharing' was published and elections for a new Assembly scheduled for June.

This close coordination of military and political tactics is evident at every stage since the Army intervened. Stormont had collapsed in March 1972 when it became evident that Catholics were never going to accept its writ again. 'Direct Rule' was introduced, with Whitelaw as Northern Ireland Secretary. But the search for stable, internal political arrangements which would keep the North within the UK with at least minimum Catholic support went on.

And browbeaten and battered as the Catholics were, a majority went along with the 'power-sharing' Assembly elected 1973. In December 'moderate' Catholic and Protestant members of the Assembly met in

Sunningdale, Berkshire, with the Prime Ministers of the UK and the South, and signed the pact which was widely touted as a final, fair solution to the age-old Irish problem. At the same time some Loyalist paramilitaries who had been involved in the assassinations, their job done, were interned. The politicians were to share power and the paramilitaries share prisons.

This didn't work either, the most immediate reason being that the Protestant paramilitaries, thus scorned, reasserted their strength by forcing the 'strike' of May 1974, and planting bombs in Dublin and Monaghan which killed 30. Whether the Army could have broken the strike is open to question. Certainly, they didn't try. When Catholic workers in Derry tried to march in body to work and were met with Loyalist barricades, the Army baton-charged the Catholics. The Assembly collapsed.

The search for a settlement started anew. And while the Loyalist hard-liners who opposed any Catholic involvement in Government occasionally got in the way of British plans and suffered as a result, the IRA remained the main obstacle, and thus it and the community it comes from took the brunt of repression—this despite occasional attempts to co-opt the Provo leadership by open or secret talks and officially recognised 'ceasefires'. And, naturally, the repression has been combined with energetic support for any development—like the emergence in August 1976 of the despicably opportunist 'peace women'—which might help undermine Provo support.

Politically, there have been few notable developments in the last three years. A 'Constitutional Convention' elected in May 1975 had ceased to exist by September and is scarcely remembered. A stoppage called by Paisley in May last year in support of demands for greater repression of Catholics in general and the IRA in particular ended in fiasco: Roy Mason was able convincingly to show that he was as enthusiastic a repressor as had ever sat in Stormont.

Stalemate continues. The Provos, less numerous than they were in 1972 but more tightly organised and tougher, probably have the capacity to carry on a campaign at its present level indefinitely. Mason shows no sign of having another stab at an 'acceptable' settlement. Local bourgeois politicians, both Catholic and Protestant, have either opted for lucrative 'consultancies' with local branches of multinationals or eye the rich pickings in Europe. And the Army keeps up its relentless surveillance and pressure on the Catholic community.

The one notable thing which has happened in the past year is a steady resurgence of resistance. It is centred on what is happening in the H Blocks in Long Kesh.

In January 1976 it was decreed that no 'crime' committed after 1 March would be regarded as politically-motivated and that political status—which was won by

Republican prisoners after a long hunger strike in 1972 and which allowed them to wear their own clothes and associate freely with each other—would end. Prisoners would be held not in compounds but in isolated cells in H-shaped structures modelled on Stanheimm prison in Germany, which houses members of the Baader-Meinhof group.

Republicans are fiercely determined to resist being categorised as 'common criminals' and there are now over 250 of them 'on the blanket'. Having refused to wear prison uniform, they are left naked but for a blanket. And being thus in breach of regulations they are denied exercise outdoors, any reading material whatever, radios, TV, conversation with one another, regular visits, food parcels or anything else which it is in the capacity of the prison authorities to deny them. In a final, desperate act of defiance the 'blanket men' have now refused to 'slop out' as a result of which cells are swimming in excrement and urine.

The standard reaction by Mason to all protests about this has been the prisoners have created these conditions themselves, by their initial refusal to don prison clothes. But protests have mounted.

The first real sign of this came on 'internment day', 9 August last year, when 6,000 turned out in Belfast for a march down the Falls. The useful coincidence of a visit by the English Queen in the following week brought an even bigger number out.

And this year, for the first time, there have been specifically workers' demonstrations. After the death of AUEW member Brian Maguire in May in the Castlereagh torture centre, 4,000 people left work in Belfast for a demonstration. Similar demonstrations have been mounted by the newly-formed Trade Union Campaign Against Repression. TUCAR now has branches in Dublin, Galway, Belfast, Limerick and Derry and a real presence in some workplaces, particularly in west Belfast.

Simultaneously, relatives—overwhelmingly women relatives—of the 'blanket men' have formed their own Relatives Action Committees. On 27 August the Tyrone RAC called a march from Coalisland to Dungannon and was staggered when upwards of 10,000 people crowded into the tiny town from all over the North. The politics of mass action, with real involvement of the organised working class, is again on the agenda.

Ten years after 5 October, the march has not been stopped. And we are no longer marching for mere 'civil rights', but against the root cause of all our political ills: British domination. Because the main lesson to be learned from the last decade is that the real problem never was the way Britain ran the North. It was the fact that Britain ran the North. And until Britain leaves, there'll be no end of trouble.





# PERFORMANCE

Steve Gooch contributes to our discussion on political theatre

Steve Gooch is the author of *Female Transport*, *Will wat, if not wat will?*, *The women Pirates* and (with Paul Thompson) *The Motor show*

As a contribution to the current debate on political theatre begun in this magazine and *Wedge* by David Edgar, Bruce Birchall, and others I should like to take issue with both David and Bruce on a number of points and add a few observations of my own. In doing this I am concerned to try and pin down a few thoughts which may serve as an orientation for future discussion.

Firstly, the starting-point. While I don't doubt the importance of 1968 as a milestone in political history, I feel it should also be seen in terms of the continuing development of the Left. While part of the significance of '68 was that it represented a **break** with traditional politics, there have **been** breaks before.

It's no coincidence for example that a lot of writers of our generation like Dave Holman, Howard Baker, Stephen Lowe, David Hare and myself have written about 1945. And stretching back further in history, one can see a whole series of 'leaps forward', not identical of course, but of similar importance to people **at the time they were lived**. I emphasise this phrase because of its connection to the Trotsky quote in Edgar's second article:

"One cannot approach art as one can politics....because it has its own laws of development.... an enormous role is played by the subconscious....Artistic creativity, by its very nature, lags behind the other modes of a man's spirit, and still more the spirit of the class. (It) is more organic, slower, more difficult to subject to conscious influence."

In other words the **lived** tradition of the working-class and socialist movement, especially as it is implanted in ourselves as producers of art and in our audiences, is something we ignore at our peril. We cannot approach the political issues of today without bringing along with us something of our collective past. We have grown up individually in a class society, under a competitive education system, where the family unit, conventional sex roles and stereotypes are the norm, and where there is a premium on success.

If any of us imagine we can shrug all that off in ten years, we're kidding ourselves. Even if we dislike the mysticism and psychologism sometimes attached to the word 'art', it remains true that theatre production involves work by flesh and blood people, often at a level of personal involvement and commitment which means total self-exposure. You cannot, under those circumstances, think yourself out of what you are today and *be* it, on stage, tomorrow.

So let us try to hold 1968 and what went before in some sort of perspective, never over-estimating the importance of one against the other.

Second, the question of the relation of socialist theatre to socialist organisation and the working-class in general. Having set himself the task of explaining why 'socialist theatre has remained at one remove from revolutionary organisations', Edgar, towards the end of his article, lays it at the door of the absence of 'mass revolutionary organisations'. While I can imagine that such

a mass organisation might help socialist theatre in material terms, even in terms of political orientation, I'm not convinced it would guarantee the culture he implies.

There is after all no predictable relation between a mass political organisation and a mass culture. Generally, one might accept that theatre is secondary, reflective, that in a sense it rides on the back of economic and political developments in society. But how it rides is a different matter. It can be quite contrary to expectations.

It was precisely the absence of a mass organisation with the kind of politics people were willing in the late 1960s early 1970s - and the presence of a mass **movement** - which led many people into expressing ideas through the theatre. Theatre was seen as a suitable vehicle to express a new kind of politics. And it threw up many exciting experiments, socially and artistically.

Even so, it came **in the wake of '68**, and yet theatre workers were importing their reading on class and party organisation wholesale into the running of their groups and the making of their shows, as if **they** were the leadership! They knew what the workers really wanted, they would spit on bourgeois opportunist deviation.

And even though they clung on tight to their group capital and agonised over 'bringing people into the group' (never, notice, employing people), they still didn't see the obvious: that by virtue of working in theatre one is in a middle-class job. Writers and theatre groups are small businesses, a collective still has a managerial function (and responsibility). Theatre workers in groups are also employers. Unless one can look **that** squarely in the face, the relation of our work to the class will be misunderstood.

For while a mass **movement** can create the will to express politics through culture, the interests of mass **organisation** are not necessarily served by a series of small businesses peddling culture; and while people may choose full-time theatre on no pay (or social security) as a way to express their politics over a short period, they're unlikely to keep going (and stay sane or healthy) over a long period.

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It is sad (and not absolutely true) to think of socialist theatre as divided between part-time, dole-financed, truly collective and playing only to blue-collar workers on the one hand, or professional, state-subsidised, hierarchical and playing to *Time Out* readers on the other, but these divisions are forced on us and demand mutual tolerance as well as struggle. Nor is the claim to be revolutionary the prerogative of one or other stream; both make the claim, both fall down on it.

Indeed, the chances of any theatre product (show) being literally revolutionary are pretty slim. However revolutionary its content, the means of culture distribution will tend to militate against the product having a revolutionary effect. The process of play-making and of building a new relationship to the audience is more likely to

be revolutionary, but even the product can belie the process.

In this connection it's worth taking up a few of the anonymous *Wedge* writer's points. For once you posit the idea of theatre groups **continuing** (as opposed to popping up, hitting and running), questions about resources, group capital, public subsidy and so on cannot be ignored. It's partially true that 'professionalisation' (and therefore careerism) through subsidy, the creation of an administrative class in theatre groups, the move towards playing better-equipped venues rather than where workers meet and the reliance on labour movement officials to book shows has provided a situation where opportunism can flourish.

But if groups really do control their own means of production, they should be able to control this. After all, these changes have come about because groups needed resources, needed sound administration, needed bigger spaces and needed reliable working-class contacts. The problem of those needs (real enough if the movement was to be more than a fart in the bath) has been replaced by another problem, which it should be in our power to solve. By denigrating the progression towards better resources and organisation, however, you don't get to grips with the **political** problem. That has to be fought with or without the resources.

In the light of all this then, it still seems that, rather than the theatre, the best place to be effective politically is in a political organisation - or at least in some more direct connection with social and public life.

In the theatre you can only be effective politically through the means of expression it offers which generally, because it's done 'live' by flesh and blood people to flesh and blood people, brings a whole load of personal, psychological, physical and other baggage with it, whether you like it or you don't.

Direct political intervention by means of agitational theatre plays an important part of course, particularly for certain occasions and on certain issues, and there is perhaps always an agitational element of some kind in political theatre; but it is not necessarily better theatre for being more directly political, nor is it necessarily more revolutionary. Similarly, your Lenin handbook on party organisation will not necessarily help you write better theatre shows or even organise your theatre group. *What is to be done?* was about **politics**.

It's paradoxical therefore that the new politics of 1968, bringing the personal, the unhierarchical and the cultural into politics, should make the mistake of bringing politics into theatre in a way which threatens to throw up as many contradictions as the old politics had left hanging around in the social democratic state subsidised theatre of the mid 1950s to mid 1960s.

What we must avoid how is repeating the mistake of that era, which was to allow the alienation of many theatre-goers and theatre-workers from socialist theatre to grow because of a failure to come to terms with those contradictions of working under capitalism which tend to undermine our stance as socialists and make our process belie our product.

For the fact that taxes from the entire

population, most of it working-class, go towards subsidy for art which is enjoyed by a tiny proportion of the population, most of it middle-class, is not in the first instance our fault. It's a result of divisions and contradictions already present in society, and those of us who wish to bring our political insights or our feeling for working-class life back to the working class can't expect those divisions and contradictions to evaporate overnight.

So how should we view the relation, finally, between our work in the theatre and the class? First, as Edgar points out, by not assuming or speaking as if socialist theatre can create a revolutionary working class on its own. Second, by fully understanding our own class position and the necessary division between ourselves and the working class when we approach the public in general with our work. Third, by not blaming ourselves for that division, blaming each other for being 'unproletarian' or politically naive.



In that absence of a mass organisation we have to forge links with advanced sections of the class, including other white collar workers, and we have to test our ideas against the responses and experience of audiences generally and those we respect particularly.

We have to struggle in our own trade unions, our own political parties, in campaigns, our own personal relationships and even our theatre groups for the reorganisation which will draw out the greatest potential in us. And in theatre that reorganisation concerns speaking about political change to the class in a voice specific to theatre as an art form.

What is that voice? On the question of TV, the point Edgar makes about home audiences being like postal ballot electorates is a good one, but it does also read as if he imagines the great mass of the British public locked up in dimly lit rooms like advertisements for McEwans, goggling wide-eyed and inane at the flickering image of Regional Bosanquet.

First, I am not so sure that people in general are as 'uncritical' of TV as he suggests. To be sure, a lot seeps in that is never discussed, a lot of impressions remain unarticulated, but people talk a hell of a lot about TV, particularly at work.

Second, I'm not so sure that the 'average' TV viewer's criticism is purely personal or domestic - TV has probably brought a greater width (though not necessarily depth) of social information into the average home than any other form of communication. Is Edgar arrogant enough to suggest it goes completely undigested?

Third, even if the average viewer's criticism is of a predominantly personal kind, is that a bad thing when the

relationship between the personal and the political is being seen in a new light? Surely the real point is that TV is the most technologically 'stitched up' of all media - a highly controlled product, pumped out through a highly controlled distribution network - and it will go on serving whichever class is doing the controlling.

Because of this I would sympathise with Griffiths' (and presumably Loach/Garnett's) view of the need for socialists to get in there and at least fiddle with, if not take over, the controls.

My criticism of TV would be different. It is manipulative by nature; by virtue of its high technology very little can go wrong (unlike theatre where door-knobs can fall off, actors can fall over scenery or a performance suddenly ignite because of the interaction between actors and audience and become a memorable experience).

Theatre, because it's live and therefore vulnerable, is potentially more open to its audience, potentially more democratic and potentially more powerful - even if only to small numbers on rare occasions.

It is this depth and tangibility of experience in the theatre, along with its democratic potential, which I believe is its distinguishing voice. And for me it is the way into a discussion of its aesthetics. For although most traditional theatre happens in buildings and forms appropriated by the bourgeoisie, it is still possible (in theory at least) to boo and throw things in a theatre and affect the proceedings; all you can do with your telly is turn it off or destroy it (given that storming the Television Centre is likely to bring tanks on to the streets of Shepherd's Bush for the first time).

While booing and throwing things may



seem extreme to most actors and audiences, it is an exaggerated form of what goes on all the time. Audiences affect performances - and not just through the ratings.

So in the great debate about realism two realities have to be acknowledged before we begin. First, (please note, Bruce Birchall) it is all illusion - 'down with illusion' therefore means down with theatre. Second, everyone (particularly those who want to destroy illusion) is concerned somehow to reflect the real world. From naturalism, through expression, neo-realism, Brecht and Ealing comedies, everyone is trying to 'get at something' in the real world.

If you present, as Birchall suggests, only the bare bones of your argument ('cutting out the flab'), your audience can only take or leave your argument. If it's done well, they might enjoy the doing but will you really have won the battle for anyone's mind?

On the other hand, if you flesh out the

arguments, produce the evidence, if you attempt to reproduce some recognisable kind of behaviour everyone in your audience from the well-read to the illiterate has the chance to judge your interpretation of the world against their own experience and judgement - which they'll do anyway.

The art lies in drawing experience and interpretation together in such a way as to make your argument and its conclusions unavoidable. It is, as Bruce notes in a different context, a question of choice, of selecting your material. The other way is artless.

Nevertheless I sympathise with a lot of the by-products of Bruce's argument against naturalism: 'uneconomic...to spend time establishing a character then...rounding it off', 'whether X really would speak like that', the way realism 'narrows down meaning to the highly specific' etc. I personally would love to be able to ban the word 'would' from



rehearsal: (would this character actually say this/do this/walk like this, would that actually happen?).

But a performance must happen, someone must actually do it, and somebody has to ground that performance in some sort of reality that will be recognisable to other people. The more firmly rooted the characterisation, and the greater the narrative drive that performance will be.

You can see people with funny hats speaking flat lines in rhyming couplets in panto and TV variety, but that concept of 'popular' theatre is as limited in its supposed appeal to working-class audiences as is the fetishised quasi-Brechtian 'device' of letting your machinery show. To some working-class audiences both methods just look amateur or sloppy - and indeed much sloppiness is perpetrated in the much-maligned name of Brecht.

It does make a difference, however, as Birchall notes, that a company's actors are seen lugging the set beforehand and can be spoken to in the bar after. But that is more to do with building the circumstances for a socialist theatre - process - that it is to do with product. The two are connected of course, and the fact of the actor being present behind his/her characterisation is what makes the 'illusion' more striking.

Not a fetishised presence though, not part of the commodity, the 'Brecht' product or whoever's it is, above all not played for, but a really real person - sweaty, contradictory, bolshie, independent, anarchic. The point here is to employ the power of the medium, the fact that it's actually happening (or seems to be), its tangible quality.

This brings me to the last point: David Edgar's enthusiasm for the shock tactics of

our new dramatists (Barker, Brenton, Keefe etc). In his piece David seems to dwell on use of broad, stark image as some kind of effective synthesis of Griffiths' occupying the space of his characters and the music-hall or agit-prop techniques of some touring groups.

Although I have enjoyed the moments he speaks of (the Bagleys moving into the heroin market in Brenton/Hare's *Brassneck*, the teenager threatening to blow up the school in Keefe's *Gotcha*, Gethin Price's dummies in Griffiths' *Comedians*), I'm not convinced of their philosophical or dramatic consistency or Edgar's defence of them as 'thought-provoking'.

Provoking what thought? Just thought? Just anti-Establishment thought? Just gut-level anti-Establishment thought? Which Establishment? Where are all these thoughts going?

The technique to me is questionable because it's riddled with questions. The method, as Edgar observes, depends on 'the audience not knowing what he will do until he does it'. Although that in one sense should be true of all good theatre. (audiences knowing what but not how is better still), it is a technique which can ride dangerously close to manipulation (or even cop-out); especially if it doesn't make sense in terms of what the audience can identify in the first place as emotional consistency (which most of the quoted examples do) or in the second place as part of a consistent political argument (on that I'm not so sure).

What I would say is that for every good moment in shock-theatre, there are ten examples of its exploitation as a technique to hide shoddy thinking at best or sheer untruth at worst.

The reason this technique has been quite popular with our writers however is not, I



suspect, primarily because of its 'thought-provoking' quality, but because of frustration.

Frustration with the Establishment (therefore blow it up, expose it in a garish light, distort it), frustration with a dramatic method that is struggling to get out of naturalism (and eventually leaps, staggers, plunges out), frustration with a play's argument that won't work through (and therefore has to be pushed). That's how I feel it anyway, and rather than shock I feel disappointment, a sense of being cheated.

One reason for this is that the creation of dramatic tension by means of keeping the audience in the dark is at the root of a dramatic method whose most adept exponent was Harold Pinter. Unfortunately it still lingers in many of our writers' work. It is an easy way of keeping your audience with

you (titillated, fascinated, in suspense) until you deliver the final shock blow (whodunit is found out, the capitalist oppressor is exposed).

In Pinter of course, as in Beckett, Godot never actually comes. But in our shock-theatre school he is shown in a green light, or in the bath, bloated and physically repulsive or covered in blood. What level of prejudice does this play on? Ageism? Uglyism? I'm not sure, but I do find its glibness suspect. It is also a way of keeping your options open to the last moment. Political options in particular, because the last ambiguous and cataclysmic moment solves all.

So if not that, what? I can't claim to know. But I have always reacted strongly against Pinterism. And I've always been wary of 'distancing' (Brecht isn't *only* that, incidentally) or 'thought-provoking' theatre when it smacks of the assumption of a monopoly on analysis by an intellectual elite.

The positive direction for me seems to lie



in putting all your cards on the table, laying the artifice open, 'taking it out', unfolding your argument through what you actually show on stage as you show it, trusting the truth of the performances as they unfold. And this has been done by all of our writers at times, as well as our touring groups.

Rather than using the stage as a platform on which to set up and knock down what we don't like, let's see it first for what it is as a platform; and let's by all means give our characters and situations on it their own space. Let us respect Griffiths' desire to get inside his characters, for it squares with the actor's need to find a handle of sympathy with which to grip a characterisation.

If we have confidence in the strength of our argument, we should also have the wit to work that argument through. Through the characters, through the space, through the platform; coming out of the narrow grip of a convincing reproduction of reality towards the broader, deeper view in a way which convinces us by its consistency, both emotionally and intellectually.

In saying that, I'm aware of the constant inconsistency and contradictoriness of people in real life, the revolutionary potential of what has been unseen springing suddenly to the foreground, but as we do that, let us also respect the audience's right to choose and select as much as our own. For the platform is a free zone, you can't control it, only occupy it temporarily, and afterwards your audience will draw their own conclusions anyway.

In the end we are all looking to transcend immediate reality, and the fact of performance is what gives us the key. It is an illusion, it is a shock, but unless it relates in performance, in the flesh, to what our audiences recognise, it will stir neither mind nor spirit.

# The Industrialisation of Office Work

The computer, as a commercial tool, has been with us for two decades. Its economic justification has been its ability to replace human clerical labour in the performance of repetitive calculations and the processing of information on a large scale. Because of their size and expense, the use of computers up to now has been mainly confined to places where very large amounts of information were being processed under one roof - that is, in banking, in insurance, in the wages departments of large companies and so on. All these are rather specialised applications and as a result the impact of computers on most people's lives has so far been marginal.

There is now taking place, however, a revolution in the electronics industry which will dramatically alter this situation. The new technique of large scale integration (LSI) makes it possible to reproduce photographically on a very small piece of silicon an electronic circuit with tens of thousands of components - for example a whole computer. The capital costs involved are immense but once they have been met any given circuit can be reproduced in huge numbers at a very low unit cost.

The immediately visible results have been the flood of cheap calculators, low cost digital watches, television games and similar electronic toys. A more significant long term consequence, however, will be the availability of large numbers of small, very cheap, computers (so called 'micro-processors'). These make possible the use of computers for small scale information processing tasks where their use has not up to now been economic. Because of this we are now seeing the beginnings of a second wave of computerisation which will have the most profound economic and social consequences.

The leading edge of this wave of automation is likely to be in the large areas of office work which have so far been untouched by the computer. Typical of the devices now coming onto the market is the so called 'word processor'. This is a kind of electronic typewriter, with a video screen instead of the usual cylinder and paper and containing a small computer with a memory for previous correspondence and the ability to perform a wide variety of editing, layout and text-manipulation functions. More advanced models can even correct spelling mistakes! Once prepared, text is transmitted elsewhere for printing by pushing a button.

One word processor operator, it is claimed, replaces three conventional typists

with their machines and can be paid less (the new job is probably less skilled - it is certainly more boring). A word processor currently costs £4000 and the price will fall as the market for them grows.

On these costings it seems likely that word processors will quite rapidly replace typewriters in all but the smallest offices. Since typists are 15 per cent of all office workers this change alone will have a considerable effect on office employment patterns. (If the claims about productivity are true it could make 10 per cent of all office staff redundant.)

This is likely to be just one of a whole range of microprocessor based innovations which will substitute capital for labour in office work. Offices can be considered very 'ripe' for industrialisation. Since 1950 office costs have risen from being 20 per cent of the overheads of a typical manufacturing business to being 50 per cent of the overheads today. Office workers are now 40 per cent of the working population.

Offices moreover, can be considered increasingly undercapitalised. The average office worker is associated with only £500 of capital equipment, compared with £5000 for a factory worker. Close on 80 per cent of office costs are wage costs. In this situation there is a potentially enormous market for equipment that can replace office workers, provided it can be produced cheaply enough.

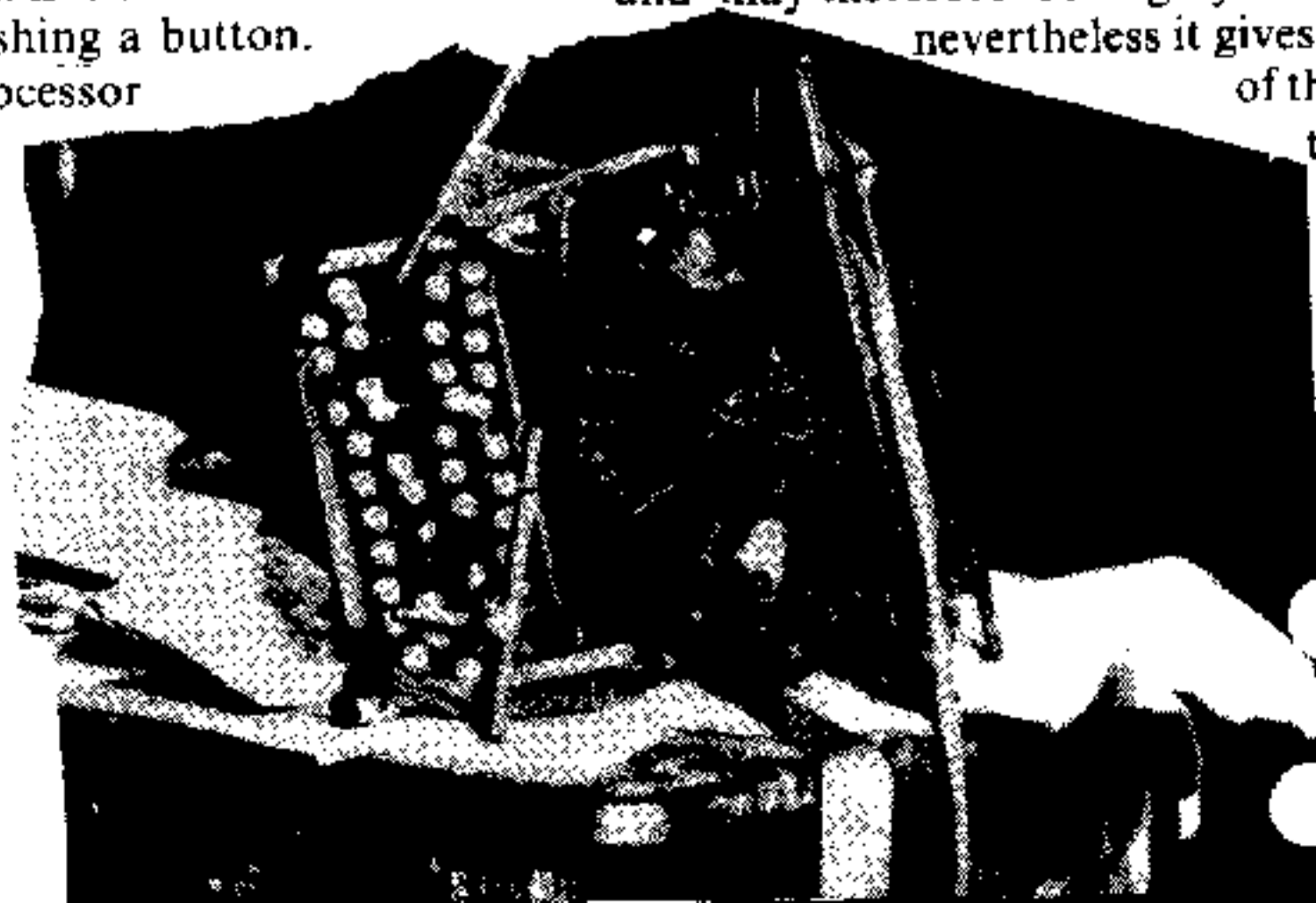
The new technology of LSI will enable the electronics industry to meet these constraints and in the process to obtain the high volume of sales necessary to recoup their capital outlay. The results are likely to transform the whole nature of office work.

Under boom conditions technological innovation does not normally cause unemployment because the loss of jobs caused by innovations is more than compensated for by the overall expansion of the system. The wave of innovation associated with LSI, however, will be taking place (barring a miraculous recovery) in a situation of continuing world recession.

A study carried out by the research department of the white-collar union ASTMS estimated that the effect in Britain of increasing office automation in this economic climate will be to raise unemployment to the 5 million mark by the early 1990s. This is presumably a projection from current trends and may therefore be highly inaccurate -

nevertheless it gives some idea of the scale of the coming changes.

David Turner



# CAN BRITISH LEYLAND SURVIVE?

*The threat by the AUEW Executive to expel the striking toolmakers at SU Carburettors and the possibility of solidarity action by the rest of the Leyland toolmakers has, once again, thrust BL into the head-lines.*

*The question of what strategy socialists inside Leyland should pursue is a highly contentious one. The Communist Party produced a pamphlet last year called British Leyland—Save It. This has now been followed by an interview with four*

*communist shop stewards from BL's Longbridge plant, including Derek Robinson, works convenor and chairman of the Leyland combine committee, in the CP fortnightly Comment (5 August 1978). We publish below extracts from the interview, followed by a reply by two SWP stewards, also from Longbridge.*

## TWO VIEWS

### **THE COMMUNIST PARTY VIEW:**

*Interviewed: Derek Robinson, AUEW, convenor of the joint shop stewards' committee and chairman of the BL combine committee; Jack Adams, TGWU, chairman of the JSSC; Vic Poulton, AUEW, chairman of AUEW shop stewards and member of the JSSC executive; Colin Willetts, AUEW minutes secretary; all four are members of the work committee.*

The interview began with a discussion of methods of payment, and the effect of the shift from piece-wages, where the rate for a particular piece of work was negotiated between the shop stewards and management, to measured day work, where the standards of work to which wages are tied are established by industrial engineers.

*Does the discussion over work measurement create any conflicts for you as shop floor representatives?*

**DR** Because we only have a small measure of mutuality (shop stewards' veto over changes in conditions, manning etc—ed) it tends to develop into a bargaining, haggling position and we end up with something better than the works study has shown. Now that might be fairly good in most instances because in reality you end up with more people on the

job than you really need, because you bargained.

Now that's OK and many people would say that's our job and that's what we ought to do. But it's got its disadvantages in as much as it leads to overmanning.

Even those of us on the left want to ensure the continuation of British Leyland, in its entirety, and we are caught in a dilemma as to what had ought to be the correct manning levels: How efficient we should be, to what extent should we become more involved and accept that we ought to become more efficient.

It's a contradiction in what people expect you to do, because they look at it from a very narrow parochial standpoint whereas those of us who are political have to look at it in a broad political way because we are talking about the future of their jobs.

*Does the fact that British Leyland is now nationalised change people's attitudes towards it? For example, if it were still privately owned there might be less pressure on you to be bothered about how efficient it was. But does the fact that it's a nationalised industry create more pressure on you to be concerned about efficiency?*

**VP** There's been a dramatic change for us, we're now concerned with the place running. Before it was just a free for all.

*Did that change of attitude come about very quickly?*

**DR** It did from the people in the leadership. But we still haven't won the conception amongst the broad masses of people on the shopfloor that they've got a vested interest in

efficiency no less than we have. It's one of our problems.

*The fact that it's state owned is something that political people would recognise had changed it, but a lot of people who weren't political, their experience of work would be just the same.*

**DR** Exactly. I think you've put it in a nutshell. It's the political battle we still have to win. We are not thinking that we are always going to live in a capitalist society, and above all, if we are able to change the ideas and make Leyland successful as a publicly owned company, then it is self-evident that that will be a major political victory.

It will prove to the work people, millions of them, that ordinary working people have got a contribution to make, that they've got sufficient intelligence, determination, and level of understanding that enables them to do whatever is necessary and above everything else it kills once and for all the propaganda against public ownership. These are the political considerations as far as we are concerned.

**VP** A lot of people say that if we make it efficient, then they'll hand it back. That's the fear.

**DR** There again, it's in the struggle to lift the level of understanding that we are conducting right now that will create resistance to handing it back to private ownership or indeed, to giving it off which is another possibility.

*Is there a great deal of commitment to it being a nationalised industry?*

**DR** No.

# CAN BRITISH LEYLAND SURVIVE?

*Before 1968 (when measured day work was agreed—ed), did piecework offer you more opportunity to gain some sort of control over production?*

**DR** Very much so. But it was very much on an individual basis. Now there were inherent weaknesses in the piecework system, because it depended on how well organised or how militant an individual or group of individuals were. We had wide variations of earnings because of individual weaknesses and strengths.

That's bound to create aggro between different groups, but it was a strength in some ways on the piecework because of the group interests.

Under standard day work, it's retrograde and reactionary because we haven't yet won the collective viewpoint that we've got to have a concern for *everybody*, we've still got the group interest coming to the fore and I think the classic example is the toolmakers.

*What sort of changes do you think will be big enough to create that sort of identity of carworkers together rather than a toolroom worker or a production worker, and especially working in a nationalised industry that is there for the public interest?*

**DR** The threat of closure. Without any question at all, that's the one big issue.

**CW** I believe that the toolmakers' problem is really that they want more money. We're a nationalised industry coming under government legislation, and the government's determined to keep the nationalised industries within the pay-limits, not only the toolmaker's wages, but everybody else's in British Leyland. I think that's the fundamental problem.

What people are doing is in any way possible to try and get a wage rise. The talk about differentials is actually a smokescreen. I don't think there'd be a real argument, myself, if we all got more money.

*One of the reasons in other industries you've found craftsmen fighting tooth and nail to defend their position is because their job is becoming less skilled and they are afraid that the craft is going to go altogether and they will just become production workers. How much is that happening to craft jobs on cars?*

**JA** That will happen terrifically at Longbridge.

**VP** It's the diagnostic skill that will actually die out.

**JA** There's about ten per cent of the craftsmen who will have their skill increased without any doubt because they will be doing off-track repairs. The on-job craftsmen will be subject to huge changes because the fault, at whatever stage of the machinery, can now be pinpointed electronically.

What they will do is replace parts because that's how the system is designed, so it will be a very simple and a limited amount of skill that will be needed for that kind of craft job.



**'If we make Leyland successful... then that will be a major political victory'**

**DEREK ROBINSON**

The people off-track in the servicing areas, the back-up areas, will have their skills increased.

You can get round that a lot of ways by rotating work so that you increase *everybody's* skill. They'll have to retrain production workers to do craft jobs.

At Fiat there were large-scale throw-offs of skilled production men and large requirements for craftsmen and they had crash training programmes of about 18 months, when people in production moved two grades and then had specialist training.

*So it could make a major change in the whole structure of work in a car plant?*

**JA** Oh, it's coming—it's knocking at the door.

*And what do craft workers feel about that—do they feel frightened?*

**DR** We've got craftsmen being trained on the unimake machinery and refusing to be involved with us on negotiating how we are going to man it, how we are going to work it, because they are being bloody minded. And yet if they don't get involved, it will be done over their heads. We are in a dilemma, particularly those of us in the leadership who come from this group of workers.

We keep raising the question with them. Now we see the need to negotiate in detail what we are going to do with this new technology so that we build in the essence of control which is absolutely essential and we are going to be successful only to the degree that we unite all the groups of workers who are going to be involved.

*People think of craft workers as being white and male and about 40. Is that generally true?*

**JA** Yes, that's true, those are the qualifications.

*And what do you think about that, not only as British Leyland workers, but people on the left?*

**JA** It's a very bad situation, but it's a matter of opportunity, but the opportunities have been very selective in the past. There's absolutely no justification for it continuing.

The first Asian that came into our department, I had to put him with a steward in his gang for the lad's own protection, and that's not going back more than five years. Now my department takes on the coloured labour without any problems at all. In addition, in the same period, we have introduced a progression scheme where low paid workers can take an aptitude test, and receive training for production jobs.

We've been accused of being racist some of the ultra-lefts in this city, but the facts are as a consequence of that policy of progression more Africans or Asians have the opportunity to progress than ever before in our factory. In our machine shop areas where there was none at all, there's not a substantial number, but now they're a minority—they're growing daily.



'... effective shop-floor organisation is a barrier to Leyland's "efficiency".'  
FRANK HENDERSON

*Given the existing structure of the negotiations at the moment, can you involve more people in these major planning questions of controlling the work, or are you going to have structural changes in how you negotiate and who is involved in the negotiations?*

**JA** We need change like yesterday in our method of negotiations. What we need more than anything is a very strong combine and its involvement and indeed the basis on which any negotiations, and our problem is that if we get people like Duffy that's controlling the negotiations, nominating people on the negotiating committee rather than electing people on to the negotiating committee, that can lead us back 20 years in my estimation.

It is mainly through the through the strength of our shop stewards' organisations that we have gained the control that we have

today, so basically that is going to be our problem during the next four-five years in my opinion.

**DR** Yes, we are going to have to fight the official machine like hell. The quicker, for instance, that no national trade union official sits on our negotiating committee, the better. We should use the national officers in a period of deadlock and for no other reason. Not only that, you know we are answerable directly back to the people inside our factories where the national officials are not, and they look at things in a very different way to what we do.

Hence the demands that are very strongly coming forward now for an established combine committee recognised both by unions and management. Indeed there would be no trouble from the management in recognising the combine committee providing the unions recognised it; that's the biggest single problem.

## **THE SWP VIEW:**

*Frank Henderson is deputy senior steward of the Sheet Metal Workers' Union at Longbridge; Tony Preist is a member of the TGWU at Longbridge chairman of the North Works shop stewards, both are members of the Socialist Workers Party.*

At the beginning of the interview Derek Robinson outlines the Communist Party's programme for British Leyland. It is a very simple one make BL 'successful'. He is quite clear he is talking about success in capitalist terms he wants to make nationalisation work within the limits of capitalism.

If this programme is implemented, its price will be the end of shop stewards' organisation inside Longbridge. Robinson speaks of the 'dilemma': shop stewards' using mutuality to haggle and bargain leads to 'overmanning'. If BL is to become a successful capitalist firm then manning levels must be cut. So effective shopfloor organisation is a barrier to Leyland's 'efficiency'.

This is what Robinson's 'political' fight against 'parochialism' amounts to. Shop stewards should stop fighting over manning and conditions for their own sections and allow 'the people in the leadership' of the plant to accept the loss of jobs and conditions necessary to make Leyland 'work'.

The Communist Party seem to think that the main problem facing workers at Longbridge is 'sectionalism'. They denounced the toolroom strike last year and are now lining up with the right wing against the strikers at SU Carburettors. They say that if only skilled workers would stop defending their differentials then all the problems at BL could be sorted out.

But in the past workers at Longbridge

have united in solidarity with each other. In 1953 a shop steward called McHugh was sacked for organising his section. 1,000 workers came out on strike and picketed the gates, arguing with their fellow workers that they should come out in solidarity. The result was a six month strike by the whole plant which resulted in McHugh's reinstatement.

Then again in 1956 a small section of workers came out on strike and picketed the gates managed to pull out the whole plant 30,000 workers in those days. In each case a small minority was able to involve the other workers—in struggle. It was possible to unite the workforce through a determined fight by a small minority for militant action, for working-class solidarity.

Today the plant leadership is unable to unite the rank and file behind them because they argue, not for unity in action, but for making Leyland 'successful' at the workers' expense.

It is hardly surprising that some workers react to this situation by engaging in sectional battles. As Colin Willetts admits the toolmakers are fighting for more money—the issue of differentials is just a 'smokescreen' covering the demand for higher wages. They distrust the present leadership, which is not fighting for higher wages, but is selling jobs and conditions, and so their struggle for higher wages takes a sectional form.

Robinson and Co have run away from fighting for higher wages for many years now. Even during the last phase of the piece-work system they did not press for higher rates. Now they are trying to sew up a package which will mean big wage rises in exchange for savage attacks on jobs and conditions. Management are already talking about cutting 7,000 jobs by the end of the year, and there'll be more sackings to follow those. They are using the SU strike as a n

# CAN BRITISH LEYLAND SURVIVE?

excuse to talk about shutting down most sports car production.

We have to say that we want more money—but we're not going to sell jobs and conditions to get it. We want a share of the profits on the new technology that is being introduced. But we must oppose every redundancy. If the new machinery means less work, then what we need is work-sharing: a 35-hour week, even a 20-hour week if necessary.

The only way in which we can oppose the management offensive is by fighting for the socialist alternative to capitalism. As long as we accept the framework of capitalism we're finished. Edwardes has been given the Labour government's mandate to make BL profitable. This can only be achieved by sackings and speed-up.

The political fight we need is not to make Leyland 'successful' in capitalist terms. It is to defend wages, jobs and conditions against Edwardes' offensive. The fact of the matter is that the CP leadership has *never* fought politically within the plant.

Take the case of blacks and women. At one stage 4,000 women worked inside Longbridge. As a result of measured day work and the increased mobility arising from new timing schedules agreed in 1973 and 1974, women are no longer employed. There are only 500 of them left in the plant.

Even where improvements have been won, as in the case of the blacks, it is no thanks to Robinson and Co. Even today there are some areas where blacks are labourers and store-keepers, never direct workers. Until a few years ago it was unknown for an Asian or a West Indian to work on the tracks or in the machine shops.

The situation only began to change when six workers were taken on from BSA—five whites, one black. The whites were put onto the better paid, more skilled direct work. The black was put onto indirect work. He kicked up a fuss and as a result a progression scheme was introduced under which workers could be shifted from higher to lower grades after passing certain tests. Even then one of the tests allowed racialism a lot of play until it was abolished quite recently.

The plant leadership has never mounted a political battle against racialism inside Longbridge. As a result, the Nazis have been able to build a base inside the plant. There are even a number of NF shop stewards.

## Extension

We are not arguing against a strong and effective leadership. But we will only get such a leadership if it reflects the rank and file and fights for their interests. We support a strong Combine Committee—but as an extension of shop floor power, not an elite cut off from the rank and file.

The Works Committee at Longbridge is chosen by an annual general meeting of all shop stewards. At present, about 70 per cent of the stewards stay away from the AGM.

Those who do turn up are told whom to vote for. There are eight members of the Works Committee—four TGWU, three AUEW, and one from the other unions. The TGWU and AUEW stewards, at their own separate quarterlies, choose their delegates to the Works Committee.

So the stewards at the AGM are faced with a fait accompli. At the last quarterlies, there were 58 stewards at the TGWU meeting, about 30 at the AUEW. So 88 stewards, representing perhaps 1/8 of the membership, chose the Works Committee.

The Leyland Combine Committee is elected roughly on the basis of one delegate per 10,000 members. Longbridge has two delegates—Derek Robinson and Jack Adams—both of whom are chosen, not by the rank and file, but by the Works Committee. What we have at Longbridge is a 'rank-and-file bureaucracy' cut off from the membership as effectively as any full-time trade union official. We should fight for a Combine Committee and a plant leadership consisting of rank-and-file delegates, not full-time convenors and senior stewards.

Their alienation from the shop floor helps to explain why the Communist Party fights for such reactionary policies within British Leyland. They are committed, as we have seen, to making BL work as a capitalist enterprise, even if jobs and conditions suffer as a result.

The harsh reality is that Leyland is not viable in these terms. The international car industry is a world of savage competition. BL invests £800 per worker a year. The equivalent figure in Japan is £10,000. Even with the new technology BL's target is to produce 16 cars per worker every year. The Japanese already have lines producing 41 cars per worker every year.

BL cannot survive as a volume car producer. Under socialism there would be no reason why cars should be produced in Britain if they could be produced more efficiently in Japan. Longbridge could be switched to producing something else, just like the Portuguese car factory which began producing agricultural machinery rather than cars during the 1974-5 revolution.

The Communist Party is committed to a narrow, nationalistic programme, which sets British against Japanese workers for the sake of the profitability of British capitalism. We should reject the profit criterion and fight for a system under which production is for need.

Leyland has no chance of surviving under capitalism. The CP, by looking for a cure to the firm's problems in collaboration with the bosses, is rejecting the only solution—socialism. The CP line represents a capitulation to capitalism and its own collapse as a working-class party. It flows from the abandonment of the very concept of working-class power, of the dictatorship of the proletariat, in the CP programme. *The British Road to Socialism*. The Communist Party's policies have turned it into a tool of the bosses.

Angela Phillips (IFU)





# Another voice, another class

'How could you organise a Terrorist Workers' Party?' asks **Colin Sparks**

When the Sandinist guerrillas drove from Nicaragua's Parliament House to the airport, they were cheered by masses of people lining the route. As the news of their spectacular and successful action spread, a massive struggle broke out throughout the country which brought the 45-year dictatorship of the Somoza family to its knees. One minor side-effect was that two of the most common Marxist arguments against terrorism were in ruins. It had been proved that terrorist actions can succeed. It had been proved that terrorist actions can be popular. Many people are starting to say that, with a few modifications to fit the local situation, perhaps we might try something along the same lines on, say, Webster and Tyndall.

I want to argue that the genuine Marxist case against terrorism is quite different from one based on its alleged unpopularity or inefficiency, and that we are unalterably opposed to even the most successful, popular and dramatic terrorist exploits. Terrorism is, properly speaking, a bourgeois strategy and it has nothing in common with socialism.

We argue that socialism can only be achieved by the collective self-activity of the mass of the working class. Only when people act for themselves and take control of the whole of their own lives is it possible to remove the exploitation and misery of class society and to develop a society in which everybody can find fulfilled lives. We do not believe that such a revolution will be a picnic and we accept, reluctantly, that the overthrow of capitalism will probably involve armed violence. But we do not believe that this mass flowering of democracy is an optional extra. We do not even believe that it is the best among several ways to bring about socialism. We think that it is the essence of socialism and that no revolutionary change is possible other than by way of the working class taking control of society.

Many people argue against this. They say that the conditions of modern capitalism ensure that the vast mass of the population

will remain riveted to *Crossroads* and page three of the *Sun*. They say that the technical sophistication of the modern state is so great that the mass of the people would not know how to fight it. They say that modern society is so complex that the mass of the people would not know how to run it. On this basis, they argue that the masses must be guided by special people. These are men and women who are somehow immune to the pressures of bourgeois society; who are clever enough or well-trained enough to meet the capitalist class on its own ground.

The most popular version of this argument gives these super-people the name 'Members of Parliament'; our role in social change is to vote these wonders into office, and perhaps to cheer from the side-lines while they, all six-hundred-odd, slay the dragon of capital.

Another version says that all this talk is nonsense and that what is needed is another sort of super-person called the terrorist; our role in social change is to give them food, shelter, money, and perhaps to cheer from the side-lines, while they, perhaps six hundred-odd, slay the dragon of capital.

## Identical

These arguments are identical. Both think that we can be liberated by the special qualities of someone else. In one case it is debating skill; in the other it is heroism. In both versions we should be thankful that there are such paragons around. A terrorist is a reformist with a machine gun.

We reject this notion of social change as bourgeois. It supposes that we, the people, are too stupid or too cowardly ever to fight for ourselves. The Grace of God has fallen upon an elect who can see what we cannot see, think what we cannot think, dare what we cannot dare. Such a view offers only a grotesque caricature of bourgeois ideas of individual excellence and bourgeois notions of an hierarchical order.

But theory is not just something that is printed in thick books. It penetrates into

everything that we do. For example, we try to build the Socialist Workers' Party. This involves doing a mass of things. Among them, we produce and sell *Socialist Worker*. In it, we explain as openly and clearly as we can what we think is wrong with capitalism and how we think a better world can be built. We sell it to everybody we can. We are continually arguing our politics with any poor innocent we can corner. We welcome new recruits with rather more enthusiasm than Billy Graham at a revival meeting. We take every opportunity to help people act together and think for themselves.

Consider what we would be doing if we were trying to build the Terrorist Workers' Party. First of all, a terrorist organisation is, by definition, an illegal clandestine group engaged in military actions against the state. Therefore, we would not spend time selling *Terrorist Worker* around our workmates: secrecy is the very birthmark of a terrorist group. We would not be holding public meetings advertised as widely as possible on the subject of 'Why you should be a terrorist'. We would not be arguing all the time at work that all and sundry should start acting like terrorists.

On the contrary, we would be keeping very quiet indeed. At most, each of us would know two or three other party members and we would not meet them if we could possibly avoid it. Perhaps, after knowing someone for a long time, we might very quietly and carefully start sounding them out about how they felt about the latest action by the Terrorist Workers' Party.

To put the case very concretely: we all know that it is difficult to be a revolutionary shop steward — difficult but not impossible. It is impossible to be a terrorist shop steward. It is possible to be a terrorist *and* a shop steward, but the two are not linked. Imagine the situation: a strike is being organised. The revolutionary is rushing around getting support and organising. The terrorist *might* just be doing that, but if so s/he is not putting his or her theory into practice. If s/he was, then s/he would be

**'... A terrorist is a reformist  
with a machine gun.'**

planning now to assassinate the managing director.

The difference penetrates even into the shape of the organisation. Every organisation fighting capitalism carries the marks of some of the enemies worst features. There is always pressure towards hierarchy; to giving orders rather than persuading. There is always a pressure even on socialists to think of themselves as a little bit better than the people they work alongside of. But an organisation that has to argue its politics day in day out with an audience of sceptics is under a contrary pressure towards democracy.

We cannot call a strike to order; we have to convince. We cannot force people to be socialists, we have to persuade. We are always forced to try and generalise our own limited experience by discussion with other party members. Our internal structure reflects those two pressures: we are centralised because we are fighting a centralised enemy, we are democratic because we have to relate to the mass of the working class.

## Pressures

A terrorist organisation is subject to only one of these pressures — the pressure towards hierarchy. Because it is, by definition, cut off from the mass of the population in order to survive, it does not have to persuade. Its arguments flow from the barrels of its guns. It is, in fact, based on the most rotten and hierarchic organisation that class societies have ever spawned — an army.

It is in the nature of armies that people give and take orders. This arises partly from the fact that it is technically very difficult to debate what to do in the middle of a gun battle. It also arises from the brutal and inhuman tasks for which armies exist. There is no such thing as a fully democratic army. Not even the workers' militia will be free from the taint of authority: it will be one of the necessities of socialism, not one of its achievements.

In making the military model a virtue, the terrorist cannot avoid the psychological consequences. We socialists often get carried away with our importance after a good meeting and a few beers. But there is always the cold-water of the next night's inquorate union branch meeting to balance it out. The terrorist does not have that. Their actions are never tested by the votes of the mass meeting. The starting point of isolation is re-inforced by the nature of the organisation and it is confirmed by failure, rather than being questioned. It is as a consequence of this that many terrorist actions seem like madness to us on the outside. It is not that the terrorists are mad or evil: they usually have the best of intentions. Much more important, cut off in their isolation, they are trapped in a logic determined by their self-assumed goals and the needs of their own group. It is only too easy to treat the masses with contempt.

We Marxists can sympathise with people driven by the horrors of capitalism into armed terror. We can admire their courage and heroism. We rarely shed tears when some brutal capitalist butcher is given the treatment he deserves. But we are engaged in a different business altogether. We have different goals. We have different methods. We have different tactics. We are the voice of a different class.

Like most novels written by, and about, the working class, *A Scots Quair* by Lewis Grassie Gibbon (the pen-name of James Leslie Mitchell, 1901-35) suffered a semi-oblivion since its first appearance in three parts, in 1932-4, until republication by Pan Books in 1973. Since then it has been more popular than ever before: perhaps as a result of the increasing interest in working-class life and culture during the 1960s and 1970s.

Mitchell was born in the Mearns, Aberdeenshire, the son of a tenant farmer, received rather more schooling than he probably would have done had he been born in early twentieth century England, became a journalist, then a serviceman in the army and the RAF and, finally, a fulltime writer in Hertfordshire.

By the time he had taken on his other persona, his Scots peasant identity, Gibbon, he had written several novels etc., under his own name, was a Communist and friend of Hugh MacDiarmid, the poet who, almost single-handed, has recreated Scots language and literature, and was ready to incorporate into his 'quair', or set of papers, or volume, his commitments—a belief in the intrinsic worth of the Scots peasant life which he had seen disappearing in the years before the first world war; in the primitive communism he saw in Neolithic ancestors, and whose Standing Stones in the Mearns country had so fascinated him as a boy; and in communism and revolution to free the workers and slum dwellers he saw in Glasgow.

The trilogy begins and ends in the farmlands in which Mitchell's mother 'used to hap me in a plaid...and leave me in the lea of a stook while she harvested.', and where his father can be seen in a photo reproduced in the study of Mitchell by Douglas F Young. *Beyond the Sunset*, the exact model for Gibbon's heroine's father, James Guthrie, stocky, capped and with bare, tanned arms showing a lifetime of hard farming.

The story traces the life of Chris Guthrie through three marriages, to a farm labourer, a clergyman and an ex-ploughman from the beginning of the century to the early 1930s. In *Sunset Song* the eclipse of the small farmer is described, in *Cloud Howe* a mill town and its workers, in *Grey Granite's* Chris and her son, the Communist, Ewan confront the keelies, or young roughs, the

workers and the slums of an industrial city, probably Glasgow.

There are therefore really two parts to the novel: the first part written, as it were, by the son of a farmer, Gibbon, and the second by the left-wing writer, Mitchell. These were incompatible: there were two sets of oppositions, a private and a political. We can see now how heroic war Mitchell's attempt to fuse the two—his own experience and conviction of the value of peasant life, against both the development of capitalism and the dictates of communist doctrine of the time and the realities of the subordination of the country to industry in Soviet Russia.

Yet another contradiction appears in the novel. Gibbon knows the Scots peasant from the inside. The bias of the entire novel is towards the ploughman. But the keelies of the city are looked at as by a stranger. This is why the earlier sections are more convincing than the later, and why Gibbon sends his heroine back to the farm which she lived on as a child.

What, however, holds the novel together is the particular Scots idiom — 'the rhythms and cadence of the kindred speech that his peasants speak' — which Gibbon invented. Like Hugh MacDiarmid, he felt the need to express his commitment to the working classes he knew by stamping the book with their speech, and therefore, their identity, not that of the alien English:

'Maybe there were some twenty to thirty holdings in all, the crofters dour folk of the old Pict stock, they had no history, common folk, and ill-reared their biggings clustered and chaved amid the long sloping fields. The leases were one-year, two-year, you worked from the blink of the day you were breeked to the flicker of the night they shrouded you, and the dirt of the gentry sat and ate up your rents but you were as good as they were.'

## LIVELINESS

Here, in a characteristic passage from the beginning of 'Sunset Song', is Gibbon's sense of history, of continuity, his sense of class and the irony which gives so much liveliness and sensitivity to the novel and which comes

# THE PLOUGH

out of that collective voice—the voice of a close-knit, narrow, scandal-mongering community—Gibbon's working class origins and attitude enabled him to produce. (It is, in fact, exactly the voice of his mother, who, on reading the novel said: 'All that muck... it's the speak of the place... I'm ashamed of you.'))

In his essay in which Mitchell describes his life and convictions, 'The Land', he emphasises his faith in the strength of the land, although it is quite clear that he has no illusions about the harshness of peasant life; comments on the place sex has in this economic environment, where a dozen children meant no inheritance for them, and thereby explains the way in which he handles child-birth in the novel and why Chris' mother commits suicide; refers to his anger at the way men treated animals, and so justifies the death of a horse in *Cloud Howe* taking several pages; and extols the virtues of those distant Neolithic predecessors: 'without ... classes or culture, writers or artists, free and happy.')

Thus, Ewan collects flints, Chris meditates by the Standing Stones and we can go to the Marxist archaeologist, Gordon Childe and read in his *What Happened in History* that these peoples held land in common. Emotionally, Gibbon fused land and prehistory; imaginatively, Chris escaped from the city into both. On this David Craig, the Marxist critic, has made the point that here Mitchell, as Gibbon, gave way to homesickness, nostalgia.

This is correct. It is a result of the contradictions which lie at the heart of a novel which tried to reconcile, in imaginative terms a failing countryside and a disjointed industrial capitalism. In the historical context of the novel we can also see that Mitchell (remotely) belongs to the first thirty years of the century when there was much idealism about going back-to-the-land, to the blood, to the instincts (obviously some of these elements are a part of fascism)—all these being attempts to escape from the appalling strains which late nineteenth century capitalism had produced. Mitchell, or Gibbon, can be seen responding to those tensions: Mitchell by interpreting class struggle in the city, Gibbon by recreating the farms of his childhood.

A similar debate about the importance of the land is still going on in left wing discussions; and such an autobiographical film by the Taviani brothers, *Padre, Padrone*, expresses similar confrontations—the journey of Gedda from shepherd to intellectual is not unlike Mitchell's.

## DEPRESSION

The social strains of the 1930s have left their mark on the novel in other ways. Mitchell intended the last part to bring out his imaginative interpretation of the class struggle during the worst years of the Depression. He worked to make the portrait of Ewan, as he became tougher, more ruthless, and of the unemployed and the communist leaders, convincing. In doing so, it is clear that the particular style he is using is not right for this. He has to shout:

'And Big Jim twinkled his eyes and said No, for that you'd to go in for Socialism and Reform, ...and be awful undignant about the conditions of those gentlemanly coves, the suffering workers. And Ewan grinned at him, he at Ewan, neither had a single illusion about the workers: they weren't heroes or gods oppressed, or likely to be generous and reasonable.... Most likely such leaders of the workers as themselves would be flung aside or trampled under, it didn't matter, nothing to them, they themselves were the workers and they'd no more protest than a man's fingers complain of a foolish muscle.'

But those workers, as I have said, are seen from the outside. And the passage, although not a bad piece of political thinking in the novel's context, also demonstrates that Mitchell, by those words he capitalized, is realising the difficulties. He has the same imaginative problem elsewhere, with Chris and her son:

'What's a keelie, Ewan? Your father was a ploughman afore were wed, and I was a quean in a crofter's kitchen.' '.....just that though my father was a ploughman and you came from a kitchen --that's nothing to do with me, has it?.....'

And, more so, in establishing a relationship between Chris and the unemployed:

'They both stared like gowks a minute, speechless, he'd shaved and wore a second-hand suit, over-big for him, bulging at paunch and bottom, the thin brown face didn't look so starved, cocky and confident till he met her eyes.....So that was who the sulky bitch was, boorjoy and stuck-up-....'

Or, in reconciling his heroine to city life: '.....it had seemed to Chris six months before that Ake Ogilvie's coming had brought to Duncairn something clean and crude as the smell of rain—crude and clean as herself had been once before a playing at gentry enslaved her.....' That 'playing at gentry' sums up the whole anti-city attitude of Gibbon, but, effective thought it is, in its own way, this is not sufficient to weld together two such great and disparate subjects as the decline of a peasantry and the disasters of interwar capitalism. It is some tribute to Mitchell that it works at all; but the last time such massive themes could be reconciled was in the nineteenth century.

However, Mitchell goes further than anyone else in trying to make politics and private life interlock at a grass roots level. At the end of the trilogy Ewan is on the way towards completing his sentimental education. Because his English mistress is reluctant to accept the isolation and loss of being a Communist, he rejects her. To most readers this appears as a piece of gratuitous brutality; to MacDiarmid it was an unconscious necessity for Mitchell to break from the English.

Perhaps so, but I think that Mitchell wanted it to be the key scene for the 'class struggle' part of the novel. Instead, and underlining the difficulties I have tried to emphasise, it is only the final stage of Ewan's education. It is also very characteristic of the 1930s: an all or nothing, now or never approach to the decay of capitalism. As Mitchell knew, capitalism wasn't on its last legs during the 1930s. Had he lived longer it is likely he would have tried his hand at a novel about the Spanish civil war.

Since then the English working class novel—by Sillitoe, Hines, Storey has become less overtly class-conscious, less ambitious. The 'great' 'proletarian' novel hasn't yet been written. But we have this splendid success and failure instead. *Eric Tartakover*.

# AND



# THE CITY

After years of semi-oblivion, the working-class novels of Lewis Grassie Gibbon (left) are once again stirring interest. Eric Tartakover takes a look at the most famous books of this communist writer and friend of Hugh MacDiarmid

Writers • REVIEWED •



## Disturbing journey into a new territory

### The Gun and the Olive Branch

David Hirst  
Faber £6.50

For the year prior to the 1967 Six Day War, I was living on an Israeli farming settlement which was just six miles from the Syrian border. During that whole period, there was not one single Syrian or Palestinian attack on the kibbutz and in fact, no attack was expected. It was an easy-going life; we had no air raid practice, there was no security fence and most of the settlement's weapons were locked away in an impregnable-looking armoury.

Night guard consisted of two lightly armed and bored irregulars whose major contribution of the year was the interception and arrest of the settlement's own secretary.

Now during the Six Day War something odd happened. The Syrian Golan mountains, which were only a short distance from our kibbutz, were occupied by the Israelis for the purpose of stopping the Syrians in their 'frequent' attacks from the mountains on the settlements below. But most extraordinary of all was that all of us on one of the settlements below, who had experienced no attacks, wholeheartedly believed the

official Israeli explanation.

We were actually there, yet we still succumbed to the myth.

I was reminded of all this while reading the section of David Hirst's fine history of Palestine which describes the build-up to the Six-Day War. This section, like most of the others in the book, is a devastating challenge to Zionist mythology. In fact, so many myths are broken in the book that most readers are going to find themselves in completely new territory.

Such an experience will be emotionally disturbing because Western opinion in general, often especially that of the left, has been soaked in sentimentality by Israeli propagandists, who are uniquely expert in this field.

It is precisely because David Hirst is so successful in alienating readers from Zionism's pious fraud that socialists should embark on, and encourage others to embark on this Palestinian historical journey.

The journey is one through acts of violence - both Arab and Hebrew violence: right from individual assaults, through acts of aggression which involve not guns but legal documents dispossessing the rights of thousands, to major wars in

which thousands die.

I should like to consider David Hirst's handling of two major acts of violence. One is a Jewish act... the Six Day War while the other is Arab... the riots in the town of Jaffa in 1921. In the first case, David Hirst reveals, with great clarity, Israel's expansionist strategy in the Six Day War. In the second case, the restrictions of David Hirst's liberal ideology produce a very distorted picture of what happened.

Israel gave a number of reasons for waging war in 1967. One of them was that the Golan Heights had to be occupied to stop Syrian attacks on settlements below. As I have already noted, this was a very thin excuse for invasion.

David Hirst goes further. He admits that there was fighting along the Israel-Syria border during 1966-67. Arab positions did fire on armoured tractors in fields not far from where I was living (though the tractors of my kibbutz were not armoured). But Syrian shells were directed at the Israeli army personnel who were extending Israel's borders by cultivating the No-Man's land. This extreme Israeli provocation caused frequent flare-ups but the escalation on such battles to attacks on Israeli civilian

settlements were rare indeed.

Another reason given by the Israelis was that the Straits of Tiran were closed thereby stopping shipping to the Israeli port of Eilat. However, Eilat was an unimportant dock with only 5 per cent of Israel's foreign trade going through it. Eilat was certainly less important to Israel than the Suez canal which had been closed to Israeli shipping for years (and was to remain blocked and closed after the Israeli captured it).

It also has to be remembered that the very port of Eilat itself, was formerly the Arab village of Um Rashrash, whose inhabitants were expelled by Israeli forces in 1949. Frantic protestations at the port of Eilat being strangled seem impudent in the face of that historical fact.

But most powerful of the Israeli justifications for war was that the Egyptians had moved forces up to Israel's southern border. This is quite true, Egypt had moved **just two divisions** into the Sinai desert by Israel's border.

In 1972, General Matitahu Peled, one of the architects of Israel's victory in 1967, was quoted in the Israeli paper *Maariv*:

"To say that the Egyptian forces concentrated on our

borders were capable of threatening Israel's existence not only insults the intelligence of anyone capable of analysing this kind of situation but it is an insult to Zahal (the Israeli Army)".

Chief of Staff, Yitzhak Rabin (later Prime Minister of Israel) said of the Egyptian President:

"I do not believe that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions he sent into Sinai on May 14 would not have been enough to unleash an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it."

What Israeli historians try to play down is that Israel was sending tanks to the Syrian border days before the Egyptian forces moved into Sinai.

According to the Director of Military Intelligence in a News Conference on 11 May:

"...We are creating such a situation that it is impossible for the Egyptian not to act because the strain on their prestige would be unbearable."

Why was it that Israel was creating this strain? Moshe Dayan, in an Israeli Government publication in 1970, remembered.

"We had fought to reach the summit; we were content with what we had achieved...but in our heart of hearts, deep down, we were not really happy and content. (Before the Six Day War) we made ourselves accept Eilat as our Southern frontier, a State of Israel which from Qalqilia to the sea was less than 15 kilometres broad. Old Jerusalem stood outside its frontiers...we thought we had reached the summit, but it became clear to us that we were still on the way up the mountain. The summit is higher up."

This is a pale reflection of what David Hirst has been able to achieve in showing that Israel went to war not only "to teach the Arabs a lesson" but also as an excuse to expand the boundaries of Israel.

David Hirst's discussion of the 1921 Jaffa riots is far from being such an impressive achievement. His account of the riot reveals an attitude on his part which leads to a major shortcoming in the book.

Palestine at the time of the riots was under a British Mandate (administrative control). The Zionist settlers had great hopes for the British Mandate because they had been promised that the British Government would look favourably on the establishment of a Jewish Home in Palestine. This was the content of the famous Balfour

Declaration of 1917.

Palestinian Arabs, with their own Nationalist aspirations, had very little to hope for from the British. Their distrust was confirmed by the visit to Palestine in March 1921 of the Colonial Secretary ... Winston Churchill.

David Hirst writes: 'A delegation of Palestinian leaders petitioned him to rescind the Balfour Declaration, end all Jewish immigration and agree to the formation of a (Palestinian) national immigration and agree to the formation of a (Palestinian) national government answerable to a popularly elected assembly. "You ask me", replied Churchill, "to repudiate the Balfour Declaration and to stop immigration. This is not in my power, and it is not my wish"... As for a Palestinian parliament, he was at least frank: "The present form of Government will continue for many years. Step by step, we shall develop representative institutions, but our children's children will have passed away before that is accomplished".

Churchill's sense of destiny must have chilled the Palestinian leaders, and it is certain that the Palestinian Arab community as a whole must have begun to realise that British interests lay on the side of the Zionists.

On the 1st of May, two months after Churchill's visit, a riot of Arab occurred in the town of Jaffa. The riot left 200 Jews and 120 Arabs dead or wounded.

The thing which sparked off the riot on the actual day was a May Day march by a Jewish

Bolshevik group and their violent confrontation with a Jewish Social-Democratic demonstration.

And it is at his stage that David Hirst goes astray. He tells us that normally Arabs would be interested spectators of Jewish political disputes. However, on this particular day, 'quite suddenly, the Arabs seemed to go berserk'.

Now, I have no doubts that Jewish Bolsheviks, preaching internationalism and anti-Zionism, must have seemed strange fish to the Arabs. It may even be that the Arabs somewhat misunderstood the intentions of the Jewish Bolsheviks and panicked. They also must have found the spectacle of Jew fighting Jew a bewildering sight. But I cannot accept that they said, 'oh, the Jews have gone mad' and then indulged in a week long orgy of bloodletting starting with the Jewish Immigrant's hostel.

In my opinion, the conditions for the riot were created - in the aftermath of the Churchill visit - by Britain's pro-Zionist stance. The actual spark for the riot on the day is only of passing interest.

David Hirst, however, although mentioning the Churchill visit and its effects on the Arabs, spends pages quoting from a British Royal Commission which put the total blame for the riot on the Jewish Communists and on Jewish radical behaviour.

The Royal Commission report is very suspect. Jewish Bolsheviks were a very suitable scapegoat, especially at a time when Churchill was leading a virulent anti-Bolshevik campaign in Britain. So why is

it that David Hirst takes the same view as the Royal Commission? Why does he use extreme language to describe the Bolsheviks?

The main reason is that the Royal Commission exonerated the Palestinian leadership from having played any part in the riots and in David Hirst's political world, the mob must be separated from the leadership. He may identify with the suffering of the Arab people but the expression of the resistance to that suffering must be through 'civilised', Western style leadership.

On the one hand is David Hirst's humanism and his Arabism, while on the other hand is his political elitism.

For him, the Jewish Bolsheviks were mere 'illegal immigrants'. Palestinian leaders described Jewish radicals as 'not the wealthy, the merchants the men of property, but a disparate multitude, "Vagabonds and outcasts" from all over the world'.

Thus, David Hirst ends up as an advocate for the Palestinian Nationalist leadership...and this is a theme throughout the book. He is not the lap-dog of PLO chairman Yasser Arafat but he is also not for the self-activity of the Palestinian people.

David Hirst is an enormously dignified and brave journalist, as his recent reports from South Lebanese villages under fire show.

It is to be hoped that the limitations in his book will be corrected by others, with the same high level of dedication and craftsmanship as he has shown.

Steve Faith

## Other than the Pankhursts

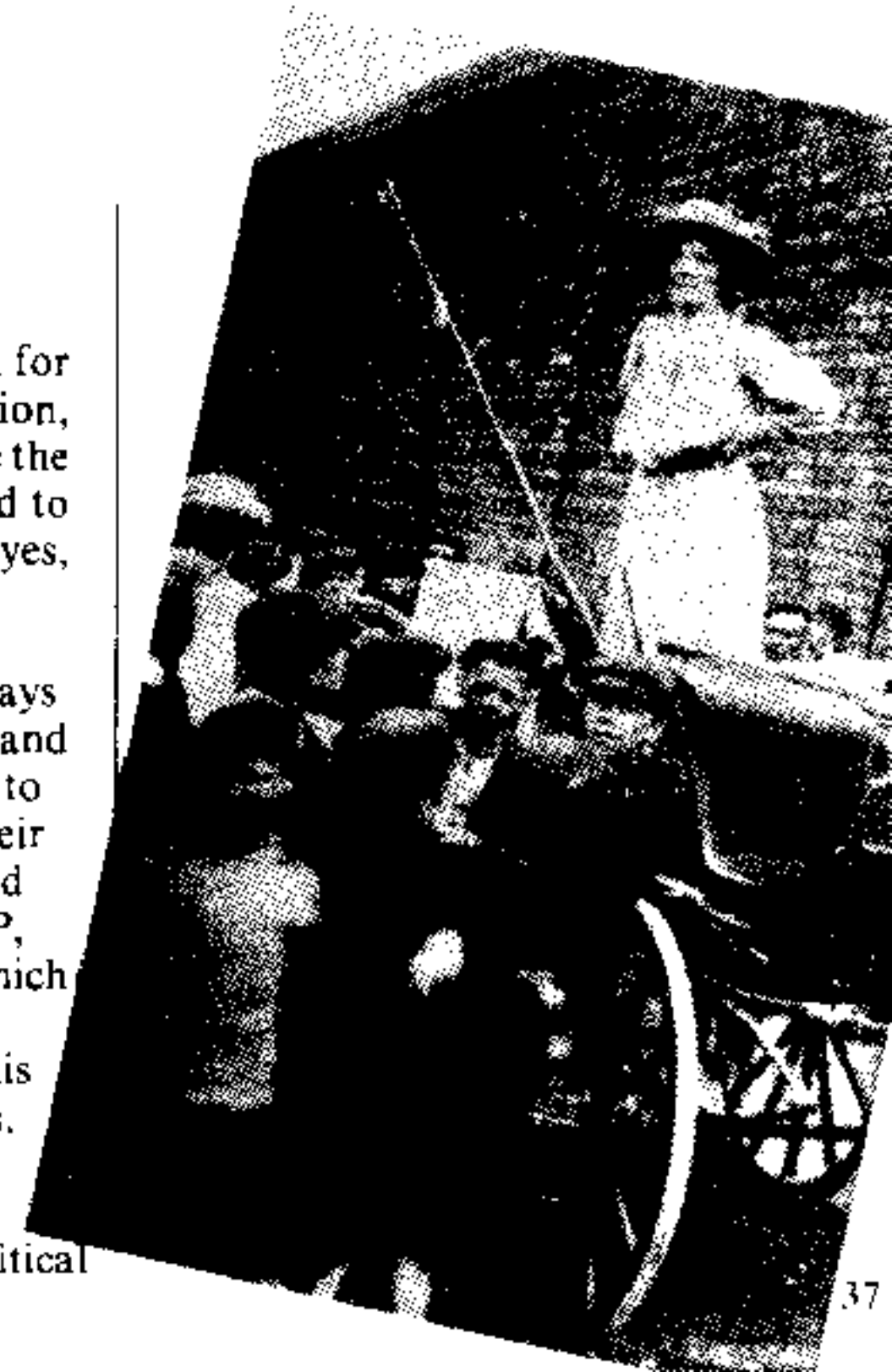
**One Hand Tied Behind Us**  
Jill Liddington and Jill Norris  
Virago, £3.50

Anyone could be excused for not feeling particularly excited at the prospect of another book on the suffragette movement in this anniversary year. Now that the various parliamentary parties have finished their champagne celebrations, their congratulatory speeches, their tribute to women in politics (Margaret Thatcher and Shirley Williams!) there's a danger that all will be forgotten again, without any of the real lessons learned. This book is a timely reminder that the struggle for the vote was not just a 'media event', nor reducible to the doings of the Pankhursts; such

a forgetting would be a miserable waste.

The book deals with the struggle of working women for political rights and recognition, including the vote; these are the women Mrs Pankhurst used to speak of with tears in her eyes, regarding them as too downtrodden ever to help themselves. It details the ways in which they did, in fact, stand up for themselves, fighting to build unions to improve their working conditions, to build political parties - SDF, ILP, finally the Labour Party - which would give them a voice nationally, and doing all this both as women and workers.

It gives an insight into how married women with children managed to fit political



activity into their 'double shift': although with 'one hand tied behind their backs', they fought. They used every weapon at their disposal in their union branches and trades councils; they invented new ones - driving a coach and four white horses around Manchester to leaflet for a woman's right to work - and they constantly sought to make plain the connections between their fight for the vote and for their rights as workers: 'I would impress on you not to think that women want the vote merely as women'.

This account brings out the extent to which the militant tactics of the Pankhurst's WSPU - however heroic - were seen as elitist and divisive, not just by unregenerate male chauvinists, but by other committed militants trying to build a mass campaign. It shows in detail how the demand for adult suffrage was not simply a red herring trailed by those who wanted an excuse not to support woman's suffrage.

Because it attacked the property-based vote, and thus raised class issues as well as the question of sex discrimination, it posed a real dilemma for many activists, and created real problems in the developing relationship between the feminist and socialist movements, not simply over which demands to support, but also how to fight for them. Should they campaign for a recognition of equal rights before the abolition of the property-based vote? Could they afford to narrow down their campaign to the single issue of the vote, ignoring the problems women faced every day at work and in the home?

For the women whose lives form the stuff of this book, the demand for the vote grew directly out of their experience at work, as second-class workers; this experience qualified their answers to these questions and determined the course of their campaign. The difference between their outlook and that of the Pankhursts is made clear by their attitude to the First World War.

Many of the women in the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, for whom war meant not only mass slaughter, but mass unemployment, joined the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom which organised support for pacifists and, later, for conscientious objectors - activities which required a great deal of courage and commitment in the face of

the chauvinist hysteria which the WSPU was active in promoting.

Soon after the war broke out, Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel organised a speaking tour in support of the Government. 'We held gigantic meetings all over the country. Both men and women munitions workers were appealed to, and the dangers of strikes explained. . . We called it the Anti-Bolshevist campaign.'

**In the Rapids of Revolution**  
ed. Nan Milton  
Allison & Busby £3.50

With the publication of *In the Rapids of Revolution* Nan Milton's life's work takes another marvellous step forward. Now without hunting in the files of the Mitchell Library in Glasgow or the National Library in Edinburgh it is possible to read a proper selection from the writing of John Maclean, one of the greatest fighters for human freedom of this or any other century.

*In the Rapids of Revolution* brings together inside one cover Maclean's writings against the first world war, on the fight for freedom in Ireland, on the need for a Scottish Workers Republic together with his agitational writings and his amazing speeches from the dock.

What a man he was. Carved from the pain of the clearances and fired in the miserable exploitation of the empire's second city, the Sweet Green Place, Glasgow, Maclean unfurled the Red Flag of international socialism with pride and defiance.

In his 1918 speech from the dock you can see the quality of this rare creature. 'I wish no harm to any human being, but I as one man am going to exercise my freedom of speech. No human being on the face of this earth, no government is going to take from me my right to speak, my right to protest against wrong, my right to do everything that is for the benefit of mankind. I am not here then as the accused; I am here as the accuser of capitalism dripping with blood from head to foot'.

You see it again in a different light in a piece of agitational writing quarried from the columns of the paper *Forward* by his daughter Nan: Writing of a strike of women workers at Stevenson and McKellar's Dyers and Bleachers in Pollockshaws, Maclean shows

By implication, the book shows the limitations of campaigns based on narrowly defined 'women's issues': 'It was no good running a moral crusade. . . advocating "Votes for Women and Chastity for Men" if the men you were accusing of being diseased lived down your street or worked next to you in the mill.'

It indicates the potential energy, imagination and

strength which working women and men have when they fight, which allows them to overcome the burdens which Mrs Pankhurst thought too heavy to allow the possibility of struggle; and it teaches us the way in which that potential was squandered, divided and diverted into parliamentary reformism. It could help us to avoid repeating old mistakes: it should be read. *Lin James*

## The freedom fighter from Glasgow

what socialist industrial reportage should be about: 'I happened to meet Mr William Rushworth organiser of the Amalgamated Society of Dyers among the women and tried to find out from him why these workers should dare to enjoy the sunshine when the men were in the trenches.... he gave me a list containing the names of 117 of the women and girls the wages paid, and the wages that ought to be paid according to the rates prevalent in the West of Scotland.... I see by the list that one female gets 6 shillings, five get 6/6 get 7/- ....(making) an average of 8/9d.



'Some are married women with families. There must be exciting lives indeed, finding out ways of and means of spending their princely incomes. It is really astonishing the government has not appointed a committee to solve the stupendous problem for them.....'

There are other treasures in this fine book But I must confess so some disappointment. Disappointment first of all that the paperback is not being published at a price that gives it half a chance of getting into the hands of working people. And

disappointment too that the book does not include John Maclean's *Notes on Marxist economics*.

Like virtually every other socialist I know I feel ill at ease when it comes to Marxist economics. And I get precious little help from the Marxist experts in the field like the Masons with their secret signs they seem to treasure their ability to keep their knowledge to themselves, unless of course form requires that they should give it the odd outing in equations across a blackboard.

John Maclean's notes on economics are the only things I've ever seen that developed the complicated categories out of real living experience, that captured the imagination and took you on an exciting journey of ideas. They were written for Maclean's amazing economics classes. At their peak these attracted 500 workers a week, workers who loved the prospect of mastering capitalism at a theoretical level. It's a tragedy that those notes still haven't been republished. And a tragedy too that our movement still offers little or nothing to those thousands like myself who do not take readily to the joys of algebra Marxist or otherwise.

John Maclean went to jail five times for his socialist beliefs. Scottish jails were at the time considered worse than anything the Russian Tsar had to offer. And Maclean's experiences - drugged food, hunger strikes, followed by forced feeding were to lead to his premature and tragic death. He died in 1923 of lack of food, physical exhaustion and poverty. In a cold and dreadful winter he even gave his one overcoat away to someone he considered more needy than himself.

In the last few years of his life he advanced the slogan of a Scottish Workers Republic, and refusing to join the British Communist Party, founded the small and shortlived Scottish

Workers Republican Party. *In the Rapids of Revolution* contains much important material which allows us to evaluate this stand.

John Maclean shaped his position a time when Ireland was being put to the sword. He believed that if Scottish nationalism could be harnessed to the socialist cause then the plug could be pulled out on that greatest menace of all humanity - the British empire. Maclean also saw the struggle for political representation in Scotland as capable of resulting in a workers' government. He opposed any parliament in Edinburgh and insisted instead that it must be in Glasgow. It would, he believed, almost inexorably be workers' parliament.

I believe that John Maclean's analysis was misconceived. I believe this not out of any love for or desire to preserve the unity of the British state. Maclean was wrong in his estimation of the hold as potential hold of Scottish nationalism on the Scottish working class and he underestimated the objective differences between Scotland and Ireland. Like other great

revolutionaries he made mistakes. Above all he over simplified the process by which a Glasgow parliament would yield up a workers government.

Even if Maclean's perspective had come true then only one thing could have saved Glasgow from all the barbaric power the British bourgeois state could muster. That thing was solidarity from those very English cities Maclean insisted lagged behind the Scots.

Reading the material contained within the covers of *In the rapids of revolution* is a disturbing as well as rewarding experience. Disturbing because you get the feeling that the differences between John Maclean and revolutionaries inside the British Communist Party were accentuated by bitterness and personal antagonism as a result they were never argued out in anything approximating a creative and productive way. The publication of *In the rapids of revolution* makes that easier to do. Are there any takers? Or is there no socialist north of the border with the fire (celtic or otherwise) to put pen to paper?  
*Laurie Flynn*



Virginia Woolf

history, personal experience and cultural ideology. She looks at them as women and shows how their lives directly influenced their work. She shows the fundamental importance of their specific feminine conditions on their novels - economics, maternity, husbands, lovers, families. She never divorces personal politics, ideology and experience from any woman's novels.

You can read this book without having to know very much, if anything, about the woman she discusses. She reveals the incredible volume of fiction written by women in the last two hundred years that is ignored, unheard of. Only a woman could have written this book. It is so sensitive to the interconnecting multiple complexity of the subject. It leaves you feeling your mind expanded, that there is more to know, it doesn't claim to be definitive like traditional criticism.

# Books

She is really funny as well, another unusual thing in criticism. She traces the historical continuity in literature, showing the influence of George Eliot and Bronte on contemporary writers like Doris Lessing and takes this continuity on into the women's movement. She says that, "So far the English women novelists have not become involved in the womens liberation movement with the openness, zeal and intellect of American writers..."

This is a terrible indictment and feminists in Britain must go on the offensive. One of the greatest weapons of change is the pen.

Showalter is first and foremost a feminist and has an allegiance to the suppressed voices of the majority of women.

"One possible effect of the women's movement might be the broadening of the class base from which women novelists have come. As the women's movement turns to these silent women, they might find their voice at last, perhaps the next literary generation will be theirs..."

Perhaps?... Let's make sure of it. Everybody has a story to tell, and feminists should start to tell their stories and encourage their sisters everywhere to tell theirs too. Literature has been the mystical property of a minority for too long. Writing your own story hurts but it fights, heals, and engenders change. Never mind "perhaps" we should be tigers of the pen.

*Melanie McFadyen*

## A story to tell

**A Literature of their Own**  
Elaine Showalter  
Virago £2.95

"We are discovering how much in female experience has gone unexpressed, how few women as Virginia Woolf said, have been able to tell the truth about the body, or the mind."

When you study literature formally, it's treated like History so often is. You get a list of writers categorised into eras or genres. You are told to write essays in which you say clever things about structure, plot, imagery and characterisation. Your nose is rubbed mercilessly in the quality not quantity system. You get ten out of ten when you write something stark, streamlined, objective and austere. It's like assessing an object for financial value. You don't consider the writer's life or social history or personal experiences - that's life, not literature.

I used to long to know the real reason why Rochester locked poor Bertha up in the attic in *Jane Eyre* and dared not voice a sympathy for her which would have been considered dark and cranky. I longed to ask the teacher why Jane Austen's heroines never fucked, only

fainted and flirted. Critics and teachers of English literature have wrung it dry, have squeezed it into acceptable pieces to fit into categories that neatly lend themselves to a narrow concept in which the characters in novels are to be studied, not felt.

Elaine Showalter's excellent study cuts through old barriers. She examines each woman writer in terms of her social

## And...

Penguin have just published a contemporary look at *Law, Order and Politics in West Germany* (90p) by Sebastian Cobler. They have also just published the first paperback edition in English of Alfred Doebelin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (£1.75). Originally published in Germany in 1929 this experimental novel is set in the last years of the Weimar republic.

Macmillan have just released a major new work from Barrington Moore Junior. *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (£10.00) a large part of which is a new

analysis of the history of the history of the German labour movement.

In November Pluto are to publish *The Politics of Nuclear Power* (£1.95) by Dave Elliott with Pat Coyne, Mike George and Roy Lewis. They consider the effects of the new industry on jobs, on trade union rights, on health and safety, and review critically the stated positions of the trade union leaders.

This month Virago published a paperback edition of Ruth Hall's biography of *Marie Stopes* (£2.95), 'the first woman to tell the world that sexual pleasure and contraception were the right of every human being'.

For anyone wanting to read

an extended diatribe against the way academic historians treat past and show little commitment to a new future, then look out for *Past and Future or What is History For?* By Jean Chesneaux, newly published by Thames and Hudson at £4.95.

A recent title from Croom Helm is a useful addition to the debate on socialist theatre. It is *People's Theatre* by David Brady and John McCormick at £7.95.

And lastly Lawrence and Wishart are reprinting two novels of Lewis Jones originally published between the wars. They are *Cwmarchy* (£1.95) and *We Live* (£1.95). *Alastair Hatcher*



# Dare to struggle, dare to win

People who talk about revolution and class struggle without referring explicitly to everyday life, without understanding what is subversive about love and what is positive in the refusal of constraints, such people have a corpse in their mouth.  
*Raoul Vaneigem*

the vision of a complete change to something else.

So I rebel, in every aspect of my life. (Well, I try.) I do it in the spirit of revolutionary change. That means that I take up the causes of all those oppressed — women, gays, minorities, racial and others, the 'mad', those branded as criminal, and ultimately all of us whose potential is stunted and malformed by our society. I take up reactive 'issues' — tenant associations, claimants unions, trade unions, etc ad infinitum.

Like they said in the States, you don't need a weatherman to tell which way the wind blows. People in struggle are all in the same struggle — and I'm in it too. Not with opportunism, and not with dogmatism, but with hate/love/anger.

It all probably started with the atom bomb. It seemed so totally wrong. And I had a strong pacifist streak. I found that I had a deep 'concern' for humanity. I rejected the fairly religious upbringing I had, and was some sort of humanist.

The awareness of the real implications — political consciousness — came rather late; faced with the prospect of being pushed into a career when I left college, I just dropped out. I had little analysis or theory. I had, and still have, gut politics.

The appeal of hippiedom was great. . . . dope, the dole, easygoing communal living, freer sexuality (and more honest), and the positive feeling that I was rejecting an oppressive and nasty world.

But it wasn't complacent rejection. It's not just about rejecting society, but changing it. In the early 1970s I slipped into the 'new left', what we called the libertarian movement. Its concerns are still mine now. (A few subject headings: imperialism, education, sexuality, housing, ecology, militarism, employment/unemployment, social control, culture, health, technology, communality and collectivity, libertarian 'ideology'.)

## Influences

A few books and political tendencies really solidified where I stood politically. Fanon *The Wretched of the Earth*, Woodcock *Anarchism*, Bookchin *Listen Marxist*, and the zany, positive newness of the underground, *Ink*, *Frendz* and *IT*. The group-ing called Solidarity, with Cardan on *Authoritarian conditioning, sexual repression and the Irrational in Politics*. Wilhelm Reich — feeding straight into my own fears, insecurities, hang-ups and the politics that go with getting away from them. Anti-Zionism — I was Jewish. Finally the Situationists, inspiring with the daring of their actions and sayings, daring me to swallow the lies and facade of the society of the spectacle.

In sum, the standard influences on the new left of the time. Lots of Marxist ideas around in the background of it all. But the economic structure of society seems parallel to the general social/cultural/internalised structure, not subordinate to it. Gramsci on hegemonic ideology — ideas that dominate the actions of members of a society — says a lot of it.

## Hate/Anger

Not jealousy, envy, but resentment and anger that the world is so fucked up. Hating all its aspects and manifestations. Angry at seeing it working so well. Hating its agents. Angry at its actions and effects.

Hierarchy, family, oppression, racism, poverty, the police and the other agents of the law (their laws, their rules), private property and possessiveness, sex roles, jealousy and the way that divided we are ruled.

## Love/Anger

Not sloppy romanticism, but gut-felt wonder and love. For solidarity and comradeship, for sharing, sharing things, sharing people, sharing oneself, sharing the tasks and joys of political discussion and work.

She said: 'At the risk of seeming absurd, I would say that the true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love.'

Anger is a positive political feeling, not expressed as uptight resentment, but as emotion guided towards revolutionary ends.

## Living it

To be a revolutionary one must be a rebel. To be a rebel is not to be a revolutionary. Rebellion is based on gut-deep horror and rejection of what is. Revolution is based on



my god!

I shall continue to be an impossible person as long as those who are now possible remain possible. *Mikhail Bakunin*

I've never belonged to a political organisation. I couldn't follow a line. I have to know for myself what is right, not be told, or have it fit in with a set theoretical framework. That doesn't mean that I have no politics and no theory. I have a strong political base. And it is grounded in my actions. In all my acts, whether in personal or sexual relations, in the way I treat and am treated by people in casual encounters, or in 'meetings' or in longstanding friendships and associations.

In our personal practice, in our personal lives and in our political organisation, we should be working on a continual progress which is a series of steps towards a revolutionary society. We should be seeing ourselves how efficiently and how consistently we are moving towards building a practical alternative so that we have forms and methods that we can know will operate as revolutionary forms and methods. Our everyday practice is real practice for how it can and will be — it is revolutionary practice, ie the practice of revolutionary theory.

The price of liberty is eternal revolution.

The author calls himself an anarchist nowadays. He does pasteup and layout a) to earn a living and b) because of the small contribution design makes to the success of left propaganda.

Note: I've avoided words like capitalism, socialism, class and all the rest of the terminology of the left in this piece. Not because I have no awareness or analysis of those things, but because I have tried to convey what it feels like to be a person committed to revolutionary change; with a hatred of how we are at the moment, a vision of how it could be, and a desire to work (ideally) uncompromisingly, without relenting, without fear, but passionately, with energy and with inspiration towards that vision. All of us together can make that real change.