

REVIEW

Socialism:



Could I keep Marx's brain alive?



Can I be a Soviet commissar? **14**



Is it a motor-buff or a Marder?

Inside

**Science & Socialism, Alexandra Kollontai,
Workers' co-operatives, Political music**

Contents

News/2-11
USSR
World economy
TU leadership
Spain
USA
China
Wages
Iran
S. Africa
Science & Socialism / 13-17
Workers' Co-ops / 18-20
Writer Reviewed / 21
William Blake
Book Reviews / 22-30
The Cult of Kollontai / 31-33
Our music? Their music? / 34-35
Film reviews / 36-37
Letters / 37-39
The Back Page / 40
A Walk to Hathersage

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NEWS

analysis

USSR

The workers united

There's an east European joke which says that the choice of political parties in Russia is a bit like the choice that God gave Adam when he created Eve and then said 'Go out and find yourself a woman.' The same could be said for trade unions in Russia.

Recent calls for a boycott of the Moscow Olympic Games in support of the dissidents have again drawn attention to the political regime in Russia. In Britain the debate was started by Owen following the mock trial organised in London during the trials of Orlov and Shcharansky.

Since then there has been a long running debate in the columns of the *Times* with even the editor calling for a boycott. Left-wingers have been slow to respond and rightly so.

Those calling for the boycott are strongly right-wing in their views and are anxious to discredit not only the Russian government and its political system but the very ideal of socialism itself.

So just how do you raise support for the dissidents without getting submerged in the swamp of right wingers ardently following the line from Washington?

Left wingers in France face a very different problem. There exiled dissidents have called for the boycott and in August the four main unions, the CGT, CFDT, FEN and the catholic unions all called for the release of Klebanov, the leader of the Free Trade Union Association of the Soviet Working People who has been detained in a

Dnepropetrovsk psychiatric hospital.

In Britain the TUC whilst passing resolutions in support of human rights at the same time refused support for the FTUA on the grounds that it was a 'breakaway' union.

The International Labour Organisation have refused help on similar grounds, but have promised an investigation in November.

The return of the NUM delegation from Warsaw where they raised the question of the FTUA and asked about the situation of Klebanov, who is an ex-mine-foreman, also presents further difficulties.



Vladimir Klebanov

Unofficial reports claim that the NUM delegates were told that Klebanov was involved in an accident in which he sustained head injuries whilst still a

miner. This has supposedly led to his madness which is clearly demonstrated by his support for the 4 day week, his affair with a young woman in Moscow and his other political activities.

As for reports that Klebanov's family are suffering financial hardship, delegates were told not to believe them because Klebanov is a Jew and has rich relatives in Israel!

That such rubbish should be offered to the NUM is surprising. That it should be accepted is scandalous (if it's true).

One by one the leaders of the FTUA have been arrested, imprisoned, sentenced to hard labour or interned in psychiatric hospitals for the crime of believing in independent trade unionism.

So on 28 October a new trade union group was set up to give workers a voice. The General Trade Union of Workers has been organised by eight people who claim to have 100 members already. (The FTUA claimed 200 members and took up 110 cases).

The eight include *V. Borisov* who has been widely involved in dissident activities. He started at the age of 18 in a dock strike. Subsequently he organised a workers' political group in Leningrad.

Ludmilla Agapova: who is the wife of Valentin Agapov, a merchant seaman who jumped ship and went to Sweden in 1974.

Vladimir Svirsky a biologist who had already been arrested by 3 November. He had issued a manifesto which stated 'Soviet workers are afraid to press their claims because they are intimidated by the authorities. Trade union officials take the side of the authorities thus betraying the interests of the workers. The activities of the trade union officials are an extension of the government apparatus'.

75 people have signed an appeal to Amnesty International calling for the release of Vladimir Svirsky who has reportedly been charged with stealing library books.

Maximum support must be mobilised not from the right-wing lobby in the west, but from organised workers.

The last attempt to give workers a voice in the Soviet Union failed because its leaders were successfully harassed and imprisoned.

It is up to us to ensure that the same fate does not meet the leaders of the General Trade Union Group of Workers. *Irena Ivanova*

World economy

Boom bang-a-bang

Three interlinked events together make a recession in 1979 quite likely.

The first is the crisis of the Shah's regime in Iran. In the period January-September 1978 Iran accounted for ten per cent of total world crude oil production. The strike in the Iranian oilfields in October and November cut back oil production drastically, from six million barrels a day to 1½ million.

The strike came at a time when oil supplies were already tight. OPEC is due to discuss a price rise this month and the oil companies have been buying heavily in order to build up their stocks before the rise.

The result is to put in the Arab oil producers in a strong bargaining position. Demand for oil has been sluggish since the price quadrupled in 1973-4 and the slowdown in the western economy. The resulting oversupply of oil, combined with general inflation and the decline of the dollar, the currency used for calculating oil prices, have led to a 20 per cent decline in the price of crude oil over the past five years. The OPEC balance of payments surplus fell from 65 billion dollars in 1974 to an estimated 10 billion dollars this year.

Oil producers like Iran which have used the petrodollars to industrialise rapidly were especially badly hit. OPEC was accordingly clamouring for a big increase in the price of oil even before the Iranian crisis. A large increase in the oil price will strike the American economy in particular a severe blow. The US imported 47 per cent of the oil it consumes—compared to 36 per cent in 1973, the year of the oil crisis.

The American treasury secretary, Michael Blumenthal, toured the middle east at the end of November in an effort to keep the increase below ten per cent. He won the support of the Shah, who needs US support desperately, and of the conservative Saudi regime, whose huge investments in the western financial system gives it a firm interest in staving off recession. Saudi Arabia had already stepped up oil production to make up the short-fall caused by the Iranian troubles.

But American capitalism has other, bigger problems. The decline of the dollar reflects the American economy's weak competitive

position compared to West Germany and Japan (see table).

The weakness of the dollar, which is still the world's chief reserve currency, used widely in trade and investment, and chronic US balance of payments deficits, which pour billions of dollars into the world monetary system yearly, have built a dangerous instability into the international economy.

An estimated 450 billion dollars are held outside the United States. The very sharp depreciation of the dollar in the last year largely reflects the decision of some of these dollar-holders to move into other, stronger, currencies like the mark, the Swiss franc, the yen and (even) sterling. So far this shift out of the dollar has taken place on a small scale. But if a significant number of the foreign dollar holdings were liquidated, the resulting panic could lead to a crash of 1929 proportions as the foundation of the international monetary system was destroyed.

It is this danger which explains the package of measures announced by the Carter administration on 1 November. The measures, involving borrowing from the IMF and other central banks, selling more gold and so on, aim to raise 30 billion dollars in defence of the dollar.

More importantly, Carter has taken steps to reassure the bankers and businessmen worried that America's comparatively high growth rate is fuelling inflation. A harsh credit squeeze was announced, leading to a US prime rate at the end of November of 11½ per cent, the highest since July 1974, when a similar squeeze thrust the American economy into its worst recession since the war. Many US economists now regard a recession in 1979 as inevitable.

Since the American economy has been the motor of any recovery from the slump of 1974-5, these developments are likely to have a serious impact on the rest of the world. Carter's squeeze was followed, on 9 November, by the Labour government's decision to lift the minimum lending rate by 2½ per cent, to 12½ per cent, the highest since the crisis levels of 1976.

The decision reflected Callaghan and Healey's conversion to monetarist policies. A strong pound and tight money are to take priority over everything else.

As the *Sunday Times* commented: 'The extent of the retreat from the traditional Keynesian style of economic management, under this government, could hardly have been made more clear than by the events of the past ten days. Minimum lending rate at 12½ per cent, and bank loans to top companies costing a record 5½ per cent in real terms, combined with an officially expected slowdown in the economy, carries a very clear and simple message: the growth rate is now virtually the last thing the Chancellor takes into account when framing new policies'.

Healey's squeeze is, in part, a response to the fact that the five per cent pay limit is in trouble. As Duncan Hallas argued in our last issue, the Labour government has shifted towards a strategy of using tight controls on the money supply, and therefore increased unemployment, to contain wage militancy underlined the point on *Weekend World* (12 November) by threatening to increase interest rates even more and raise taxes as well if wages get out of control.

Callaghan and Healey now aim to keep the pound steady. A rising pound means cheaper imports and hence cuts the inflation rate. The cost of fuel and raw materials used by industry has actually fallen in the last 18 months, thanks largely to the recovery of sterling on the foreign exchanges. The credit squeeze was designed in part to show the multinationals and the banks that Labour means business and thus prevent a collapse of international confidence in sterling such as that which took place in 1975 and 1976.

The effect of the squeeze will be much slower economic growth. The British economy has been enjoying a boom this year, with real gross domestic product up 3½ per cent.

However, the roots of the boom are shallow. The main source of growth has been increased consumer spending, itself a product of the rise in real incomes caused by the decline of the inflation rate and tax cuts.

Even before the squeeze the London Business School was expecting the consumer boom to slacken in 1979. The latest Treasury forecast expects manufacturing investment, up 15 per cent in 1977-8, to fall by 2½ per cent in 1978-9 and accordingly predicts 2 per cent growth in 1978-9. Companies, forced to pay record real interest rates, are likely to cut back even further on investment.

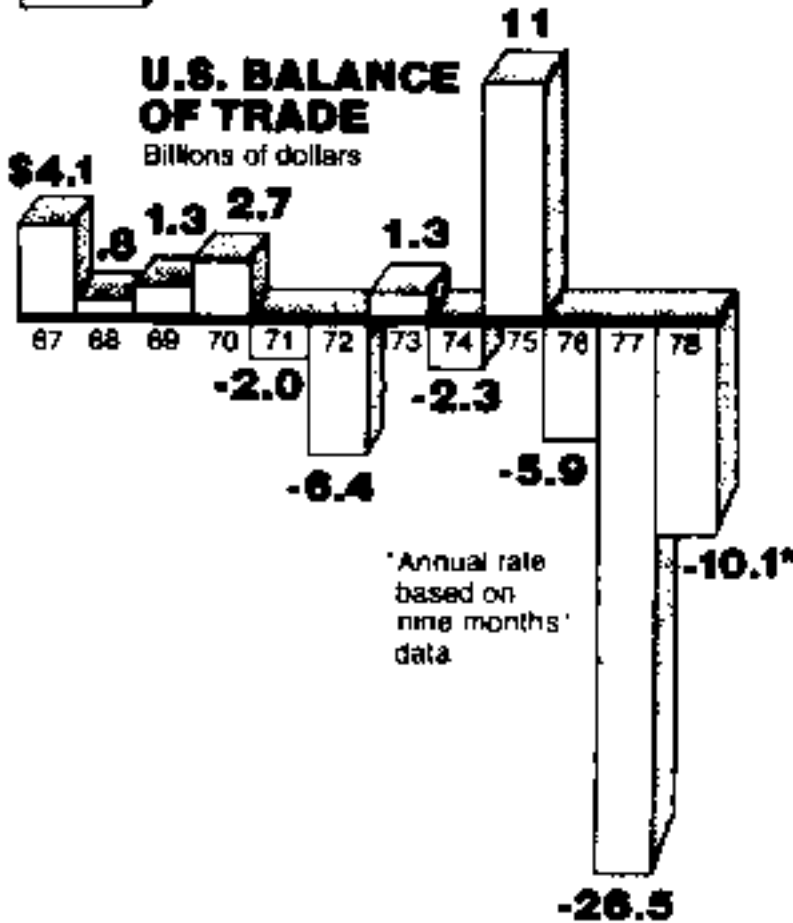
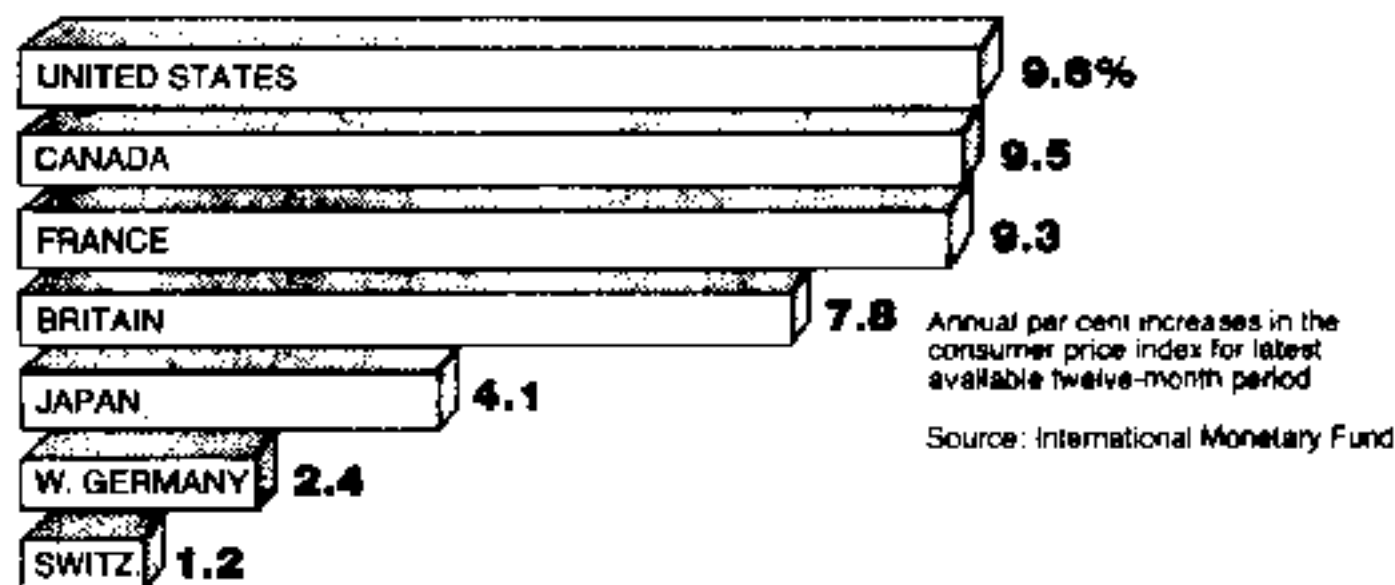
As the world economy enters the sixth year of the crisis which burst upon it in October 1973, none of the basic problems which caused that crisis have been solved. *Alex Callinicos*

analysis

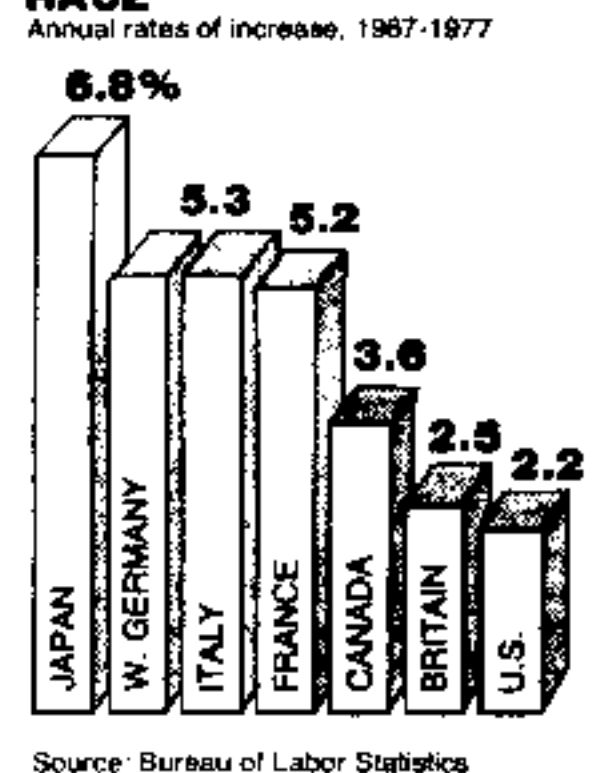
THE KEY INDICATORS

Behind the dollar's woes is a dismal U.S. record in international competition. Leading the major nations in its inflation rate, the U.S. is last in productivity gains—and its trade deficit threatens to be chronic.

INFLATION RATES



THE PRODUCTIVITY RACE



They are honourable men

Compared with their British counterparts, American trade union leaders are almost honest about their treachery.

Which TUC General Council member would actually say to the CBI or EEF what the AFL-CIO President, George Meany, said to the American employers?

'I never went on strike in my life, I never ordered anyone else to run a strike in my life, I never had anything to do with the picket line . . . In the final analysis, there is not a great deal of difference between the things I stand for and the things that the National Association of Manufacturers (the American CBI) stands for.'

What today's British trade union leaders lack is class (of the ruling variety). In the 1950s the TUC General Council became known as the Knights of the Round Table.

There were Sir Vincent Tewson, Sir William Lawther, Sir Thomas Williamson, and Sir Lincoln Evans and Lord (formerly Sir Walter) Citrine was still knocking about. In the 1960s Sir William Carron, Sir Sidney Greene and Lord Cooper did their bit in the interests of class collaboration.

But in the 1970s open class collaboration became less respectable as the level of struggle rose and as the state intervened more and more against the trade unions.

Only one knight—Sir Fred Jarvis of the NUT—and one Lord—Allen of USDAW and Fallowfield—grace today's General Council (UCAIT's Sir George Smith has just died) and neither of them are key leaders. And when Lord Allen does retire next year the man tipped to replace him on the TUC top six negotiating team is the one and only Mr Frank Chapple.

Jack Jones accepted his royal honour (Companion of Honour) after his retirement. It would have dented his effectiveness to have done so before.

And while it is more exclusive than a knighthood or mere baronetcy it still leaves him a plain mister! Rank hypocrisy is the mask Britain's current trade union leaders prefer to hide their class collaboration with.

This year with both the TUC and the Labour Party conference overwhelmingly rejecting the Labour government's five per cent pay freeze, the mask has been more use than usual.

The pressures on the trade union bureaucracy this autumn were extremely complex. On the one hand there was the overwhelming desire to continue to serve the Labour Government and its election chances, a feeling shared by both 'lefts' and 'right-wingers'. On the other hand there was considerable rank-and-file discontent following three years of wage restrictions.



AUEW Executive made the Ford walk-outs official. The TGWU paid out 1½ million pounds in strike benefit to its Ford members, a 'big battalion' out on strike against government pay policy for the first time since the miners defeated the Tories in 1974.

But then the TGWU failed to instruct its members to respect Bakers' Union

Pick a leader, any leader

picket lines. The Ford strike did not spread to other 'big battalions'. It remained passive and sectionalised.

More than one-third of all

Some sections of the bureaucracy sensed that this three year period had so weakened rank-and-file militants as to make it possible to use phase four to increase their own power over the membership. Others feared this anger might create a backlash that could sweep them from office if they didn't take the lead quickly themselves.

Still others sought to manipulate the rank-and-file unrest to increase their own personal prestige and bargaining strength vis-a-vis the Government and other trade union leaders. The departure from the General Council leadership of Jones and Scanlon had left a power vacuum that was waiting to be filled.

In a word, the situation was volatile.

The threat of expulsions hung over the heads of the SU Carburettors toolroom workers at the same time that the

workers due to conclude wage agreements between August and November put off doing so. The Electrical Contractors Association openly admitted it was 'waiting to see what happened at Fords'.

Others were waiting to see what happened in the new talks that were taking place between the TUC's top six and Chancellor Healey.

On 14 November, at a special meeting of the TUC General Council we found out. The Government and the TUC top six (Murray, Basnett, Evans, Duffy, Allen and Weighell) were unanimously recommending a statement which agreed that 'the fundamental objective of economic policy in 1978-9 is to keep the annual rate of inflation at not more than the present level . . . ?'.

And the top six had added guidelines to negotiators arguing 'when framing claims, both in the private sector and in nationalised industries, unions

should consider the impact of their proposals on prices'.

It totally accepted the Government's underlying argument that wage rises are the main cause of inflation and therefore would have to be held back for at least another year.

But instead of letting this through on the nod, Bill Sirs, the right-wing General Secretary of the steelworkers (ISTC) put his spoke in. Angered by the six's assumption that their word was law (the government had already fixed a press conference to announce the successful new 'contract') and looking over his shoulder at his membership whose wage claim he was to present the following week, Sirs insisted on a major debate.

Moss Evans, Frank Chapple, Joe Gormley and Laurence Daly—habitual government supporters—were all absent. So the TGWU's Number Two, Harry Urwin, along with Clive Jenkins of ASTMS tried to get the vote postponed. That move failed to get a majority (tying 15-15) so the actual statement was put to the vote.

Without Moss there to tell them which way to vote not only did three other TGWU General Council members vote against (Urwin abstained) but so too did several of the smaller unions whose General Council positions depend on TGWU votes at Congress.

The biggest block of opposition came from some of the public sector unions (ISTC, NUPE, ASLEF, COHSE and CPSA) most likely to have their wages kept close to the five per cent limit by the Government. Clive Jenkins joined the usual right-wing block in voting in favour. And the result was a tie at 14 all. The new 'contract' accepting phase four did not go through.

But was this the 'left' victory the Press, from the *Morning Star* to the *Daily Mail*, made it out to be? Did it mean the TUC was actually going to fight for major wage rises?

For as the *Financial Times* pointed out the following day, the success of the Government's present policy 'should not be judged against the five per cent limit but the unwritten seven or eight per cent "target".'

And the signs of any serious determination by the trade union leaders to challenge this figure are few and far between.

Bill Sirs, when he came to present the steelworkers' claim

only asked for eight per cent, with another 4½ per cent from productivity bargaining. The breakthrough at highly profitable Fords only added 9.9 per cent to the basic pay. And according to CBI figures 90 per cent of the 500,000 workers who settled Phase 4 wage deals between August and mid-November did so within the five per cent guide lines.

Even the 'militant' Alan Fisher of NUPE has adopted a wait-and-see approach. Rather than launch industrial action against low pay while the Ford workers and the bakery workers were battling it out, the manual public sector unions are playing it 'clever'. They are allowing all their 1978 settlement dates to slowly expire and promise to call selective action in January 1979.

By then basic wage increases in the seven to nine per cent bracket will be more firmly fixed as the miserable experience of selective action against the cuts will be weighing heavily on the memories of the few called out to win rises for the many.

If the TUC General Council 'militants' are taking their victory over the government lying down, the 'moderates' are not. The right-wing are going all out to repair the damage that initial failure might have caused.

The UPW's Tom Jackson spoke his mind in a major attack on fellow General Council members the following day. Talks with the government have already been resumed.

Of even greater long-term significance, however, were the measures adopted in November by the executive of the two major right-wing unions, the AUEW and EEPTU.

The AUEW engineering section executive endorsed a circular by the General Secretary, John Boyd, informing members they would not get official support in any dispute where the full-time officials had not been involved prior to action.

And then it went on to outline rule changes and ballots which would be carried through by 31 March next year to create a unified union of the engineering, foundry and construction sections of the AUEW while excluding the Communist Party-controlled TASS.

The EETPU Executive decided not to pay their Ford members strike pay for the first month of their strike. The dispute would only be given full official backing from the date the 1977 agreement had run its full 12 month course.

And then they went on to cut back the number of delegates eligible to attend the next Biennial Conference in May

1979 by closing down and amalgamating tens of (mainly plumbers') branches.

These moves decisively advance the prospect of an amalgamation in 1979 between these two major industrial unions. The result: a giant-sized/ right-wing union to equal the influence of the TGWU but with a crusading and determined leadership.

Frightening enough during 'normal' times, the prospect of such an articulate and energetic right-wing grip on the throat of British trade unionism during the continuing economic crisis and employers' offensive is terrifying.

Over the next year British revolutionary socialists will have to concentrate their attention on what is happening to the trade union movement in a way we have not done for several years. The experience of relying upon 'left' trade union leaders during a deepening capitalist crisis has proved disastrous.

Many militants and rank and file activists are aware of this. Our job is to connect with them by putting our efforts into rank-and-file initiatives which can organisationally unite the fighters and all those who oppose class collaboration for both short and long-term reasons.

Steve Jefferys

Church in education and morals is reinforced.

One of the worst aspects is the constitution's *machismo*. The constitution openly discriminates against extra-marital relations and 'illegitimate' children; it ignores the right of divorce; it doesn't contemplate legalising all forms of family planning; it closes the door on any possible law on abortion; nor does it mention any form of equal rights at work.

Nevertheless, a massive 'yes' in the referendum is guaranteed by the wholehearted support given by the Socialists (PSOE) and Communists (PCE), as well as the ruling UCD.

For the PCE the choice is clear: 'the constitution or fascism'. Any criticism will only help the extreme right. This constitution is not only, in the PCE's opinion, 'the best possible in the circumstances' but 'will open the road towards socialism'.

For the PSOE the constitution is the fruit of the 'long, hard and bloody' forty-year struggle for democracy. Both parties see the constitution as the logical development of the Moncloa pact (social contract) concluded last year.

The supporters of the constitution claim that the main threat to the constitution is 'terrorism' (ie ETA, the armed wing of the Basque independence movement).

The PCE, PSOE and their respective trade union organisations mobilised large demonstrations in early November against 'terrorism'

Spain

Yes, no, status quo

On 6 December the Spanish people will go to the polls to vote in a referendum on the country's new 'democratic' constitution. This marks the culmination of the development of 'democracy' ushered in after Franco's death and presided over by Adolfo Suarez' ex-Francoist and conservative government.

The reality of the constitution is rather less democratic than the claims made for it would have us believe. It is not a complete break with the past.

In the first place, the constitution confirms the position of Franco's nominee, King Juan Carlos. A whole number of Francoist institutions are preserved intact—notably the army, the police, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, the prison system.

The army is declared to be the 'defender of the constitution' — a constitution which guarantees the rights of private property, and the 'indissoluble unity of

the fatherland' (ie no rights of self-determination for the Basques, the Catalans and the other nationalities). The traditional interference of the Catholic



and in support of the Constitution. Their propaganda seeks to group together ETA and fascist groups like the Guerillas of Christ the King. It also ignores the repressive machinery of the state, left more or less intact since Franco's day.

Indeed, the PCE opposes calls to purge the police forces as 'provocative'. They admit the police needs 're-structuring' but argue that they have to support as they are now 'defending democracy'. The leaders of the PCE-dominated Workers' Commissions recently visited the heads of the police to express their union's solidarity with the fight against 'terrorism'.

Their common support for the constitution does not prevent the PCE and the PSOE from squabbling with each other. The PCE criticises the PSOE for wanting a deal with the UCD that would exclude them. Indeed, the Socialists are now presenting themselves more and more as a 'party of government'. They want the renewed Moncloa Pact to last only for a year and call for new elections (which they hope to win) after the constitution is approved.

Meanwhile, the PCE want the pact to last for three of four years and do not want elections for at least another year. They argue that to do otherwise would drive Suarez into the arms of the far right.

Also backing the constitution are the Catalan nationalists and the two main Maoist groups, the ORT and the PTE. The latter have produced a poster showing a large heart ('freedom') about to be unlocked by a key (the 'yes' vote).

The main opposition will come from the Basque country. The Basque Nationalists (PNV) are calling for abstention because, although they support the constitution as a whole, they were unable to secure the inclusion of the *fueros*—traditional Basque rights like the collection of taxes and control of the police.

Calling for a 'no' vote will be the *Abertzales*, the left-wing Basque nationalist parties, and a section of the far left, notably the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR) and small groups like Communist Action (AC). They argue that such a vote will represent the clearest possible rejection of the UCD's anti-working class policies and of the retention of much of Francoism by the constitution.

A 'no' vote would be, in the LCR's words, 'the most revolutionary position'.

Other groups, notably the soon-to-be fused Communist Movement (MC) and Organisation of Left Communists (OIC), call for abstentions. They argue that it is not enough to reject the constitution—the methods by which it is being adopted, notably the referendum, must also be rejected. The OIC also argue that the constitution represents a positive step away from Francoism and therefore cannot be rejected outright.



Nicholas Redondo Urbieta of the socialist trade union

MC-OIC have launched a massive and vigorous propaganda campaign, which has led to the arrest of many of their members for putting up a poster which included the King among the leaders of the right. One OIC member was arrested for 'being a member of a communist organisation, advocating abstention, using republican symbols, and possessing leaflets opposing the anti-terrorism demos'. So much for Spanish 'democracy'.

Outside the Basque country, the 'no' vote will come mainly from the far right. Ripples of discontent with the constitution have affected unreconstructed Francoists inside the army. It was presumably they who were behind the abortive right-wing coup in mid-November.

However, the coup does not seem to have represented a serious threat to the regime and indeed may have blown up Suarez to force the choice between the constitution and fascism. However even the main far right party, Popular Action (AP), has split between supporters and defenders of the constitution.

The most positive thing to come out of the referendum campaign for the far left has been the way in which the MC-OIC have used it to attack the consensus between the UCD, PSOE and PCE and to put over the socialist alternative. They have argued that whatever concessions have been squeezed out of the regime have been the result of workers' struggles, not pacts with the King and Suarez. *Doug Andrews and Mary Reid*

It takes the *Morning Star* to find comfort from AUEW election results which show the broad left in a predominantly weak position at a national level.

The Communist Party took some comfort from John Tocher's fine performance in polling 13,000 votes and coming top of the first ballot as a result of his considerable and deserved prestige in the Manchester area.

Sadly it looks as though any broad left organisation in the West Midlands has collapsed—to judge by the total vote polled by three right-wing candidates from Birmingham which threatens to overwhelm Tocher in the second ballot.

The broad left's only very belated support for democracy in the SU toolmakers' case cannot have helped to win backing from those Birmingham AUEW members already well disillusioned with 'Duffy's Law' and not much enamoured with two of the area's right-wing candidates—Ken Cure and Bert 'Neanderthal' Benson.

Benson is, incidentally, the only AUEW district secretary on record to have called publicly for a one-day district-wide strike... because the chairman of an industrial tribunal described his case as stupid.

London Vote

While John Tocher's Manchester support was at least encouraging, the broad left's performance in the first round of voting for the southern region was derisory.

With an unpopular candidate, regional officer Len Choulerton, the left looks to be well beaten by Jack Whyman in an executive election division which the left has held since well before the war. The only hope is Roy Frazer's 5,000 unpredictable votes.

More light is thrown on the broad left's disarray when Choulerton's 9,000-odd votes in the whole southern area are set alongside the votes cast at the same time in the London North election for assistant divisional organiser.

The lowest-placed candidate, a maoist, received some 2,000 votes, second was Sid Harraway, Fords convenor and CP member, with some 3,500 votes and top of the poll came Billy Taylor, Acton Works convenor, ex-CP, now supported by the engineering Charter group, with over 4,000 votes. In all, some 9,500 votes.

Now granted that not all votes cast were 'leftwing' this is still a formidable total for one division compared with a total 9,000 plus left vote in an area including the whole of London, north to Oxford and across to Southampton. *Dave Field*

USA

The turn right

In the wake of Anita Bryant's 'Save Our Children' crusade, in the wake of important gains made by anti-abortion forces and groups opposing the Equal Rights Amendment for women, socialists and left liberals began talking a year and a half ago about the rightward drift in American politics.

The rightward drift was a sort of musical chairs situation where each political pole was bumping one seat to the right. The revolutionary right—the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis—though still small in numbers, was increasingly on the offensive and growing bolder in its tactics.

The conservative right became more out-front about its real reactionary politics. And liberals were dropping their stances of the late 1960s and

early 1970s like hot potatoes and capitulating to the pressure of right wing groups just as they had been pressured by the left a decade earlier.

Since June, 1978, though, that drift to the right became a stampede to the right with the 'great middle-class tax revolt'. Sponsored by Howard Jarvis, a millionaire and the director of the Los Angeles County Apartment Owners Association, Proposition 13, a bill slashing property taxes for landowners, was passed in California.

Since 1974 a growing number of middle class and to a lesser extent working-class people, have begun looking to the right for answers to their problems. The real wages of the middle and working classes never recovered from the deep 1974-75 recession. People who ex-

pected the American Dream to come true for them found those expectations to be unrealizable.

The tax revolt capitalised on that frustration and anger and organised the vote of California homeowners, whose property taxes were the highest in the country. But the working and middle classes lost more than they financially won through passage of Proposition 13.

They are taking their losses in terms of lost services. In Los Angeles County alone, most of the summer school programmes were cut leaving 60,000 students without needed catch-up classes and resulting in the lay-off of several thousand teachers. 40 million dollars were cut from the Community Health Service budgets.

A 71 per cent cut in fire services meant the closure of many stations, reduction of rescue services and the lay-offs of thousands of firemen. Obviously workers and poor people are bearing the brunt of the cuts. The question, then, is who is really benefitting?

Homeowners are getting a tiny slice of the pie. The biggest slice goes to corporations since they own the most property. Southern California Edison stands to save 60 million dollars, Pacific Telephone, a whopping 180 million dollars and Pacific Gas and Electric, 80 million dollars. Next in line to benefit are the big landlords, like millionaire Jarvis. The homeowners are on the bottom of the heap.

The tax revolt didn't stop in California. It became the dominant issue in domestic politics from June to November. Fortunately, with the November elections the tax revolt fizzled. Tax or spending limits passed in 11 states but only two Proposition 13 look-alikes—in Idaho and Nevada—were passed. Proposition 13 look-alikes were defeated in five states.

The tax revolt is only the most recent and the most far-reaching of the right-wing attacks building in the United States over the last three years. Victims of the attacks have been blacks, workers, women, gays and prisoners.

It is only natural that with the growth of the right the first attacks would be racist ones. Racism has always been the glue that binds reactionaries together, organisationally and emotionally. From the Old Right—the Klan, Nazis and John Birch Society—there have been the old-style attacks in a marked increase of terrorism, killings, beatings of blacks, and burning of crosses.

But from the new right came an attack on the gains made by blacks as a result of the 1960s civil rights and black power movements.

Most notable is the attack on affirmative action policies (positive discrimination in favour of blacks and women).

The new right did the organisational work against affirmative action, but it was the Supreme Court that gave it the axe in deciding that Bakke, a white medical school applicant, was a victim of 'reverse discrimination'. Universities and companies are now reneging on their affirmative action programmes in the name of compliance with the law.

On workers the biggest attack has been that on the pocket-book. But the Supreme Court and Congress added to that by outlawing common situs picketing, by cutting off unemployment benefits for strikers, and by defeating the labour law reform bill.

The new right launched an anti-worker attack with an attempt to pass right-to-work (anti-union shop) legislation in Missouri. Fortunately 60 per cent of those who voted, voted against that anti-union legislation, soundly defeating the legislation.

The attacks on women have been extensive and vicious. The Equal Rights Amendment, a constitutional amendment that basically does no more than extend the rights and responsibilities of men citizens to women, was brought to the American public by the women's movement of the early 1970s.

Now ten states, which under the pressure of that women's movement agreed to ratify the amendment, have attempted rescission of their ratification. The Supreme Court has denied then the right to rescind, but the attempt to do so is telling of the political climate regarding women.

More shocking are the attacks around abortion. When the Supreme Court legalised abortion in 1973, 'Right to Life' groups launched a massive campaign aimed at the Congress to first make abortions unavailable to poor women, and then to declare the foetus an American citizen.

Their first breakthrough came in June 1977, when Congress cut off Medicaid payments for abortion. Congress threw the whole problem of abortion-related medical funding into the laps of states and cities. The right-wingers then shifted their attention to those arenas, trying to get states to cut off medical funding, and sponsoring local ordinances restricting abortion. Both campaigns have been frighteningly successful.

Even more vicious are the violent attacks on abortion clinics, all in the name of 'pro-life'. In the last two years there have been terrorist attacks in thirteen cities with at least eleven unsolved firebombings.

The latest tactic of the Right to Lifers has been the establishment of a political party in New York state which ran a candidate for governor this November. Their candidate won over 100,000 votes placing the party as fourth highest vote winner in the election.

The entrance into electoral politics is an indication of their strength and confidence and their political savvy in using elections as an organisational tool.

The attacks on gays began with Anita Bryant's 1977 Save Our Children Campaign. The repeal of the Dade County, Florida ordinance protecting its gay residents set the stage for the repeal of similar ordinances in four other cities.

In the November elections, however, two pieces of anti-gay legislation were defeated. One was an initiative in Seattle, Washington to rescind a gay rights bill. More important was the defeat of California's Briggs Amendment which not only would have denied basic civil rights to gays, but would have put their friends and acquaintances in the line as well. A classic witch hunt piece of legislation, the Briggs amendment was roundly defeated 59 per cent to 41 per cent.

Finally, there has been a resurgence in support for the death penalty. Oregon reinstated its death penalty which had been struck in more liberal days and California extended its capital punishment to cover more crimes.

In explaining these growing attacks, the left and the straight press alike have begun referring to the 'new right'. Within this new right can be found many of the same faces from the old right, but the new right has organised thousands on a grass roots level because of its mass appeal, and because of decaying economic and social conditions.

For people attracted to cross-burnings and lynch mobs there is still the Klan, but many people are far more attracted to respectable movements against abortion, 'reverse discrimination', illegal immigrants, welfare cheats and the like.

But while it is undeniable that the Right is growing, while it is true that they have managed to pull along people in government, liberals, middle class and working class people alike, while the response to the attacks has been minimal, there is still a vacuum in American politics. There are still many unanswered questions.

The biggest strike the new right has against it is its anti-labour politics. For a time they can emphasise their racism and their hatred of gays and 'liberated' women, but the anti-working class ideas at the centre of their politics must be exposed.

There is a growing anger in

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the US over the failure of the American Dream. The right has nothing to offer but viciousness against various sectors of the American population.

There are glimpses now of hope in the American working class. The miners in spite of the growing law-and-order sentiment of the public, said 'hell no' to Taft-Hartley. They told the government that they didn't respect their anti-worker laws. All over the country this fall, teachers have been radicalised by their need to break the law

against striking and go to jail proudly if necessary. The cuts have sped up the proletarianisation of many people who have considered themselves members of the middle classes.

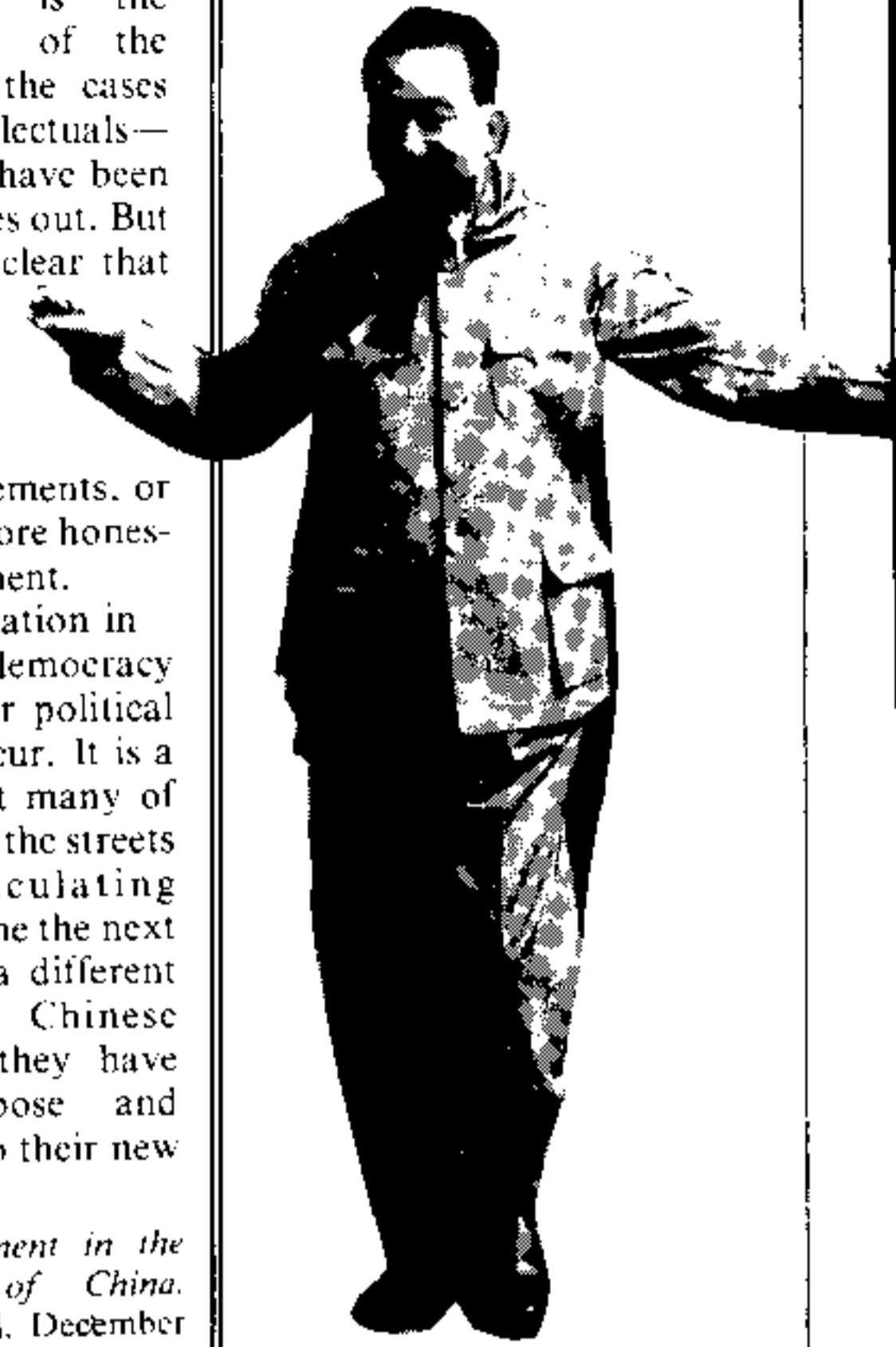
The glimpses are there. The small and not so small opportunities are beginning to present themselves. The task of American socialists is to be there, to meet and organise those people ready to rise up fighting to meet the attacks head on. **Christina Bergmark, Cleveland, Ohio.**

Amnesty describes is the resilience of many of the prisoners. Most of the cases described are intellectuals—simply because they have been able to get their stories out. But the report makes it clear that 'thought-crime' is not thought nearly as

dangerous as actual agitation for improvements, or higher bonuses for more honesty, from the government.

The new open agitation in China for more democracy suggests that another political lurch is about to occur. It is a chilling thought that many of those people now on the streets of Peking articulating grievances will become the next layer of victims of a different section of the Chinese bureaucracy when they have served their purpose and become dangerous to their new masters. *Dave Field*

* *Political Imprisonment in the People's Republic of China*. Amnesty International, December 1978.



Hua Kuo Feng

China

People's criminals

Very little is known about the numbers, political persuasion and fate of political prisoners in China. Amnesty International has just brought out a long and extremely careful report* which reveals some of the reality.

The report is quite horrifying. It should go a long way in opening the eyes of the pro-regime faithful in the West, though probably not the leaders of the Conservative Party, Franz-Josef Strauss, the Shah of Iran or President Pinochet—all of whom seem to share an intense admiration for the Chinese rulers' way of life.

Perhaps it is because of the regime's successful silencing of dissident workers, peasants or intellectuals 'agitating for better conditions', 'expressing doubts' or worried about this or that small contradiction or inequality.

The report is very revealing on those condemned to death. Apart from 'common criminals' we have: an execution for defacing Hua Kuo Feng's name on a poster (November 1976).

an execution for hampering criticism of the 'gang of four' (March 1977), an execution for keeping a 'revisionist diary' and painting 'counter-revolutionary pictures' (May 1977), perhaps 20 killed for distributing leaflets (September 1977) etc.

But the report also reveals how far back political repression goes. It reminds us for example of the 200 Trotskyists arrested in 1952 and never heard of since. Of people arrested after the 'Hundred Flowers' period, when having been encouraged to criticise the system they were then viciously persecuted for 'rightist deviations'.

Indeed the report emphasises how different lurches in politics, different campaigns against this or that deviation, were often followed by witch-hunts against those who were previously encouraged.

Most of this information is not new: it has been collected for the first time. What is new is the detail of imprisonment in China, the detailed descriptions (including plans) of Chinese labour camps.

These camps are geared to 'reform': via exhaustion from working 16 hours a day, via starvation from receiving as little as a quarter of recommended prison rations, via despair through psychological and physical torture.

The extraordinary thing, in reading the older cases which

There's a lot more militancy about than the government would have you believe—at least to judge by some figures just released by the Social Science Research Council.

According to a survey carried out by Industrial Facts and Forecasting Ltd., just under half the workplaces they looked at (out of a total of nearly 1,000) had had a dispute on the shop floor in the last two years. This is almost exactly the same result as that measured in another recent survey of G&M stewards (see *Socialist Review* No 6).

This is a bit different from the official government statement that only two per cent of workplaces ever have a strike. The IFF figures suggest that about a third of smaller factories (50 - 100 workers) had action over disputes, a figure which climbs to 87 per cent of factories employing 1,000 or more workers. In terms of the number of 'strikes per worker' however disputes are more common in smaller plants.

The obvious reason for the huge difference between government figures and the IFF results is that nearly half the incidents listed by IFF were either strikes lasting less than a day or were overtime bans. Neither of these get into Department of Employment figures: working-to-rule, blacking machines is also excluded, of course.

The result is that use of the official figures by socialist militants trying to work out what's happening to the class struggle could lead to some serious mistakes. A large part of the DE's monitoring of strikes is done through local papers and 'specialist' journals like *Socialist Worker*. They also keep in touch with large companies. Even this isn't much use, seeing they weren't told about something like 950 stoppages in Fords last year according to the company.

Wages

Scattered showers

'After Fords, the deluge' a lot of the press seem to believe it anyway. But those in powerful bargaining positions seem to be

accepting rises of nine or ten per cent—hardly swamping the policy—and many other workers are accepting damaging productivity agreements in return for rises considerably in

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Box One:

Outside The Policy

Workers getting more than 5 per cent on the basic (excluding any fiddles on productivity deals or the national engineering agreement):

	Nos.	Main TU	Percentage Increase
NHS Works Supervisors	3,000	UCATT	15 (regrading)
Fords	57,000	TGWU	9 (+ prod.)
BOC	3,500	TGWU	9
Michelin	15,000	TGWU	9
Mather & Platt	1,000	AUEW	7 (+ prod.)
Vauxhall	30,000	TGWU	6 (+ prod.)
Morgan Grampian	300	NUJ	15

PLUS building industry plumbers and heating and domestic engineers who have got staged rises of 15 per cent this year and 15 per cent next year under official special case treatment (most plumbers are, however, on the lump and earning more anyway).

excess of the government limit.

Nevertheless, it is important to record that quite a few groups of private sector workers—and one in the public sector—have broken the five per cent. ASTMS now claims not to have signed a single five per cent deal, with many rises for small groups of white-collar workers of about 15 or 20 per cent. And TASS claims the same.

Both are probably honest claims (as they were last year) but neither union has the basic trade union bottle to come out into the open and actually say who's getting what. The box shows those who have got more and whom we know about.

The list could be much longer. But as limited as it is it shows that the strict 5 per cent policy is just not holding in private industry, and that—unlike last year—a lot of people are not even pretending to pay allegiance to it.

The Great Delay

But the other side of the coin is the enormous number of workers who have increases due but whose settlements were delayed—either to wait for Fords or for the government's expected deal with the TUC. It is unlikely that many of these claims will be settled before the new year, and even if some of them are, the crucial public sector negotiations are almost certain to drag on through January. The backlog of settlements includes a number of really major groups—shown in the second box:

Box Two:

Deals Due

Agreements likely to be outstanding by early January:

Private Sector			
	Nos.	Main TUs	Month Due.
Contracting electricians	40,000	EETPU	Jan.
Contracting staff	40,000	EETPU (EESA)	Jan.
Rolls-Royce (Glasgow)	5,000	AUEW	Jan.
Rolls-Royce (Derby)	15,000	TASS, ASTMS	Jan.
Int. Harvester (Doncaster, Bradford)	4,200	AUEW	Dec.
Hoover (Scotland)	2,800	AUEW	Dec.
Scots lorry drivers	50,000	T&G	Nov.
Midlands lorry drivers	15,000	T&G	Dec.
Dockers (Bristol, Hull, London, Southampton)	9,000	T&G, NASD	Jan.
Municipal Busmen	21,000	T & G	Jan.
Dunlop	13,500	G & M	Jan.
GKN (West Midlands plants)	15,000	AUEW	Jan.

As well as the general build-up of claims, difficult negotiations for the government—notably in British Leyland and British Shipbuilders—are still likely to be hanging round come the new year.

BL's pay talks currently resemble a piece of knitting by Terry Duffy and in British Shipbuilders the government is threatening to give no basic increase at all in certain yards so as to bring in new national minimum earnings levels within the five per cent limit.

Public Sector Targets

Behind all this the government also faces the two groups which the press always spotlight—miners and power workers—and some quite tricky equations. There is not much room for giving the NUM a lot more without the power workers reacting (the secret ballot last year only resulted in a 500 majority for acceptance out of 80,000 votes cast).

So it is quite likely that the government will in fact opt for a

limited confrontation with some public sector group—the tactic tried out first with the hospital supervisors.

Unfortunately the selective action proposals drawn up by, for example, NUPE could play into the government's hands. They are likely to be demonstrative and propagandistic rather than the sharp weapon that is needed.

Unless, that is, a group like the water workers is chosen as the spearhead. This little-known and underpaid group of workers has almost unlimited industrial muscle if they choose to use it: in particular as water supply has an immediate effect on electricity supply.

If circumstances to force the officials' hands—such as unofficial action by the well-organised areas such as Manchester, Liverpool and Avon—the government's option of setting up a relativities board rather than using troops for the second year running might seem more attractive. Especially in the run up to an election. *Dave Field.*

Public Sector			
	Nos	Main TUs	Month Due
Council Workers	1,000,000	T&G, G&M, NUPE	Nov.
Hospital Workers	240,000	NUPE, COHSE	Dec.
Postmen	220,000	UPW	Jan.
University Technicians	17,500	ASTMS	Oct.
University Manuals	25,000	T & G	Nov.
Council Electricians	50,000	EETPU	Nov.
Council direct building workers	85,000	UCATT, T & G	Nov.
BBC	26,000	ABS, ACTT	Oct.
Atomic Energy	4,500	T&G, AUEW	Oct.
Brit. Nuclear Fuels	6,500	T&G, AUEW	Oct.
Water Workers	39,000	NUPE, T&G, G & M	Dec.
Gas workers	40,000	G&M	Jan.
British Airways	50,000	AUEW, T & G	Jan.
British Airports	4,500	T&G,	Jan.
BRS/NFC drivers etc	35,000	T & G, NUR, TSSA	Nov.

The moving finger writes

Looking back over the last few months, it is striking how each turn in events in the mass movement has been able to grow, not primarily in terms of numbers but in its grasp of the situation, so that the 'procession of clowns taking it in turn to be prime minister' has each time been outmanoeuvred.

This is important to examine with the future in mind, for the more the regime is forced to sacrifice its favourite sons to the anger of the masses the less able it is to find a new stability without making considerable concessions.

THE FIRST PURGE

The Shah for many years relied on a balance existing between the civilian clique and the leading military figures—a balance that was guaranteed by SAVAK, the infamous secret police. Apart from their roles as spies on the opposition at home and abroad, and jailer-torturer of those unlucky enough to be caught SAVAK also had built up a massive apparatus within every stage agency—what the Shah himself was eventually forced to recognise as a 'state within a state'.

The SAVAK generals reported direct to the Shah and were therefore independent of both those hand-picked civilians who formed the 'government' and of the equally carefully selected high ranking military.

When the prime minister for thirteen years, Hoveida, and Nassiri, head of the SAVAK,

were sacked this sent shudders through the elite of both the civilian and the security organisation. When Nassiri was replaced by the head of military intelligence the balance of terror was broken decisively in favour of the military.

Furthermore what led to the sacking of both these high ranking servants of the Shah was not the brutalities with which they had been associated but the fact that it was no longer possible to cover up their immense corruption.

Replacing Hoveida was the chairman of the Senate, Sharif-Emami, who was also in charge of the Shah's personal finance house, the Pahlavi Foundation.

Not surprisingly the Sharif-Emami government was unable to stem the tide and it ended with the massacre of 'Black Friday' (8 September) when it effectively had to put all real power in the hands of the military by declaring martial law.

Up till this point in time the strategy of the regime was to sacrifice some of its proteges and await the moment when with the army it could stage a 'coup' against the opposition. 'Black Friday' flowed logically from this strategy—an apparently decisive blow calculated to destroy all opposition.

The world's great powers—particularly the US, Britain and Russia at this point assumed the Shah had won and made their declarations of either support

or of 'non-interference'.

In the immediate aftermath of Black Friday there was a lull. Some of the more bourgeois elements in the opposition were almost driven into 'national reconciliation', using as an excuse the terrible earthquake that struck the town of Tabas in the week following the massacre.

It seemed that the national horror over the earthquake was going to be used by the regime. The Empress went to visit the stricken town, the Shah announced the cancellation of his birthday celebrations and the donations of the cost to help the victims.

Leaderless, the mass movement abandoned the streets for a time. At this point its future was in doubt.

Two strikes, insignificant during the tumult of the week leading up to martial law, suddenly transformed the situation.

First a long running strike at a machine tool factory in Tabriz, Machine Sazi, where over 2,000 workers had been out for several weeks, won a large wage increase. Secondly officials and workers in the Central Bank won an even larger increase with a short, sharp strike.

The Central Bank example was followed by the National Bank with its 1800 branches throughout the country and this move spread down the state bureaucracy and over into the private sector.

Within a week strikes had hit every sector of the economy and the martial law authorities were reeling under the weight of a new kind of movement, one which disarmed it.

Initially the strike movement was purely economic in its demands. Only a few groups of workers even went so far as demanding the right to organise trade unions.

Within a month to six weeks after martial law had been declared it was becoming clear that the military could not hold the situation indefinitely.

Various factors made the position of General Oveysi (the same general who had commanded the Imperial Guard in the 1963 massacre) untenable. Firstly, the mass strikes couldn't be crushed by force as demonstrations could and con-

ceding the wage demands only seemed to spread the strikes and embolden the opposition more.

Secondly, the military was highly conscious that the arrests of dozens of ex-ministers and corrupt officials had completely discredited the old guard of civilian politicians.

For example, entrepreneur called Yazdani was arrested just before martial law was introduced.

With help from the ex-prime minister and no doubt of members of the royal family he had been able to borrow for the purposes of speculation in land and food amounts of money equal to 10 per cent of the GNP or one third of the total sums available for investment from government controlled banks!

Everyone knew that only connections at the very top would have made this possible so he couldn't be brought to trial, and neither could he be released.

This left the martial law authorities in the position where they were seen to be defending the old guard even though they had many of the latter under lock and key.

The loyalty of the troops, their last hope, could not be guaranteed if they were still to be sent out to kill for a regime whose corruption was being revealed each day in the more or less free press.

The street demonstrations started again—smaller but much more violent and willing to take on the troops, to strain their every nerve day after day.

Incidents of soldiers refusing to obey orders, of junior officers doing deals with bank-burning crowds rather than shooting them off the streets simply multiplied the fears of the high-ranking officers.

Then the strikes turned political. Civil servants and teachers struck for the release of all political prisoners—over one million out, the largest political strike anywhere for years. In reply the regime announced that 1500 would be released on the Shah's birthday on 3 November—the crowds just demanded more.

On the birthday hundreds of thousands wore black, many went to the prisons to see the release, one whole group of 122 political prisoners refused to be let out at all. When one religious figure was released 200,000 went to greet him.

The oil workers finished off the state of martial law. 35,000 of them struck for an end to martial law—within a few days the world's oil bosses were screaming about the interrup-

Sooner or later another employer was bound to use George Ward's tactic: refuse to let the government's conciliation service conduct a survey over union recognition. The surprise is that it took a major multinational—Michelin—to do it.

The company has refused to let ACAS talk to its 3,100 white-collar workers on the grounds that a company ballot conducted by the Electoral Reform Society showed 'only' 579 voting in favour of union bargaining. After this vote two of the unions, TASS and the ACTSS (T&G white-collar section) withdrew the claims, preparing to fight another day. ASTMS and EESA (EETPU white-collar section) pressed on to the bitter end.

ACAS has now given up and Michelin must be feeling pretty pleased wit with themselves. It seems odd that the T&G, with full-scale shop-floor recognition, hasn't told the company it might suffer if it refuses to let its staff be properly consulted.

Meanwhile, across the Atlantic the same company is establishing a much nastier reputation. Michelin is the only tyre manufacturer in the US without union recognition and its response to union organisers at its three new southern plants has been quite 'physical'. The company deliberately sited its plants in areas of low unionisation and in states with anti-union legislation. *Dave Field*



tion of their profits caused by this action.

Under such a siege the military became very unsure of themselves—General Oveysi for example went on television and radio to deny that his troops had shot at a demonstration in Tehran that had burnt down many banks! What good was such a 'martial law then if one could burn down banks with impunity?

Then on Sunday 5 November, in response to David Owen's defence of the Shah, a large crowd attacked the British embassy, setting fire to parts of it, going on to burn down the British Airways office and the ministry of information for good measure.

It was clear that the military on the ground were yielding to the 'mob'. The writing was on the wall for Oveysi.

MILITARY GOVERNMENT

In order to resolve the political impasse created by the collapse of the old guard and the fact that wholesale slaughter had not quelled the masses, the American pushed the Shah to his next step—the formation on 7 November of the General Azhari government.

Again there was a lull in the strikes and demonstrations as the military talked of change, of bringing to trial those arrested for corruption etc . . .

In the oil fields massive pressure and some force was exerted to get the oil workers back to work and although this has been partially successful it is clear that those that have gone back are doing as little work as possible and that many others

have not gone back at all—the *Financial Times* estimated a 30 per cent return to work.

Smaller demonstrations continue. Each one brings its toll of death and injury and the military are far from in control. On 26 November in response to an earlier attack on a crowd inside the religious shrine at Mashad there were big demonstrations all over the country. In Mashad itself half a million people demonstrated (the population of the city is just over 600,000).

In the important industrial city of Esfahan demonstrators took weapons from soldiers by force and shot two of them—here the curfew has been greatly extended. On top of the demonstrations have come a new wave of strikes—the Central Bank is out again, the electrical power workers also blacked out most of the country for the whole of Sunday. The bazaars are mainly closed.

The Central Bank strikers have published a long list of important people who have taken millions of dollars out of the country in the last few weeks. On top of these strikes the journalists and printers are still refusing to work under military supervision in the main papers.

So the military government has had to talk more and more of doing things by the constitution—General Azhari even went on the Television and radio to declare that he is now ruling Iran and not the Shah.

Whilst the Shah receives the Spanish ambassador and dreams in his isolation of a 'Juan-Carlos' solution the military may well be looking to General Videla in Argentina.

WHAT CHANCE HAS THE SHAH GOT TO SURVIVE?

The military have frozen the Shah out almost totally. He no longer heads every news broadcast, is absent from public occasions and sits more or less alone (his immediate circle being in prison) in his Peacock Palace in the north of Tehran.

The tidal wave of corruption beats heavily at his palace walls and he has had to concede the right of the ordinary courts to investigate the royal family's holdings.

It is likely if the Shah stood in the way of a deal with enough of the opposition to calm the situation restore 'law and order' and production. The military, who clearly enjoy being in the saddle, will send him off for a long holiday (to Johannesburg, perhaps, like his father).

Even Carter has been forced to say things like: 'We support the Shah but of course the Iranian people must decide'. So maybe Dr Death could end up being the Shah's last friend?

IS THE MOVEMENT IN IRAN JUST ONE OF RELIGIOUS FANATICS?

Because of the years of repression the current mass movement in Iran has to an extent channelled itself around certain of the leading clerics and through the national network of religious institutions run by them.

Figures like Ayatolla Khomeini have been able to say things against the monarchy that no other established personalities would have dared. The identification with Khomeini in particular is one which allows even the humblest on the streets of Iran to feel that their opposition to the Shah is

shared by others.

While there is widespread suspicion of many other leaders whose record of double dealing is well known, Khomeini stands for the intransigence of the masses of the urban poor and the poorer bazzaris who either have not benefited from the Shah's modernisation or have actually been made worse off by it.

He blocked an attempted deal between the Shah and the opposition National Front in the crucial week leading up to the formation of the military government.

Yet when it comes to giving the movement real direction Khomeini has little to say beyond vague statements about 'continuing the struggle in all its forms'. He tends to bless events after they have taken place as if he had initiated them.

The strikes were something outside of his reckoning, the strikers' demands outside of his vision of a classless world divided only between good and bad Muslims.

His utopian vision of an Islamic republic in which 'everything will be better' is patently no real answer for the deep economic crisis that underlies the current political one.

The role of the urban poor is extremely important. In terms of lives lost they have given more than any other layer in the struggle with the Shah, yet unlike the workers and the other wage-earning classes they have yet to gain anything out of it in concrete terms.

Their spokesmen in the movement are the religious nationalists, who do not raise economic demands, only 'political ones'. So when a deal is eventually struck they will get least out of it.

As the workers' movement develops it is important that it seeks to link its demands with those of the urban and rural poor.

An alliance of workers and peasants would be bitterly opposed by the religious leaders they rely on an army of followers still condemned to what Marx and Engels called 'idiocy of rural life'.

So to describe the movement as 'religious' one is to miss the point. The masses are fighting for change, for an end to repression but above all for a new life for themselves. Only by promising this do the religious hold on to them.

But the traditional laws and practices of Islam cannot deliver the goods. Like everywhere else the masses will look elsewhere. *Terry Povey*

South Africa

Whiter than white

'Mr Mulder's resignation leaves me cold'. These words of Percy Qboza, a South African black journalist, echoed Justice Minister Jimmy Kruger's callous comment on the murder last year of black consciousness leader Steve Biko at the hands of the security police. Shortly after Biko's death, Qboza's paper, the *World*, was banned and he himself was detained.

Nonetheless, 'Muldergate', the scandal which led to the resignation of Minister of Plural Relations (as apartheid is known these days in Pretoria) and which is still rocking the Afrikaner establishment, must be giving South Africa's blacks some cheer.

The source of the scandal is the activities of the Department of Information, which until recently Mulder headed. Under pressure from the liberal English-speaking press more and more facts have over the last few months begun to leak out about the Department's corruption and dirty tricks.

But the scandal really blew up when Mr Justice Mostert, appointed to investigate some aspects of the Information Department's activities, revealed that it had financed the attempt three years ago of Louis Luyt, an Afrikaner fertiliser millionaire, to buy up South African Associated Newspapers, (SAAN), which owns the English-speaking opposition papers like the *Rand Daily Mail*, the *Johannesburg Sunday Times* and the *Financial Mail*.

When this takeover bid failed, the Department of Information persuaded Luyt to launch a new pro-government English-speaking daily, *The Citizen*, providing him with the money to do so.

In part, these attempts reflect the growing totalitarianism of the ruling National Party. Having long ago suppressed all legal black resistance, the regime has gradually moved towards gagging the liberal white opposition, and especially the opposition press, which is a real thorn in its side.

The scandal also reflected a change in the strategy of the National Party. Traditionally the Nationalists have claimed to represent exclusively the Afrikaner *volk* and have been as hostile to English-speaking whites as they are to blacks.

However, since John Vorster became prime minister, the Nationalists have projected themselves as the party of all whites, Afrikaner and English-speaking alike.

POWER

This shift is a product of major changes in the South African economy. The hostility of Afrikaners to English-speakers arises from the economic and political dominance of English-speaking capital, concentrated in the great mining finance houses, closely linked to British capital.

However, since the Nationalists came to power in 1948, they have used their control of the state to build up the economic power of the Afrikaner business class. Based particularly in the powerful state sector, Afrikaner capital is now able to deal with English-speaking capital on equal terms. Indeed, these two fractions are increasingly intertwined.

The Afrikaner investment company FVB now controls one of the largest mining finance houses, dominates the chemicals sector jointly with Anglo American and ICI, and recently bought up Greatermans, the biggest retailers' chain in South Africa.

The convergence of English-speaking and Afrikaner capital underlies the regime's attempts to unify South African whites politically. The National Party has recent won the votes of many English-speaking whites.

The main obstacle to this process is the Anglo-American mining empire, which controls the opposition Progressive Federal Party and SAAN. Although as firmly opposed to black majority rule as the Nationalists, the PFP supports greater concessions to urban blacks than the Nationalists are prepared to countenance. Buying up SAAN must have seemed a good way of undermining Anglo's clout.

This attempt has now blown up in the regime's face. The problem for the prime minister, Pieter Botha, is to limit the damage. Mulder has been sacrificed to save bigger fish. Involved in the decision to take over SAAN and launch *The Citizen* were Vorster and his old chum from the days when they were both interned for suppor-

ting Hitler during the second world war, Hendrik van den Bergh, who recently retired as head of BOSS (now renamed the Department of National Security), the secret police.

Demands that Vorster, now state president, should resign or at least stand down temporarily are now being voiced in the opposition press. And can Botha stop some mud sticking to himself—since some of the money used to finance Luyt came from the Department of Defence, which Botha has run since 1966?

The affair has brought out divisions within the National Party itself. Mulder headed the powerful Transvaal province of the National Party, and would in normal circumstances have succeeded Vorster when he retired as prime minister at the end of September.

He failed to do so, partly because the scandal had begun to break, and partly because the foreign minister, Pik Botha, ran for this job, and took enough Transvaal votes away from Mulder to let Pieter Botha in (Botha is the Afrikaans equivalent of Smith—until a year ago there were four of them in the Cabinet).

SPLIT

The election result was a victory for the *verligtes* (moderates) inside the National Party. Pik Botha is their acknowledged leader and a protege of Vorster's. Pieter Botha heads the traditionally moderate Cape Nationalists.

He took advantage of Mulder's fall to promote two *verligtes*—Piet Koornhoof, who takes over as Minister of

Plural Relations, and Punt Janson, who has been put in charge of black education.

These gains for the *verligtes* have been wiped out by the surprise victory of Andries Treurnicht, Deputy Minister of Plural Relations, in the election to succeed Mulder as leader of the Transvaal Nationalists. Treurnicht is the ex-chairman of the Broederbond secret society and a leading *verkrampste* (hardliner).

He is now the second most powerful man in the National Party and can now claim a senior Cabinet job (he had been passed over in the recent reshuffle).

This result will almost certainly affect the row between South Africa and the west over Namibia (see our last issue). Treurnicht is likely to oppose any concessions to the UN.

More significantly, the *verkrampstes* are opposed to any relaxation of the racialist system within South Africa. Under Vorster the Nationalists began hesitantly to relax 'petty apartheid'—the ban on multi-racial sport, parkbenches etc—in an effort to buy off middle-class blacks.

Treurnicht wants to stop all that. His victory will add to the confusion and divisions within the Afrikaner establishment.

These changes, and the divisions they reflect, however only affect the surface of white politics in South Africa. All white politicians in South Africa, *verligte* and *verkrampste*, Afrikaner and English-speaking, are committed to the preservation of white supremacy. The only argument is over methods, not objectives. *Alex Callinicos*

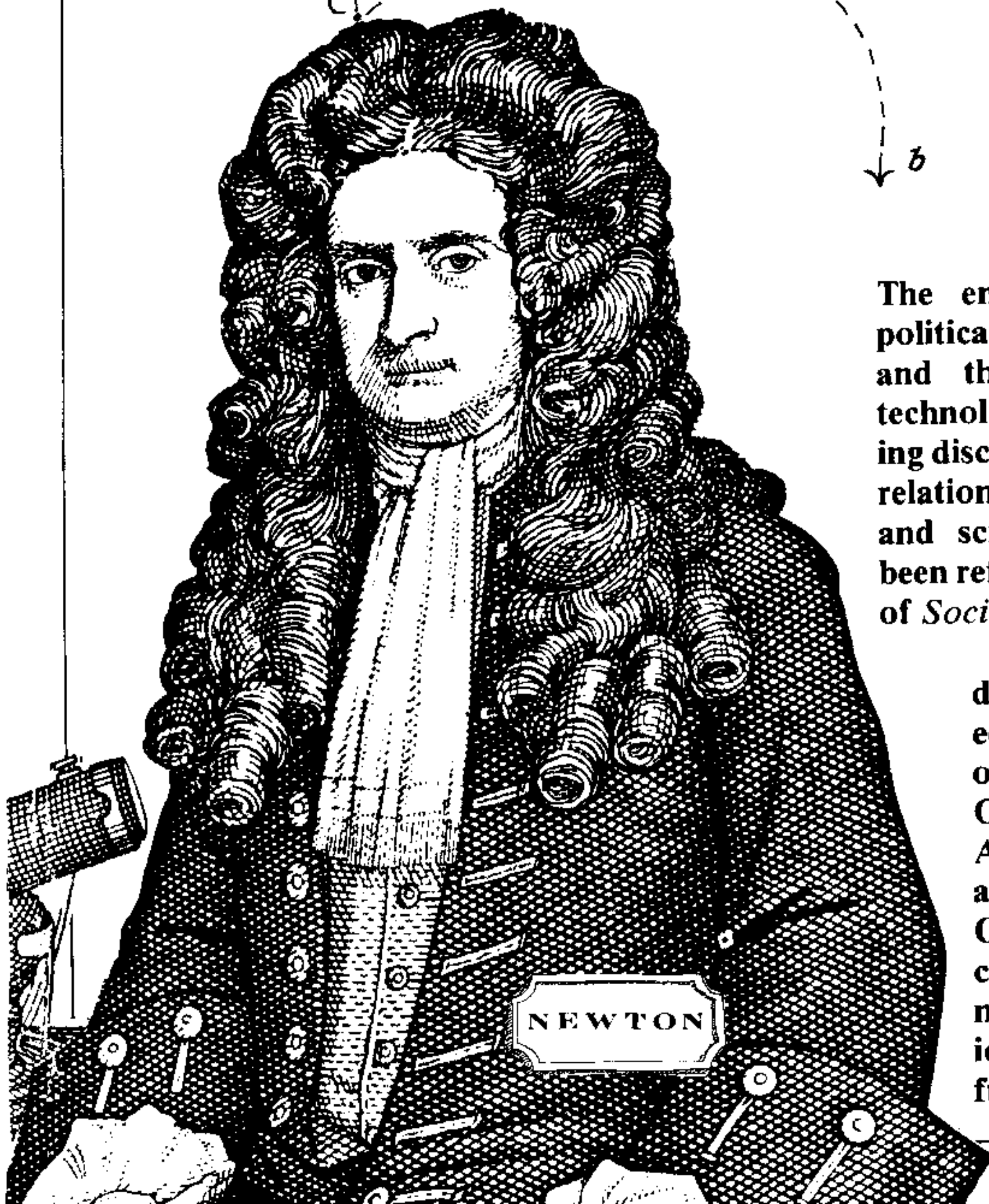
Christmas is a rotten time to be on strike. About the only group of workers ever to 'enjoy' a strike-bound Christmas were the firemen last year, and even then only because some supporters were sensible enough to donate food and drink or provide kids' parties rather than donate money to an anonymous, centralised strike fund.

Employers are well aware of the 'Xmas factor'. Fords has just moved its pay settlement date a month nearer Christmas. For years the Newspaper Society, a particularly nasty bunch of newspaper proprietors, calculated that by delaying talks with the National Union of Journalists they could put the union in the unenviable position of balloting its members on industrial action sometime during the first week of December. This year the NUJ brought its meetings forward . . . the action is strengthening as we go to press.

Last year when Rolls-Royce Scottish workers were banning overtime in Christmas week (in support of 30 per cent rises) management threatened a lock out. Even then it was the votes of about 100 part-time workers that formed the majority to lift the sanctions, but the workforce settled for ten per cent and a sore nose.

There is not a great deal socialists can do about the problem this side of the revolution. But we can alleviate it. If you hear of anyone on strike this Christmas, or New Year, come to that, take them some money. And if they're picketing on Christmas Day, don't just give them the wishbone . . . *Dave Field*

SCIENCE & SOCIALISM



The emergence of a series of political issues like nuclear power and the introduction of 'new technology' has provoked a growing discussion on the left about the relationship between socialism and science. This discussion has been reflected in the letters column of *Socialist Review*.

As a contribution to this discussion we publish an edited and revised transcript of the debate 'Is Science Objective?' between Dave Albury and Alex Callinicos at *Marxism 78* this summer. Obviously such a debate could only touch on the main issues, but this clash of ideas may help to clarify future discussion.

DAVE ALBURY:

I'll start off with what I don't believe. I don't believe that in a socialist society apples will rise from trees rather than fall from them. I don't believe that under a socialist society $2 + 2$ will equal 5.

I don't believe that the hydrogen atom in a socialist society will have two electrons. I say all this to avoid the rather simplistic assumptions which are made about those who answer 'No' to the question 'Is science objective?'

There is a long tradition of socialist thinkers who see science as objective, as neutral, as asocial. Even someone as normally perceptive on these questions as E P Thompson could write in 1969 that every area of society was subject to a marxist analysis except mathematics and natural science.

Many other socialist thinkers have seen science as truth, as the reflection of objective reality and as therefore something neutral and inherently progressive. Trotsky wrote in 1929:

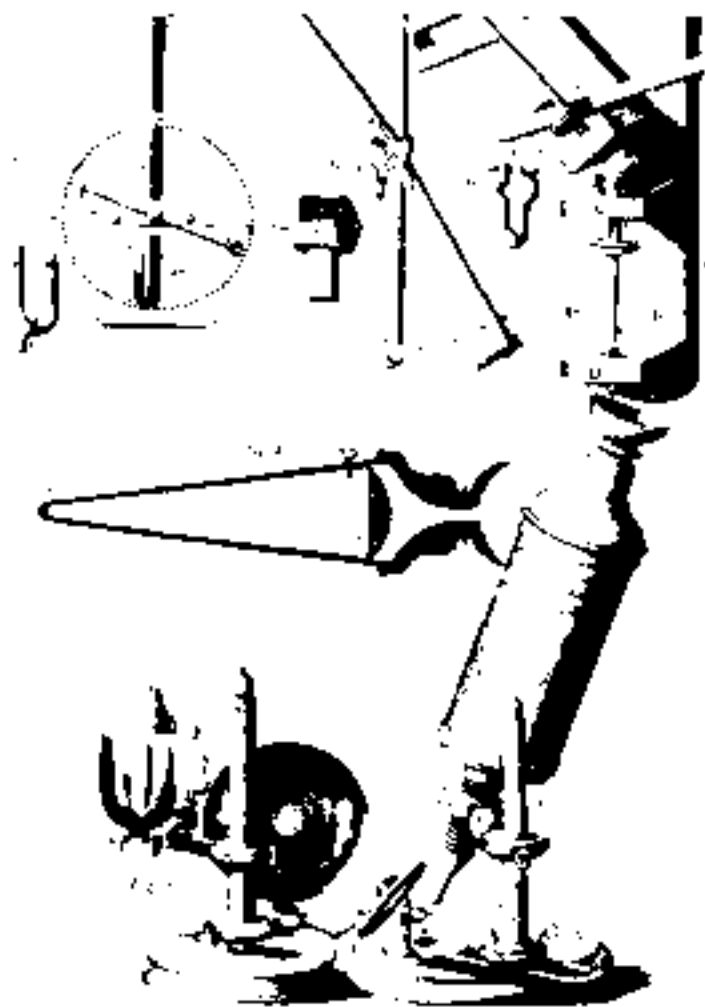
'When the revolution has been finally accomplished, we will have hotels on the top of Mont Blanc, we will have hydro-electric schemes in the middle of the Sahara desert.'

In other words, he shared exactly the same tradition as Stalin's, a tradition based on the idea that what socialism does is to unleash the enormous potential of technology for the good of mankind.

One Stalinist writer, J D Bernal, made out the case for this view of science in a book also written in 1929, *The World, the Flesh and the Devil*.

One example he gave of the wonderful things science would achieve under socialism was the possibility of keeping brains alive after the bodies had long since died, so that the words, the thought, the ideas of Karl Marx could still come through to us!

However, perhaps the most sophisticated theoretician in this tradition is the French Communist philosopher Louis Althusser. Now Althusser has much that is valuable to say, but he makes one crucial mistake.



It's that mistake that I want to analyse in this talk. Althusser draws an absolute distinction between science and ideology. In doing so, he is following the majority of marxist thinkers this century.

The exception is Lenin (at least at some times). He wrote in the *Philosophical Notebooks*: 'Cognition is the eternal, endless

approximation of thought to the object. The reflection of nature in man's thought must be understood not lifelessly, not abstractly, not devoid of movement, not without contradictions, but in the eternal process of movement, the arising of contradictions and their solution'.

And it is as one part of that process that we must examine science.

But let's return for a moment to the standard view of science, the image that people have of science and that you get out of scientific textbooks. This image is one of great men, and, occasionally great women, pushing back the frontiers of knowledge and approaching the Truth.

The production of scientific knowledge is depicted as the effort of independent individuals. We mark the history of science by reciting a list of names: Galileo, Newton, Lagrange, Einstein, Planck.

The sort of history which Marx vehemently attacked in the sphere of economic and social formations is accepted by socialists and others as a completely standard history of science. The great scientists are seen as being guided not by any social or economic constraints but by something mystical called the internal logic of science.

Science is seen as objective, neutral knowledge which is applied either as 'good' technology—increased food production, miracle drugs, etc—or 'bad' technology—atom bombs, pollution, and so on.

The main point I want to make is that science is a social process whose product is appropriated by individuals. This social process is structured by the society of which it is part.

One of the mistakes that people make is to treat science as somehow distinct from technology. But this distinction does not exist. The development of technology is heavily constrained by the economic, that is, the capitalist logic of the situation as well as by what we'll loosely call the logic of science.

There are many examples of science influencing technology and technology influencing science. One example is to be found in a paper of Hessen which shattered the World Congress of the History of Science when he presented it there in 1932.

The standard view of Newton, one which Althusser virtually maintains, is that expressed by Alexander Pope: 'Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night: God said, Let Newton be: and all was light'.

Hessen shows that in the 17th century certain economic problems came to the fore with the rise of mercantile capitalism in British society. Through the mediation of certain technical problems, these set physics a set of theoretical problems and it is those theoretical problems which guided Newton's framework, far from the *Principia Mathematica* being the work of a sheer genius.

The same view which sees science as objective and value-free sees science and ideology as two opposed forms of intellectual activity. I want to show that there is always a relationship between science and ideology, that they interpenetrate and that asocial concepts of truth and falsity are of little use in forming a politica-economic, a historical-materialist analysis of science and technology.

Now there are two very simple—and fairly non-contentious—ways in which science and



technology interpenetrate. The first is scientism—the use of science to justify arguments which have nothing to do with science itself. So we have, for example, *scientific* management, *scientific* cost-benefit analysis, Euthymol, the *scientific* toothpaste.

Secondly, science as a social institution reflects the ideology and practices of capitalist society. Science itself is hierarchical, is racist and is sexist in its very institutions.

Ten years ago if you'd toured around British hospitals and suggested that acupuncture was a legitimate form of treatment you'd have been laughed at. Today you have a slightly different situation—people are beginning to take acupuncture quite seriously.

Yet there's an almost complete rejection of Afro-Asian science, of various other non-western sciences, of herbal medicine, and so on. All these traditional practices which come from outside of the western scientific tradition are looked upon as beneath our consideration. In that sense science is very racist.

But what I want to contrate on the way in which *ruling class ideas permeate the structure of scientific knowledge it self*. They help determine hypotheses about the way in which the world is, they help shape experiments and they thereby mould those illusory things called facts.

The result is that oppression and exploitation are justified as conforming to various scientific laws which at the same time support the ruling class and ideologically disarm those struggling against it.

I want to take a historical view of this with a few particular examples. I've already mentioned Hessen's analysis of Newton. In addition to what Hessen writes it is worth noting that Newton argued that the natural world is composed of hard, massy, impenetrable particles acted on by external forces.

If we compare this with Hobbes's social theory, we find that the latter saw society as composed of atomised individuals who act in accordance with laws of which they are unconscious. So there is a structural parallelism between Newton and Hobbes which indicates that the ideology of the time permeated both social theory and the natural sciences.

If we move through to the 19th century, to the next great social upheaval in British society we see that there is another great breakthrough in science—Darwin's intervention into biological theory.

Now it's often pointed out that Karl Marx in his infinite wisdom wished to dedicate *Capital* Volume 1 to Darwin (a fact now disputed by some historians). To correct this picture, I'd like to read a few quotations from Marx and Engels.

First from Marx: 'It is remarkable how Darwin recognises among beasts and plants, his English society with its division of labour, competition, opening up of new markets, "inventions", and the Malthusian "struggle for existence".'

Indeed, if you read Darwin's notebooks you will find that he went about virtually randomly collecting data and then he came across the Rev. TR Malthus's *Essay on Population*, in which, he said, he was given the key for how his data fitted together. He actually threw away much of the data he had collected in order to fit what was left into Malthus's framework.

But let Engels continue: 'The whole Darwinist teaching of the struggle for existence is simply a transference from society to living nature of Hobbes doctrine of *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war of all against all —ed.) and of the bourgeois-economic doctrine of competition together with Malthus's theory of population.'

'When this conjurer's trick has been performed..., the same theories are transferred back again from organic nature into history and it is now claimed that their validity as eternal laws of human society has been proved. The puerility of this procedure is so obvious that not a word need be said about it.'

Now this wouldn't have been so bad if Darwin wrote *The Origin of the Species* which was tucked away on biologists' shelves for a few years. But it gave rise to the most pernicious set of ideas that have erupted since the 1850s the ideas of social Darwinism, the ideas which actually gave the foundation to fascism and the ideas which give the foundation to capitalist ideology today.

At a very simple level: when you're selling *Socialist Worker* on the streets, one of the most common arguments is: 'Socialism is a very good idea, but unfortunately people are naturally aggressive, naturally competitive, etc.'

And if people doubt this there's always the *Daily Mirror's* double spread on Desmond Morris saying that we're all apes really etc.,

Sociobiology, the latest attempt to make respectable the line of thinking which provides a biological explanation for social behaviour, naturalises the status quo. It says: this society, because it conforms to natural laws, is the sort of society, whether we like it or not, which we have to have.

It justifies male superiority; it justifies hierarchies; it justifies class society; it justifies racism.

Well, that's early physics and early biology and of course we all make mistakes. But let's take the argument onto firmer ground, onto quantum mechanics. In the next time of social upheaval, the early 20th century, there was a great debate in quantum mechanics. Physicists came up against a problem.

What Newton and Darwin had said was something inherently reactionary, ie, that there is an observer and an observed and that the observer can make statements about the observed without talking about the relation between observer and observed.

Then along came Einstein and other people working the field of quantum mechanics and relativity. They said that as soon as you look at nature, as soon as you touch nature, you're interacting with nature.

There's not a category, nature, existing outside human experience. If we want to understand nature, we have to interact with nature and we have to recognise that interaction.

Now what's interesting about that argument is that many scientists divided along political lines. Those who were grappling with the new ideas of dialectical materialism, those who were prepared to take a more radical stance in their field, went along with the idea that observer and observed are linked, that science about a form of interaction between observer and observed.

Let's look at molecular biology. When it was launched in the 1930s where did the concepts of molecular biology come from? People didn't look at nature and out popped the concepts.

Molecular biology was based on concepts like current account, deposit account, credit transfer, the language of banking, not nature. Molecular biology very soon got itself into a mess—not very surprising considering those conceptual tools.

In the 1950s molecular biologists switched to concepts like feedback drawn from computer science, again metaphors drawn from particular technologies arising from particular social and economic imperatives.

And a last simple example. All of you who did 'O' level chemistry will remember those lovely little equations presented in the

'Vested interest, class position and prejudices are not left behind when the scientist enters the laboratory.'

text-books, for example, 2 nitrogen atoms + 3 hydrogen molecules give you 2 molecules of ammonia. And these equations are presented as the truth. But they are only partial truths—in a very dangerous sense, and I mean literally dangerous.

When ammonia is made industrially what you get is a one per cent yield of ammonia. You also get numerous other products many of which are fatal or dangerous to workers involved in that production process. A truer equation would reveal to people that there are various nasty things going on in that process: the textbook equation conceals this.

Where does all this take us? I don't deny that there is an objective reality. But our conceptual tools for analysing it come from our various interactions with that reality and these interactions are determined by the socio-economic imperatives that are operating in that society in that time.



Science, experimentation, activity are all forms of interaction with reality which can provide us with knowledge of it. They provide us with partial truths but not *the* truth. A finite amount of activity, which is all we will ever have, cannot reveal the infinite possibilities, the infinite aspects of reality. We investigate those aspects of reality that economically or ideologically interest us.

I want now to pre-empt some criticisms that are made of this sort of argument. There are three main areas of criticism. The first one is to dismiss me as a relativist—someone who denies that truth and falsity exist. But all I'm saying is that science is very specifically grounded in socio-historical conditions. That the amount of knowledge available within a specific framework is determined by the ruling ideology of the society.

The second accusation is that I think that reality is essentially unknowable. I don't claim this—simply that reality is not totally conceptualisable. Our concepts cannot become the thing itself. Reality is objective, science is not.

The last and most serious accusation is of Stalinism. I'm accused of following the Stalinist biologist Lysenko, who distinguished between bourgeois and proletarian science. Well, if that's all he had said, then I would agree with him.

Lysenko used the state apparatus to control the scientific community rather than using the self-activity, the self-criticism of scientific workers, of workers generally. But he rightly criticised the geneticist Mendel as a bourgeois theorist.

He didn't, however, point out what historians of science now accept, that Mendel couldn't possibly have derived hypotheses from the evidence he possessed. Capitalist or bourgeois science is not false, merely limited, and this was not grasped by Lysenko.

In conclusion, the fights over the new technology in the print and in the docks demand an analysis of science which does not centre on the belief that science is a progressive force. They demand a concrete historical-materialist analysis of science.

In short, contrary to popular belief, scientists are members of classes, they're human. The scientific method, if such a thing exists at all, is not a process for arriving at universal truths but a way of deepening the knowledge available within a particular framework for looking at the world. Vested interest, class position and prejudices are not left behind when the scientist enters the laboratory.

ALEX CALLINICOS:

Dave Albury started off with a disclaimer so I suppose I should too. I'm *not* going to argue that science is neutral—somehow separate from and above the class struggle. Therefore I agree with quite a lot of what Dave said.

Unfortunately he confuses two quite different things. One is the *neutrality* of science—its alleged separation from the class struggle, its alleged value-freedom, a thesis which I reject. The other is the *objectivity* of the sciences—their ability to provide us with knowledge of reality, a thesis which I do accept and which is a very important component of the marxist tradition.

There are two completely misconceived approaches to the sciences within the marxist tradition. Dave discussed the first, in which socialism is seen as unleashing the productive forces and the sciences as part of them. In other words, science and technology are seen as being neutral—the only thing wrong with them is the uses to which they are put under capitalism.

Now this approach, of which Stalin and Kautsky were the two chief advocates, is a fundamentally wrong one, which involves a number of theoretical and political dangers.

However, there is another equally wrong approach to the sciences and that's the one Dave argues for. According to him the sciences are forms of ideology—they simply reflect what happens in the economic class struggle.

This idea is quite fashionable on the left at the present time. It's fashionable for a number of good reasons—for example, the campaign against nuclear power, and I suppose I should say that I'm in favour of this campaign (another disclaimer!). It's also fashionable for some bad reasons.

It's strengthened by a trend which is extremely strong in academic sociology and philosophy of science. This trend sees the history of the sciences as a succession of different 'paradigms', different theoretical frameworks, each of equal value in providing knowledge of the world.

The most extreme example of this position is a book by Paul Feyerabend called *Against Method* in which he advocates 'epistemological anarchism'—essentially relativism: 'anything goes', there's no such thing as objective knowledge.

To show why this approach is wrong I want to start by looking at how we view the history of the sciences. In the past, as Dave said, it was seen as a succession of great men making extraordinary discoveries—a completely idealist approach.

More recent research shows that the sciences develop in a different way. I'm thinking of the work of some historians of science, notably in France—people like Alexandre Koyre, Gaston Bachelard, Georges Canguilhem.

On this approach, sciences like physics are seen, not as a collection of isolated laws discovered by great men, but as *systems* of concepts, in which the meaning of particular laws, of particular facts, depends on their place in the science as a whole.

So you can't separate Newton's law of universal gravitation from the theoretical system of which it was a part. It follows that the sciences develop through profound internal reorganisations of these concepts.

To illustrate this argument I'm going to choose an example, not from the allegedly neutral natural sciences, but from Marx's *Capital*. In his preface to Volume 2 of *Capital* Engels wrote: 'The *existence* of the part of the value produced that we now call surplus-value was established long before Marx; what it consists of, ie the product of labour, for which the appropriator has paid no equivalent, was also formulated with a greater or lesser degree of clarity. But this was as far as it went.

'Some people—the classical bourgeois economists—investigated primarily the ratio in which the product of labour was distributed between the worker and the proprietor of the means of production. Others—the socialists—found this distribution unjust and sought to remove the injustice by utopian means. Both remained captive to the economic categories as they had found them.

'Then Marx appeared. And he stood in direct opposition to all his predecessors. Where they had seen a *solution*, he saw only a *problem*. He saw... that it was neither a matter of simply recording an economic fact, nor of a conflict between this fact and eternal justice or true morality, but rather of a fact which was destined to revolutionise economics, and which provided the key to the understanding of the whole of capitalist production—for the person who knew how to use it, that is.

'With the aid of this fact Marx investigated all the existing categories of economics'. And Engels goes on to show how, starting from the concept of surplus-value, Marx completely reorganised, reworked and transformed economics as a theoretical system.

The obvious question which arises from this approach to the history of the sciences is: Do these conceptual organisations, these changes in theory, take place in isolation from the class struggle? The answer is: No. Theoretical transformations are closely linked to economic, ideological and political conditions. For example, the new physics which emerged in the 17th century involved for the first time a concept of nature as an objectively existing entity which man could both know and transform.

This concept was very closely linked to the struggle against the feudal ideology of the Catholic Church and was an important precondition to the development of the economic and political domination of the bourgeoisie.

Moreover, the sciences are social practices. That is to say, they are moulded by the capitalist society of which they are part. They are organised on the basis of the division between manual and intellectual labour, they involve institutionalised racism, sexism, elitism, etc.,. Theoretical research is often directly related to the needs of industry, and so on.

But it does not follow from this that the sciences do not possess an objective content. The sciences cannot be reduced to the class conditions of their production—they provide us with knowledge of reality. It's in this sense that I regard the sciences as objective—not that they're separate from the class struggle, but that they can't be reduced to it.

The sciences are a profoundly contradictory phenomenon—they are *both* theoretical activities *and* social practices, and any approach which seeks simply to reduce them to one or other of these two aspects is going to get themselves into a mess.

The fact that the sciences can't be reduced to their class conditions arises from what I spoke of earlier—the fact that the sciences develop through continual conceptual reorganisation. Dave seems to see the sciences developing theoretically simply by passively adapting to the reality outside them—and in particular to the needs of capitalism. This is profoundly at odds with the history of the sciences, which shows this process of internal conceptual reorganisation. It is this process which gives the sciences an autonomy which may be relative, because they are part of society, but is nonetheless genuine.

Moreover, this process of internal transformation has a direction. Progress takes place within the sciences, deepening our knowledge of reality. The classic example is Einstein's theory of relativity, which supplanted Newtonian mechanics, explaining phenomena which Newton could not while including Newton's system as a limiting case.

I'd like to show that theoretical developments within the sciences cannot be reduced to the changing needs of capitalism by taking some of Dave's examples.

First of all Newton. Dave says Newton was a bourgeois theorist because he saw



material reality as being composed of atoms. Now, although Newton's atomic theory proved to be a brilliant anticipation of modern theories of matter, it was one of the aspects of his system which he was most tentative, most uncertain about, certainly not the crux of his theory: his laws of motion, which are independent of the atomic theory, had a far more immediate impact on the development of physics.

Then there's the case of Darwin. Dave chose his quotations from Marx and Engels rather selectively. When Marx first read *The Origin of the Species* he wrote to Engels: 'Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a natural-scientific basis for the class struggle'.

And Engels writes in the letter Dave quoted: 'Of the Darwinian doctrine I accept the *theory of evolution* but Darwin's method of proof (struggle for life, natural selection) I consider only a first, provisional, imperfect expression of a newly discovered fact'. The quotation Dave uses was in fact aimed, not at Darwin, but at the 'bourgeois Darwinists' in the field of social theory.

Dave's whole approach to Darwin is fantastically dishonest. He reduces Darwin's contribution to certain aspects of his theory—in particular the ideas deriving from Malthus—and the uses to which it has been put by some of his followers in biology and sociology. On the face of it that's a bit like the bourgeois critics of Marx who say Stalin called himself a marxist, therefore Marx equals Stalin.

Dave's discussion of quantum mechanics reveals his ignorance of the subject. He refers to the uncertainty principle. This was discovered by Heisenberg, not Einstein. It states that you can't measure the position of electrons in atoms because the energy involved in the operation of measurement would knock the electron out of the atom. Einstein rejected the principle from the start and spent the rest of his life trying to refute it.

In any case, the uncertainty principle arose from certain highly complex problems withing quantum mechanics. To suggest that it was developed by the defenders of the working class, of dialectical materialism, is just ludicrous. Heisenberg wove the uncertainty principle into a highly subjectivist philosophy of science. To suggest that this has anything to do with dialectical materialism would make Lenin, who wrote a book, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, defending the objectivity of the sciences, turn in his grave.

I suppose Dave's cavalier attitude to the history of the sciences arises from his general approach. If the sciences passively reflect what goes on in the economy then they have no specific existence of their own and there's no need to bother with studying their actual history.

What Dave says about Lysenko, Zhdanov and the other advocates of 'proletarian science' in the 1930s and 1940s is interesting. He says that the trouble with them was that they had the wrong politics, not that they distinguished between proletarian and bourgeois science.

If we take the idea of 'proletarian science' seriously then we must imagine that there would be a 'proletarian' relativity theory which would tell us different things about the structure of the universe because it reflected the interests of the working class, not the

bourgeoisie. It is difficult to take such a silly idea seriously.

Moreover, since the distinction between proletarian and bourgeois proletarian science is a political one, it would presumably the job of the Central Committee to police physics, biology, etc., to weed out the reactionary theories.

When in the years following the October revolution some Bolsheviks came up with the idea of 'proletarian culture' and argued

'The sciences occupy a position in class society which is determined by the relations of production, but this... is one of relative autonomy'

that there should be a party line in art and literature, Lenin and Trotsky firmly rejected this sort of fake leftism. They argued that literature had its own rhythms of development which could not simply be reduced to the class struggle.

The same argument applies to the sciences. It is impossible to predict or control the development of theoretical research. For example, in the 19th century various mathematicians developed geometrical systems derived from different assumptions from those of classical Euclidean geometry.

These non-Euclidean geometries appeared to be purely intellectual constructions with no application to reality. However, Einstein's general relativity theory, developed many years later, showed that there are certain properties of physical reality which can be grasped only on the basis of non-Euclidean geometry. That is a perfect example of the sciences' relative autonomy—of the way in which they develop in accordance with their own laws.

The obvious criticism to be made of this approach is that it is idealist—in other words, that I separate the sciences from the rest of society. But to repeat what I have been arguing: the sciences are a contradictory phenomenon—they are shaped by the needs of class society but possess an internal dynamic of their own. The sciences occupy a position in class society which is determined by the relations of production, but this position, because of the peculiar nature of the sciences, is one of relative autonomy.

Why does this matter to marxists? It matters for two reasons. First of all because the transition from capitalist to socialism involves elements of continuity. Marx, Lenin and Trotsky all argued that a workers' state would take over the cultural heritage of

bourgeois society—including the sciences. The positive achievements of capitalist society will be set to work by and for the associated producers under socialism.

Of course this doesn't mean that we will simply take over the sort of technology that capitalism has created. This technology reflects the needs of the exploiters: every innovation under capitalism means for the workers increased exploitation, redundancies, speed-up, deskilling. But our opposition to the new technology, for example, must be on the clear basis that what we fighting is not the sciences, but capitalism. Inventions like microprocessors offer, under socialism, the potential of freeing humanity from wearisome drudgery.

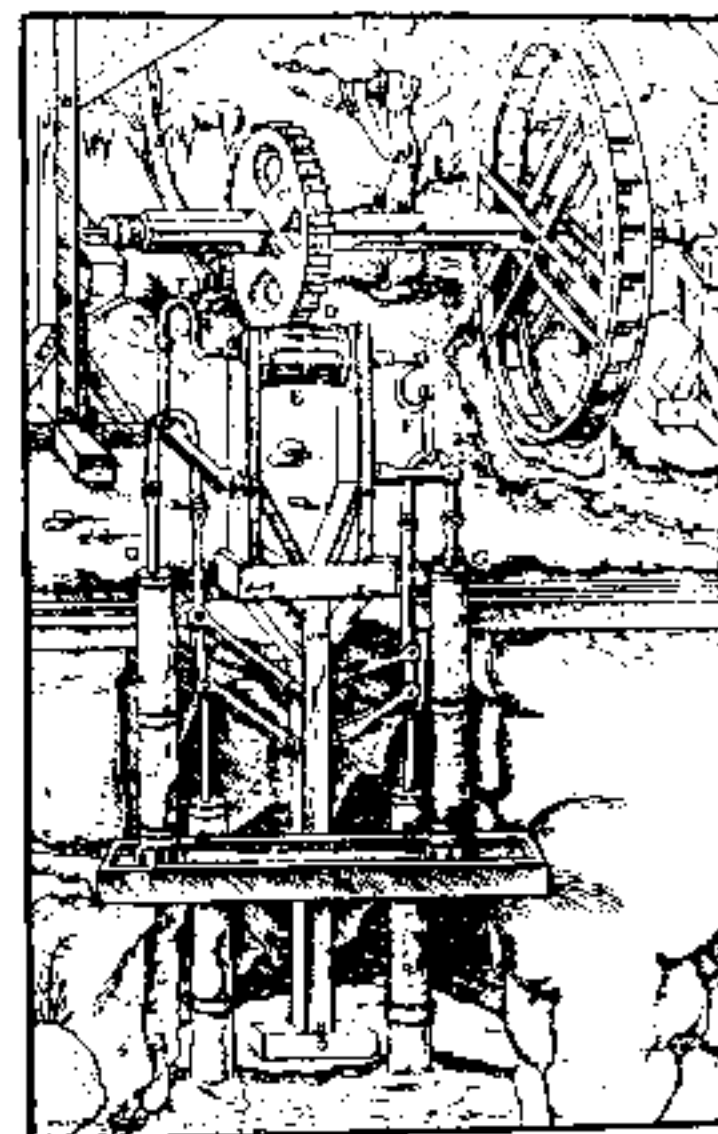
Second, the objectivity of the sciences matters because marxism is a science. In other words, it provides us with knowledge of the society in which we live as the basis for our day-to-day activity as socialists. Lenin put it like this: 'the marxist doctrine is omnipotent because it is true'. In other words, marxism is an effective guide to practice because it provides us with better knowledge of the world than its competitors, bourgeois sociology and economics.

Marx devoted his life to *Capital* and insisted that it was a work of science because he believed that for socialism to succeed depended on a realistic understanding of capitalist society. This distinguished Marx's theory from that of his predecessors, the utopian socialists, who substituted their desires for reality. On Dave's approach we should choose the theory we like best, not the one which fits reality best. A serious socialist theory needs a better basis than that.

Of course, this doesn't mean that we claim that marxism represents the absolute truth. All theories are approximations to reality, but some are better approximations than others. It's in that light that the quotation from Lenin which Dave read out has to be understood.

The great marxist thinkers combined passionate commitment to the cause of revolution with a careful, detailed and scholarly approach to reality. On Dave's account they were wasting their time, since bourgeois economics, or indeed astrology tells us as much or as little about the world.

I've said enough to show that we need to reject Dave's approach as a form of vulgar marxism as pernicious in its way as that of Stalin and Kautsky.



The last few years have seen mass unemployment on a scale not seen since the 1930s. Some studies predict four or five million jobless by the mid 1980s as a result of innovations like microprocessors. Some socialists argue that the most effective and practical way to fight unemployment in the short term is through the introduction of workers' cooperatives. Tony Benn during his stay at the Department of Industry in 1974-75 lent his weight to the idea. But the announcement in November 1978

that the Kirkby Manufacturing and Engineering workers' co-operative, set up with Benn's support after militant sit-ins against threatened redundancies, is to be taken over by Worcester Engineering, points to some of the problems faced by co-operatives. Frederick Gregory examines the experience of workers' co-operatives, and argues that they represent, less an alternative to capitalism, than a diversion from the fight against unemployment and for socialism.

on purchases, proved fatal to the collectivist and egalitarian orientations integral to cooperative ideals.

This represented a grand compromise with capitalist society: no longer was cooperation antagonistic to capitalism and aimed at its ultimate destruction and replacement by a communistic system; but primarily was another, if superior, variant of capitalist trade.

'Profits were in principle fervently defended, and cooperation was lauded as making working men respectable, law abiding, and property owning citizens'. Cooperation had become another expression of the Victorian ideal of self-help.

Workers' cooperatives have traditionally held out the promise of a more direct democracy than was ever achieved in the retail societies; and of threatening capitalism far more effectively by intervening between the capitalist and the producer, rather than simply intervening between the capitalist and the consumer. However workers cooperatives have had a difficult history.

Early craft cooperatives failed, or were converted into private businesses. At the end of the century a wave of producer cooperatives were established during lock-outs, (including at the CWS shoe factory in Leicester, where striking workers set up a cooperative rather than be starved into

CO OPERATIVE ESTABLISHMENT

The cooperative movement is the third arm of the established labour movement, but, in contrast to the Labour Party and trade unions, has received very little critical attention from the left in recent years.

One obvious reason for this is that the cooperatives have in many respects become virtually indistinguishable from private enterprise: 'your caring, sharing co-op' somehow fails to convince that it cares or shares anything which a private company, bent on accumulation and growth, does not.

Yet the cooperative movement deserves serious attention from socialists for both theoretical and practical reasons. From its inception in the early 19th century the movement has developed into a massive, worldwide concern. In this country, activities are concentrated in wholesaling and retailing.

In 1973 the CWS had aggregate sales of £736 million, and reserves of £95 million. There are 10¼ million members of the 260 retail societies, which have combined sales of £2,000 million a year, account for 15 per cent of the grocery trade in Great Britain, operate 12,000 shops, and employ 150,000 people.

Internationally, 326 million people are members of cooperatives in 66 countries: 38 per cent in consumers societies; 33 per cent in credit societies; 29 per cent in agricultural cooperatives; and 2 per cent in industrial cooperatives.

However not only does membership of the cooperatives require little, if any, commitment; but often cooperatives have been imposed by national governments as an instrument of economic development, especially in the third world.

Thus unfortunately, all of this activity does not indicate a significant undermining of capitalist control of economic life: on the contrary, the cooperative movement began to expand and grow rapidly in the 19th century precisely when cooperators dropped their outright opposition to the capitalist system and began to accept the constraints and orientations of that system, even when they contradicted cooperative principles.

The appeal of cooperation was born out of the misery and despair experienced at the time of industrial revolution. Despite the growing productive power, a privately owned competitive economic system meant increasing unemployment, degradation and poverty for the working class.

As Sidney Pollard put it, 'The right of everyman to happiness, the right to the whole produce of labour, the right to work, to knowledge, to social equality, the longing for a social system that would encourage

man to help man instead of competing against him—these and others touched a chord in almost every artisan and labourer who lived through the dark days of the industrial revolution'. Thus the early cooperators, most notably Robert Owen, were utopian communists who wanted to create egalitarian, self-supporting, collectively controlled industrial communities.

It is ironic to realise that the Rochdale Pioneers, who are acknowledged as the founders of the modern cooperative movement, were responsible for the first major breach with Owenite idealism. The decision in 1844 to pay individual dividends

WORKERS' CO-OPS

ARE THEY AN ALTERNATIVE TO CAPITALISM?

BY FREDERICK GREGORY

submission by the CWS). In the early 1920s building guilds were set up by the guild socialists, but collapsed due to the withdrawal of government contracts and economic depression.

There is no reason to suppose that workers cooperatives are economically any less viable than small private businesses, which also regularly fail. But what is clear, is that in isolation these cooperatives are unable to alter the instability, irrationality, and insecurity of the capitalist market economy. Moreover, survival is normally dependent upon the acquisition of conventional business values and orientations, which erode democratic principles and practice.

The Webbs in particular denounced 'democracies of producers', arguing that they inevitably became 'association of capitalists'. The Webbs' warning is still relevant: even when conceived as an embryonic form of socialism, workers cooperatives, under the weight of the existing social and economic system, display a consistent tendency to assume the primacy of commercial concerns in pursuit of financial success.

There are a number of types of workers' cooperatives currently in existence. The most elementary are the several hundred small craftshops specialising in handicrafts, printing, radical publishing, wholefoods, or providing some other craft or service. In some ways these are the most acceptable cooperatives, in that they are small enough to ensure some degree of democratic control, and are usually set up with the express purpose of providing for some unmet social need.

In this respect the wholefood stores have proved most successful; there are now several hundred stores organised in regional federations, and every city is served by one or two.

The politics of food is important, and things have deteriorated since Orwell commented in the 1930s that capitalism was attempting to poison the working class with processed foods. However many of these cooperatives are not unionized, and some of them have a vague political consciousness to put it mildly.

A number of larger workers cooperatives are organized into two separate federations, the older Cooperative Productive Federation, and the newer Industrial Common Ownership Movement. The CPF was established in 1882 to promote producer cooperation; however although there were about 100 producer cooperatives at the turn of the century, by 1975 only seven remained members of the CPF.

These cooperatives are registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts. Each member of the cooperative has a vote regardless of shareholding, but the membership is not confined to the workforce, and there can be any number of outside shareholders up to a maximum of £5,000. Profits are distributed according to shareholding rather than labour contributed, and the shareholders may also dissolve the cooperative to recover their capital. It is difficult to detect any significant benefits for workers of this form of organization compared to that of a capitalist company.

A 'purer' form of cooperation is that practiced by ICOM, which has about 20

small cooperatives in membership. Only workers in the cooperative may be members of it, and the general meeting decides policy, and controls funds, though loans at fixed interest with the ensuing controls may be obtained.

In both CPF and ICOM cooperatives the management normally have retained control despite the concession of democratic forms; differentials and inequalities persist, and in essence many of the cooperatives are

paternalistic bodies.

This is particularly true of the founder company of ICOM, the medium sized chemical company Scott Bader. ICOM has recently attracted some government support, though the producer cooperative movement in this country remains weak and undernourished relative to that in other industrial countries such as France where 500 cooperatives receive government approval.

'NEW IMPROVED' COOPERATIVES

One important reason for the failure of workers' cooperatives to develop in this country is the legitimate suspicion of trade unions as to their purpose. This suspicion was only temporarily overcome with the pragmatic establishment of three larger cooperatives in 1974/75 in the fight against mass redundancies.

The refusal of the Labour government to countenance nationalization persuaded the leaders of Kirkby Manufacturing and Engineering, the Scottish Daily News, and Triumph Meriden to approach the Department of Industry for funds. Despite being Industry Minister, Tony Benn who was the principal influence behind the cooperatives, was so hemmed in by hostile civil servants and business interests, that although funds were provided, they were so inadequate that the cooperatives were forced to struggle for their survival from the start.

At Kirkby this meant that from the beginning several hundred technically voluntary redundancies were necessary, though the sit-ins were fought, and the cooperative founded to prevent this. The militancy of the Kirkby workers had achieved top rates for the area and a 35 hour-week by 1974. This was needed especially since the work at Kirkby was predominantly exhausting mass production in the press shop and radiator shop, which allowed little opportunity for personal development.

However workers found that instead of a drastic improvement in working conditions with the commencement of the cooperative, they were demanded to work *harder*. Images of workers' control were shattered as workers found they had the same wages, hours, shifts and supervision as before: 'We're *all* supposed to be bosses now! How can we be bosses with all this supervision over us?'

Cooperative idealism disintegrated as workers found that they had not escaped from the ravages of the capitalist system: they were confronted by constant demands for greater output, interrupted by abrupt lay-offs. The market still dictated the level of production in the cooperative. More seriously still, the defences of the workers were dismantled as the shop stewards merged with management.

At Kirkby the two convenors were also the sole directors, (they also ran the shop stewards committee, works council, sports society, company shop...). Realising that it was the only way to exert some influence over the cooperative, workers have engaged in several unofficial strikes at KME, despite the supposed 'self-management' structure.

However, in general the rank-and-file activity which politicized and enthused the

two sit-ins at Fisher-Bendix (KME) was effectively defused in the years of the cooperative to be replaced by gloom and despondency.

At the Scottish Daily News, the militants and idealists at the heart of the venture, quickly found that that they were acting out a black comedy. The paper was so perilously financed that only instantly securing a readership of 200,000+ and as much revenue again from advertising could save it.

Although the paper consistently reached 65 per cent of its circulation target during its six months life, it only ever achieved 25 per cent of its advertising target. Advertisers disapproved of the cooperative status of the paper, and reacted hysterically to the few radical stories which crept into the paper. Many of the workers had not been involved in the effort to set up the paper, and some of the journalists were only interested in seeing their name in lights.

Brought up in the reactionary Beaverbrook mould, especially the intensely conservative Scottish Graphical Association, it was this element in the workforce which welcomed the return of Maxwell as the 'overlord' of the SDN. But the formidable neanderthal qualities of the man should not be underestimated; Tiny Rowland, the Lonrho chief executive who presently hopes to take over the *Glasgow Herald*, was once described as an 'urbane guerilla'. The label fits Robert Maxwell even better.

The militants at SDN who had hoped to transfer it somehow into a class-conscious defender of the workers, realised that they had created what they had feared, 'a monster'. Not only were wages, manning and conditions unacceptable, undermining the conditions achieved by print workers in other newspapers; not only was the paper becoming a cheap imitation of the *Express*; but Maxwell was presiding over the whole process.

The engineers were ready to pull the plug on the paper if the deterioration continued, as was likely, but in the event this proved unnecessary as the paper was bankrupt by November 1975, and Maxwell's promise of aid proved to be empty rhetoric.

The cooperative which has attracted greatest public attention is undoubtedly Triumph Meriden. Meriden has won a soft-spot in the heart of every middle aged person who can remember burning up the bypass in a mispent youth. It would be difficult to find an industry which had been so wilfully destroyed by incompetent management as the British motorcycle industry. Investment and product development were totally neglected, working capital was eaten into to pay high dividends. While Lord and Lady Docker drove around in a gold plated Rolls,

WORKERS' CO-OPS

BSA was collapsing. A half-hearted restructuring of the industry did not halt its decline, and the Meriden struggle was to save part of the remnant of three factories.

The Birmingham Confed apologetically asked for nationalization of Small Heath, Wolverhampton NVT, and Meriden, which a concentrated campaign could have achieved. However the leaders of Meriden were seduced by the notion of a cooperative, and although with great determination Meriden was saved, this later meant the closure of the other two factories.

So far Triumph Meriden has survived. Pay is lower than in surrounding car factories, though the work is much the same. Constant production must be maintained to compete with other manufacturerers.

Some elements of craft autonomy have been retained in the cooperative, and they operated for over two years with essentially one manager, who did the books. But the cooperative has been gradually acquiring a management structure, and has already suffered the untender attentions of management teams from GKN and GEC, who attempted to whip it into an acceptable shape.

At Kirkby and Glasgow the militants were painfully aware that their enterprises were not cooperatives; at Meriden the primary interest seems to be in building motorcycles, though what cooperatives innovations that have been achieved, such as the elimination of close supervision, seem in danger of coming under attrition from management and market forces.

As for the established cooperative movement, which has had time to fully develop, the picture is not promising. Poor conditions of work, typical of the retail trade, exist in the retail cooperatives: average earnings for men are 84 per cent of the national average, and for women 73 per cent of the national average. Workers' control and cooperative purpose seem notably absent.

Cooperative workers once made the classic response to finding that formal structures denied them control. As one study put it, 'the growth of the Amalgamated Union of Cooperative Employees (now USDAW) during the 1900s and its militancy in the 1910s—albeit immediately concerned with wages rather than political status—does not suggest widespread involvement of employees in retail cooperative government.'

The problem is that individual cooperatives operating in the capitalist market can only achieve a restricted, contorted and contradictory form of cooperation. Whilst practicing cooperation at the enterprise level the cooperative is subject to competitive market constraints and the pressure to produce for profit, not for social needs, 'a barometer of market trends... and a fulcrum of market forces', as one cooperative advocate approvingly put it.

But this is to insert cooperation within competitive and exploitative relations of production. Marx insisted, 'In production, men not only act on nature, but also on one another. They produce only by cooperating in a certain way and mutually exchanging

their activities. In order to produce, they enter into definite connections and relations with one another and only within these social connections and relations does their action on nature, does production, take place'.

In this sense even capitalism is a cooperative method of production, but this cooperation is enforced within an oppressive private ownership and control of the means of production, and subject to the irrationality and inequality of market forces.

It is necessary to transform these exploitative relations of production to allow the production for social need, with democratic and collective use of resources in a system of democratic planning and decentralized implementation. This is both necessary and feasible.

Presently much of private industry is sustained only by massive government assistance amounting to thousands of millions of pounds annually. The self-activity of the working class and the determination to destroy capitalism will attain a genuinely cooperative socialist economy.

But in contrast, individual cooperatives submerged in a market system are often a way of avoiding the class struggle, and abandoning nationalization as a political objective. Frequently cooperatives are seen as a route to worker capitalism, a means to sever class consciousness and action; and Tories are coming to regard a limited

number of cooperatives, dependent upon private capital, as the industrial equivalent of shackling workers with house mortgages.

This explains why workers cooperatives have recently derived support from all kinds of right-wingers, including Peter Jay, ex-economics editor of the *Times*, now sojourning at his father-in-law's place in Washington.

A century ago Marx put the present situation very well. 'The experience of the period from 1848 to 1864 has proved beyond doubt that, however excellent in principle, and however useful in practice, cooperative labour, if kept within the narrow circle of the casual efforts of private workmen, will never be able to arrest the growth in geometric progression of monopoly, to free the masses, nor even perceptibly to lighten the burden of their miseries.

'It is perhaps for this very reason that plausible noblemen, philanthropic middle-class spouters, and even keen political economists, have all at once turned nauseously complimentary to the very cooperative labour system they had vainly tried to nip in the bud by deriding it as the utopia of the dreamer, of stigmatizing it as the sacrilege of the socialist.

'To save the industrious masses, cooperative labour ought to be developed to national dimensions, and, consequently to be fostered by national means. Yet the lords of land and the lords of capital will always use their political privileges for the defence and perpetuation of their economic monopolies. So far from promoting, they will continue to lay every possible impediment in the way of the emancipation of labour...'

AN ALTERNATIVE TO UNEMPLOYMENT?

The pressure to establish cooperatives as a local response to unemployment in inner-city areas and depopulated rural areas is mounting. The Socialist Environment and Resources Association and other similar bodies are pressing local councils to set up such cooperatives to serve local needs. But anyone contemplating a cooperative should be aware of the dangers, and should observe certain minimal conditions.

First, and most importantly, the political orientations of the enterprise must be coherently directed towards the class struggle. This will determine not only the products produced or the services provided, but the technology utilized, the division of labour, work organisation, control structure, and commercial relations.

No measure should be adopted which contradicts socialist principles and practice, however convenient or profitable. If it is impossible to fulfil these conditions, and in many material circumstances it would be impossible to fulfil them, then it is difficult to see the contribution of a cooperative to the class struggle. One example where these conditions are attempted to be met, are socialist printing workshops which insist that material oriented towards the struggle is the first priority, and where no sexist, racist, or reactionary material is tolerated.

Of course the cooperative should be fully unionized and ensure that everything is done to support local union and political struggles. The sight of the entire staff of our local wholefood collective regularly turning

up to picket in freezing winter at a union recognition dispute was convincing proof that the retail trade does not invariably produce petty bourgeois attitudes. Such cooperatives can have an important demonstrative impact showing as Marx applauded, that workers can do without masters, that work can be a joy, and an expression of freedom instead of bondage.

But for the dedicated revolutionary cooperatives can often only exist at the periphery of the struggle, and the centre of the struggle remains where the working class is concentrated: in the large offices and factories which make up the public and private sector of the economy, and among the unemployed.

In some circumstances cooperatives may be a valid and helpful expedient, but to believe that they can be freely developed and expand to the extent that they effectively undermine monopoly capitalism is naive and diversionary, and may sap the organization and will necessary to more directly assault the power of capital by political and industrial means through the trade unions and socialist parties.

Moreover it is unfair and misleading to workers to hold up the immediate promise of socialism in single factories, as they may be rapidly disillusioned when they find, as they have done in some of the existing cooperatives, that working in a cooperative within the capitalist system can be as arduous, unrewarding, and restricting, as in any capitalist company.

In the era of bourgeois-democratic revolution at the end of the 18th century, those who fought with most energy and determination for the 'rights of man' were neither the bourgeoisie nor the as yet unorganised wage-workers, but the small masters and direct producers who still owned their means of production.

Such were the *sans-culottes* of the Paris *fauvourgs*, who were the driving-force for political and social change, between 1789 and 1794, and their fellow artisans and craftsmen in the urban centres of England.

The English radical movement produced some remarkable individuals. One of the most remarkable was William Blake, engraver, artist and poet, who was born in Soho in 1757.

Blake is too often thought of as a unique genius who had connections with little else besides angels, spirits and visions.

Those who think of Blake as an eccentric mystic, Romantic individualist and visionary tend to forget that his context was one in which to be a 'visionary' was to attract the attention of government spies; that the Romantic artist was the product of a particular historical moment; and that the revolutionary-democratic movement was itself made up of 'individualists' in the sense that it was not yet a *working-class* movement.

Blake's working life illustrates very well the transition from dependence on a rich patron, to 'independence', to a new dependence on the impersonal mechanisms of the market. The course steered by Blake as a 'humble' engraver and as a 'rebel' artist is worth close study from this point of view.

Yet he will never be pinned down. Not only, as a self-taught poet and individualist were his contacts, associations and influences wide, varied and constantly shifting (he was a Londoner to the last); he was nakedly aware of social and psychological realities others ignored or failed to see, and he always generated his *own* way of looking at things.

What he came to see, around the time of the French revolution, was that the issue

facing humanity was not one of constitutional change or social reform, but the end of the *whole system* of oppression and exploitation.

Blake understood intuitively what it took his contemporary, the anarchist writer William Godwin, pages of rational argument to prove: that human freedom was incompatible with any manifestation of state power, including the established Church and the patriarchal family.

The change therefore had to be not just 'radical' but *total*: 'Prisons are built with stones of Law, brothels with bricks of Religion'. Thus Blake expressed through his art, albeit often obscurely, what the most

WILLIAM BLAKE REVOLUTIONARY ARTIST & POET

advanced layers of the revolutionary movement desired: *total* freedom, and the end of the system that denied it.

Let us look at one example of Blake's revolutionary awareness, the poem *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, written in 1791-2.

The 'daughters of Albion' are the women of England. Later, in the period of bourgeois reaction, Blake distinguished between women who were genuinely oppressed, such as poor females who laboured for their bread, and those who helped the oppressor as middle-class philanthropists.

The poem relates both to the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade and the struggle for women's emancipation. Fusing the two through the device of poetic narrative, Blake shows that slavery and bourgeois marriage are intertwined. Both arise out of a system

based on the existence of private property.

The difference between owning a slave and owning a wife is shown to be one of degree, not of kind. In both cases power and ownership issue in a twisted, perverted mentality of phallus-domination and sadism that treats others as objects and as means to an end.

Oothoon, the heroine of the poem, gives herself freely to Theotormon. The act is guiltless and spontaneous. The slave-owner Bromion then rapes Oothoon, and with this rape claims her as his possession, his 'harlot'.

Oothoon, now bound to Bromion and unable to liberate the weak-willed Theotormon from his religious fears, utters one of the most eloquent and passionate denunciations of class-bound morality ever written in English. Part of it is reproduced below.

If the picture drawn here seems warped, then so was the social and moral system it exposes. The royal family especially was not a pretty sight.

Blake knew where true humanity potentiality lay. He knew it was *human* desire, *human* power and *human* energy, not 'ideas', 'things' and machines, that were creative and brought change.

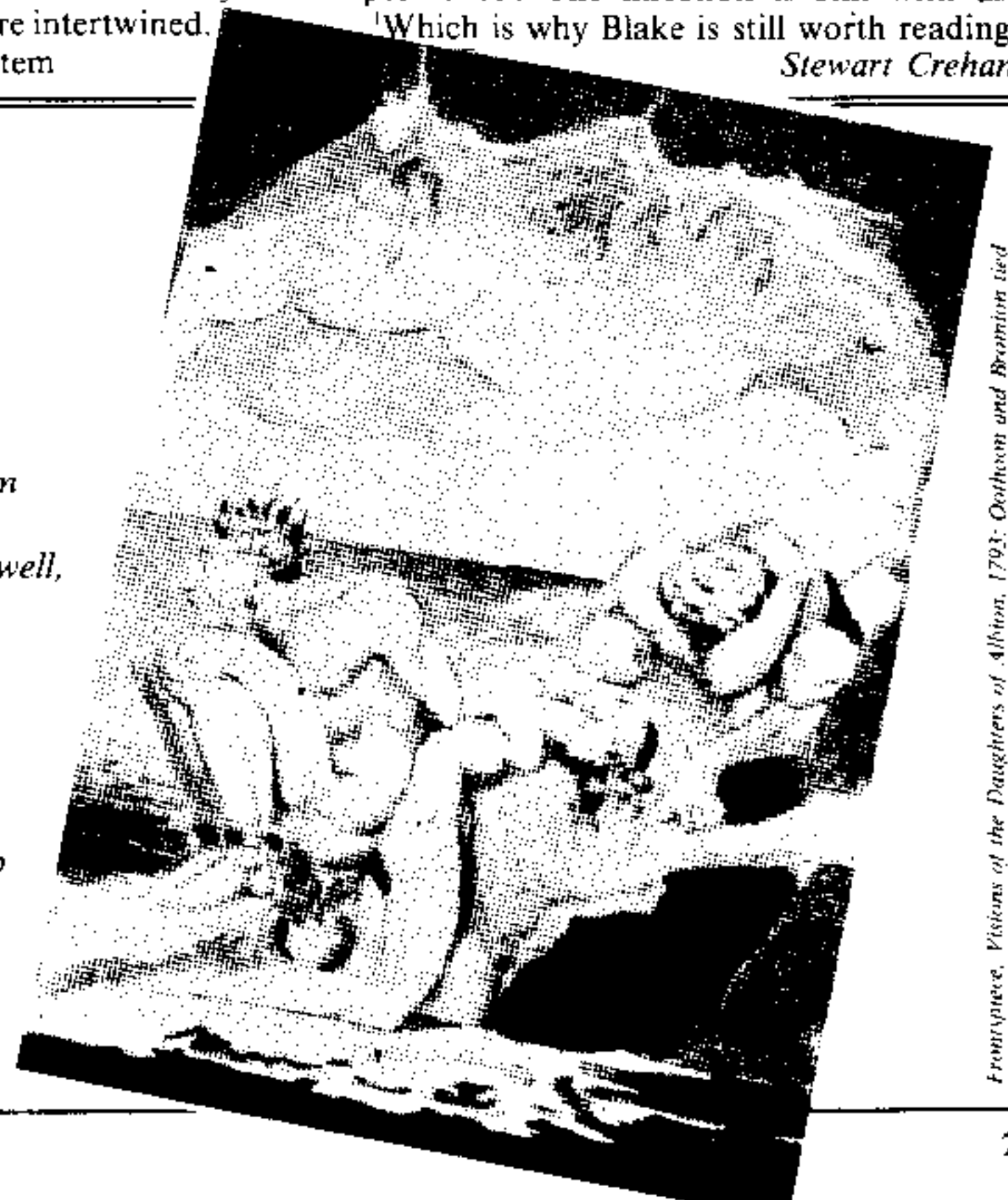
When people subordinated themselves to repressive, general ideas and systems they forged manacles for their own minds. The cycle of repression described in the passage quoted comes from failing to see that marriage and property are *man-made* not, God-ordained.

To break out of the vicious circle of repression is to imagine different, and to act accordingly. This is no utopian dream, since, as the passage above tells us, it is our social existence that determines our consciousness. To be a revolutionary is to act on the basis of a potentiality that is already present in living human beings—'givers of gifts', not merchants, landowners and tithing persons.

'He who desires but acts not breeds pestilence'. The infection is still with us. Which is why Blake is still worth reading.

Stewart Crehan

*How can one joy absorb another? Are not different joys
Holy, eternal, infinite? And each joy is a love . . .
How can the giver of gifts experience the delights of the merchant,
How the industrious citizen the pains of the husbandman?
How different far the fat-bellied hireling with hollow drum,
Who buys whole cornfields into wastes and sings upon the heath!
How different their eye and ear! How different the world to them!
With what sense does the parson claim the labour of the farmer?
What are his nets and gins and traps, and how does he surround him
With cold floods of abstraction and with forests of solitude,
To build him castles and high spires, where kings and priests may dwell,
Till she who burns with youth and knows no fixed lot, is bound
In spells of law to one she loathes. And must she drag the chain
Of life in weary lust? Must chilling murderous thoughts obscure
The clear heaven of her eternal spring, to bear the wintry rage
Of harsh terror, driven to madness, bound to hold a rod
Over her shrinking shoulders all the day, and all the night
To turn the wheels of false desire, and longings that wake her womb
To the abhorred birth of cherubs in the human form,
That live a pestilence and die a meteor and are no more—
Till the child dwell with one he hates, and do the deed he loathes,
And the impure scourge force his seed into its unripe birth
Ere yet his eyelids can behold the arrows of the day?"*



Frontispiece, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, 1793. Oothoon and Bromion tied back to back in a cave, while Theotormon mourns.

Reviews



How bright and brave they look, by *Chang Chin-feng, commune member*

The myths of Maoism

The Mandate of Heaven—Marx and Mao in Modern China

Nigel Harris

Quartet £3.00
A Bookmarx Club Choice

Nigel Harris has written an essential book—one which demands to be read by every socialist. It is essential because from a consistently socialist standpoint it cuts through all the myths that surround the greatest revolution in the post war world: China's epic struggle to free itself from the grip of imperialism.

Ever since 1949, the history of China has been an ideological battleground. Until 1960 it was seen as proof of the inevitable spread of Russian-style 'socialism', used as a threat by American cold warriors and as an inspiration by Stalinists everywhere. But by 1968 a new generation of revolutionaries,

streaming out of the universities of Europe, saw it as a real alternative to the discredited systems of Russia and America.

After all, hadn't the leader of a fifth of the world's population led a second 'Cultural' revolution against all the bureaucratic aspects of the old state? In the heady days of 1968, it really appeared that in China we were witnessing a massive transformation of a backward, oppressed people into a genuinely democratic and revolutionary society.

Today, the legend lives on. Many of the major far left groups throughout the world still see Maoism as being an essential part of their traditions. In Britain, the impact of China has been less marked—but there still exists amongst parts of the left the idea that China represents in some ways a more acceptable, less repressive model for socialism than the USSR.

But since 1968, the legends that surround China have taken a battering.

Most visibly China's foreign policy has forced many Maoists to look once again at their inspiration. A list of China's allies around the world over the last decade reads like a Who's Who of evil. There was the infamous meeting with Nixon at the height of the bombing of North Vietnam, the link up with Vorster's South Africa against the MPLA in Angola, the increased aid to Pinochet's Chile and, most recently, the state visit paid to the Shah of Iran at the height of the massacres of unarmed demonstrators in the streets of Theran.

In state after state, throughout the under-developed world, Chinese foreign policy has propped up viciously reactionary regimes and set back the true supporters of a socialist regime—the

oppressed and exploited.

Harris's achievement is to show how a revolution carried out in the name of the working class and pledged to create a communist society 30 years later objectively strengthens the existing world order.

For Harris, the liberation of China in 1949 was precisely that, the national liberation of a country from the domination of foreign capitalism. It was not a socialist revolution. The working class, the essential instrument for the building of socialism, did not play any active part in the revolutionary process. They had been led into suicidal struggle twenty years before on Stalin's orders by the Chinese Communist Party. From then till the liberation there was almost no contact between the party and the class it was supposed to represent.

The liberation of China was not a socialist revolution led by the working class rather it was a

section of the intelligentsia with a mass peasant army behind them destroying the client-state of imperialism and establishing an independent national state.

Mao's aim was the creation of a modern efficient China which would pull China into the 20th century and free its people from the miseries of backwardness. But the pre-condition for that was the expulsion of imperialism and the overthrow of the old corrupt state.

It would only then be free to start the process of industrialisation that could guarantee the provision of the basic necessities of life. But to industrialise an economically backward state like China was an immense task in a hostile world. It required huge amounts of capital—capital that could only come from the impoverished workers and peasants.

Democracy simply could not be afforded lest the demands of the masses for an increased standard of living find a focus. When the discipline of the state broke down, as in the cultural revolution in the late 1960s, the workers poured onto the streets demanding increased wages and improved conditions. But such demands threaten the aim of the Chinese rulers—the building of a powerful modern state. So the workers cannot be allowed any control over the direction of the state, their role is only to be the

source of the capital the state needs.

Marxism, whose central thesis is the self-activity of the working class, can obviously play no role in such a society. So instead there are the contortions of Mao Tse Tung thought used, not as a guide to action, but as a justification for the actions of a ruling class trying to hold the ring between on the one hand the demands of national economic independence and on the other a combative working class.

The Chinese leaders are carrying out the task achieved before them by the bourgeoisies of the advanced western world; the creation of a nation state to aid the process of industrialisation. But things have changed dramatically since the nineteenth century. Then, capitalism was an expanding system, revolutionising the traditional way of life throughout the world. Now it is in crisis, demanding huge amounts of capital for further expansion.

The aim of a self-sufficient economy, powerful enough to remain independent from the pressures of the world economy seems unrealisable. For all the immense achievements made by the Chinese state, the basic structure of Chinese society

remains intact. The vast majority of the Chinese population are still peasants living just above the subsistence level.

China appears to be caught in an insoluble contradiction. It needs immense amounts of capital to be able to compete effectively with the giants of the world economy and preserve its independence. Yet to attempt to accumulate that capital internally would put such great strains on the social structure as to imperil the survival of the state itself. On the other hand, to attempt to obstruct foreign investment would be to subordinate China to the fluctuations of the world economy.

China's alliances with reactionary rulers throughout the world is an attempt to buy time, to safeguard its independence for a few more years while its economy and its defences grow.

But allies like the Shah or the Japanese ruling class are not to be relied on. If and when China needed them to beat off the attacks of a major power, there is no guarantee at all that they would come to its defence.

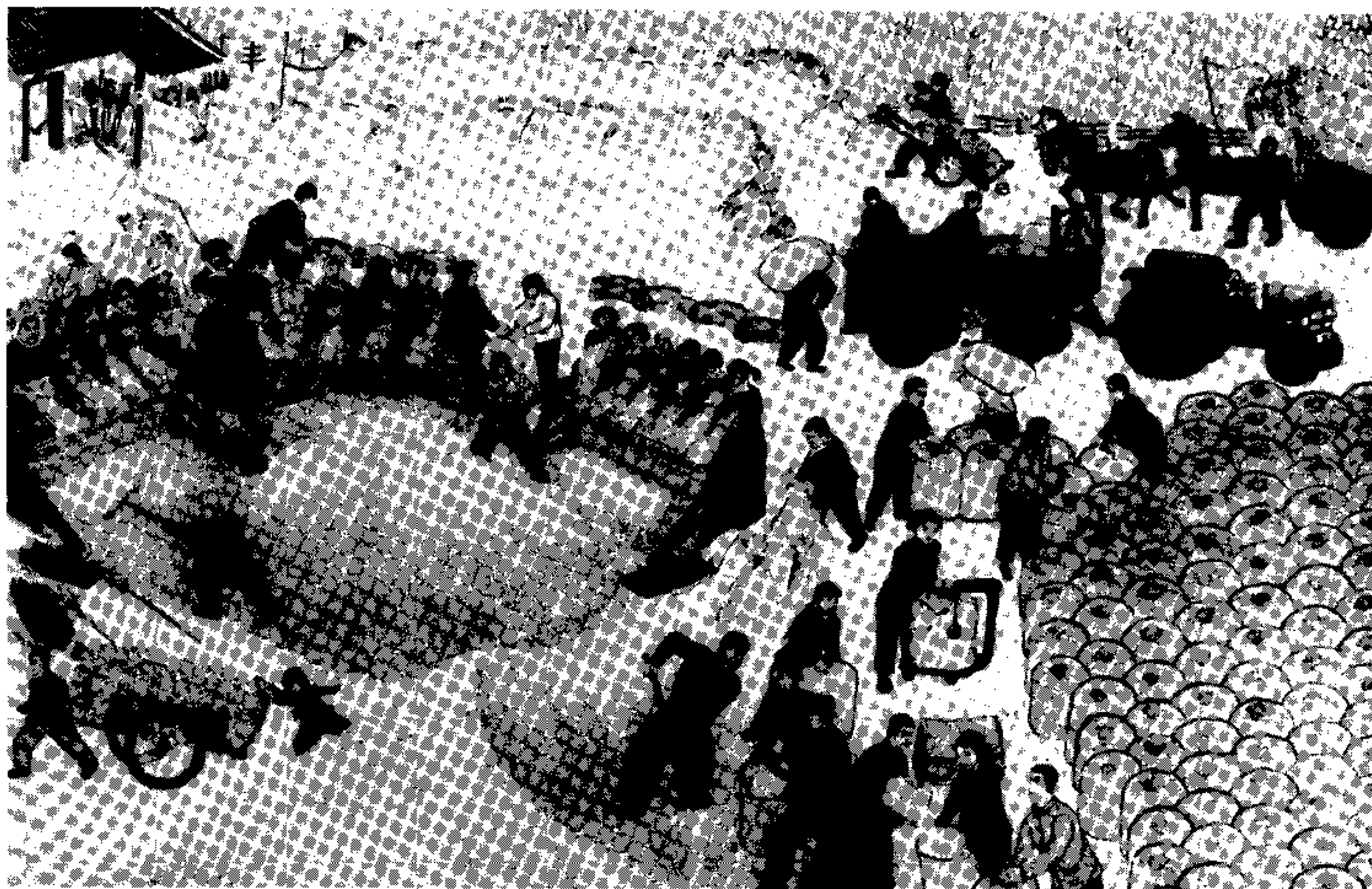
The only reliable allies of a socialist China, the workers and peasants of the rest of the world, do not hear any calls from

China to overthrow their own ruling classes as the prelude to world revolution which could break China's isolation. Rather they are told to unite with their own rulers against Russian 'social imperialism'.

The alternative of international revolution, proposed by the Bolsheviks, as the only way an isolated socialist state could survive has not been part of the Chinese Communist Party's theory since the rise of Stalinism in the late 1920's. The only way that China's independence can be safe-guarded is through the overthrow of the world's rulers not through an accommodation to them.

The politics of Harris's book are likely to become increasingly relevant over the next few years. As capitalism staggers further into crisis, workers throughout the world are moving on a scale not seen for years. Whether in Portugal or Iran, many will be influenced by Maoist ideas.

If this latest upsurge of militancy is not to be defeated then those workers must be won away from the politics of class-collaboration with their own rulers against Russian 'social imperialism'. British socialists have a role to play in developing an international revolutionary perspective. This book is indispensable in the fight for the perspective. Read it! *Tim Potter*



Autumn Harvest, by Wang Hsing-min, accountant, and Hsin Chiang-lun, commune member

Masses against Mosley

Out of the Ghetto

Joe Jacobs

J. Simon £3.00

Our Flag Stays Red

Phil Piratin

Lawrence and Wishart £1.50 A
Bookmarx Club Choice

The Struggle against Fascism and War in Britain 1931-39

Mike Power

CPGB History Group 40p.

One of the few good results of the rise of the National Front in the last few years is that it has riveted the eyes of the left upon the experiences of the fight against the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s. All three of these books are concerned to describe and analyse that victorious battle.

It must be said at once that they are of very uneven quality. M. Power's pamphlet is a worthless piece of writing which contains so many evasions, misrepresentations, and occasional downright lies that it succeeds in illuminating one thing only: despite it claims to recent conversion, the Communist Party is still committed to the same sort of intellectual honesty that made it famous in the days when it claimed that Trotsky was a Gestapo agent.

Joe Jacobs' book is a different matter as it is nothing if not honest. Unfortunately, the author died before completing his work and, out of respect for his memory, his daughter has chosen, wrongly

in my opinion, to publish his manuscript virtually without editing. This leads to a rather difficult book about which I will have to express some reservations.

Piratin's book has been, for many years, an underground classic and its publication in a new edition is an event of considerable importance. Although it contains much of the same sort of dubious practice as does Power's effort, it also has a number of passages which should be required reading for every anti-fascist.

Both Piratin and Jacobs were leading figures in the Communist Party in Stepney during the 1930's. Piratin later became the Communist MP for Mile End between 1945 and 1950 while Jacobs was expelled from the Party twice—once in 1938 and again in 1952. Both were deeply involved in the East End struggle against the fascists and the core of both books is devoted to that question.

They present rather different accounts of the period and, although Piratin does not mention Jacobs by name, both are writing directly about the events which led to Jacobs' expulsion.

The crux of the matter was an issue which is of great contemporary relevance: to what extent should the fight against the fascist be conducted by military means and to what extent should political work play a part?

Piratin's argument is this: the support for the BUF was made up largely of working class

people who found in the fascists a distorted answer to the very real problems of housing, unemployment and poverty which they faced on a daily basis.

In order to counter this, he argues, direct physical attacks are of little use.

Piratin recounts how he went to a Mosley meeting and observed the audience, who were made up of ordinary working-class people. As he put it: 'Where did you get by fighting the people?'

In order to destroy the popular support for fascism, it was not enough to simply expose the fascists with good propaganda. Rather, it was essential to try to offer solutions to their real problems.

'We urged that the Communist Party should help the people to improve their conditions of life, in the course of which we could show them who was really responsible for their conditions, and get them organised to fight against their real exploiters'.

By far the best sections of this book are the passages where Piratin describes how the CP set about doing this. In particular, he recounts the story of a number of major struggles over housing conditions, in the course of which the CP did manage to build up very considerable support.

His description of the battle against evictions at Paragon Mansions, during which the CP organised to prevent a fascist family being thrown in to the streets is crucial to

understanding his case: 'the kind of people who would never come to our meetings...learned the facts overnight and learned the real meaning of the class struggle.'

The two chapters in which Piratin develops this theme 'Masses Against Mosley' and 'Tenants Fight Back' are the best part of the book. I do not know of any better account of the way in which people change their ideas in the course of struggle and how revolutionary militants have to try to take up the minute issues which are of immense importance to ordinary people.

The reality of a small but victorious struggle over something as petty as stair-lighting can be as valuable in the struggle for socialism as the finest presentation of the theory of surplus-value.

Jacobs' case stands directly against this. He argues that Piratin and his faction were a right-wing tendency in the Communist Party who were opposed to physical confrontation with the fascists and who thus allowed the British Union of Fascists to terrorise and demoralise the Jewish people of Stepney.

His implicit argument, although it is never spelt out, is that the Popular Front policies of the Communist Party led it to avoid even the defence of the Jewish immigrants and that this was part and parcel of a more general development of opportunist politics throughout the party.

The difficulty that this



reviewer has is that it seems to me that both were right! Piratin's argument that it is necessary to provide a genuine political alternative to the misery upon which the fascists seek to play is undoubtedly one of the most important lessons we need to absorb today.

But Jacobs, too, is right when he argues that this should not be done at the expense of the physical confrontation with the fascists. The two should not be contradictory, and both writers pretend that they accepted the need for the complementary form of action, but in practice the balance is a very difficult one to strike.

This problem is highlighted by the events surrounding the famous Battle of Cable Street in 1936. The common view of this is provided by Power, who argues that: 'the Communist Party launched a massive campaign aimed at preventing the (fascist) marchers reaching their destination'. As anyone who has looked at the *Daily Worker* for the period will tell you, this is not true, and Piratin at least admits that the CP were very late in calling for a mobilisation against the BUF.

Jacobs provides the detail behind all of this. He shows that the CP initially refused to call off their mobilisation in Trafalgar Square, despite the fact that popular pressure to oppose Mosley was building up. He reproduces a directive from the CP District Organiser Frank Lefitte, dated 29 September 1936 (the fascists were due to march on 4 October), telling Jacobs that the District Political Committee had decided that the policy was

to 'avoid clashes' and that 'if Mosley decides to march let him'.

He also details the struggle inside the CP to get this decision reversed, including the refusal of the CP leader of the Ex-Servicemen's Anti-Fascist Association, Harold Cohen, to accept any other policy than to try and stop the fascists.

Eventually, the CP changed its line on the evening of the 30 September and joined the mass agitation which was to bring perhaps a quarter of a million workers onto the streets of Stepney and write a glorious page in working-class history.

What none of the writers really answer is the question of why this all happened. In my opinion, the reason why the leadership of the CP was determined to press on with a jamboree in Central London while the fascists marched into an immigrant area of East London had nothing to do with their claim that it would be difficult to 'organise' opposition.

As with all such claims, the real problem was political. The Labour Party Conference was about to begin, and the CP hoped to win it to a formal Popular Front; to the end of that unity they were prepared to sacrifice the Jewish people of East London. It is to the credit of Jacobs, Cohen and the other CP militants of the area that they had the political determination to fight this opportunist manoeuvre and were prepared to go ahead even in defiance of the party line.

This political problem is the key to why the problem of 'violence' versus 'politics' is

misplaced. The question for a revolutionary party is rather can it retain the political flexibility to do *both*. The whole development of the CP in the 1930s was away from independent action and towards a policy of unity at any price; it is that which lies behind the quarrel between Jacobs and Piratin not the question of violence.

We can learn much from both of these positions because we should not accept either of them without reservation. From Piratin we can take the need for mass mobilisation and the political struggle against the fascists. From Jacobs we can take the refusal to subordinate the struggle for working-class politics to a phoney unity with the leaders of reformism.

With the benefit of hindsight we can see that the issues around which they quarrelled were not simply parochial squabbles limited to the East End 40 years ago. They were part and parcel of the death of the Communist Party and the Communist International as forces for world revolution. It is up to us today to do rather better.

The balance between a broad popular mobilisation and the political independence of a revolutionary party is a difficult one to find. There is a constant pressure to copy the leaders of the CP and to subordinate a militant and principled policy to the apparent gains to be had from a matey relationship with assorted reformist dignitaries. There is also a counter-pressure simply to repeat into empty air the elementary truth that the

fight against fascism is a fight against capitalism and that fascist marches must be stopped, if need be by violence.

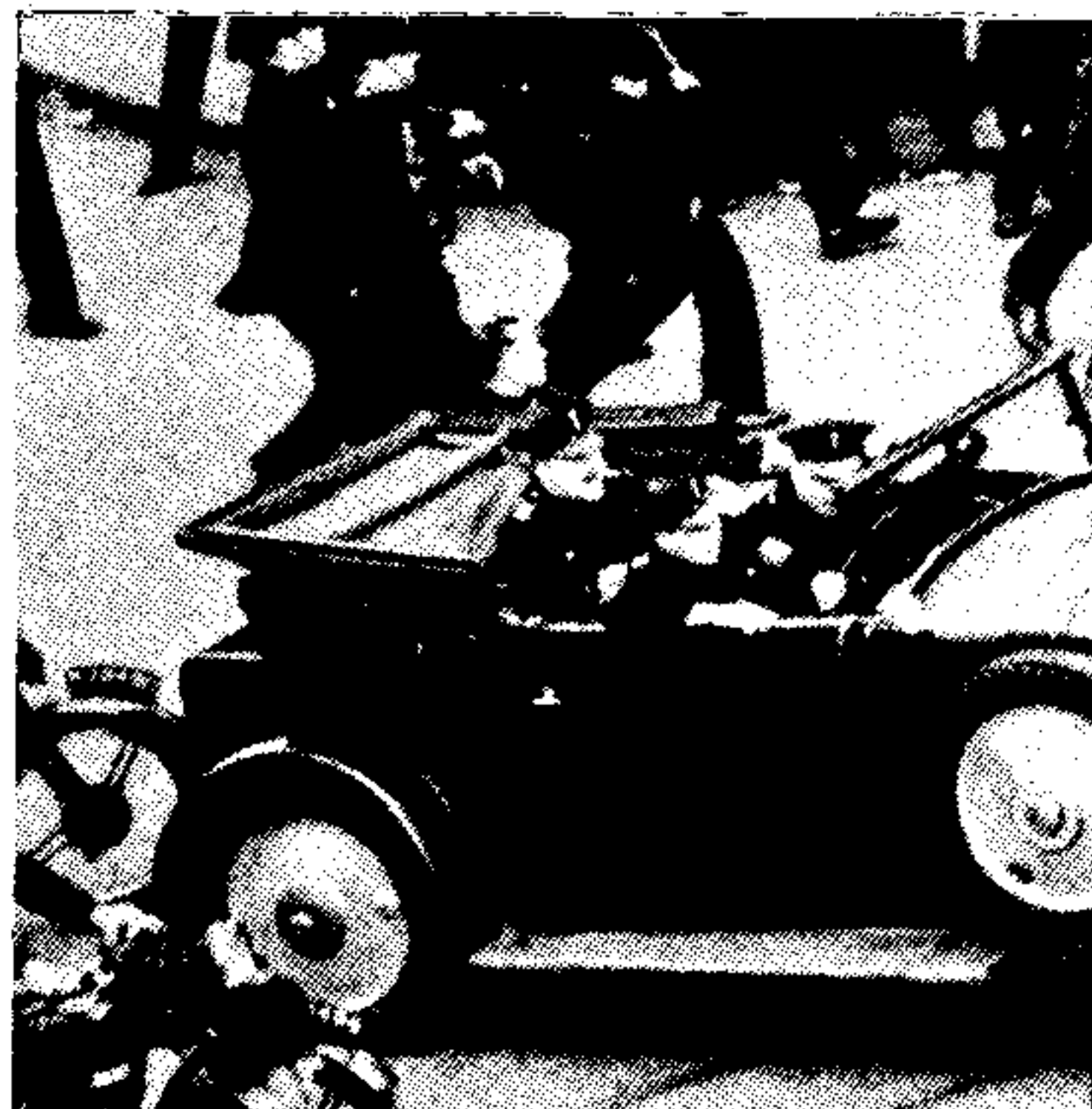
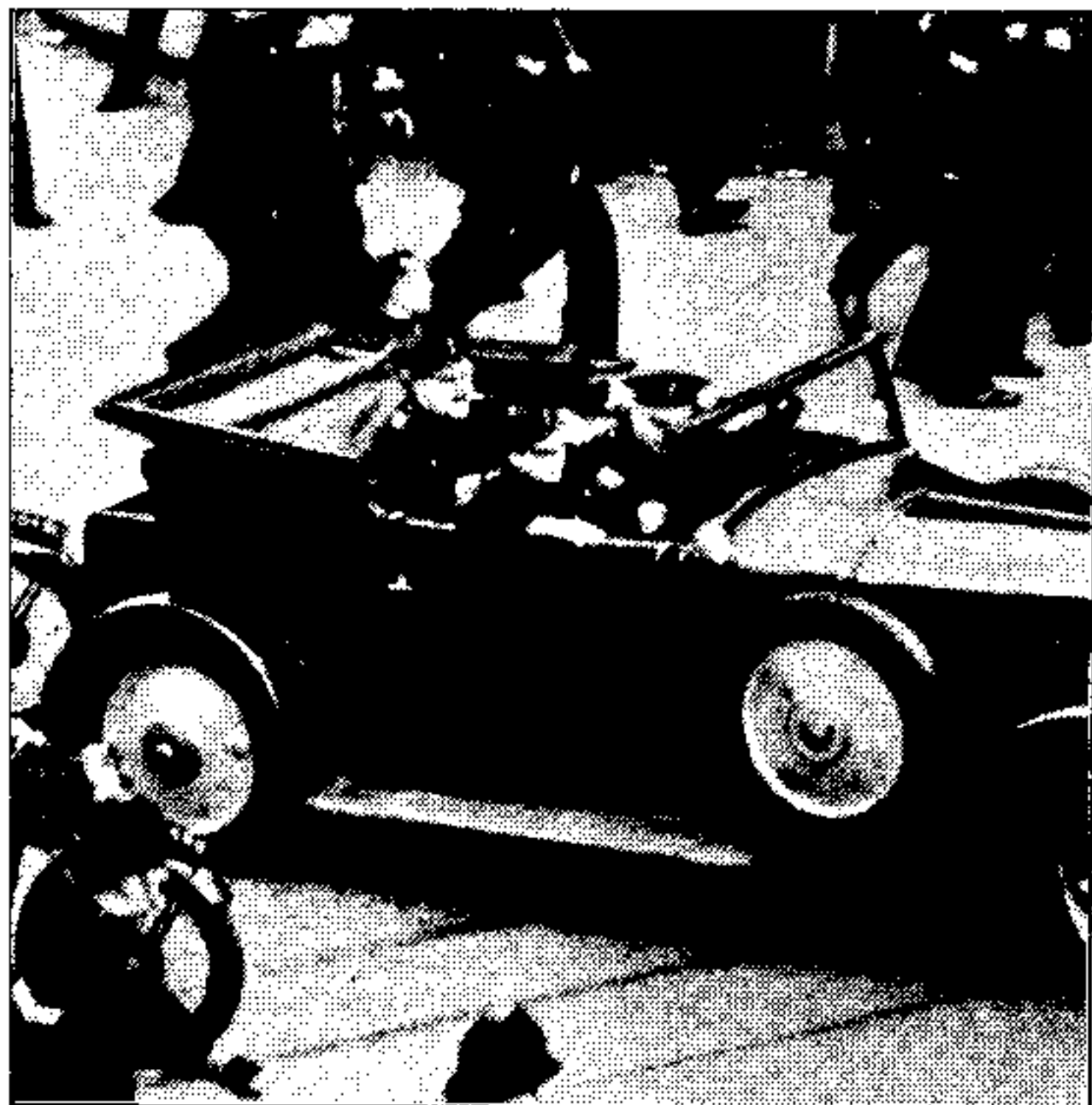
In Britain the fascist menace never reached the point at which the price of a political mistake by the left would be the extinction of all working class organisations. In Germany, the Communist Party faced such a position and paid the price of a capitulation to a false unity. The arguments in these books were part and parcel of that massive historical tragedy.

In summary, I would say of the books under review that no one should bother with M. Power, but the other two deserve reading. Jacobs' book has all of the faults of a first draft and it is easy to get lost in the welter of details of his personal life; interesting those these are, they seem secondary to the political purpose of the book.

In general, his political line veers towards the ultra-left politics he learned in the period when he joined the Communist Party. It is a book which anyone who wants to learn the details of the struggle in the 1930s should buy and read.

Piratin, on the other hand, wrote a book which, despite its many faults, should be read everybody who opposes the National Front. Buy yourself two copies. Keep one for your own use, lend the other to people sympathetic to the fight against the National Front. Get them to read it. But try to help them to read it through red spectacles.

Colin Sparks.



Police clearing a path through demonstrating East Enders for a car carrying British Fascist leaders during the '30s. 25

Theatre in Weimar England

People's Theatre

David Bradby and John McCormick,

Croom Helm £6.95

People's Theatre is an extremely useful book simply because it surveys the periods of important political theatre activity this century, and thus provides the background and

context in which to assess the equally important development of political theatre in Britain from 1968 to 1978. And it comes conveniently at a time when

people are beginning to recognise the size, scope and significance of political theatre work here in the past decade—when they are trying (in

Socialist Review, *The Leveller*, *Wedge*, for example) to analyse its implications and to understand its relation to the wider class struggle.

Socialist culture has at last begun to receive its due credit as a weapon in the revolutionary process. The authors' approach is descriptive rather than analytical—indeed the book is weakest in the few places it attempts analysis—but information is precisely what is needed now.

Thus there is a chapter on theatre in post-revolutionary Russia: the Proletkult movement which aimed to politicise the masses; the Blue Blouses which emerged after the first wave of agit-prop, during the economic and political stabilisation of the New Economic Policy; the use of posters for propaganda and the Theatre of Revolutionary Satire which animated them theatrically; the mass performance of *The Taking of the Winter Palace* in 1920; the work of Mayakovsky and Meyerhold and the ironic influence of Marinetti's 'fascist' futurism.

Though the authors do not draw parallels with post-war British theatre, the conclusions are there to be drawn. Red Ladder and Broadside Mobile Workers Theatre (created from a split in Red Ladder in 1974) and the General Will in the early seventies when David Edgar was writing with them, have all used the techniques of Russian agit prop. And Albert Hunt modelled his famous Russian Revolution in the streets of Bradford in 1967 on the taking of the Winter Palace.

There is a chapter on radical theatre in Weimar Germany, perhaps the most interesting in suggesting parallels between that period and Britain in the seventies: the similar economic conditions contributing to a similar growth in political theatre.

There was the Dada desire to 'create gun in hand', to use art as a weapon, for example; the use of expressionism to reflect the realities that the prevalent naturalism tended to romanticise; the work of Piscator and his Proletarian Theatre (readers may wish to note that John Willett's excellent *Theatre of Erwin Piscator* has just been published by Eyre Methuen); the growth of the Volksbühne, the workers' audience organisations; Ernst Toller's political activism (for



Jean Hart (left) and Melissa Murray in *Bouncing Back* with Benyon, October '77 (Mark Rusher)



Back Theatre of Brixton during a show at Covent Garden market. (Kelvin Tilfowd).

which he was imprisoned) and political art.

This period produced a utilitarian worker-directed doctrine of art which sheds light on current work as divergent as John McGrath's with 7:84 and Edward Bond's at the Royal Court.

There is a fascinating account of the early workers' theatre in Britain and America, that on the Workers Theatre Movement (WTM) and its *Stanley Baldwin's Pipe Dream* immediately calling to mind such David Edgar/General Will plays as *Rent, or Caught in the Act*. The authors document the early years of Unity and the Federal Theatre Project in the US—the programme set up for unemployed theatre workers which produced the radical Living Newspapers.

There is the statutory chapter on Brecht's contribution to political theatre, with the emphasis, mercifully, on the elements of his craft that helped to create a critical spirit in the audience while making them laugh. 'a theatre that can't be laughed in,' wrote Brecht, 'is a theatre to be laughed at... there is such a thing as pleasurable learning, cheerful and militant learning.' Brecht's theory and practice has had an important though sometimes indirect influence on Arden, Bond, Brenton, Hare and others: this chapter shows how.

The concluding chapter, misleadingly entitled 'community theatre', relates some of this history to the work of Joan Littlewood, to the abortive Centre 42 and to the San Francisco Mime Troupe ('We try in our humble way to

destroy the United States.'). But these represent the tip of an iceberg. There is much political theatre yet to be documented. This is the next task: to provide the recent background and context from which to discover

Pure revolution

**The Pure Revolution:
Anti-Bolshevik Communism**

Paul Mattick

Merlin Press £3

The revolutionary crisis that gripped Europe in the wake of the Russian revolution and the first world war led to a complete shake-up and realignment of the working class movement. The pre-war division between the social democrats 'marxists' and the syndicalists/anarchists was replaced by the division between the now openly reformist social democrats in the Second International and the revolutionary communists in the Third International.

Many syndicalists and semi-anarchists who, as Trotsky put it 'really wanted to tear the bourgeoisie's head off', and were attracted by the revolutionary audacity of the Bolsheviks and above all by the soviet system of workers' councils, sought to join the Third International. One of the products of this period was a movement of extreme leftist, or 'ultra-left' communists who attempted a kind of fusion of Marxism and syndicalism which received the name 'council communism'.

Fired with revolutionary enthusiasm, and disgusted by

new directions in Weimar England.

For those who doubt the similarities between the thirties and the seventies, *People's Theatre* provides an interesting point of comparison. 'In

the chauvinism, opportunism and outright counter-revolution of social democracy, the council communists demanded a direct onslaught by the proletariat on capitalism. No compromises, alliances, temporary retreats or tactical manoeuvres could be tolerated. Parliament was obsolete, so communists should have nothing to do with it, trade unions had become agents of capitalism, so the answer was to break up the unions and build new organisations.

Lenin saw clearly that such tactics would isolate the council communists from the mass of workers who retained illusions in Parliament, the unions and social democracy and make it impossible to win over a majority of the working class, and issued a firm but comradely rebuttal in *Left-Wing Communism; and Infantile Disorder*.

Faced with this criticism and its endorsement of the Comintern, some of the council Communists denounced Bolshevism as a new opportunism and attempted to build new organisations of their own, notably the Communist Workers Party of Germany, (KAPD).

Paul Mattick, a revolutionary youth at the time,

February 1937, a group called the Theatre du Peuple joined a group called Les Comediens de Paris to present an adaptation of Gorky's *The Mother* at the huge Theatre Sarah Bernhardt.

... The play ran throughout 1937, but gradually as the political atmosphere shifted to the right, the Municipality (the theatre owners) found itself accused of trying to turn the Sarah Bernhardt into a propaganda theatre... there was a legal excuse for eviction, but despite a court injunction against them, and persistent efforts to have them removed, *The Mother* held the stage until the end of the year... (until) the anti-Communist lobby finally succeeded in having the company evicted, spreading rumours about misappropriation of funds.'

This sounds alarmingly similar to the circumstances which recently closed down the mid-Pennine theatre company Theatremobile, after the controversy caused by their play about asbestosis in a 'Midlands company'. *Catherine Izzin*

is heir to this tradition. The council communists as a presence in the working-class movement did not survive the early 1920s, but Mattick, with rare consistency, has attempted to cling to and develop their positions ever since. This collection of essays, written over the last forty years, is the record of this project.

In Mattick's view, social democracy, Bolshevism, Trotskyism, Stalinism, fascism, are all merely aspects of a developing state capitalism. Indeed the whole history of the labour movement and the working class's struggle up to now is seen as little more than an accessory to the process of capital accumulation and concentration.

Lenin's theory of the party is equated with Stalinism on the basis of Lenin's position in 1902, with no regard for the changes in the theory that took place in 1905 and after, and no regard for the seething democratic reality of the Bolshevik party in 1917. The problem of counter-revolution in 1917, because it does not fit Mattick's scheme, is simply wished away without evidence or argument.

The Communist International was Lenin's bid for world power. Lenin and

Trotsky's condemnation of German Communist Party's the hopelessly adventurist March Action in 1921 is depicted as opposition to the German revolution as such, when Mattick must know that the March Action was a disaster for the German working class and revolutionary movement, and it was exclusively on this basis that Lenin and Trotsky criticised it.

Socialism in one country was 'not a perversion of the Leninist standpoint' but a 'direct consequence' of Lenin's policy. Stalin was 'the best disciple of Lenin' in his attitude to German fascism. The controversies between Stalinists and Trotskyists are 'superficial and often silly'. One could go on almost indefinitely for at times Mattick descends to the level of polemic we have come to associate with American cold war hacks.

However it is neither

ignorance nor malice that motivates Mattick to these absurdities but a fundamentally false theory. Mattick's marxism is in fact a deep and through going economism. One hesitates to make this charge (which has been so abused and misused in recent years) but, in this case, it is justified.

In the first place he regards the workers' movement and the revolution as overwhelmingly an economic struggle with only the most marginal political element. Secondly he relies exclusively on the catastrophic and total collapse of capitalism not only to provide the context of revolution, but to produce the revolution and determine its course. Thirdly he sees in history only the direct reflection of economic development.

This is why, having grasped the fact of a global tendency towards state capitalism he treats everything, including Bolshevism and workers'

revolution, as a manifestation of this, and is unable to see that the reality of state capitalism in Russia could be established only on the basis of the political defeat of Bolshevism and that revolution.

This is why, generalising from the objective economic unity of interests of the working class, he is unable to see the uneven development of the consciousness of the class which necessitates the creation of the revolutionary party.

This is why Mattick is at his best when dealing with abstract economic theory and at this worst with a concrete historical situation, for concrete reality is never pure economics. This is why he can allow of no political strategy for the working class.

In fact Mattick's economism dominates his whole conception of the revolutionary process. Proceeding from the contradiction of interest between labour and capital he

conceives of the revolution as a pure confrontation of these two forces with all complicating factors such as peasants, national oppression rigidly excluded. But as Lenin said 'Those who expect a pure revolution will never live to see it'. Nor, we may add, are their ideas likely to be an effective guide to action in preparing the impure, but real, revolution of the future. *John Molyneux*

Berlin Alexanderplatz

Alfred Doblin

Penguin £1.75

Jesus, I hate novels like this. Reading them is the sort of careless fun you associate with chewing a brick sandwich.

It's 1928 and the hero, Franz Biberkopf, comes out of a Berlin prison after doing four years for manslaughter. After a spell selling Nazi newspapers, he becomes a pimp and a burglar and loses his right arm in a car accident.

His whore is murdered by another burglar, he's framed, and, when the police come for him, he wounds one of them, collapses into a catatonic stupor and ends up being force fed in a lunatic asylum. Then he dies.

Jolly, no? All related in language as warm and enticing as a kick in the kidney, language that, in Orwell's phrase, achieves the impossible by making the modern world seem worse than it actually is.

Groping and grinding through 478 pages of this stuff on my precious free evenings has brought out the Philistine in me, baying and hooting for blood. I mean, maybe there was a demand for this sort of thing in 1929, when the book was first published.

In 1978 it seems to me there's only point in reading two kinds of novel—either cheer-up rubbish to take your mind off things, the type of book in which our hero wins the pools, marries a girl with an insatiable sexual appetite (who loves him for his mind) and lives happily ever after, or subversive, outrageous fiction that stands reality in its head and invites you to ridicule it and change it.

Berlin Alexanderplatz isn't a shout of rage against reality, it's a glum reproduction of it. To ask £1.75 for a novel that takes hold of our grey environment and its frustrations, magnifies them, and hands them back with no suggestion of a way out, is a bleeding nerve. Come back Warwick Deeping, all is forgiven!

Paul O'Flinn

Bondage thrown off

The Independent Collier

Edited by Royden Harrison

Harvester Press £10.50

This is an immensely rich, extremely well researched new

study of coal miners in the nineteenth century. In fact it is one of the few really good pieces of workers' history to have been published in recent years.

Unfortunately it is packaged only for libraries so you'll have

to . . . (here we omit our statutory reference to the prices of hardbacks and so on).

The authors set out to challenge the myths surrounding the coal miner as the 'Archetypal Proletarian'. They refute the contention that the collier was indistinguishable from the unskilled labourer and challenge the all too common assumption that the mid-Victorian working class was neatly divided into a 'labour aristocracy' and 'plebians'.

The collier who emerges from these pages was fighting to throw off the bondage of 18th century serfdom, seeking to become a 'free and independent miner'; frequently living close to the land but rapidly entering the ranks of the working class in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

The colliers and their trade unions sought a form of craft status despite the condescension of engineers or glassmakers who all too frequently saw the hewers of coal as unapprentices, 'green' labour with little that they recognised as a trade.

The colliers found their independence and their recognition in fierce struggle against Capital and the State. Changing consciousness through struggle was as important in the 1880's and 1890's as it has been for the NUM since nationalisation. What Ted Heath learned with hindsight should not be forgotten by us. *Alastair Hatchett.*

Unemployed miners tending their allotments at Pontypridd between the wars.



Blacks arise

White Man, We Want to Talk to You

Denis Herbstein

Pelican 95p

The uprising which began in the township of Soweto on 16 June 1976 was one of the most important events of the last decade. It was the awakening of the black working class of

he suggests, lies in the racism of the Afrikaners, the settlers of Dutch origin whose National Party has ruled South Africa for the last 30 years. Several times he describes John Vorster, at the time prime minister of South Africa, as a 'prisoner' of the Afrikaner people.

This approach fails to grasp the way in which the Nationalists have ruled as a *capitalist* party, ruling in the interests of western and South African capital, including the increasingly powerful and prosperous Afrikaner bourgeoisie. Indeed, Herbstein deluges us with facts which show the way in which capitalism and apartheid are intertwined in South Africa.

One final complaint: the title of the book is just silly. Herbstein brings out very clearly that the last thing South Africa's blacks want to do with whites is *talk* to them.

As he writes: 'For the whites, the most alarming new factor introduced (by Soweto—AC) has been psychological—a new-found black confidence; a determination not to accept society as unchanging and unchangeable; a readiness on

Congeaed marxism

Social Work Practice under Capitalism: A Marxist Approach.

P Corrigan and P Leonard

Macmillan, £2.95p

This book is aimed at a very specific audience, the layer of radicalised young professionals who have entered social work in recent years. Its aim is to counter the fatalism that has overtaken many in this category as their idealism and radical strategies prove ineffective in helping individual clients or in changing the structures of the welfare state.

In a series of case studies, the authors describe the efforts of Pauline, Paul and Pamela to develop radical social work practice. Nothing seems to work. The children end up in care, the families stay in poverty. Destructive family squabbles rage unchecked. No way can be found to alleviate the hopeless loneliness of isolated old people. The area social work team can't be persuaded to support the



Zimbabwe: guerilla fighters in training

the part of a growing number of blacks to die for their cause.

'At Sharpeville, blacks were shot in the back while running

away from the police. At Soweto, many were shot in the chest, advancing'. Alex Callinicos



Douglas-Home meets Smith, 1971

South Africa from 15 years of passivity induced by the repression which followed the Sharpeville massacre in 1960.

Before they became frightened of politics, Penguin Books were known as the publishers which produced good books on *current* affairs. Denis Herbstein's book on Soweto appears more than two years after the uprising.

Still, better late than never. Denis Herbstein, himself a white South African who is banned from returning to the country where he was born, covered the events of 1976 as a correspondent for the *Sunday Times*. He was on friendly terms with leaders of the black consciousness movement which inspired the uprising, people like Steve Biko and Drake Koka.

The result is a clear, well-documented and very readable account of the events leading up to the Soweto uprising. The chapters on black consciousness and on the system of Bantu education which sparked off the black schoolstudents' rebellion are particularly good.

My only quibble is that Herbstein remains trapped in the categories with which liberal journalism approaches South Africa. The root of the problem,

claimants union.

The authors, both academics and members of the Communist Party, argue that the perceptions of middle-class radicalism lead to incorrect interpretations of the personal situations of clients—eg automatic and uncritical support of wives against husbands, of children against parents and teachers. Radical tactics are condemned as impatient and individualistic—not based on the building of support among fellow social workers, or of alliance within the labour movement.

The core of the book is a set of chapters on basic Marxist concepts, such as class, ideology, family and the state. The gist of the argument is the need to relate the politics of the reproductive sector (claimants, women, community groups etc.) to the politics of production (trade unions).

Also that state employees such as social workers are in a deeply contradictory situation—they *are* agents of social control, but they *can*

develop organised resistance to ruling class strategies, in alliance with other workers and with welfare dependent groups.

Given that so little writing about social work is informed by any sense of the labour movement, this is a useful book, and deserves to be widely read and discussed. But politically there are fundamental criticisms to be made.

The argument is firmly anchored in a reformist vision. The disillusioned radical is urged to join in a cautious, brick by brick construction of progressive alliances. As portrayed in this book, the revolutionary party is the lifeless cement that integrates the bricks, not as a fighting organisation.

Rank-and-file organisation in the unions is condemned because it leads to attacks on officials and disrupts unity. No reference to the disunity created as officials police their membership on behalf of the system.

Capitalism is portrayed as a static structure, not historically

as driven by its own contradictions, and currently in deep crisis. There is no discussion of the impact of world economic dislocation on class-organisation and levels of militancy.

No sense of the rapid ebb and flow of class struggle and consciousness in a period of crisis, nor of the opportunities and responsibilities which socialists must consequently accept.

This is a book which uses pessimism to argue against fatalism. No one reading it could possibly imagine that withing two months of its publication, social workers in a number of important areas would be taking determined strike action against their employers. Marxism is summarised by the authors as, 'the congealed practice of a whole international class'. An accurate description of the politics offered in this text—more like yesterday's gravy than a weapon of class struggle.
Jim Kincaid.

The Crash Of '79

Paul Erdman

Sphere Books. 60p

Paul Erdman, author of *The Crash of '79* is well qualified to write on international finance and intrigue. The founder and former president of the United California Bank of Los Angeles, he was caught in Switzerland when his bank collapsed, and imprisoned there.

His first two novels, *Silver Bears* and *The Billion Dollar Killing*, had its genesis during his spell inside. Which explains, perhaps, his antipathy to that country.

Before that, he had, in establishment terms, a distinguished career. 46-year-old American Mid-Westerner, he attended several universities taking an MA in Georgetown and finally a PhD from the University of Basel, before moving into international economics. He worked at the European Coal and Steel Community, the Stanford Research Institute and for a variety of corporate clients and Governments.

Erdman's book is the bedside reading of the characters about whom he writes from oil execs to the chief ministers of Saudi Arabia. He remains a conservative, with a patrician contempt for politicians: 'We have a great American tradition that our presidents don't know much about economics. I think

President Jimmy Carter is following completely in this great American tradition.'

Erdman is convinced that the only serious flaw in his book is the timing. Although he vastly underestimated the role of the Iranian working class, his underlying reasons for predicting the great international crash within the next decade remains. His comment on the financial system is short and to the point: 'It's precarious. The large American banks are out of control.'

Mike Flood Page.

Class, Crisis and the State

Erik Olin Wright

NLB £7.00

Are you a student with a Sociology exam on Marx? This book reads like a set of lecture-notes made for the purpose. It has a simplicity almost unique for someone who invokes a certain L. Althusser as a mentor.

It even comes complete with diagrams full of arrows showing how the 'structural limitations' of the Economy on the State diverge from the 'limits of functional compatibility' of the State with the Economy. A travesty of Marx's method of course but they do make him look like just another fashionable theorist of some abstraction called society, and are bound to impress that examiner.

Perhaps you've been worrying about the work of N. Poulantzas recently? Especially that book where he says all white-collar workers, State employees etc. aren't really workers at all but 'new petty-bourgeois' and that the working-class amounts to only 20 per cent of the population. Do you think that rather undermines the prospects for

socialism?

Rest assured—Erik Olin Wright has sorted it all out. 'Unproductive workers' like your dustman really are workers after all, indeed at least 40 per cent of us are, and as for teachers, technicians and the like they occupy 'contradictory class locations'. The political conclusions are implicitly much the same—the workers only chance is to form some sort of Popular Front with sections of the 'bourgeoisie', but at least it doesn't sound quite so hopeless.

Looking for a neat summary of the four Marxist theories of the crisis? They all get fair treatment here, each allocated an actual historical crisis of its own for which it is correct. Marx's own theory gets the nineteenth century, Keynes is awarded the 1930s slump, and at the moment it seems that wage-rises and the welfare state are to blame, although the evidence isn't 'conclusive'.

You even got a preview of the 'next stage of capitalist development', the one we're going to have when the State's finally sorted out the current crisis for us. I think he means the US government, the one that's having so much success with the dollar at the moment, but it's not very clear. Most of the time the capitalist system exists only within 'national boundaries' and there's this State in the singular capable of planning the whole thing, but there's also something called Imperialism and even some nasty complicating international factors.

He hasn't grasped that its a world-crisis and that there's no world-state to deal with it but he's scarcely alone on the reformist left in that respect.

Got an essay to write: 'comparing and contrasting the work of Lenin and Weber on

bureaucracy'. Erik's packaged them both up for you, four numbered propositions each, sub-divisions where appropriate, just the thing for the tutor who's forgotten to renew his subscription to the *New Left Review*

Balance is the key-note here—Weber might have ignored the roots of bureaucracy in the class-structure of Capitalism. But Lenin doesn't have much grasp of 'the real organisational contradictions of soviet institutions'. Seems that the 'socialist state' of China has had a lot of difficulty with bureaucracy too—something to do with the inherent character of 'technical experts' apparently.

Finally are you in need for some more reassurance about peaceful roads to socialism? Do you want another dose of 'parliaments' supplemented by 'local forms of popular democracy' and other such nebulous bodies? In this book you get the truly remarkable idea of socialists 'using the State to destroy the State'.

Wright does lack the polemical edge of his co-thinkers of the Eurocommunist 'left'—but he more than makes up for it by his earnest desire to see all sides of the question. There's even a quote from Perry Anderson on the need for insurrection and an invocation of the memory of Chile on the second to last page.

He doesn't mean it though. Academics just have this luxury of being able to hedge their bets. Indeed, 'the problem is that in the United States in the 1970s no strategy for socialism is particularly plausible'.

Such a promising title too.
Pete Green.

Inbrief

Merlin Press have just published *The Socialist Register 1978*. Pluto have just released a paperback edition of Robert Barltrop's *Jack London: The Man, The Writer, The Rebel* (£1.95). Pluto have also published Suzanne de Brunhoff's *The State, Capital and Economic Policy* (£2.95). Monthly Review have now released Bettleheim and Burton's exchange of views on *China since Mao* (£1.50), in which Bettleheim presents his sad argument that 'there has been a veritable leap

backwards'.

New Left Books have at last stopped Nicos Poulantzas from publishing his books with tongue twisting titles. His new volume is *State, Power, Socialism* (£7.50) which is at least to the point, even if he misses it.

Dave Laing's *The Marxist Theory of Art* (£3.50) is just out from The Harvester Press. CIS have a new report out on *The Nuclear Disaster* (65p), an incisive critique of the British nuclear industry.

And for those of you who loved the Bookmarx choice some time ago of Sjowall and

Wahloo's *The Locked Room*, Penguin have recently published *Cop Killer* (85p) by the same authors.

And for anyone who gets past Christmas and into the new year without reading Paul Erdman's *The Crash of '79* (Sphere 95p) you'll have only yourself to blame.

Finally, a cheap buy. Merlin have reprinted E P Thompson's brilliant *New Society* article, *The state and its enemies*, setting the ABC trial in the context of the history of English state trials, as a pamphlet (5p).
Alastair Hatcher

the **Cult of** **Kollontai**

In February 1917 women workers met in Petrograd to decide whether to demonstrate on International Womens Day. They were advised not to by the local Bolshevik party. But the next day they decided to have demonstration anyway. Kaiurov, a member of the local Bolshevik District Committee, was horrified:

'I was extremely indignant about the behaviour of the strikers, both because they had blatantly ignored the decision of the District Committee of the party, and also because they had gone on strike after I had appealed to them only the night before to keep cool and disciplined'.

Reluctantly the Bolsheviks agreed to support the strike. It was the spark that was to fire the whole Russian revolution.

'Thus the Russian revolution was begun from below overcoming the resistance of its own revolutionary organizations, the initiative being taken of their own accord by women textile workers'.

The women had spontaneously organised the insurrection. But the lack of traditional organization among women which had caused the explosion, also held them back once the revolution was underway. Women were new to the organised working class

scene in Russia. Lack of political experience combined with the physical conditions of the revolution itself meant that few women actually rose to prominence during the revolutionary years. The Bolshevik leadership was aware of the problem, and in 1919 Lenin urged positive discrimination toward women when he said.

Her place in 1917 and after

Alexandra Kollontai was active in the Bolshevik Party leadership throughout this period. Minister for Social Welfare in the first Bolshevik government, she had been exiled from Russia in 1908. She returned in 1917 after having been active as a feminist and socialist speaker in the international socialist movement. After 1917 she was centrally involved in the attempts to build the Party womens organization among peasant and working women.

She wrote a great deal in the womens paper *Rabotnitsa* and was a well know speaker and pamphlet writer. Until recently she has been an obscure figure mentioned, if at all, in histories of the Revolution as the leader of the Workers Opposition.

Today the Russian revolution and the way women organised during it have become a subject of some discussion in the feminist movement. Alexandra Kollontai has been brought out of her obscurity, dusted down and glamourised. Her books and pamphlets have been translated into English accompanied by glowing introductions from noteworthy feminists. And altogether a romantic and indeed grandiose image has been built up of her. In her introduction to *Selected Writings* Alix Holt writes:

'The work of Alexandra Kollontai

'Elect more women workers both Communist and non party to the soviet... it makes no difference if she is not a member of the Party—elect her to the Moscow Soviet'.

But despite the multitude of laws that had been passed to ensure female equality, the resources did not exist to provide the communal facilities necessary to liberate women from domestic work. And as the economic crisis deepened so did the pressures preventing womens liberation. During the New Economic Policy thousands of women were unemployed or starving. Prostitution grew. People retreated into traditional patriarchal attitudes as the only alternative they knew to the chaos.

represents the most important contribution of its period to the development of the relationship between the womens movement and the socialist programme, and her contribution to this long neglected area of Marxist theory deserves to be more widely known and appreciated'.

Such extravagant claims are typical of the cult that is being built around Kollontai. She is posed as a lone defender of womens rights who fought for independent womens organization in the midst of baying Bolsheviks. Her sexual writings are hailed as an important contribution to today's discussion on womens' oppression.

But the image is altogether a false one. First, Kollontai was not alone but a part of a large international Marxist womens movement. Second, her main preoccupation when writing about women was the question of class—an aspect conveniently ignored by her translators and commentators. Third, anything more than a superficial look at her sexual writings discloses a rigid and authoritarian attitude toward sexual morality. While this can be explained as a response to the conditions of Russia at the time, the writings are hardly the liberal precursor of modern sexual politics.



The International Womens Movement

It is fashionable to believe that Marxism has always ignored the women question. Reality is rather different.

An international socialist womens movement led by Marxist women existed in Europe at the end of last century and up until the first world war. It campaigned not only on women's issues, but on general politics as well. Its members were responsible for the split in the international suffragette movement which developed on the question of attitudes to the war.

As far back as the 1860s Marxist writers had argued the case for womens liberation, and how it could be integrated into the socialist programme. They argued that the right to work was central to the fight, not as an end in itself but as an important starting point for women's fight as an integral part of the class struggle for socialism. They also argued that the economic basis for the bourgeois family had to be destroyed in order that women could be freed their family ties and become truly independent.

In 1891 the Marxist perspective on women was included in the programme of German Social Democracy which was the first Marxist organization to commit itself to the fight for female emancipation.

A large womens movement grew up

alongside German Social Democracy. It was led by Clara Zetkin and marxist women. Its journal *Gleichheit* started with a circulation of a few thousand in 1891 and rose to 112,000 by 1913. By then 140,000 women had joined the Party—no mean feat in a period when women were much more confined to the home than they are today.

It is strange therefore that Alix Holt should say in her commentary on Kollontai 'German social democracy despite its resolutions proved incapable of integrating the struggle for the liberation of women into its practice'.

German Social Democracy not only built a modestly successful womens movement but it also developed women as leading cadres on all the major issues the day. Clara Zetkin, Louise Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg are among the women who were involved in this movement.

Alexandra Kollontai was closely involved with the German movement and indeed put forward views similar to theirs on all major issues. She shared with them a total opposition to the bourgeois feminist movement and believed that women workers should fight as a class together with men to overthrow the system that oppressed them.

emphasis on the organization of working-class women and on defending their right to work. They fought on the question of maternity rights, equal pay and womens trade union organization.

Kollontai and Zetkin argued time and again that there was 'no special womens agitation to be carried on, but rather socialist agitation among women' and that the 'main task is to arouse class consciousness among women and to involve them in class struggle.'

This clear distinction between class politics and the bourgeois reformism of the middle class womens rights movement at the time was central to the politics of the Marxist women. It was not as Alix Holt says 'lacking sociological sophistication and rejecting the validity of demands for professional and educational equality'. The Marxist woman supported reforms but equally she believed that:

'For the great majority of women it makes no difference if some thousands or tens of thousands of their sisters who belong to the more favourably situated ranks of society succeed in attaining a superior profession or medical practice or some other scientific or official career, for nothing is thereby changed.'

The Family

As Kollontai pointed out, women had to struggle against the bourgeois family and the way that it oppressed them but she argued that while middle class women had pioneered changes in the family within their own social layer this 'subjective solution of the question by individual women does not change the situation and does not relieve the overall gloomy picture of family life'.

She was extremely critical of those who looked for alternative sexual moralities while the collective that could make these possible was absent.

Kollontai, like the other Marxists, argued strongly against the idea that working class woman and middle class woman could fight together as women to change their lives. She said that they would never really be able to unite because

'However good the intentions of individual groups of feminists towards the proletariat, whenever the question of class struggle has been posed they have left the

Sexual Writings.

Many of Kollontai's sexual writings were completed during this period of economic difficulty and social chaos. And they were essentially a practical response to a problematic situation. Alix Holt writes 'many of her formulation jar on the modern ear'. That is really far too kind. Many of Kollontai's views would cause shock horror reactions in the straightest of revolutionary circles today.

In writing about love she tried to argue that proletarians consciously chose casual sexual relationships during the war period because they were concerned to spend their main energies on the revolution. What garbage. In reality she was simply glamourising the hopeless situation of people fighting a war, when couples meet briefly and are torn apart again by the pressures of war. There is



Virago

The Question of Class

The entry of women into the workforce had been opposed in Germany by male

workers and indeed by some socialists. The Marxist women therefore put a great deal of

in the general situation of the sex as a whole'.

The Marxist feminists argued that they should organise 'not as women but as proletarians not as female rivals of our working class men but as their comrades in struggle'.

Today the emphasis sounds crude particularly in the light of the modern women's movement's unbalanced preoccupation with oppression to the neglect of exploitation. Marxist women did raise the question of women's oppression—in 1906 Clara Zetkin berated the men at the Social Democratic Congress for not allowing women to be fully active in politics—but the question was usually raised as a practical response to organizational problems and never clearly developed.

Neither the Marxist women like Zetkin and Kollontai, nor today's 'autonomous' feminists have understood the dialectic between oppression and exploitation of women. Both are important and both have to be fought. The root of both, however, lies in the existence of class society and Kollontai and Zetkin were quite correct in saying that the question of class was of overriding importance.

battlefield in a fright. They find they do not wish to interfere in alien causes and prefer to retire to their bourgeois liberalism which is so comfortably familiar'.

So Kollontai like the other Marxist concentrated on the struggle of woman workers. Her early writings are concerned largely with the struggle for maternity rights and for equal pay. Meantime they held out the perspective that the destruction of the family under socialism was the only real basis for liberation.

The early days of the revolution in Russia held out ecstatic hopes for the abolition of the family. And Kollontai wrote enthusiastically about the possibilities that were presented in her pamphlet *Communism and the Family*. But the poverty of the revolution presented other problems which increased after 1919. There was increasing prostitution, rapes, abandoned children and a total lack of facilities for those whose relationships had broken down.

nothing either proletarian or revolutionary about that.

On other matters Kollontai had a far from liberal view. The revolutionary government had legalised abortion. Kollontai was unhappy about this. She thought that the need for abortion would disappear when women realised that 'childbirth is a social obligation.'

She argued that women would have to produce many children if the new socialist state was to have sufficient workers to survive. That is hardly looking at it as a 'social rather than a private matter' as Alix Holt claims. That is effectively denying women the right to choose because the needs of the state come first. It is the argument that Stalin used when he introduced the cult of motherhood in the 1930s and gave medals to

mothers of large families.

On prostitution too Kollontai was rigid. She condemned it, but not because prostitutes were women who were oppressed and exploited but because prostitutes were those who:

'avoid the necessity of working by giving themselves to a man... the person who does not work and who lives off someone else on an unearned wage harms the collective and the republic. The traders and the hoarders all live off unearned income. We must fight prostitution as another form of labour desertion'.

The Workers Opposition

Kollontai's best known role is as a leader of the Workers' Opposition who opposed the moves towards one man management during the New Economic Policy. How she moved into the Opposition is not really clear. Her personal association with other members of the opposition may have persuaded her of their cause. But certainly she never explained what happened. And when the Opposition was defeated she refused to talk about it.

Alfred Rosmer describes a meeting with her in 1922. 'We interrogated her about the Workers Opposition which she had led in struggle together with Shlyapnikov—rather

Stalinism

Germaine Greer has naively suggested that Kollontai survived the Stalinist purges because she was a woman or because her 'comrades remembered her old friendship with Lenin'. Alix Holt has suggested that she survived because her job was far away from everyday developments in Russia and her isolation protected her.

It's rubbish. To survive the purges you had to praise Stalin actively, and condone the tortures and the executions and this was especially true for old Bolsheviks. It is known that Kollontai 'spoke of Stalin Molotov and Litvinov with deep admiration'. Doubtless she did much more. But we await a critical translator for the details.

But the commitment to survive and support Stalin was definitely a conscious one. Why else would a young woman write her autobiography except to record the kind of woman she had been? Her miserable book about her life was written in 1926. It contains little of importance and is a sad goodbye to a former activist.

From then on Kollontai's importance dwindled. When she died in Moscow in 1952 hardly any one noticed.

In the rush to discover 'our' history some writers have an understandable but unfortunate habit of taking women out of their historical context and interpreting them in a way that dovetails neatly with their own theories about the world. This is precisely what Alix Holt and others have done to Kollontai. She is posed as a feminist who fought the party and worked for independent women's organization.

In fact she was a Marxist and a feminist. Her contribution can only be understood within the context of the international women's movement, of the rise of the Russian Revolution and of its defeat. She

The only really sympathetic writings about sexuality appear in Kollontai's novel, *Love of Worker Bees* and in the two short stories she wrote. Set against the background of the New Economic Policy when the revolution was already beginning to fall apart, the stories tell how women looked to new ideas and got cheated by the old ones. She describes the pain of jealousy, the heartbreak of the failure to define finer and freer relationships. The stories are agonising but well worth reading and are unfortunately a very small part of her writings.

a curious turn for nothing in her origins and previous activity seemed to have prepared her for this syndicalist position. But we couldn't get anything out of her... it was now an affair of the past'.

After this Kollontai took a post in the Soviet Legation to Norway. It marked an important change in her life. From then on she left the leadership and held diplomatic posts up until her retirement. She survived the purges and the Stalinist trials of the 1930's and was decorated twice for her services to the State.

was a product, not an instigator of the women's movement.

The interpretation put on her frequently omits the crucial point. The question of class was central to all Kollontai's writing on the woman question. That is what the autonomous feminists choose to ignore. Or where they acknowledge it they disagree.

Sheila Rowbotham has written of Kollontai:

'She does not recognise that without an explicit socialist feminist theory, and without the bargaining power of an autonomous organization, the specific oppression of women would be overlain by the Marxist analysis of the exploitation of the worker'.

Kollontai did understand. And it is on just this point that she would take issue with contemporary feminists, as she did with the women in the equal rights movement in Russia and Europe. She was in favour of separate organization — but class struggle was its central task.

The interest in Kollontai is to be welcomed, if only because it might stimulate us to discover and understand our own heritage on the relationship between Marxism and women's liberation. Russian women workers fired the revolution. We may spark another, but only if we have clear class perspective and an honest appraisal of the contribution of women like Kollontai.

Key Books

Selected Writings of Alexandra Kollontai; edited by Alix Holt. Allison & Busby £2.95

Hal Draper & Anne Lipow 'Marxist Women versus Bourgeois Feminists' in *Socialist Register 1976*. Merlin Press £3.00

There has been a sort of debate in the columns of *Socialist Worker* recently concerning popular music. Most of the discussion has been around the notion that as revolutionaries we should support particular sorts of music, almost in the same way that we support the patriotic front in Zimbabwe. Neither Nkomo or Mugabe are about to lead a workers' revolution, but their victory would be an undoubted advance. We certainly don't support Smith, or even the black collaborators such as Muzorewa or Sithole.

Neil Rogall for example, claimed 'We've got street music, rebel music... Clash, Sham 69, Steel Pulse' but 'Disco, unlike Punk provided a return to security'. 'Disco IS big business'. No mistaking the goodies and baddies there. Or, from an earlier *Socialist Review*, Roger Huddle claimed 'punk is one of the most important working-class cultural things ever to happen'... 'dying your hair, forming a band is a political act'.

Now, these are pretty strong statements. Is punk revolutionary and disco reactionary? Should *SW* support one more than another? What is a 'punk' or a 'rock fan' anyway? For marxists trained to ask 'what class?' and 'whose class interest?' the answers are none too obvious.

The rise of a music industry is a comparatively recent phenomenon. There has probably only been a record industry for 50 years. So revolutionaries have to start creating some new theory. One correspondent to *SW*, while defending 'disco', said 'obviously music is one of the most powerful weapons we have come across'. To test the validity of that statement, let us see where modern popular music came from.

During the last century there was a wealth of popular music in this country. Some of it was commercialised in music halls and by

street hawkers of sheet music. But without any method of recording music, much was still passed on from one performer to another. Popular music was a possession of the working class, recording its disasters, murders, wars, strikes and so on. It was an important method of transmitting news.

Across the other side of the Atlantic, a new musical phenomenon was undergoing a prolonged gestation period. The black Americans, slaves, were absorbing the musical styles, songs and instruments of their English and French masters and mixing them with their own, half remembered, African tradition.

They created a new music; or rather new musics, Blues, Ragtime and Jazz. European music employed words prominently. Very often the words told a story. Ironically, many of these crossed the Atlantic and became black American tales. But the blues gave popular music its powerful, rhythmic qualities. Blues guitar and piano players play rhythm first and foremost.

This is quite a sweeping generalisation; there are some incredibly poignant blues with immense lyrical richness. But it is the synthesis of the popular music of two different cultures that has ultimately swept the world and together with modern methods of recording and broadcasting music, has universalised popular musical style.

Let's look a little closer at the blues. The blues, the black American music of the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, involved little commercialisation. Though some of it was recorded and marketed, and one or two companies kept house bands producing stereotyped records, for the most part the thousands of black musicians learned by travelling, from other musicians.

In this way it achieved a rich diversity of

styles and has often been called the last folk music. It developed in semi isolation. Few whites took notice of the blues; it was played by blacks for blacks. It underwent many stylistic alterations. From lone guitar players, who needed to travel easily, through the vaudeville circuits that produced the 'classic' female blues singers such as Bessie Smith, to the strident, amplified 'urban' blues of the 1940s when blacks had become the working class in many northern cities.

It was this city blues, played by people like Muddy Waters, that was the starting point for rock and roll, and everything that passes as rock music today.

I have referred to two totally different areas of popular music, 19th Century England and early 20th Century black America. In both, the music was part of the everyday life of the working people. They sung the songs at work, or in bars or pubs. It expressed their lives, chronicled their misfortunes, recorded historical events. Where political events figure strongly, they crop up in the music. In the blues for example, at its peak in the Great (sic) Depression of the 1930s we find songs about WPA (like Job Creation, now) and one or two in praise of Roosevelt (like Callaghan!), but nowhere songs expressing black consciousness.

Any music must have a material, social basis. Its content (i.e. what the songs are about) reflects what is going on in that society.

That is not a particularly earth shaking observation. It is, of course, the basis for *SW*'s often uncritical admiration for 'Punk'. But the point is that if a type of music owes its vitality to a social group, then it will reflect all the contradictions apparent in that group. Of course, music is not like a social barometer, constantly changing. Some features will predominate. Country and Western seems to feature a lot of songs about unfaithful marriage, husband/wife running

Out Music?

off with the kids/someone else/the car and so on. Punk has lots of songs about school, conformity, alienation. Clearly the interests of two different age groups are being reflected.

Reggae is a good example of a music arising from a well defined community.

According to Huddle 'The punks' comrade in struggle was reggae'. There are certainly lots of good songs about freeing Zimbabwe, freedom fighters, etc. However, Bob Marley, interviewed in *Black Music and Jazz Review*, thought the NF had a good effect: 'If black people who . . . work in the factory, if them never work in the factory then the Front could never say them taking away Ephraim's (England's) jobs.' 'We should just come together and go home Africa'. Steel Pulse, who have to face the NF, have a different answer: 'do unto the Klan as they would do unto you!'

This, the social basis of music, is the explanation for blues from before the war failing to speak out for the plight of American blacks. On the whole, their consciousness was low. After the war it changed rapidly and the songs reflected it. Big Bill Broonzy for example wrote his 'Black, brown and White Blues'. There were songs about Korea, too.

But amongst poor Whites, many as badly off as the blacks, consciousness was different. Ideas of socialism and organisation had been imported with the immigrants from Europe. Woodie Guthrie toured camps urging the poor whites to join unions. They had been forced off their small holdings by the banks and big trusts, and began migrating to California.

The story is movingly told in Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. Guthrie was an activist. He

used the music of the southern, white community as a means of organising and communicating. Many are still sung today, such as 'Do Re Mi' and 'Vigilante Man'. The Wobblies, the Industrial Workers of the World, also used song to get round laws about street meetings, with great success.

So when consciousness was marginally higher a more political lyric became apparent. I have tried to show that music, or types of music, come from a material, social base. In this context, 'punk' is not a new music at all. Any guitarist will tell you how little different in style it is from other rock music of the last decade. What is important is that it is a reflection of increased political awareness of a sort, so that the alienation and pointlessness of the dole has replaced the usual boy meets girl lyrics.

Since it is primarily working-class kids who leave school with no qualifications and who figure largely among the dole figures, punk is 'their' music. There is nothing in the music itself that is revolutionary. The lyrics could just as easily include 'If they're black, send 'em back'. No music is inherently 'anti-authority' or 'anarchistic'. Punk would still be an important phenomenon if they'd all taken to forming duos of piano accordion and clarinet.

If youth is now more open to politics than before and some groups sing about their feelings of anger, frustration etc; if that provides us with a bigger audience, the music has done all it can. To draw unemployed youth onto political activity is our job.

One final question is worth asking. Why has a new style of music altogether not sprung up? Why not, for example some fusion of rock and reggae? Why is punk, in musical terms, such a puny gesture?

The answer is to be found in the stupefying, all embracing power of the big record companies. Their survival in

capitalism demands that they turn music into a commodity. The incredible diversity of music around the world has to be distilled into just a few types, each of which can be given a brand image. Classical for the upper-classes, jazz for intellectuals; Virgin Records' logo for their new reggae lable is a black, clenched fist!

The industry operates on a worldwide scale. A sort of musical imperialism means that from Europe to America to Australia to Japan, the same records are played, the same groups tour. In Holland, they disdain to sing in their own language but prefer English!

It is not surprising that a new music has failed to appear. Increasingly the chances of

a new blues or reggae happening along are rapidly fading. For that to happen requires a certain cultural isolation. With the record companies pushing their products 24 hours a day that isolation is no longer possible. This music industry has the same effect as the car industry. The diverse models are all absorbed into a few. The brand names are kept but they all, Ford, Fiat, Datsun, look similar. Every year they superficially restyle.

Socialism will free music from its repressing bondage under capitalism. Music is a live, participatory art. There is an interaction between performer and audience. Though Discos are a real source of enjoyment, now, after the drudgery of work, they are the musical equivalent of a sex show. Socialism should open the way for everyone to enjoy real music. To learn to play, to experiment, to hear live music; to express their lives in music—not merely buy a certain brand image.

Only then will 'all music' be 'our music'.
Mike Garner

Their Music?

Watership Down

Rank and file rabbits rool okay. That was the message from the film of *Watership Down*. And what's more they get a bit of support from other animals after a canny bit of solidarity work.

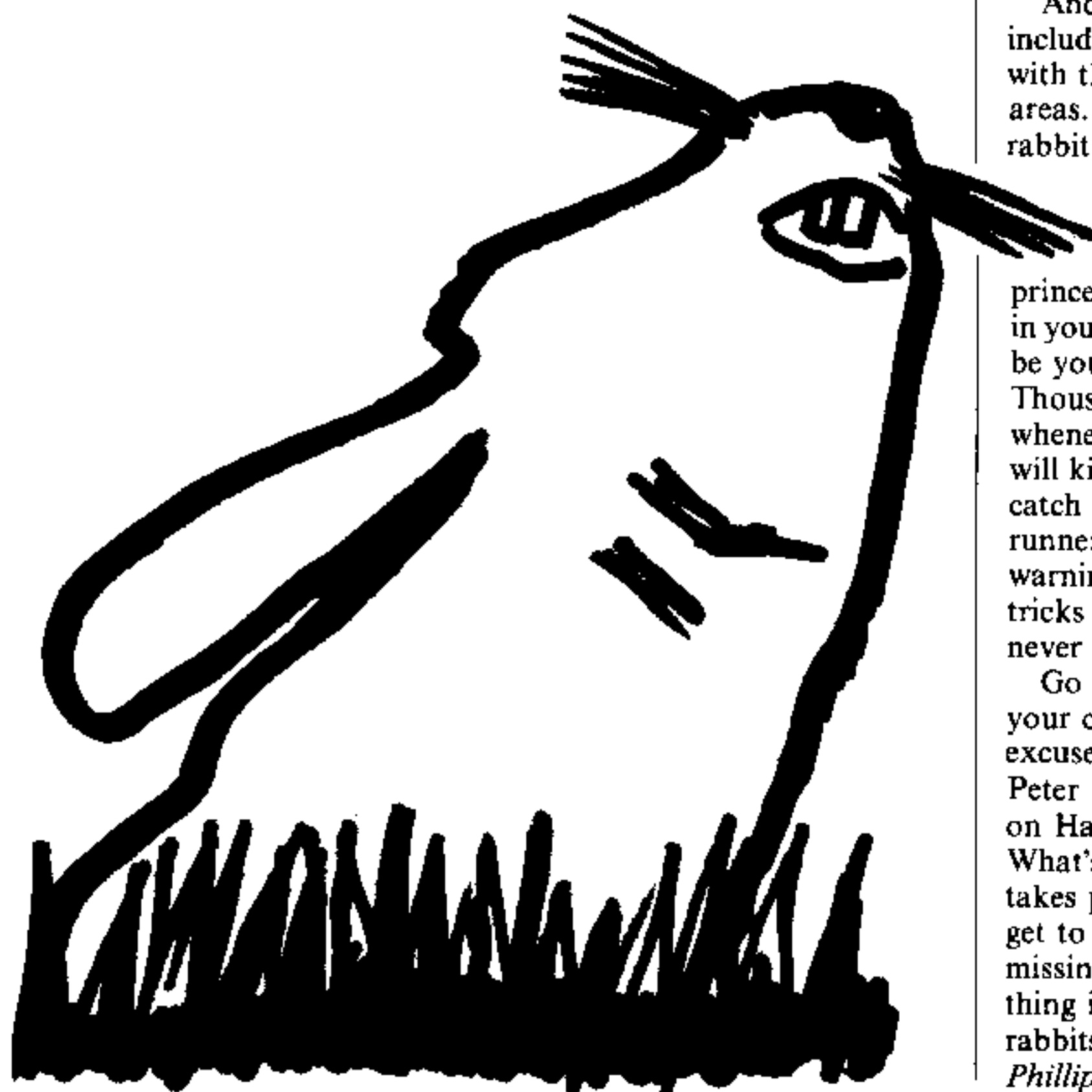
They help the big white bird with the damaged wing and he helps them defeat the patrols of General Woundwort of Efrafa.

Very political, this. Efrafa is the strong state based entirely on fear. It has total control over the lives of the rabbits crammed into its now overcrowded burrows.

This distorts their way of life because it daren't let any of them go. Indeed one of them has his ears shredded for trying to escape.

Whereas the more 'liberal' states can absorb newcomers and allow young rabbits to leave and set up their own warrens when things get too crowded.

It's a very violent, very political film, with overtones of mysticism and religion. The rabbit god Frith hovers over it throughout.



I was going to send my two boys to see it without me. I'm glad I changed my mind and went. We were glued to the edge of our seats following the fortunes of a small group of rabbits fighting to start their own warren.

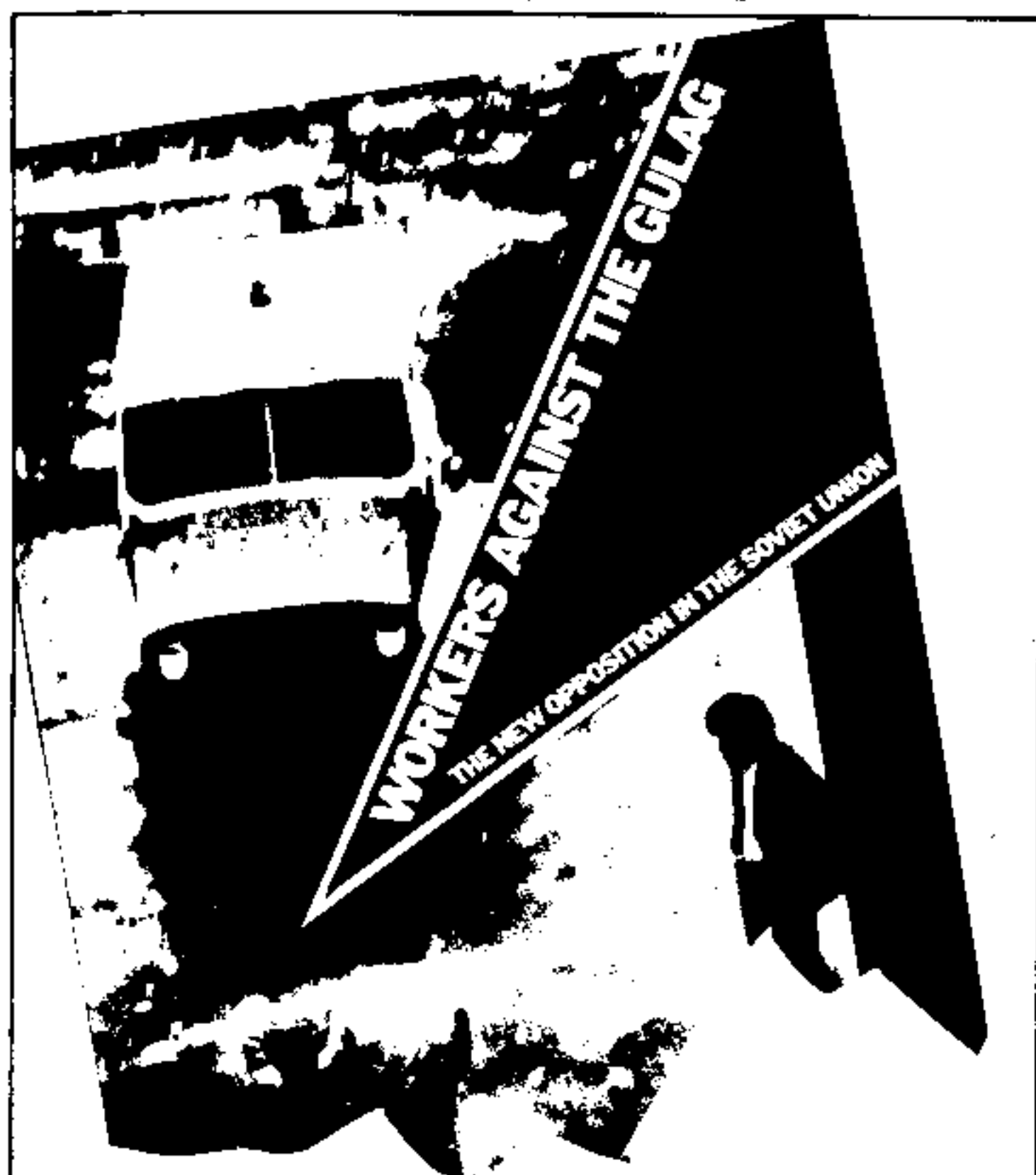
And we hated all the enemies, including the human beings with their plans for developing areas. I could almost become a rabbit eco-freak after that film.

By Frith I could.

Frith's

message to the rabbit prince El-Ahrairah really sticks in your mind: 'All the world will be your enemy, Prince with a Thousand Enemies, and whenever they catch you they will kill you. But first they must catch you, digger, listener, runner, prince with the swift warning. Be cunning and full of tricks and your people shall never be destroyed.'

Go and see it if you can, with your children if you need an excuse. Benjamin Bunny and Peter Rabbit ain't got nothing on Hazel, Fiver and Bigwig. What's more, most of the action takes place because when they get to the new warren they're missing the most important thing in the world. Female rabbits, of course. *Mary Phillips*



Documents translated for the first time from the Russian. Soviet workers describe in their own words the exploitation and repression they suffer.

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Cold cool thrillers

The Driver Coma

These two films should reassure anyone who feared, after Paul Cunningham's review of *The Big Sleep* last month, that the Hollywood thriller was dead. They are, however, very different thrillers.

The Driver appears to draw heavily on the *films noir* of the 1940s and 1950s, which explored the dark world of American gangland, its internecine struggles and its sometimes cosy, sometimes hostile, relationship with the forces of law and order.

The Driver is, quite literally, a black film, shot almost wholly at night or in artificially-lit interiors. This style fits the story perfectly.

The film is as cold as a game of chess. Its subject is, indeed, game—the battle of wit and nerves between the Driver (Ryan O'Neal), who specialises in piloting get-away cars from armed robberies, and the Detective (Bruce Dern), who is obsessed with hunting him down. The Player (Isabelle Adjani) is drawn to the Driver partly

because she, too is a gambler (with cards, not cars).

There is not an ounce of spare flesh on the film—not a shot, a word, gesture, a facial expression more than is necessary. The characters are stripped down to the essentials required to tell the story: they do not even have names.

The result is one of the tightest, most exciting films I have seen in years. It even manages to inject new life into that overused device, the car-chase.

For all its bleakness, *The Driver* is a surprisingly romantic film.

The Driver, is a cool, super-efficient machine, equally adept with car and gun. He invites comparison with the sort of character Clint Eastwood used to play. His main relaxation is listening to Country and Western 'cowboy music'. The Detective calls him the 'cowboy'. (Walter Hill, who directed the film, used to write scripts for Sam Peckinpah).

In that sense, *The Driver* is a very conservative film. The male super-hero rides unchallenged at a time when

Clint Eastwood, in his most recent films, has begun to send himself up. And the Player simply looks on while the Driver and the Detective fight it.

Coma, by contrast, reflects the impact that the women's movement is making even on Hollywood. Its main character is a woman, Susie Wheeler (Genevieve Bujold), who is anything but a passive onlooker.

As a surgeon in a huge Boston teaching hospital, and something of a feminist, she is already up against a male hierarchy ever ready to patronise her as a woman when she begins to puzzle about the suspiciously high number of coma cases among healthy, young, surgical patients (the latest being her closest woman friend).

And when Susie discovers that these patients all went into a coma in the same operating theatre and they all get shunted off to the mysterious Jefferson Institute, everyone, including her ambitious boyfriend (Michael Douglas) is only too ready to dismiss her as a paranoid and hysterical woman.

But, as the film unfolds, we are drawn deeper and deeper into the labyrinthine bowels of the hospital, as Susie reaches closer and closer to the heart of a conspiracy to hijack human bodies.

The film is packed full of sharp satire of the bureaucratic world of American big medicine. The Jefferson Institutes sells fresh hearts and kidneys for transplant operations in the way that commodity exchanges sell gold or grain or pork-bellies. The man behind it all is full of visions of rule by experts ('the hospitals are the cathedrals of the future').

Coma is an almost perfect film. Genevieve Bujold's performance is completely convincing in her single-minded hunt for the truth, as she outwits her male opponents (and in a couple of instances, outfights them—burying one under a heap of corpses awaiting dissection and knocking another flying).

Almost perfect, I said. Without giving away the ending, it fits neither the inventive and ironic style of the rest of the film, nor the central character's feminism. It's a sentimental, stereo-typed copout.

Nonetheless, it's rare to find two such well-made and exciting films on general release. *Alex Callinicos*

Socialist Review

POBox82

London E2

Well, Colin Sparks has gone ahead of Duncan Hallas in the *Complaints Stakes*, with Maurice Herson trailing slightly, and Paul Cunningham nowhere to be seen now. Don't any of you have anything to say about the *Back Page*, the *News/analysis* section, reviews, or even the whole magazine? Is writers Reviewed any good? What about the design of the thing? We can spare more space for letters....

POBox82

The fact is . . .

I thought Duncan Hallas' comments (*Socialist Review* No.5 September 1978) on Glyn Ford's article 'Even the Truth is Relative' (*Socialist Review* No.4 July/August 1978) were illogical.

He may be correct in his point of view (or maybe not) but at no point does he put forward any kind of scientific argument against Glyn Ford. As a self-proclaimed scientific socialist surely that is what he should have done.

Quote: 'Marx and Engels took it for granted there was such a distinction'. So does Hallas. He just makes a statement, applies its implications to Newton's *Principia* without offering any *factual evidence* to support this assertion.

I conclude that if Hallas is a 'scientific' socialist then his concept of what is scientific is very different from most (physical) scientists or that Hallas is not the scientist he purports to be.

Ian Freestone
Ashton under Lyne.

POBox82

Lot's of safe energy?

I would like to reply to Andy Wynne's letter (*Socialist Review* No 5 September 1978) criticising my article on *Socialism and Nuclear Power*. In my article (in *Socialist Review* No.2 May 1978) I argued for two principal conclusions:

1 Nuclear fission as currently being developed under capitalism is a highly dangerous technology, will lead to the uncontrollable proliferation of nuclear weapons and should be vigorously opposed.

2 In a future socialist economy the more advanced technology of nuclear fusion could provide a safe and plentiful source of energy.

As I understand it Andy Wynne agrees with conclusion 1 but objects to point 2, maintaining that we must be opposed to *all* forms of nuclear power and not just under capitalism but *in principle*. In his letter he offers (by my count) seven arguments against nuclear fusion.

Every one of his seven points seem to me to be based on misinformation or faulty reasoning. In the interests of brevity, however, I shall take up here just two of his points.

First of all he claims that nuclear fusion is unsafe because it will leak the radioactive gas tritium. This is a rather bizarre claim, implying as it does that engineers clever enough to build a thermonuclear reactor will somehow not be clever enough to make the joints in their plumbing gas-tight! Presumably what he meant to say is that tritium will be produced as a *waste product*.

So what? Every industrial process produces waste products. The special problem with the waste products from

fission is that they are radioactive materials with *very, very long half-lives* ie tens of thousands of years, so they constitute a public health hazard that will still be with us in a hundred centuries.

Tritium has a half-life of twelve years and decays to helium-3, which is not radioactive. If the only waste product from fusion were tritium the technical problems of making the process safe would be comparatively trivial.

In fact I don't claim to know what all the waste products from a fusion reactor would be and I think it's clear that in the present state of our knowledge it is an *open question* whether or not fusion could be made safe but so far I've heard no convincing reason why it shouldn't be.

Some comrades seem to imagine that we should be opposed on principle to any process involving radioactivity. A moment's reflection should convince them that this is just silly. Do we march into hospitals and demand that they shut down the X-ray department (on the perfectly truthful grounds that X-rays are ionising radiations of exactly the same character as those emitted by radioactive materials)?

Do we demonstrate against the use of radiotherapy for cancer patients? Do we campaign against the use of radioactive tracers that have yielded invaluable results in countless fields of medical and scientific research?

A person who adopted these positions would be not a socialist but a *crank* and a pretty reactionary crank at that. The use of radioactivity, *under carefully controlled conditions*, is just as much a normal and proper part of an advanced industrial economy as the use of say high voltage electricity or concentrated sulphuric acid.

In all these matters the safety argument is about *when* and *where* and *how much* and under what precautions. In all these matters the problem is that in an economy that puts profits before people the safety precautions are not high enough and that is the basis on which we fight, not on the basis that we are opposed to advanced technology.

The second of Andy Wynne's points I would like to take up is his unsubstantiated claim that 'nuclear fusion is not needed' because renewable sources of natural energy (sun, wind etc.)

POBox82

will be able to provide all the future energy needs of a socialist world economy. How does he know?

He himself calls (quite rightly) for 'far more research' into these renewable sources of energy—presumably because at the moment we just *don't know* how much energy and at what cost could be extracted from these sources. But the idea that an advanced industrial economy could be run off, say, windmills, is hardly convincing.

The point I tried to make in my article is that as revolutionary socialists we are committed to a *massive expansion* of the world economy and that notwithstanding the greater efficiency of a socialist economy such a programme will require a great expansion of our sources of energy. It may well be that we shall have to look to nuclear fusion to provide that energy.

David Turner
Canterbury

Arms and the class

Colin Sparks' article on terrorism (*Socialist Review* No 6 October 1978) is undoubtedly correct in so far as revolutionary work inside bourgeois-democratic societies is concerned. But he fails to take into account the different strategies and tactics imposed by enforced clandestinity.

Under a dictatorship like Somoza's you wouldn't be selling any newspaper, whether it was *Terrorist Worker*, *Socialist Worker*, *Reformist Worker* or whatever. Witness the fact that Pedro Chamorro, the director of Nicaragua's only opposition paper, *La Prensa*, was assassinated on 10 January this year.

Paul Foot wouldn't be making speaking tours: he'd either be in prison or in hiding. The SWP would be outlawed.

The forms of resistance which have developed under conditions such as these fall into three distinct categories:

1 Illegal agitation in

whatever trade-union structures exist (these are invariably controlled by the dictatorship). This form of resistance is undoubtedly the best suited to countries with an advanced industrial structure. It was largely responsible for the eventual disintegration of Franco's dictatorship in Spain.

2 Armed struggle carried out independently of activity inside the working class. This has nothing whatsoever to do with a socialist strategy, and suffers from all the defects which Colin Sparks enumerates: lack of internal democracy, substitution of guerrilla group for class etc.,

3 Armed struggle combined with illegal activity inside the working class, and attempting to integrate itself into the development of working-class resistance. This is only possible in relatively underdeveloped countries with a large enough peasant sector to sustain guerrilla armies. But although it shares some of the weaknesses of group 2 above, its effectiveness as a catalyst cannot simply be ruled out.

After all, the insurrection in Nicaragua was not carried out by the Sandanistas alone. It was carried out by the overwhelming majority of the working class and the petty bourgeoisie, with support even from oppositional sectors of the bourgeoisie.

Given Britain's industrial structure, an underground SWP would have little use for guerrilla warfare in a dictatorial Britain. But this should not blind us to the qualitatively different kinds of armed struggle developing in other countries.

Hugh O'Donnell
Hamilton

them to reformism.

It is one thing to claim in general that communism must be a conscious mass process and quite another to deduce particular tactics from that definition regardless of the material situation.

Lenin expressed the problem: 'Let us begin from the beginning. What are the basic questions every Marxist must ask when he analyses the problem of the type of struggle? First of all... Marxism does not tie the movement to any particular combat method. It recognises the possibility that struggle may assume the most variegated forms'.

The mistake that Colin Sparks makes in his article is to counterpose mass action and terrorism, presumably on the assumption that all terrorism discourages mass activity and involvement. While examples can be found to support this claim, the assumption tends to fall down when you remember what he is trying to say: all terrorism is counter-productive.

The first point to be made is that 'terrorism' has been instrumental in the victories of Algeria, Yemen, Vietnam, among other. Guerilla tactics in particular countries have shown many similarities to what comrade Sparks labels 'terrorist' tactics.

Therefore, from the start we have to admit that what matters isn't the nature of the act but its relationship to the general revolutionary process.

To illustrate the false barrier between 'mass action' and 'terrorism' and to see where this barrier can lead to bloody defeat, we need only look to South Africa. As the most industrialised country in Africa, South Africa has created and relied on a black industrial proletariat.

For this reason it might be argued that the revolution in South Africa will consist of mass uprisings (perhaps triggered by strikes) with guerilla action as only a subsidiary part of the struggle.

But those who deduce political strategy (mass action) from a priori truths (the size of the proletariat) are, in this case, clearing the way for bloody defeat.

The townships where the black workers live are apart from the white cities and factories; they are vulnerable to air attack; boundaries are cited just

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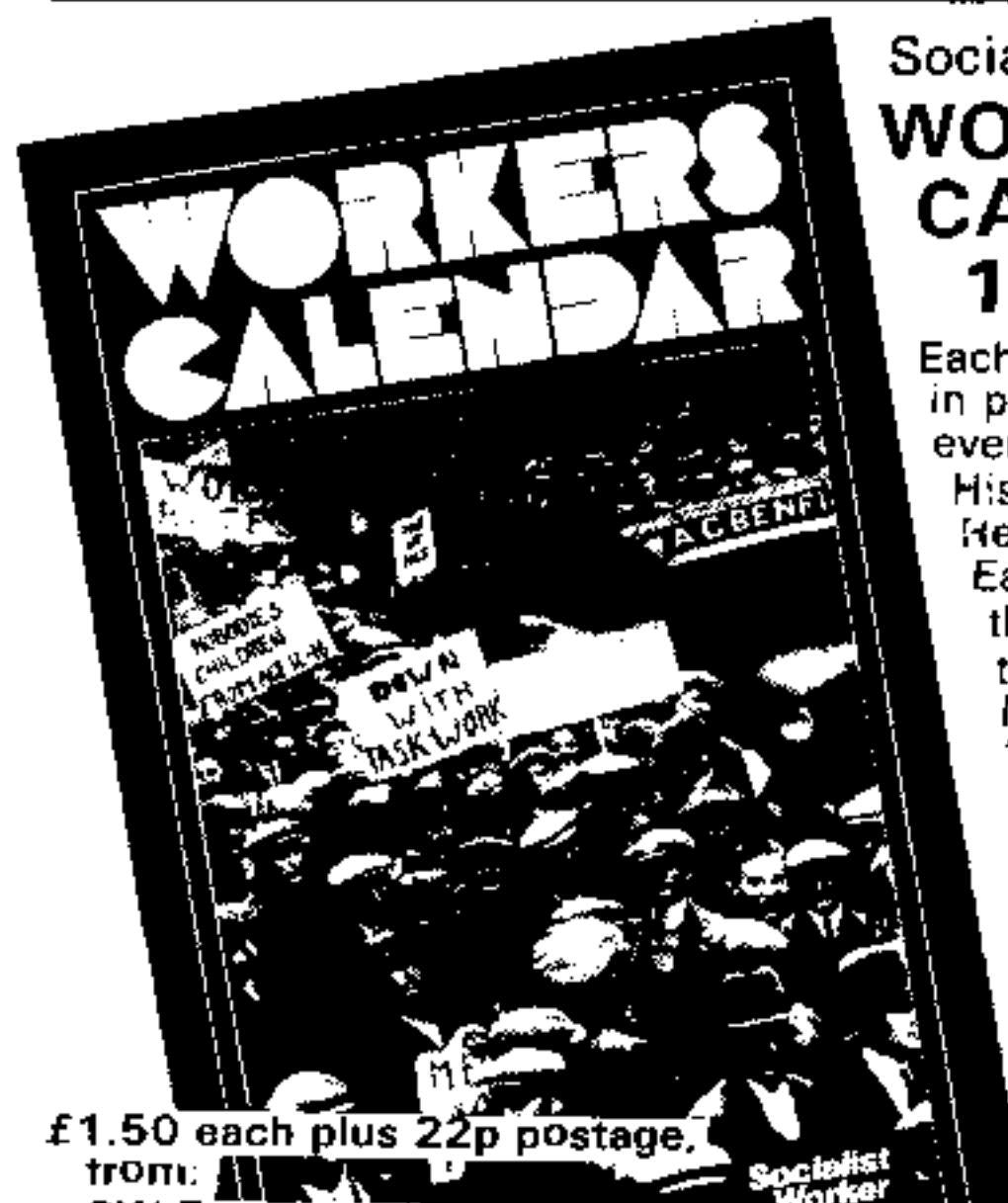
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Quote Terrorism Unquote

I want to reply to Colin Sparks' article on terrorism, in which he justly condemned some terrorist actions but only at the cost of condemning terrorism as a whole. His article tended to reduce tactics to the unhelpful truism that revolution is a product of working-class self-activity.

There is a potential danger that this kind of 'Marxism' will begin to appear as a pre-determined political strategy in the same way as the Mensheviks' determinism led

far enough away from the main roads for the roads to be out of rifle range; by law, all hills or vantage points in these towns are kept clear for armoured car sites or helicopter pads; water can be cut off easily; and wages are so low that strikes are very difficult.

In this case, mass action of the kind advocated by its fetishists would be tactical (and strategic) suicide. It is vital to consider factors such as these in developing an approach.

Successful revolution in South Africa will depend mainly on a guerilla or terrorist strategy, gradually sowing disillusionment and a sense of powerlessness in the whites, taking control of the countryside, and depending for fighters and material support on the black workers in the townships.

It would be impossible for the South African state to combat a war in the countryside by bombing and shooting in the towns; and a conventional warfare in the countryside cannot stem the flow of the revolution, as Vietnam proved.

Communist revolution—be it in South Africa, West Germany or Britain—is composed of basic trends which only exist in and through concrete situations. As workers start to seize control of their lives in one sphere after another, specific confrontations take place demanding specific forms of action.

It is no use claiming that certain forms of action will be used as the excuse for future state repression: the state will respond to any real threat to its power and ideology. And in order to combat the state's response, further effective tactics will be needed to neutralise this response.

For instance, the British network of underground 'administration' centres linked by special transmitters (in case of 'civil disorder') cannot be combatted by strikes or pickets alone (the army would see to that) but by sabotage.

If this seems overly dramatic, nevertheless in any country alive with the centrifugal forces of revolution specific tactics needed if the main trend—the self-activity of ordinary people—is to be both protected and extended. To refuse to consider the tactics of terrorism as part of a revolutionary situation is to endanger the revolution and its gains.

Take the example of a strike picket. Those who have attended a picket where the state forces are used know only too well that the state's superior organisation and equipment enable the state forces to dictate the situation. Correct action taken to disrupt that 'well-oiled' state machine and to ensure the success of the picket is surely justified: we cannot always rely on winning a confrontation by calling on more and more people.

At a certain stage, it is not the scale of mass action which is vital, but its internal organisation and the confusion and fragmentation of the enemy.

Terrorism, used correctly is nothing more than a part of the organised revolutionary movement itself. The fact that some terrorist or guerilla actions can only be carried out by a few individuals does not mean that they are 'bourgeois'—if this were the case presumably all the delegates of an organised working-class movement would fall under the same category.

Any communist movement is in the main concerned with combatting both consent and coercion—but part of that fight is in the correct tactics for concrete situations. You do not win a Grunwick's by planting a bomb in George Ward's car—but, conversely, you cannot defeat state forces purely and simply on the basis of more and more forces.

'Terrorism' or 'guerillaism' can play an important role in those vital situations where material force meets material force. In *Left-Wing Communism* Lenin wrote: 'Everyone will agree that an army which does not train itself to wield all arms, all the means and weapons of warfare that the enemy possesses or may possess, behaves in an unwise or even in a criminal fashion'.

Colin Sparks should take note.

Mike Barnes

POBox82

Men's socialist politics

So, Maurice Herson claims that *Achilles Heel* embodies 'some quite clear and hard political thing' (my enthusiasm is rather less overwhelming). Well, then, it's a great shame that his own foundering attempt to 'justify the idea of men's sexual politics' (*Socialist Review* No 5, September 1978) hasn't a share

of these characteristics.

I may be simply reacting to a detectible undercurrent of sheer patronisation towards the women's movement (OK, you've done your bit, now it's in our turn) in Herson's review, but, on the other hand, a statement such as 'it is time for men to make their/our own serious contribution to what has been (sic) women's politics and should be sexual politics' reveals a modicum of (sexual-) political naivety that cannot escape comment.

Is Herson rejecting the simple fact that women as an oppressed group can only realise the nature of their oppression (whatever its form) through their own analysis of it?

I hope not, because if he is, then he is also rejecting the idea that women's politics must *always* remain a separate women's domain and not become part of the kingdom (and that's not a pun!) of the (non-sexist) left in the form of a unified 'sexual politics'.

Furthermore, I'm not exactly clear what Herson means by men's 'sexual politics'. He emphasises men directly challenging their own sexual roles and the sexism of our society. All well and good, if you want to try and plug a burst tyre rather than work out how to replace it.

In other words, it's completely insufficient for men to realise the nature of their/our sexist behaviour without attempting an analysis of its root causes (admittedly not an easy task).

Consequently, unless Herson begins to link his socialism to his anti-sexism, instead of the latter just existing in isolation as some form of moral response to the women's movement, and, therefore, begins to connect the restructuring of society to the restructuring of men's and women's relationships to themselves and each other, he is bound to be left in the cloud-cuckoo land of woolly-minded reformism.

Like women, we men must begin to politicise our personal lives and to analyse our own relationships to the modes of production and reproduction that exist under capitalism, but, in our case, this politicisation must take an essentially different form since we, as men, embody the oppressive relationships which we, as socialists, oppose.

Consequently, our revolutionary politics must be directed both outwardly in opposition to capitalism, and inwardly, against our own personification of capitalism's repressive nature.

Geoff Wallis
Lincoln

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A WALK TO HATHERSAGE

That winter's night the snow was falling softly in the darkness, as it had been for days, on the climbing, twisting roads, on the clusters of stone houses, on the encircling hills and wide moors of Derbyshire, until nothing could move on the highways and the great slopes were wide expanses of white and cloaked silence.

As in most winters, the snow closed the place in, liberating all there from the bustle, traffic, tumult of the acquisitive world. People were their true selves again.

In homes and farms fires were banked high, and, in the bright, glowing inns, men supped mulled ale, talked sport and farming. Jests and tales—it could have been any century, any year, yet nowhere else but England.

In the village hall, the local Silver Band was playing heavily and faithfully music for old-time dancing. The cause was a good one—the raising of money for the bandsmen's uniforms. The need was obvious—the band members wore fine tunics of red and gold, but their trousers were ordinary and everyday.

The attendance was smaller than usual, for the most numerous and enthusiastic supporters of 'old time', the farmers of hill and dale, were shut away in their farmhouses behind the climbing snowdrifts blocking all roads to the village.



Past the hall and the strains of *Bradford Barn Dance*, past another merry inn, slowly up winding road we walked, the snow crunching under our feet, the wind stirring flurries of white from festooned tree branches.

A path in the churchyard among the slanting gravestones took us to a long grave fenced by low iron railings. Two ancient yew trees, one at foot, one at head, threw a close protective covering of dark green over the surface of chipped stones, on which a few patches of white snow glowed in the darkness.

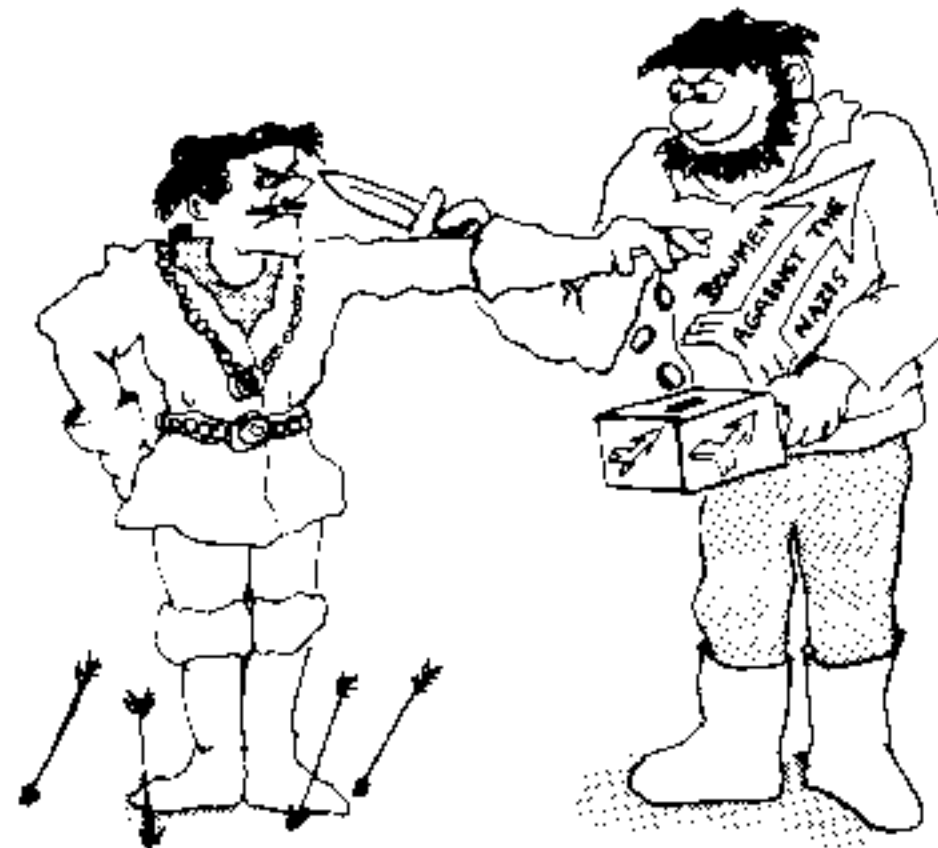
By torchlight we read the inscription on the headstone—'Here lies buried Little John, the friend and lieutenant of Robin Hood, who died in a cottage (now destroyed) to the east of the churchyard'.



Tales told and songs sung at winter firesides kept green through the centuries the memory of Robin Hood, Little John and the rest of the merry men. In this Derbyshire village of Hathersage people remembered from generation to generation the cottage where Little John died, and the spot in the churchyard where he was buried.

His long bow, inscribed with his surname, Naylor, hung on a wall in the church for centuries, until, in 1792 it was taken away by

the squire, to vanish from sight until, a couple of hundred years later, it was put on show at Wakefield Museum. It is of spiced yew, 79 inches long, weighs two pounds and



requires a pull of 160 pounds as against the 50 pounds usual today.

Robin Hood, reports one old narrative, 'joyned unto himself many stout fellows of like dispocicioun, amongst whom one called Little John was principal . . .' An old ballad tells us that 'by hym stode Little John, a good yeman was he' and it is striking that of all the things remembered and recorded about Robin Hood above all else is the fact that Little John was a friend of Robin Hood; that Robin recruited his band from men who bested him in combat; that though chosen captain he was but one among friends and equals and betters, not master but comrade, not head but friend and fellow.

Robin was a proud outlaw,
Whyles he walked on ground,
So curteyse an outlaw as he was one,
Was never none yfounde.

So the oldest and most beautiful ballad tells us, using proud in its older sense of free and masterless, and using courtesy to describe Robin's gracefulness and humility to his comrades and to the poor, the defenceless and the oppressed.



Historians, particularly those dedicated to so-called scientific methods, dismissed the tales of Robin Hood as they did much else that has been since proven beyond argument. In place of the clear, simple, intelligible ballads and stories they advanced wildly incredible theories to account for the centuries-old belief in the outlaw and his fellows.

Robin Hood never existed, they said. He was myth created by superstitious people, a hero sprung from a misty Teutonic paganism, or an Aryan sun god, or a relic of tree worship, or a forest elf, or, said some marxists, an expression of popular rebellion against authority. He was everything highly

improbable and impossible; anything but the real man honoured and remembered by the foolish English poor.

Amid the spreading of such doubts, Little John's grave was opened. The size of the grave and a 29½ inch thighbone in it suggested a man of some seven feet tall. The old ballads spoke of him as 'seven feet high'. Good enough for the academic historians? Not a bit of it. Unlettered men must be wrong.

What evidence was there, demanded the authorities, that there was ever a cottage on the site pointed out? Stung by endless repetitions of these doubts, a retired market gardener of Hathersage reached for his spade, went to what the guide books still call 'the reputed site of Little John's cottage' and dug.

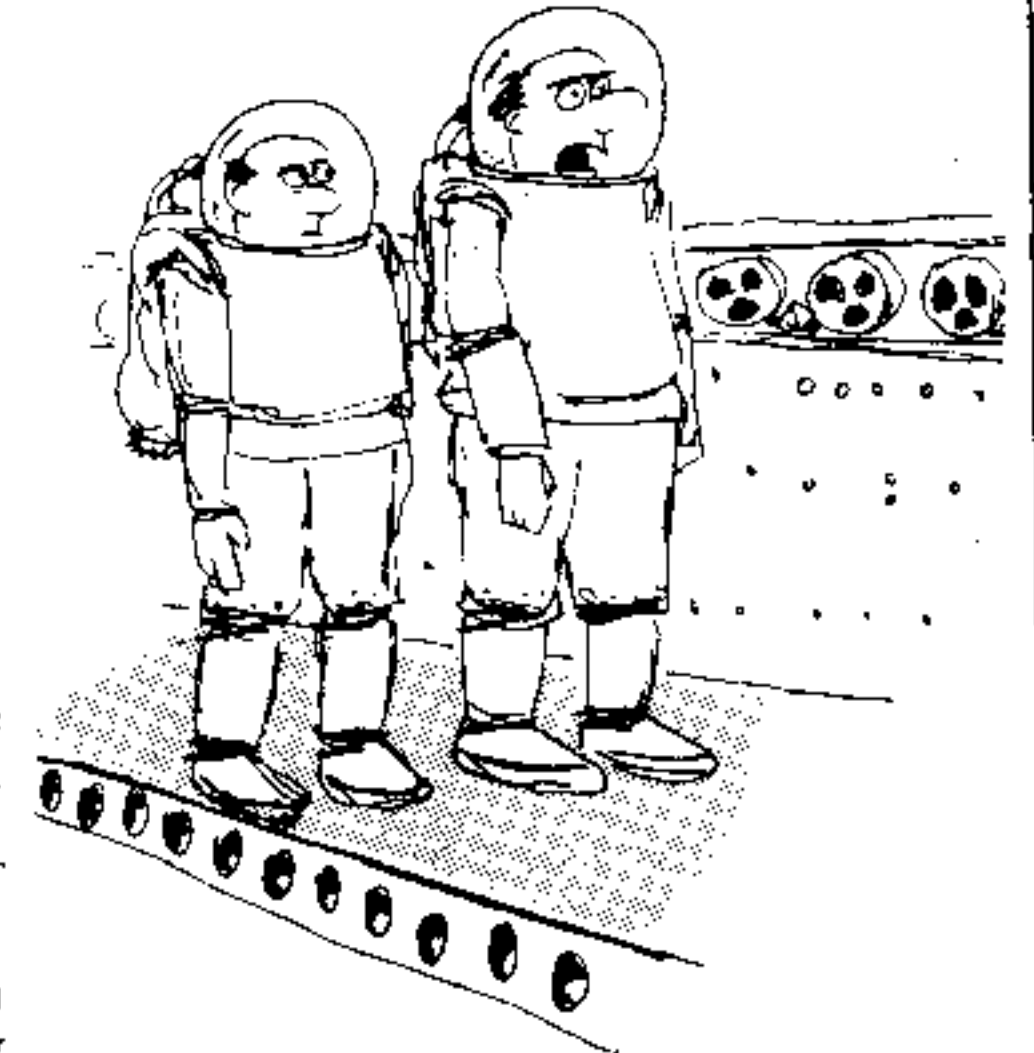
He went deep and his spade unearthed the remains and foundations of a medieval cottage! If anyone else has any doubts let him or her go to Hathersage and argue it out there.



We walked from the graveside, and down to the village. Across the silent hills an occasional light flickered in the windows of a lonely farmhouse; footsteps crunched along the street; 'good nights' hung on the cold air. From the village hall came whoops and shouts and the strains of the *Gay Gordons*, played by the indefatigable Silver Band.

In the warm, friendly bar parlour of the inn—'The Little John'—a man was blowing blasts on a forester's horn, amid a hubbub of friendly comment, derision and laughter. Where else but in high Hathersage should sleep the friend and lieutenant of Robin Hood—Little John? *Reg Groves*

LENIN AND THE BOLSHIEVKS?
WELL, THEY'RE ONLY A
LEGEND, AFTER ALL...



• BY REG GROVES •